A Neglected Armenian Source of the Late Umayyad Era: The *Martyrdom of Vahan of Gołtʻn*

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Abstract

The Armenian Martyrdom of Vahan of Gołtʻn, *composed in 744 CE, offers a fresh perspective from which to study the Umayyad caliphate. A sophisticated literary composition assembled in a monastic context, the* Martyrdom *traces contemporary networks of power, communication, and knowledge within and beyond Armenia. As a product of the late Umayyad world, it constitutes a work of major significance for the study of the Umayyad caliphate at large and the caliphal North in particular during the first half of the eighth century. The* Martyrdom *reveals contemporary Armenian perceptions of Umayyad hegemony, including* ʿaṭā *(stipend) payments, public executions, conversions, apostasy, contemporary apologetics, and the nature of Caliph Hishām's court at Ruṣāfa. At the same time, it portrays members of the Armenian elite, lay and clerical, reacting in different ways to new political circumstances. The present article provides the first annotated English translation and extensive thematic introduction to the* Martyrdom of Vahan of Gołtʻn, *with the aim of making the text accessible to Islamicists and thereby integrating this rich source into discussions of the late Umayyad era.*

Introduction

Although the rich canon of medieval Armenian literature has become more widely appreciated in the last sixty years, principally through the transformative scholarship of Thomson, Garsoïan, Mahé, and others, it remains the case that its full potential is yet to be realized.[1] There are many reasons for this state of affairs, ranging from practical matters of accessibility—in terms of both editions and translations—to broader historiographical and methodological issues. When the study of the Armenian past began in earnest in the nineteenth century, those compositions that projected an independent Christian kingdom of Armenia, apparently in control of its own destiny, cohered with contemporary ambitions for national awakening and self-determination and therefore attracted the greatest scholarly attention. A hierarchy of medieval Armenian literature developed, with the *History* of Movsēs Xorenacʻi at the pinnacle. This profile, once established, proved

1. For comprehensive bibliographies of these scholars, see T. W. Greenwood, "Publications of Robert William Thomson," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 77, suppl. (2023): 1*–7*; "Bibliographie de Nina G. Garsoïan" [to 2015]: 63–76; "Bibliographie des travaux de Jean-Pierre Mahé de 1970 à 2014," in "Mélanges Jean-Pierre Mahé," *Travaux et mémoires* 18 (2014): xv–xxxiii.

remarkably resilient and continues to shape the contours of Armenian historical research. As a result, there has been less focus on those compositions that present a subordinated Armenia or a fractured Armenian elite, responding individually to the governance of an outside power. The *Martyrdom of Vahan of Gołtʻn*, with its representation of Armenia as an integral part of the caliphal North during the first half of the eighth century, is one such work.[2] Although it has featured consistently in Russian-language scholarship and, more recently, in the studies of Jinbashian and Sahner in English, it has not received in-depth literary or historical analysis as an individual composition.[3]

In addition to this pattern in which certain texts and eras are privileged while others are downplayed, there has also been a tendency to separate medieval Armenian historiography from other traditions and treat its works as independent witnesses to the circumstances they record. It is almost as if the mountainous topography so often associated with Armenia served also to isolate its historiographical production, blocking the transmission of knowledge. We take a different approach. Armenian space, however defined, has always included the valleys separating the mountains, and the settlements within those valleys were always connected to wider political, economic, and spiritual networks. Armenian soldiers, scholars, pilgrims, and merchants were highly mobile throughout Late Antiquity and beyond, traveling far beyond the districts of historic Armenia and returning with knowledge and experiences acquired elsewhere.[4] Furthermore, at different times, and no doubt to differing degrees, non-Armenians arrived in Armenia—some passing through, others settling permanently

2. For a sensitive and thoughtful definition of the caliphal North in terms of the provinces of Armenia (Armīniyya) and Albania (Arrān), see A. M. Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam: Islamic Rule and Iranian Legitimacy in Armenia and Caucasian Albania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), xiii–xvi, 1–4, and 43–77; and the earlier, pioneering studies by D. A. Spellberg, "The Umayyad North: Numismatic Evidence for Frontier Administration," *American Numismatic Society* 33 (1988): 119–27; and M. Bates, "The Dirham Mint of the Northern Provinces of the Umayyad Caliphate," in "Essays Dedicated in Honor of Dr. Paul Z. Bedoukian on the Fortieth Year of His Contributions," ed. Y. T. Nercessian, special issue, *Armenian Numismatic Journal* 15 (1989): 89–112.

3. References to the *Martyrdom* in Russian-language literary and historical surveys include M. Abełyan [Abegyan], *Istorija Drevnearmjanskoj Literatury* (Erevan: Izvestija Akademii Nauk Armjanskoj SSR, 1948), 392–96; A. N. Ter-Łevondyan [Ter-Gevondyan], *Armenija i Arabskij Xalifat* (Erevan: Izdatelʼstvo AN Armjanskoj SSR, 1977), 83, 89, 230; a translation with a summary introduction in Kʻ. S. Ter-Davtʻyan [Ter-Davtyan], *Armjanskie Žimija i Mučeničestva V–XVII vv* (Erevan: Nairi, 1994), 289–307; A. K. Shahinyan, *Armenija i Strany Yužnogo Kavkaza v Uslovijax Vizantijsko-Iranskoj i Arabskoj Vlasti* (St. Petersburg: Aletejja, 2011), 18, 228 n4, 230, and 371 n1; and A. K. Shahinyan, *Rannesrednevekovaja Geografija Armenii i stran Yužnogo Kavkaza* (St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg State University, 2014), 232, 245, 339. For treatment in English-language scholarship, see M. Jinbashian, *Church-State Relations in Armenia during the Arab Domination: From the First Invasion to the Time of the Early ʿAbbāsids* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2000), 194–98; and C. Sahner, *Christian Martyrs under Islam: Religious Violence and the Making of the Muslim World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 41–44. In Armenian, see the entry on the text in Kʻ. Ter-Davtʻyan, *Haykakan Srbaxosutʻyun: Varkʻer ev Vkayabanutʻyunner (V–XVIII dd.)* (Erevan: Nayiri, 2011), 121–30. For previous specifically philological scholarship on the text, see the section below, "A Note on Editions and Translations."

4. J. Preiser-Kapeller, "Aristocrats, Mercenaries, Clergymen and Refugees: Deliberate and Forced Mobility of Armenians in the Early Medieval Mediterranean (6th to 11th Century A.D.)," in *Migration Histories of the Medieval Afroeurasian Transition Zone*, ed. J. Preiser-Kapeller, L. Reinfandt, and Y. Stouraitis, 327–86 (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

and bringing their own cultural practices, beliefs, and stories with them. Therefore, rather than treating medieval Armenian compositions as the products of an exclusively Armenian Christian milieu, we prefer to interpret them from a cross-cultural perspective, informed by engagements and exchanges across different linguistic and religious communities. Just as late antique Armenian literary compositions can be viewed as Sasanian sources, in that they were composed within the borders—real and conceptual—of Sasanian Iran (Ērānšahr) and were shaped by the political, social, and cultural contexts in which they were produced, so Armenian works composed in the eighth and ninth centuries may be treated as Umayyad or ʿAbbāsid sources, in that they, too, were composed inside the caliphate—the *dār al-Islām*.[5] Arguably, therefore, the perceived isolation of medieval Armenian compositions reflects the linguistic and disciplinary boundaries of modern scholarship rather than the original circumstances of their production.

We maintain that the *Martyrdom of Vahan of Gołtʻn* holds significant potential for scholars of the early Islamic world. We argue below that the longest version of this work was compiled in 744 CE and bears no obvious trace of later revision. It predates the bulk of Islamic historiographical material used by scholars to study the Umayyad caliphate, which was assembled after the ʿAbbāsid takeover and reflects ʿAbbāsid-era perspectives and conventions. The *Martyrdom* therefore constitutes a rare Umayyad-era source.

This does not mean that the *Martyrdom* comprises a simple account of what happened. It is a sophisticated composition, one that was framed around existing literary models, including the Bible as well as earlier Armenian historical and hagiographical works. The three opening sections of the *Martyrdom* are structured around prophetic sayings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as well as the extended account of the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace of Babylon preserved in the Armenian version of Daniel 3.[6] Elements in sections 8 and 9 reflect details found in the Greek *Passio* of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, a work that was translated into Armenian.[7] Nor should we ignore the fleeting references to the visions of two prominent Armenian clerical leaders, Saint Sahak and Saint Grigor, preserved elsewhere in late antique Armenian literature, both of which are infused with prophetic and apocalyptic dimensions.[8] At the same time, however, the *Martyrdom* comments extensively

5. G. Traina, "The Rise of the Sasanians: The Armenian Evidence," in *Sasanian Iran in the Context of Late Antiquity*, ed. T. Daryaee, 107–19 (Irvine, CA: UCI Jordan Center for Persian Studies, 2018), 107–8 and nn. 3–5; T. W. Greenwood, "Armenian Sources," in *Blackwell Companion to the Sasanian Empire*, ed. T. Daryaee and M. R. Shayegan (Abingdon: Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming). For contemporary perceptions that Armenia was part of *dār al-Islām*, see Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces*, 107–11.

6. In both the commentary and the translation, we follow the section and sentence divisions established in Version 1 of the text: Artawazd Vanahayr Erašxawori, *Patmutʻiwn ew Vkayabanutʻiwn Vahanay Gołtʻnacʻwocʻ*, ed. G. Tēr-Vardanean, in *Matenagirkʻ Hayocʻ* [*MH* in shortform references] *8 Dar*, 6:855–945 (Antʻilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʻołikosutʻiwn, 2007), 869–97.

7. Greek (*BHG* 1624): I. van den Gheyn, "Passio antiquior SS. Sergii et Bacchi Graece nunc primum edita," *Analecta Bollandiana* 14 (1895): 373–95; Armenian: "Vkayabanutʻiwn srboyn Sargsi ew Bagosi," in Ł. Ališan, *Varkʻ ew Vkayabanutʻiwnkʻ Srbocʻ*, 2 vols. (Venice: Tparan Mxitʻareancʻ, 1874), 2:272–79.

8. Vision of Saint Sahak: Łazar, *Patmutʻiwn Hayocʻ ew Tʻułtʻ aṙ Vahan Mamikonean*, ed. G. Tēr-Mkrtčʻean and S. Malxasean (Tbilisi: Aragatip Mnacʻakan Martiroseancʻi, 1904; repr. Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1985), §17, at 34.4–6; repr. in *Matenagirkʻ Hayocʻ 5 Dar*, 2:2197–2395 (Antʻilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʻołikosutʻiwn,

on the contemporary Umayyad world and Armenian experiences within it. Instead of trying to disentangle the real from the imagined or the derivative, we prefer to approach the *Martyrdom* as a literary creation, situated in the recent past and constructed in accordance with the author's ambitions. We contend that it represents a commentary on and response to contemporary concerns, pushing back against the threat of conversion to Islam as well as anxieties about emigration to the Eastern Roman Empire by providing its audience with collective and individual illustrations of Armenian resistance. In approving the faithful Christian witness of the Armenian nobles who were shut inside churches at Naxčawan and Xram and burned alive at the start of the eighth century, as well as the steadfast conviction of Vahan on his road to martyrdom in 737 CE, the author of the *Martyrdom* was reacting to present circumstances. As we shall see, some members of the Armenian elite participated in the political and social structures of the Umayyad caliphate, while others had decided to seek new lives in the Roman world. Through commemorating the actions of the holy martyrs, the *Martyrdom* affirmed that Christian belief and practice lay at the core of being Armenian.

Since the principal value of the *Martyrdom*, for Islamicists and Armenologists alike, stems from its purported date of composition, 744 CE, this article will first set out the arguments in support of that dating. As will become evident, doing so also requires assessing the work's authorship and structure. We shall then consider the *Martyrdom* as a product of its time, analyzing its representation of the late Umayyad caliphate and Armenian experiences within it. Finally, we shall introduce our translation by outlining in brief our editorial choices as well as identifying directions for future research.

The Date of Composition, Authorship, and Structure

The *Martyrdom* is a composite work, comprising two distinct narratives: a lament for the evils endured by Armenia at the hands of Arab Muslims in 703–4 CE, which culminated in the deaths of the Armenian nobles burned alive in the churches (sections 1–3); and a record of the life and martyrdom of Vahan, together with a series of posthumous miracles associated with his burial site outside the city of Ruṣāfa and the subsequent construction of a church with a martyrium at the same location (sections 4–8). This bifurcation is confirmed in the extended colophon at the end of the text (sections 9–10). Here we learn that an Armenian delegation travelled to Callinicum and that two of its members went on to visit the martyria of Saint Vahan and Saint Sergius in Ruṣāfa before rejoining their colleagues

2003), 2225.1–2234.75; trans. R. W. Thomson, *The History of Łazar P'arpec'i* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 64–72. Vision of Saint Grigor/Gregory the Illuminator: Agat'angełos, *Patmut'iwn Hayoc'*, ed. G. Tēr-Mkrtč'ean and S. Kanayeanc' (Tbilisi: 1909), §731–55; repr. in *Matenagirk' Hayoc' 5 Dar*, 2:1289–1735 (Ant'ilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Kat'ołikosut'iwn, 2003), 1654.1–65.4; trans. R. W. Thomson, *The Lives of Saint Gregory: The Armenian, Greek, Arabic, and Syriac Versions of the History Attributed to Agathangelos* (Ann Arbor, MI: Caravan Books, 2010), 337–52; E. Petrosyan, "Grigor Lusavorč'in Veragrvoł tesil harc'umĕ (The Revelation Attributed to Gregory the Illuminator)," *Banber Matenadarani* 36 (2023): 212–50. For individual studies, see R. W. Thomson, "The Vision of Saint Gregory and Its Interpretations," in *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. K. B. Bardakjian and S. La Porta, 285–95 (Leiden: Brill, 2014); and G. Muradyan, "The Vision of St. Sahak in the *History* of Łazar P'arpec'i," in Bardakjian and La Porta, *Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition*, 296–312.

and returning to Armenia, where the author "began to record, beginning from where it was appropriate, through joining to the same the testimony of Saint Vahan the martyr" (9.10). The colophon is unequivocal, therefore, in depicting "this book of martyrdom," as it labels the whole work (10.2), as the fusion of two narratives. The lament is the point of departure, the "appropriate beginning," to which the testimony about Saint Vahan has been joined. We shall consider the authorship and structure of the *Martyrdom* in further detail below.

The *Martyrdom* states that Vahan was martyred on the twenty-seventh day of the Armenian month of Mareri in the year 185 of the Armenian Era (AE), which fell on March 18, 737 (7.21). The visit of the Armenians to Ruṣāfa is described as taking place seven years later (9.2). The return of the whole delegation to Armenia occurred "close to the feast of Epiphany" (9.8), which was celebrated on January 6 every year, and the author began his undertaking thereafter. This asserted date of composition, 744 CE, is wholly consistent with multiple internal features of the work. Let us examine these individually and collectively.

The first observation concerns the use of the Armenian Era dating system. Although year 1 of this chronology equates to July 11, 552–July 10, 553, it is only in the last decade of the seventh century that we find the earliest securely attested use of this system, in a colophon attached to the Armenian translation of Socrates's *Ecclesiastical History*, whose synchronism refers to the year 144 of the era (June 6, 695–June 5, 696).[9] Three other colophons from the first half of the eighth century also employ the Armenian Era system as their exclusive chronology.[10] The earliest extant inscription to feature an Armenian Era date is that of Uxtaytur at T'alin; its opening line refers to "232 of the Armenian Era," which extended from May 15, 783, to May 13, 784.[11] The appearance of two Armenian Era dates in the *Martyrdom* (3.4, 10.1) is therefore consistent with Armenian practice in the first half of the eighth century.

A similar argument can be advanced with respect to the single Islamic date to appear in the text: "In the time of the tyranny of the Arabs, which followed the death of the originator, the raving Muḥammad, in their eighty-fifth year . . ." (2.1).[12] One of the documents produced

9. A. S. Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren jeṙagreri Hišatakaranner 5–12dd* (Erevan: SSH GA Hratarakč'ut'yun, 1988), no. 28; trans. R. W. Thomson, *The Armenian Adaptation of the Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 9–11.

10. Mat'evosyan, *Hišatakaranner*, nos. 36, 39; G. Yovsep'ean, *Yišatakarank' jeṙagrac'* (Ant'ilias: Tparan Kat'ołikosut'ean Hayoc' Kilikioy, 1951), no. 17. It is also striking that the canons of the Council of Manazkert employ an Armenian Era date: the year 175, on the 7th of the month Trē, which equates to September 2, 726: *Girk' T'łt'oc'*, ed. Y. Izmireanc' (Tbilisi: Tparan T. Ṙōtineanc' and M. Šabajē, 1901), 223.

11. T. W. Greenwood, "A Corpus of Early Medieval Armenian Inscriptions," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 27–91, at 87 (A.14).

12. The hijri year 85 extended from January 14, 704, to January 1, 705. This sentence, however, is ambiguous and hard to interpret. It implies that the tyranny of the Arabs began only after the death of Muḥammad and that his death, rather than his migration to Medina on July 16, 622, marked the beginning of Islamic time. Alternatively, the writer was aware of the hijri date but mistakenly correlated it with the death of Muḥammad rather than his migration. For hijri dates in Syriac, see S. P. Brock, "The Use of Hijra Dating in Syriac Manuscripts: A Preliminary Investigation," in *Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East Since the Rise of Islam*, ed. J. J. van Ginkel, H. J. Murre-van den Berg, and T. M. van Lint, 275–90 (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 277 and 283. It is notable that the second-oldest Syriac manuscript to preserve a hijri dating (London, British

by the council of the Church of Ałuankʿ (Caucasian Albania) at Partaw is also dated to "the 85th year of the Arabs" and is correlated, impossibly, with Armenian Era year 148 (June 5, 699–June 3, 700).[13] Although there is no relationship between these canons and the *Martyrdom*, together they attest the emergence of Islamic time as a meaningful chronological mechanism in the first decade of the eighth century. In this respect, it is noteworthy that the first dirhams minted in the North are dated AH 78, reading *Armīniyya*, whereas the first to bear the mint name of the city of Dabīl/Duin—the provincial capital in the later Sasanian era—are dated AH 84.[14] As Vacca has argued, the period of caliphal domination in the North began in the first decade of the eighth century, following the so-called Marwānid reforms, and this seems to be reflected in the *Martyrdom*, both in its perception that the conflagrations at Naxčawan marked "the beginning" and in its use of Islamic time.[15]

The *Martyrdom* contains several surprising details about the world of the Umayyad caliphate that support 744 CE as the date of composition. We shall limit our analysis here to three of these. The first concerns the text's awareness of caliphal succession. Not only does it record the correct sequence of caliphs from ʿAbd al-Malik to Hishām, omitting only Yazīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik, and not only does it provide a positive representation of ʿUmar b. Abd al-ʿAzīz, in line with contemporary Christian sources,[16] it also reports Umayyad family relationships accurately. When in dialogue with Hishām, Vahan asks, "Where is the universal authority of your father or the tyranny of your four brothers?" (6.27). Hishām was indeed preceded as caliph by three brothers (al-Walīd, Sulaymān, and Yazīd) and one first cousin (ʿUmar, who was also a brother-in-law twice over) and before them by his father, ʿAbd al-Malik. The *Martyrdom* therefore demonstrates precise knowledge of the Marwānid succession, including an awareness that it functioned agnatically. Conversely, the *Martyrdom* shows no awareness of Marwān b. Muḥammad's future accession as caliph. Instead, it refers to him as the "prince of the North" (7.1), currently based in Mesopotamia (6.31). This acknowledges the authority he was granted across the North, including Armenia and Mesopotamia, from 732 CE onward.[17] His prominence in Hishām's regime is demonstrated through the caliph's decision to instruct him to find out who Vahan was and report back. Once again, it is the representation of Marwān's loyal service to Hishām that is meaningful, rather than the

Library, MS Add. 14448, dated 699) refers to year 80 of the *Ṭayyāyē*—that is, the Arabs.

13. Movsēs Kałankatuacʿi, *Patmutʿiwn Ałuanicʿ Ašxarhi*, ed. V. Arakʿelyan (Erevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakčʿutʿyun, 1983), 3:8, at 302.17–18; repr. in *Matenagirkʿ Hayocʿ 10 Dar*, 15:25–437 (Antʿilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʿołikosutʿiwn, 2012), 375.19; trans. C. J. F. Dowsett as Movsēs Dasxuranci, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 196.

14. Bates, "Dirham Mint," 94–95. AH 78: March 30, 697–March 19, 698; AH 84: January 24, 703–January 13, 704.

15. Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces*, 83, 193.

16. A. Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: L'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides (v. 72–193/692–809)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 301–5; S. La Porta and A. M. Vacca, *An Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative: Łewond's Eighth-Century History of the Caliphate* (Chicago: Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, University of Chicago, 2024), 182.

17. A. Vacca, "The Umayyad North (or: How Umayyad was the Umayyad Caliphate?)," in *The Umayyad World*, ed. A. Marsham, 219–39 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 229–32.

historicity of the action he performed. We propose that this knowledge about the caliphate originated outside Armenia, even if we cannot show precisely how it arrived in Armenia.

Second, the *Martyrdom* demonstrates significant knowledge about Hishām's court in Ruṣāfa. It notes the presence of Christians among the royal advisers (8.11), including one from the Roman people named Theophilus, or "according to theirs, Abu Stepʻan" (the father of Stephen).[18] Ruṣāfa was undoubtedly home to a diverse confessional community, as is evident in Hishām's construction of a mosque that shared its courtyard with the famous martyrium of Sergius. Elizabeth Key Fowden has interpreted their proximity as an attempt by Hishām to capitalize on the enduring popularity of the cult of Saint Sergius.[19] Andrew Marsham similarly highlights the mosque/martyrium complex at Ruṣāfa as an indication of Hishām's administrative and military dependence on non-Muslim groups resident in the region; Ruṣāfa was part of the frontier-facing Qinnaṣrīn district.[20] The *Martyrdom* not only displays enthusiasm for worshiping at the martyrium of Saint Sergius but also reports that a royal palace was constructed near the site of Vahan's martyrium (8.17) and hence outside the walls of the city. Hishām is known to have constructed several extramural palaces.[21] Furthermore, Vahan's martyrium is described (8.22) as being "constructed with baked bricks and lime." It is very rare to find descriptions of any brick-built structures in medieval Armenian texts, which tend to focus instead on walls of prepared stone.[22] Late antique and medieval Armenian churches were built using single blocks or revetments enclosing a concrete core. By contrast, baked brick was a common building material at Ruṣāfa.[23] In terms of people, places, and building materials, therefore, the *Martyrdom* corresponds closely with what is known about Hishām's Ruṣāfa.

Third, the temporary disappearance of Vahan's body (8.11) is blamed initially on merchants who, on departing Ruṣāfa, are assumed to have traveled "through the region of Baʿalbek to the land of the Palestinians" (8.13). The city of Baʿalbek, Roman Heliopolis, was damaged in 746 CE, during the Third Fitna, and it partially collapsed in the earthquake of 749 CE.[24] It would be surprising if the merchants' route were described by reference to a site

18. The meaning of "theirs" is ambiguous, since it could indicate either linguistic or cultural tradition. It implies that local patronymic naming practice was different. Abu (Abū) is Arabic rather than Aramaic.

19. E. K. Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 175–82.

20. A. Marsham, *The Umayyad Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024), 275.

21. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 175 n7; Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 427–29.

22. By way of illustration, problem 16 of Anania Širakacʻi's *Problems and Solutions* discusses two stonecutters preparing stones at different speeds for the construction of a church: Anania Širakacʻi, [*Yałags*] *harcʻman ew lucman*, in *Širakacʻu Matenagrutʻyunĕ*, ed. A. G. Abrahamyan, 227–32 (Erevan: HSSR Matenadarani Hratarakčʻutʻyun, 1944), 229; repr. in *Matenagirkʻ Hayocʻ 7 Dar*, 4:617–23 (Antʻilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʻołikosutʻiwn, 2005), 619.48; trans. T. W. Greenwood, "A Reassessment of the Life and Mathematical Problems of Anania Širakacʻi," *Revue des études arméniennes* 33 (2011): 131–86, at 164.

23. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 84; D. Genequand, "The Archaeological Evidence for the Jafnids and the Naṣrids," in *Arabs and Empires before Islam*, ed. G. Fisher, 172–213 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 202–5.

24. According to Theophanes, Marwān II demolished the walls of Emesa (Ḥimṣ) and Heliopolis (Baʿalbek) after an uprising: Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1883), 1:422; trans. and comm. C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History,*

that had recently been devastated. This incidental detail therefore supports the contention that the *Martyrdom* was composed before these events.

The representation of Armenia and members of the Armenian elite is also consistent with the stated date of composition. Again, we shall concentrate on three features. Although Vahan is not independently attested in contemporary works outside the *Martyrdom*,[25] Esayi, bishop of Gołtʻn, and Sahak, lord (*tēr*) of Gołtʻn, both attended the council of Armenian and Albanian clerics and laymen held at Partaw in 768 CE.[26] This, however, is the latest reference to the noble house of Gołtʻn or its episcopal see, and although the history of Gołtʻn in the ninth century is wholly obscure, the district had become an emirate by 900 CE.[27] In our opinion, there would be little purpose in commemorating the spiritual heroism of a figure from a defunct noble family, so this feature again supports an eighth-century dating.

Second, one of the ecclesiastical figures named in the *Martyrdom*, Sołomon, abbot of the monastery of Makʻenocʻ (5.45), is independently attested. It has now been more than fifty years since Sołomon's life and career were pieced together from a range of sources by van Esbroeck.[28] We can be confident that he attended the Council of Manazkert/Manzikert in 726 CE because the list of attendees in the Syriac account preserved in Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle* includes "Sołomon, abbot of Makʻenocʻ."[29] A colophon attached to a florilegium dated AE 196 (May 24, 747–May 22, 748) records that "the man of God Sołomon, leader of the community of Makʻenocʻ, in the district of Gełarkuni, assembled individual extracts from patristic theologians into a single collection for spiritual instruction."[30] Although several of the other works mentioning Sołomon date from much later eras, leaving their specific

AD 284–813 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 584. For a collection of similar notices and their common origin, see R. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 256, 259–61. For the earthquake, see Hoyland, *Theophilus*, 271.

25. The date and authorship of a short poetic eulogy commemorating Vahan's martyrdom remain contested. It is attributed by some to Xosroviduxt Gołtʻnecʻi, Vahan's sister, and by others to another female poet of the eighth century, Sahakduxt Siwnecʻi. Remarkably, in several places it resonates with the language of the *Martyrdom*, most particularly in the phrase "included among the incorporeal ones by the peoples of the South," *yazgacʻn harawaynoy dasaworeal ĕnd anmarmnakansn*; for the text, which is not afforded a separate entry, see Ł. Ališan, *Hayapatum*, 2 vols. (Venice: S. Łazar, 1901), 2:18–19. For the description of Arab Muslims as the people of the South, see below and notes 32–34. If the eulogy is an eighth-century composition, it seems to depend on the *Martyrdom*.

26. "Kanonkʻ Sioni Hayocʻ katʻołikosi," in *Kanonagirkʻ Hayocʻ*, ed. V. Hakobyan, 2 vols. (Erevan: Haykakan SSH Gitutʻyunneri Akademiayi Hratarakčʻutʻyun, 1971), 2:3–18, at 5 and 6; trans. in A. Mardirossian, "Les canons du synode de Partaw (768)," *Revue des études arméniennes* 27 (1998–2000): 117–34, at 121.

27. A. Ter-Łewondyan, *The Arab Emirates in Bagratid Armenia*, trans. N. G. Garsoïan (Lisbon: Livraria Bertrand, 1976), 72.

28. M. van Esbroeck, "Salomon de Makenoc, vardapet du VIII[e] siècle," in *Armeniaca: Mélanges d'études arméniennes*, 33–44 (Venice: S. Łazar, 1969).

29. Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche*, trans. and ed. J.-B. Chabot, 2 vols. (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1901), 2:497; van Esbroeck, "Salomon," 37. The Armenian account partially overlaps with the Syriac one but contains an abbreviated list, which identifies eight Armenian bishops by name but otherwise refers generally to all the Armenian bishops, priests, deacons, and children of the covenant of the holy church. By contrast, the Syriac text names thirty-three Armenian attendees.

30. Van Esbroeck, "Salomon," 42–44; Matʻevosyan, *Hišatakaranner*, no. 39.

details open to question, there can be no doubt that Sołomon was a prominent Armenian scholar in the first half of the eighth century.

Finally, it is striking that in the *Martyrdom*, the Armenian delegation is provided with a "Roman book" by leading Christians in Ruṣāfa. We understand this to refer to a written composition in Greek. Setting to one side for the present what work it comprised, this Greek text was then translated into Armenian by the bishop of Edessa as the party of pilgrims traveled home to Armenia (9.7). The apparent lack of knowledge of Greek within the delegation is surprising, but the revelation that the translation was accomplished by the bishop of Edessa is less so. At the Council of Manazkert, convened in September 726, a delegation of six Syrian Orthodox bishops met with the Armenian catholicos Yovhannēs Ōjnecʻi, his bishops, and other prominent Armenian clerics to discuss matters of doctrine and belief.[31] They found themselves in agreement and issued a joint statement of faith, including ten anathemas. One of the Syrian Orthodox bishops who attended is identified as Constantius, bishop of Edessa. This is not to suggest that the Armenian party met Constantius or that the encounter took place in this way, or indeed at all—we have no way of knowing—but the delegation's encounter with the bishop of Edessa occurred at a time when relations between the Armenian and Syrian Orthodox Churches were close.

Further, two linguistic features of the *Martyrdom* provide strong support for the proposed dating. First, the Arab Muslims are described as the "people of the South," *harawayin azgēn* (in the title of the *Martyrdom*), and as "wind of the South," *awdovn harawoy* (1.8). Similar terminology is found in the *History* attributed to Sebēos, a composition completed in the early months of 655 CE and then updated with brief notices recording the progress and outcome of the First Fitna around 661 CE.[32] Turning to the core of seventh-century materials assembled in the 680s and preserved in book 2 of the *History of Ałuankʻ* attributed to Movsēs Kałankatuacʻi/Dasxurancʻi, we find that Muʿāwiya is termed "king of the South," *tʻagawor harawoy* (or *harawaynoy*), on no fewer than nine occasions, thereby connecting him directly to the figure who features so prominently in Daniel 11.[33] This text contains further references to the "Southerners," the "cruel rod of the South," the "tyrant of the South," and the "prince of the South."[34] However, such terminology is absent from the

31. *Girkʻ Tʻłtʻocʻ*, 220–233; for a recent study and translation, see S. P. Cowe, "Yovhannēs Ōdznetsʻi's Canon on the Synod of Manazkert (726): End of an Era or New Beginning?," *St Nersess Theological Review* 14, no. 2 (2023): 7–112.

32. The *History* mentions *zHarawayinn*, "the one of the South," and *Ays čʻors, yarucʻeal i Harawoy kołmanē, Ismayelean tʻagaworutʻiwnn*, "this fourth, which arose from the region of the South, the kingdom of Ishmael": Sebēos, *Patmutʻiwn Sebēosi*, ed. G. V. Abgaryan (Erevan: Haykakan SSH Gitutʻyunneri Akademiayi Hratarakčʻutʻyun, 1979), 72, 142; repr. in *Matenagirkʻ Hayocʻ 7 Dar*, 4:453–565 (Antʻilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʻołikosutʻiwn, 2005), 474.3, 534.36; trans. R. W. Thomson, comm. J. D. Howard-Johnston, *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 13, 105. The three updating notices disrupt the chronological sequence at the end of the text, implying that they were inserted into the margins of the final folio of the autograph.

33. Movsēs Kałankatuacʻi, *Patmutʻiwn*, 2:27–28; repr. *MH*, 15:251.8, 251.10, 251.12, 253.24, 253.28, 254.36, 254.1, 255.4, 257.12; trans. Dowsett, *History*, 124–27.

34. For *harawayinsn/harawaynocʻn*, "Southerners," see Movsēs Kałankatuacʻi, *Patmutʻiwn*, 2:18, 27; repr. *MH*, 15:228.13, 251.8; trans. Dowsett, *History*, 110, 125. For *zgawazann xstutʻean harawynoyn*, "cruel rod of the

History of Łewond. Whether the latter is a late eighth-century composition, as most recent commentators maintain, or assembled a century later, it is evident that at the time of its composition, this conceptualization was no longer being applied.[35] These "Southern" labels connect the *Martyrdom* powerfully to several other Armenian works composed in the formative era of Islamic-Armenian interactions, before the ʿAbbāsid caliphate.

The second linguistic marker is the use of the term *Yakobik*, "little Jacob," a term applied to Syrian Orthodox Christians and derived from Jacob Baradaeus, the sixth-century bishop of Edessa, who helped establish a separate Syrian Orthodox Church (whose members are hence sometimes called Jacobites). The term occurs twice in the *Martyrdom*. The priest who gave the sacrament to Vahan while the latter was imprisoned in Ruṣāfa (6.37) is described as a "truth-loving *Yakobik*," and the crowd of Christians, both men and women, who collected the blood of the martyr are reported to have been "Roman and *Yakobik* and Nestorian" (8.7)—in other words, members of the Chalcedonian/Melkite, Syrian Orthodox, and Nestorian/Church of the East confessional communities. This term does not appear to have been used before 700 CE, at least not in Armenian. It is used to describe one of the lay lords who attended the council of the Church of Ałuankʿ at Partaw in 705 CE: "Vahan i Varaz Yohanean, from the stock of the Madianacikʿ—perhaps those of al-Madāʾin (Ctesiphon)—*Yakobik* in faith."[36] Furthermore, the six Syrian Orthodox bishops who attended the Council of Manazkert in 726 CE, referred to above, are described by its convenor, Catholicos Yovhannēs Ōjnecʿi, as being "from the *Yakobik* house."[37] The term is also used by Xosrovik *tʿargmanič*ʿ—Xosrovik/little Xosrov, the translator—who attended the Council of Manazkert and wrote a number of important dogmatic works.[38] In one of these, addressed to Sargis, bishop of Geradekor, Xosrovik distinguishes between the theologies of Julian of Halicarnassus and Severus of Antioch, calling supporters of the former *Yulianist* and supporters of the latter *Yakobiks* and explaining, wrongly, that their name derived from Jacob, bishop of the city of Mcbin/Nisibis rather than Uṙha/Edessa.[39] This concentration of references to *Yakobik* in several Armenian works dated to the first half of the eighth century supports the proposed date of composition of the *Martyrdom*.

South," see Movsēs, 2:19; *MH*, 15:236.32; Dowsett, 115. For *bṙnakaln harawoy*, "tyrant of the South," see Movsēs, 2:27, 28; *MH*, 15:251.13, 254.Title; Dowsett, 125, 127. For *išxann harawoy*, "the prince of the South," see Movsēs, 2:35; *MH*, 15:289.33; Dowsett, 146.

35. For recent assessments of this work, including its dating, see J.-P. Mahé, "Le problème de l'authenticité et de la valeur de la chronique de Łewond," in *L'Arménie et Byzance: Histoire et culture*, 119–26 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996); T. W. Greenwood, "A Reassessment of the History of Łewond," *Le Muséon* 125, no. 1–2 (2012): 99–167; and La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, xix–lvii.

36. Movsēs Kałankatuacʿi, *Patmutʿiwn*, 3:10; repr. *MH*, 15:378.1; trans. Dowsett, *History*, 197.

37. *i yakobik tanē*: *Girkʿ Tʿłtʿocʿ*, 224.

38. The Syriac account of the council preserved in Michael the Syrian's *Chronicle* refers to one Xosrov as the priest and *vardapet* of the Armenians: Michael, *Chronique*, 2:497.

39. Xosrovik tʿargmanič, "Tʿułtʿ aṙ Tēr Sargis episkopos Geradekoray," in *Matenagirkʿ Hayocʿ 8 Dar*, 6:682–94 (Antʿilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʿołikosutʿiwn, 2007), 683.13–14. The identity of Bishop Sargis remains contested. The Syriac list of attendees at the Council of Manazkert identifies two bishops named Sargis, one whose see cannot be securely identified and another who is called the bishop of Sanasnaye, "those of Sasun": Michael, *Chronique*, 2:497–98. The Armenian account refers to Sargis, bishop of Taykʿ: *Girkʿ Tʿłtʿocʿ*, 223.

In sum, the date supplied in the colophon, 744 CE, finds extensive support in the work's representation of the Umayyad caliphate and of contemporary Armenian figures and experiences as well as in its use of distinctive chronological and linguistic markers. Collectively, these features demonstrate that the *Martyrdom* is a product of the late Marwānid era.

Although this cannot be proved definitively, in our view it is highly likely that Artawazd, also known as Abraham, the leader of the community at Erašxawor in Maseacʻotn (5.46), was responsible for the composition of the *Martyrdom*.[40] He appears twice in the text. He is depicted receiving Vahan warmly for three days before providing him with what he needs for his onward journey south to Edessa and ultimately Ruṣāfa (5.46). Artawazd is therefore represented as the last Armenian cleric to encounter Vahan before the latter's martyrdom. Furthermore, it is Artawazd who leads a group of brothers to Callinicum/Raqqa from where he travels on with a single companion to Ruṣāfa, seven years after the saint's death (9.2–10). The pair worship at the martyria of both Vahan and Sergius before the whole party returns home via Edessa. Although it is possible that the *Martyrdom* was composed by his companion, or another member of the community at Erašxawor, the simplest solution is to accept that Artawazd was responsible.

In any event, the character of the work suits a monastic context of production. Aside from Vahan, no lay figure is identified by name. The *Martyrdom* is limited in its coverage of the lay elite. It reveals that Vahan's wife was from the family of the lord of Siwnikʻ (5.7) and that his father-in-law controlled the district of Vayocʻ Jor (5.10). An anonymous prince and commander of Armenia is mentioned in disparaging terms as someone who was inspired by a demon (5.18–19). The text's treatment of the ecclesiastical elite is similarly meager. The only bishops to feature in it are located in Ruṣāfa and Edessa, outside Armenia. The *Martyrdom* does not promote the spiritual credentials of any noble family, nor does it highlight the support of the catholicos or any bishop in Vahan's passion (in fact, as we shall see, it does quite the reverse), nor does it identify any location in historic Armenia for the commemoration of Vahan; his relics remain in Ruṣāfa. By contrast, several monastic communities in Armenia feature in the narrative. One unidentified community looks after Vahan for six months before requiring him to leave at the insistence of a prince's wife (5.29–32). In obscure circumstances, Vahan is assisted by the leader of an unidentified monastery—possibly the same one—named Yovhannēs (5.40–41). We noted earlier that Vahan is portrayed meeting Sołomon, abbot of Makʻenocʻ, in the district of Gełarkuni, south of lake Sewan (5.45), and encountering Artawazd, abbot of Erašxawor (5.46). Moreover, when Artawazd and his party journey south to Callinicum, they stay at a monastery in the city called Der Mar Zakkʻē (9.2).[41] Although Armenian nobles and ecclesiastical leaders

40. Three figures in the narrative bear two names: Artawazd/Abraham, Vahan/Vahap, and Theophilus/Abu Stepʻanē. The alternative names denote new or different identities adopted by or attributed to the figures in question. The name of the monastery, Erašxawor, indicates that this community was located somewhere near the river Erašx/Araxes in the district of Maseacʻotn; this was probably its original location, although it later came to be situated at Širakawan in Širak.

41. In Syriac, literally the monastery of Lord Zaccheus. The use of the Syriac name is noteworthy. The site of the monastery is located just to the northeast of the city, on the Tell al-Bīʿa: Stefan Heidemann, "The History of

remain anonymous and their actions are sometimes criticized, the heads of identifiable monastic communities are named and their actions commended. For all these reasons, a monastic context of production for the *Martyrdom* seems most likely, with Artawazd responsible for its composition.

The individual responsible reveals something of his role and the remit of the work in the concluding colophon. Using familiar tropes of humility and self-abasement, he states that God has rendered his unworthiness "worthy of writing and giving this history in memory of those who have died" (10.2). This statement asserts that he personally wrote at least some part of the work. In commemorating "those who have died," the colophon reveals that the composition addressed more than Vahan's martyrdom. This final section refers specifically to the year 152 of the Armenian Era (703–4 CE) when "Armenia drank the cup of wrath" (10.1), and this is the same date supplied at the start of the composition (3.4), after the churches had been set on fire. We can be confident, therefore, that the *Martyrdom* included both narratives from the start. From a structural perspective, the lament introduces the circumstances in which Vahan came to be transported to Damascus as a four-year-old child and to adopt Islam (4.1). His childhood apostasy and upbringing outside Armenia are fundamental elements in the story of his path to conversion to Christianity and subsequent martyrdom.

The structure of the *Martyrdom* merits further comment. We proposed earlier that the *Martyrdom* comprises two distinct narratives: the initial lament for the evils endured by Armenia at the hands of Arab Muslims in 703–4 CE, culminating in the deaths of the Armenian nobles burned alive in the churches (sections 1–3), and the record of the life and martyrdom of Vahan. We also noted that when Artawazd and his companion visited Ruṣāfa, they were instructed by leading Christians "through a Roman book" (9.6). This implies that they were presented with a written work in Greek and that this was the text translated into Armenian by the bishop of Edessa in the course of the return journey (9.7). But what work was this? For a long time, our working hypothesis was that it was an account of the life and martyrdom of Saint Vahan.[42] It has proved difficult, however, to demonstrate that a Greek original underlies the entire Vahan narrative in the *Martyrdom*. There are no clear borrowings or dependence on Greek syntax or morphology, and the scriptural citations, which tend to be paraphrases or allusions rather than direct biblical quotations, do not point to a Greek archetype. Moreover, it is hard to envisage the circumstances in which such a work would have been composed in Greek. It is, however, possible to envision an alternative interpretation of the "Roman book."

In this analysis, the structure of the account describing the visit of Artawazd and his companion to Ruṣāfa takes on a particular significance. They are recorded as worshiping at the martyrium of Saint Vahan at the start and at the end of their visit (9.3, 9.7), supporting the proposition that this was an extramural church. The centerpiece of the narrative is the

the Industrial and Commercial Area of ʿAbbāsid al-Raqqa, Called al-Raqqa al-Muḥtariqa," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69, no. 1 (2006): 33–52, at 38.

42. Both Abełyan, *Istorija*, 396, and Ter-Davtʻyan, *Armjanskie Žimija*, 291, maintain that the *Martyrdom* was based on a Greek original.

description of their visit to the martyrium of Saint Sergius. It appears that they are able to meet the saints (plural) through the assistance of Theophilus/Abu Stepʿanē (9.4). The next sentence reports that after worshiping at the martyrium of Saint Sergius—implying that this is where they encountered the saints—they meet the bishop (9.5) and the wise men, reportedly leading figures in the court of Hishām (9.6). These men instruct the Armenians about the martyrdom of the saint through a Roman book and present them with the testimony about the brave hero (9.6). This description is ambiguous and could apply equally to Saint Sergius or to Saint Vahan, but the context seems to favor the former. In other words, Artawazd and his companion are depicted as receiving specific information and a written account not about Saint Vahan but rather about the passion and cult of Saint Sergius. Coincidentally or otherwise, an Armenian translation of the Greek *Passio* of Sergius and Bacchus exists, and the account of Vahan's death in the *Martyrdom* parallels several details in the deaths of both Sergius and Bacchus as recounted in that translation, specifically the gathering of the martyr's blood in one place and the involvement of wild animals in guarding the holy body overnight (8.1 and 8.3).[43] There is no direct linguistic correspondence, however, and the exact nature of the relationship between these works remains unresolved at present.

At this point, we need to remember that the *Martyrdom* is a work of hagiography, not reportage. Instead of seeking to establish exactly what the Roman book comprised and how it informed the writing of the *Martyrdom*, it may be more helpful to interpret the comment about the book from a broader perspective. The inclusion of this detail attests the ongoing authority of written testimony. It also confirms that Armenians of this time continued to believe that Christian truth could be preserved in other languages and that even if they were not able to translate the texts themselves, it was still important to gain access to them. Some Armenians, at least, were open to instruction through such writings, even works in Greek (if this is a correct understanding of the term "Roman"). To put it another way, this detail suggests that Armenian translation activity persisted into the middle of the eighth century.

In summary, the *Martyrdom* is a composite Armenian text, compiled in 744 CE in the monastery of Erašxawor in the district of Maseacʿotn in all likelihood by Artawazd/Abraham, the leader of the community. We contend that instead of being written to highlight the spiritual credentials of the princely family of Gołtʿn or the leaders of the Armenian church, or to promote the cult of Saint Vahan in some location in Armenia, the *Martyrdom* was written as a defense of Armenian Christian doctrine and teaching at a time when members of the Armenian elite, both lay lords and clerics, were becoming integrated into the political and religious culture of the Marwānid state and were seemingly at risk of compromising their Armenian identity. In addressing themes of conversion, apostasy, and religious polemic, the author sought to confront his present circumstances. In order to develop this contention further, let us consider the representation of the later Umayyad caliphate and then of Armenian experiences within that world.

43. For the Greek *Passio* and its Armenian translation, see above, note 7, and below, notes 96–101.

The Representation of the Late Umayyad World

The previous section has shown that the *Martyrdom* preserves invaluable testimony about Umayyad rule. The text reproduces the caliphal sequence accurately, displaying precise knowledge of family dynamics and patrilineal descent. Its use of the hijri calendar (2.1) makes it one of the earliest works in Armenian literature to do so. It offers important reflections on the character of Hishām's court in Ruṣāfa. Yet these features barely touch the surface. The *Martyrdom* is suffused with insights and observations about the political and religious culture of the late Umayyad world. We shall examine these under three headings: administration and hegemony, conversion and apostasy, and, more briefly, perceptions of Armenia. This survey is not intended to be comprehensive; rather, it provides an impression of the work's potential.

I. Administration and Hegemony

The *Martyrdom* opens with an unequivocal statement about political transformation: "Foreign nations have taken the pleasure of this land, and the freedom and lordship and authority of the nobles has been overthrown as worthless" (1.4). This is presented as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy (1.1–3, 1.5), a time when the condition of Armenia was fundamentally altered.[44] The statement also presages the conflagrations at Naxčawan and Xram, described in the following section (2.1–17), in which a large number of Armenian nobles—we are told neither how many nor who they were—were burned to death. The narrative states that these events occurred in the eighty-fifth year and in the sixteenth year of ʿAbd al-Malik, but that it was only in the first year of his son, al-Walīd, at Easter time, that the captives, identified as relatives of those who had been killed (3.1), were taken to Duin, where they were held until the autumn for dispatch to Syria (3.4–6). The text correlates the timing of these events with AE 152. The dates do not fit together perfectly, but they give a strong indication that the fires occurred in 703 or 704 CE and the surviving family members who had been seized were transferred to Syria in 704 or 705 CE.[45]

From the perspective of the author, therefore, it is only at the end of ʿAbd al-Malik's rule that caliphal dominance in the North began to be asserted directly and systematically. Vacca has argued that this took place in the aftermath of the Marwānid reforms.[46] Although this narrative of reform has recently been questioned by Legendre, the testimony of the *Martyrdom* corresponds with the numismatic evidence.[47] As noted earlier, the earliest

44. The prophetic context is established through a complex combination of scriptural allusions to Ezekiel 21:3, Nahum 3:10, Lamentations 1:1, and Jeremiah 1:5.

45. For a wider assessment of the tradition, which incorporates the fires narrative found in the *Martyrdom*, see A. Vacca, "The Fires of Naxčawan: In Search of Intercultural Transmission in Arabic, Armenian, Greek, and Syriac," *Le Muséon* 129, no. 3 (2016): 323–62.

46. Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces*, 38; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, xx.

47. M. Legendre, "The Translation of the *Dīwān* and the Making of the Marwānid 'Language Reform': Secretarial Agency, Economic Incentives and Regional Dynamics in the Umayyad State," in *Navigating Language in the Early Islamic World: Multilingualism and Language Change in the First Centuries of Islam*, ed. A. Vacca, A. Borrut, and M. Ceballos, 89–166 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2024).

dirhams minted in Dabīl/Duin are dated AH 84 (January 24, 703–January 13, 704). In other words, the establishment of a provincial mint in Duin correlates with the detention of the Armenian captives in the same location, and both imply direct control of the city through a permanent military presence.

Three other specific features of the lament merit comment. In the first place, the reason given in the *Martyrdom* for the gathering of the nobles was the promise that "many gifts and presents would be granted to them from the royal treasury by distributing to them generous gifts of *dahekan*s, the *atayan*s of the year" (2.2). This implies that the Armenian nobles had been included in the *dīwān al-jund*, the military payroll, and were thereby eligible for annual stipends.[48] As pointed out by Tēr-Vardanean, *atayan* is an Armenian rendering of the Arabic *ʿaṭā*, the term typically used for such payments.[49] It is attested in Umayyad-era papyri from Egypt, such as *P. Heid.Arab.* I 1, dated AH 91 (November 9, 709–October 28, 710).[50] This is the first instance of this Arabic loanword in Armenian and an early example of any Arabic loanword in Armenian.[51] Significantly, it is associated with the administration of military resources, the primary topic of negotiation between the caliphal authorities and the Armenian elite.

Second, the lament concludes by noting that "all the celebrated military forces were beheaded by the sword and were hung on wood" (2.17). This account accords precisely with the form of execution known as *ṣalb*, the gibbeting of a beheaded corpse. Seidensticker has argued that "in the Islamic world, the normal case was crucifixion after death."[52] Anthony maintains that "crucifixion was a public and ritualized form of violence intended to conjure up an amorphous array of polyvalent symbols that . . . served the legitimizing effort of the Umayyad polity."[53] Marsham adopted a similar interpretation in his study of public executions in the Umayyad period, concluding that they communicated claims to legitimate authority.[54] The *Martyrdom* comments specifically on this public dimension. It notes that those taken captive in the aftermath of the fires and executions were led past the wooden crosses at Naxčawan (3.1). The next sentence gives an impression of the effectiveness of this strategy: the sight of the crosses outside Naxčawan (3.2) was "not only terrifying to our fellow countrymen but also [one that] made their own bravery universally known."

48. M. Legendre, "Aspects of Umayyad Administration," in Marsham, *Umayyad World*, 133–57, at 139–40.

49. Artawazd, *Patmutʿiwn*, ed. Tēr-Vardanean, in *MH*, 6:871 n32.

50. *P.Heid.Arab.* I 1, 7–9 (Aphrodito); see A. Grohmann, *From the World of Arabic Papyri* (Cairo: Al-Maaref Press, 1952), 124–25.

51. R. W. Thomson, "Arabic in Armenia before the Tenth Century," in "Mélanges Jean-Pierre Mahé," *Travaux et mémoires* 18 (2014): 691–706; A. Vacca, "Arabic and the Public Performance of Power in Medieval Armenia," in Vacca, Borrut, and Ceballos, *Navigating Language*, 281–306.

52. T. Seidensticker, "Responses to Crucifixion in the Islamic World (1st–7th/7th–13th Centuries)," in *Public Violence in Islamic Societies: Power, Discipline, and the Construction of the Public Sphere, 7th–19th Centuries CE*, ed. C. Lange and M. Fierro, 203–16 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 210.

53. S. Anthony, *Crucifixion and Death as Spectacle: Umayyad Crucifixion in Its Late Antique Context* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 2014), 67.

54. A. Marsham, "Public Execution in the Umayyad Period: Early Islamic Punitive Practice and Its Late Antique Context," *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 11 (2011): 101–36, at 104–5.

Marsham's study supplies a substantial list of descriptions of capital punishment, including crucifixion, during the Umayyad caliphate, but these are all drawn from Islamic narrative sources of the ʿAbbāsid era.[55] By contrast, as a work of the late Umayyad era, the *Martyrdom* preserves the memory of violence and crucifixion in Armenia in the first decade of the eighth century. Its closest contemporary Armenian analogue is the little-studied account of the crucifixion of David of Duin, but this work's date of composition cannot be narrowed further than to some point in the first three-quarters of the eighth century.[56]

The third detail also concerns the transportation of the captives. The *Martyrdom* reports (3.6) that "at the coming of autumn, they removed them from the place of imprisonment and sealed their necks, and they took them and had them conveyed to the land of Syria, enumerated and in writing." Robinson and Vacca have both noted that the sealing of captives' necks had late antique—primarily Sasanian—precedents, symbolizing both the imposition of legitimate authority and public humiliation.[57] The practice of neck-sealing to indicate either payment of taxes or ongoing liability for payment was not, however, a direct Sasanian legacy but rather an adaptation of that earlier practice.[58] Robinson and Legendre have both observed that there are no references to neck-sealing in Umayyad-era sources.[59] The *Martyrdom* supplies such testimony, but it does so in the context of the original practice, not its post-Sasanian adaptation.

At this juncture, it is worth repeating that we do not interpret the *Martyrdom*'s narrative of the fires of Naxčawan and their aftermath as a description of what actually happened. We see it as a representation of what happened, one that was composed by or in 744 CE and was sufficiently plausible to contemporaries to be deemed meaningful and instructive. As a product of the late Umayyad era, it therefore offers insight into both present experiences and past memories that were familiar to its contemporary audience. We approach the

55. Ibid., 126–36.

56. "Xač'azgeac' nahatakn ew k'aǰayałt vkayn K'ristosi," in *Liakatar Vark' ew Vkayabanut'iwn Srboc'*, ed. M. Awgerean, 12 vols., 6:224–29 (Venice: Tparan Mxit'areanc', 1810–15); *Sop'erk' haykakank'*, 22 vols., 1:985–96 (Venice: Tparan Mxit'areanc', 1853–61); Ališan, *Hayapatum*, 1:546–52. See also Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i (John Catholicos), *Patmut'iwn Hayoc'*, ed. M. Emin (Moscow, 1853; repr. Tbilisi, 1912; repr. Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1980), 91–94; repr. in *Matenagirk' Hayoc' 10 Dar*, 11:317–584 (Ant'ilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Kat'ołikosut'iwn, 2010), 413–16; trans. K. H. Maksoudian, *Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i: History of Armenia* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 106–7. David's execution is explicitly described as imitating the passion of Christ. He first willingly raised himself upon the cross and was then killed by a lance (or, according to John Catholicos, an arrow to the heart). Although the different versions of his martyrology disagree on the precise details, they are clear that his cross miraculously turned to face east.

57. C. Robinson, "Neck-Sealing in Early Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48, no. 3 (2005): 401–41, at 412–17; Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces*, 207.

58. Robinson, "Neck-Sealing," 405; Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces*, 207.

59. Robinson, "Neck-Sealing," 428; Legendre, "Aspects of Umayyad Administration," 144–45. The *History* of Łewond contains two references to the neck-sealing of Armenians: Łewond, *Patmabanut'iwn*, ed. G. Tēr-Vardanean, in *Matenagirk' Hayoc' 8 Dar*, 6:711–854 (Ant'ilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Kat'ołikosut'iwn, 2007), at 822.4 and 850.10; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 279 and 376; see also 283. Both instances take place in the ʿAbbāsid era, both refer to Syriac *zuzē* (coin), and both occur in the context of taxation, not captivity.

account of the life and martyrdom of Vahan in the same way. Let us now consider the remainder of the composition for its perceptions of Umayyad administration.

Vahan is introduced as a four-year-old child, the son of Xosrov, lord of Gołtʻn, who was taken to Syria in the aftermath of the conflagrations (4.1). He was brought up as a Muslim at the royal court in Damascus (3.7) where he exceled in his studies of "their knowledge and law" (4.2, 4.5). He was given a new name, Vahap, and appointed a scribe of the royal diwan (*diwanadpir arkʻuni*).[60] This narrative corresponds in several respects—noble birth, handsome appearance, superior intellectual gifts and knowledge, new name, entry into royal service—with the experience of the Old Testament prophet Daniel at the court of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, described in Daniel 1. The key point of difference is that whereas Daniel remains faithful to his ancestral religion, Vahan does not. Vahan's appointment in the royal diwan is striking, although not decisive for dating purposes. As Legendre has shown, this term held multiple meanings, which changed over time, and it was already in use in the late Sasanian era.[61] The Armenian evidence confirms this. It is found as a loan word in the mid-seventh-century Armenian *History* attributed to Sebēos, both in a provincial context—a request by an Armenian lord to move the *diwan* of the land of Siwnikʻ from Duin to the city of Pʻaytakaran (before 572 CE)—and in a metropolitan context—the award of the "lesser commerce *diwan* of the country" to Smbat Bagratuni by the *šahanšah* in 615 CE.[62] The latter has been interpreted in various ways. For our purposes, however, the key observation is that in Armenian tradition, *diwan* was an existing term associated with state administration, so its use in the *Martyrdom* does not necessarily signal specific knowledge of contemporary terminology in caliphal central government. Intriguingly, many years later, when trying to obtain an audience with Hishām prior to his martyrdom, Vahan is reported to have sought the assistance of the *dprapet*, the head scribe, who had taught him in his childhood (6.5). This implies the existence of a bureaucratic hierarchy with internal mechanisms of training. It also presumes that careers in government administration could last for many years and across successive caliphates.

60. The significance of his new name is unclear. Vahan means "shield" in Armenian. His new name, Vahap, could be read as a form of the theophoric name ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, meaning "servant of the All-Giver"; Wahhāb is one of the ninety-nine names of Allāh and appears in two suras of the Qurʾān, in three separate verses: Q. 3:8, Q. 38:9, 36. It seems, however, unlikely that Vahan would have been given this name and the author should omit the "ʿAbd al-" component. Alternatively, the new name may have been Wahb, meaning "gift." The name is attested in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods: the Prophet's maternal grandfather was named Wahb, and at least three of his companions bore this name. It does not seem that this new name held any specific significance—it was not used to designate converts or slaves, for instance—and so it may simply denote knowledge on the part of the author of an Arabic name that sounds like Vahan. The adoption of similar-sounding names by converts appears to have been quite common, as in the case of the leader of the Banū Tayy who, upon converting to Islam, changed his name by one letter from Zayd al-Khayl ("abundance of horses") to Zayd al-Khayr ("abundance of goodness"). On the adoption of a new Muslim name upon conversion, see Ayman S. Ibrahim, *Conversion to Islam: Competing Themes in Early Islamic Historiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 165–66. For Zayd al-Khayr, see Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. M. al-Saqqā et al., 2 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955), 2:577.

61. Legendre, "Translation of the *Dīwān*," 112–19.

62. Sebēos, *Patmutʻiwn*, 67–68 and 101; repr. *MH*, 4:471.29 and 499.11; trans. Thomson, *Sebeos*, 6 and 49, although the second instance of *diwan* is not apparent in the translation, being mentioned only in n309.

According to the *Martyrdom*, Vahan eventually secures a meeting with Hishām thanks to his Islamic education. Having failed to persuade the official responsible for entrances and exits (6.11) to intercede on his behalf, he manages to get the chief executioner, identified as K'abš, prince of Himac'ik' (perhaps Qabisa of Ḥamā or Ḥimṣ), to present the caliph with a letter (6.14).[63] When Hishām receives the letter (6.15), "he was amazed at the beautiful forms and the clever and suitable position of the words." The implication is that Vahan was gifted in Arabic composition and calligraphy. In the late Umayyad era, therefore, letters could be prized for their aesthetic and calligraphic as well as their linguistic qualities.[64]

The *Martyrdom* also offers occasional insights into the wider system of Umayyad governance. It names the person responsible for the fires at Naxčawan and Xram as Kasm/Qāsim.[65] He is described as someone who was "faithful to Muḥammad and appointed *hramanatar* [that is, commander] of Armenia through the command of ʿAbd al-Malik" (2.5). Although Qāsim is not attested in Arabic narratives, the *History* of Łewond observes that he was loyal to Muḥammad b. Marwān, the first governor of the North.[66] Therefore, "faithful to Muḥammad" indicates in this instance a political relationship, not a religious conviction.[67] It is notable that his appointment is described as being determined by the caliph rather than Muḥammad b. Marwān. A later passage introduces the future caliph, Marwān b. Muḥammad, as simply Marwān, reporting that he was located in Mesopotamia at the time (6.31) and that Hishām sought reliable information about Vahan from him. Shortly afterward he is referred to as the "prince of the North" (7.1), reflecting his wider authority in the region after 732 CE.

The most sustained coverage centers on Hishām's court in Ruṣāfa. The presence of the *dprapet*, mentioned earlier, implies a functioning bureaucracy, and this is supported by the description of Hishām's treasury. When in debate with Vahan (6.21), Hishām commands "the heads of the treasury to bring treasures of gold and silver and garments in silk of different colors. And he said to him, 'Unfortunate and evil-loving man, take all that, and servants and maidservants and horses and mules and camels, and authority for you, whether here or in Gołt'n, your own principality.'" The account may be formulaic, the list of movable assets intended to contrast with Vahan's repudiation of the riches of this world, but it corresponds with the representation of Hishām in other sources as someone who was obsessed with material possessions.[68] More surprising, perhaps, is the assertion later in the story that there was a chief eunuch within the palace entourage (8.4). This figure is reported to have come from the palace to direct the crowd of Christians who had gathered at the site of

63. This figure is otherwise unattested.

64. A. Gully, *The Culture of Letter-Writing in Pre-modern Islamic Society* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 61.

65. Vacca, "Fires of Naxčawan," 340.

66. Łewond, *Patmabanut'iwn*, in *MH*, 6:755.13; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 78.

67. This phrase is not used in Armenian to define a Muslim.

68. L. Pecorini Goodall, "'The ʿAbbās after Whom Those Who Rule in Baghdad Are Named': Al-ʿAbbās b. al-Walīd in Late Antique Accounts of the Marwānids and the Third Fitna," *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 30 (2022): 384–434, at 405–16.

Vahan's execution but were nervous about removing the body and blood of the martyr. Employing eunuchs at the caliphal court is usually considered a convention introduced in the ʿAbbāsid era, although El-Azhari has recently challenged this view.[69] This detail implies that eunuchs were indeed features of Umayyad-era court life. It could also be the case that the official was assumed to be a eunuch because there was already such a tradition in the imperial court in Constantinople; this interpretation would support the constructed quality of the representation of the court. Alternatively, it could be that *nerkʻinapet* retained a meaning equivalent to the Middle Persian (MP) *ped-šabestān*, master of the private/inner quarters. In any event, we do not find that this reference to a chief eunuch undermines the proposed dating.

This episode introduces an important dimension of Hishām's Ruṣāfa for the author of the *Martyrdom*: the city's Christian communities.[70] The narrative refers to a multitude of Christians who follow the saint at a distance as he is being led to his place of execution (7.9) but who do not intervene. Further, we are told that members of the royal court were present at the execution and saw everything (8.1). The implication is that these were Christians, and two later comments confirm this impression. Theophilus, also known as Abu Stepʻanē, is described (8.11) as being "from the royal officials, one who honored God and was from the Roman race." The reference to the "Roman race" reveals his confessional identity as a Chalcedonian. Earlier (8.7), the Christians who collected the body and blood of the martyr are described as being "a multitude of men and women . . . Roman and Yakobik and Nestorian." Since Yakobik and Nestorian denote distinct confessional communities, it follows that "Roman" does the same. The narrative comments that these communities were usually in conflict with one another but that in this instance they worked together to collect the relics and agreed that these should be buried at the burial site, "which is called 'for foreigners'" (8.8). Theophilus/Abu Stepʻanē is also reported to have been the figure who greeted Artawazd and his companion after they had worshiped at the martyrium of Vahan and who enabled them to worship in the martyrium of Saint Sergius (9.4). He is not the same person as the true and God-fearing bishop who received them with love and who introduced them to "the wise men, those who were prominent at the royal court, those who were well informed about the martyrdom of the saint" (9.5–6). As discussed previously, this passage may be interpreted as a reference to the martyrdom of Saint Sergius rather than of Saint Vahan.

The *Martyrdom* therefore asserts that there was a significant Christian presence in Ruṣāfa under Hishām's rule. Christians were present at and beyond the royal court. In addition to the multitude of Christians who watched Vahan's execution and waited to recover his body and blood, the overseer of the construction of a new palace who fell from a high place but was saved thanks to the intervention of Saint Vahan was also, seemingly, a Christian, since he invoked Vahan as he fell (8.17). As already noted, these Christians belonged to three different confessional communities, presumably with their own hierarchies and places

69. T. El-Azhari, *Queens, Eunuchs and Concubines in Islamic History, 661–1257* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 69–73.

70. On Hishām's attitudes toward Christians, with a brief discussion of Vahan in the context of the late 730s, see Marsham, *Umayyad Empire*, 181–86 and 274–75.

of worship, since their collective action is presented as unusual. Aside from his position as a royal official, Theophilus/Abu Step'anē apparently had a role in granting or securing access for those wishing to visit the martyrium of Saint Sergius inside the city. He is not, however, identified as a bishop. Intriguingly, the chronicler Theophanes, writing in Greek in the second decade of the ninth century but drawing on the earlier *History* of Theophilus, reports that Hishām was friendly with a Syrian monk called Stephen and allowed him to be elected patriarch of Antioch after a vacancy of forty years.[71] Even if this person was not the son of Theophilus, it is noteworthy that other Christian sources, too, depict positive Christian interactions with Hishām.

II. Conversion and Apostasy

The *Martyrdom* reports that Vahan's conversion to Islam took place at the royal court when he was held captive as a child. His youth is mentioned several times across the narrative and in different ways. Vahan is portrayed as repenting of his earlier conversion, calling it "childish ignorance" (5.5, 5.36, and 5.49). Hishām, too, reflects on Vahan's childhood (7.2), but from the opposite point of view, interpreting his upbringing as the opportunity for Vahan to receive the "truth" from learned scholars (7.2). Although Vahan—and thus the author—challenges the legitimacy of his conversion to Islam on the grounds of his young age, Hishām is portrayed as deeming it effective and genuine. Vahan's status as a slave attracts less comment (3.7, 4.4, and 4.8), but it is only if we accept that he was still a slave at the accession of ʿUmar II that the subsequent actions of the caliph reported in the text (4.4–5.2) become meaningful.

According to the *Martyrdom*, "God inspired [ʿUmar's] heart to remember the iniquity that [had been perpetrated] against the Armenians" (4.4). Since the next sentence reports that the captives were assembled and then dispatched, presumably back to Armenia, the "iniquity" can refer only to their capture and transportation south into northern Syria fifteen years or so earlier. What to do with Vahan, however, poses a dilemma for the caliph, because Vahan is such a gifted individual (4.5), "well instructed in their knowledge and law and clever and skillful in speech." He is depicted as unequaled in wisdom, echoing the superior abilities displayed by the Old Testament prophet Daniel. ʿUmar rejects the testimony of unspecified witnesses from Armenia (4.6), but further inquiries in Mesopotamia turn up fifteen Arabs who are acquainted with Vahan (4.8–9), and their evidence proves decisive. Although unstated, it seems that this testimony centers on proving who Vahan is, where he has come from, and under what circumstances he became a slave. ʿUmar offers Vahan worldly riches and high status to induce him to stay, but Vahan, while acknowledging all that he has received from ʿUmar, nevertheless asks to be released to go back to his ancestral home, which he would administer at ʿUmar's command. This part of the account resonates with the story of the great-grandfather of the Isfahan-based scholar Muḥammad b. ʿIṣām b. Yazīd b. ʿAjlān, who was captured in Daylam and taken to Kūfa, where he converted to Islam; he was at some point freed and eventually returned to his estate.[72]

71. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1:416; trans. and comm. Mango and Scott, *Theophanes Confessor*, 577. The implication is that he was the Melkite/Chalcedonian patriarch, since Theophilus was "Roman."

72. R. W. Bulliet, "Conversion Stories in Early Islam," in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian*

Several elements of this story merit comment. According to the *Martyrdom*, Vahan's conversion to Islam was not accompanied by automatic manumission. He was still a slave when ʿUmar II became caliph and reportedly decided to free all the Armenian captives. This group included members of the military elite, who were kept at the royal court in Damascus; their sons, however, had been set to study (3.7). Everyone else went into captivity in locations and circumstances unknown, although the reference to ʿUmar commissioning a specific investigation in Mesopotamia (4.8) implies that this was where the majority had ended up. The author indicates that those who sought manumission had to prove who they were and that there was a difference in probative value between the testimony of Armenians (presumably Christians) and Arabs (presumably Muslims). Furthermore, ʿUmar's manumission of Vahan may have created between them a relationship of clientage, *walāʾ*, in which Vahan became a client, *mawlā*, of ʿUmar. As Sijpesteijn, among others, has noted, in the early eighth century, many of the non-Muslim administrators disappeared and "whenever the names of new heads of the diwan are mentioned, they invariably are also *mawālī*."[73] In this respect, it is striking to note how Vahan defines his relationship to ʿUmar (4.11). He situates his service to and reward from the caliph in the context of the military service of his ancestors to the Persians—that is, the Sasanian *šahanšah*s. This framing attests the persistence of memories about Armenians participating in the world of Sasanian Iran a century after its collapse, and it correlates with repeated claims in Sasanian-era Armenian sources that they did so.[74] The significance of the passage for our purposes lies in its connection of the past and present experiences of Armenians working within the institutions of a hegemonic power. Vahan is represented serving ʿUmar like his ancestors had served the *šahanšah*s.

At ʿUmar's death, Vahan repudiates the terms of his appointment and refuses to return to "Arabia," to be understood broadly as "the land of the Arabs" (5.5). It is at this time that he apostatizes, regretting his childhood conversion and experiencing a second baptism through his own tears. Both his conversion to Islam and his later apostasy fit well with Sahner's notion of "cultural dislocation": just as "a young Christian was likely to abandon his or her religion in captivity among Muslims, a slave could also lose his or her adopted Islamic faith by returning to an old Christian world."[75] In other words, Vahan's move from Damascus to Gołtʿn precipitates the shift in his spiritual allegiance. Yet it is also worth noting that Vahan apostatizes only after the death of ʿUmar, his patron, and not upon arriving back

Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries, ed. M. Gervers and R. J. Bikhazi, 123–33 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990), 126.

73. P. M. Sijpesteijn, "Loyal and Knowledgeable Supporters: Integrating Egyptian Elites in Early Islamic Egypt," in *Empires and Communities in the Post-Roman and Islamic World, c. 400–1000 CE*, ed. R. Kramer and W. Pohl, 329–59 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 343.

74. T. W. Greenwood, "Adontz, Armenia and Iran in Late Antiquity," in "Mélanges James Howard-Johnston," *Travaux et mémoires* 26 (2022): 59–81, at 71–77.

75. C. Sahner, *Christian Martyrs under Islam: Religious Violence and the Making of the Muslim World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 43–44. Sahner offers a brief account of Vahan's life at 41–44.

in his ancestral lands. The narrative represents a personal connection between Vahan and ʿUmar, which dissolves upon the death of one of the parties. This may challenge the general presumption that a *walāʾ* relationship did not terminate in such circumstances.[76]

The themes of conversion and apostasy feature strongly throughout the narrative. Some of the most significant discussion appears in the dialogue between Vahan and Hishām. Even though these conversations reflect the perceptions of the author rather than transcripts of what was said, they still possess great value, as they articulate Armenian knowledge of Islam in the middle of the eighth century. Hishām highlights the riches and power given to the Muslims by "our Prophet" as proof of the truth of Islamic belief, but he also refers to "the pleasure of the garden that has been prepared"—that is, paradise (6.22). A similar line of argument can be found in the words of the royal advisers who come and sit next to Vahan before his audience with Hishām (6.2): "Take for yourself your splendor and remember our Messenger, who gave the greatness of this world to us and keeps for us the pleasure of the garden that has been prepared." Theological truth is thus connected to material wealth in this world and paradise in the next.[77]

Vahan's response is also instructive. In part it follows conventional lines of argument, stressing the humility and poverty of Jesus and his emulation of these traits. Vahan also maintains that he is fortified by knowledge of the Holy Books and the defense provided by the teachings of Christ, asserting (6.24) that he is "well trained and more learned than you in your erroneous fables." This debate over textual authority has an Armenian spin to it, since the disparaging comment "erroneous fables" echoes the language employed by Movsēs Xorenacʿi to describe materials he has rejected as unhistorical.[78] More intriguingly, the narrative reports (6.34) that "the tyrant did not stop sending teachers of their religion to him in prison for the purpose of discussion in order to overcome him by some books." This attempt to persuade Vahan to recant corresponds to the legal notion of *istitāba*, a period, typically of imprisonment, in which the apostate is asked to repent. Although three days was later established as the length of this period, at this time there was no consensus as to its duration or even as to whether it was required.[79] This passage implies awareness of this practice. A further implication is that theological debate between Muslims and Christians involved the use of written materials. Once again, however, we need to remember that this is the representation of an Armenian scholar. It may reflect the author's experience of theological disputation, which could just as easily have been conducted between different Christian groups.

76. A. J. Wensinck and P. Crone, "Mawlā," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. J. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill Online, 2012). For an up-to-date discussion of the status of *mawālī* in the Umayyad Empire, see Marsham, *Umayyad Empire*, 169–70.

77. For further discussion, see P. Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 14; and Sahner, *Christian Martyrs*, 34–35.

78. *jerum aṙaspelakan molorutʿeand*. Movsēs Xorenacʿi uses *aṙaspel* (and occasionally the verb *aṙaspelabanel*) for fables that are not to be taken literally because, according to Movsēs, they are exaggerated, nonsensical, false, or even obscene: R. W. Thomson, *Moses Khorenatsʿi: History of the Armenians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 10.

79. J. Kraemer, "Apostates, Rebels and Brigands," *Israel Oriental Studies* 10 (1980): 34–73, at 41.

Vahan also makes pejorative comments about the Prophet Muḥammad (6.25), asserting that he is the corrupter-in-chief and a false prophet and that he "is dead, and his bones and tomb are next to you." Whereas the first two charges could be considered conventional expressions of hostility, the latter is a novel claim, given the traditional association of the Prophet's tomb with Medina. Hishām built a mosque in Ruṣāfa adjacent to the martyrium of Saint Sergius.[80] One interpretation of this statement, therefore, is that it reflects a belief that just as the martyrium contained the relics of Saint Sergius, this mosque contained the relics of the Prophet Muḥammad. Vahan also gives the Prophet three names that are purportedly in contemporary use among Muslims (6.25): *draxtapet*, head of the garden/paradise; *tesanoł*, seer (the one who sees or watches); and *banber*, messenger. Although the third (Ar. *rasūl*) is ubiquitous, the association made in the first appellation between the Prophet and paradise is extremely rare, if not unique.

The *Martyrdom* thus contains a rich body of evidence about contemporary Armenian experiences of and attitudes toward childhood conversion to Islam and apostasy. It offers fresh perspectives on slavery, manumission, and *mawālī*. It also provides valuable insights into perceptions of Islamic belief, its challenge to Christian tradition, and Christian reactions to it.

III. Perceptions of Armenia

As is evident from the preceding discussion, the *Martyrdom* situates Armenia from about 700 CE onward firmly within the world of the Umayyad caliphate. Armenians are presented as interacting with Arab Muslims in Armenia, Damascus, and Ruṣāfa as well as with fellow Christians in Edessa, Callinicum, and Ruṣāfa. The Eastern Roman Empire, by contrast, seems remote and distant. We shall examine these and other Armenian experiences in the following sections. Before doing so, however, it is worth noting that the *Martyrdom* offers two intriguing perceptions of Armenia. When debating with Vahan, Hishām comments on his appearance (6.15): "Why, Vahap, do you show yourself dressed as a poor man, contrary to your magnificence? So then, has the land of Armenia reduced you to that?" The implication is that Armenia is a poor land, at least in comparison with other territories in the caliphate, and liable to reduce those sent there to indigence and penury.[81] Shortly afterward, Hishām

80. Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 175–82.

81. Intriguingly, some ʿAbbāsid-era writers portray Armenia as rich, fertile, and productive. By way of illustration, see Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, ed. M. J. de Goeje and J. H. Kramers (Leiden: Brill, 1938), 331–55, at 347–48; trans. J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Commission internationale pour la traduction des chefs-d'oeuvre, 1964), 2:325–48, at 341. Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī notes that the Arabic historiographer al-Yaʿqūbī, who was thoroughly familiar with Armenia, knew no land richer in plants and other goods: Ibn al-Faqīh, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1885), 290–91; trans. in J. Laurent, *L'Arménie entre Byzance et l'Islam depuis la conquête arabe jusqu'en 886*, ed. M. Canard (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1980), 506. Al-Iṣṭakhrī remarks on the low prices in Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan, singling out honey and sheep and noting the latter sometimes cost not even two dirhams. More generally, he states that there was such an abundance of goods in these lands that one would not believe it without having seen it: al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1927; repr. Beirut: Dar Ṣādir, n.d.), 190–91; trans. in Laurent, *L'Arménie*, 516. Vacca, in *Non-Muslim Provinces*, 20, notes that the author of a tenth-century Persian geographical treatise, *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam*, describes Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan as "the most

notes (6.17): "The evil demons of the ice-covered mountains of Armenia have surrounded you and deceived you to speak in this useless manner." Here the caliph is represented as knowing not only that Armenia's topography features snow-capped mountains but also that the land is inhabited by evil demons. Given that the text was composed by an Armenian author, the overwhelmingly negative impression it conveys of Armenia—poor, mountainous, and demon-possessed—is striking. Vacca has suggested, however, that this representation, rather than reflecting contemporary non-Armenian attitudes toward Armenia, coheres with descriptions of the northern quarter of Ērānšahr found in Middle Persian texts.[82] Rapp has argued that Avestan tradition "imagined the North as the dominion of dark and cold, the abode of demons," and he identifies clear resonances in Armenian literature.[83] The *History* of Agatʻangełos likewise depicts the northern regions as mountainous and occupied by demons (expelled from the temple of Anahit at Artašat by Saint Grigor), and Movsēs Xorenacʻi situates the domain of Hayk, the progenitor of the Armenian people, in the northern region and in the icy cold.[84] Such associations were therefore known in Armenian tradition, but the *Martyrdom* appears to be the first Armenian work to bring together all of these characteristics. Vacca has proposed that putting Avestan-inspired logic into the mouth of the caliph enabled the author to represent Hishām as a "neo-shāhanshāh." We cannot know to what extent this connotation would have been recognized by an Armenian audience, but the caliph's disdain for Armenia would have been obvious to everyone.

The *Martyrdom* therefore establishes Armenia as both integrated into the wider Islamic world—Vahap is sent to govern it for ʿUmar II—and different from that world, distinct and distant in terms of wealth, topography, and religious culture, belonging and not belonging at the same time. The ambiguity of Armenia's relationship with Sasanian Iran, captured by Garsoïan, continued to frame its relationship with the Umayyad world.[85]

The Representation of Late Umayyad Armenia

Accepting a date of 744 CE for the composition of the *Martyrdom* has a transformative effect not only on our understanding of the late Umayyad world but also on our knowledge of Armenia in the first half of the eighth century. With notable exceptions, scholars working on the history of Armenia in this period have tended to focus their research on the *History*

pleasant places in *dār-i Islām*."

82. This interpretation, with supporting references, was proposed by Professor Vacca in a personal email dated March 12, 2024. The authors acknowledge her insightful suggestions with grateful thanks.

83. S. H. Rapp, *The Sasanian World through Georgian Eyes* (London: Routledge, 2014), 131.

84. Agatʻangełos, *Patmutʻiwn Hayocʻ*, §780; repr. *MH*, 2:1676.10 (*i bnakičʻs ierinn Kawkasu, i kołmans hiwsisoy*); trans. Thomson, *Lives of Saint Gregory*, 375. Movsēs Xorenacʻi, *Patmutʻiwn Hayocʻ*, ed. M. Abełean and S. Yarutʻiwnean (Tbilisi: Aragatip Mnacʻakan Martiroseancʻ, 1913; repr. Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1981; rev. ed. [with collations by A. B. Sargsean], Erevan: Haykakan XSH GA Hratarakčʻutʻiwn, 1991), 1:11; repr. in *Matenagirkʻ Hayocʻ 5 Dar*, 2:1737–2121 (Antʻilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʻołikosutʻiwn, 2003), 1777.2–3 (*i kołman hiwsisoy . . . i mēǰ cʻrtutʻean saṙnamaneacʻ*); trans. Thomson, *Moses*, 83.

85. N. G. Garsoïan, "The Locus of the Death of Kings: Iranian Armenia—The Inverted Image," in *The Armenian Image in History and Literature*, ed. R. G. Hovannisian, 27–64 (Malibu, CA: Undena, 1981); repr. in N. G. Garsoïan, *Armenia between Byzantium and the Sasanians* (London: Ashgate, 1985), no. XI.

of Łewond and later Armenian compositions, sometimes in conjunction with Islamic and Byzantine literary sources as well as numismatic and epigraphic evidence.[86] Whether written in Armenian, Arabic, or Greek, these textual materials present a common challenge: the significant distance between the events recorded and the date of composition. As a result, historians have relied heavily on ʿAbbāsid-era works in order to reconstruct the historical circumstances of Umayyad-era Armenia. The *Martyrdom* provides fresh insights into this world, insights that have not been shaped by later concerns or attitudes. After establishing its literary context, we shall examine its representation of late Umayyad Armenia under three headings: networks and mobility, resistance and participation, and the lordship of Gołtʻn. Again, we anticipate that there are further dimensions to this work that other scholars will identify as significant. Our intention, once more, is to give an impression of the work's potential rather than a comprehensive analysis of it.

I. The Literary Context

Up to now, we have presented the *Martyrdom* as an exceptional composition of outstanding value for studying the wider late Umayyad world and Armenian experiences within it. We do not wish to undermine this thesis in any way. Nevertheless, the *Martyrdom* did not emerge from a literary vacuum. In this section we shall reflect briefly on the wider contexts within which the *Martyrdom* was composed, exploring its literary and intellectual backgrounds.

Like many works of Armenian literature, the *Martyrdom* is reticent when it comes to defining the specific circumstances of its composition and the literature that shaped it. We can, however, be confident about three of its dimensions. First, most of the medieval Armenian scholars whose works have survived envisaged their work as having a moral purpose, recording the operation of God's providence in the world and the actions of Armenians, individually and collectively, as instruments of His divine plan. As a result, Armenian compositions with historical dimensions tend to shape their understanding of the past around biblical schemas, using scriptural imagery to depict, and hence affirm the truth of, their narratives.[87] The *Martyrdom* describes the fires of Naxčawan and Xram (2.8) in terms that correspond to the account of the Three Hebrew Children in Daniel 3. However, the urgent statements and commands addressed to the land and people of Armenia are based on prophetic verses in the books of Ezekiel, Lamentations, and Jeremiah (1.1–8 and 3.11–14). These record the violence and bloodshed that Armenia has experienced at the hands of the people of Ishmael, who are described as bringing about the eclipse of the noble elite. Unusually, the appropriation of biblical prophecy to depict the Armenian experience is explicitly acknowledged (1.3): "The prophecy was really in respect of Israel, but the voice directs it towards us as well; just as Jerusalem was demolished to its foundations, so this whole country of ours has been demolished and ruined."

86. See, for example, Laurent, *L'Arménie*, 400–408. For notable exceptions, including Ter-Łevondyan, Ter-Davtʻyan, Shahinyan (in Russian), and Jinbashian (in English), see above, note 3.

87. For an overview, see J.-P. Mahé, "Entre Moïse et Mahomet: Réflexions sur l'historiographie arménienne," *Revue des études arméniennes* 23 (1992): 121–53; for a specific use, see R. W. Thomson, "The Maccabees in Early Armenian Historiography," *Journal of Theological Studies* 26, no. 2 (1975): 329–41.

Second, although the *Martyrdom* may be reticent about its literary context, it is not silent. It refers directly (1.9) to two Armenian prophetic works, the Vision of Saint Sahak and the Vision of Saint Grigor, preserved, respectively, in the *History* of Łazar P'arpec'i, composed around 500 CE, and the *History* of Agat'angełos, whose earliest witness was compiled in about 470 CE.[88] One of the sentences in Sahak's Vision, interpreting "the covering of thick dark cloth" as "a representation of the heavy mourning that the whole country will experience," corresponds both in content and in language to a sentence in the *Martyrdom* (1.8): "the thick darkness of the cloth was revealed, the dark thickness of this terrible blackness that shall take possession of all the countries of this land of Armenia."[89] There is, however, no obvious textual correlation with Grigor's Vision, at least in the form in which it has been preserved, despite its explicit mention. These references indicate that the author of the lament was aware of earlier prophetic works in the Armenian literary tradition and cited them to legitimize his own approach.

Lastly, the *Martyrdom* can be situated in the context of contemporary and historic martyrological writings. Peeters has suggested that the *Martyrdom* was directly connected to the *Passion* of Peter of Capitolias, which records his life and execution in Transjordan in 715 CE at the command of the caliph al-Walīd.[90] There are clearly similarities between the two accounts: both saints are interrogated by the ruling Umayyad caliph; both saints articulate a range of reasons for why many had been seduced from the truth of the Christian faith and had converted to Islam, some of which overlap; both saints speak with boldness or audacity; both are suspected of delirium; and both are martyred in public before a crowd of Christians. However, we consider a direct intertextual relationship unlikely.[91] Instead, we prefer to interpret the correspondences between the two works as evidence of similar contexts of production and modes of representation. Sahner has observed that al-Walīd objected not to Peter's holding different religious views but to his public disparaging of Islam and undermining of Muslim dogma.[92] The *Martyrdom* reveals the same anxiety. Hishām rebukes Vahan (7.5) for constituting "a bad example for us" and points out that "you have pronounced your words in public and broadcast them into the hearing of everyone, reducing ours to falseness." It has been argued that the *Passion* was probably composed in Greek within a Greek-speaking Chalcedonian community in Transjordan or Palestine within a few years of Peter's death, although it is only preserved in a Georgian translation. The numerous points of resonance between the two texts support the contention that both were composed in the late Umayyad era.

88. See above, note 8.

89. Łazar, *Patmut'iwn*, §17 in *MH*, 2:2231.52–3: *. . . zcp'umn alēkocut'ean ašxarhis Hayoc': K'anzi ew t'xagoyn t'anjr ktawoc'n cackumn, zōrinak berē zt'anjramac sgoyn, or uneloc' ē zašxarhs amenayn*; *Martyrdom* 1.8: *ew yaytnec'aw t'xut'iwn t'anjrut'ean ktawoyn. xawaramac t'anjrut'iwn anhnarin sewut'eans goyn, or uneloc' ēr zamenayn ašxarhs Hayastan erkris.*

90. P. Peeters, "La passion de S. Pierre de Capitolias († 13 janvier 715)," *Analecta Bollandiana* 57 (1939): 299–333, at 330–33.

91. S. J. Shoemaker, *Three Christian Martyrdoms from Early Islamic Palestine: Passion of Peter of Capitolias, Passion of the Twenty Martyrs of Mar Saba, Passion of Romanus the New-Martyr* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2016), 1–65; Sahner, *Christian Martyrs*, 130–40.

92. Sahner, *Christian Martyrs*, 139.

The *Passion* of Peter of Capitolias is not the only contemporary work with which the *Martyrdom* may be compared. In his *Narrationes*, composed around 690 CE, Anastasius of Sinai records the life and martyrdom of George the Black, which probably took place in or near Damascus in the later seventh century.[93] George was born into a Christian family, was taken captive as a child, converted to Islam at the age of eight, apostatized as an adult, and worshiped in secret until betrayed by a fellow slave, a "Christ-hating apostate," after which he was killed by his owner. The sequence of captivity, coercion, and conversion as a child followed by apostasy as an adult is paralleled in the *Martyrdom*, although the contexts are different.

The Armenian *Passion* of David of Duin supplies a different set of correspondences and distinctions. It depicts the conversion to Christianity of a soldier variously described as either Arab (*tačik*) or Persian (*parsik*) who arrived in Armenia while Hamazasp Mamikonean, *curopalates*, was the leading prince—seemingly, therefore, at some point between 655 and 661 CE. He converted and was baptized by Catholicos Anastas while Grigor Mamikonean held sway—so between 661 and 668 CE—and then was martyred by crucifixion in the final years of ʿAbd al-Malik's reign.[94] Unlike Vahan, an Armenian who was martyred and commemorated outside Armenia at a newly constructed martyrium outside the walls of Ruṣāfa, David is represented as a foreigner who was martyred and commemorated inside Armenia at an existing martyrium in the city of Duin that was also dedicated to a foreigner: Yizitbuzit/Yazdbōzid, a Persian. This is not to suggest that Vahan was intentionally constructed as the antithesis of David. We simply note that as in other traditions, martyrologies in Armenian overlap and diverge in multiple ways and invite close comparative analysis with one another. Marsham argues that these two martyrdoms reflect the unique nature of the North within the caliphate as a region that saw the "continued dominance of Christianity."[95]

The *Martyrdom* also needs to be situated in the broader context of late antique martyrological compositions. A compelling case may be made for an interaction of some kind between the *Martyrdom* and the traditions surrounding Saints Sergius and Bacchus. In addition to the association with Ruṣāfa, the narratives include dialogue with the respective head of state (Maximian/Hishām) who is called a "tyrant," *bṙnawor*.[96] Two specific details bring the traditions into a proximate relationship. After Vahan's execution, the *Martyrdom* reports (8.3) that dogs gathered around his body in a circle and guarded it overnight; when morning came, however, they returned to their savage state, started biting one another, and fled. Both the Greek *Passio* and its Armenian translation report that the *dux* Antiochus ordered that the body of Bacchus should not be buried but thrown outside the fort of

93. Ibid., 40–41.

94. For the text, see above, note 56; for the centrality of leading elites to the narrative, see below, note 107.

95. Marsham, *Umayyad Empire*, 286.

96. *Martyrdom* 6.15, 6.17, 6.28, and 6.34; "Vkayabanutʿiwn srboyn Sargsi ew Bagosi," 273. Heightening the drama by including a dialogue between a head of state or senior official and the martyr was a well-established and common narrative element, which ultimately derives from the second-century martyr Polycarp's interrogation before a Roman proconsul and may be traced back yet further to the biblical narrative of Christ before Pilate: G. Buschmann, *Das Martyrium des Polykarp* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); John, 18:28–40.

Barbalisus for dogs, wild animals, and birds to eat.[97] Although a multitude of wild animals gathered around the body, the birds did not allow the animals to approach the saint's remains and kept guard throughout the night until morning. The tradition is therefore associated with Bacchus, not Sergius, and it is the birds that prevent the wild animals from approaching the martyr's body, not the dogs who guard the corpse overnight. Turning to Sergius, the Greek *Passio* records that when he was led away to be executed, a large crowd of men, women, and children followed him, and the wild animals of the region gathered together with the people and did not attack them, instead lamenting with inarticulate sounds the passing of the martyr.[98] This detail is not found in the Armenian translation, which refers only to the multitude of people.[99] Sergius's final prayer, which opens by noting that the beasts of the field and the birds of the air recognize God's authority and lordship, is common to both the Greek and Armenian versions but does not feature in the *Martyrdom*.[100] The second detail relates to the blood of Sergius. The Greek *Passio* and the Armenian translation report that the place that received the blood of the martyr became a great chasm, as God intended.[101] This frightened the pagans, who did not dare to approach or tread on the site. The *Martyrdom* records (8.1) that Vahan's blood collected in one place and that (8.6) "a multitude of Christians assembled and collected the glorious blood of the martyr, and digging the earth, they made a trench." Although there are no specific lexical correspondences, there is a common interest in the blood of the martyr and its miraculous collection in one place. The *Martyrdom* is related to the Sergius and Bacchus cycle of traditions, even if we are not able to establish the precise nature of that relationship nor how it came about.

The *Martyrdom* therefore sits comfortably in the context of contemporary and historic martyrological compositions preserved in Greek and Armenian. By contrast, its ties to extant Armenian historiographical works appear more distant. Although the linguistic correspondence with the *History* attributed to Sebēos in defining Arab Muslims as people of the South is significant, there is no direct connection between the two compositions. Furthermore, in displaying knowledge of the sequence of caliphs, their years in power, and their personal qualities, the *Martyrdom* resonates with the *History* of Łewond, which is structured around similar—although not identical—knowledge.[102] Both histories also use scriptural prophecies to construct their narratives and interpret their times, but they do so on their own terms. Whereas the prophetic message of Sebēos is one of impending apocalypse, structured around the four beasts/kingdoms of Daniel 7, Łewond's *History* interprets the Arab Muslim conquests as well as the Second and Third Fitnas as the

97. Van den Gheyn, "Passio antiquior SS. Sergii et Bacchi," 389; "Vkayabanutʻiwn srboyn Sargsi ew Bagosi," 273.

98. Van den Gheyn, "Passio antiquior SS. Sergii et Bacchi," 393.

99. "Vkayabanutʻiwn srboyn Sargsi ew Bagosi," 277.

100. Van den Gheyn, "Passio antiquior SS. Sergii et Bacchi," 393–94; "Vkayabanutʻiwn srboyn Sargsi ew Bagosi," 277–78.

101. Van den Gheyn, "Passio antiquior SS. Sergii et Bacchi," 394; "Vkayabanutʻiwn srboyn Sargsi ew Bagosi," 278.

102. Greenwood, "Reassessment of Łewond," 121–30; Pecorini Goodall, "ʿAbbās," 400, 413–16.

fulfillment of scriptural prophecies.[103] Łewond also looks forward to future liberation from Islamic rule.[104] The *Martyrdom* does neither of these, instead invoking the prophetic mode to depict and inspire spiritual heroism, collectively and individually. We are consequently cautious about situating the *Martyrdom* in the context of these histories. They are both much longer works, with their own purposes, and date from eight decades before and several decades after the *Martyrdom*, respectively. In our view, the *Martyrdom* cannot be seen simply as a narrative bridge between them.

One other difference stands out. When depicting Armenian affairs, both of the historical compositions tend to focus on the lives and conduct of members of the two leading princely houses, the Mamikoneans and the Bagratunis, as well as the behavior of individual catholicoi of Armenia. Other lay and clerical figures also appear, but members from one or the other of these houses are usually at the heart of the drama. The *Martyrdom* takes a completely different approach. It does not mention any member of either family by name. The closest it gets is when it reports that an anonymous prince and commander of Armenia, acting in concert with an anonymous catholicos, was frightened by a demon (5.18–19) and drove Vahan away, telling him: "Leave, go away, lest it become ruinous for us and anyone." This is almost certainly a reference to the prince of Armenia, a title used by both Roman and Muslim authorities to designate their principal client, through whom they engaged with the Armenian elite.[105] Several eighth-century catholicoi are also depicted interacting with caliphs or their representatives.[106] It is, however, extremely rare, if not unprecedented, to find them represented as acting in concert against the interests of a Christian Armenian lord and future martyr, as here. The figures are anonymous but may be identified as the contemporary holders of these roles: Ašot III Bagratuni, prince of Armenia from 726 or 732 to 748 CE, and Catholicos David I of Aramonk' in Kotayk' (incumbent ca. 728–41). Little is known about Ašot and almost nothing about David. Their specific anxieties are not defined, but the implication seems to be that they were both concerned about the consequences for themselves if Vahan were to carry out his plan of traveling westward to the city of Constantinople. In this episode, therefore, the *Martyrdom* depicts members of the Armenian elite pitted against one another, with the prince and the catholicos apparently acting in the interests of the caliph, and Vahan following his own path, which involved rejecting service to the caliph.[107]

103. On Sebēos, see T. W. Greenwood, "Sasanian Echoes and Apocalyptic Expectations: A Re-evaluation of the Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos," *Le Muséon* 115, no. 3–4 (2002): 323–97, at 375–88; S. La Porta, "The Sense of an Ending: Eschatological Prophecy and the Armenian Historiographical Tradition (7th–10th Centuries)," *Le Muséon* 129, no. 3–4 (2016): 363–93, at 364–72. On Łewond, see Greenwood, "Reassessment of Łewond," 136, 146.

104. Greenwood, "Reassessment of Łewond," 112.

105. A. Ter-Łevondyan, "Hayoc' išxanĕ arabakan tirapetut'yan žamanakašrǰanum," *Patma-banasirakan Handes* 2 (1964): 121–34; trans. as "Le 'Prince d'Arménie' à l'époque de la domination arabe," *Revue des études arméniennes* 3 (1966): 185–200.

106. For Sahak III in ca. 703 CE and Yovhannēs IV Ōjnec'i, see Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces*, 170 and 183–84; for the sequence, see J.-P. Mahé, "L'Église arménienne de 611 à 1066," in *Histoire du Christianisme des origines à nos jours*, vol. 4, *Evêques, moines et empereurs (610–1054)*, ed. G. Dagron, P. Riché, and A. Vauchez, 457–547 (Paris: Desclée, 1993), 476–89.

107. The *Passion* of David of Duin (see above, note 56) offers an interesting counterpoint. This work has

Finally, we note that the *Martyrdom* was composed during a time of lively Armenian intellectual production. A range of theological and liturgical works associated with several figures have been preserved, and although some of these have received recognition and attention from modern scholars, many others have not. By way of illustration, Yovhannēs Ōjnecʻi is best known in his role as catholicos (718–28 CE) for convening the Council of Manazkert in 726 CE, but he is also credited with a large number of writings, including the long treatises *Ĕnddēm Pōłikeancʻ* (Against the Paulicians) and *Ĕnddēm Erewutʻakanacʻ* (Against the Phantasiasts [that is, aphthartodocetists]).[108] As already noted, Sołomon of Makʻenocʻ and Xosrovik *tʻargmaničʻ* both attended the Council of Manazkert, and four little-studied dogmatic texts are associated with the latter.[109] The writings of Stepʻanos Siwnecʻi (d. 735 CE) are better known, and Dorfmann-Lazarev has recently offered a helpful comparative analysis of the writings of Yovhannēs, Xosrovik, and Stepʻanos in relation to the contentious subject of Christ's incorruptibility, highlighting points of similarity and difference.[110] He sees Stepʻanos as reacting directly to Yovhannēs's interpretation and finds a difference of emphasis between Xosrovik and Stepʻanos, on the one hand, and Yovhannēs, on the other, on the question whether human limitations are evidence of corruption.[111] Therefore, although no narrative Armenian histories have survived from the first half of the eighth century, we find a wealth of other materials that collectively speak to the diversity of theological interpretations in Armenia at this time. Remarkably, the author of the *Martyrdom* shows little interest in situating his narrative in this context. Instead, through its hostile construction of the anonymous prince acting in concert with the equally anonymous catholicos, the *Martyrdom* attests a range of attitudes and responses to Umayyad governance. The political context seems to have held greater significance for the author.

an evident Mamikonean dimension. Named princes and catholicoi play important roles in the narrative and define its chronology. David was by origin the son of a Persian prince and thus already of high social standing at the time of his arrival in Armenia. As noted earlier, he was reportedly baptized by Catholicos Anastas, and Grigor Mamikonean served as his godfather. David obtained the estate of Jag, Kotaykʻ, but is said to have resided in the nearby capital, Duin. After his death, his relics were collected and his cult fostered by members of the Mamikonean and Amatuni families. His credentials as an embedded member of the Armenian nobility are thus repeatedly stressed in his martyrology. Whereas Vahan appears as a somewhat liminal member of a fragmented constellation of nobles, David is presented as part of a coherent inner circle.

108. These have been assembled and republished under Yovhannēs Ōjnecʻi, ed. Y. Kʻēosēan, in *Matenagirkʻ Hayocʻ 8 Dar*, 7:21–707 (Antʻilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʻołikosutʻiwn, 2007): *Ĕnddēm Pōłikeancʻ* at 37–44, and *Ĕnddēm Erewutʻakanacʻ* at 45–66.

109. These, too, have been collected, but in the previous volume: Xosrovik tʻargmaničʻ, *Astuacabanakan vastakĕ*, ed. Y. Kʻēosēan, in *Matenagirkʻ Hayocʻ 8 Dar*, 6:627–708 (Antʻilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʻołikosutʻiwn, 2007).

110. Stepʻanos Siwnecʻi, *Matenagrakan žaŕangitʻiwnĕ*, ed. Y. Kʻēosēan, in *Matenagirkʻ Hayocʻ 8 Dar*, 6:105–597 (Antʻilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʻołikosutʻiwn, 2007); see especially his *Reply to Germanus*, 521–42. See I. Dorfman-Lazarev, "Travels and Studies of Stephen of Siwnikʻ (c. 685–735): Redefining Armenian Orthodoxy under Islamic Rule," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 68, no. 3–4 (2016): 255–92, especially 278–91.

111. Dorfman-Lazarev, "Stephen of Siwnikʻ," 289–90.

II. Networks and Mobility

The world of Umayyad-era Armenia as represented in the *Martyrdom* is constructed around political, social, and religious networks. It is also characterized by various forms of mobility within and between these networks. Vahan is the most mobile figure within this world, moving across space and time but also across confessional and kinship boundaries. He is not, however, the only figure to do so. Muḥammad b. Marwān (2.5), Marwān b. Muḥammad (6.31, 7.1), and Artawazd/Abraham likewise pass into and out of Armenian space (9.2), in different contexts and for different purposes. Furthermore, the narrative depicts networks with which Vahan is only distantly connected. By way of illustration, we learn of a rumor that merchants stole his body from Ruṣāfa and traveled through the region of Baʿalbek to the land of the Palestinians (8.13). The rumor turns out to be false, but that is less significant than is its underlying premise of a commercial network between these geographically distant locations within the Umayyad caliphate, probably involving Christian merchants, since non-Christians would not have appreciated the value of Vahan's body.[112]

Let us start with geography. The *Martyrdom* has a wide geographical scope, comprising principally Armenia and the lands and cities under Umayyad hegemony to the south. It also projects an adjacent but distant Roman Empire located to the northwest and accessible through Virkʻ/Iberia (5.13) or Taykʻ (5.17), as well as other unspecified northern regions engulfed in conflict, almost certainly against the Khazars (5.48). Conversely, the lands of western Armenia and the Roman territories of Anatolia as well as the territories to the east and southeast, including Ałuankʻ/Caucasian Albania and Iran, are not mentioned. Siwnikʻ features only as the original homeland of Vahan's wife (5.7). As a result, the *Martyrdom* highlights the connectivity of regions along the north-south axis and ignores the long-standing ties with the Iranian and Roman worlds along the east-west axis. This spatial reorientation is significant, as it reveals the priority attached at the time to connections with Umayyad Syria.

These spaces are constructed in different ways in the text. Armenia is portrayed as a region of different districts, including Gołtʻn, Vayocʻ Jor, Siwnikʻ, Aragacotn, Taykʻ, Bznunikʻ, and Maseacʻotn, which contain both villages and monasteries. It is also a region of cities, but it is noticeable that the urban spaces of Armenia named in the *Martyrdom*—Naxčawan, Xram, and Duin— are all depicted in terms of Umayyad control. Provincial government and military power are projected through these urban centers, as had been the case throughout Late Antiquity.[113] The one exception appears to be the city of Vałaršapat, mentioned once in relation to the unnamed catholicos (5.24). As we have seen, however, this space may also be

112. G. B. A. Bingelli, "Annual Fairs, Regional Networks, and Trade Routes in Syria, Sixth to Tenth Centuries," in *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, ed. C. Morrisson, 281–96 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2012). Bingelli notes the association between fairs and annual Christian festivals of commemoration, observing that a fair took place at Dayr Mār Sarjīs, the monastery of Saint Sergius, apparently at ʿĀna, to coincide with the saint's festival on October 7. Ruṣāfa is not mentioned, but its absence may not be entirely surprising, given that the sources used by Bingelli date from the ʿAbbāsid era.

113. N. G. Garsoïan, "The Early-Medieval Armenian City: An Alien Element?," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 16–17 (1984–85): 67–83; repr. in N. G. Garsoïan, *Church and Culture in Early Medieval Armenia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), no. VII.

associated with Umayyad control through the representation of the hostile attitude of the catholicos, who threatens Vahan that he may suffer harm from others unless he departs. Historic regions to the south of Armenia, such as Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine, are mentioned in passing, but they obtain specific definition through their cities—Damascus, Edessa, Ruṣāfa, Callinicum, and Baʿalbek. Once again, urban spaces are associated with caliphal control, but their Christian communities also feature prominently. Vahan is represented worshiping the "salvific image" in Edessa (5.49) in a previously unnoticed reference to the Mandylion, and Artawazd and his party meet the bilingual bishop of Edessa on their return journey (9.7). Both Vahan and Artawazd also pass through Callinicum, south of Edessa, on their way to Ruṣāfa, and the latter is reported to have stayed at the monastery of Der Mar Zakkʻē (9.2).[114] Whereas monasteries in Armenia are associated with specific districts, Syrian monasticism is associated with cities. Finally, we have already encountered the diverse Christian communities and martyria of Ruṣāfa, both inside and outside the city. Christians are represented in multiple spaces, from Hishām's court and palace (9.6) to the prison (6.37) and the building site (8.17), with their own hierarchies (the bishop) and archives (the Roman book). Whereas urban spaces outside Armenia are populated by Muslims and Christians, urban spaces inside Armenia are constructed only as centers of Umayyad administration.

The *Martyrdom* attests multiple networks connecting these different spaces. Vahan's forced movement from Duin to Damascus (2.4–7) reveals the primacy of this route southwards for communications between the caliphal court and provincial representatives in Armenia. Moving northward is less straightforward. When Vahan resolves to leave Gołtʻn and travel to the country of the Greeks, he makes use of his network of relatives, going first to his father-in-law in Vayocʻ Jor (5.10) and then to unidentified relatives in Virkʻ/Iberia (5.13). Vahan seeks advice from his father-in-law about the route he should take, implying that the latter knew how to get there. The *History* of Łewond reports that in the aftermath of the fires of Naxčawan, Smbat Bagratuni, who had previously been appointed *curopalates* and settled in Taykʻ, asked the emperor for further assistance and went to reside in the city of Pʻoytʻ/Phasis in Lazica for six years with other unspecified figures.[115] There are a number of challenging elements in Łewond's narrative, including its dating, the identity of those seeking refuge, and their relocation to a single "city," but it records the first in a series of Armenian migrations to the Roman Empire undertaken by figures from various noble houses—Mamikonean, Anjewacʻi, Amatuni—across the eighth century. These were not all permanent displacements; some Armenians, including Smbat Bagratuni and Tačat Anjewacʻi, returned and were reintegrated back into the caliphal North.[116]

And yet, in the *Martyrdom*, although Vahan considers and even attempts to move to the Roman Empire, he is not able to complete this journey. The precise reasons for his failure are not given, but we need to remember the literary character of this work. The physical

114. See above, note 41.

115. Łewond, *Patmabanutʻiwn*, in *MH*, 6:757.28; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 80, 92–96.

116. See Łewond, *Patmabanutʻiwn*, in *MH*, 6:841.7–845.23; and La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 329–33, 349–55, for Tačat's career in Roman and then caliphal service.

journey that Vahan embarks on is a manifestation of his spiritual journey. As he travels, he loses, in various circumstances, the outward expressions of his status: his entourage of cavalrymen (5.11–12, 16); his wealth, his horse, and his sword (5.21); his wife, sent away previously (5.23); and finally his signet ring (5.26). At the same time, however, he gains in spirituality and divine knowledge. This transition is reflected in the shift from reliance on a social network of relatives to engagement with a network of monastic communities, with varying degrees of success. For us, it is highly significant that the monastery where the monks are frightened by a demon (5.30) is also the community that is connected in some way to a prince's wife, who instructs them that Vahan should leave the community, "otherwise he shall be a cause of destruction for himself and for you." This implies a presumption on her part that Vahan's actions, whether abandoning his position in Gołtʻn or apostatizing or both, have made him a danger to all he comes into contact with.[117] At another level, it shows that within the narrative, all lay elite figures are now problematic. Finally, this episode suggests that not all Armenian monasteries were of equal merit, nor did they form a single network; at least in the mind of the author, some were evidently better than others.

This transition is one of several that Vahan undergoes in the course of the narrative: from the son of an Armenian lord to a slave in the service of the caliph in Damascus, from Christian to Muslim, from trusted *mawlā* to ostracized apostate, from married lord to solitary ascetic, from wealth to penury, from human death to eternal life and commemoration as martyr. We shall not discuss these transformations individually. Instead, we propose that these multiple spaces, communities, and networks and the movements between them tell us about the various contexts in which Armenians could be imagined. If these had not been embedded in a social reality, the credibility of the *Martyrdom* would have been compromised. The *Martyrdom* does not deny that Armenians were forcibly taken into captivity or that Armenian children converted to Islam, suggesting that these were plausible lived experiences. It pushes back against the threat of conversion by offering a didactic illustration of its futility as well as a model for Armenian converts to Islam to recover their Christian faith on returning to Armenia. This is reminiscent of an episode recorded in an earlier Armenian historical work titled the *Buzandaran*, which was compiled in the 470s. In the narrative, Aršak, the king of Armenia, freely acknowledges his guilt and submission before the Sasanian *šahanšah*, Šapuh, when walking on Persian soil inside the royal tent, but haughtily dismisses the *šahanšah* from his presence, promising vengeance, when walking on soil and water secretly brought from Armenia and carefully laid on the floor of the tent.[118] The allegorical meaning—namely, that Armenians profess loyalty to an external hegemonic power when outside Armenia but repudiate it when back on Armenian soil—is also reflected in the *Martyrdom*.

117. Her rejection of the saint is described in terms similar to those applied to the hostile reactions of the prince of Armenia and the catholicos (5.18–19 and 5.24).

118. Pʻawstos Buzand, *Pʻawstosi Buzandacʻwoy Patmutʻiwn Hayocʻ i čʻors dprutʻiwns*, 4th ed. (Venice: S. Łazar, 1933) [henceforth *Buzandaran*], 4:54; repr. in *Matenagirkʻ Hayocʻ 5 Dar*, 1:277–428 (Antʻilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʻołikosutʻiwn, 2003), 367.1–369.38; trans. N. G. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories (Buzandaran Patmutʻiwnkʻ) Attributed to Pʻawstos Buzand* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 170–73.

III. Resistance and Participation

Although the *Martyrdom* focuses on Vahan, it also provides insight into wider Armenian interactions with the caliphal North in the first half of the eighth century. These were characterized by both resistance and participation. Instead of envisioning these as discrete categories, with Armenians either clashing or cooperating with the caliphal authorities, we propose a more complex and dynamic model, in which individual Armenians resisted, participated, and responded in other ways all at the same time. Although no source represents the full spectrum of Armenian attitudes to Umayyad governance and administration, the *Martyrdom* addresses several forms of response.

As discussed earlier, the *Martyrdom* opens with a lament for the Armenian nobles, "the *naxarar*s of this country" (1.6), who were consumed by the flames at Naxčawan and Xram. The identities of those who died are not revealed. Instead, the deaths are represented as a general catastrophe for the whole Armenian people at the hands of the people of Ishmael (1.3): "this whole country of ours has been demolished and ruined." The disaster is defined further in the following sentence (1.4): "Foreign nations have taken the pleasure of this land, and the freedom and lordship and authority of the nobles has been overthrown as worthless." Significantly, therefore, the destruction of the country of Armenia is portrayed in terms of the overthrow of its nobility. The spiritual implications are not ignored, as a subsequent passage (1.7) considers the wider impact: "the light of the glorious holy vessels and decorations of the churches has been corrupted and extinguished; the rejoicing of the spiritual festivals and the joy of spiritual songs to God, of priests and worshippers, and altogether the collective delight of this country [have been destroyed]." But this outcome is seen as a consequence of the ruin of the country.

The narrative reports that the Armenian nobles assembled in anticipation of gifts from the royal treasury, in coin (*dahekan*), which are described (2.2) as "the *atayan*s of the year." In other words, they were expecting to receive payment for military services. Such payment represents a change in the arrangements. The *History* attributed to Sebēos, compiled fifty years earlier, depicts a tributary system largely predicated on military service in lieu of direct taxation.[119] By contrast, the *Martyrdom* asserts that some Armenian nobles and their forces participated in caliphal structures of power and were rewarded through annual payments. This assertion finds support in Łewond's narrative, which reports that on becoming prince of Armenia in 726, Ašot Bagratuni traveled to meet with Hishām and negotiated the reinstatement of stipends for the Armenian nobles and their cavalry after they had been withheld for three years.[120] Łewond maintains that the stipends were paid at a rate of 100,000 dirhams a year for the remainder of Hishām's reign. The *Martyrdom* was therefore composed at a time when such payments had become standard.

No explanation or context is given for the mass immolation in the churches beyond the allegorical "dark thickness and terrible blackness" (1.8) associated with the people of the South. It is simply a conspiracy, "a deceitful trick" (2.3), that reveals their bad faith and

119. Sebēos, *Patmut'iwn*, 164; repr. *MH*, 4:554.15; trans. Thomson, *Sebeos*, 136; Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces*, 196–97.

120. Łewond, *Patmabanut'iwn*, in *MH*, 6:812.7–9; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 214–15, 238–41.

catches the Armenians unawares. A later passage (2.17) reports that "the executioners were safe from fear, for many of them had been defeated many times by the few courageous and honorable *naxarar*s; in the same way, all the celebrated military forces were beheaded by the sword and hung on wood." This implies that some nobles had previously fought against the caliph's representatives and that the mass executions constituted retaliation. The narrative thus shows Armenians both participating and resisting. But the author of the lament betrays little interest in establishing the precise circumstances in which the fires occurred beyond stressing that this was the moment when everything changed. The text then embarks on the account of Vahan's life and passion (4.1, reflected at 9.10). Other narratives of these events offer their own interpretations. Łewond, for instance, traces the conflagrations to an Armenian revolt in 703 CE, in which Armenian nobles tried to flee to Roman territory but ended up—reluctantly, even apologetically—having to defeat a pursuing caliphal force at the battle of Vardanakert.[121] Łewond also highlights the role of Muḥammad b. Marwān in deceiving the Armenian nobles and engineering the circumstances of their destruction. Instead of preferring one narrative over another, we concur with Vacca's judicious comments: "Why and how traditions changed provide more fertile ground for enquiry than 'what really happened' when the churches burned down at Naxčawan. . . .Every text is a reliable indicator of what its author was trying to say."[122] By the time the *Martyrdom* was composed in 744 CE, the fires of Naxčawan were remembered as a formative moment in the relationship between the Armenian elite and Umayyad hegemony; the specific circumstances, whether Marwānid reform or Armenian rebellion or both, were not significant. For Łewond, however, themes of provincial administration and taxation, on the one hand, and Armenian resistance to and participation in the politics of the caliphate, on the other, were central to Armenian lived experiences and framed his historical reconstructions.

Evidence for a range of Armenian interactions is not confined to the opening sections of the *Martyrdom*. We have already noted the hostile portrayal of both the leading prince of Armenia and the catholicos as acting under demonic inspiration, and we interpreted it as a comment on their working in the interests of the caliphate (5.19). Immediately before traveling to Edessa, Vahan is depicted (5.48) meeting various contingents of cavalrymen on their way back from campaigns in the northern regions and debating the divinity of Jesus with them. Again, if we examine Łewond's *History*, we find specific references to campaigns against the Khazars undertaken by Marwān b. Muḥammad with the support of Armenian nobles and cavalrymen under Ašot Bagratuni, the leading Armenian prince.[123] The identity of the cavalrymen who debate with Vahan is not revealed but the nature of the issue discussed suggests that they were Arab Muslims rather than Armenians. The *Martyrdom* maintains that they were persuaded by Vahan's wisdom, indicating that they accepted his arguments. Armenia is therefore also represented as a site of religious debate.

121. Łewond, *Patmabanut'iwn*, in *MH*, 6:748.24–751.29; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 46–48, 65–70.

122. See Vacca, "Fires of Naxčawan," 351, and generally for a meticulous presentation and analysis of the different narratives.

123. Łewond, *Patmabanut'iwn*, in *MH*, 6:813.1–6; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 215, 238–41.

IV. The Lordship of Gołtʻn

Neither the district of Gołtʻn, nor its lay or ecclesiastical elite, nor its cultural traditions feature prominently in medieval Armenian literature. The *Martyrdom* is the only exception. It would be mistaken, however, to assume that nothing is known about this district or its inhabitants in earlier times. Koriwn's *Life of Maštocʻ* represents the saint traveling "to the lawless and incorrigible places of Gołtʻan" (*sic*) before he is inspired to formulate the Armenian alphabet.[124] There, he encounters the prince of Gołtʻan, Šabitʻ, "a reverent and God-loving man."[125] The implication is that Šabitʻ, whose name is of Syriac derivation, is already a Christian. The saint subsequently returns to the district, specifically to the location of Ṙotastak, which is described as his first foundation or endowment (*dastakert*), and preaches the gospel in all the villages with the assistance of Giwt, the son of Šabitʻ.[126] Gołtʻn therefore has a surprising significance in one of the earliest extant Armenian-language compositions, completed in the mid-440s. Otherwise, the references tend to be extremely brief. Atom, prince of Gołtʻn, is mentioned once in the *Buzandaran* in a mid-fourth-century context as one figure in a list of Armenian princes who accompanied Yusik to Caesarea in Cappadocia for his ordination as patriarch.[127] In the sixth century, Yoys, bishop of Gołtʻan (*sic*), attended the second Council of Duin in 555 CE; at the start of the seventh century, Siovn, bishop of Gołtʻn, is attested in three documents dated 607 CE; and Esayi, bishop of Gołtʻn, was present at the Council of Manazkert in 726.[128] The canons of the Council of Partaw in 768 CE record the presence of both Sahak, lord of Gołtʻn, and Esayi, bishop of Gołtʻn, who may or may not be the same figure as the Esayi at Manazkert.[129] Bishop Esayi succeeded Sion Bawonacʻi as catholicos of Armenia in about 775 and held office for thirteen years; he features briefly at the end of Łewond's *History*, although his association with Gołtʻn is not mentioned.[130] Sahak and Esayi are the last figures to be identified with the district before it reemerges in the historical record at the start of the tenth century as an emirate.[131]

These terse notices are supplemented by several passages in the *History* of Movsēs Xorenacʻi. According to Movsēs, the inhabitants of the wine-abounding (*ginewēt*) district of Gołtʻn had preserved rhythmic songs about Artašēs and his sons as well as about Aždahak the Mede, and he quotes from these directly.[132] Elsewhere, he refers to the songs of the

124. A. Terian, *The Life of Mashtotsʻ by His Disciple Koriwn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 5.1, at 68–69.

125. Ibid., 5.2, at 68–69.

126. Ibid., 13.3–5, at 82–83.

127. *Buzandaran* 3:12; *MH*, 1:292.3; trans. Garsoïan, *Epic Histories*, 82.

128. For Yoys, see *Girkʻ Tʻłtʻocʻ*, 73; for Siovn, see *Girkʻ Tʻłtʻocʻ*, 146, 149, and 151; and for Esayi, see Michael, *Chronique*, 2:497.

129. See above, note 26.

130. Łewond, *Patmabanutʻiwn*, in *MH*, 6:849.6–851.10; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 376–77, 388–89.

131. Ter-Łewondyan, *Arab Emirates*, 72.

132. Movsēs Xorenacʻi, *Patmutʻiwn*, 1:30, 2:50; repr. *MH*, 2:1827.4–1829.12 and 1926.1–1929.18; trans.

storytellers of Gołtʻn and the singers of Gołtʻn.[133] These passages therefore associate Gołtʻn with oral epic traditions, both spoken and sung. Intriguingly, the short recension of the seventh-century Armenian geographical text *Ašxarhacʻoycʻ* also describes Gołtʻn as wine-abounding (*ginewēt*).[134] It is tempting to locate both performative recitation and wine in the context of elite feasting and dining in Gołtʻn, but the details of such occasions—when, where, and for whom they might have occurred—are wholly obscure.

The *Martyrdom* offers several insights into the affairs of the noble house of Gołtʻn. Vahan is identified as the son of Xosrov, lord (*tēr*) of Gołtʻn (4.1). This title was used to identify the head of a noble family in whom control of the family's ancestral and inalienable property was vested. There were several legal mechanisms by which noble houses could generate legal heirs and thereby ensure continuity of possession.[135] Elite Armenian tradition abhorred a legal vacuum; only when an entire family had been wiped out could a transfer of their property assets take place. We suggest that it is for this reason that the *Martyrdom* presents the return of Vahan to Gołtʻn in terms of his people (5.7), whether relatives or not, trying to arrange his marriage, "lest he should remain without an heir through lacking a family."[136] The narrative does not reveal how the lordship of Gołtʻn had been maintained while Vahan was in Damascus, nor how it continued to exist after his martyrdom, but we should remember that such worldly concerns were not central to the purposes of the composition, with its focus on his spiritual transformation. Nevertheless, it is striking that his return should be represented as prompting immediate action to secure the continuity of the family line through marriage.

As discussed previously, Vahan is reported to have left Gołtʻn with the intention of traveling to the land of the Greeks and the city in which the king resided (5.18), Constantine's city/Constantinople. But his plans gradually change as he begins to pursue a spiritual path instead. Vahan is represented as settling in Virkʻ/Iberia and later intending to move to Taykʻ, both regions adjoining Roman territory, but for unspecified reasons he does not make the crossing. The chronology of his movements is also vague. The narrative indicates he spends more than a year in Iberia (5.15), at least six months in the unidentified monastery (5.29), and four years wandering with a single companion (5.42). There are further unspecified periods of time spent at other locations. We have already proposed

Thomson, *Moses*, 117–18 and 189–90.

133. Movsēs Xorenacʻi, *Patmutʻiwn*, 2:49 and 61; repr. *MH*, 2:1925.1–3 and 1941.4; trans. Thomson, *Moses*, 187 and 200–201.

134. *Ašxarhacoycʻ Movsesi Xorenacʻwoy*, ed. A. Soukry (Venice: Tparan Mxitʻareancʻ, 1881); repr. in *Matenagirkʻ Hayocʻ 5 Dar*, 2:2138–92 (Antʻilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʻołikosutʻiwn, 2003), 2188.100; trans. R. H. Hewsen, *The Geography of Ananias of Širak (Ašxarhacʻoycʻ): The Long and the Short Recensions* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1992), 63A.

135. T. W. Greenwood, "A Contested Jurisdiction: Armenia in Late Antiquity," in *Sasanian Persia: Between Rome and the Steppes of Eurasia*, ed. E. Sauer, 199–220 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 206–9; L. Read, "Fostering in Early Medieval Armenian Sources from the Fifth to the Seventh Century," *Journal of Late Antique, Islamic and Byzantine Studies* 3, no. 1–2 (2024): 46–80, at 75–77.

136. Notably, Łewond comments that the events at Naxčawan "rendered this land heirless (*anžaṙang*)": Łewond, *Patmabanutʻiwn*, in *MH*, 6:756.25; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 80.

that the physical journey undertaken by Vahan through space and time is an outward expression of his inner spiritual transformation. Over time, Vahan moves from a network of lay supporters—involving his father-in-law and then other unspecified relatives in Iberia—to a monastic one. This transformation is also attested through the gradual shrinking of Vahan's entourage. When he sets out from Gołtʻn (5.9), he is accompanied by his wife, an armed retinue of twenty cavalrymen, and his *tʻošak*; although this last term is usually understood in terms of provisions or resources, it may also identify a group of people. In stripping Vahan of all the outward symbols of lordship, the narrative establishes what those symbols were. The loyalty of the twenty cavalrymen with whom Vahan travels is shown to be conditional rather than absolute. When Vahan arrives in his father-in-law's district, some of them reportedly voice their dismay (5.11–12). After high expectations of his return to Gołtʻn, several of them disagree with his decision to go to the country of the Greeks. They assume that they will be asked to go with Vahan "to live and die in a foreign land," and therefore leave his service. Evidently, a lord who acted arbitrarily or failed to take counsel ran the risk of losing support. The remaining cavalry abandon Vahan a year later. He is then deserted by his remaining entourage (5.16) and sends his wife back to her father (5.23). Even this is not enough: he gives his horse and his sword to one of his beloved ones (5.21) and finally his gold signet ring to a stranger (5.26).

Whether or not these episodes took place in the ways described or even at all, there is no reason to doubt that they represent ideals of contemporary Armenian lordship. According to the author of the *Martyrdom*, the ideal Armenian lord was married into a powerful family, had a loyal body of armed supporters who attended to him when traveling, rode a horse, carried a sword, and wore an authentic (*vawerakan*) gold signet ring (5.26).[137] The last detail is significant because no eighth-century documentation containing the signatures of lay Armenian lords has been preserved. A document dated AE 288 (May 1, 839–April 29, 840), recording the purchase of Arciv by Lord David, bishop of Siwnikʻ, from Lord Pʻilippē, son of Vasak, lord of Siwnikʻ, was sealed by both of them using their rings: "And we have sealed this deed, Lord David and Lord Pʻilippē, with our rings."[138] Another document recording the donation of property in AE 316 (April 24, 867–April 22, 868) by Kʻupłiduxt, daughter of Vasak, lord of Siwnikʻ (and hence probably Pʻilippē's sister), was confirmed by the "the authentic signet ring of the spiritual lord Sałomon, honored by God, bishop of Siwnik."[139] The addition of *vawerakan* to the description of Vahan's ring in the *Martyrdom* connects its use to legal documentation and supports the contention that written records, including but not limited to property transactions, were being produced for local Armenian lords in the middle of the eighth century. This supplies a useful context in which to interpret the assertion of the Arab Muslim historiographer Ibn Aʿtham that it was Mušeł Mamikonean's refusal to hand over his ancestral signet ring to the ʿAbbāsid governor that precipitated the revolt

137. The Armenian term used here, *vawerakan*, is a transliteration of the Middle Persian word *vāvarīkān*, "trustworthy, valid, authentic."

138. Stepʻannos Episkopos Siwneacʻ, *Patmutʻiwn tann Sisakan* (Moscow: Tparan Lazarean Čemarani Arewelean Lezuacʻ, 1861), 150.

139. Ibid., 160, *zvawerakan matanin*.

of 774–75 CE.[140] Signet rings symbolized the authority of leading Armenian lords to control the assets and resources within their jurisdictions; giving such an object to the provincial governor would have been tantamount to transferring those rights and responsibilities in perpetuity. The act of handing over his ring therefore marks the moment in which Vahan divests himself of secular lordship and worldly power.

Conclusion

In line with many other medieval Armenian hagiographical and martyrological works, the *Martyrdom of Vahan of Gołt'n* has remained at the margins of scholarly research for a very long time. With the notable exceptions of the studies by Jinbashian, Ter-Davt'yan and Sahner, it has largely been confined to a subsidiary role.[141] Its rediscovery and scholarly rehabilitation as a distinct witness, offering its own perspectives and insights, is overdue. This study seeks to start this process and bring the work to the attention of a wider audience. We propose, on multiple grounds, that the *Martyrdom* was completed in 744 CE. Although composed in Armenian, informed by Armenian literary traditions, and attentive to contemporary Armenian concerns, it is also a product of the caliphal North and completed during the Umayyad era. It therefore possesses a particular significance. Even if the distinction between Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid sources has been exaggerated, since traditions were fluid and subject to change from the moment they crystallized, the overwhelming majority postdates the ʿAbbāsid Revolution. As a result, whether knowingly or otherwise, ʿAbbāsid-era concerns shaped the extant accounts of Umayyad-era events.[142] By virtue of its date of composition, the *Martyrdom* stands outside these epistemological challenges.

It does not follow, however, that the *Martyrdom* can be approached uncritically, as if it were a simple record of what happened. We prefer to see it as a sophisticated work of literature, shaped by the conventions of its genre and the choices of its author, which led it to emphasize Vahan's spirituality when alive, his fortitude when facing death, and his effectiveness as an intercessor after martyrdom. The "real" Vahan is always going to be out of reach. But this does not mean that the *Martyrdom* lacks historical insight. The credibility of the *Martyrdom* depended on its proximity to contemporary experiences, attitudes, and expectations. If its account of Vahan's life and death had been entirely fanciful, beyond the realm of possibility, its potential to instruct and encourage—its meaningfulness—would have been diminished. We do not, therefore, need to agonize over the accuracy of

140. Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, 8 vols. (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1968–75), 8:234–35; Vacca, "Arabic and the Public Performance of Power," 297.

141. For references, see note 3 above.

142. On source criticism, see the seminal works of A. Noth: *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study* (with Lawrence Conrad), trans. M. Bonner, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1994); "Die literarisch überlieferten Verträge der Eroberungszeit als historische Quellen für die Behandlung der unterworfenen Nicht-Muslims durch ihre neuen muslimischen Oberherren," in Tilman Nagel et al., *Studien zum Minderheitenproblem in Islam*, 282–314 (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1973); and "Futūḥ-History and Futūḥ-Historiography: The Muslim Conquest of Damascus," *Al-Qanṭara* 10 (1989): 453–62.

the reported conversations between Vahan and Hishām or establish the means by which they were preserved; rather, we can accept that these encounters convey eighth-century understandings and perceptions, whether real, imagined, or derivative, about the character of the caliph and the arguments he might have advanced. Through its construction, the *Martyrdom* reveals the issues that mattered to its author and the ways in which he articulated them.

This study has analyzed the *Martyrdom* in terms of its construction of the Umayyad world and Armenian experiences within it. The work reveals an extraordinary breadth of knowledge, from the complicated relationships between successive Marwānid caliphs to awareness of the communities, spaces, and built environment of Ruṣāfa during the reign of Hishām, and from contemporary names of the Prophet to hostile perceptions of Armenia with its snow-capped, demon-possessed mountains. Its representation of Armenia in the first half of the eighth century is no less significant. The *Martyrdom* depicts a complex, fluid, and fractured society in which some members of the elite serve the Umayyad authorities and are rewarded with stipends (*ʿaṭā*) but others suffer brutal reprisals. The catholicos and the prince of Armenia are both depicted as repudiating Saint Vahan, their actions reportedly inspired by a demon. Such negative projections are very rare, and therefore invaluable, since they attest a greater diversity of opinion than is usually recorded. Whereas the established church is criticized or ignored, some, though not all, monastic communities are commended for their treatment of the saint. Within the narrative, Vahan acts as a transitional figure, shifting between spaces, identities, and roles. As such, he seems to embody many of the possibilities as well as the anxieties of the age.

A Note on Editions and Translations

The most recent edition of the *Martyrdom* was prepared by Tēr-Vardanean and published in 2007.[143] Tēr-Vardanean offers five different versions of the martyrology, each briefer than the last.[144] We have chosen to present a translation of his first and longest version, supplying in the footnotes any material of substantial importance not included in the main text of the edition but found either in the manuscripts consulted for Version 1 or elsewhere in the texts of Versions 2–5. Version 1 is primarily based on the text preserved in a manuscript of hagiographical texts held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (arm. 178, at fols. 556v–561v), written in Sebasteia by Pawłos the scribe and dated to the twelfth century.[145] Tēr-Vardanean identifies this as Manuscript Ա/A. The same manuscript (henceforth P178) was used for the first of two versions published (anonymously) by Ališan

143. Artawazd, *Patmutʿiwn*, ed. Tēr-Vardanean.

144. Version 1: *MH*, 6:869–897; Version 2: 898–912; Version 3: 913–928; Version 4: 929–936; Version 5: 937–945. They are described by Tēr-Vardanean in his introduction, at 861–63.

145. *MH*, 6:859. Although this manuscript has been digitized, unfortunately folios 1–297 have been uploaded twice and folios 298–598 are missing. For a full description, see R. Kévorkian and A. Ter-Stépanian, *Manuscrits arméniens de la Bibliothèque nationale de France: Catalogue* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1998), no. 178, at 589–604.

in *Sopʻerkʻ Haykakankʻ* in 1854.[146] Although he did not specify his source, we can be confident it was P178, since this was one of the manuscripts copied by Ališan during his extended stay in Paris between 1850 and 1860.[147] In giving priority to the longest version, Tēr-Vardanean followed the rationale previously proposed by Ališan, who maintained that the text was abbreviated rather than lengthened over time, as copyists progressively omitted details not deemed essential to recording Vahan's martyrdom.[148]

In his introduction, Tēr-Vardanean identifies twenty-two manuscripts aside from P178 that contain different forms of the text, all located in the Matenadaran's collection in Erevan, and reveals that he consulted thirteen of them in the preparation of the five versions.[149] It seems clear, however, that his list is incomplete. Tēr-Vardanean himself identifies one further manuscript, found in the Mekhitarist Library in Vienna (W224, fols. 143r–153v), which he used in preparing his edition of Version 1.[150] Furthermore, Thomson identifies two additional manuscripts that also preserve the text in the library of the monastery of St. James in the Armenian patriarchate in Jerusalem (J97, fols. 410v–427r, and J3152, fols. 158r–175r) and a third in the Armenian library in New Julfa (NOJ229, fols. 67r–75r), although it is not clear which versions they contain.[151] Thomson also notes that there are "innumerable brief accounts [of Vahan's life and martyrdom] in synaxaria and miscellanies in all major Armenian collections." It is beyond the scope of this study to trace the reception and transmission of the traditions found in the *Martyrdom*. These await separate study in the future, but it will be no small task to determine how, when, and why they developed in the ways that they did.

To our knowledge, two translations of the *Martyrdom* have been published. The earlier of these is that prepared by Gatteyrias in 1880, using the first of the two versions published in *Sopʻerkʻ Haykakankʻ*.[152] This French translation has been consulted recently by several scholars.[153] The second is the Russian translation (with introduction) of Ter-Davtʻyan, which

146. *Ołbkʻ vasn čareacʻn ašxarhis Hayocʻ ew vkayabanutʻiwn srboyn Vahanay Gołtʻnacʻwoy*, in *Sopʻerkʻ Haykakankʻ*, vol. 13 (Venice: Tparan Mxitʻareancʻ, 1854), 11–59. The first edition of the text was published by M. Awgerean in *Liakatar Varkʻ ew Vkayabanutʻiwn Srbocʻ*, 12 vols. (Venice: Tparan Mxitʻareancʻ, 1810–15), 1:188–216.

147. Kévorkian and Ter-Stépanian, *Manuscrits arméniens*, xvii.

148. See Tēr-Vardanean's discussion of his rationale in *MH*, 6:857.

149. *MH*, 6:859–61, 867 (conspectus). These date from the twelfth to seventeenth centuries.

150. For the reference in the introduction, see *MH*, 6:858 n19; for its contribution to the edition, see 895 n33, at section 9.2.

151. R. W. Thomson, "The Martyrdom of Vahan," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 1, *600–900*, ed. D. Thomas and B. Roggema, 281–83 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 282.

152. J. A. Gatteyrias, "Elégie sur les malheurs de l'Arménie et le martyre de saint Vahan de Koghten: Episode de l'occupation arabe en Arménie, traduit pour la première fois de l'arménien littéral, sur l'édition des RR. PP. Méchitaristes," *Journal asiatique*, 7th ser., 15, Aug–Sept (1880): 177–214. In his brief introduction, at 178, Gatteyrias records that he searched for a manuscript in the Bibliothèque nationale de France that might assist him with problematic readings but that he was unsuccessful. Evidently, he did not manage to locate P178.

153. R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 2007), 373–75; Sahner, *Christian Martyrs*, 41–44; Vacca, "Umayyad North," 225–26.

was based on the same Armenian text and originally published in 1973, and which has provided the point of departure for much of the Russian-language scholarship that has touched on the text.[154] The *Martyrdom* has also been mentioned briefly by others, but there is no recent assessment of the work as a whole.[155] It is in the light of this interest, and our assessment of the significance of the *Martyrdom* for Islamicists and Armenologists alike, that we have prepared the following annotated translation.[156] Although every translation negotiates the balance between faithfulness and meaning in its own way, we have preferred to stay close to the original text, even if this sometimes comes at the expense of clarity of expression. This is a rich, complex, and occasionally obscure text whose meaning is not always clear and straightforward; our translation reflects these qualities.

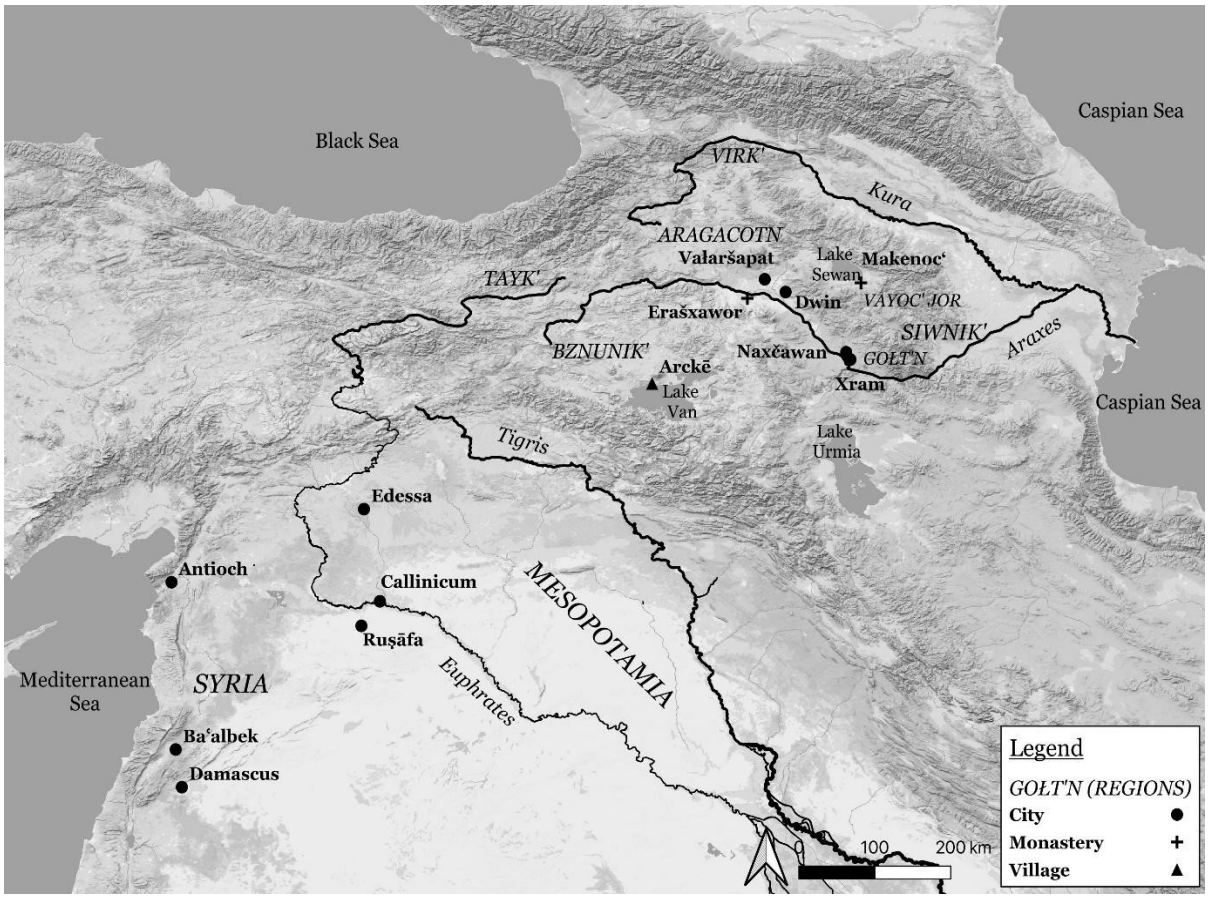

Fig. 1. Map of locations referenced in the *Martyrdom* (prepared by Tim Penn).

154. Ter-Davt'yan, *Armjanskie Žimija*, 289–307. For the scholarship in question, see note 3 above.

155. S. P. Cowe, "Armenian Hagiography," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, 1:299–322 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 310; Vacca, "Fires of Naxčawan," 329.

156. Fowden, in *Barbarian Plain*, 183, commented twenty-five years ago that "the martyr Vahan is remembered by Armenian Christians and not usually by students of Rusafa."

Translation

[869][157] *Lament for the evils that came to pass across this country of Armenia in one hundred and fifty-two of the era*[158] *through fire and captivity by the southern people of Ishmael,*[159] *along with the martyrology of Saint Vahan, who was the son of Saint Xosrov, lord of Gołt‘n.*[160] *And after thirty-three years of the captivity of Armenia Saint Vahan was martyred, in one hundred and eighty-five of the era.*[161]

(1.1) Behold the sharp sword has been drawn from the sheath, which the seer and prophet lamented when it threatened previously.[162] (1.2) The people of Ishmael lifted a sword thirsty for blood against us, roaring like a lion through the four regions of the earth or striking like the four winds the whole of this country.[163] (1.3) The prophecy was really in respect of Israel, but the voice directs it towards us as well; just as Jerusalem was demolished to its foundations, so this whole country of ours has been demolished and ruined.

(1.4) Foreign nations have taken the pleasure of this land, and the freedom and lordship and authority of the nobles has been overthrown as worthless. (1.5) Young children have been stoned there,[164] and we ourselves, parents and children alike, [have been taken] **[870]** into captivity. Jeremiah also lamented over the mothers who had been taken, and these things, too, happened to apply to us as well.[165]

(1.6) Now, you who are great and active in terms of compassion, you who were known to God when still without form, being conceived in the womb,[166] and before being born were sanctified through the true law of our Christ, you who summoned the Holy Spirit to yourself from the seat of wisdom and having become a temple for Him—you were prophesying, like the holy Habakkuk.[167] (1.7) Now, just as then, in the same way and now for us, the ways of Sion are mourning;[168] the light of the glorious holy vessels and decorations of the

157. Numbers in bold in square brackets refer to the page numbers in Tēr-Vardanean's edition of Version 1: *MH*, 6:869–897. Numbers in parentheses indicate the section and sentence divisions supplied in Tēr-Vardanean's edition for ease of reference; they do not feature in the manuscripts.

158. AE 152: June 4, 703–June 2, 704 CE.

159. Manuscripts Ի/Ē (M1523, thirteenth century) and Ր/H (M993, 1436 CE) omit *Ismayeli*, "of Ishmael," identifying the captors merely as "the people of the South." See above, at notes 32–34, and below, note 169.

160. Both these manuscripts omit the qualifying *srboyn*, "Saint," for Vahan and his father Xosrov.

161. AE 185: May 26, 736–May 25, 737 CE.

162. Ezekiel 21:3. All biblical references are to the Armenian Bible.

163. We prefer here the reading in manuscript Ի/Ē, which omits *zcov*, "the sea." For Armenian awareness of the symbolism of the number four, including the four elements and their properties and the four cardinal points, see R. W. Thomson, "Number Symbolism and Patristic Exegesis in Some Early Armenian Writers," *Handes Amsorya* 90 (1976): 117–38, at 120–24.

164. Nahum 3:10.

165. An allusion to Lamentations 1:1.

166. Jeremiah 1:5. This sentence is addressed to the prophet Jeremiah.

167. The Old Testament prophet, Ambakum in Armenian.

168. Lamentations 1:4.

churches has been corrupted and extinguished; the rejoicing of the spiritual festivals and the joy of spiritual songs to God, of priests and worshippers, and altogether the collective delight of this country [have been destroyed]. (1.8) Because a burning, grief-making storm blown by the wind of the South[169] has removed the veil of salvation, having destroyed the excellent and holy covering, furnished with light, which in place of the garden was granted to us by the living wood of the cross of Christ;[170] and the dense darkness of the cloth was revealed, the dark thickness of this terrible blackness that shall take possession of all the countries of this land of Armenia.[171] (1.9) As previously, it appeared in the vision of the blessed and prophetic man of God, Saint Sahak, the extremely diligent shepherd of his sentient flock and overseer of this country of Armenia; or as previously, it was observed through the wonderful illumination of his ancestor, the apostle-like man, the thrice-blessed Saint Grigor.[172]

[871] (2.1) In the time of the tyranny of the Arabs, which followed the death of the originator, the raving Muḥammad, in their eighty-fifth year,[173] they write at this time,[174] during the oversight of ʿAbd al-Malik, son of Marwān,[175] they set fire to us, Satan having inspired anger in them.[176] And they discussed and devised an impious plan against us, poisonous and death-producing in its wickedness, so that after various other evils, they would completely destroy and exterminate the soldiers and commanders, the leaders and princes, the *azat*s and *naxarar*s,[177] through a brutal massacre.

(2.2) Therefore, they quickly dispatched messengers to various regions with a false report, using deceitful, convincing words and promises, that everyone should assemble in one place,[178] that many gifts and presents would be granted to them from the royal

169. The Arab Muslim raiders are first identified with "the South" in Sebēos, *Patmutʿiwn*, 72, 142; repr. *MH*, 4:474.3, 534.36; trans. Thomson, *Sebeos*, 13, 105. For discussion and further references, see above, at notes 32–34. Strikingly, this identification does not feature in Łewond's *History*.

170. In other words, reconciliation with God, experienced in the garden of Eden before the Fall, had again become accessible through the death and resurrection of Christ, but this hope of salvation was now removed.

171. This sentence corresponds both in content and in language to a sentence in the Vision of Saint Sahak (Sahak I, head of the Armenian Church, 372–77 CE), preserved in Łazar, *Patmutʿiwn*, §17, at 34.4–6; repr. *MH*, 2:2225.1–34.75; trans. Thomson, *History of Łazar*, 64–72, at 69. The whole vision describes the shaking of the golden throne that will introduce the famines, earthquakes, and tribulations associated with the Last Days.

172. Saint Grigor/Gregory the Illuminator (d. 328 CE), the principal architect of the conversion of Armenia and founder of the Armenian Church, is referred to by Saint Sahak as his ancestor in Łazar's *History*: Łazar, *Patmutʿiwn*, §17; repr. *MH*, 2:2228.35; Thomson, *History of Łazar*, 67. For Gregory's vision, see Agatʿangełos, *Patmutʿiwn Hayocʿ*, §731–55; repr. *MH*, 2:1654.1–1665.41; trans. Thomson, *Lives of Saint Gregory*, 337–52.

173. AH 85: January 14, 704–January 1, 705. For discussion of this date, see above, at note 12.

174. This mysterious comment could indicate a preexisting written composition.

175. "Abdlmelikʿ, son of Mruan": ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān, who ruled between 685 and October 9, 705.

176. For a recent study of the complex and multiple traditions recording this event, see Vacca, "Fires of Naxčawan."

177. *azat*, "the free," probably in both a social and a fiscal sense; *naxarar*, "noble," originally denoting status in Iranian society. These collective nouns define the elite in different ways; they do not represent different social groups or constituencies.

178. A similar narrative element is found in the *Passion* of David of Duin. In that narrative, the Armenian

treasury by distributing to them generous gifts of *dahekan*s,[179] the *atayan*s of the year.[180] (2.3) Through a deceitful trick they completely removed from them those who were armed, as if protecting themselves against them, from fear of the sword; "You are not like us, trustworthy in an oath." (2.4) And having brought them to one place, they consigned them to two sites, some to the city of Naxčawan and the rest to the *awan* of Xram.[181] (2.5) And the person in charge of these evildoers was named Qāsim, one faithful to Muḥammad, and *hramanatar* of Armenia through the command of ʿAbd al-Malik.[182]

(2.6) And having assembled the *naxarar*s of this country in the aforementioned places, they put them into the holy churches and closed and shut the doors and said, "May no one from this great crowd go outside." **[872]** And they secretly equipped themselves with weapons, as they were instructed,[183] and they rushed up to the doors and they blocked up the exits of the places with bricks.[184] (2.7) And they [those trapped inside] cried out, singing the hymn of the holy young men who were in the furnace[185] and then the songs of the angels, and they were glorifying the angels above with the shepherds.[186] (2.8) And when they had demolished the roofs, they set [them] on fire, and through flammable materials they caused it to go up higher than that of Babylon.[187] (2.9) Here, fear of the tyranny of the king, and there, a legion of demons, entered into the men, and becoming infuriated

elite was assembled in Duin under false pretenses and then taxed heavily: Aucher, *Liakatar Vark'*, 6.225.

179. *dahekan* in Armenian traditionally identified a gold coin but was increasingly used as a generic term for coin.

180. *atayan*s, Ar. *ʿaṭā*, "gift." This seems to refer to the annual stipends granted to Armenians who served the Umayyads as cavalry. Łewond refers to such payments as *hṙog*: Łewond, *Patmabanut'iwn*, in *MH*, 6:755.13; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 78, 90–92, 238–39. The terms under which Armenians provided military service varied over time. According to Sebēos, in the conquest era, such service was supplied in lieu of tribute or taxation: Sebēos, *Patmut'iwn*, 164; repr. *MH*, 4:554.14–15; trans. Thomson, *Sebeos*, 136. For a recent reinterpretation of the agreement, see Greenwood, "Negotiating the North," 605–10.

181. Naxčawan: a strategic fortress on the river Araxes, repeatedly contested by Armenians, Persians, Romans, and Arabs. Xram (Ḥram in the text): a fortress on the Araxes downstream from Naxčawan. *Awan* is usually translated as "town," something less than a city but more than just a fortress. For an earlier association between the two sites, see Sebēos, *Patmut'iwn*, 146; repr. *MH*, 4:538.17–19; trans. Thomson, *Sebeos*, 111.

182. Kasm/Qāsim has not been identified, but following Łewond, we understand his description as someone faithful to Mahmet/Muḥammad to reflect his loyalty to Muḥammad b. Marwān rather than the Prophet: Łewond, *Patmabanut'iwn*, in *MH*, 6:755.13; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 78, where he is described as Muḥammad b. Marwān's representative in Naxčawan. *Hramanatar*: cf. MP *framatar*, usually interpreted as commander but here denoting an unspecified capacity.

183. We prefer here the reading in Manuscripts Ի/Ē and Հ/H, which read *irazgack'* for *srazgack'*.

184. *ałiwsov*, "with brick." This is a very rare reference in Armenian to this building material; see also 8.22 and note 362 below.

185. Daniel 3 describes the events. This is a reference to the Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Holy Children (sometimes called Hebrew Youths), included in the Septuagint and the Armenian Bible at Daniel 3:26–88 but rejected outside Orthodox tradition. This canticle features in the various readings collected at the end of Armenian Psalter after Psalm 151; see also S. P. Cowe, "The Reception of the Book of Daniel in Late Ancient and Medieval Armenian Society," in Bardakjian and La Porta, *Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition*, 79–125, at 85–87.

186. Luke 2:13–14.

187. Cf. Daniel 3:46, for the flammable materials added to the furnace in Babylon.

and rushing around, they were flashing their swords. (2.10) Pity burned the insides of the fathers of children,[188] and the flames fell from above from the ceiling, and the fire consumed the clothing of the children; the fathers were completely annihilated because they did not have in mind their own piteous death for themselves, and they were all burned together, equally.

(2.11) Now weep for us, O holy one of God, you who said, "Do not send me to this crowd,"[189] for it has confined yours within burial sites and your eyes have overflowed with tears for us.[190] (2.12) Open your mouth in intercession, for God has rendered your state of being dead more valuable than our state of being alive.[191] (2.13) Cry out, O earth, and weep, you heavens; groan together, howl like the prophet, because behold, mist and fog have spread over you. (2.14) Do not torment yourself, Jeremiah, with manifold tears, you who sought fountains as eyes,[192] for fountains of tears have covered this land of ours like a sea.

(2.15) As a result of all that perilous fire being increased by mortal human hands, the wooden roof caught fire **[873]** and was burned. The soot of the fire dropped from above with the fire mixed with smoke, bringing a deadly end to all of them through a suffocating and cruel punishment; it hid that multitude without assistance from above. (2.16) And their ceaseless praise ceased when their spirits perished. (2.17) And the executioners were safe from fear, for many of them had been defeated many times by the few courageous and honorable *naxarar*s; in the same way, all the celebrated military forces were beheaded by the sword and hung on wood.[193] And in this way they accomplished the deed.

(3.1) And then the evildoing foreigners[194] spread across the land and investigated the families of those who had been killed. And through these ones, they took all the treasures[195] of this whole country, seizing both the families of cavalrymen and the chosen men, and, taking them in this way, they brought those taken captive to Naxčawan. (3.2) And at this news, [everyone] was disheartened, and the country expressed heartfelt laments; while being led away, they showed compassion to those who were upon the wooden crosses, [a sight] not only terrifying to our fellow countrymen but also [one that] made their own bravery universally known.

(3.3) And this wicked plan occurred in the sixteenth year of the authority of ʿAbd al-Malik,[196] since through such evils he destroyed this land of Armenia, until the day of his

188. A rhetorical conflation (zeugma): the fathers are consumed by both pity and the flames.

189. An allusion to Jeremiah 1:7.

190. Based on Jeremiah 9:18.

191. The contrast is between "deathness" and "aliveness."

192. Jeremiah 9:1. This may foreshadow Vahan's self-baptism; see 5.5 and note 222 below.

193. This practice of gibbeting a beheaded corpse is known as *ṣalb* in Arabic and is attested under the Umayyads: see Marsham, "Public Execution."

194. *aylazgik'*, originally applied to the Philistines in the Old Testament; the term came to mean Muslims but may not have held that meaning at the time of composition.

195. The implication is that the treasures comprised both material resources and family members.

196. By convention, this corresponds to 700–701 CE, but this dating is approximate rather than absolute,

death. And these evils were accomplished through his command. (3.4) After his death, in the first year of the authority of Walīd his son,[197] which was one hundred and fifty-two of the Armenian Era, during the days of the festival of Easter,[198] they took and led the multitude of captives to the metropolis of Duin.[199] (3.5) And during days of heat **[874]**, they were kept in prison, to the point that I estimate the number of those who died to be greater than those who remained alive. (3.6) And at the coming of autumn, they removed them from the place of imprisonment and sealed their necks, and they took them and had them conveyed to the land of Syria, enumerated and in writing.[200] (3.7) And when they arrived in Damascus, they kept the military elite at court and set their children to study, and the rest they split up in captivity.[201] (3.8) And [as for] those who died on the road, I do not know whether a tomb received them or whether they remain in the places where they fell.

(4.1) In that place, among the crowd of those who had fallen, a child was found from the district of Gołtʻn, named Vahan, son of Xosrov, lord of Gołtʻn,[202] a young boy about four years old, good-looking in appearance; he was ordered to the royal court, and, being turned from the truth of our great mystery to error, he denied the hope of our truth.[203] (4.2) And when they did that, they called him Vahap, and he went and grew wise and was found to be superior to all the counselors[204] and became *vardapet* of those of the same age, and a scribe of the royal *diwan*.[205] (4.3) And then, after the passing of the time of ʿAbd al-Malik and Walīd his son and Sulaymān his brother, this rumor of the Arabs became popular, that he had become a proof of falseness for us.

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given the complex circumstances of his accession. Responsibility for the massacre is once more attributed to ʿAbd al-Malik.

197. Vlitʻ, al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik, ruled from October 705 until January or March 715.

198. AE 152: June 4, 703–June 2, 704. This implies Easter 704.

199. *mayrakʻałakʻ*, "mother-city," a calque on the Greek μητρόπολις. Duin was the seat of the Persian governor or *marzpan* in Late Antiquity and later served as the seat of the Arab governors of Armenia.

200. See Robinson, "Neck-Sealing"; Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces*, 204–8; and above, at notes 57–59.

201. *azatagund*, military elite, literally the "free contingent."

202. Xosrov, lord of Gołtʻn, is not otherwise attested in contemporary sources. For discussion and further references, see above, at notes 124–34. The last reference to a lord of Gołtʻn is dated 768 CE; at the start of the tenth century, Gołtʻn was under the control of a Muslim emir: Ter-Łewondyan, *Arab Emirates*, 72.

203. That is, he was converted from the Christian faith to Islam. Like the prophet Daniel, he was also given a new name.

204. *xorhrdakcʻacʻn*, "sharers of knowledge."

205. *vardapet*: a term whose meaning shifted over time but that usually denotes a spiritual teacher or instructor in late antique Armenian contexts; here it is used in a nonreligious context. The classic study of the term remains R. W. Thomson, "*Vardapet* in the Early Armenian Church," *Le Muséon* 75 (1962): 367–84. *Diwanadpir*: scribe of the *diwan*. *Diwan* is another transliterated term in Armenian, from MP *dīvān*, with a range of meanings; *dpir*, from MP *dipīr*, means a scribe. The term *diwan* is found in seventh-century Armenian compositions and seems to refer to various state institutions in Sasanian Iran that relied on written records; see Sebēos, *Patmutʻiwn*, 67, 101; repr. *MH*, 4:471.29, 499.11; trans. Thomson, *Sebeos*, 6, 49. For discussion, see above, at note 62.

(4.4) And when ʿUmar was installed in the headship of the Arabs,[206] God inspired his heart to remember the iniquity that [had been perpetrated] against the Armenians.[207] He commanded the captives to be assembled with great care, and at the gathering he dispatched **[875]** each one of them. (4.5) And that Vahan, who had been named Vahap, came, and he had been well instructed in their knowledge and law and [was] clever and skillful in speech, and he was aware of his difficulty.[208] (4.6) Those words were reckoned difficult for the great ʿUmar because he saw that there was no one equal to him in wisdom. He sought witnesses and did not want anyone to testify concerning him, and he rejected those who came from Armenia as witnesses.[209] (4.7) This obstinacy was due to the value of the man; but he kept his order firm out of the moral nature that he had and did not alter it.

(4.8) Then he sent envoys by horse for the purpose of investigating the captives in Mesopotamia and [making] a very diligent search, which was not obstructed, as if it were the contemplation of God. (4.9) And there fifteen men were found, Arabs who were well acquainted with that time and had known the blessed young man. And they presented all this information to ʿUmar as testimony. (4.10) Now ʿUmar, having seen the circumstances, did not want to act in a violent manner but entreated the young man with delectable words:[210] "Do not leave us, O young man, and if you believe that there is anything lacking in your life, I shall make you celebrated in my kingdoms, glorious in authority and treasures." (4.11) And that man, who was bubbling with the spirit of God[211]—no worldly desire consumed him—and reflecting deeply, confessed in his reply: "At the time when my ancestors advanced the dominion of the Persians, laboring with spear and bow, they were rewarded with more treasure than many of the *azat*s who were in my land.[212] Now this captivity of mine has

206. ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Azīz, caliph between September 717 and February 720.

207. At this point, Manuscripts Ի/Ē and Ր/H supply an additional sentence: *He recalled the impiety that there had been across this country of Armenia, and after he had learned of all the harm that had been inflicted by the impious Abdlmelikʿ, God loosened his heart, and compassion for higher concerns returned.* The added passage elucidates ʿUmar's motivations and casts ʿAbd al-Malik as "impious," a derogatory epithet applied regularly to Sasanian rulers by Armenian authors. The positive depiction of ʿUmar is noteworthy.

208. The final phrase is hard to interpret. Considered alongside the repetition of difficulty/difficult (*džuarutʿiwnn/džuarin tʿuēin*), it indicates a possible interruption or lacuna at this point. Again Manuscripts Ի/Ē and Ր/H offer a helpful alternative, including the following: *and he was aware of his patrimonial inheritance and lordship, and he begged to go to his native district, having been moved by the bubbling of his spirit* [*šaržeal i hogwoyn eṙacʿmanē*] *to recognize the true faith that is in Christ, of which he had been ignorant since childhood.* This provides the context for the words that ʿUmar allegedly found difficult. This additional sentence therefore asserts that Vahan had secretly converted back to Christianity before he was sent back to Armenia. A very similar phrase is used at 4.11 below to describe his bubbling spirit.

209. This is a challenging passage. One possible interpretation is that ʿUmar sought evidence to prove the identity and/or circumstances of the Armenians who had been transported prior to their release but that he rejected the testimony of Christian witnesses from Armenia. The following passage asserts that the testimony of Arab witnesses was accepted; unfortunately for ʿUmar, they supported the case for Vahan's repatriation.

210. This implies that the process yielded no grounds to deny Vahan's return to Armenia. ʿUmar therefore adopted a different approach.

211. *astuacayin eṙayr hogwov*, very similar to the phrase discussed in note 208 above.

212. Vahan is asserting here that his ancestors had served in the Sasanian forces and been rewarded more than many other Armenian nobles had been. Such military service by Armenian nobles is very well attested

returned everything to me double, **[876]** which was in the time of your Majesty,[213] and you have loved me and promised me greatness; however, now it is not possible for me to grow old in these places.[214] (4.12) Now, since God in his mercy has softened your care for me, release me so that I may see the ruinous condition of my ancestral land and, having made me representative by your command,[215] I shall attend on you."

(5.1) And after these wise words, the hardness of his heart was softened, and he wrote a command that was firm and irrevocable. (5.2) He arrived in his district of Gołt'n[216] and in the position of overseer[217] in accordance with the command.[218] (5.3) But as the pattern of the events seemed to us, that ray that should be interpreted as the light of faith, he truly sought from God to be delivered from them.[219] (5.4) Therefore, when the news rapidly reached him that ʿUmar had died, (5.5) he did not want to leave in accordance with his firm command[220] and his comfort, which was in Arabia; he repented of his conversion in the years of his childhood[221] and rendered his tears a second font,[222] a thing that, in his mind, matched the depth of his feeling.

(5.6) Now You, Holy Father, who [exist] in grandeur yet are not distant from our own humble condition; You [who] offered to us Your Only Begotten through the altar of the cross and Your Holy Spirit to guide Your faithful correctly on earth—now look on me, at the broken things in my heart, because You alone are Lord and **[877]** Your care is never limited

in the fourth to seventh centuries, but none of the surviving accounts refer specifically to any participants from the house or district of Gołt'n. For an older, but still significant, survey of Armenian military potential and service, see N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Age of Justinian*, trans. N. G. Garsoïan (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1970), 183–234.

213. *jer kʻaǰutʻean*, a difficult phrase to interpret. If we insert *žamanaki* so that it reads "in the time of your Majesty," the passage indicates that the material rewards Vahan had enjoyed during ʿUmar's rule as caliph were double what his ancestors had received under the Sasanian *šahanšah*s. This is a rhetorical rather than literal assertion.

214. Again, Manuscripts Ի/Ē and Ր/H appear to preserve an additional passage here: *in the place of my captivity by your Majesty; you love me and promise me greatness.*

215. *gorcakal*, a general term for someone with authority; it does not denote a specific office.

216. Manuscripts Ի/Ē and Ր/H add: *And then he set out and arrived in the land of Armenia, in the district of Gołtʻn, and the inhabitants of the land were assembled and greeted the son of their original lord.*

217. *kargaworutʻiwn verakacʻuacʻn*: again, this refers to a general power of oversight rather than a specific appointment.

218. Manuscripts Ի/Ē and Ր/H: *Then they reminded him of the previous misfortunes that had come upon the land of Armenia and with them his rebellion as a child from the Christian faith, and they sighed; he became tearful and wept for the loss of himself, and everyone was moved to tears.* This overlaps partially with the above.

219. Manuscripts Ի/Ē and Ր/H: *because he was not willing to return in accordance with the king's command for the sake of delight in Arabia.* Again, this overlaps partially with the above.

220. The implication seems to be that Vahan's appointment ended with ʿUmar's death.

221. Manuscript Ի/Ē: *and he wept day and night that he had abandoned Christ in his childhood.*

222. Self-baptism through tears is a striking image. For the development of this tradition in both East (specifically in Origen and Gregory Nazianzus) and West, see T. O'Loughlin and H. Conrad-O'Briain, "The 'Baptism of Tears' in Early Anglo-Saxon Sources," *Anglo-Saxon England* 22 (1993): 65–83.

by boundaries, and if it should be pleasing for You that we die, may we never be rejected by Your love and it shall not be equal to Your goodness.[223]

(5.7) And when his people saw all this and the conviction of his mind, they wanted to bind him with this country in love [and] forced him into marriage, lest he should remain without an heir[224] through lacking a family, and to fulfill their wishes, they took [a bride] from the family of the lord of Siwnikʻ.[225] (5.8) But he did not turn from his love of God, so that the great things of this world would not consume him, and so that he would not appear to be worshiping God in secret,[226] but so that he might openly confess Christ and so that he would not be living like an apostate in fear. (5.9) Then, elevating his mind from the transitory affairs of this world, he set aside all his wealth and authority and, taking with him his resources[227] and twenty cavalrymen, and his wife, he resolved to go to the country of the Greeks.[228] (5.10) And when he reached Vayocʻ Jor,[229] he revealed his secret plan to his father-in-law so that he might obtain assistance with his proposed route.[230] (5.11) Then they, [like] easily moved women, showed their inner turmoil through tears, saying, "When you took possession of your ancestral principality, **[878]** you accordingly became a great hope for us; now we have realized your intention, and we are estranged. And you have become for us neither alive nor dead." (5.12) And while they were sitting around in tears, several slipped away and said, "Think about the impossibility of this life for us. Perhaps you shall ask us to go[231] with you to live and to die in a foreign land. Having lamented together with you, let us go away, with tears that cannot be dried up."[232]

223. This prayer appears without introduction but should be associated with Vahan.

224. Manuscript Ա/A has *anžamayn*, "without time," but the reading *anžaṙang* should be preferred. This anxiety finds correspondence in Sasanian-era Iran, where multiple means of generating legal heirs were recognized to ensure continuity of the family line and hence ownership and control of family assets: M. Macuch, "Incestuous Marriage in the Context of Sasanian Family Law," in *Ancient and Middle Iranian Studies: Proceedings of the Sixth European Conference of Iranian Studies of the Societas Iranologica Europe in Vienna, September 19–22, 2007*, ed. M. Macuch, D. Weber, and D. Durkin-Meisterernst, 133–48 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010).

225. Coterminous with Gołtʻn. In the middle of the seventh century, the prince of Ałuankʻ Juanšēr also married a daughter of the prince of Siwnikʻ ("the daughter of the prince of the Sisakanean country"): Movsēs Kałankatuacʻi, *Patmutʻiwn*, 2:19; repr. *MH*, 15:234.21–22; trans. Dowsett, *History*, 114.

226. This is complex, but it seems that the text here portrays Vahan as a Muslim who was dispatched to Armenia by the caliph and who secretly converted back to Christianity but did not practice his faith openly out of fear of being accused of apostasy. His decision to leave is represented as inspired by a determination not to worship God in secret any longer.

227. *tʻošak*: MP *tōšag*, usually "provisions or resources," but arguably here and below (5.21) a group of people—that is, an entourage.

228. This representation of the East Roman Empire as a refuge and alternative source of patronage and employment for Armenian nobles is found throughout Łewond's record of the eighth century, from Smbat Bagratuni *curopalates* in ca. 705 CE, to Tačat Anjewacʻi in ca. 753 CE and Šapuh Amatuni in ca. 790 CE: Łewond, *Patmabanutʻiwn*, in *MH*, 6:757.28, 843.5–4.7, 850.3–7; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 80, 330–33, and 376.

229. Vayocʻ Jor: a region adjoining Gołtʻn to the north and under the control of Vahan's father-in-law, who was from the princely house of Siwnikʻ.

230. This implies that his father-in-law knew the way to Roman territory.

231. Manuscript Ա/A reads *gamkʻ*, but we prefer *gal*.

232. The implication seems to be that some of Vahan's party resolved to break away at this point.

(5.13) When the blessed one heard that, he left the things that were encumbering and impossible and used up resources. Acting controversially,[233] like the weapon of the Spirit, he arrived straightaway in the country of Virk'[234] through the provision of faith, since those *azat*s who were there were relatives of his,[235] in order that through them, he might find the proposed route.[236] (5.14) And there, he undertook still more repentance and nightly prayers without rest, calling God to his assistance with fasts, (5.15) and having spent the days of more than one year there, again he came back to Armenia, to Aragacotn.[237] (5.16) And his supporting cavalry deserted him completely out of annoyance. (5.17) And among the princes of the district, there were sympathetic[238] *azat*s who resolved that having crossed the remote country of Tayk', they should travel to the city where the king resided.[239] (5.18) His ones not reckoning this sufficient, they made the prince and the catholicos parties to the plan.[240] (5.19) And **[879]** as I surmise, that demon who is very active in everything, through ill-intentioned thoughts, suddenly arrived. He frightened the commander and the overseer of the Christians[241] to the point that they said, "Leave, go away, lest it become ruinous for us and anyone." (5.20) [This was] so that perhaps he[242] might be able to lead the blessed man into denial of our Christ.

233. *yandēps*, literally "unsuitably" or "unbecomingly" but here with a positive rather than negative meaning, since he is described as acting like the sword of the Spirit.

234. Virk': Iberia, the lands to the north of historic Armenia, often termed Georgia. Vahan was therefore moving north from Gołt'n toward districts contiguous with the East Roman Empire.

235. It is not clear how they were related.

236. Again, this suggests that Vahan sought guidance from relatives in Georgia on how to reach East Roman territory.

237. One year: the actual timing is impossible to pin down beyond its being after the death of ʿUmar in 720 and before ca. 730 CE. Aragacotn: south of Virk' and further away from East Roman territory. No reason is given for this movement.

238. *mōtawor*: literally "neighboring" or "adjacent," but here "close" in the sense of sympathetic.

239. The city of Constantinople, which literally meant "Constantine's city." Tayk': a mountainous and remote region of Armenia adjoining Roman territory, west of Aragacotn. Łewond records that both Bagratuni and Mamikonean princes traveled to Tayk' when seeking refuge, Smbat Bagratuni *curopalates* in ca. 705 and Grigor Mamikonean in ca. 748: Łewond, *Patmabanut'iwn*, in *MH*, 6:750.27–9, 819.10; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 80, 92–95, 257.

240. This part of the narrative represents the leading prince of Armenia operating in concert with the catholicos, the head of the Armenian Church. The title "prince of Armenia," *išxan Hayoc'*, emerged in the 630s and was used by both Roman and Muslim authorities to designate their principal client. For a list of princes of Armenia, see Laurent, *L'Arménie*, 400–408; Ter-Łevondyan, "Hayoc' išxaně," 121–34. Several eighth-century catholicoi are also depicted interacting with caliphs or their representatives. It is extremely rare to find a prince and a catholicos working together and seemingly against the interests of a Christian Armenian lord, as here. The figures are anonymous but may represent Ašot III Bagratuni, prince of Armenia from 726 or 732 to 748 CE, and Catholicos David I of Aramonk' in Kotayk' (ca. 728–741). For Ašot's support of Marwān b. Muḥammad, see La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 238–41. See also below, note 278. It is unclear whether "his ones" refers to Vahan's relatives (5.13) or his cavalrymen who have just deserted him (5.16).

241. Different ways of describing the prince of Armenia and the catholicos. Frightened: Vahan was by this time a known apostate, and under Islamic law this was worse than being a Muslim political rebel: Kraemer, "Apostates."

242. That is, the demon.

(5.21) And they provoked the saint still more, and then he was deserted by everyone, by his supporters and entourage,[243] apart from one man whom he had, one of his beloved ones; however, the demon did not pass over that man. He said, "I am following my companions, but give me your horse and your sword, and I shall not betray you to those who are seeking your blood."[244] (5.22) And he [Vahan] perceived the deceit in him and gave [them] to him, and he contemplated [him] in a loving manner. (5.23) And previously he had given the few remaining members of his entourage[245] to his wife and sent [them] to the house of her father, so he had nothing for himself. (5.24) He went and traveled on foot, having put on his faith as armor,[246] and went and arrived in the city of Vałaršapat, and the catholicos[247] encountered him and said to him, "Go, travel to some deserted place, so that no harm shall befall you from others."[248]

(5.25) Being unrecognized by everyone, he traveled with laborious exertion; and drained of energy, he fell down on the ground. (5.26) And straightaway a man appeared with a pack animal; he looked [at him] and did not see anything apart from a gold ring, his signet ring,[249] which he removed and gave to the man; [and he said,] "Take me to somewhere deserted." (5.27) In taking counsel with God, these words came out in a fitting way: "Lord, You who do not recall evil, You are that one who was sold with Joseph, **[880]** when through the blood of a kid and the tearing of his coat by the teeth of wild animals his brothers caused the weeping of his father.[250] You also kept Daniel alive in the lion's den, and You rescued the three children from the furnace.[251] (5.28) Now, O immutable God, [as to] my iniquities, may they not be remembered by You, and because Your benevolence cannot be overcome, take me away from these bitter cares and this affliction."

(5.29) And then the days of Great Easter drew near, and he entered some monastery[252] and stayed there for six months; he made a pool of tears, and his thoughts became God-speaking through lips that did not move, and he obtained a higher wisdom. (5.30) But the evil-loving

243. *i tʻošakēn*; see above, note 227.

244. This is the first representation of Vahan as a fugitive being pursued.

245. *zsakaw mnacʻeal tʻošakn*.

246. Ephesians 6:10.

247. Vałaršapat, the older name for Ējmiacin, the site of notable churches including the Church of Zuartʻnocʻ, built by Nersēs III Tayecʻi, catholicos between ca. 641 and 661 CE. According to Yovhannēs Drasxanakertcʻi, David I was forced to leave the city of Duin and settled in the village of Aramonkʻ in Kotaykʻ. This is just 25 km northeast of Vałaršapat. See Yovhannēs Drasxanakertcʻi (John Catholicos), *Patmutʻiwn*, 105; repr. *MH*, 11:422.1–4; trans. Maksoudian, *History*, 112.

248. A second indication that Vahan is being pursued.

249. *matani mi oski, zvawerakann*. Having given away his horse and sword, Vahan now divested himself of the last symbol of his noble status. For the use of seals to execute legal documents in the ninth century, see Greenwood, "Contested Jurisdiction," 214. According to Ibn Aʿtham, it was Mušeł Mamikonean's refusal to give his ancestral signet ring to the ʿAbbāsid governor that precipitated the revolt of 774–75 CE: Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, 8.234–5; La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 325.

250. Genesis 37:12–35.

251. Allusions to Daniel 6 and Daniel 3, respectively. Manuscript Ա/A lacks the reference to the den of lions.

252. In light of what happens, the anonymity of this monastery is unsurprising!

demon, who is accustomed to inspiring human senses, spread fear among the monks. It was made known through them that a prince's wife was close; she sent to the hermitage, saying, "May he depart and go from you; otherwise he shall be a cause of destruction for himself and for you."[253] (5.31) And he arose and praised God and said, "At the rising of the evil one in battle against me, I have trusted in You; and in the shadowy places of death, make me fearless, and do not make the rod and staff of Your holy cross distant from me.[254] (5.32) Behold, I have been wounded by the teeth of the wolf, just as the man who was [going] to Jericho fell into the hands of thieves; do not leave me half-dead, because I have need of bandages and soothing oil."[255]

(5.33) He left and arrived in a hidden desert and sparsely populated places, and he passed the year, until the same autumn, with a single piece of clothing and one cloak, but with a heart that was not dispirited, [and] through endeavor; just as **[881]** a very thirsty stag longs for spring waters, so he longed for the love of God.[256] And his tears were rendered food, like [those] of Saint David,[257] and he reckoned it pleasing. (5.34) From that time on, he completely removed his hope from the world, and existing outside the body like the spiritual ones, he soared above against his enemy, Satan.

(5.35) He decided to go to the prince of the Arabs[258] in order to test the boldness of his faith, especially because he had become learned in the holy scriptures since the divine Holy Spirit had met every need of assistance, as if he were a *vardapet* in a temple,[259] and he was trained in the Ishmaelite fables.[260] (5.36) He went, not running toward death in some foolhardy manner, but rather seeking to confirm the truth of his faith and to repudiate completely the falseness of theirs. "Because I did not have a mature mind when I accepted theirs," the saint said, "but was in childhood; and upon growing up, the truth has been revealed to me, and I have come to recognize the falseness. And the words of the sermon

253. Even if this interaction is fictitious (and critical), the passage supplies early evidence of a direct connection between an elite woman and a monastic community. Mariam, daughter of Ašot I Bagratuni and wife of Vasak, lord of Siwnikʻ, was renowned for her generous support of churches and monasteries in the second half of the ninth century, but there is little earlier evidence of female endowments in Armenia—as opposed to female asceticism, for which see Z. Pogossian, "Female Asceticism in Early Medieval Armenia," *Le Muséon* 125, no. 1–2 (2012): 169–213; and D. Zakarian, *Women, Too, Were Blessed: The Portrayal of Women in Early Christian Armenian Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 105–33.

254. A clear allusion to Psalm 22:4, interpreted in the light of the cross of Christ.

255. Luke 10:30–34.

256. Psalm 41:2.

257. Psalm 41:4, presented as a psalm of David.

258. *išxann tačkacʻ*, "prince of the Arabs." The edition amends the reading in Manuscript Ա/A to *hanur*, "universal," but this seems unjustified since *tiezerakal* is the contemporary Armenian term for universal authority.

259. Since Vahan had been brought up as a Muslim and was now a wandering ascetic, he had received no formal instruction. He is therefore depicted as acquiring his knowledge directly from the Holy Spirit.

260. *Ismayelakan aṙaspelabanutʻeancʻn*: a disparaging comment on Islamic belief. Thomson has noted that Movsēs Xorenacʻi uses *aṙaspel* (and occasionally the verb *aṙaspelabanel*) for fables that are not to be taken literally because, according to Movsēs, they are exaggerated, nonsensical, false, or even obscene: Thomson, *Moses*, 10.

seem to me just.[261] (5.37) If their violence torments me and justice does not favor me, still I shall not be aggrieved. Christ has died for me and for the sake of His love I am ten times more eager; insults in exchange for insults, persecution in exchange for persecution, bonds in exchange for bonds, judgment in exchange for the tribunal, just witness that I am a Christian in exchange for false witnesses, **[882]** suffering in exchange for suffering.[262] I shall carry my cross with the man of Cyrene,[263] a sword in exchange for the lance.[264] (5.38) And so, in accordance with the zeal of Paul,[265] I shall fulfill in my own body the want of afflictions of Christ, if only God shall make me worthy."

(5.39) And there were some who were obstructing him, to weaken his resolve, but he took delight in their reprimands; other brothers were encouraged at what they had heard and he was emboldened on a daily basis.[266] (5.40) And when the time of his departure arrived, a great sadness came upon a certain monk who was the leader of the community, named Yovhannēs.[267] He provided him with a mount and a cloak for the needs of the journey, for they had become fellow brothers in divine worship and love. (5.41) And he urged one of the younger brothers to go after him in his place, in service to the saint. (5.42) And for four years[268] he traveled, continually afflicted, but God was with him. On three occasions he saw the manifestation of a miracle that I am not capable of describing and that the one from Tarsus said was his, seeing the light but not hearing the voice,[269] and hearing the voice but not seeing the light;[270] on both occasions it was incomprehensible. (5.43) Now such a thing is not dissimilar to seeing the Lord Himself through the eye of the Spirit and hearing, "Do not delay, for I am with you and I will make your words invincible and I shall set you among the first of the saints."[271]

(5.44) And having come to the feast of the Holy Cross, with much contrition he entered the temple of God and shared in the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord.[272] (5.45)

261. Given the following biblical reference, this appears to refer to the Sermon on the Mount.

262. Based on Matthew 5:11. Vahan is imagining taking upon himself the experiences of Christ's passion.

263. Variously Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26.

264. Perhaps the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17), in opposition to the lance that pierced Christ on the cross (John 19:34). This is very compressed.

265. Acts 22:3.

266. It is not clear where this occurred. When the narrative broke off at 5.34, Vahan was living alone in a deserted place, having been compelled to leave a monastery. Here he is once again in a monastic community. Evidently some elements have been lost or the sequence of the narrative has been disrupted.

267. The location of the monastery and the identity of Yovhannēs are both obscure.

268. This laconic statement about the passage of time sits uneasily with Vahan's express intention above (5.35) to go and confront the caliph.

269. Acts 22:9. The perspective here is that of the companion, not Vahan.

270. Acts 9:7. Again this is the perspective of those accompanying Saul/Paul on the road to Damascus. This sentence combines details from the two accounts of Paul's conversion.

271. Isaiah 43:5 for the first part of this sentence, but the verse has "fear," not "delay" or "slumber."

272. According to van Esbroeck, this occurred on September 14, 736: van Esbroeck, "Salomon de Makenoc," 41–42.

And a certain man—the abbot of the monastery, which **[883]** was called Makʻenocʻ[273]—whose name was Sołomon had brought to him a book of consolation and a garment for the purposes of provision.[274] (5.46) Then this blessed man, with many tears from many people, searched for the irrevocable road, just as the evangelist of the world [had searched] for Rome.[275] He went and arrived in the district of Bznunikʻ, at a village called Arckē;[276] he went to the hermitage in Maseacʻotn that they call Erašxawor, whose leader was an abbot named Artawazd, also known as Abraham.[277] He received him with love for three days, and at his departure he supplied him with the needs of his journey. (5.47) And God's miracles accomplished this, because he subsequently attracted everyone's minds with love, and he departed and became praiseworthy.

(5.48) And a multitude of cavalrymen returned from conflict in the northern regions,[278] and various contingents approached him afterwards for the purpose of debating with him, and they were not able to endure the wisdom through which he spoke to them from the divine scriptures, revealing the truth about Christ—that He is the Son of God.[279]

(5.49) And having arrived in the metropolis of Edessa, he worshiped the salvific image and sought pardon for his childish ignorance.[280] (5.50) And from there he went to Callinicum and crossed the Euphrates River; and finishing the journey with great effort, he came and arrived in the city of Ruṣāfa, which was the residence of Hishām, the prince of the Arabs.[281]

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273. The monastery of Makʻenocʻ was located south of lake Sewan. If it is the same figure, Abbot Solomon of Makʻenocʻ was the learned teacher of Stepʻanos Siwnecʻi, one of the most prominent clerics and scholars of the first half of the eighth century; see van Esbroeck, "Salomon de Makenoc," for a presentation and analysis of the disparate references.

274. We prefer the reading in Manuscript Ա/A, *patčars*, "causes, purposes," rather than *pēts*, "needs"; *tʻošaki*, provision.

275. The apostle Paul. Vahan's search for the right road (to martyrdom) contrasts with his struggle to find the way to the East Roman Empire earlier in the narrative and his need to take advice (5.10, 5.13).

276. Arckē: a settlement on the northern shore of Lake Van, more commonly identified as an *awan*, "town," in later works.

277. The monastery of Erašxawor is usually identified as being located at Širakawan in Širak. The suggestion that it was in Maseacʻotn—the "foot of Masis," the territory extending north from Mount Ararat (Masis) to the Araxes River—is surprising but may indicate an earlier location. Vahan's movements are hard to explain. Artawazd/Abraham also features at the end of the composition (9.2), and he is presented as the author of the narrative (10.2).

278. This passage appears to be connected to the series of campaigns undertaken by Marwān b. Muḥammad after 732 CE against the Khazars in the northern Caucasus. These involved both Arab and Armenian troops, the latter under Ašot III Bagratuni: see La Porta and Vacca, *Armenian* Futūḥ *Narrative*, 238–41.

279. Such a debate implies that there was disagreement over the status of Jesus and hence that the cavalrymen involved in the debate were Muslim, not Christian.

280. Uṙha, the Armenian name for the city of Edessa. This is a previously unacknowledged reference to the Mandylion, on which there is a substantial secondary literature; see M. Guscin, *The Image of Edessa* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

281. Kałinikos: Roman Callinicum, modern Raqqa. Ṙucapʻ: Resafa/al-Ruṣāfa, Sergiopolis. Šam: Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik, caliph between January 724 and February 6, 743. Hishām invested heavily in this site and spent much of his reign here: Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 427–29.

(5.51) And then he sent the servant who was with him back to his place. And he himself stopped outside the city for a few days, reflecting on who might notify the palace about him.[282]

[884] (6.1) But it seems to me that that demon was moving there and said to his advisers,[283] "I shall separate this man from Christ and bring him near hell; but you, my fellow combatants, provide assistance because he has greatly weakened me." (6.2) And the multitude of royal advisers came and sat around [Vahan] and said, "Do not abandon comfort for difficulty.[284] Take for yourself your splendor and remember our Messenger,[285] who gave the greatness of this world to us and keeps for us the pleasure of the garden that has been prepared, and your Christ has increased death for you."[286]

(6.3) Now he, strengthened in the Holy Spirit, said, "The one who speaks with me through you [is the same as] those who, in the land of the Gergesenes, asked to take control of the pigs and were plunged into the sea, in the multitude of the waters.[287] Your words shall die in you, in accordance with that vain and malicious advice." (6.4) And they were defeated by him and were tripped up by their error.

(6.5) And he relied on God and went to the *dprapet* who had previously been his *vardapet* and disclosed his intention.[288] "Through true hope, I am without fear. I beg you; relate my circumstances to the *amirapet*."[289] (6.6) And he recognized his boldness and the contempt that he had for their faith, and he rebuked him severely with threats and showed the danger of unendurable things, worse than death by torture, and after that becoming food for birds, always pitiable for Christians.[290] (6.7) Then the joy of his heart caused the color of his face to shine, and he was not downcast as one frightened. (6.8) When the *dprapet* saw that, he entreated [him] and promised presents from the royal treasury and power, if only he would be persuaded, and having sworn, **[885]** he gave to him thirty silver coins and sent

282. This implies that access to the court was controlled and Vahan was trying to work out how to bring himself to Hishām's attention.

283. That is, Hishām's advisers.

284. Given Vahan's travails up to this point, this injunction seems misplaced. It echoes previous arguments advanced by al-Walīd at 4.10 above.

285. *patgamawor*, i.e., the Prophet Muḥammad; see also below, 6.25 and note 311, for other names for the Prophet.

286. The garden: paradise. The Qurʾān contains multiple references to the garden as paradise, including Q. 2:25 and 5:85. This may also be an inversion of Matthew 25:34.

287. Luke 8:26–39. Gergesacʻikʻ, i.e., Gergesenes, is used in the Armenian Bible at vv. 26 and 37.

288. *dprapet*: head scribe. See 4.2 and note 205 above.

289. Vahan is still searching for someone to bring his case before Hishām (5.51). The use of *amirpet* here and in two later passages (6.32 and 7.6), as well as *amir momin*, Ar. *amīr al-muʾminīn*, at 9.1, may be contrasted with the absence of such terms in the narrative reporting the fires of Naxčawan (1.1–4.2) and provides weak evidence for the combination of two separate compositions.

290. Psalm 78.9. Exposure rather than burial was also a Zoroastrian practice and features in earlier Armenian works. See, for example, the description of the corpses of the holy Łewondeankʻ, left to be devoured by birds and dismembered, as reported by Łazar, *Patmutʻiwn*, §57; repr. *MH*, 2:2297.12; trans. Thomson, *History of Łazar*, 151.

him away from himself.[291] (6.9) He received it on account of the oath and distributed it to the poor in his presence. (6.10) And he himself lived outside during the season of the bitter cold of winter, with little clothing and food, as if he was incorporeal.

(6.11) Then he went to a certain prince who had responsibility for the entrances and exits.[292] Out of fear of Hishām, he declared that the matter could not be discussed and that his ears would not stand for it because "that discourse is deadly, trouble for me and death for you." He also told him to leave and go away, because "there is a sword pointing at your body; perhaps you shall cause it to be raised at others." (6.12) Now, he [Vahan] did not reckon the advice pleasing to God, since he would be fleeing from the battle like a coward. (6.13) When he did not find a solution, he fell before God in entreaty. We have found his prayer in writing,[293] and he spoke in this way:

"Almighty Son of God, you who have been called the shepherd of the lost sheep and having found it, you lifted it onto your shoulder[294] and, stretching out your arms, you have gathered the whole world to yourself—do not leave me without assistance among strangers; wash away my transgressions through your blood and life-producing body, you who are that manna of immortality, you who descended from heaven and were presented as bread for us,[295] my Jesus, savior of the world, who, through the will of the Father and the Holy Spirit and yourself, became a sacrifice for us and a guide on the road of life. Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit, who are the Trinity of our confession and one God, you who are one in three persons, distant from everyone and near to everyone, whose glory is forever, Amen."[296]

(6.14) And after the praise and the prayer, he went to the chief executioner,[297] whose name was K'abš and who was prince of Himac'ik',[298] and being made known to him, he became very eager to relate [Vahan's arrival to Hishām]. (6.15) And he took {the document}[299] and conveyed it to the tyrant, and when he received **[886]** the letter, he was amazed at the

291. The nature of this oath is unclear, but it could be a promise on oath by the *dprapet* to Vahan that he would speak on his behalf to Hishām. The payment of thirty silver coins recalls the sum received by Judas for betraying Jesus (Matthew 26:15), but who is paying whom and why is unclear. It seems more likely that the *dprapet* paid Vahan, who then gave the money away. In any event, it seems that the *dprapet* did not carry out his side of the agreement.

292. The *dprapet* having failed him, this is the second person Vahan approached to try and secure an audience with Hishām.

293. The implication is that this is the prayer of Vahan preserved separately in written form. No explanation as to how this might have been achieved is offered.

294. Luke 15:3–6.

295. An allusion to John 6:58.

296. The stress on the Trinity is noteworthy, given the sharply anti-Trinitarian stance of Islam.

297. *Dahčapet*, based on MP *dahīč* + *pet*, head executioner.

298. K'abš: an unknown figure, perhaps Qabisa. Himac'ik: perhaps "those of Ḥamā" or "those of Ḥimṣ," Gk. Emesa, although it is also possible that a form of Yamanī (that is, Yemeni) lies behind this term. He is the third person to be approached by Vahan; his office seems more than coincidental, given the role he plays later in the narrative, at 7.8ff.

299. *yetkar*, "document," is not found in manuscript Ա/A and has been inserted by Tēr-Vardanean on the basis of manuscript Գ/G. The sentence refers to the caliph receiving the letter, *zgirn*, and not the saint in person, which suggests that the addition of *yetkar* is unnecessary.

beautiful forms and the clever and suitable position of the words[300] and gave an order to bring [him] into his presence. And looking at him, he spoke gentle words: "Why, Vahap, do you show yourself dressed as a poor man, contrary to your magnificence? So then, has the land of Armenia reduced you to that?"[301] (6.16) The saint replied and said, "My Lord humbled himself in the appearance of a servant and came down into poverty for our sake and became obedient to death on a cross.[302] Now I shall not renounce what he suffered for my sake." (6.17) The tyrant said, "The evil demons of the ice-covered mountains of Armenia have surrounded you and deceived you to speak in this useless manner."[303] (6.18) The martyr[304] said, "What I used to have previously in accordance with your religion I have purged from myself, since just as dark is driven away by light, likewise yours [is driven away] from me." (6.19) The judge said, "The wise ones of your false religion say that when demons are cast from a good person,[305] they become the evil of others. And it is true, because they have become yours here and you have gone to what you have trusted in. (6.20) As a man who hates the good, why do you cast the glory of your life away from yourself like a mad person?"

(6.21) And he gave an order to the heads of the treasury to bring treasures of gold and silver and garments in silk of different colors.[306] And he said to him, "Unfortunate and evil-loving man, take all that, and servants and maidservants and horses and mules and camels, and authority for you, whether here or in Gołt'n, your own principality. (6.22) And bear in mind our Prophet, who has given all this greatness to us and keeps for us the pleasure of the garden that has been prepared."[307] (6.23) And the saint replied, saying, **[887]** "In the past I listened to the report of your subtle, false, and cunning counsel, through which you have seduced many from the truth into the abyss of destruction, making them companions with you in Gehenna, some by using a frightening voice and others with persuasive and flattering words, some with pointless goods and other possessions; some you rendered glorious with transitory power and honors and others you fooled with false hope of eternal

300. For Armenian knowledge of Arabic, see Thomson, "Arabic in Armenia"; and Vacca, "Arabic and the Public Performance of Power."

301. The note of disdain in the caliph's voice could be indicative of Armenia's contemporary reputation.

302. Philippians 2:7–8. The reference to poverty is not found in the standard Armenian or Greek texts of Philippians.

303. For analysis of this intriguing comment, see above, at notes 81–84. It appears to reflect Avestan tradition and Sasanian administrative and geographical knowledge, all of which feature in earlier Armenian literature, although not in this specific combination. For reflections on the North (*abāxtar*) in Sasanian Iran, see A. Tafazzoli, "Bāktar (1)," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online ed., 1988; and idem, *Sasanian Society* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2000), 8–9. The caliph is therefore being represented as a Sasanian *šahanšah*. But even for those who did not grasp this connotation, the disdain with which Armenia is mentioned would have been obvious.

304. *vkayn*, literally witness.

305. Manuscript Ա/A lacks *i barwoyn*, "from the good," but this has been added by Tēr-Vardanean on the basis of the reading *baroyn* in Manuscripts Գ/G and Զ/J. This may be an allusion to Matthew 12:43–45, but it displays a different logic and language.

306. *metak'saṙēš*; cf. Manuscript Ա/A, which has *metak's aṙaǰi*, Gk. μέταξα.

307. Compare 6.2 and note 286 above.

life, promising that they would become heirs of paradise. And in every case, you have attempted to divert the fickle-minded by your clever wisdom from the broad highway, and through rebellion and apostasy you have cast [them] into the abyss of destruction. You shall answer with them in the eternal torments through the fire of Gehenna.[308] (6.24) But you are not able to defeat this servant of God through your cunning devices; I am protected by the fear of God and fortified with the knowledge of the Holy Books and the defense of the precepts of Christ, and I am well trained and more learned than you in your erroneous fables.[309] (6.25) As a result, your corrupter-in-chief, whom you falsely call a prophet, is dead, and his bones and tomb are next to you.[310] And you elevate [him] next to God and call him head of paradise,[311] about whom the sayings of your erroneous belief are seer or messenger. (6.26) But if you were to do good for me, may it be this: grant me freedom in accordance with the practice of Christians, for me to have my traditional religion.[312] And I have no need of transitory wealth; and if you wish, you may take my district from me because I shall be leaving, like all men. (6.27) Where is the universal authority of your father or the tyranny of your four brothers?[313] **[888]** Did they not in fact become covered in shadow in an instant, just as you will be transformed in the same way?"[314]

(6.28) Then the tyrant was filled with anger and ordered him to be taken out and thrown into prison and for his feet to be bound with fetters. (6.29) And when they conveyed him to throw him into jail, he requested that both his feet be bound in the fetters. (6.30) And they were amazed at his natural courage and acceded to his request. (6.31) And they rapidly sent messengers to Marwān,[315] who at the time happened to be in Mesopotamia, so that he might learn truly from him about the holy man.[316] (6.32) And he found well-informed men and sent [them] quickly to the *amirapet*, so that he might be informed by them.[317]

308. Possible allusion to Matthew 5:22, *i gehen hroyn*, or to Mark 9:43, *i gehen i hurn anšēǰ*, both of which connect Gehenna with fire, but here the term used for fire is *ayrmamb*.

309. *jerum aṙaspelakan moloruṫ'eand*; compare 5.35 and note 260 above.

310. This is a surprising claim about the location of the tomb of the Prophet.

311. *draxtapet*, "head of paradise." The Prophet is here given three names that were apparently in contemporary use: "head of paradise" as well as *tesanoł*, "seer," and *banber*, "messenger" or "envoy"—literally "word-bearer"; compare above, 6.2 and note 285.

312. This is a familiar request made by Armenian lords and clerics alike to Sasanian *šahanšah*s in late antique Armenian sources, as discussed, for example, in Thomson, *History of Łazar*, 14–17 and especially 25–30. In this instance, the language used to express the demand is different, as it avoids claims that Armenian tradition is *hayreni*, "patrimonial," or *bnik*, "natural, original"; the term *awrēnk*, "Christian religious practice," is also not used.

313. *tiezerakan išxanutiwnn*; compare 5.35 and note 258 above. His father: ʿAbd al-Malik. His four brothers: al-Walīd, Sulaymān, and Yazīd II were all brothers, but ʿUmar II was a nephew of ʿAbd al-Malik. The memory of four caliphs between ʿAbd al-Malik and Hishām is correct; only Yazīd II is missing from the narrative.

314. That is, they proved to be mortal and died, just as Hishām will.

315. *Mruan*, Marwān b. Muḥammad, nephew of Hishām, a powerful figure in the 730s and later the last Umayyad caliph (744–750 CE). Marwān is introduced without explanation, suggesting that the original audience knew exactly who he was.

316. This echoes the earlier investigation ordered by ʿUmar, described at 4.8 above.

317. This final phrase is not found in Manuscript Ա/A.

(6.33) And he stayed in prison for eight days; he completely ignored ease of the body, with eyes that did not sleep and eyelids that did not slumber, without rest, so that the Holy Spirit would strengthen him to elevate his earthly nature and to make him a sharer of Christ's cross. (6.34) Now, during those days the tyrant did not stop sending teachers of their religion to him in prison for the purpose of discussion in order to overcome him by some books.[318] (6.35) But they were overcome by him, and they returned ashamed to their prince and said, "He is impossibly eloquent and expert in speaking and sharp-eared at the recitation of the books, so it is not possible for anyone to speak a word to his replies; but [he is like] a sword that lays bare the language of words." (6.36) He commanded [them] not to tell this to anyone.

(6.37) And then a certain truth-loving *Yakobik*[319] came to him in the prison and said to the saint, "On the last day of your life, **[889]** receive the body and blood of Christ, our provision for your salvation,[320] because it has happened at this time of my priesthood."[321] (6.38) And he said, "I shall be baptized in this blood; through this last cup, I shall depart from this world." (6.39) And when the festival that is called Palm Sunday arrived, a blessed day, he blessed God on that day through reflection and said to the head of the prison,[322] "I shall leave you in peace after my departure from this world because you have treated me with compassion." (6.40) The man was astonished and said, "What is the prison of which you speak? I did not create for you some place of leisure because you have completely rejected such a thing. For since I did not have power in other matters, I wanted in some small way to share in your affliction, through clothing, food, or perhaps some other means, but you have not allowed consolation for the body in any way, because some gift has appeared to you, not only in the daytime but also in the nighttime, and you have been in some glorious place that has appeared. (6.41) But now you are showing the signs[323] of a departure, something that I have never heard." (6.42) And having given thanks concerning him, he said, "The distributor of good things is not far away. And behold, the travelers who went beside me have departed."

(7.1) And on the following day, they came back from the prince of the North[324] on their swift horses to relate the information that he had examined everything truthfully and to say concerning him that "he is no stranger to knowledge and from a good family and is not

318. The apparent use of written testimony in the debate is striking, and it is repeated in the following sentence (6.35). See also Kraemer, "Apostates," 41, for discussion of whether apostates would be given a chance to recant and how long that period of possible repentance was (*istitāba*). This account seems to be aware of the practice and approves it. See above, at note 79.

319. *Yakobik*: a contemporary term for a Miaphysite, literally "a little Jacob," one who followed Jacob Baradeus, hence Jacobite. For analysis and discussion, see above, at notes 37–39. This term does not appear to have been used before about 700 CE, at least not in Armenian. See also 8.7 and note 344 below.

320. The implication is that Vahan accepts his final sacrament from a Syrian Orthodox priest.

321. Manuscript Ա/A reads *handipecʻaw*; Tēr-Vardanean prefers *handipecʻar*, "you have encountered."

322. *bandapet*, "head of the prison."

323. *irs*, used repeatedly with a wide range of connotations; here "signs."

324. Marwān b. Muḥammad, mentioned above at 6.31. This title recognizes his broad northern command, a role he held from 732 or 733 CE.

someone who is sick other than being of another people and of foreign learning."[325] (7.2) And he [Hishām] commanded the blessed one to be brought, imagining that he would yield as a result of the onerous affliction and imprisoning bonds. And he inquired, "Have you come out of your madness **[890]** to the truth, the things of ours that you learned in childhood through the tuition of erudite ones, or do you remain confirmed in the same perversity?" (7.3) And he said, "It is not permitted to speak of anything else as truth, or to speak of the light as darkness or of the darkness as light. But you shall do whatever is your will."

(7.4) The prince said to him, "One of my elite has undertaken a thorough investigation and has not seen any falseness in you, nor in your family since they became wise.[326] And if they had some dealings with foreign kings, they did not change from their own tradition.[327] (7.5) But you have become a bad example for us, because in contemplating you, others will fall into the same.[328] Now, it is not appropriate to do good to you, since you have pronounced your words in public and you have broadcast them into the hearing of everyone, reducing ours to falseness. You had received that gift not from yours but from ours, and that audacity of yours derives from my indulgence."[329]

(7.6) Then everyone, all those who were around him, acted in unanimity. Everyone shouted out that he should be removed from the living promptly and quickly. And the evil spirit inspired everyone together; he changed the color of the *amirapet*'s face, and he commanded that he be taken outside and killed. (7.7) And he left meekly, with a joyful expression, singing the psalm, "To You, O Lord, I have lifted the eyes of my soul; just as the eyes of a servant look to the hand of the master, in the same way the sight of my mind looks to You."[330] And the psalms that are after this, up to the place and the endpoint of these, "My weakness, like a sparrow, has sought refuge from their traps."[331] (7.8) And Hishām summoned the chief executioner[332] and said, "Go, **[891]** take him outside the city and implore that perhaps he shall convert, but if [he does] not, intimidate him with that sword of yours and, getting close to him, say 'Do not perish in vain.'"[333]

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325. For prospective martyrs needing to be of sound mind, see Sahner, *Christian Martyrs*, 169. Marwān b. Muḥammad's report is remarkably neutral, acknowledging Vahan's noble background and his difference but refraining from denouncing him. The joint Arab-Armenian operations under Marwān's command in the 730s would have provided an ideal context for the representation of such an assessment; see above, 5.48 and note 278.

326. *imastun*: "wise" or "prudent," possibly in a political rather than religious sense.

327. This implies that although Vahan's family had had dealings with other kings—most probably Sasanian *šahanšah*s—in the past (see above, 4.11), they had remained faithful to their own religious tradition. This is a key theme in earlier Armenian literature: see above, note 312.

328. Vahan's public repudiation of Islam is deemed to threaten upsetting the political and religious consensus and Armenian quiescence.

329. Is the gift eloquence or learning in Arabic? This verbal joust is very compressed. Hishām seems to want to have the last word, claiming that even Vahan's boldness in speaking out is thanks to his own forbearance.

330. Psalm 122:1–2, with additions that are not obviously from the Septuagint.

331. Psalm 123:7. This sentence identifies a longer reading from start to finish by citing the opening and closing verses. It may therefore be a later interpolation.

332. *dahčapet*: see above, 6.14 and note 297.

333. See above, notes 79 and 318, for discussion of the period within which an apostate might recant (*istitāba*).

(7.9) And a multitude of Christians went out after them at a distance.[334] And the laments of the compassionate ones streamed with tears. (7.10) And on arriving at the place of destruction, filled with rejoicing, he stretched his arms to heaven and said, "I thank You, Lord, You who have received my daily groans and have fulfilled my desires and have transformed the breaking of my joints and have rendered it equal to the death of Your holy martyrs and have made me worthy to die for the sake of Your great name. (7.11) Now, remember us, O Lord, us who die every day for Your sake, and put to shame those foolish ones, who have taken pride in their worldly achievements by means of the deceptive pleasure-loving distraction of the left side.[335] And keep the children of Your holy church innocent and unshakable on Your rock of faith, and render them worthy at Your glorious return to advance with You along Your heavenly highway to the vaults of heaven as sons of light, glorifying the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever, Amen."

(7.12) Then the chief executioner, in furious anger, said to him, "You have not wanted to be persuaded by my words; now, having gone out, I shall carry out the things commanded concerning you." (7.13) And the saint replied, saying, "Even if it is perhaps usual for you to refuse the commands of your superiors, it is impossible for me to violate the injunctions of my heavenly king." (7.14) Then the chief executioner seized him, drew his sword, and caused it to shine in accordance with the royal command, showing the bloodiness,[336] **[892]** but he was not at all afraid. (7.15) He said to him again, "What do you want?" (7.16) The saint said, "Do what you want." (7.17) And from this point on, he did not say anything. (7.18) Again, the killer spoke: "O unfortunate one, behold, the day of grief has arrived for you, or life once more, if you should wish. Now why have you not chosen life but preferred death?" (7.19) The saint said, "I have chosen death for the sake of Christ over this transitory life."[337]

(7.20) And then the killer held his neck in front of him, and having raised his sword, he cut off his head. And he left immediately and went away.

(7.21) The blessed martyr of Christ, Saint Vahan, was killed on the eighteenth day of the month of March and the twenty-seventh [day of the month of] Mareri in the week of the Easter fast, on a Monday, at the ninth hour.[338]

(8.1) Those from the royal court who were there heard and saw everything, that the blood of the confessor of Christ, which had been shed, collected in one place.[339] Those who

334. The first reference to large numbers of Christians being present in Ruṣāfa; see above, at note 70, and below, 8.1–10.

335. *jaxakołmann*: "of the left side"; cf. Matthew 25:41.

336. Manuscript Ա/A has *zariwnacʻaytsn*; Tēr-Vardanean prefers *zariwn ačacʻn*. See 7.8 above.

337. This contradicts 7.16, where Vahan is reported to have said his last words.

338. This corresponds to March 18, 737 CE: van Esbroeck, "Salomon," 42. Tēr-Vardanean prefers *kʻsan ew hing Mareri*, "twenty-fifth [day of the month of] Mareri," but Manuscript Ա/A reads "27 of Mareri," which corresponds to March 18. Confusion between the Armenian numerals 5 and 7, Ե/E and Է/Ē, is very common.

339. Elements in the following narrative correspond to features preserved in the Armenian *Life of Saints Sergius and Bacchus*, which itself is closely modeled on the Greek *Passio*. For the gathering of the blood of Saint Sergius in one place, see van den Gheyn, "Passio antiquior SS. Sergii et Bacchi," 394; see also "Vkayabanutʻiwn srboyn Sargsi ew Bagosi," 278, where the location is called a "great chasm," *vih mec*. For a wider study of the

watched the miraculous events at the time of his execution reported that his face was glorified with a marvelous radiance. (8.2) Then the Christians who were waiting diligently to take some relics did not dare approach out of fear, and the holy body fell and remained in the place where they threw those condemned to death. (8.3) And it was usual for dogs to gather in that place. Now, when night fell, they came and straightaway made a big circle and stayed there on guard during the night, and then suddenly they started biting one another with their teeth and fled away.[340]

(8.4) And on the next day—I do not know whether it happened as a vision at night or through some other means—the chief eunuch[341] came out from the palace **[893]** and announced, "If there should be anyone here from the Christians, come forward and remove the body, and after conveying [it], act in accordance with their custom." (8.5) Now some Christians came forward and showed their dread and fear. And he said, "There is no sedition in these acts; remove in peace."[342]

(8.6) And when the news spread, a multitude of Christians assembled and collected the glorious blood of the martyr, and digging the earth, they made a trench. And from the ardor of their passion, countless conflicts used to be stirred up.[343] (8.7) And a multitude of men and women was found there, Roman and Yakobik and Nestorian,[344] and taking relics from the blood and clothing, they were at peace. (8.8) And they were of one mind in relation to the matter of the holy body, saying, "Let us now take and bury this martyr[345] at the burial site,[346] which is called 'for foreigners,' and let us reckon it to be at an end." (8.9) And when

traditions, see Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 7–29.

340. In the Greek *Passio*, a crowd of animals gathers around the body of Bacchus, but it is protected by the birds until the following morning: van den Gheyn, "Passio antiquior SS. Sergii et Bacchi," 389; Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 10. Before Sergius is martyred, animals and birds assemble to mourn his passing and Sergius commends their obedience and recognition of God's power, but there is no sense that they guard the body: van den Gheyn, "Passio antiquior SS. Sergii et Bacchi," 393; Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 11. The Armenian version of the *Passio* is broadly similar, but the animals are not described as guarding the body of either saint: "Vkayabanut'iwn srboyn Sargsi ew Bagosi," 273, 277–78. By contrast, here the dogs form a circle around Vahan's body overnight. This seems closer to the description of the martyrdom of Bacchus, which occurred at Barbalissos, not Ruṣāfa. The gathering of the blood in one place, however, is reserved for Sergius.

341. *nerk'inapet*. This term is challenging to interpret, since employing eunuchs at court has usually been considered an ʿAbbāsid-era practice; see, however, El-Azhari, *Queens, Eunuchs and Concubines*, 69–73. It could be that the official was assumed to be a eunuch because this was already the tradition in the imperial court in Constantinople. Alternatively, it could be that *nerk'inapet* may have retained a meaning equivalent to MP *ped-šabestān*, "master of the private/inner quarters," of which it is a calque.

342. This is a surprising statement. Collecting relics on this occasion was not deemed to be a seditious act, but one might infer that previously it had been, hence the fear of the Christians to act.

343. That is, these communities were normally in conflict with one another, but the gathering of the relics afforded a rare instance of unity.

344. Roman: Chalcedonian or Melkite; Yakobik: Jacobite, Miaphysite, or Syrian Orthodox (see above, note 319); Nestorian: Church of the East. The representation of all three communities in Ruṣāfa is striking, as is the detail that both men and women were reportedly involved in gathering the relics.

345. *vkayd*: "this martyr."

346. *gerezman*: "tomb," "grave," or "burial site." The implication is that there were several graveyards, including one for foreigners—that is, for those who died while visiting Ruṣāfa and had no family tomb there.

they had conveyed and set it there, they carved a four-sided stone from the rocks and placed it as a gravestone, and then they went, each to their own places.[347] (8.10) And later it was believed that this may have been done so that no one could steal the precious body.

(8.11) Then a certain man from the royal officials—one who honored God and was from the Roman race[348]—named Theophilus, who according to their [custom] was called Abu Step'an,[349] came together with four of his men to seize the precious treasure, and he commanded [them] to make a box[350] in secret.[351] And at the darkening of the day, he came with four men, and after taking it from the tomb, they placed it in the box and took it and secured it in his chamber. (8.12) And during the same night, it was revealed to the bishop of the city,[352] and when it grew light, he summoned those who had lifted [the body] and described to them the things that they had done in secret according to his vision. (8.13) When it became known **[894]** that [the body] was not at the site of the grave, a rumor went around that merchants had stolen the body of the blessed man and had gone down through the region of Baʿalbek to the land of the Palestinians;[353] and the truth was revealed openly to those who were uncertain.[354]

(8.14) There was a certain person who was ill and near death. He saw someone in a vision who said to him, "Be quick; seek soil from the site of the tomb[355] of the marvelous man Vahan, and once you have been consecrated through it, you shall live." (8.15) Straightaway, he commanded that this be carried out and that he be conveyed to the place, and he returned to his house healthy. (8.16) When they saw that, they were inspired by his courage, and in honor of the saint they built a martyr's shrine[356] over him in an operation that required little effort.[357]

347. This could describe a stele or an early form of *xač'kar*.

348. "Roman" was used above as a religious marker. Here it qualifies *azg*, "people" or "race."

349. T'eop'ilē, Theophilus; Abu Step'an, "father of Step'anos." The meaning of "their [custom]" is ambiguous, since it could indicate either linguistic or cultural tradition. Either way, it implies that local patronymic naming practice was different. Abu is Arabic (Abū) rather than Aramaic.

350. *tapan*: box.

351. The Greek *Passio* of Saints Sergius and Bacchus records that some religious men later tried to steal the body of Saint Sergius, described as a precious treasure, but were thwarted: Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 11, 21. This is not mentioned in the Armenian version.

352. Manuscript Ա/A lacks *i tesleann*, "in a vision," inserted by Tēr-Vardanean, but the same phrase appears in the manuscript at the end of the sentence. The identity of the bishop is unknown; conceivably there were several bishops in the city, of different confessions, each ministering to his own community. It seems clear that Theophilus was not a bishop.

353. Bałbag: Baʿalbek, Roman Heliopolis, north of Damascus. The city was badly damaged in the Third Fitna, suggesting that the text may have been composed before its destruction in 748 CE. Although the rumor was untrue, one of the implications of this passage is that the merchants were Christians.

354. The passage ends without any clear statement of what happened to Vahan's body. The bishop's vision, his confronting the perpetrators, and the revelation of the truth all suggest that it was returned to its original location.

355. *tapanavayr*: "place of the box."

356. *matuṙn*: "martyr's shrine" or "chapel."

357. Again, it is not clear whether this happened at the original site of his tomb or the site to which his relics

(8.17) And they built a royal palace near the site of the saint.[358] And one of those who had removed the body of the saint, on becoming one of the overseers, fell to the ground from one of the very high places, and letting out a cry and in a loud voice, he said, "Save me, Saint Vahan!"[359] And having come down, he got up on his own feet. (8.18) And those who had seen him and heard him coming down saw the man standing up. (8.19) And he said, "I saw this marvelous person and was very amazed, for it seemed as if he came beside me to hold me. When I realized this, I stretched out my hand and held him, even though he was not there beside me. (8.20) And you all see me, that I am well, without injury."

(8.21) When they saw all these miracles, without delay they built a wonderful church over him, with a martyrium, without fear.[360] (8.22) And they placed the martyr not in the church **[895]** but in the martyrium on the north side, in the holy chamber;[361] they constructed it with baked bricks and lime, they made it shine with lamps, and they decorated it with other vessels.[362] (8.23) And from then on, many sick and ill people were healed. (8.24) And the news spread round all the regions. And those who arrived from the provinces and went across to the court fell in front of the holy martyr and worshiped the Holy Trinity.

(9.1) This was accomplished in the days of Hishām, *amīr al-muʾminīn*, on that side of the river Euphrates, in the city of Ruṣāfa.[363]

(9.2) Then, seven years later,[364] the abbot Abraham, who was also [known as] Artawazd,[365] took with him some of the brothers[366] and went down to Syria, and they arrived at the city of Callinicum. There, in the city, they lodged in the monastery, which was called Der Mar Zakkʿē,[367] which received us with much love[368] and advised that we should depart for the place with great caution, lest we be seized by the enemy and suffer punishment and death.[369]

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had been taken by Theophilus; but see 9.3 and 9.7 below, which suggest the former.

358. At least one of Hishām's palaces was apparently located outside the city walls: Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 175 and n7.

359. This implies that Christians were involved in the construction of Hishām's palace.

360. *vkayaran*: "martyrium." This seems to refer to the original site of Vahan's tomb. It is not clear how this construction activity relates to the construction of the *matuṙn* at 8.16, but it seems that the original structure was replaced with a church and a separate chamber.

361. *i srboy senekin*: "in the holy chamber." The same term is used to describe where Theophilus put the body, but this could be coincidental.

362. *tʿrceal aɫiwsov ew krov*: "with baked bricks and lime." It is very rare to find any brick-built construction being described in Armenian texts, but baked brick would have been used at Ruṣāfa; see above, at notes 22 and 184.

363. Šam *amir momim*: Hishām *amīr al-muʾminīn*.

364. In 743–44 CE. Hishām died on February 6, 743.

365. See above, 5.46.

366. Manuscript Ա/A lacks the following, inserted by Tēr-Vardanean: *and the aforementioned young man who was the servant of the saint.*

367. Monastery of Saint Zaccheus in Callinicum (modern Raqqa). The use of the Syriac name of the monastery is striking.

368. An important addition in V224, fol. 153a. Manuscript Ա/A switches between first and third person.

369. This could be referring to the early stages of the Third Fitna.

(9.3) He therefore left the brothers and packhorses there and, taking a certain one with him, traveled by day and night with great endeavor and arrived at the site of completion[370] at first light; and entering the martyrium[371] of the holy martyr, **[896]** we offered worship and blessing to Christ. (9.4) And that Theophilus, who was also [known as] Abu Stepʻanē, met us and greeted us and received us with much love and compassion. And through him, God caused us to go in to [meet] the saints. (9.5) And after worshiping the Lord at the martyrium of Saint Sargis, we saw the bishop, a true and God-fearing man, and he received us with much love and amazement.[372] (9.6) And then he summoned all the wise men, those who were prominent at the royal court and well informed about the martyrdom of the saint; we were instructed by them securely through a Roman book, and they gave to us the testimony of the brave hero.[373]

(9.7) Having been honored with love, we departed from the bishop and the others, and after praying in the martyrium of Saint Vahan,[374] we gave thanks for the mercy of Christ; returning from there, we crossed the river Euphrates, took the brothers, and came to the city of Edessa,[375] and we implored the bishop and we translated[376] the book into the Armenian language.[377] (9.8) And we left there and came to Armenia close to the feast of Epiphany. (9.9) And finding our brothers healthy and at peace, we praised God in unison, who had rendered our unworthiness worthy of attaining this gift. (9.10) And then we began to record, beginning from where it was appropriate and joining to the same the testimony of Saint Vahan the martyr[378] for the encouragement of all believers and to the glory and praise of God, to whom be honor and blessing for ever and ever, Amen.

370. Manuscript Ա/A has *i teł̇in katarmann*, "at the site of completion" (or "death"). This suggests that the martyrium of Saint Vahan was located outside the city, at the original burial spot.

371. *vkayaran*: "martyrium," as in 8.21 and 8.22 above.

372. This is the *vkayaran*, the martyrium of Saint Sergius, situated inside the city. It is apparently only through Theophilus that they gain access. For the close relationship between this famous martyrium and the mosque constructed by Hishām, see Fowden, *Barbarian Plain*, 174–83 and fig. 15.

373. *hoṙom grov*: "Roman book." The impression is that the local Christians supplied written testimony in the form of an existing text. The following sentence (9.7) implies that the text was in Greek.

374. *vkayaran*. The fact that they could do so as they departed again suggests that the martyrium was located outside the city.

375. Uṙha: Edessa. One of the six Syrian bishops who attended the Council of Manazkert in 726 was Constantine, bishop of Edessa: *Girkʻ Tʻłtʻocʻ*, 224.

376. *tʻargmanecʻakʻ*: "we translated," when perhaps *tʻargmaneacʻ*, "he translated," would have been expected. Perhaps the bishop translated the book orally from Greek into Armenian and Artawazd or one of his companions wrote down his translation. For simultaneous translation from Greek into Armenian in the seventh century, see Anania Širakacʻi's description of his teacher Tychikos: *Vasn orpisutʻean kenacʻ irwocʻ (Inkʻnakensagrutʻiwn)*, in *Matenagirkʻ Hayocʻ 7 Dar*, 4:593–95 (Antʻilias: Meci tann Kilikwoy Katʻoł̇ikosutʻiwn, 2005), 594.24; trans. Greenwood, "Reassessment," 140: "Through the favor of the Holy Spirit, he had an extraordinary gift for translating, such that when he wanted to translate books written in Greek, he did not hesitate like other translators but he used to read out the Armenian as if it had been written in Armenian." This implies that his translation was written down by someone else.

377. *i hay lezu*: "into the Armenian language."

378. This indicates that it was a composite work from the outset, comprising an account of the fires of Naxčawan to which the martyrology of Vahan was added.

(10.1) Now, this occurred thirty-three years after this country of Armenia had drunk the cup of wrath,[379] in one hundred **[897]** and fifty-two of the Armenian Era.[380] And in the one hundred and eighty-fifth [year], the martyrdom of Saint Vahan occurred through confessing Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God. (10.2) Now in return for this testimony, O you fathers and brothers, I, this miserable person,[381] one [who is] constantly sick and protecting the memory of the holy martyr, and again by reason of the encouragement of this book of martyrdom, I implore [you] to make prayers on my behalf [to the one] who rendered my unworthiness worthy of writing and giving this history in memory of those who have died, so that perhaps through your prayers I shall be snatched from the rank of the wicked and placed among those of whom they say, "Come, blessed ones of my Father"[382]—those who become worthy—and Christ shall act to meet, both us and all those who have confessed His name, to whom be glory and worship with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever, Amen.

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379. *zbažak patuhasi*: "cup of punishment." For "cup of anger," "cup of destruction," and "cup of wrath" (*bažak barkutʿean*, *bažak korcanman*, *bažak srtmtutʿean*), see Isaiah 51:17.

380. AE 152: June 4, 703–June 2, 704. AE 185: May 26, 736–May 25, 737.

381. This is a standard trope of humiliation.

382. Matthew 25:34.

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