

Aristakes Lastivertc'i's History

Translator's Preface

Aristakes Lastivertc'i was an eleventh century Armenian cleric and historian. His History Regarding the Sufferings Occasioned by Foreign Peoples Living Around Us was written between 1072 and 1079, and describes the events of 1000-1071, including information on Byzantine-Armenian relations, the Saljuq invasions, and the T'ondrakac'i movement in the Armenian Church. The work opens with a poetic summary of the disasters befalling the Armenian people in the eleventh century. Subsequent chapters describe Byzantine attempts to subjugate the Armeno-Georgian district of Tayk'/Tao (1000-1022); conflicts and cooperation among Armenian and Georgian princes; and the Saljuq invasions from 1047 to the capture of the city of Ani (1064) and the battle of Manzikert (1071). His information confirms and supplements what is known from Byzantine, Arab, and Iranian sources.

Little is known about the author of this work. The village of Lastivert whence he hailed, is believed to have been located near the city of Arcn in the district of Karin/Erzerum. It is clear that he was well-versed in the Bible, which he cites frequently. His religious worldview leads him to attribute everything to God's design, and makes him blame the Armenians for the massacres committed against them by the Byzantines and Saljuqs. Unlike earlier Armenian historians, Aristakes had no patron and was not writing a eulogistic account of the role of a particular noble family in Armenia's history. Rather he was a patriotic historian who heaps scorn on those clerical and lay Armenian lords whose actions he considered detrimental to Armenia's national church and to the preservation of Armenian states. The History displays equal aversion to Armenia's foreign overlords, Byzantine and Saljuq.

The present translation was completed in 1978. It was made from the critical edition of the classical Armenian text, published by K. N. Yuzbashyan, Patmut'wn Aristakisi Lastivertc'woy (Erevan, 1963). A full bibliography by H. A. Anasyan is contained in Yuzbashyan's edition. Additional bibliography is available in a French translation by M. Canard and H. Berberian, Recit des malheurs de la nation armenienne (Paris, 1973) as well as in Yuzbashyan's article, "The Daylamites in the History of Aristakes Lastivertc'i", in the Armenian Review 31 (1979). For a discussion of the Saljuq invasions see The Cambridge History of Iran vol. 5 (Cambridge, 1968); for Armenia in particular, see see R. Bedrosian, The Turco-Mongol Invasions and the Lords of Armenia in the 13-14th Centuries (New York, 1979). The transliteration system employed in this translation is a modification of the Hubschmann-Meillet system.

Robert Bedrosian
(New York, 1985)

[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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The History of Vardapet Aristakes Lastivertc'i Regarding the Sufferings Occasioned by Foreign Peoples Living Around Us

1. Events in the Land of the Armenians

[1] Days of torments came to us,
Unbelievable troubles found us,
Because the measure of our sins, having filled up
Overflowed, and our cry arose before God.
Everyone sullied his own road,
And the country was filled with impiety.
Justice declined, and licentiousness increased.
The people and the priests broke their word to God.
For this reason foreign peoples
Alienated us from our habitation [g21]
And turned our glory to ruin.
No breath remained within us
And we became lost through our despair.
Death grew strong and swallowed [us].
Nor did the cemetaries wish to say "Enough!"
Everyone attacked us,
And in our dying days there was no time
[to be healed] from the agonies we had already borne.

[2] Thus were successors replaced by successors.
And the animating breath of life was reduced.
Those who were settled in the land,
Migrated a second time, in their exile,
And were banished by rebellious exiles.
Those who were torn from their loved ones,
If not slain by the sword, were dispersed like erratic stars.
In our day, wars sprung up on all sides:
Sword in the East, killing in the West,
Fire in the North, and death in the South.
Joy at the country vanished.
Sounds of the lyre were silenced,
Beatings of the drum were silenced,
And cries of woe arose...

So much for such things. Now it is time for us to turn to the history [of these events] and to begin right from this point so that our words are intelligible to you.

Dawit' the Curopalate [990-1000] was a mighty man, a builder of the world, very honorable, a lover of the poor, indeed, the definition of peace. For in his day it was as the prophecy states: everyone reposed [3] under his vine and his fig tree. Now after his death, the emperor of the Byzantines ("the Romans"), Basil, in the 25th year of his reign, came forth with [g22] a large army, and reached the Ekegheac' district, having avoided [stopping] at numerous resting places. The cavalry force of Tayk' went before him and everyone was honored by him with generous gifts according to his worth, receiving authority (*ishxanut'iwn*), honor, and station, and was exceedingly happy. However, the prophecy of the psalmist David was fulfilled with regard to them, that "In the morning they bloom like grass, in the morning they flourish and rejoice, in the evening they wilt, dry up, and fall [Psalms 89. 5-6]." For when the emperor was crossing the Aghorhi land, he [decided to] pass the evening near the stronghold called Hawachich'. I do not know what the reasons were, but the western army which was called Erhuzk', and the *azatagund* clashed and 30 of the most honorable of the *azatagund* fell at that very place. This did not happen to them for no reason or in vain; for they had mixed poison into the communion on Good Thursday, and had given it to him [Dawit'] to drink, causing that venerable man to choke to death. [This was] because they had wearied of him, and were [4] interested in promises [made to them] earlier by the emperor. Because of this, the righteous judgement of God requited them in accordance with their deeds. From that day on no *azat* has been able to arise in the House of Tayk'--even if he should manage to live--rather they were met with premature death and were eliminated. The great Isaiah in rebuke to them said, "Because this people have refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and melt in fear before Rezin and the son of Remaliah; therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory [Isaiah 8. 6-7]." So much on this matter. [g23]

At the same place the king of Abkhazia, Bagarat, and his father, Gurgen, came to meet the emperor, and he greatly glorified them, giving to Bagarat the honor of Curopalate, and to his father that of Magister, and dismissed them in peace. Then he himself went and crossed through Hark' and Manazkert, halted, then turned upon Bagrewand and came to the city of Uxtik'. He ruled numerous districts, fortresses and cities. He set up officials, judges and overseers in them. Then he went on his way in peace, reaching his royal city of Constantinople. This transpired in [5] the year 450 [1001 A.D.], and then the country rested for 14 years.

Now as for the emperor himself, he went and concerned himself with [matters in] the western parts, for he had mastered the land of the Bulgars, their districts and cities which for a long time following the commencement of his reign, [waging] uneasy wars, he had been unable to get under control, But now favorable opportunities presented themselves, for the one who had held the land, [a man] victorious in warfare, had died, while his sons, because they did not reconcile themselves one with the other, surrendered, going to the emperor. For "A kingdom divided

against itself cannot stand [Mark 3.14]." Such was the case with the country of the Bulgars. Now the emperor removed the sons of the Bulgar tyrant from their inheritance, clan and family, and gave them places of habitation in the land of Byzantium. Then he treacherously assembled in one place all the troops of that land as if he were going to give them gifts and record their numbers, but then sent them without [chance of] return to the [g24] East. They came and ruined the land. Alas their coming to the East, and woe to the place where they moved about. Lo, [they were] a wicked and merciless [6] people, a hard-hearted, assaulting people. This prophetic lament may appropriately be recited about them, "The land was like the garden of Eden before them, but after them, a desolate wilderness [Joel II. 3]." We have said enough about this. Let us return to the course of our narration.

In the year 464 of our era [1015] Bagarat, [king] of Abkhazia, died and his son, Georgi, succeeded him [1014-1027]. The emperor Basil sent him an edict which read as follows: "Abandon [those territories] which I gave to your father out of the Curopalate's portion as a gift, and be prince solely over your patrimony." But [Georgi] did not consent to this; rather, taking pride in his youth, he wrote a contrary reply: "I shall not give anyone even one single House [from the territory] over which my father held sway." Now when the emperor heard this, he sent an army to forcibly master the land. The braves of Tayk' came forth to resist [this army] near the great Uxtik' awan, and they put the Byzantine army to flight, but in no way did they harm the city or other cultivated places. Yet this was the beginning of the destruction of the House of Tayk'. [7]

2. Concerning the Armenian Kingdom

In that period the king of the land of Armenia was Gagik [I, 989-1020], son of Ashot, brother of Smbat and Gurgen, from the Bagratid clan, a man mighty and successful in warfare. He had kept the land of Armenia in peace. In his day the orders of the Church shone [g25] forth, and priests of the Holy Oath [the Church] were illuminated. In his time it was as the prophet predicted: "The earth was full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." For the patriarchal throne was occupied by lord Sargis who had been nourished with holiness in the bosom of the Church and schooled in religious asceticism at the monastery called Sewan island. By the grace of God, they summoned [Sargis] in accordance with his merits, and seated him on the throne of our Illuminator. [Like Gregory the Illuminator, Sargis], having spent his life doing good deeds, ended his life.

At that time there were [many noteworthy] vardapets [such as] Sargis, Tiranun and Yenovk' who were vardapets at the kat'oghikosate; Samuel, who directed the monastery of Kamrjac' Jor; Yovsep', the primate [8] of Hnjuc' monastery; Step'annos Taronac'i, who wrote a history of the world in a marvellous style, beginning with the first man and concluding with the death of Gagik, about whom this [present] history is concerned; Yovhannes from the same district [Taron] who was nicknamed Kozerhn, who wrote a book on the faith; and Grigor an exceedingly learned man, and many others, who in their time greatly elevated the horn of the Church with orthodox confession. Those who look upon us with distrust [would be] humiliated by the doctrinal works of these [scholars] and [should] crawl into holes in the walls like mice. Enough on this matter.

Now king Gagik reigned for a long time and died in hoary old age, being worthy of a fine remembrance. [Gagik's] sons, Smbat, who was called Yovhannes, and his brother Ashot, inherited his principality. Smbat was physically large and quite fat, but they say that he was more learned than many; while Ashot was handsome, stout-hearted and warlike. They fell into disagreement with each other regarding the division of the country, and stood in need of laws and judgement. So Georgi, king of Abkhazia, came and reconciled them. He gave to the doubly-named Smbat as his share the stronghold [9] of Ani and the districts surrounding it, on account of [Smbat's] primacy/seniority. He gave the lower part of the land, facing Persia and Georgia, to Ashot. Smbat accepted this and was returning to his city. On the way, he dismounted to spend the night because of the weight of his body, and he slept unconcernedly. Now a certain one of the princes on Ashot's side came before Georgi for judgement, saying: "Shatik, which Smbat unjustly took from me, is my own place." When Georgi heard this, greatly angered and enraged he sent a force after [Smbat]. They came and pounced upon him unexpectedly. But because of his great physical weight, [Smbat] was unable to mount a horse. Now the princes who were with [Smbat] quickly took to flight, but their pursuers littered the road all the way up to the gate of Ani with corpses. [The pursuers] then turned back, stripped and plundered the adornments of the churches of the kat'oghikosate, unnailed the crosses, and said insultingly: "We shall take and make horse-shoes [from them]." But at the appropriate time righteous God punished them by means of the Byzantines, as we shall relate in [the proper] place. As for Smbat, they took him to Georgi who ordered that he be put in prison. But then, having taken three fortresses from [Smbat], he released him.

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[10] Now because there were grandees in the environs [of Ashot's holdings] they unjustly took many places from him. He was unable to bear this, and so left [g27] his land and went to the court of the Byzantine emperor. Since he pleased him, [Ashot] requested auxiliary troops. He took them and came to his own land. God helped him to master many districts and fortresses and to grow stronger than all who had come before him. So much so, that many of the grandees left their patrimonial places to him and voluntarily submitted to him. Up to this point the narration is pleasing.

In 467 of our era [1018] the emperor [of Byzantium] sent a certain Nicomedian prince who came and placed a capitation tax (mardahark) on the country, and, assembling a multitude of men, began reconstructing Theodosiopolis (T'eodosupolis/Karin/Erzerum).

In 468 [1019] lord Petros was ordained kat'oghikos during the lifetime of lord Sargis. And in 470 [1021] once more the emperor came to the East with a large army. He came and encamped in the large plain of Karin, and sent emissaries to Georgi--who was ruling the Georgians--to come to him and submit. For a certain bishop of Georgian nationality who resided in the city of Vagharshakert, had gone to the emperor and assured him that "When you come to Ekegheac' or Karin, [Georgi] will come before you." And [Basil] believed him, and placed his hopes on that [happening]. He awaited [Georgi's] arrival, moving from lodging-place to lodging-place. But [Georgi] did not agree to come at the emperor's summons, for many of his people had frightened him [by saying]: "When he sees you, either you will die, or he will shackle you and you shall not receive your honor." Now the emperor, crossing over to Bagean, sent messengers [to Georgi] two and three times, since he greatly desired that his journey end in peace and that the land remain [g28] in a flourishing state. However, when the sending of messages had ended in vain, the emperor, moved to anger, ordered that the great awan known as Okomi and the villages and fields (agarakk') around it and belonging to it be disfigured through fire, sword, and captivity. He ordered the captives to be taken to Xaghteac' district, while he himself crossed Basean and reached Karmir P'orak in the Vanand district. Now Georgi, having found an appropriate time, went against the city of Uxt'ik' and ordered his troops [12] to scorch its beautiful estates with fire, and to loot its goods, but not to injure a single person. When the emperor heard this he became increasingly enraged, and turned back against him. The two armies met near the small lake called Paghakac'is, and clashed with a frightful roar. The flashing of swords and glittering of helmets sent fiery sparks flying about the mountain, and blazing sparks from the clash of swords fell to the ground. Looking upon this all, the emperor himself was astonished at the bravery of the combatants for, just as the rapids of a river strike against a rock, so did the Byzantine army strike against them, turning them to flight. In that spot the great prince Erhat died, because his horse fell into a swamp, and was unable to pass. They attacked that praiseworthy individual and slew him with swords, [an act] which caused great mourning to the House of Tayk'. Now Georgi went with his troops and secured himself into the stronghold of Abkhazia. Meanwhile the emperor sent [g29] troops to the four directions of the land, commanding them with a wrathful order not to spare either old or young, neither child nor adult, neither man nor woman nor anybody. And in this way he demolished and polluted 12 districts. It was a pitiful scene there [13] and one worthy of many tears. For the lofty regal palaces which had been constructed with very great expense and with the craft of architects, [creating] wonder in the beholder and joy in the occupants, fell down, gutted by flames, while their lords fell before them, stabbed by swords. Alas this narration, alas, this wicked deed. How can I, poor in wisdom and more ignorant than anyone else, put into writing how things were at that moment, or how can I lament our misfortunes in a fitting way? [This task belongs] to the spirit of Jeremiah who knew how to fashion laments to suit the misfortune. But we are recording these lengthy events in brief for the benefit of the generations coming [after us], so that when children are born and grow up they will relate this to their children so that they not forget the acts of God Who justly requites all that stray from His laws, as Job said: "He shall requite those who hate Him, and not delay [II Deuteronomy 7.10]."

Come now and tally up for me the numbers [slain] at that time: the venerable, respectable elderly who fell, their white hairs stained with blood; the youths stabbed to death with swords, the countless incalculable eyes which were blinded. It seems to me [14] that these things befell them in return for removing the nails of the regal Symbol [the Cross] from the door of the blessed cathedral and saying insultingly, "We shall make horse-shoes out of it." This bitter lesson [g30] befell them and those with them, deservedly. Azza women, having come forth, their veils removed from their heads, were shamelessly disgraced in the open sunlight. Those who had hardly been able to travel on foot to visit the sick or to go to a place of pilgrimage, now bare-headed and barefoot went before the captors, stripped of adornments, having fallen from honor, and subject to myriad humiliations. Of the suckling babes, some were torn from their mothers' embrace and hurled against the rocks, while others were pierced by lances in their mothers' arms, such that the mothers' milk mingled with the babies' blood. Yet others were thrown down at crossroads, trampled under horses' hooves, and they died, every one. Oh God, [for] Your forgiveness at that time! Oh the merciless commands of the king! But despite all of this, [Basil's] anger did not fade, rather, he continued to raise his hand and to visit on them yet more evil. And through this deed he made the well-cultivated country devoid of people, a devastated wasteland, until the onset of winter.

[15] I do not know why all of this befell them, whether it was a fitting lesson for the excessive impiety of the country's inhabitants, or whether it resulted from the fierce behavior of the western troops which had been gathered from barbaric (xuzhaduzh) peoples. Now the emperor turned to his wintering quarters in temperate Pontus, he encamped in the Xaghteac' district and passed the night. Patriarch Petros followed after him and met him on the great feast-day of the Revelation of God, and was exalted by him.

On the day of the Revelation, the day when the Christian kings and princes are pious, making themselves equal to the directors of the Church, descending to the waters on foot and performing there the sacrament of the Lord's baptism, on that day, the emperor commanded the patriarch Petros to bless the waters in accordance with our [Armenian] canons, while the Byzantine bishops who happened to be there [were to celebrate] in accordance with their canons. When the patriarch sprinkled holy chrism on the water, suddenly rays of light streamed forth from the waters. Everyone saw this and glorified God, and the horn of our faith [16] was raised up. Then, yet more honored by the emperor and the officers, patriarch Petros returned to his home. But it was there that the destruction of Armenia occurred [through] a written letter. For Yovhannes had ordered the patriarch: "Give the emperor a written will so that after my death he shall inherit my city and country." For he had no royal heir for his kingdom, since his son Erkat' (Iron) had died prematurely without succeeding to his father's position. The emperor went and reached his wintering place at the aforementioned spot; and the troops sold their captives to distant peoples.

In these very times the blessed and worthy patriarch, lord Sargis, passed from this world. His grave is at Horhomos monastery.

3. How the emperor Turned Back a Second Time on the Land of Tayk' Where the Georgian Troops Were Defeated

When springtime came, the emperor, having spent the winter in temperate Pontus, turned back upon Tayk'. Bypassing numerous lodging stops, he came and camped in the Basean district. Now many of the Byzantine [17] princes, who at various times, for diverse reasons, had been deposed from their honor of rule by the emperor, [g32] and who [now] were roaring like lions in cages, finding the time appropriate, assembled in one place. They made bad counsel, counsel which they were unable to implement. They planned to unite and rebel against the emperor and to establish whomever they chose as emperor. When they had confirmed this, they embellished the plan and placed an army on the vast plain. A countless multitude of people were assembled in one spot, and they commenced urging the royal honor on each other. Then, in unity, they all seized the son of Phocas (P'okas) called Crhaviz, who on account of his father's crimes had long since been removed from the honor of principedom. But [Nicephor Phocas] did not consent, and did not want [the office]. Nonetheless, those urging him did not slacken, rather, they forcibly convinced him until he accepted.

As soon as the emperor [Basil] heard about this, he fell into great uneasiness, and went and secured himself into a certain strong fortress called Mazdat, for such was the ancient custom of Greece. However, I do not know whether this is a divine law--that servants must not arise against their lords--or [18] whether the emperor then had some special goodness. But I do know for sure, and saw with my own eyes, that those who arose against him died laughable deaths. The same sort of affair had transpired at the beginning of his reign when Vard [Phocas], called Scleros (Siklarhos) rebelled against him, and took with him almost all the Byzantines, to the point that the emperor [had to] request an auxiliary army from the Georgian Curopalate. With these troops [Basil] struck at the tyrant and made him flee the land. Then [Vard] went to Babylon, the city of the Chaldeans. After [Vard Phocas] his homonymous [relative, Nichephor] Phocas was infected with the same disease, and ruled [g33] the entire East for 7 years. [Basil] with only 4,000 men crossed the sea at night and attacked the myriad troops of the rebel. No one died of that multitude excepting the rebel himself. Having severed his head, [Basil] commanded that the trumpet of peace be sounded, and all the troops returned to their homes. Then the emperor himself, in great triumph, went and entered his city of Constantinople,

Similarly here, their [the rebels] childish game was not prolonged, [but was] rather like a structure [19] built on sand which quickly falls into ruin from the blows of a flood. For Dawit', who was called Senek'erim, being harassed by the Persians, gave his patrimonial inheritance, the Houae of Vaspurakan, to the emperor Basil, receiving in exchange the city of Sebastia and the districts surrounding it. Now these events did not transpire in the distant past, but only two or three years previous. From then on, up to the present, the Byzantines ruled the East. [Senek'erim] at that time was united in counsel with the rebels, and loyal to them. But then suddenly, as a person awakening from sleep, or as a mighty man coming to himself after drunkenness, he realized the impropriety of the deed. And because there was no other way of disrupting the wicked union, one day, at an unexpected hour, he took the one whom they had styled king and went away from the army as if to advise him. Suddenly, pulling out his sword he killed [Nicephor Phocas], beheaded him, gave the head to his servants and had it speedily taken to the emperor.

Now when this happened every one of those assembled scrambled over the next man to quickly, secretly reach his own home. And all of their plans [20] came to nought forthwith. [g34]

When the emperor saw the tyrant's head, he ordered it raised aloft on a pole in view of the entire army, for there were many among them who though they followed after the emperor with their feet, nonetheless, in word and thought they were one with the rebels. [Basil] did as he did out of his deep wisdom, so that seeing [Nicephor's head] they would stand clear of such vain plots, and [re]direct their hearts toward obedience to the emperor.

After these [events], the emperor and his troops descended to the large plain of Basen. He sent cavalymen of the heathen troops to capture the rebel P'ers, while he himself went to the border of Basen, to the place called Salk'ora, dug a deep trench around the army as a barricade, and remained there for a month or longer.

Now those who had been sent by the emperor seized P'ers and his son-in-law, Andronicos (Andronike), who was his partisan. They brought them as far as the stronghold called Xaghtoy Arhich at the border of Karin.

[21] Reaching the field which is opposite the stronghold, they camped, and bringing forth P'ers and Andronicos, they beheaded them. For the emperor had so commanded them. [This was because] during their rebellion, the Abkhazes had been allies, and they had promised to give to him [territory] up to that place as his share. For previously that [territory] had been ruled by Dawit' the Curopalate, not, however, as his patrimonial inheritance, but as gifts received from the emperor in return for [Dawit's] loyal obedience. [Dawit'] had promised that after his death, his district would be returned to the emperor; but [the conspirators] did not bother about that. On the contrary they generously gave gifts which were not theirs to give. For this reason, the emperor ordered them to be beheaded at that spot. [g35]

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4. Concerning the Last War at Shghp'ay

The emperor, during the days he remained at Salk'ora, sent emissaries to [Georgi] and wrote to him using pleasant words, for he was demanding three fortresses with their estates from him, [territories] [22] which Georgi had unjustly expropriated from the Curopalate's portion. [Basil] wrote: "Abandon that which is not your patrimonial inheritance, and dwell in peace in your sector, and do not be an impediment on my road toward Persia." [Georgi], however, did not agree to this. But then [Basil] sent Zak'aria, the bishop of Vagharshakert, whom we recalled a little earlier, who went and deceived Georgi with convincing words. [Georgi] then consented and wrote to the emperor giving him what he requested. [Bishop Zak'aria] took the document and joyfully turned back.

But scarcely had [Zak'aria] gone a day's journey when messengers came in haste to the lodging-place where he was spending the night, to demand the letter back; for the foolish [Georgi] had regretted his action. They took it and left. Now [Zak'aria] went on to the emperor and related to him what had occurred. The emperor inquired about the troops, about their organization and preparedness for war. Zak'aria responded: "[Georgi] has more troops than anyone. He is militarily strong, and ready for battle." When the emperor heard this, moved to anger he said: "You have come from the rebels to terrify me." And he ordered that [Zak'aria] be lead off to Constantinople, saying: "Go and remain [23] there until I come to you as a fugitive." But he commanded those taking him to cut out his tongue. [Zak'aria] went and never again returned to his place. No, he remained [in Constantinople] until the day of his death. [g36]

After these [events] the emperor left his camp at Salk'ora and went with his troops to the forward position called Shghp'ay. When the Abkhaz [Georgi] learned about this, since they had not yet encamped or secured themselves with a rampart, he attempted the following wily scheme: he sent one of his bishops as an emissary, then he, with the troops, proceeded after the emissary so that coming upon [the Byzantines] unexpectedly, he could put them to flight in terror. Those who arrived riding spirited horses did not proceed in war formation, but rather as if they were out for looting. It was [then] just as it had been in antiquity, in the days of Yovram when the Moabites having come against Israel were themselves subjected to the sword of bitterness. So now [the Abkhazes] encountered the same [fate]. Although they arrived boldly on their horses, they were exhausted from the weight of their iron weapons, and from the rapid and lengthy journey. Immediately and without trouble, [24] the Byzantine troops surrounded them and killed a countless multitude. The survivors, together with their king, fled to the stronghold of Abkhazia. The [Byzantine] troops which pursued them [continued] killing until sunset. Then the emperor ordered that the heads of the slain be gathered together at one spot, and that everyone who brought a head would be given one *dahekan*. Searching everywhere they collected the heads of the fallen in one place, before the emperor. He commanded that [the heads] be made into piles and placed along the road, to shock and terrify the beholders.

After this, when Georgi saw himself stripped of all hope, he beseeched the emperor to come to terms. Hearing this, [Basil] pitied him, and wrote [to Georgi] an edict having the following import: "Do not think that having vanquished you, I shall demand more from you than previously. Rather, give me the patrimony ("my patrimony") which the Curopalate had given me, [g37] and give me your son as a hostage, and there will be peace between us." [Georgi] consented to this. The emperor set up princes over the district who divided [it up] House by House, village by village, and field by field, just as it had been before. [25] Emperor Basil took the hostages, promising to return them after three years. Then he and his troops circulated around Armenia (zHayovk'), camping in the extensive plain of Her. He commanded the troops to cut down the city's orchards. He who was prince of that city beseeched the emperor that [he permit him] to be tributary and subject to him.

While [Basil] was occupied with this proposal--since the entire land of Persia was in terror and quaking and [the people] were seeking some means of salvation--suddenly the sky became thick with clouds, and torrents of rain poured down to earth. Then the bitter north wind blew, turning the rain to hail, snow, and ice, falling heavily and covering the face of the country. This was the time for [such a downfall], since winter had arrived. With the prolongation of the snowstorm and [the continued] severity of the icy cold, herds of horses and mules became numbed and were unable to move. As for the army's infantrymen, the cold caused their fingers and toes to fall off, as if scorched by fire. Furthermore the cords and stakes for the tents could not be moved, since they had become stuck to the ground from the severity of the bitter storm. It seems to me that this was recompense for the merciless [26] sword which they had let loose on the Christians. For although [the Abkhazes] were subjected to this [treatment] because of their sins, nonetheless, they should have been pitied, as God had said to the [g38] Babylonians "I gave My people into your hand; you showed them no mercy [Isaiah 47.6]." Consequently, they were tormented with the bitter cold, not on lofty mountains but on deep and very temperate plains, in full view of their enemies. [Her] was just as Egypt had been in Moses' day--afflicted with hail and drizzling rain--quite out of keeping with the nature of the area. Thus did the barbarians clearly realize that it was the hand of the All-Mighty which was warring with them. Now when this had so transpired, those who had any power and strength left, mounted their horses, together with the king, and crossed over to the Arcrunik' district, forgetting about their belongings, and driven by the cold as if pursued by enemies. When [the inhabitants] of the city [of Her] saw [the Byzantine departure], they suddenly rushed forth and joyfully pounced upon [what had been left], filling up with booty of horses, mules, tents and other stuff which [the Byzantines] had been unable to concern themselves with, being dazed by the cold. Now the emperor, ridiculed by the looters, [27] clearly realized that the Hand of the Lord had given the Georgians into his hand, as is written in the book of Kings "The mighty does not wax strong by his own might; rather the lord weakens his adversary [! Kings 2.9]." Then the emperor and his troops moved on, passing numerous lodging-places, and reached his city of Constantinople. After three years he released the son of the Abkhaz [king] with many gifts. He himself grew ill with the pain of death.

However, since [Basil's] brother and co-emperor, Constantine (Kostandin), was in the district of the Nicaeans, the emperor ordered that messengers be sent so that [Constantine] would come to him speedily. Now those who were [the military] commanders, although they verbally consented [to the order], nonetheless concealed the emperor's command amongst themselves, because [g39] they did not want Constantine to be emperor. After issuing many commands, the emperor perceived their guile and he ordered his attendants: "Bring me a horse!" Getting out of bed, [Basil] mounted the horse, and rode outside the palace in view of the city. When many [people] saw this, in dread they went and submerged themselves in dark [underground] chambers. [28] Then the messengers, having picked up Constantine, quickly brought him [to Constantinople]. When the emperor saw this, he placed the crown of the kingdom on [Constantine's] head and confirmed him as emperor. He

instructed him, as David [had advised] Solomon not to leave alive those who were stirring up the realm and those who had not wanted him to rule over them. But not as David, [rather] he should seek other causes [for putting them to death]. Then [Basil] took himself to bed, and grew weak, and after two days, died. He had reigned for fifty years. While he was dying a certain marvellous sign appeared in the heavens. In the evening, as he was breathing his last, a lightning bolt of fire split the upper Ether and suddenly fell down. Everyone saw it and said that it presaged the emperor's death.

5. The Reign of Constantine

After Basil, for four years his brother Constantine ruled. Because he was a peace-loving and generous [man], he was quiet for the first year of his reign, and the country rested from that great crisis. He [29] confirmed [in office] those princes who were in charge of districts, who had been designated by the great Basil. Now there was a certain brave and war-loving [man] named Komianos whom [Constantine's] brother had set up as lord of the district of Vaspurakan. He had displayed extremely great feats of bravery at the Persian [g40] court (? i durhn Parsic', or, "by the Persian border"), and was renowned throughout the entire East. Now on the emperor's death, [Komianos] devised a bad plan, to become an ally of Georgi and to rule in the East. When the Cappadocian army heard about this, unitedly, unexpectedly, they came against him, cutting the cords of [his] tent and causing it to collapse [on him]. They seized him and his advisors, and placed them in prison in a fortress, and then informed the emperor. This transpired during the first year of Constantine's reign, which was, according to our calendar, the year 475 [1026].

Now when the emperor heard about this, he did not do anything immediately to punish [Komianos], rather, he bided his time for an entire year until he was more in control. [30] Then, at the commencement of the second year, he sent an executioner who came and blinded [Komianos] and the some eight men who were with him. It is very worthy of repentance that such an honorable man and one worthy of good remembrances should have fallen into such wicked deeds. For it was [Komianos] who had placed [the city of] Archesh with its estates under Byzantine control .

Now when the second year had come, the emperor sent to the East a certain eunuch named Nikit, who was to be overseer of the land. He arrived and crossed through the district of Georgia. Through deception he expelled from their patrimonies numerous azats of the land, and sent them to the emperor's court. Seeing this, in joy, [the emperor] honored them with very great gifts and princely station, bestowing upon each in accordance with his worth villages and awans by signed and sealed documents, as perpetual inheritance. At the start of the third year, the eunuch Simon, who had sway over half the kingdom and was styled in Greek para-koimonemos (parhekimanos), came to the East with numerous troops. Having come, [g41] he crossed the land of Georgia. But he was unable to do anything, since the bad news of the emperor's death [31] followed. As soon as [Simon] heard about this, taking the troops, he immediately returned to Constantinople.

6. How Romanus Ruled

Basil, [the man] mighty among kings and always victorious in battle, who had trampled underfoot many lands, had not, in his manly feats of bravery, taken a wife and raised a son to be heir to the realm, as is meet for all kings. Following [Basil], his brother, the aforementioned Constantine, succeeded him. Like [Basil], he too did not have a son, rather, he had two daughters. He gave Zoe, the senior [daughter] in marriage to Romanus (Romanos), who was one of the officers of the Byzantine army, and [Constantine] enthroned him in his stead. Then dying, he followed [the path of] all mortal beings.

[Romanus], in the first year of his reign [1028], assembled troops and set out for the area of the Antiochans, wanting to go against the city called Aleppo (Halp), to take and destroy it. He came upon the mountain called Seaw (Black) where he saw a multitude of monks and [32] cenobites who, although possessed of physical bodies, were more like incorporeal [beings]. [With respect to dress], they were satisfied with a wrapping or jacket of goat hair, similar to John [the Baptist], but [with this difference, namely] that he had eaten locusts and wild honey, while they, with iron hoes in hand, fatiguingly labored to ready their daily meal from barley seeds. They left to those [g42] who love this world the diverse delicacies, delicious foods and the joy-producing wine supplied by the vine. Having climbed to the mountain's summit, they became conversants with the first prophet [Moses], and were always speaking with God.

When the emperor saw them, he asked of his worthies: "What is this multitude of heretics?" They replied: "They are flocks who pray, always asking for peace for the world, and for your health." The emperor returned: "I do not need their prayers. Record all the monks as bowmen for service in my realm." For [Romanus] greatly approved of the declaration of Chalcedon, and hated all orthodox [Monophysite] believers. He took the Syrian bishop to Constantinople, subjecting him to ridicule and ignominy. He ordered that his beard [33] be shorn off, and that he be led around the squares and streets seated on an ass, to be spat upon. Later he ordered [the bishop] taken into exile, where he died. The emperor was just such a fool. He did not think about how previous kings had displayed concern toward those peoples under their sway. Instead, with a capricious order he wanted to introduce changes into God's churches, not remembering the Lord's unerring command: "And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on any one, it will crush him [Matthew 21.44]." Consequently, the righteous verdicts of God quickly came upon him. For on the [g43] very road [which Romanus] was travelling, an army of Taciks arose. [This army, comprising] not more than 800 or 1000 men, pounced upon the numberless (biwrawor) [Byzantine] hosts. They killed an inestimable number [of men], took as booty the treasures of the emperor and his soldiers, and returned to their city.

Now with great indignities the emperor took to flight, racing to his capital city. Then, humiliated by his grievous impiety, he managed to recall the words of the Song of David: "It is better to take refuge in the Lord and the saints' prayers than to put confidence in princes and plentiful treasures [Psalms 117.9]." For in no way can they be of help on the day of wrath. [34] From that [defeat] onward until the day of his death, [Romanus] never again ventured forth from the royal city.

7. The Taking of the City of Edessa

[The man] who had been prince of the city [of Edessa], whom [the inhabitants] called emir and who had inherited that place from his forebears, died without leaving an heir. Now his wife passionately loved one of her servants named Salamay, and set him up as lord of the city in place of her husband.

[Salamay], afraid that the chief [men] of the city would not obey him, sent one of his loyal servants to Maneak, who at that time held sway over the borders of the Byzantine district and resided in the city called Samusat (which they say was built by Sampson). [Salamay] had done this so that [Maneak] would inform the emperor to give [Salamay] principedom and eternal inheritance in the Byzantines' land [confirmed] by writ and the royal seal. "And," [Salamay] said, "I shall give him the city, without warfare." [g44] [35] When emperor Romanus heard this, he wrote [to Salamay] a document of consent, making him an antipatos patrician, and subsequently exalting him with great and prominent honor.

Now the citizens [of Edessa], as soon as they heard the sound of clamor and the blare of trumpets, came forth dismayed and full of trepidation, terrified and agitated, crowded one on the other as waves of the sea. When they were unable to discern any way out, those who were Muslims, departed during the night and hurried to a nearby city where they informed [the people] about the unexpected emergency which had developed. As soon as they [the Byzantines] heard what had happened, an order was given and a multitude of troops assembled at one spot. They came against the city, breached its wall and entered, causing great destruction. Thus many citizens went and secured themselves in the cathedral, others [took refuge] in secure places or towers. The besiegers destroyed many places with the flame and even set fire to the blessed cathedral itself. They opened the treasuries of that house of holiness, which former kings of Armenia had provided with vessels suitable for a temple of the Lord, [36] and removing everything in great haste, they returned to their places. From that day forth the city [of Edessa] fell into the hands of the Byzantines.

8. The Death of Romanus

Now as for this emperor, in no wise is he worthy of good remembrances. On Holy Thursday he left the palace to give an address to his troops, and [spent] until noontime giving royal gifts in accordance with [his] authority. When he had completed this matter, he commanded that a golden [g45] pool be filled with water for him to bathe in. As soon as he entered that golden basin filled with warm water, attendants seized him by the hair of his head and submerged him under water until he gave up the ghost. The queen had supported this. [Romanus] reigned for seven years [1028-1034].

9. The Reign of Michael

In his prophecy, Daniel saw an apparition whose [37] head was of gold, whose shoulders and arms were silver, and whose back and sides were copper. That was in the past. Now [the apparition] possessing legs and feet of iron mixed with crockery is the Byzantine kingdom. For they did not [follow the ways] of other peoples whereby the emperor's son succeeds his father. He who holds sway [having inherited it] from his fathers and grand-fathers is iron; but he who comes from the outside, not belonging to the royal clan, such a one is crockery. This [non patrilineal inheritance] is quite frequent among [the Byzantines], as indeed we shall see [in the case] of the present monarch. [Michael] was neither from the royal clan, nor the son of an emperor, nor did he have the authority of a prominent officer [of the army]; rather he was an insignificant palace functionary. The queen had lusted after him with a prostitute's diseased passion, and had her own husband drowned on [Michael's] account. They say that he was one of the murderers. After completing this satanic deed, the queen ordered that the chiefs of the city be summoned to her. She showed [them] the deceased emperor[']s body and claimed that he had died accidentally. Shortly thereafter, she brought forth this Michael, enthroned him and then married him--at which the matter became [38] clear to all. Since [Michael] had numerous relatives [g46] and brothers, he placed the supreme authority in their hands. One of his brothers he made a magister giving him Thessalonica, and entrusting him with the concerns of the Bulgars and the western parts; one [brother] he styled demeslikos and sent him to the great [city of] Antioch, entrusting him with the concerns of Tachkastan and the southern region; while the third brother, who was a eunuch and a monk named Orht'anorhos, [Michael] set up in the royal city of Constantinople, making him a sugkletikos (sinklitos), and entrusting him with all the concerns and rights of the palace.

[Michael] himself was wickedly afflicted by a dew, even while he went to the churches and the resting-places of the saints. However, I do not know whether this [affliction] was vengeance for the death of Romanus, who died unjustly, or whether [Michael] was naturally possessed. They say that there were other causes, that because the kingdom was not properly his, he would go to the city of the Thessalonians to a certain woman witch giving himself in service to the father of all evil, just as in ancient times, in the time of Basil they say, a youth [39] had done [similar] things by means of a witch. [And they say] that though a demon of prostitution he had inflamed the queen with love for himself, and that she had set him up as emperor of the lands. Now after this deed had been done, [Michael] in accordance with royal custom was obliged to go to church on the Lord's feast-days. But the wicked dew was unable to abide this, thinking that [Michael] was rebelling from him. People who say this confirm it [by the fact that] the emperor was in Thessalonica frequently, probably with the witch. In any case, until his death, [the demon] which tormented [Michael] did not leave him. [g47]

During [Michael's] reign [1034-1041], a great destruction of the Byzantine troops occurred in the fortified city named Berkri. [This city] which is on the territory of the Arcrunik' land had, together with its estates, long since been ravished by the Persians, who controlled it. The district chief of Vapurakan, a certain Kawasilas, came [against the city] with numerous troops, took it, and established there cavalry brigades to guard the city. Then another individual replaced [Kawasilas], took the troops and went to a very distant place called Arcak, on account [40] of the abundance of victuals and other things needed by the cavalry [to be found there]. Now the lord of the city, who was named Xtrik, being shut up in the fortress, informed the chiefs of the land of Persia, and they, quickly spreading the word around, assembled in one place, came against the city, investing it with a rampart. The Byzantine troops, benumbed by wine and by their licentious activities, were unable to take care of

themselves. Furthermore the protector of Israel deprived them of His aid. [The Persians] killed with the sword some 24,000 men. This [disaster] occurred not because of the righteousness of the Persians, but because of the impiety of our [Christian] troops which caused the sword of bitterness to be lifted up [for it is] just as the Lord said: "The wicked shall be destroyed wickedly [Matthew 21.41]." Now those troops which were at Arcak did not arrive to help them [in Berkri]. Then the Persian troops, taking the loot and booty of the slain, went off to their own land. En route, at a lodging-place, since [the Persians] had many captives with them, Xtrik ordered that the ground be dug down to a depth of the human body, and that the captives be slaughtered over that ditch until it was full. Then [Xtrik] got in [41] and bathed in the blood of the slain, to calm his wrathful heart. [g48].

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Aristakes Lastivertc'i's History

Now when the next year had come, once more the emperor sent other troops who arrived with [siege] machinery. Putting the engines of war into place, they commenced demolishing the stronghold's wall. When those who were in the fortress saw that there was no way out for them, and since many of them had died, they beseeched the military commanders to permit them to depart unharmed to their own land, [so that] they [the Byzantines] could occupy the stronghold and its estates. When [the Byzantines] heard this, they did as they were requested, and from that day forth the domination of the Persians over that place was ended.

At the beginning of [Michael's] reign, there was an eclipse of the sun during the month Arac', on a Friday evening, in the year 482 of our [Armenian] era [1033]. Many learned people, seeing [the eclipse] believed that the birth of the anti-Christ had occurred on that day, or that it presaged very great evils. Indeed such [disasters] did occur in our day, and this narration is leading to [a description] of them. [42] With our own eyes we saw the blows of divine anger and the unheard of punishment directed against Armenia because of our sins. Previously yet another sign had been revealed which greatly astounded viewers. This was similar to the signs [preceding] the final destruction of Jerusalem, about which the Savior had spoken, in warning: "For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will be [Matthew 13.19]." For [the people] had grown frenzied with regard to their lord and creator, thinking Him to be a man. A man named Ananias stood in the midst of the city of Jerusalem crying out this lament in a loud voice: "Alas Jerusalem, woe city of blood, days of revenge have befallen you," and so forth, as the great Eusebius indicated in his Ecclesiastical History. Likewise here in our times, a man similar to him appeared, unknown by anyone, destitute and homeless. He came from the eastern parts, crossed [g49] through the districts of Apahunik' and Hark', descended into Mananaghi and Ekegheac', [intending] never to return to the [East], and saying in a loud voice day and night without cease "Woe is me, woe is me!" He said no more than this. Should anyone ask him: "Where have you come from?" or "From which [43] district?" or "Why are you saying that?" [the man] would give no reply, but only repeat endlessly what he had said. Senseless people, seeing him, thought that he had gone out of his wits. The wise, however, said: "That 'Woe' will be for the entire country." Let us leave this matter here as it stands, and return to the course of the narration, concerning the aforementioned emperor.

[Michael] named his sister's son Caesar (kesar). Then, after reigning for 7 years and 8 months, he grew ill and died. Now the queen adopted the Caesar and enthroned him in her husband's stead. However, [this Caesar, (Michael V Calfat, 1041-1042)], rather than being grateful to the queen for the good turn she had done him, plotted with his relatives to send the queen to a distant island in exile, so that the authority would belong to them alone. Indeed, they did just that. Now the queen's sister, who was named Theodora, summoned the chiefs of the city and informed them of what had transpired. When they learned about it, they notified the Western army to assemble there. Then forcibly going against [Michael V], they demanded: "Show us our imperial queen who has inherited the kingdom from her fathers [44] and grandfathers." For many people believed that she had died. Now [Michael V] as soon as he observed their strength and unity, became frightened and hastily ordered that the queen be brought back out of exile. Seeing her sister, Theodora instantly ordered that the emperor, his relatives, and their intimates be seized. [g50] The emperor took to flight, wanting to enter the senior church and save himself by hiding under the altar. However he was unable to reach [the church], for pursuers quickly caught him, turned him back, and, at an unholy spot they threw him to the ground and blinded him. [The same thing was done] to the one styled demesilikos, and to numerous others. And she ordered that their homes be plundered, pillaged, and destroyed. The entire city struck out and effected great pillaging, demolishing to the foundations very large and beautiful mansions, and destroying them. But the agitated mob, thirsting for booty, had grown so large that it even breached the wall of the palace, and excavated numerous precious items from the royal treasuries. The principals of the city were barely able to stop the mob, and [in this] the sun helped them, by setting.

[45] Now the emperor who yesterday was seated on a golden throne giving out orders to the whole world, today, blinded, sat on a chair of futility and insult; and those who thought to rule in perpetuity over land and sea, in one moment had lost their own salvation. Indeed it came to pass just as the prophet had said, that [they were like] the grass on the housetops which withers before it grows up, with which the reaper does not fill his hand or the binder of sheaves his bosom, nor were the good tidings of passersby heard [compare Psalms 128.6]. Such is the ephemeral history of the Caesar who reigned for six months.

10. The Reign of Theodosius' Son, Constantine, Called Monomachus

In accordance with that apparition of the prophet, this [Constantine] also was part of the crockery. For in the palace his father had occupied the office of gayiosut'wn from which all the [g51] judges of the land were dispatched. Following the incomplete reign of the Caesar, the lioness [the queen] was roaring in her den for a companion. [46] For she was greatly troubled that none of her own people were worthy of the realm; and as for the one she had adopted and made lord and emperor of the lands, she was requited by him as we described above. So what did she do? Going outside the canonical stipulations, she called forth this man [Constantine] and made him her husband, and enthroned him on the throne of the kingdom. Many thought that he was her lover. I do not know whether this is true, or whether it was as she herself had written in her edict that "For the good of the land and for peace I have not spared myself, and therefore dared to do such an unworthy deed."

In the first year of [Constantine's] reign, the son of Maneak, who held sway in the western part, a brave and renowned man rebelled, and many united with him. With numerous troops he came as far as the gate of the royal city, and with the force of his bravery so tyrannized over [the city] that many involuntarily submitted to him. For they believed that he would be emperor, because of the numerous [examples] of good fortune which attended him. For two and three times the army of the emperor had arisen, [47] fought with, and were defeated by him, returning to the emperor with great dishonor. During the last battle everyone was intending that after his triumph they would submit and make him emperor. However, since [Maneak's son] did not think to reign through God but rather placed his hopes on the power of his might having become infected from afar by Abisoghom, filled [g52] with impiety, [God] requited him with the verdict [visited upon Abisoghom]. For they found [Maneak's son] fallen in the battle, without having fought anyone: a powerful angel took his soul. The creator and lord of all did this and does this in the most wise fashion. He who is more awesome than all kings can harvest the souls of princes so that "Let not the wise man

glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth [I Kings 2.10 and Jeremiah 9.23-24]." Such [a man] truly is worthy of great glories and praise, and a memory of him will endure until eternity "His horn shall be elevated in glory," as is written in Psalms [Psalms 111. 9-10]. Such a one was the great David who was anointed king by the prophet, and received with that the soul of strength [48] and prophecy, (he could crush wild beasts as though they were goats' kids). Confident of his [powers] he battled against the unbeatable giant, crushing his head with a jawbone, laying him flat on the ground, and putting to rest the insult against Israel. Nonetheless [even the mighty David] pardoned Saul who had persecuted him many times, and hearkened to the caller's order. Not only did he not attempt to rule his realm with brute force, but two times he let his hands drop, sparing his persecutor as a benevolent act, and angrily replying to those wishing to kill: "Do not touch him, for he is the Lord's anointed [I Kings 24.7]." For this reason God loved [David] and said: "I have found a man after my heart who shall do what pleases me [Acts 13.22]." However, [Maneak's son] did not think about such matters, and did not heed God's command. Rather, he wanted to rule alone, without God, forgetting that divine command which [God] had announced by means of the prophet, in anger against the kings of Israel: "Woe to those who wish to rule without me," etc.

Now it was not that this monarch was worthy of any praise and was so pitied by God, but that [God] wanted to honor the throne and stop the source of impiety. [49] [It was] just as the Savior said when preaching to the Jews: "Scribes and Pharisees have sat on the throne of Moses [Matthew 23.2]." Despite the fact that they were hypocrites, [the Savior] commanded [the people] to obey them because of the throne. The great Paul, counseled by such venerable words wrote to the Romans: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God [Romans 13.1]." He was not speaking about a prince, but about princship, that is, about the throne, for God did not set up every prince. [Paul] added: "Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment [Romans 13.2-3]." This is exactly what befell [Maneak's son], for he was not punished by any man but by the righteous verdict of God, which judges all properly and justly. For His eye is alert and our secrets are revealed before His all-seeing wisdom. Just as the blessed David confessed to God in a Psalm: "You knew of my actions and my deeds [Psalms 138.5]." The Apostle wrote to the Hebrews in a similar vein: "And before Him no creature is hidden [Hebrews 4.13]." And the children in the fiery furnace said in praise of Him: "You Who sit among the cherubim and gaze at the void are eternally praised and yet more glorified [Daniel 3.54]." For from the elevation of [His] place [50] they revealed [His] accurate knowledge, as the Psalm [g54] states: "The Lord looked from Heaven to earth [Psalms 13.2]." Thus did the great Isaiah say: "The haughty looks of man shall be brought low and the pride of men shall be humbled; and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day [Isaiah 2.11]." Such things occurred at the outset of Constantine's reign, which was the year 490 according to our [Armenian] calendar [1041).

Three years later, Armenia's life came to an end. For in one year the two brothers Asot and Yovhannes, who held the kingship of our land, died. Thereupon their throne of stability was moved and never more came to rest; thereupon the princes arose and departed from their patrimonial inheritances and became wanderers in a foreign country; thereupon districts were destroyed, looted by the Greeks. Cultivated awans became the dwellings of wild beasts, and their fields the pastures of deer. Houses, desirable, many-storied and grand, became the habitations of sirens and centaurs (hambareac, yushkaparkac). Thus did the blessed prophets lament the desolation of Israel: "The porcupine shall bear her young there and raise them without fear [Isaiah 34.15]."

[51] The solemn places in the monasteries became [dwelling-places] for robbers as did the churches in them. [These churches] with their glowing structures, their gorgeous adornments, their ever-lit candles and candelabras whose light, mixing with the air, flickering here and there, resembled the waves of the sea at rest when gentle zephyrs cause them to ripple, gently embracing each other. The generously donated incense, whose [g55] smoke rose fragrantly up from the power of the fire, resembled the spring mists settled around the summit of a mountain which blocks and covers the sunbeams. As for [the clerics] who dwelled in [the monasteries], what language is sufficient to describe them? Their sweet songs and ceaseless singing of psalms, their reading of Scripture, their commemorations of the Lord's feast-days and of the martyrs, their united will, and their enthusiasm for the divine, and much else.

Things were once this way. But now, [the churches] are stripped and denuded of everything, devoid of all glories, sacked. In place of those mellifluous songs, now we have [the cries] of owls and screech-owls who have become the choirmasters. In place of psalm-singing, the dove and turtle-dove are [52] singing, as the prophet said: they sweetly summon their young. The candles have been extinguished, the sweet fragrance of incense has passed. The holy altar which at one time had been adorned and embellished like a new bride wearing a crown of glory, has now become a pitiful spectacle, one worthy of many tears: stripped of adornments, covered with dust, and a perching place for crows. A description of all of this would lengthen the narration and require the aid of grace from On High to complete it. It is time now to move forward in [g56] our narration.

When the great Constantine had fallen sick with the illness that killed him, he ordered those close to him to go forth and find someone from Armenia and to bring him there. Those who went out found a certain elder, named Kiwrakos, who served as superintendant of the guest apartments at the kat'oghikosate. They led him before the emperor. When the emperor saw him, he gave him a letter regarding the land of Armenia and said: "Take this document and give it to the king of Armenia and say, 'Since that invitation for death which is sent to all mortal beings has also come to me, take your letter and give your realm to your son, and [53] let your son give it to his sons, for all time'!" Then, lying on his bed, [Constantine] died, Now [Kiwrakos] took that letter and kept it until the time of Michael's reign, when he sold it to him for much treasure. Oh that bitter deal! Responsible for the blood of how many people? How many churches were destroyed by reason of that sale? How many districts were depopulated and became desolate? How many populous awans became uninhabited! We shall speak about all of this in the [proper] place, but now let us proceed in the order we commenced.

When the Byzantine emperor heard news of the kings' deaths, he found that document dealing with Armenia, and became concerned with acquiring the city of Ani and the land, as though it were his own inheritance. A certain one of the principal azats of Armenia, named Sargis, intended to rule over Shirak and the districts surrounding it, for he had gathered up all the treasures found in the home of king Yovhannes, since upon [Yovhannes'] death [Sargis] was his executor. Now Vahram Pahlaw, a man mighty, renowned, and sublimely pious [g57]--to the point that no one was his equal--together with his relatives, sons and nephews(brothers' sons) [54] some thirty azats refused to unite with [Sargis]. Instead they called to themselves Gagik son of Ashot, made him their king, then wisely and with strategems they brought him to the city,

When Sargis saw what had developed, he took the royal treasures and entered the citadel of impregnable Ani. Gagik descended to see him alone, with manly brave-heartedness, and, using beseeching words, he was able to persuade him. [Sargis] quit the stronghold, and went to the fortified city called Surmarhi. However he gave to Gagik neither the stronghold [of Ani] nor the other strongholds under his sway. Having gone [to Surmarhi] once again, [Sargis] thought up a futile scheme; to give whatever he possessed to the Byzantines, and to go to them. Now

Gagik with a few men went amidst the army to the tent where Sargis was. He arrested him and entered his capital city. The rebel should have been killed. But Gagik, reasoning like Saul, spared that second Agag, seating him in his own carriage. Therefore, like Saul, he was requited with a life more bitter than death.

[55] In these days Byzantine armies entered the land of Armenia four times in succession until they had rendered the whole country uninhabited through sword, fire, and captive-taking. When I think about these calamities my senses take leave of me, my brain becomes befuddled, and terror makes my hands tremble so that I cannot continue my composition. For it is a bitter narration, worthy of copious tears .

Prior to this, our land appeared to travelers as a paradise with vegetation dense, green, leafy, fruit-bearing, gorgeous and happy. For princes occupied their princely stations with beaming countenances, and their troops stood before them resembling spring gardens in their blazing colors. And [military] reviews were but occasions for joyous songs and words, where the sounds of trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments thrilled listeners with delight. At that time too the elderly sat in the squares resplendent with their venerable white hair. Mothers, babies in arm, displaying maternal compassion, and, because of their great joy having forgotten the sad period of labour, like doves constantly fluttered about their newly-feathered chicks. What shall I say about brides in [the wedding] chamber [56] about grooms on the nuptial-couch, about passionate, fiery, unrestrained desires and propensities. But let us ascend to the patriarchal throne and the royal dignity. For [the patriarchal throne] was like thickening clouds laden with spiritual gifts which their by means of doctrinal grace rained their life-giving waters, fertilizing the Church's fruitful garden, and [for protection, the patriarchal throne] had set up alert guards, ordained by it, poised on the ramparts. As for the king, at dawn when he came forth from the city he resembled the bride-groom arising from his nuptial-couch, or the sun which, rising over the heads of all creatures, arrests everyone's gaze. The king also glittered in resplendent clothing and in a crown adorned with pearls, capturing everyone's attention and astonishing them. The white steed, adorned with golden ornaments, which went before [the king], returned the sun's rays and dazzled the eyes of beholders. [g59] The dense multitude of the people which went in advance were like waves of the sea, piling upon each other. The retreats were crowded and filled with the clerical orders, to the point that villages and fields, motivated by good envy, became abodes of clerics. Our land had many such things [in the past]. I have written down this [description] so that when I explain what befell [the country] all shall be moved to tears.

[57] Today, the king, fallen from honor, sits like a captive in a distant place. Similarly the patriarchal throne devoid of occupants, displays the sad face of a new bride, newly widowed. The cavalry wanders about lordlessly, some in Persia, some in Greece, some in Georgia. The sepuh brigade of azats has left its patrimony and fallen from wealth; they growl wherever they happen to be, like lion cubs in their lairs. The royal palace has become an uninhabited ruin. The populated land has become stripped of its inhabitants. I hear not the sound of joy when the vineyards [were] harvested, nor praise for those who trample in the wine presses. Children do not play before their parents, nor do the elderly sit in chairs in the squares. I hear no sound of weddings, nor are bridal chambers embellished. All of this has become reduced and then lost as the psalm says: "It shall not return [Psalms 40.9]."

Our everything has turned to lamentation, our robe of gladness has become melancholy sack-cloth. What ear can bear the narration of our misfortunes? What heart of stone is there which does not turn to sighing, and break into sobs? It is time to mingle our sighs with Jeremiah's laments: "Zion's roads are mourning because [g60] there is none to cross over them [Lamentations 1.4]." Such things were said when Jerusalem was ruined, but [the same words] were fulfilled in these [present] days.

[58] Now all of this [calamity] was visited upon Armenia because of that sale which we recalled a while earlier. It seems to me that this sale was more inhuman than the one effected by Judas, for in that case, although the seller was subjected to indignities, nonetheless that sale became the price of salvation for the entire land. Thus did the great Peter write in his catholic letters: "You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ [I Peter 1.18-19]." But in this case, the seller was extremely inhuman and cruel since he became the cause of so much evil. For the vineyard which the Lord had planted and which our Illuminator tended with fifteen years of his fatiguing labor, [this merchant] deprived of its fence and he destroyed its towers, making of it a place for passersby to trample on, to the point that "The hog of the forest sullied it, and the wild boar grazed in it [Psalms 79.14]," as the Davidic psalm states. Let the news of all this reach the Lord, and may justice be meted out to him [the perpetrator]. We shall now return to our narration.

[59] In the year 494A.E. [1045], Ani was taken, not through warfare, but through treachery. For [the Byzantines] by the emperor's order succeeded in convincing Gagik, using an oath and the Cross, that "I need but to see you, then shall return your kingdom to you and shall write a document giving you your land and city in perpetual inheritance." As the learned say: "The wise man swears, and the fool believes," or, similarly, "The words of liars are as succulent as cheese, and fools gulp them down." I do not know why [Gagik] believed them, whether [g61] because of the oaths and the Cross, because of immaturity, or because of a timid nature, but [in any case] he gave the keys of the city [of Ani] to Petros who then occupied the patriarchal throne of our Illuminator; and [Gagik] with great conditions and oaths entrusted [Petros] with all the concerns of the land. [Gagik] did not heed Vahram and the other azats who had put him on the throne, but rather he listened to the deceitful support of Sargis and so left the city and went to the Greeks on a one-way journey, like a fish caught on the line, or a bird ensnared in a trap. Now when the [Byzantine] emperor saw [Gagik], he forgot about his oath and the intercession of the Cross. No, [60] he obliged [Gagik] to remain with him and demanded: "Give me Ani and I shall give you in exchange [the city of] Melitine (Malatya) and the surrounding districts." But [Gagik] did not consent.

As the demand [for Ani] was being prolonged, Grigor, son of the brave Vasak, went before the emperor. [Grigor] was a sagacious man, so learned in theology that he was without equal. When he realized that they would not permit Gagik to return to his country, [Grigor] went before the [Byzantine] emperor and gave him the key to Bjni and to all of his patrimonial inheritance. He was honored by the emperor and received from him the dignity of magister and a place to dwell including villages and cities in the Mesopotamian borders. [This was given] in writing and stamped with a golden seal, and [the territory] was to be [Grigor's family property] from generation to generation until the end of time.

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Aristakes Lastivertc'i's History

When the principal citizens of Ani saw that Gagik was confined in Byzantium they thought to give the city either to Dawit' or to the one from Duin, since Dawit's sister was his wife, or to Bagarat, king of Abkhazia. When the patriarch Petros understood [61] that the city would be given to somebody, he sent [g62] to the man who held sway over the Eastern part(s) and resided in the city of Samusat (which they say was built by Samson, in antiquity). He wrote [as follows]: "Inform the emperor [about what is going on and find out] what he will give us in return if I give up the city and other strongholds in this land." [The Byzantine official] hurriedly informed the emperor, and the emperor satisfied [Petros] with treasures and authority. And thus did they rule Ani, and the entire land.

Meanwhile Gagik remained with the emperor, unconsolable. [The emperor] out of compassion had given him the place which he himself wanted [but] which was greatly inferior in value to Ani or the other lands [he was deprived of]. Rather [the Byzantines] recompensed the kat'oghikos [Petros] from whom they had taken the city, with thanks and rewards. Furthermore by the emperor's order, Gagik married the daughter of Dawit', son of Senek'erim, and ruled that sector, since when Dawit' died he had left no other heir.

[62] Now there was a certain prince named Asit who previously had held lordship of the East. The emperor sent him to be lieutenant of the city of Ani. Upon arrival he elevated the patriarch Petros with incomparable honor, subdued the land under his control, and then went in person with numerous troops against the city of Duin. Now Apusuar, lord of [that] city warred with [Asit] and an inestimable number of men were killed by the city gate [including] the great prince of Armenia, Vahram and his son, something which caused the Armenians great mourning. Asit remained [in control] of the lordship of Armenia until the year 493 of our [Armenian] calendar [1044] when a certain Kamenas replaced his authority. But when the latter arrived he did not honor the patriarch in accordance with the previous dignity. Instead he commenced writing accusatorial letters to the emperor about him and deceitfully removed [Petros] from the city, saying: "The emperor has commanded that your habitation be at Arcn awan in the Karin district." So the patriarch arose and came to our populous, shahastan city filling with joy the beholders who wanted him [there]. The time for the [g63] feast of the Holy Revelation of God neared. When the feast-day itself had come, [Petros] together with [63] a vast multitude, descended to the churning waters which coursed down from the mountains located in the northern part of the plain. There he gloriously and appropriately celebrated the sacrament of the day. Now when the moment came for releasing the Lord's oil [chrism] upon the waters, a Tachik man came forth from the crowd and requested baptism in the water. [Petros] inquired of him why he wanted this, learned that he desired to become Christian, and so ordered him to get into the water. The chrism-bearer stood near him, took the bottle in his hand, but broke it by striking it, causing the chrism to plentifully pour on the neophyte and the water. However a fragment of glass seriously wounded his hand, and blood copiously flowed to the ground. Many who saw this prophesied: "That is not the sign of anything good," and indeed [the prophecy] was fulfilled on that very day. For while they were seated at the dinner table, men arrived who seized and took [Petros], placing him in the fortress called Xaghtoy Arhich. Subsequently they brought from Armenia [Petros] nephew (sister's son), named Xach'ik, whom they placed in the fortress called Seaw K'ar (Black Rock). They remained [in confinement] until it was almost Easter. Then they were removed thence and taken before the emperor in Constantinople. Prior to this, Xach'k's senior brother, Anania, had been taken there by a certain eunuch who held sway over half the kingdom.

11. Regarding the Destruction which Took Place in the Basen District and on the Mountain called Smbat's Mountain

In the same year, the gate of Heaven's wrath opened upon our land. Numerous troops moved forth from T'urk'astan, Their horses were as fleet as eagles [g64], with hooves as solid as rock. Well girded, their bows were taut, their arrows sharp, and the laces of their shoes were never untied [i.e., they were always on the move]. Having arrived in the district of Vaspurakan, they pounced upon the Christians as insatiably hungry wolves devour their food. Coming as far as the Basen district and as far as the great estate called Vagharshawan they demolished and polluted twenty-four districts with sword, fire, and captive-taking. This narration deserves many piteous laments and tears. They sped like lions, and like lion cubs, they mercilessly threw the corpses of many people to the carnivorous beasts [65] and birds. They wanted to go on to the city of Karin to effect the same there. However He Who limited the ocean, saying: "Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud Waves be stayed [Joel 38.11]" threw up a thick fog before them and stopped their advance. He did this in His fathomless wisdom so that out of fear of them we learn, and they also learn that what they had accomplished was not by reason of their might. No, the Hand which mightily prevented them was the same Hand which had succored their journey.

[God] poured His wrath down upon us by means of a foreign people, for we had sinned against Him. But once again He regretted this and ceased visiting His evils upon us, for He is merciful. But He did not grow totally angry nor did He hold His grudge forever. He was obliged to try us, since He is the righteous judge; yet He hastened with His mercy, since He is the forgiving Father. He regretted the evils visited upon us since He is the God of mercy. Indeed He [g65] displayed both [wrath and forgiveness] toward us: first requiting us with a deserved vengeance, then His anger would pass so that we would not be completely exterminated. We became infected with the disease of [66] Pharaoh and his partisans--foolish callousness. For when [Pharaoh] was tormented he would confess: "This is the finger of God [Exodus 8.19]," yet when the frightful wrath had passed, filled with impiety, he would say: "I do not recognize the Lord, nor will I let Israel go [Exodus 5.2]." When he received the final punishment, becoming an inhabitant of the deepest abyss, the senseless one correctly said: "This is the finger of God." Just as the hand performs a complete work with ten fingers, so it was there that the punishment, commencing with one finger, ended with ten. Then he released Israel.

Now after [His] wrath had been revealed, and had been stirred up, and after horrible evils had commenced, we stood trembling in shocked, horrified terror. But God had mercy and closed their road with a fog, and blocked the march of the impious invaders. We regarded that good deed as suspect and were found lacking in our thanks. However we should have come to our senses from the punishment suffered by our brothers, and we should have hastened to learn the prophet's saving advice: "Put an end to your evil ways, and learn to do good [Isaiah 1.16-17]," etc. We should have calmed God with our uprightness, [67] extinguished the blazing flames of Gehenna's chastisement, and lowered that hand upraised in anger to pardon us. But we forgot about this, Nor did a knowledge of Him dawn in our hearts. To those who are

iniquitous, [God] is iniquitous, to the unjust He is unjust. We were like the wild boars, throwing ourselves upon the Word [g66] bearing responsibility for everything. It seemed to us that they bore chastisement because they were guilty whereas we were saved because of our justice. But we did not recall the Lord's command and instructive counsel: "There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish [Luke 13.4-5]'. We, however, conducted ourselves according to the words of Amos with which he insulted Israel, drinking strained wine, perfumed with fragrant oils, relaxing on ivory couches, etc., but the misfortune of Joseph did not bother them. God required that when some folk are subjected to torments, those near to them should share their grief: "Weep with the weepers [Romans 12.15]." But they behaved just the opposite. Although [68] they were of one blood, they were not pained at the capture of Joseph's clan. Thus did the prophet sing out an accusation against them. The same [fate] befell us.

In the year 497 of our [Armenian] calendar [1048] which was the second year of our captivity, once again the dregs of bitterness full of rage moved forth from Persia, surging in gigantic waves. They filled up the vast plain of Basen and Karin. Jets of that flood took hold of the four corners of the country; in the west, as far as Xaghteaç' district; in the north, as far as Sper and the strongholds of Tayk' and Arsharunik'; while in the south it stretched as far as Taron, to the Hashtenic' district, as far as the forests of Xorjean. Resting for fourteen days, once more they billowed out and covered mountains and thickets, and seized the entire land. [g67] It seems to me that this resulted from that unadulterated wine which in his vision the young Jeremiah gave in a golden goblet as a drink to kings, nations, cities, princes and their troops, and last of all to the House of Sisak. Behold that prophecy was indeed fulfilled. For Armenia drank of that pure wine, and became evilly drunk. It drank, became numb, and lost [69] its senses. It drank until [it was responsible] for all [chastisements] visited upon it. And now it lies sprawled at the crossings of all roads, naked, disgraced, and trampled upon with insults by all passersby. [Armenia] quit its home, was alienated from acquaintances, went far away from family and relatives, [becoming] the captive and slave of all peoples.

It is time to repeat the words of the prophet: "What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten [Joel 1.4]." Such words are likewise my own, since all the prophetic words of the prophets were fulfilled on us. The cutting and swarming locusts have passed, but it is about the hopping and destroying locusts that I speak. For the first time that the Persians and other barbarous pagan peoples arose, sullied many districts with murder, took much booty and captives and returned to their land, they brought the good news to [other] peoples and kingdoms. And they invited them, saying with [70] the prophet: "All you beasts of the field, come to devour--all you beasts in the forest [Isaiah 56.9]." Upon arrival of the next year, they assembled a countless host of troops of bowmen and swordsmen, assembling as eagles pouncing upon food. In the month of September on Wednesday, the feast of the blessed Cross, they [g68] speedily came to our land in great excitement.

It is a history for us to lament and mourn. The entire public is invited to sob over this narration. The Ninevehites were so terrified by the threats of the prophet--and he a foreigner who had entered their city, unknown to anyone, insignificant--that everyone from the king down to the miller sobbed together, everyone dressed in melancholy sack-cloth, everyone stopped eating, forcing himself to multiply the laments. Furthermore they summoned professional mourning women, [saying]: "Perhaps God will regret [His deed] and turn His wrath from us [Jonah 3.9]." How much more deserving of lamentation is our [account], when not merely a threat but the actual chastisement of rage was visited upon us. Wickedly tormented and destroyed, we became a spectacle for the world [to gape at], as the Apostle said of the saints, and we have left behind us [71] for succeeding generations an unhappy history. For [our] cities were ruined, homes burned, palaces transformed into furnaces, regally built chambers reduced to ashes. Men were killed in the squares, women taken from their homes into slavery, suckling babes hurled against rocks, and the beautiful faces of little children withered away. Women were disgraced in public, youths were stabbed to death in view of [their] elders, the respect-worthy white hair of the elderly became blood-stained and their [g69] corpses rolled upon the ground. The enemies' swords grew dull, their hands grew weak, the strings of their bows were broken, their quivers were emptied of arrows, they grew weary--but mercy did not find a way into their hearts.

Oh God, [for] Your mercy! You Who so tolerated the arrogance of the impious inflicted upon the flock of Your pasture, remember Your people whom You received beginning with the coming of Your Only-Begotten [Son] and saved with the blood of Your anointed one. God, why did You completely reject [us], grow wrathful and betray us to the hands of impious, stern and rebellious men? Remember not our sins, and because of our sins turn not Your [72] face from us. Remember, instead, Your mighty hand and forceful lofty arm by which You ruled us and [that] Your name was placed upon us. But now, lo: You became angered, and we sinned. Therefore we roamed in slavery among many peoples and became as if unclean to everyone. The winds dispersed us and there remained none to bless Your name or to remember to take refuge in You. For You turned Your face away from us and betrayed us because of our sins. Remain not eternally angry at us, and, in time, forget our sins.

Alas the dawning of that day! That light, which on the first day [of Creation] came into existence of an incorporeal sort by the Word of God, on the fourth day became possessed of substance and was divided [to create] the luminaries, princes of the day and night, eternal travelers of the world. One [body, the sun], awakens men to work, while the other [luminary, the moon], gives boldness to the wild beasts. But now our noontime became eclipsed and was transformed into night. That bestial pagan people which had long since been growling in its lairs, as the prophet says, sought [73] their food from the flock of God. When our day [g70] turned into night, they came forth and spread over the face of the earth. They found much prey and were satiated with food, and saved the left-overs for their children, [enough] for many years. Now although there was plenty of prey for them everywhere, for the country before them was like a lush garden full of fruit, nonetheless this was more so in the Mananaghi district, on the mountain named Smbatay Berd (Smbat's Fortress), for it was there that a countless multitude of fugitives had assembled [with] an inestimable number of animals. The infidels attacked, broke into the stronghold, and put everyone to the sword.

One could observe there a pitiful spectacle, and one worthy of much lamentation. For some whom they grabbed hold of were dispatched with the sword; some who had secured themselves into craggy places [the Saljuqs] killed with arrows; many who had gone up to a cave were crushed to death by huge rocks [rolled on them], and their corpses tumbled down upon each other resembling heaps of wood-shavings [left] by a wood-cutter, filling the valley in front [of the mountain]. Alas and alack [74] the very bitter light of that day! Brave men armed, and glowering with rage, assembled, while the cowards swooned, women took leave of their senses, and youths scoffed [at the danger]. Yet they could find no way out, for the enemy had blockaded them on all sides. No love for dear ones there, no lament for friends. Father forgot tenderness for his children, mother [forgot] love for her newborn infants. The newly-wed woman could not recall her love for her bridegroom, nor did the man think to caress the wife he longed for. Hymns of the mass ceased [g71] in the mouths of the priests, and the recital of psalms stopped on the lips of the psalmists. Everyone without exception was seized with trembling and dread. Because of the severe crisis, many pregnant women aborted their babies. [The Saljuqs] surrounded that mountain for the entire day, like hunters with nets, until they weakened and were exhausted.

Now when evening fell, they took their loot, captives, and the booty from the slain, and departed. But they left behind them a scene more pitiful and lamentable than it had been before. The death-agonies were of many types: for some who had fallen [75] [fatally wounded] were still alive. From thirst their tongues had dried up, and with weak and soft voices they sought to quench their thirst, but there was no one to give them drink. Others who were terribly wounded, and could not make sounds, were breathing violently. Others whose throats had been slit but were still alive were emitting gurgling sounds in pain. Yet others, who had been badly wounded, were scraping the ground with their feet and clawing at it with their fingernails. There were others whose appearance was so frightful that the very rocks and other inanimate objects were moved to lamentation and sighing. For when the infidels were removing captives from the mountain, they took the children from their parents' embrace, and threw them to the ground, and [the Saljuqs'] place of encampment was swarming with them. Some [of the children] had died when they fell against rocks. The sides of some of them had torn open and their intestines poured out onto the ground. As for those remaining alive, what ear could bear their crying? Those [children] capable of walking were moving about here and there looking for their mothers, and the mountains reverberated with the loudness of their crying. Those who [76] were [to young to be] steady on their feet, were crying as they crawled along on their knees. Those who were even younger than they, thumped the ground with their feet, and, weakened through crawling they could scarcely breathe. With their piteous sounds and unceasing cries they resembled lambs newly separated from their mothers, who, being impatient by nature, angrily struck out this way and that, offending the very air with their bleating and weighing heavily upon the listeners' ears.

Such is your wicked history, oh mountain! Mountain whereon God was not pleased to dwell, mountain of blood, of invasion, and loss. It is impossible to call you a mountain. Rather, you were a mud pit in which the entire population of the country was lost. [Now] wild beasts take lodging on you, and kites and vultures have made you their dwelling, and packs of foxes frolic about, filled with meat. Oh mountain! You were not fertilized by the dew of Heaven like [mount] Hermon, but with the fat and blood of the corpses which fell upon you. Oh mountain! You were not, like mount Sinai, a medium through which Moses spoke with God; no, you silenced many priests [77] singing the psalms, [priests] who by their prayers were always conversing with God. When Elia, frightened of death, fled from Jezebel, he went to [mount] Koreb, and lived. But those who took refuge on you were betrayed to the sword and became food for foxes. Oh mountain! I consider you equal to Geghu mountain upon which the children of Israel perished. Therefore now I shall repeat about you what David said about that [mountain]. [g73] May no rain nor dew fall upon you, mountains of Smbat, for you drank the blood of the believing men and women who fell upon you. Let the evil history of this mountain end here, albeit I have related but little from much [information]. Let us return to the theme of this history. I would gather my energies to writing in such a way that I move all to tears. Together with Jeremiah, I call upon [professional] weeping-women to compose laments with me, for I write not about mountains, caves, and desolate places where beggarly fugitives went to dwell.

12. Regarding the Merciless Destruction of Arcn

Rather [I would write about] such a city [as Arcn], charming and renowned throughout the lands. It was like a city perched upon a mountain, with both sea and land laboring to multiply and sustain its strength, as the great prophet Isaiah said about Jerusalem. So [Arcn] was in times past, when it was crowned with a plentitude of good things, and everything was as one would wish. Then it resembled a newly-wed woman who, with her captivating beauty and glittering ornaments, is desired by everyone. For its princes were humane, its judges were righteous and uncorruptable. Its merchants were builders and embellishere of churches, givers of lodging to the clerics, alms-givers and sustainers of the poor. There was no deception in business transactions, nor treachery in exchanges and speculators were deplored, and despised and the gifts given them as bribes were dishonored. Everyone strived for devoutness. The priests were saintly lovers of prayer, and obedient to church [g74] orders. Therefore [the city's] merchants were glorious, [79] and its buyers were like kings of peoples. Our city was like a precious gem shimmering with resplendent beauty among all other cities, completely beautiful, fully embellished.

But after the Sceptics and Pyrrhonists entered our churches, the reign of justice was transformed into injustice, the love of silver became more honored than the love of God, and Mammon [more esteemed] than Christ. Then all modesty of the orders was perverted and disorder resulted. The princes [of Arcn] became thieves' companions, evil-doers, and servants of silver; its judges took bribes and, for bribes, robbed the just; the case of orphans and widows was not defended. Usury and speculation became law, and [the production] of wheat was multiplied [to such an extent] that the land was ruined [worn out] and did not bear crops at the proper time to feed mankind. He who cheated his friend boasted about being wise, while he who ravished said, "I am mighty." The wealthy (*mecatunk'n*) ravished the homes of neighboring poor people and expropriated their fields, nor did they think about the divinely-ordained curse written by [80] the Lord's servant, Moses: "Accursed is he who ravishes the fields of his neighbor [II Deuteronomy 27.17]." [They did not recall] the rebuke of the great Isaiah who in angry protest condemned such people: "Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, in order to expell their friends. This reaches the ear of the Lord in all its power [Isaiah 5. 8-9]." I shall not continue [the passage] to spare you. They did not remember what [g75] Jezebel suffered after ravishing Nabrovth's vineyard, although to this day [that fate] is blared forth by trumpets within everyone's hearing. The piety and holy selection of priests also came to an end. They pushed and crowded toward the altar and officiated at the ineffable mystery [of the mass] which is awesome to the angels, let alone to man, and [they got there] through silver and not through God, forgetting the hymn in Psalms which says "They shall be despised who are chosen by silver [Psalms 67.31]."

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Aristakes Lastivertc'i's History

What shall I say in condemnation of the women? The words spoken by Isaiah are sufficient, there is no need for my own composition. He rebuked the women of Jerusalem for their showy immodesty: [81] "The daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks [Isaiah 3.16]." I consider arrogance to be the root of all evil, the mother and first cause of it. For it turns a human into a dew and subjects [humans] to their torments. This disease is damaging to all, but especially so to womankind. First and foremost [women] should be charged with this [fault], and then one might recall their heavy [trains] which they drag along the ground, the earrings, finger-rings, bracelets, the ruffles, necklaces, and everything else. Listener, behold their recompense: "In place of golden ornaments for the hair, there will be baldness [Isaiah, 3.24]" for, stripped of headdresses, their hair shall be cut off to mock them. In place of a golden belt there will be one of rope, and instead of a rich robe, a girdling of sackcloth [Isaiah 3.24]," for when they are led away into slavery, their captors shall give them these things.

I did not mention all this without cause; rather to illustrate that our chastisement shall be equal to [g76] or more severe than the [nature of] our transgressions. [82] Now if they [the Jerusalemites] suffered such things, lacking an example [of proper conduct], how much more worthy of punishment are we, having them as an example and having the advice of Christ Who cried out and said: "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven [Matthew 5.20]." We did not surpass them in righteousness, but in sin; therefore what pardon or forgiveness shall we have?

See now the similarity of righteous punishments. The Persians came against Jerusalem, and they also came against us; they laid waste Jerusalem, and they also wasted our cities; pagans entered the holy temple [of Jerusalem], took its adornments as booty, and defiled the blessed temple; and they also entered our churches, daring to go to the holy altars which they sullied with their filthy heels, and took its adornments as plunder. The holy temple was consumed by fire, yet in our case, instead of that one house [of God], they burned down many churches. Countless numbers of their priests fell to the sword, but who can count how many of our [priests] perished? It is now time for me follow David and to create our lament [83] based on his: "Why dost thou stand afar off, oh Lord? Why dost thou hide thyself in our times of trouble? [Psalms 10.1]." When the unjust behave impiously in Your sanctuaries when those who despise You boast during Your feast days? Behold, pagans have entered Your inheritance, have polluted Your blessed temple, have burned Your holy things, and levelled to the ground the glory of Your Church. They made the blood of Your servants flow like water, not as it was in the past, around the city of Jerusalem alone, but [here] the entire country was filled with the blood of the slain. As for the number buried, the mind cannot even imagine it [g77].

Who can put into writing the diverse and unbelievable disasters that were visited upon our city? It was [here] as was written about the Sodomites: "The sun had risen on the earth, and the Lord rained on Sodom with brimstone and fire, and burned it [Genesis 19.23-24]." So it happened here that when the sun rose on the earth, an impious people, like famished dogs, arrived, surrounded the city, entered, and like reapers [working] in a field, they reaped with their swords until they had snuffed out the city's life. Mercilessly setting fire to the homes and churches wherein refugees [84] had fled, [the Saljuqs] burned them down, considering this a benevolent act, just as the Savior had prophesied: "Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God [John 16.2]." He Himself made the reason clear: "They shall so deal with you for My name's sake, since you did not recognize Me [John 15.21]."

The weather also was an aid on this destructive day. An extremely severe wind howled, stirring up the fire so much that smoke rose to the sky in thick billows. The flaming columns of fire vanquished the rays of the sun. One could see there a pitiful and terrifying spectacle in the extreme, for the entire city--the bazars, the lanes, and the great chambers--was full of the corpses of the slain. Who can count those burned to death? Those who had escaped from the glittering sword, and taken refuge in houses, were immolated, one and all. As regards the priests, those whom they caught in the churches, they burned to death; those they found outside, they killed and, to insult and disgrace us, put huge hogs [g78] in their arms. The number of priests who died by fire and sword, lords of diocese and church, we found to be more than 150. But as for those who had come from all other lands, and happened to be there, who can count them?

[85] Such is your wicked history, oh city, blessed and venerable, full [of good things], renowned among the lands. Raise now your eyes and observe your children led into slavery, your babies hurled mercilessly against rocks, your young people burned by fire, the respect-worthy and glorious elderly folk fallen in the squares, your fresh and prosperous virgins and women fallen in disgrace, led away into slavery on foot. David's lamenting songs were fulfilled regarding us: "Their might was betrayed to slavery, their villages, into the enemies' hands [Psalms 77.61]," and so forth. But Christ was late in awakening, and it was not [here] as it had been at that [Biblical] time.

Let the narration of Arcn's sad history end at this point, for we were unable to record every evil event. Let whoever wants to learn of our omission look in the ruins. We have written the pitiful account of two places, of the mountain and of the city. We have written only about what we saw with our own eyes, and about the wicked things we ourselves experienced. As for the disasters which befell the other districts and cities, who is strong enough [to record them]? Much time and many words would be [86] needed for that. We abbreviated our [account] as much as possible. [g79]

13. Regarding the Great War Which Occurred On the Plain of Basen, Where the Byzantines Were Defeated

The prophet Isaiah, when prophesying the destruction of Egypt said: "The princes of Tayan [Zoan] are utterly foolish; the wise counselors of Pharaoh give stupid counsel [Isaiah 19.11]." We encountered the same thing here. For the Byzantine cavalry, guarding the Eastern land were not few in number. They say that the army had as many as 60,000 men. Its heads were Kamenas, which translates "fire," who held sway over Armenia, and Aharon, son of Bulghar, who held the Vaspurakan region, and Grigor, the mighty prince of Armenia, who held the dignity of magister. Just as the Bible says, that the rule of many princes will be confused, inappropriate and subject to dissolution, so it was with these

[men]. While they should have called for assistance upon the granter of victory, lord God, with firm unity, as victors in the past were wont to do, "For the mighty grows strong not through his own strength, [87] but because the Lord weakens his adversary's power [I Kings 2.9-10]," they did not think to do so. The impious committed impious acts, and they thought that by human cleverness they could quench the blaze of that frightful fire. Consequently they fell into confusion, and no one approved of the next one's counsel. For God had removed sense from their heads since they had not sought [help] from Him. This is quite clear from their actions, for they expected Liparit to come to [their] aid. They resembled the diseased Saul who ran to a wizard, or the Jews who piled their [g80] treasures onto camels and took them to a people from whom there was no hope of aid. They did not remember what David did to that mountain of meat who had insulted Israel with great boasting, that merely a jawbone was sufficient to smash his brains. [They did not think of] Ezekiel who laid low 180,000 Assyrians with prayers alone, with the aid of the angel, with an invisible sword. .

Then Liparit arrived, after [receiving] many entreaties and generous gifts of treasure; but he was unable to accomplish anything, for they themselves were disunited. Thus, when the battle had commenced, Bulghar's son and his people took to flight, encouraging [88] the enemy. [The latter] urged each other on with loud cries. They trapped Liparit and his brave warriors in their midst, killing some of them, cutting [Liparit's] horse's sinews with a sword and taking [Liparit] himself captive. When the rest of the troops saw this, they turned in flight. The enemy pursued, killing an incalculable number of them; some they killed with the sword, but many, since it was evening, they threw [to their deaths] from lofty places and caves. The remainder, naked and robbed, went on foot wherever they could, and survived. Laden with an extremely great quantity of booty, the enemy was delighted, while our [people] were full of woes and laments. From that day forth resembling carnivorous dogs or jackals [the Saljuqs] were never satiated on Christian blood, until they had completely done away with [the people]. The entire country was like a field ready for reaping; following the reapers came the sheave-binders, and [g81] [the sheaves] were taken, and only the gleanings and stubble were left as fodder for deer. After the victorious battle, [the Saljuqs] took plunder and slaves and entered their own land, and every country was filled up with an immeasurable amount of loot. Now they [89] took the Georgian prince [Liparit] and gave him to the Caliph as though [he were] a great treasure, more pleasing to him than all the other captives. [The Caliph] accepted him with thanks, and peaceably released him to return to his own land with great gifts. Enough of this for now.

14. How Long the Patriarch Petros Remained in Constantinople, or How He Returned.

When the [Byzantine] king saw [Petros], he received him with great respect and honor, and commanded that [Petros] be honored with a generous stipend. However he kept him there with him for three years, fearing that if he let him return to Armenia, [Petros] would go and incite Ani to rebell. Now Senek'erim's son, Atom, took [Petros] gratefully and brought him to his city, Sebastupolis. [Atom] gave him as a dwelling-place the retreat of the holy Cross, which he himself had constructed with numerous well-appointed embellishments and resplendent beauty. [Petros] remained there for two years, and then passed to Christ. [90] They established in his position his sister's son, Xach'ik, who had received the ordination for the patriarchate long ago. As soon as the king heard about this, he sent messengers, and had [Xach'ik] and all his treasures there and in Armenia brought to him. For Petros had been a great lover of treasure, and on account of this many [people] chided him. Now after three years, lord Xach'ik was released from the royal city. He came to the borders of Third Armenia to the district called Tarnta, and stayed there, for they had ordered him to settle in that spot. [g82]

Now the reason that he had tarried in Constantinople was this: they wanted to place him under taxation. However [Xach'ik] refused [arguing that] "What was not [a practise] before my own time, I shall not accept either." Subsequently, despite the fact that they subjected him to much inquisition and added the threat that "You shall not leave here until you do as we command," nonetheless that venerable man, the substitute for our great Illuminator [St. Gregory] was in no way frightened by their words, rather he held fast. After this two Byzantines came forward, one a prince, the other a monk. I do not know whether they did [what they did] in order to make him emulate them [91] or in good faith, but they requested superintendency of the [Armenian] church, and [promised] to pay the tax. Both were wickedly killed. Finally, repenting, [the Byzantine king] released Xach'ik without the tax, giving him a written document sealed with [the king's] gold ring indicating what sites in Armenia were theirs, and [giving him] two monasteries in Tarnta.

15. Regarding How Terribly the City Called Kars Was Struck

For a long time this city [Kars] had had no experience with evils [warfare] and so [the people] dwelled unconcernedly and without suspicions therein, grown rich with much merchandise acquired by sea and by land. Now during [the festival] of the Revelation of Our Lord, in the evening, when the ranks of the priesthood together with great crowds of the people were celebrating the mass of the day, [singing] with joyous voices, the troops of the infidels unexpectedly attacked. Because the city was without a night-watch, they entered. Putting swords to work, they mercilessly killed everybody, a history meriting much lamentation. It was the custom of the city's men, women, elderly, and youths [each] according [92] to strength and ability, on the Lord's feastsdays, to ornament himself or herself with many adornments, such that they resembled spring gardens. When these [people] were thus chanced upon, suddenly the city became filled with sighs and lamentations. Priests were silenced at mass, as were the psalmists [silenced] from singing psalms. The song of blessing stopped on the lips of scribes and boys. There one could have seen a spectacle most pitiable, capable of moving even the stones and inanimate objects to sighs of lament, let alone the rational and living. Well-respected and honorable merchants were wickedly slain, youths and athletes/wrestlers lay stabbed to death in the streets, and the blood-spattered heads of the elderly lay fallen near them. By such deeds was the city stripped of its population. Only the one who managed to enter the stronghold located above the city saved his life. The entire remainder of the day, [the Saljuqs] rummaged through the houses, then set the city on fire. Taking their captives and the city's plunder, they went to their own land.

16. Regarding the Sultan's Arrival

The year after this [devastation] occurred was [the year] 503 of our [Armenian] era [1054]. Now the [93] same month, and the same date of the month as [the previous year] when [the Saljuqs] took the land captive, and burned Arcn and other cities and awans, that death-breathing, bloodthirsty and murderous beast, the Sultan, advanced [toward us] with countless troops, elephants, carts, horses, women, children, and much preparation. Skipping over Archesh and Berkri, they came and camped near the city called Manazkert in the Apahunik' district, seizing

all the extensive places in the fields [i.e., the pasturelands]. [The Sultan] dispatched marauding parties across the face of the land: north as far as the stronghold of the Abkhaz and to the [g84] mountain called Parxar to the base of the Caucasus; west as far as the forests of Chanet'ia; and south as far as the place called Sim mountain. And they seized the entire land as [easily as] reapers working a field.

Who can record the evils which [the Saljuqs] then visited upon the land? Whose mind is able to enumerate them? The entire land was full of corpses--cultivated and uncultivated places, roads and desolate places, caves, craggy spots, pine groves and steep places--and [the Saljuqs] set on fire and polluted all the cultivated places, homes and churches. And the flame of that fire rose higher than [the flame of] the furnace of Babylon. In this way [94] they ruined the entire land, not once but three times, one after the other, until the country was totally devoid of inhabitants and the bellowing of animals ceased.

Bearing such misfortunes, the country donned mourning garb. It was ruined because its inhabitants were destroyed. The entire country ceased rejoicing. Everywhere lamentations and sighs were heard, everywhere there was weeping and sobbing. Nowhere were the songs of the priests heard, nor the glorification of God. Nowhere were books [read] to advise and comfort listeners, for the readers lay stabbed to death in the squares, while the books themselves had been burned and turned to ashes. Nowhere were the sounds of weddings and the glad tidings of newly-born children. The elderly did not sit in chairs in the squares, nor did the children play before them. Herds did not flock together to pasture, nor did lambs frolic about in the meadows. No more did the reaper fill his embrace with sheaves, no more was the praise of passersby heard, no longer were the threshing-floors filled with grain, nor the cisterns full of wine. [g85] Sounds of joy were not heard when the vineyards were harvested, nor were the pantries overladen with vessels. All of this vanished and is no more. Where is the Jeremiah to mourn our destruction, prolonging the lament on the roads and the [95] mountains? What Isaiah would disobey the comforters, to saturate [them] with lamentations? Woe is me that I [must] relate such things. I am as the Himen youth, a bringer of bad news, but not to one village or to one city, but to the entire world, from generation to generation until the end of time. For there is neither time nor deed which can mitigate our [suffering], except for the Evil of the desert [the Antichrist], which the Bible prophesies. Now what shall I do? Shall I leave off narrating the incredible evils which befell the Christians, sparing you, or shall I stir up the laments and sighs of all who are participants in this hellish history? Yet I know that you want to hear it. Therefore I shall stop wavering and shall write one after the next about those unbelievable disasters visited upon the major places.

When I recall Xorjean and Hanjet' [districts], and what transpired in them, my breathing becomes choked off by tears, my heart is moved to pity, my mind is dazed, trembling seizes my hands, and I am unable to continue writing. Because of the security of those places, many people, a countless number, had assembled there from the upper districts. But the infidels speedily swooped down upon them like birds, as mercilessly as wild beasts, glowering with rage like avengers, [96] and, searching through caves and the thick pine forests, they insatiably killed whomever they found. Just as in springtime, from the warmth of the air, the water starts to flow and rise, causing streams to form in the snow, inundating the land behind it, so it was [when the Saljuqs attacked]; streams of blood flowed down from the corpses of the fallen, [g86] and from its coursing, the ground was inundated.

Recall what took place then [to] the class of clerics and priests who happened to be there, or [to] the elderly, or [to] the multitude of youths, whose newly-grown beards adorned their cheeks like a beautiful picture, whose ringlets of hair gleamed upon their brows resembling the glowing hues of roses, making their faces shine, [recall] how suddenly they fell to the ground and tumbled over, struck by the enemies' swords, as if struck by hail. Add to this the number of children who were taken from their mothers' embraces and hurled to the ground, who sought their mothers with their baby sighs. But the parents, cuddled, were quickly separated from them. What heart of stone would not be straitened by tears, hearing these numerous and varied [recitations] of evil? Virgins fell dishonored, newly-married women were separated from their men and led into slavery. In one single moment the country, which had been crowded with [97] people, like a densely populated city, became an uninhabited wasteland. [As for the people], they were either killed by the sword, or taken captive. Oh Christ, for your forgiveness at that time; Oh the wickedness that befell us! How bitter was the death we died!

Who is capable of describing the destruction visited upon [the districts of] Derjan and Ekegheac', and upon the area between them? Judge that one by my recitations. Now [those Saljuqs] who had entered Tayk' took the country and reached as far as the great river called Chorox. Following the course of the river, they descended into the Xaghteac' land. Taking the district's booty and slaves, they turned and came as far as the fortified city named Baberd. There they encountered a brigade of Byzantine troops [g87] called Vrhangs (Vrangk') who, at all hazards, battled with them. By God's mercy, the Byzantine brigade grew stronger, vanquished the enemy, killed the head of their troops and many with him, turned the rest to flight and retrieved all the loot and slaves. However, they did not dare to pursue the fugitives very far, since they were afraid of encountering a large force. Thanking God, those whom they freed went off to their own homes. As for those [Saljuqs] who had come against [98] Armenia, whomever they chanced upon they killed or led into captivity, and filled with plunder they turned back. When [the Saljuqs] reached the borders of Vanand, the valiant princes of Abas' son, Gagik [1029-64], came against them and wrought great slaughter in that place. But then [additional] troops of the infidel came up and caught [the Armenians] in their midst. Because of the prolongation of the battle and the enormous destruction, [the Armenians] and their horses were exhausted. Therefore they were unable to break the enemies' blockade and come out. [The Saljuqs] putting swords to work, killed thirty of the azats.

Now they had seized a certain one of the azats, a mighty martial man named T'at'ul, whom they took before the Sultan. Because [T'at'ul] had severely wounded the son of the Persian emir, Arsuban, when the Sultan saw him he said: "If [Arsuban's son] lives, I shall free you. Otherwise, if he dies, I will order you made a sacrifice for him." A few days later, he died. Now [when first being questioned], T'at'ul had said: "If I struck him, then he will not live, but if somebody else struck him, I cannot answer for his health." When the Sultan heard that [the son] had died, he ordered [T'at'ul] killed, and had his severed right arm taken to Arsuban as consolation that [99] "Your son was not slain by a weak arm." [g88]

What need is there that I record one by one the unchecked destruction of Christians? It was as though the sea had been churned up by a severe wind, with enormous surgings, and foamy billows, crashing about on all sides of us. Suddenly the entire land became full of agitation, nor could any place of refuge be found. For due to the unbelievable evils [which had befallen us] no one had any hope of life. The Savior had prophesied this [disaster] long ago, comparing those criminal evils to an agitated sea in which many people, swooning from dread and apprehension are unable to remain conscious.

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Leave this aside now, and come and marvel at the Sultan's stupidity and at God's magnificent wisdom. [Wonder at the stupid Sultan] who declared himself omnipotent and God's coadjutor, and [marvel at] God's wisdom, for He struck him a blow, and sent him back to his own land heaped with contumely. Attend, now. The first time that [the Sultan] came with innumerable troops and surrounded the city [of Manazkert], its residents and livestock were caught unawares. Had he but prolonged the siege for ten days, he would have taken the city. However, God (Who does [100] not remain angry forever, does not eternally hold a grudge, and does not deal with us in accordance with our sins) caused a foolish plan to enter [the Sultan's] head. After three days [the Sultan] and his entire army moved down into Tuaraca Tap' and thence descended onto the extensive plain of Basen by the impregnable fortress called Awmik.

He observed there a great concourse of people and animals, but did nothing, because he could tell just by looking that [the place] was unassailable. So, passing it by, he came to the head of Basen, close to the village named Du. With a few men [the Sultan] [g89] ascended the promontory which looks toward Karin, and saw that the city was completely prepared [to withstand a siege]. After observing it for many long hours, he turned away. Now the people of Manazkert had gone forth out of the city without suspicion, and had prepared plentiful provisions for themselves and for the animals, since it was harvest-time. By the time the Sultan, occupied with one thing or another, finally returned, the people were unconcerned [because they were prepared]. He came, boiling with anger, and commenced battling with the city. Now the prince who had the duty of superintendency of the city, since he was a pious man, called upon omnipotent God to aid [101] them, disciplining himself with fasting and prayer. Armed with this, he became yet stronger in the faith. Reading psalms, he said to God: "Lord, I fear no evil, for Thou art with me [Psalms 22.4]," and "I fear not the myriads of their soldiers which surround me [Psalms 3.7]." He encouraged the men of the city and the troops, saying: "Take heart, my comrades and brothers, take heart and fear not, for this is a simple matter for God. As they come upon us with their carts and horses, let us recall the name of our Lord, be proud of God eternally, and confess His name, that He give strength and steadfastness to His people, He Who is blessed for all time." He urged the priests to pray and sing psalms, and they individually beseeched God night and day, with the Cross and the loud noise of the clapper, upon the walls they beseeched God to come to the aid of the threatened [people]. The tyrant's ears were wearied by the din and he inquired what the ceaseless clamor was and learned from the learned that [the people] were crying to God.

[The Sultan] remained there warring against the city for one month, and each day he would offer battle twice: once at daybreak, [g90] and again at nightfall. But observe here [102] God's wisdom, how He knows how to use adversaries to help [one] party. For while the city stood in such consternation and danger, [God] caused a wonderful idea to be implanted in the heart of a prince who was one of the Sultan's close associates, that is, [the prince] informed the city either orally or in writing what [military] plans he learned from [the Sultan]. Often he would write [such information] on paper, attach it to the shaft of an arrow, approach the [city] wall in the course of battle, and shoot the arrow into the city. Thus did he acquaint [the citizens with all the battle tactics, [for example] that tomorrow the battle would be fought in such a way, or that at night via such and such a place [the Saljuqs] wanted to excavate under the walls and enter the city, and that [the citizens] should remain firm and guard those places.

This was done by God Who knows how to lay the foundation for great deeds [even] from afar. If God was able to turn Baghaam into a prophet during Baghak's day in order to govern the people, and made a dumb beast speak with a prophetic tongue, [or if God] during a time of famine was able to feed Elisha for three years by means of crows in the K'eriat' valley, [103] then why should it be surprising if He directed the city's salvation by means of its adversaries?

Thus wherever [the Saljuqs] commenced battle, at night or during the daytime, they found [the citizens] there armed and ready. After this they erected [war] machinery and fought with them. However, one of our presbyters, who was quite old and extremely informed about the art [of utilizing siege machinery] erected a catapult of his own, and when [the Saljuqs] would place a rock in the catapult's sling, and hurl it at the city, this presbyter [g91] would aim his own missile at their rock so that they would collide, and fall upon the infidels. The infidels tried [using their catapult] seven times, but were unable to accomplish anything, since the presbyter's blow was the stronger.

Then [the Saljuqs] readied another military device which they themselves called *baban*--a very frightful thing, which, it was said, required four hundred attendants to pull [back] ropes. They placed a rock weighing sixty *litrs* in the sling, and hurled it at the city. In front of it they set up a wall of cotton loads and many other materials, so that the presbyter's rock would not touch it. When everything was so [104] arranged, they released a rock which violently struck the wall, caused it to crumble, and opened up a passageway. When the citizens observed this, they began to tremble, and with great sighing they beseeched God to come to their aid. The infidels were delighted. Now the following day, the prince of the Delm troops [Dailamites] took his soldiers and came to battle with our people, for he was a brave man. Coming to the breach [in the wall] he wanted to enter in force, but suddenly he himself fell. Then those who were stationed upon the wall threw down an iron claw, seized him, and drew him up over the wall. When the troops saw this, they turned back full of grief, but within the city there was no small amount of rejoicing.

At that time a certain general of the Byzantine troops, brave-hearted and manly, prepared [a mixture] of sulphur and flammable oil, put it into a glass vessel, mounted a thoroughbred steed, and, protected by merely a shield, rode out of the city gates going to the foreigners' army, claiming to be a mandator or messenger. He rode up to the [g92] *baban* and around it, and then unexpectedly poured the contents of the bottle [he was carrying] upon the *baban*. Instantly a fire ignited, a purplish flame shot forth, while [105] [the general] hastily turned back. When the infidels saw this they were astounded, jumped onto their horses and pursued him, but they were unable to catch up. As for [the general], he peacefully entered the city unharmed, with the aid of God. Now when the Sultan saw what had happened, burning with rage he ordered the [machine's] guards executed.

Do you see the humane concern of God, [do you see] how close His salvation is to those who fear Him? How He knows the way to overcome great [ones] by means of small things? [Through God's aid] Moses [overcame] the colossal giant Oggin who was nine cubits tall; the child David [overcame] Goliath; K'aber's wife Hayel [overcame] the foreign titan Sisar, and another woman [overcame] Hoghep'erhnes. I have recited this so that we do not become disheartened when we fall into unbearable difficulties. For it is God's way to temporarily countenance

such dangerous straits, so that the patient people merit the crown of glory, while the impious receive recompense for their wickedness by righteous verdicts. We see this in the case of the children in the [fiery] furnace. God countenanced [matters] until the king expressed all of his anger and rage, and prepared a furnace the flames [106] of which reached up forty-nine cubits. Then [the king] said with terrible impiety: "Who is God to save you from my hands?" Compare this with the children's stout-hearted faith, how when they were at trial with that beast replied even more [g93] boldly after that tyrant's insults: "We need not answer you." After this what happened when the king's threats were exhausted, and when [the children] bound, were tossed into the furnace? It was then that [God] speedily came to their aid, and did not shame those who correctly called upon Him. Note here the deep wisdom of God, which none can attain. For He divided the fire in two and it burned those Chaldeans it encountered. But an angel sprinkled the children with dew, and the fire neither approached them, distressed, nor harassed them. This put sense into [the head of] that barbarian [king] who, at the sight of such unutterable marvels, confessed, saying: "Come forth, servants of God, that I along with you bless Him Who is blessed for all eternity." In this case also, God, by means of an insignificant man, displayed very great wonders. Let this serve as counsel and teaching for us.

Now Basil, the prince of the city, ordered the rabble to insult and curse the Sultan from the walls. [107] After two days [the Sultan] departed with his army. He went away, and en route encountered a city called Arcke, located in the Sea of Bznunik' [Lake Van] which had a secure, impregnable fortress near it. The citizens, placing their hopes on the sea and the stronghold, remained unconcerned. But those bloody beasts found a shallow way through the waters--either because someone pointed it out to them, or because they craftily discovered it themselves--and entered the city. Putting swords to work, they killed [almost] everyone. Then taking captives and the city's loot, they departed. Although this calmed the Sultan's heart a little, nonetheless, he returned to his own land in great sadness, since he had been unable to accomplish what he had wanted. [g94]

17. The End of Monomachus' Reign

The blessed and divine Solomon wrote that "A just king makes his land flourish, while an impious one ruins it [Proverbs 29.4]." Indeed, we saw the validity of this with our own eyes, in the case [of Monomachus]. For it is the responsibility of kings to concern themselves about the peace and prosperity of [108] their realms, just as God cares for his creations. But [Monomachus] did not behave in this fashion. Rather, he was constantly preoccupied with eating and drinking. He elevated filthy people, and as for those taxes which he collected from all lands, which he should have spent on the needs of the cavalry, to enlarge the cavalry forces [fighting] against enemies, [forces] which, by vanquishing the enemies could have kept the land in peace, (as did the venerable Basil during the fifty years of his reign when no enemy dared enter his territory), those accumulated treasures [Monomachus] squandered on whores, and was in no way troubled by the ruin of the land. For so much did he love harlots and whores that [all] the women of Constantinople could not satiate him. No, he had women brought in from afar, and occupied himself with them every day. Consequently the enemy became as brazen as famished wolves which, chancing upon a flock without a protector, mercilessly destroy it. And so it was in [Monomachus'] time that [enemies] from the West and the East destroyed the Christians, as we noted briefly above. Having led such a [dissolute] life, [Monomachus] died after a reign of thirteen years [1042-1055], accomplishing nothing worthy of remembrance.

[109] Now Theodora, the daughter of king Constantine [Monomachus] seized the throne as her own patrimonial inheritance, which none could resist. [g95] [Toghri], the Sultan of the Tachiks, sent emissaries to her and wrote her an edict with the following import: "Either give me those cities and districts which your forebears took from the Tachiks, or else every day send me one thousand *dahekans*." But Theodora [instead] sent him white horses and mules, many treasures, and purple attire. [The Sultan] received [the gifts], but, keeping the purveyor of them, he took [that man] along with him to Babylonia. This transpired in 504 of our [Armenian] era [1055].

In the same year Persian troops under the Sultan's name arrived in Armenia. But some say that they were the forces of Apusuar, who held Duin and Ganjak and was the son-in-law of Ashot, king of Armenia. People from populated places fled from their raiding to the city of Ani, but everyone did not manage to get inside, because night fell, and the city gates were closed. Now the Persian troops came at night, seized the city gates, put swords to work, and wreaked unbelievable destruction [on people] who had none to help them. Then, taking booty and captives, they returned to their own land.

[110] In the Taron area the prince of the district was T'eodoros, son of Aharon whom [the Persians] called Awan since [their alphabet] lacks a letter. A brigade of soldiers came [to T'eodoros] from Turkestan, submitted to him, and wanted to display their loyalty. Entering the district of Xlat', they seized much booty and brought it to Taron. But then troops assembled from Persia and Turkestan sent to T'eodoros saying: "Either surrender those rebels to us or we shall lead your country into slavery." But T'eodoros refused. Therefore they came and battled two and three times. The prince displayed much valor, but was fatally wounded, and died a few days later. His premature [g96] death was most regrettable, because he was only a lad and exceedingly good looking, resembling the prophet David, and he was braver than many.

The next winter, during the days of the feast of Epiphany the infidel troops came at night to the town called Mankan Gom in Hark' [district]. The [Saljuqs] came upon the people while they were unconcernedly celebrating the evening services. Putting swords to work, they killed [virtually] all of them, and did the same in the surrounding villages and fields. [111] Taking captives and booty, they moved on to the village of Aracani, as they were passing by. Taking the captives and loot over ice, suddenly the ice broke, and everyone on it fell in.

Oh how bitter this history is, how worthy of lamentation! Perchance someone will blame me wondering "How long will he continue to thrust before us these accounts of grief and troubles?" How much the prophets predicted the threatening things which subsequently occurred; yet the people were vexed at them. Now I sermonize not about what threatens, but about matters which have transpired, and I narrate the accomplished fact, to move all listeners to tears over just how very bitter was the period we lived in. Our life was not a real one. As the prophet in lamentation complained against his own [people] that the sins of our fathers will be visited upon us, [I say] woe are we that must pay the debts of our fathers. God, speaking to Ezekiel said "Son of Man, what is that proverb which they repeat in Israel, "The fathers ate sour grapes, and their children's teeth were on edge"? As I live, this proverb shall no more be used [g97] [solely] in Israel. The Lord says: "Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine [Ezekiel 18.2-4]." And He freed [112] the son from his father's debt. If all of this [misfortune] was visited upon us because of our evils, then we are more pitiful than all other peoples. The entire world dwells in peace, yet we are slaves and captives, stabbed by the sword, homeless, and pillaged of our belongings.

Armenia had four thrones of kingship, to say nothing of the Curopalate's principality and what [existed] in Byzantium. [It once had] a patriarchate, great and envied by all peoples, as well as vardapets of the first order, truthful and sagacious, at whose words all the legions of heretics were humiliated and cast down, unable to enter the fold of the Believers. For the gate-keeper would not accept them, since he recognized his own and was recognized by his own. Our churches resembled a new bride, adorned with all comeliness to satisfy the desire of the immortal Bridegroom. The clerics, newly born from the immaculate womb of our mother Sarah, resembled dove-chicks clustering together, singing angelic songs with open mouths.

Come now and see the wicked unconsolable replacement which we received. Where are those thrones of the kingdoms? [113] They appear not. Where are the multitudinous hosts of troops before them, whose raiment shone with variegation resembling the hues of spring flowers? Behold, they are no more, nor shall they reappear. Where is the great and wondrous patriarchal throne which that venerable man of God, Gregory (Grigorios), established upon an apostolic throne, after descending into the deep pit and being tested by fatiguing labor for fifteen years? Today it is vacant, without an occupant, [g98] stripped of adornments, covered with dust and spiderwebs, and the heir to that throne has gone to a foreign land as a slave and a captive. The voices and sermons of vardapets have ceased. The ranks of heretics which previously resembled mice running for cover into this or that hole, chased away by [the vardapets'] theological words and orthodox confession, presently resemble lions which fearlessly, mightily, sally forth from their dens open-mouthed to wolf down innocent people. What shall I say about the Church, which formerly was so embellished, comely, fruitful and sanctified that it would have astonished a prophet? Today it sits ingloriously, unadorned, stripped of all beauty, resembling a childless widow, stripped of adornments, fallen from honor, sitting unconsolably in [114] tattered clothing. Its chandeliers and candles are extinguished, the smell of incense and sweet fragrances is gone, the frame of the Lord's altar is covered with dust and ash. Those clerics who could be seen at the [church] doors, books in hand, singing Davidic psalms, dance before the doors of those dew-infested lairs called mosques learning the sayings of Islam (mahmetawand). Modest, prudent women who had been legally married, taking large dowries from their men today have learned dissolute, licentious adultery.

If everything which I have related was visited upon us because of our wickedness, inform Heaven and those who are in it and over it; inform the earth, and the animals living on it; inform the mountains and hills, trees and dense forests, let them mourn [g99] and lament our destruction. Prophets did so in their joy. For they would command the mountains and hills to leap for joy; the rivers to applaud; the sea to make merry; and the forests to rejoice. They are all our comrades, and since they share in our joy, they should partake of our sorrows, as it was in times past, when they [115] bowed down with us in our day of humiliation and tribulation, because they were created for us. Yet for us this brings neither aid nor consolation. Though they weep and sob and shroud themselves in darkness, in no way does this help the dead one. How did Jeremiah's tears benefit the Jews, Christ, Jerusalem or Judas? Tell me. In no way. Consequently, realizing this, we should work to appease God with our righteousness. Should that occur, then the enemy's sword will vanish for good, the difficult will become easy for us, the rough road will become flat, and everybody will see God's salvation. For if God is on our side, who can oppose us? Did not God Himself so state in Deuteronomy, "I shall be the enemy of your enemies, and shall destroy those who hate you" or, "I shall not abandon you and cast you down [Psalms 17.41]." We need only have peace with God, and turn to Him with sincere hearts, having [our] good deeds as a pledge, and no adversary can grieve us. These too are the Lord's words, which we find in the book of Isaiah: "Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear [Isaiah 65.24]," words which surpass the most fervent words of the Fathers. Yet [God] withdraws His aid from worthless folk, saying: "I shall not be with them," [116] and also: "Though you beseech Me, I shall not hear you; though they seek Me, the wicked shall not find Me [Proverbs 1.28]," or "When you [g100] raise your hands [in prayer] I shall turn My face from you, and if you pray continuously, I shall not hear you [Isaiah 1.15]," for what has Light in common with darkness?

Brothers, be fearful and heedful of the heavenly messengers. Be not unknown to Him, that He not say: "I do not know you." Rather, let us be among the ranks of His friends, that He say to us: "Come, O blessed of My Father, inherit the Life Everlasting [Matthew 25.34]."

18. The Reign of Theodora (Meaning, "God-Given")

After the death of Monomachus [d.1055], that lioness with a lion's frenzy was roaring in her lair [resembling] what Daniel had seen in his vision, in bygone times. Calling together the principals of the city and the very great princes, she said to them: "If any of you is brave enough to take troops to the East, to end the turmoil [caused by] the Persians, and to pacify the land, then let [117] him come boldly and sit as king. By God's laws such a one is deserving of the realm. But if none of you dares do as I said, I am sufficient as a substitute." When the princes heard this, without replying each went to his palace.

Now the queen satiated the Sultan as though he were a famished beast, giving him such a plethora of gifts that he forgot to attack us. Rather, he continued fighting in Babylon and the surrounding areas, since he was a very [g101] martial man. However neither summer nor winter did those aroused neighbors of ours, or those whose borders marched with ours cease coming and sully the land of Armenia. For by means of spies they sought out and discovered where the populated places were. Then at night they would suddenly fall on them, and with unheard of blows, put everyone to death. Unconcernedly and fearlessly they would remain many days in [one] spot until they had examined the houses to see if anything [of value] lay concealed there. They would remove everything leaving the place totally demolished, and then, taking the booty and captives, they would return to their own land.

There was a populous and rich awan in the Basen district close to the base of Ciranis mountain, named Okomi. At nighttime [118] on the day of the great feast of Epiphany, the infidels approached it. Because of the severe frost on that plain, the hands and feet of these beasts in human form froze. Now when they drew near to the habitation they spotted a good deal of fodder for the animals piled up. This they set on fire, and from the blaze of that fire they entire plain was lit up as though it were high noon. There [the Saljuqs] stood warming themselves and their horses. Then, stringing their bows and baring their weapons they attacked the shen [battling] as easily as though it were summertime. They put to the sword [virtually] everyone, some 30,000 people, and none of the residents remained alive except for those who had gone journeying elsewhere. [The Saljuqs] remained there for three days. Then, taking away all the accumulated grain, on the backs of oxen, asses, and horses, [taking] goods and a small amount of useful items, and captives, they went off to their own land. Who can record the diverse evils which they wreaked on that place? As a result the entire countryside became devoid of inhabitants, the only survivors being those secured into strongholds.[g102]

Now after the Empress [Theodora] ruled the realm for two years, and having reached deep old age, she grew ill and died of that illness.

[Before she died] the principals of the city came before her and said beseechingly: "While you are still [119] alive, set up somebody as king so that the city will remain without agitation." The queen agreed to this. She summoned one of the principals of the city, named Michael [VI, Stratioticus, 1056-1057], who, in the time of her fathers, had been an official at the palace, and who was quite old and exceedingly rich. [Theodora] established him as emperor with the approval of the city. Then, after three days, she embarked upon that journey which, as the Davidic psalm says, all mortal kings and paupers must travel. Now as soon as the very great and the small princes of the lands heard about [Michael's] enthronement, they all came forth to tender their submission. While [Michael] should have kept them happy with sweet words and generous gifts and kept them loyally under his sway, on the contrary, since he was uncivil, infected with Robovam's disease, he kept some princes [with him], considering them unfit to rule. At court he said to the grandees: "Either go forth in war against the Persians and prevent the land from being ruined, or else I shall pay the Persians your stipends and thus keep the land in peace." The princes did not accept this. Without replying they quit the emperor's presence, formed an alliance, went overseas and assembled innumerable troops. The leaders [of these forces] were Komianos, who later ruled, and Kamenas. Thus did they rebel from the emperor and swore oaths that they would not submit to his [120] rule. And this transpired in the year 506 of our [Armenian] era [1057], which was the tenth Byzantine indiction. [g103]

Alas that year, alas that destructive plan by which the inhabitants of the country were ruined and destroyed. [The land] became unadorned as it had been at the Creation: "The land was desolate and unprepared, for there was no one to work it [Genesis 1.1 and 2.5]." It resembled the handsome face of a person in the flower of youth which always appeared very beautiful and agreeable to beholders; but when death has removed that embellishing soul, depriving [the face] of its former glow and beauty, to the beholders it seems ugly, unworthy of respect, frightening, and even unworthy of pity, as is said: "I have passed out of mind, like one who is dead [Psalms 30.13]." Thus was the country. For when it was still cultivated and full of people, the agriculturalists filled up their fields with plentiful seeds which, sprouting, dyed all the plains with rich green hues, and growing higher until ears appeared at their tips. Then with their dense height they looked like clouds, undulating in the soft breezes, or rippling like the ocean's waves. So too did the herds and flocks leap and play in evergreen valleys by cold fountains, and the country, resembling a guardian (zdayeak) took on a beautiful appearance because of them, as is said [in Scripture]: "May the fields and all upon them rejoice [Psalms 95.17]."

[121] Presently we see just the opposite: a country laid waste and empty of inhabitants, destroyed cities, uncultivated fields which produce thorns, reflecting frightful, terrible neglect. The sweet-voiced flocks of birds have also vanished, the birds which by their human-loving nature had grown used to our species, which filled the land with their sweet [g104] melodies, with their morning twitter and loud chirpings, which, like a goad would rouse the farmer from lethargic sleep, calling each to his trade. Presently the cultivated places are in ruins, desolate, depopulated, and lacking places of habitation. Where do the storks build their nests? Where may the weaker birds find refuge in them, as is said in the Psalms. Where does the swallow in agitation fashion a nest to fearlessly raise her chicks? Let this matter rest here. We shall return to our sorrowful unfortunate history.

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Aristakes Lastivertc'i's History

When the Greek kingdom was divided in two, the iron scepter became a broken reed (just as the Assyrians insultingly styled the kingdom of Egypt), and the cauldron which was shown to Jeremiah, boiling and spilling over [afflicting] from north to south, now with its ferocious rolling boil spilled over burning and destroying the Christian peoples from south to north. For, as is said in the Lord's command, "The kingdom divided against itself [122] cannot stand, but is destroyed," so, truly, did it occur. Because as soon as the Persians realized that [the Byzantine nobles] were fighting and opposing one another, they boldly arose and came against us, ceaselessly raiding, destructively ravaging.

From the very beginning of that year which we recalled above with woe, troops came from Persia resembling ravenous wolves which, upon encountering a flock unguarded by a shepherd, are not content merely with eating their fill, but try to kill all the flock, so the troops from Persia [g105] were not satiated by booty alone, but craved our deaths with voracious appetites. It was impossible for anyone they spotted to escape from their hands. They regarded that as a great deed of benevolence.

Now during the period of Byzantine warfare, Iwane, Liparit's son, [was alive]. A dwelling place, the great Erizay awan in the Hastenic' district, had been given to him as a gift together with the dastakerts surrounding it. When [Iwane] learned that the [Byzantine] kingdom had been split in two, he went and deceitfully took the stronghold called Eghanc' Berd. After taking it, he turned back to the district of Aghor and the stronghold called Hawachich'. The city went before him in friendship. [123] There [Iwane] chanced to encounter the judge who was concerned with [the government] of the East. Instantly he ordered [the judge] arrested and he stripped him of inestimable treasure, horses, donkeys and everything else which he had amassed in the East, and then incarcerated him at Eghnut. [Iwane] hurriedly went against the secure city of Karin. For a while he attempted take it by deception, saying: "I have an edict from the king. The city belongs to me. Open the gates so that I may enter." When he was unable to subdue them in this manner, he fought, hoping to master the city through warfare. Now the prince of the city quickly informed the prince residing at Ani, who held the charge of magister. As soon as the latter heard what was going on, he sent one of his principals together with the troops against [Iwane]. But [Iwane] found out, pillaged that country, then returned to his own place. And he sent to the Persians to bring him auxiliary troops. This was the inception of unbelievable misfortunes which were visited upon us.

When the infidels heard this invitation, they notified one another, quickly assembled at one place, and speedily reached [Iwane]. Seeing the multitude of their troops, he was awed. [g106] For there was none to oppose them. That prince because of whom [the Saljuqs] had come, had secured himself [124] into a great fortress, at the first clamor of their arrival. Then the troops which had come said: "Show us a path of plunder; do not turn us away empty-handed." Having no way out, [Iwane] gave them a guide from among his own men. They went at night, passing over the desolate places, and reached the Xaghteac' district. Finding [the residents] uninformed, in accordance with their own blood-thirsty customs, they slaughtered all males [from Xaghteac'] as far as Xrt'i forest in Chanet'ia. Taking an unlimited amount of loot and captives, they turned back with great triumph. Then they went to that director of wickedness [Iwane], and thanked him with magnificent gifts for the success which they had encountered on the way. Thereafter they returned to their own land. But because they observed that the country was lordless and without a defender, those satellites of satan soon returned [to Armenia]. They descended into the Mananaghi district and divided into two parts. One detachment went to Ekegheac' and attacked the city there at night. The city was unprepared and not warned [of the Saljuqs' coming]. I am incapable of recording the disastrous, pitiful evils [visited upon that city]. When day dawned, such a lamentable spectacle of agitation was revealed that it even would have made the very stones and inanimate objects sigh. What spectator's heart [125] would not break, who would not be seized with trembling, whose eyes would not cloud over and grow dim? The squares, homes, and vast chambers, the lanes and vineyards were choking with corpses. Virtually the entire confines of the city were dyed red with the blood of the slain. There [g107] were many who yet lived, unable to speak, breathing with difficulty. As for the severely wounded, [the Saljuqs] mercilessly tore out their intestines and livers, stuck them in their mouths and forced them to eat while they yet lived. Oh God, for Your forgiveness then! Oh, the great number of our evil deeds! For this is the thirteenth year that the Christians have born such intolerable disasters, yet the Lord's wrathful anger has not been quenched. Still His hand is raised, with a cup of pure wine to make us drunk, in a foul drunkenness. No more does He forgive and pardon, but would requite us hateful people. Thus were the city, and the villages and fields surrounding it, besieged until there was no living human remaining except for those in the strongholds. The infidels, filled full and satiated with loot, set fire to the city, took captive and the pillage of that district, and then turned thence. Such is your grievous history, oh city. No longer shall you be a city of refuge, but rather an abyss of ruin for those dwelling within you. Here we have recorded but a few of the diverse misfortunes [visited upon Ekeleac' district].

[126] The infidels came to the Karin district, to a village called Blurs, Since the residents of that place had enclosed the hill with a wall whose foundations they had laid on the soil (as in the Lord's proverb), when the infidels came like a raging torrent and struck against that wall, it did not withstand even for a moment, but quickly collapsed. Its collapse was heard throughout the world, and shall be remembered for all time. For those who thought [the city] would be a place of salvation and refuge, it became a pit of ruin. For all the villages and religious establishments [g108] on this side of the Euphrates, as well as many people from the Arcn awan had assembled there. As soon as the enemy attacked, [the city's] fortifications collapsed, and they rushed in. The flashing of swords and the whizzing of bowstrings made everyone tremble with dread as if bound with chains. Since there was no prince nor leader there who, by threats and encouragement, might urge them to resist the enemy, urging them to be brave martyrs, as is meet for all warriors, the lordless citizens became horror-stricken at the mere sight [of the Saljuqs]. They lost their senses, they gave up hope and went crazy. And they commenced hiding from one another. Some descended the walls at nighttime and fled, others voluntarily surrendered. Those who remained inside, abandoning all thought of resistance, dug caverns and hid underground. [127] When the enemy attacked, they cut [the citizens] down, not after the fashion of a war, but as though they were slaughtering sheep penned up in a yard. Some [the Saljuqs] seized, brought forward and beheaded with the sword. They died a double death. More bitter than death was the scintillating of swords above them, then the death verdict. Swords in hand they came upon some, fell upon them like beasts, pierced their hearts and killed them instantly. As for the stout and corpulent, they were made to go down on their knees, and their hands were secured down by stakes. Then the skin together with the nails was pulled up on both sides over the forearm and shoulder as far as the tips of the second hand, forcibly removed, and [the Saljuqs] fashioned bowstrings out of them. Oh how bitter this narration is!

As for the presbyters and clerics, what ear could bear the unique tortures to which they were subjected? Their skin was flayed from the breast upward, over the face, and [g109] then twisted around the head. And only after so torturing them did [the Saljuqs] kill them. Who has heard of more bitter, unbelievable tortures? We have not encountered any in the martyrdoms of the saints.

[128] By such deeds did they kill everyone. They even hunted after those survivors who were buried [in hidden chambers], killing them after wickedly stabbing them through. The mountains all resounded with the screams of the tortured. When [most] of the people had been executed, [the Saljuqs] then split open the sides of the slain, drained the bile into pans, and made the slave women take that along. So ended that bad fortune. So were we betrayed into the hands of wicked, merciless men. Nor did the Lord visit us, since we did not heed him when we dwelled in peace. He beseeched us through His prophets, saying: "Come, heed Me, and you shall dwell in goodness, and if you hear Me with joy, you shall enjoy the good things of the land [Isaiah 1.18-19]." We neglected His words. Consequently He did not hear us in our time of need. No, He turned His face away from us. And we were betrayed into the hand of our enemies, and straitened by those who hated us. Their arrows drank our blood, and their swords ate the flesh of our fallen wounded fighting men. In such triumph they went off to their own land. It is said that seven thousand [men and women] were killed or captured, and sixty clerics. [129]

19. The Destruction and Inestimable Ruin of Mesopotamia and Its Cities

Earlier we recalled and described what one detachment [of Saljuqs], which had come to the borders of Mananaghi [g110] and divided, accomplished. Now the second detachment raced its horses through Hanjet' and Xorjean [districts], turning neither right nor left but heading straight for its target like the powerful thrust of an arrow shot from the bowman's hand. So [the Saljuqs] went at nighttime, never resting, until suddenly, unexpectedly, they fell upon the residents of the southern city like hail mixed with stones. Because the city had no place of refuge, the residents could find no way out, like ocean waves, surging back and forth. Alas the deeds then performed in that city. The infidels put swords to work and killed the mother with her child, and the son before his father. And that gloriously fashioned city became a cistern full of blood. The extreme suddenness of it, the unexpected anguish caused people to forget their love for dear ones and sympathy for relatives. Each person thought of some way of escape, to perhaps save himself from the burning Gehenna of rage. Consequently, they fled to the vineyards which surrounded the city, and they concealed themselves under the thick leaves [130] of the vines. The infidels learned about this, searched [the vineyards], and stabbed and killed with lances all [those concealed]. The clusters of grapes were stained with their blood. Later on the surviving dregs [of the city] came forth, located their dead among the vines, and buried them under the earth. Yet their consciences would not allow them to gather or eat those grapes. For they said that those grapes [were filled with] human blood. Now when the infidels were finished killing, they returned to the city and started searching through the houses. If anyone anywhere or in a secret hiding place had concealed his belongings, [the Saljuqs] dug them out with great skill. Then they set the city on fire and burned it down, and then, taking booty and captives, they departed. They dealt [g111] similarly with the surrounding villages and awans, destroying all of them with fire, sword, and slavery until nowhere was anyone left alive to emit even a feeble cry.

20. The Reign of Comnenus

[Isaac] Comnenus (Komianos), since he was generous and quite wealthy, assembled about himself many troops. Now when the Emperor [Michael VI, Stratioticus] saw that conditions seemed favorable to Comnenus, he beseeched him, and [131] started sending emissaries to him, promising him gifts and the authority of Curopalate of the East, if only, he said, [Comnenus] remain at peace, and together with himself avenge the blood of the Christians [slain by the Turks]. But [Comnenus] did not believe this, and did not accept. When nothing was accomplished by the emissaries, the emperor's intimates attempted to subdue [Comnenus] by warfare.

Mustering many troops, they went against him. The two adversaries met and clashed. There was so much blood shed that people said that such carnage in one place had not occurred before in Byzantium. On the battleground even many of the principals fell, from both sides. But Comnenus' troops were victorious. And since the patriarch was on Comnenus' side, many of the principals of the city united with him. Leading Comnenus inside, they enthroned him. As for Michael, they made him become a monk and set him off to an island, though some say he went gladly. All this took place in that same world-destroying year [1057]. [g112]

21. The Destruction of the Shahastan City, Melitene

God took in His hand Turkestan and Persia, the scepter [132] of chastisement, not of teaching, and by means of them He judged us, in accordance with His righteous law. For the scepter of advice is a paternal one, while [the scepter] of torments belongs to the judge. David said about the torments of sinners: "Many are the torments but Your counsel shall teach me [Psalms 31.10 and 17.36]." Similarly for sinners, Paul wrote to the Hebrews: "It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons."

Now Christ, in His enlivening evangelism, brought us closer to His heavenly Father, to become familiar with Him. And He commanded that [we] resemble Him in all matters, and to preserve that relationship by means of good conduct. Yet we rebelled from our sweet and good Father and were alienated from His association. Therefore in the time of our need and of our torments, He ignored us, and we were betrayed into the hand of a foreign people. Our enemies grew strong against us, those who hated us ravished us; we were laid low, and our entrails congealed in the ground. It was among us as it was in the time of Moses when God said to Egypt (which had been struck ten times with [the Lord's] scepter): "This is my great might [Hebrews 12.7]."

[133] Their water turned to blood. Our rivers and cisterns and virtually all the soil of the country was dyed with our blood. Tumours formed all over their bodies. Our bodies were stabbed by swords, and then [g113] hacked apart, limb by limb. Dragonflies and mosquitoes rested upon [the Egyptians] which bit and blinded those lordly visages, but volleys of arrows were our fate, and they wounded more painfully. For three days, [the Egyptians'] day was turned to night. However [in Armenia] the light was entirely extinguished, for the eye itself died, nor in its lifetime shall it again see the goodness of the Lord. Horrible looking insects entered their homes, yet [these same pests] crept into our homes and churches--it terrifies me to say it--and polluted them not only with ravaging diseases, but also with an awful stench. The angel of death looked after their first born sons, while here [in Armenia] whole houses with their inhabitants were wiped out, one and all. The only thing we lacked was the Sea, yet if you judge things by their outcome, you will also find that we too had our Sea. For are there deeper abysses than

Turkestan or lands at the ends of the earth, whither our captives were dragged, wherein they were swallowed [134] up as in the Red Sea, which was dyed with the blood of their captives? The [Egyptians] demanded as payment from the Israelites golden ornaments and clothing in place of serving them. Yet [the Saljuqs] totally stripped and pillaged whatever we had, even though we had done nothing to them. Alas and alack that unconsolable destruction! There was a double justice in chastising the Egyptians: first, God tried them for the bitter servitude by which they had straitened the Israelites; second, because they worshipped created beings and not the Creator Who is blessed for eternity. Although we are devoid of good deeds, nonetheless we have the right belief and the tongue of confession. Why should we be punished the way they were? How much more pitiful are we, and [how much more] deserving of lamentation. Oh Lord, Creator, and God, why did You completely reject us, and cause us to be trampled under foot by pagans and make us the object of ridicule and derision by our enemies? Arise and awaken Your might, come and save us, [g114] and requite our neighbors sevenfold!

Now it took ten days, more or less, [for the Saljuqs] to accomplish the destruction of other cities and districts. As for the city about which we are now speaking [Melitene], [135] while it was still flourishing, it resembled a three-year-old heifer in the strength of its vigor and bravery, like Moab, it was tender and genteel. Its merchants were the glorious men of the country, while its shoppers were the kings of nations, who rested on ivory couches always drinking clarified wine, and anointing [themselves] with fragrant oils. All evils commence with this, just as Moses condemned the Israelites: "It waxed fat and grew thick, and became sleek, then it forsook Lord God its Creator [II Deuteronomy 32.15]." The Sodomites, similarly, led such lives, and fell into unbelievable evils, as Ezekiel revealed, enraptured by the plentitude of bread and a rich existence. Even the first man was unable to enjoy the blessings of Paradise for a day untainted. Such is our nature: when growing poor, we grumble and blame God, while when growing rich we become insolent and like immortals subjugate the land. Therefore, constantly changing our condition, we are taught to know our limits and not to ascend above our bounds, so that our fall not be all the greater. Does anyone know anything more dishonored or lowly than the soil? Yet we originated from it and return to it. However, the creator of our [136] nature does not want anyone to be lost, and therefore does not allow any to live abandoned. As much as is possible and when it is appropriate, He advises us sweetly and with paternal counsel, but when we do not heed His counsel, He torments us with His lordly authority. Some [g115] sinners He tries in this world, so that in the next their torments will be the lighter. Others He keeps for the next world [to punish]. And there are those, like the Sodomites, who were punished both in this world and in the next. There are those, like Lazarus, who [are punished] in this world only; others such as the wealthy (mecatunn) are punished in the next world solely. Let this discussion be closed here. We now return to our narration.

During autumn of that grievous year, while the Byzantines were occupied with the clamor of kings [succession squabbles], when the month of Areg had come [October, 1057] once again another army arose from Persia, but whether it was the same one that had come before, or a new one, I do not know. They crossed the desert places with such caution that no one knew [they were coming] until they reached the district called Kamax. Then [the Saljuqs] divided up. One group went as far as Koghonia, and, as is their [137] wont, they ravaged the country. (We learned about their passage on our return [from our journey]) The other group headed for Melitene, and reached it at night. There was a brigade of Byzantine cavalymen guarding the city, and so, when the brigands arrived, [the Byzantines] suddenly sallied forth to attack. When the two forces clashed, many were killed on both sides. Meanwhile, during the battle, those who left the city were able to save their lives. The warriors who remained to fight on [eventually] fled after the fugitives. As for those seized in the city, [the Saljuqs] put them all to the sword. They remained there for twelve days, digging through and ruining the city and its surrounding estates. This was the recompense of uncorruptable, righteous God for the arrogance [of the people of Melitene]. God requites each in accordance with his deeds.

Now when [the inhabitants of] the districts located below Ekegheac' (through which [the Saljuqs] passed by night) [g116] learned about the evils visited upon Melitene, they assembled numerous troops of archers and seized the passes of the road. Since the infidels did not know about any other road, [138] and since the mountains were covered with heavy snow, they were obliged to stay right where they were for five months of winter, from its inception until the month of Nawasard [November, 1057 -- March, 1058]. The country despaired of life. [The Saljuqs] left a remembrance forever of the unbelievable inequities they occasioned there. They took the young boys and other little children and used them as targets, wickedly piercing and killing them with lances and arrows. Nor did any feelings of pity find their way into their natures. I need not mention the children who were torn from their parents' embrace: the boys were hurled against rocks, while the attractive women and girls who had been reared in comfort were disgraced. Why should I record it? Do you see how unbearable the measure of tribulations are when God withdraws His hand from us?

Victuals for man and beast gave out. Therefore [the Saljuqs], driven by the severity of their need, went up toward Xorjean [district]. But because the roads were cut because of [the people's] fear of them, and since snow still thickly covered the country, they went twice as quickly as before. They allowed herds of horses and donkeys [139] to run ahead unimpeded, thus opening a path. Then the captives and baggage went. In this fashion they reached the edge of that district and the village named Mormreans. Now this village had a fortress, and for that reason, all the inhabitants of the place had assembled there. When the Persians reached it, they encamped, since they thought that there was a cavalry force within the fortress. Packing down the snow, they commenced preparing for battle. Their chief went before the fortress and started saying something to the prince of the fortress. He had covered the snow with numerous pavilions [g117] and was sitting on [one of] them, with a shield before him speaking harsh words with arrogant conceit. The prince of the stronghold, who had been awaiting an opportune moment, [acted] when the shield curved over to one side. He shot at [the Saljuq's] throat with an arrow, and killed him instantly. Then a Byzantine army came up from behind, and immediately started sounding their horns. Hearing this, the infidel fled, while those within the fortress came out and took as many captives and as much loot as they could back inside. However, the Byzantines did not advance. Now when the Persian(s) saw that another army was not there, they turned around and killed whomever they encountered, gathered [140] up the loot, scooped up the rest, and turned back. Going close to the borders of Eghnut, [the people there] similarly sallied forth, battled with them, freed many captives, filled up with booty, and then went back inside the fortress. Having been defeated, the blood-thirsty beasts were thrown into confusion. When they entered the boundaries of the Taron [district], an army descended from Sim mountain, customarily styled Sanasunk' after their forebear. This army struck at them, vanquished, killed [virtually] all of them, retrieved captives and booty, and returned in joy, glorifying God.

During the same year, [the Saljuqs] burned down the beautiful residence of the blessed [monastery of] Karapet [the Precursor, John the Baptist] which had been built with great labor by a certain Hrahat, one of the colleagues of Vasak's son, the great Gregory, when he was lord of the country. They also burned the belfry located in front of St. Karapet (which had been built in a gorgeous style to the glory and honor of the great martyr and precursor of Christ), as well as other structures, and the wooden church called St. Gregory. This occurred in the year 507 of our [Armenian] era [1058]. [g118]

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Aristakes Lastivertc'i's History

22. Concerning the Evil Sect of the T'ondrakeans Which Appeared in Hark' District and Agitated Many People

[141] There was a certain bishop named Yakobos who held the superintendency of the churches in Hark'. At the inception of his rule, he displayed himself as a virtuous man, wearing a hair-shirt, keeping fasts, and going about barefoot. He selected priests who circulated around with him, [men who] wore coarse unadorned clothing, who had forsworn sumptuous foods, and who continuously were occupied with the singing of psalms. In this fashion, he had moved many people to wonder, far and near, and everyone wanted to see him. Those who had grown haughty with conceit because of their authority, so gave themselves up to him in obedience that if he had ordered them to die, none would have resisted nor dared open his mouth to warble. But this was all a sham, not the true state of things. For the tree is judged by its fruit, as the Lord said. In a similar vein the Apostle wrote: "Satan even disguises himself as an angel of light, so it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as Christ's apostles [II Corinthians 11.13-14]." Just as poison is mixed with ordinary [142] food, and those who eat of it--thinking it to be ordinary food--are poisoned, just as fishermen conceal the fishhook with bait so that the fish will be deceived and caught by the hook, so do those who serve impiety. They dare not display to anyone their own pit of perdition. [g1 19] Otherwise, who in his right mind would willingly sink into an abyss from which there is no exit? For this reason, they wrap themselves up in our pious faith to deceive the gullible, and they dupe the innocent with sweet words. For their words spread like cancer and just as that illness is difficult to cure, so the people ensnared by [deceivers] are hardly able to sustain themselves.

Indeed our Lord Himself had them in mind [when He said] in His enlivening evangelization: "Beware of false prophets who will come to you in sheeps' clothing, for underneath they are ravaging wolves [Matthew 7.15]." Counseling the Lord's commandments, the Apostle similarly taught this to the Philipians: "Look out for the dogs, look out for the wicked servants [Philippians 3.2]." It is easy to beware of external enemies, but difficult to be saved from the wars of [your own] clansmen--as Habel and Joseph learned. Should [the enemy] be from a people [143] which speaks a foreign language, it is easy for us to beware. But, as the venerable John wrote: "They went out from us, but they were not of us [I John 2.19]," it is not easy to recognize them. Those who share the same language, and who belong to the same people--who spring from the same fountain--[may be] sweet and also bitter water, even though St. James said that this was impossible. Nonetheless, such was the case regarding our [Armenian] people. [Bitter water indeed did flow] from that same sweet fountain which our great leader [St. Gregory] caused to flow for us from the depths of the earth (after fifteen years of fatiguing labor in Xor Virap), a copiously flowing fountain, similar to the one in Ezekiel's vision, limpid and clear, into which [g120] pestilential, heretical streams could not run. For the bulwark of truth had been firmly secured to the rock of faith--until recently. Truly, [St. Gregory] our Illuminator himself saw in prophetic spirit how lambs became wolves and caused a carnage of bloodshed. This occurred when human iniquity multiplied in the country, when the goodly householder, the sower of grain, reposed, when the enemy, finding a way, sowed weeds among the grain, as in the parable in the Gospels. The dregs of bitterness mixed with the life-giving water [144] which flowed from the House of the Lord. However, [the heresy of the T'ondrakeans] was quickly exposed by the vardapets of the Church who uprooted the harmful weed from the meadow of our faith, who strained and purified the dregs of bitterness and brought health to the waters with the salt of truth, like the prophet Elijah. We have said enough about this matter. Now it is time to return to the narration so that our words be supported.

[Bishop Yakobos], the first-born disciple, the sharer of opinions of the father of all evil, seeing how much his falsely-good reputation had grown--[a renown] which stupid people noised about--began shooting arrows at our faith, arrows whose heads had been tempered with oak embers. For he was an extremely great publicist, and he bewitched the ears of many with his oratory. On such a foundation he thought he could overthrow the blessed Church. He did not recall the Lord's command and unswerving promise to Peter: "You are a rock and upon this rock shall I build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not overcome it [Matthew 16.18]." But [Yakobos] did not believe this; rather, he considered these singular words those of an ordinary man. Therefore he entered [g121] [145] battle, thinking to shear the Church of its glory, just as in ancient times the prostitute had shorn off Samson's locks so that the unconquerable man would be betrayed into the foreigners' hands. [Yakobos] also wanted to betray the holy Church into the hands of the sowers of discord, that Church which our Lord Jesus Christ ransomed with His honored blood, and glorified and crowned with the invincible Cross, erecting in it an altar of mystery, resembling the Tree of Life in Eden, whose immortal fruit was the very body of the life-giver, in accordance with His truthful command: "Whosoever eats of my body shall never die [John 6.56-58]." Behold now his adroit cunning, see how with serpent-like duplicity he schemed to inject his polluting poison into those healthy in the faith.

First he began selecting among the priests, according to their worth, telling the unworthy to be silent. When this pleased many folk, [Yakobos] then added something to it: he ordered those worthy [priests] to perform mass but three times a year. Now it is written in the canons of [the Council of] Nicea that although an individual be extremely sinful, his confession must be accepted, he must be given communion in the body and blood of the Lord and be made worthy of masses and all Christian rituals. But [Yakobos] refused to accept this.[146] On the contrary he taught that if the sinner himself did not individually repent, neither memorials nor masses would help him. Then with his accomplices, subjecting [the sinner] to ridicule, they laughed at him. The animal [brought for sacrifice] would be led forward and they would say: "Unfortunate beast, it is bad enough that he, during his lifetime sinned and died, but how did you sin that you must die with him?" At [such teachings] the people divided into two groups: some accepted this, but [g122] others did not. Everyone was confused and doubtful and sought some resolution of the matter, this included those who at that time were ever doing God's will, in retreats and caves, [and who] requested a visitation from the beneficent Lord, with great sighings and tearful entreaties. Now on two occasions assemblies were held which included an inestimable number of people, numerous [church] fathers, patriarchs, priests, as well as the laity. However, since all the princes of the district were bound as if by chains to [Yakobos] deceptive pretensions, they vowed they would die in battle before handing him over to the gathering. Meanwhile [Yakobos], resembling Nestorius, sat at home greatly encouraged, and sent replies to the meeting by means of messengers. Placing his hopes on the princes' aid, not on God, he did not think about the [147] Davidic psalm which says, "It is better to rely on the Lord than on princes [Psalms 117.8]." The wretch thought that he could vanquish truth with human assistance. God, however, does not permit the strength of sinners to approach the righteous, so that the righteous not extend their hands toward evil. [God] works the will of those who fear Him, He hears the prayers of those who pray to Him, [God] stilled the tempests and brought rain in time of drought, all for the prayers of one just man, and He also visited us and saved His people. Through His deep wisdom God knows how to lay the foundations for very great matters from afar. Indeed in this matter too He also disposed of things in a very helpful way. [Events] transpired as follows.

There was a certain cleric from the Karin district named Esayi, descended from a pious family, who, attracted by [Yakobos'] renown for goodness, went and [g123] became his adherent. Now when the investigations arose regarding [Yakobos], [Esayi] carefully kept watch over matters. He was an extremely learned man, and displayed great intimacy toward [Yakobos], declaring himself to be one of [Yakobos'] adherents. Observing and becoming informed about [Yakobos'] Mcghneay faith, [Esayi] went at [148] once and informed the blessed patriarch Sargis. Now when the latter heard this, and as events continued to unfold, he summoned that wretched man to him with mild words, and requited him as was meet. For he removed him from the ranks of the priesthood, and, branding [Yakobos'] face with the likeness of a fox, he loudly preached: "Whoever quits the faith of the blessed Illuminator and crawls into the fold of those beasts with human faces, the impious T'ondrakeans, and unites with them, shall bear the same judgement and punishment." [Sargis] ordered that that most wretched man be confined in prison, since he wanted him to repent yet and to promise to stand clear of that loathsome sect. For he was greatly concerned over the loss of a soul.

But as Jeremiah said, the fire cannot forget to burn, the Indian cannot lose his darkness, and the leopard cannot lose its spots, so too the evil person cannot quit his evil ways. For at night [Yakobos] broke out of jail, and fled across Byzantine territory until he reached the royal city of Constantinople. There he slandered our [Armenian Apostolic] faith and requested baptism according to their [Orthodox] rites. [The Byzantines] in their wisdom became knowledgeable about the matter and comprehended what it was. They refused [149] [Yakobos' request] saying instead: "Whomever the Armenians have refused and dishonored regarding the faith, we also do not accept." Not succeeding in this, [Yakobos] arose and came to the Apahunik' district, to that residence of satan, the assemblage of atheists, that lair of the beasts called T'ondrak, where, temporarily, [g124] he nestled in secret. It is said, however, that the people there similarly did not accept him because of his excessive impurity. Consequently he left that place and went to the mountain of Xlat' where he found his own folk settled there on fields and in open places, and he tarried with them. Having spent some time there, he departed for the city called Muharkin (Tigranakerd/Martyropolis/Mufarghin) where he wickedly perished. Whoever does not live according to the canons of the Bible, and does not unite with the Christians will be rejected. Therefore [Yakobos] died like an ass, and was buried like one, leaving behind [to posterity] an evil memory, such that everyone who hears this narration will curse him.

23. How That Fire of Heresy Also Inflamed the Borders of Mananaghi

[150] There was a certain adulterous monk named Kuncik who dwelled near the fortress-town of Shirni (which to this day is the name given to its field). Being of an advanced age, [Kuncik] had within him the ferment of impurity. He had studied with a certain churlish monk who claimed to be from [Caucasian] Aghbania, but was in fact satan's first-born son and the storehouse of his plans. Therefore smoke from the furnace of Gehenna was ever billowing forth from his mouth, and many were poisoned therefrom and died. Now this Kuncik, satan's diligent servant, gave instruction to a certain woman named Hranoysh who belonged to a principal and fine line, mistress of field(s) and [Kuncik's] neighbor. Once infected by that death-bringing poison, [Hranoysh], dissatisfied with her own perdition, prepared many others as accomplices for their heresy. First and foremost were two women, her clanswomen who were named Axni and Kamara (truly the willing accomplices (kamarar) of satan). [g125] These two were actual sisters, infected with that outrageous dissolute disease which is typical of their fold, and by the art of sorcery they became satan's vardapets, and the father of all evil made them strong. "They whet their tongues like swords, and aimed bitter words [151] like arrows," aiming at the hearts of the righteous. They struck and mortally wounded many innocent souls. [These two sisters] possessed two villages from their patrimonial inheritance which they turned into dwellings and dens for that crafty dragon-snake. [Yakobos] nested therein and violently spewed forth his bile. [The sisters collected the poison] and, serving as cup-bearers, gave it to the folk living about them to drink themselves to ruin. It was about such people that Moses wrote: "Their wine is the poison of serpents, and the cruel venom of asps, impossible to heal [Psalms 63.4]."

There was a certain prince named Vrverh who became the willing brother to these sorceresses. Previously he had been correct in the faith, and forward in pious deeds, to the point that he had had constructed a clerical retreat on his patrimonial lands and assembled ascetic brothers therein. Within its extensive confines he kept them free from want. Their director was known as Andreas, a man greatly renowned in clerical competitions. This prince [Vrverh] would visit them each year during the fast of Lent, and remain with them until Easter day itself, doing much to serve [152] their needs. He proved himself more forward than many when it came to charity for the poor [g126] and in showing submission to the priests' wishes. The devil ensnared him by means of those women who indiscriminately copulated with him, those diseased prostitutes, thinking nothing about consanguinity. Such are their dens of perdition. This is the leech's fourth daughter that Solomon spoke of and about which the divine Apostle commanded: "[Fall not] into the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God [I Thessalonians 4.5]." Do you see that that disease is pagan? See how the divinely blessed Solomon set this forth: "My son, keep yourself from adultery with foreign women for whomever they find foolish enough, they shall convince to remain with them through their honeyed words. For the lips of a loose woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood. For she will take her lovers, bound like dogs, and drag them off like a calf for slaughter, and she will [kill you] just as a goat shot by an arrow in the liver. There is no cure for it until in death you reach Hell, because her home is the abyss of Hell [compare Proverbs 5.3]."

Trapped by them, that lamentable Vrverh lost his prudence and fell from the faith, becoming the enemy of God and His saints. [153] He forsook the Lord in whose blessed font he had been baptized; he forgot God Who had nourished him with His body and blood. Having left the house, he fell from honor. He forgot the divine covenant, and withdrew from communion with the ascetic orders. The site which had been an assembly-place for clerics, which he had constructed with very great expense and labor, where groups of psalm-sayers and clerics with divine accompaniment [g127] sang sweet songs glorifying God, is now silent, ruined and desolate. What do you suppose happened next? The wretched man went and joined up with those diabolical women. And they joined to themselves all the inhabitants of those fields which naturally belonged to them and which we spoke of a little earlier, namely, Kashe and Aghiwoy. Frenzied with diabolical rage, they ruined those churches which they had long since had constructed in their snake-infested places. Whenever they found an opportune moment, to avenge their satanic father, they unashamedly destroyed the symbol of our salvation, the weapon of the Lord's victory [the Cross] in the villages. It was through the Cross that the victory of death was set at nought and the temptations of the wily Enemy were removed. The venerable Paul, ignoring created beings, took pride in its power, saying: "I boast of nothing except the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ [Galatians 6.14]." Since I have mentioned the Cross [154] let me add to this narration a wondrous account which will strike all listeners with trepidation.

In a section of Paxra mountain which presently is called Gaylaxazut, there was an ancient awan named Bazmaghbiwr [Many Fountains] wherein a resplendently stunning Cross had been erected. Because of this Cross the village was renamed Xach [Cross], even to the present. At night on the day of great Pentacost (called "new Sunday") those willing servants of satan came and, striking the crown of the divine symbol

with hammers, smashed it and threw it to the ground. Then they went secretly and entered their snake-infested lairs. [At their deed] the sky above was stupefied and the earth was afflicted with trembling. In the darkness of evening, Aurora lamented [g128] and mourned that deed. Now according to ordinary custom, at cockcrow the presbyter arose and went before the Cross to perform the ceremony for great Sunday. Observing that frightful scene, he grabbed his own collar and tore his clothing. Then crying loudly for the inhabitants of the place to immediately come forth, he gathered them. Seeing [the damaged Cross] they were stupefied, shrieking loudly, and beating their breasts, they returned home. [155] Then everyone, men, women, the elderly and the young, lamented sighing in unison. While they were so fraught, suddenly through God's ineffable wisdom, they had a thought. The evening that that [deed] was wrought it had suddenly begun to snow, whitening the face of the land. So, following the footprints of the impious, they were led to their dens. Immediately they notified the blessed patriarch Samuel, who arrived at the spot with a great multitude. Gathering up the district's bishops, presbyters, and fathers, he took them and went and put to the fire the lair of the impious, cursing their goods and property just as in the past Joshua cursed Jericho so that no one would dare to take anything from it. He further arrested six of them who were styled the vardapets of that wicked and foul religion, and came with the crowd to the town named Jerma. And he commanded that their faces be branded with the sign of a fox, so that eternally that would serve as a notice to them, clear and recognizable to all, so that no one in ignorance would commune with them, but rather that they be hounded by all as evil beasts. After this, [Samuel] blessed the people who had been his colleagues, then sent them off in peace. [g129]

[156] Now when summer arrived, the [Byzantine] emperor sent a judge, whose name was Eghia, to see after the affairs of the land. When he reached the Ekegheac' district, that most wicked Vrverh went before him and accused the very respectable patriarch Samuel and the other bishops with him, saying: "They robbed my home, and burned down the village." Moreover [Vrverh] made them accountable for debts of many treasures and goods. When the judge heard this, becoming increasingly enraged, he sent soldiers to bring before him speedily the venerable bishops. As soon as the soldiers arrived, the head of the bishops wrote commands to the clergy, to the presbyters and the cenobites that they assemble by him forthwith. Upon receiving the news--it was as though everyone were informed through God's providence--immediately a multitude of people assembled in one place, not merely priests, but especially laymen, and so vast was their number that I am unable to record it. They went in a body to the confluence of the Euphrates and the Mananaghi rivers, to the banks of the Euphrates. It so happened at that time that rain started to fall, and swollen from the downpour, the Euphrates had risen and coursed fully. The soldiers, having brought a boat, were hastening to take across the aged bishop Samuel and his brother's son Teodoros, to [157] the awan called Kot'er, since the judge was there. However, the people, forcibly holding the bishops, did not permit the soldiers to touch them. Now [the soldiers] said: "First we shall ferry across those [bishops], and then, the people." Thus did they get the people to consent. Then, taking the bishops, they ferried them to the other shore. Stopping the boat, they placed the bishops in prison. When the people perceived [the soldiers'] [g130] duplicity--for they had not returned to them the boat as they had promised--they commenced encouraging each other with loud voices and exhortatory expressions, saying that it would be better to die crossing the waters than to permit the overseer of the faith to hear rebukes. It was evening. The sun was setting, having dispersed of its rays, and giving boldness to the stars which adorned the sky. The priests, coming forward, divided the waters, not by the mystery of the Cross, but rather, holding that symbol of the Lord's triumph in their hands and raised to their shoulders, and with unwavering faith, they split asunder the lofty billows, which, resembling an intractable steed suddenly bridled by the strength [of their faith] gave way for the people to pass over. Not one person was [158] injured out of the entire multitude. When they had crossed, they spent the entire night singing songs of thanksgiving to God. As the leader of the troop they had the spotless Mariam (which is the blessed Church) holding in her hands a drum (which is correctness of faith); they were not silent and without art as are those conquered by dissolute heretical diseases, rather, being pure in fervor of the holy Spirit, ready with ringing songs, with the plectrum of David's lyre they made to resound within the hearing of all: "Bless the Lord, for He worked a miracle [Psalms 97. 1], etc." Praying to God with such songs, they made light the entire night.

Now the judge, when he heard about the divine dispensation and the miracle-working, realized that the Lord was visiting our [Armenian] people. In trembling from extreme amazement, he prayed prayers of atonement and called on God's aid: "I not, ignorantly," he said, "distort Your laws, Lord." When day dawned, it was a Sunday. [g131] The judge went to the bishopric, named P'rris, seeking a just trial and entrusted the case to the chiefs of the people. They commanded the worthless and guilty Vrverh to appear at the trial. There is a creature known as the cuttle-fish about which it is said that in order to escape the hunters, it changes colors. So was [159] [Vrverh] when he observed the strengthening of justice, which he could not resist; for when the light dawns, darkness is dispelled, and when truth appears, falsehood vanishes. What could he do, what ruse could he find? He promised that he would become a Roman [Chalcedonian], and, bribing a bishop named Episarhat, he agreed to become his adopted son. The bishop appeared at the trial and beseeched them to grant him [Vrverh], and the judge agreed. This was because the brother of the impious one, through his princely station, bravery and valiance was one of the king's acquaintances and select [companions], and the judge was very considerate of this. Consequently, he gave [Vrverh] to the bishop, as the latter had requested. However, as for those of [Vrverh's] comrades they found, after subjecting them to severe torments and beatings, they persecuted them and ruined their homes. The assembly blessed the judge and adjourned in peace.

However the verdict of God quickly fell upon [Vrverh] who, although able to escape punishment [from men] was unable to flee from the hand of the Omniscient. For, suddenly, his body burned with fever--like unto Herod--and because his fingers had so dried up, he was unable to eat; whatever he was able to get down, he then threw up, since his esophagus [160] was blocked. So he remained until his death and then, his body decayed with leprosy/syphilis. However he did not repent, nor did he remember his previous piety. Rather, he remained inflamed with that same diabolic heresy until he quit this life. The aches of his body were a constant reminder of Gehena where he is being tormented. [g132]

However, their mcghne deeds being too foul, we regarded it as inappropriate to set it down in writing, because everyone is not steadfast when it comes to the audible, and because the narration of many sins could arouse the listener even to doing the same. Consequently, I have avoided it. However what is known about them, and what I have heard about them is this: they do not accept the Church or Church ritual at all--not baptism, not the great and awe-inspiring mystery of the mass, not the Cross, not the observance of fasts. But let us, the true Believers in the Holy Trinity, firmly keep the doctrine of confirmed light which we learned from the blessed Fathers. Let us, turning away from their atheistic assembly, heap curses upon them.

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Aristakes Lastivertc'i's History

24. How the World Renowned City of Ani was Massacred by the Sword

[161] The human race, subject to many delusions and illusions, because of lust and impropriety, has sought refuge in its deeds. The powerful, tall, giants who could not be withstood or competed against, styled themselves gods. Some, fortified with towers, regarding their height as impregnable, did not want to taste from the cup of the Lord's goodness--resembling the foolish builders of that first structure which was built with great difficulty but easily demolished; or like the residents of Jericho, who, because of the fortification of towers, did not consider themselves Caananites and did not think that the right hand of the Lord ruled them too, or that the sword of the Omnipotent would near them. For it is the Lord who builds and destroys, makes strongholds tremble [g133] and lofty towers collapse. The tower on the mountains of Lebanon which David built and fortified with swords and shields against Damascus, did not withstand Solomon's adversary Eder, nor did it impede his attack, because the fortress is holiness, while the choice wall, is pious action.

Now let us return to our former narration. Let it not be considered few or insignificant the sins of those who will not repent or regret, or who fail to see the punishment [162] of people close to them and neighbors--punishment which occurs according to the crime[s committed]. The cypress must weep for the pine, the buck-thorn for the olive, because it is not that all upon whom the Tower collapsed, according to the Lord's command, were without distinction worthy of death, but rather that kin and others understand the sins, while those at a distance learn from them and take care. The calamitous events which took place regarding Arcn had not occurred long ago, nor had much time passed that they became clouded over. Many had witnessed them with their own eyes and had no need to listen, for many districts and cities had been saved from that raiding. However, they revolted and rebelled not against mankind, but against God Who levels to the ground those lofty towers and transforms secure cities into mounds of earth. [The people] did not understand or remember the Lord's dread and threats, nor the dregs of His rage and wrath, [Whose cup] He lowers for sinners to drink from. They considered [that cup] empty. [This was] especially so for the fortress of Ani and her daughters surrounding which had learned arrogance even more, and clapped their hands against Heaven; while God moved the king of Persia to come in His place [g134] and to see what was [163] going on there. There was warfare in the country of Armenia for [the Saljuqs wanted to] enlarge their holdings and rule the borders of the other [Byzantine] kingdom. This transpired in 513 of our [Armenian] era [1063/64].

Now the [Saljuq] king came with many myriads of armed troops and entered our land, spreading dread and terror among those far and near. He trampled on and overturned many lands until he reached the city [of Ani] which had reached the limit of sinfulness. He pitched his tent opposite the city of Ani and spread his army throughout the breadth of the country. He tried and devised stragems to destroy that [city] gate of iron and the locks of copper which opposed his kingdom, but because he grew disheartened because of the fortification [of the place], although the battle was growing more intense, he wanted to depart. He did not know that the Lord had implanted discord, disunity and chaos between the guards and the princes. Just then, [the guards] leaving off