

# Mkrtič' Našaš: An Armenian Bishop as Pillar of the Aqqyunlu State? Synchronisms in the Armenian and Aqqyunlu History of Diyarbakır, 1430–1450 CE

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## Abstract

*Although the fifteenth century CE has commonly been recognized as a crucial saddle period in both the history of the Armenian church and the administrative history of the Middle East, which is largely focused on Muslim rulers before the Ottoman-Safavid confrontation, the two topics are usually approached separately. To bridge this gap, the present contribution examines three pivotal moments in the tenure of the Armenian bishop, painter, and poet Mkrtič' Našaš (d. after 1469 CE) in Diyarbakır to argue that his career was inextricably entangled with the trajectory of the Aqqyunlu "Turkmen" rulers who were establishing Diyarbakır as a regional center at the time. Accordingly, I suggest that we should see the processes of Aqqyunlu state formation as including members of the Armenian clerical elite such as Mkrtič' Našaš.*

*I propose to use the concept of synchronisms to reflect the joint and entangled agency of multiple individuals and interpersonal networks of mobilization and patronage. This concept enables the description of entanglements and linkages without attributing primacy to any of the involved parties. I argue that the synchronisms linking Mkrtič' Našaš and early Aqqyunlu rulers of Diyarbakır demonstrate that the histories of Christian clerical elites and the histories of the Muslim etatist and administrative configurations they inhabited must be told together.*

## Introduction: Synchronisms as a Conceptual Framework in Armenian-"Turkmen" History

Research on the institutional and administrative history of the Near and Middle East during the fifteenth century CE is commonly centered on three of the "four thrones" of the fifteenth century CE Persophone world.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the dynastic or paradynastic political dispensations

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1. The description of the political landscape of the fifteenth-century CE Near and Middle East as structured by "four thrones" (*chār takht*) is proposed in the late fifteenth-century versified travelogue of Abīwardī, *Chār takht*, ed. Īraj Afshār, *Farhang-i Īrān-zamīn* 15 (1347/1968): 5–84. See the discussion and conceptual development in G. Leube, *Relational Iconography: Representational Culture at the Qaraqyunlu and Aqqyunlu Courts (853/1449 CE to 907/1501 CE)* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 43–51. For the conceptual framework of the *Persophonie*, see B. Fragner, *Die "Persophonie"* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1999). I use the modern name of Diyarbakır as an ahistorical container for the various names (Āmid, Amit', etc.) under which the town was known in the fifteenth century. I similarly use other modern toponyms, omitting the artificial honorific "Şanlı-" from the name of the town of Urfa as a matter of personal taste while retaining the form "Şanlıurfa" as the official name of the province (*il*) centered on this town. Contemporary toponyms of minor locations in modern Turkey are

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of the Mamluks, the Ottomans, and the Timurids have received extensive attention,<sup>2</sup> the fourth “throne,” that of Tabrīz, which was occupied alternately by Qaraqyunlu and Aqqyunlu “Turkmen” rulers and courts, has not been analyzed as a case study for the emergence of early modern preindustrial statehood. This is largely due to the fragmentation of the field and the pertinent sources, which necessitates the sustained integration of narrative, epigraphic, numismatic, and diplomatic sources composed in Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Armenian, Syriac, and the languages of various western European travelers, which must be combined with an acute awareness of their geographical, urbanistic, institutional, and scribal contexts.

Accordingly, the pioneering works of Woods,<sup>3</sup> Sümer,<sup>4</sup> and Aka<sup>5</sup> on the Turkmen dynasties are centered on the reconstruction of these dynasties’ political histories, supplemented by snapshots of the cultural, administrative, and economic circumstances under specific rulers at particular times. Carlson offers an overview of the cultural history of Christians within the Turkmen realms,<sup>6</sup> complementing the established ecclesiastical histories, particularly of Armenian Christians,<sup>7</sup> during the fifteenth century CE. Although some illustrative instances of Syriac Christians’ interaction with Turkmen administrations have also been reconstructed in dedicated case studies,<sup>8</sup> this research commonly focuses on Christian clerical dignitaries navigating relationships with non-Christian overlords.

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given in the format toponym / İlçe / İl. The term “Turkmen” is used throughout this article as a shorthand for Qaraqyunlu and Aqqyunlu to distinguish these dispensations from other political and social formations that have been called Turkmen over the past millennium. For individuals whose names are rendered in various ways in different sources, I pragmatically retain one recurring form (*qara* ‘Uthmān, Mkrtič' Nalaš) in the main text of the article, indicating the transliterated original between parentheses where appropriate. In personal names, I differentiate capitalized names from italicized epithets (*qara* ‘Uthmān, *uzun* Ḥasan) but make an exception in the case of Mkrtič' Nalaš in deference to established practice. Personal names and toponyms are capitalized in transliterated passages irrespective of their treatment in the sources. Dates according to the Armenian calendar are indicated as AE, dates according to the Seleucid era given by Syriac sources are labelled AS, dates pertaining to the Common Era are labeled CE, and dates without indication of the era pertain to the Islamic lunar calendar. For AE dates, I give the precise CE equivalent on first mention and abbreviate to the CE year only on subsequent occurrences. The conversion of Islamic and Armenian dates to CE ones assumes that architectural work was suspended during the winter season; in cases of doubt I give a sequence of years.

2. For a survey of the current state of research on fifteenth-century CE statehood in the Islamic Near and Middle East, see the contributions in J. van Steenberg, ed., *Trajectories of State Formation across Fifteenth-Century Islamic West-Asia: Eurasian Parallels, Connections and Divergences* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

3. J. E. Woods, *The Aqqyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999).

4. F. Sümer, *Kara Koyunlular: Başlangıçtan Cihan-Şah'a kadar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1967).

5. İ. Aka, *İran'da Türkmen Hâkimiyeti (Kara Koyunlular Devri)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2001).

6. T. A. Carlson, *Christianity in Fifteenth-Century Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

7. See, for instance, M. Örmanean, *Hayoc' ekelec'in* (repr. Buenos Aires: Tparan “Ararat,” 1949), 105–10, for the reestablishment of an Armenian catholicate within the Turkmen realms at Eǰmiacin.

8. See, for instance, T. A. Carlson, “A Light from the ‘Dark Centuries’: Işhaq Shbadnaya’s Life and Works,” *Hugoye* 14, no. 2 (2011): 191–214, and A. Palmer, “John bar Şayallāh and the Syriac Orthodox Community under Aqqyunlu Rule in the Late Fifteenth Century,” in *Christians and Muslims in Dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages*, ed. M. Tamcke, 187–205 (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007).

This article follows the trajectory of the well-known Armenian Christian bishop, painter, and poet Mkrtič' Nałāš (ca. 1394–after 1469 CE) to understand how the Aqqyunlu rulers *qara* 'Uthmān (r. until 1435 CE), Ḥamza (r. 1435–1444 CE), and Jahāngīr (r. after 1444 CE) negotiated with urban elites in ruling the town of Diyarbakır between 1430 and 1450 CE.<sup>9</sup> This microhistory of the Aqqyunlu management of urban content and discontent through fiscal administration and performative networking is interpreted within the context of transregional shifts in the institutional and political landscape. So far, these shifts have commonly been analyzed from the particularist perspectives of Islamic political or Armenian ecclesiastical history. As suggested by an unpublished diplomatic missive sent from Cairo to the court of a Timurid prince (see below), the interactions of Aqqyunlu rulers with Christian and Muslim elites within their realms were visible and significant for the political configurations of the Islamic world on a transregional scale. I explore this transregional dimension to reconstruct and contextualize the local activities of Aqqyunlu rulers and Muslim and Christian elites in Diyarbakır.

In this regard, the present study builds on the important research tradition focused on reconstructing “enclaves” of Armenian political autonomy, commonly described as fiefdoms led by dynastic concatenations of local rulers (*išxan*, *melik*) in the fifteenth century CE and beyond. This tradition includes important contributions by authors such as Bałdasaryan on Erzincan,<sup>10</sup> Xaç'ikyan and Hewsen on the region of Artaz centered on Maku,<sup>11</sup> Hewsen on the *meliks* of Siwnik' and Arc'ax,<sup>12</sup> and Hewsen and Vardanyan on the hereditary lineage of catholicoi at Ałt'amar in Vaspurakan.<sup>13</sup> Because these studies rest predominantly on Armenian sources, they usually frame the influence of Muslim rulers as external and potentially threatening for Armenian political autonomy.

9. For a similar approach, reading Armenian church history as a source for Islamicate administrative culture centered on Muslim rulers before the fifteenth century CE, see the recent work of Z. Pogossian, “Princes, Queens, Bishops, Sultans: Seljuks in Syunik' and the Rise of the Monastery of Noravank',” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 89, no. 1 (2023): 207–50.

10. Ē. M. Bałdasaryan, “Erznkac'i haykakan išxanut'yunə XIII–XV darerum,” *Lraber Hasarakakan Gitut'yunneri* 2 (1970): 36–44.

11. See the magisterial exploration of the interplay of political autonomy and scholarly and scriptorial production by L. [S.] Xaç'ikyan, “Artazi haykakan išxanut'yunə ew corcori dproc'ə,” *Banber Matenadarani* 11 (1973): 125–210, as well as the subsequent study by H. H. Simonian, “Armenian Reactions to the Fall of the Principality of Maku in 1426,” in *Armenian Communities of Persia/Iran*, ed. R. G. Hovannisian, 103–36 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2021).

12. See the series of articles by R. H. Hewsen: “The Meliks of Eastern Armenia: A Preliminary Study,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 9 (1972): 285–329; “The Meliks of Eastern Armenia II,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 10 (1973–74): 281–303; “The Meliks of Eastern Armenia III,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 11 (1975–76): 219–43; and “The Meliks of Eastern Armenia IV: The Siwnid Origin of Xaç'atur Abovevan,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 14 (1980): 459–70.

13. See the groundbreaking study of R. H. Hewsen, “Artsrunid House of Sefedinian: Survival of a Princely Dynasty in Ecclesiastical Guise,” *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 1 (1984): 123–40, as well as the detailed study exploring the deployment of illuminated manuscripts as mediums of elite self-representation by Zak'aria III in the mid-fifteenth century: E. Vardanyan, “Un maštoc' d'ordination et de sacre royal du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 29 (2003–4): 167–231.

Conceptually, this article builds on the observation that three crucial turning points in the biographical trajectory of Mkrtič' Nalaš's tenure as Armenian Christian bishop and archbishop of Diyarbakır between 1430 and 1450 CE coincide chronologically with critical junctures in Aqqyunlu rule over Diyarbakır and the political and ecclesiastical configurations of wider eastern Anatolia. I do not believe that these chronological nexuses joining Islamicate political and Christian ecclesiastical history with the urban history of Diyarbakır reflect the agency of a single actor or network. Rather, they are synchronisms.<sup>14</sup> The chronological coincidence of local and transregional developments reflects the entanglement of multiple local and transregional interpersonal networks. I thus use the concept of synchronisms to recognize connections without attributing decisive explanatory power to the agency of any of the involved individuals or networks. The use of this concept resonates with a presentation of (calendrical) synchronisms that concludes the critical appraisal of Armenian Christian autonomy from Latin Christianity signed by Mkrtič' Nalaš himself.<sup>15</sup>

The three synchronisms reconstructed in the present article are the foundation of the church of Saint Mary at the fortress of Ergani in 1433 CE in the presence of *qara* 'Uthmān, the foundation and subsequent demolition of the cathedral of Diyarbakır after 1442 CE under his son Ḥamza, and the restoration of the cathedral during the tenure of Ḥamza's nephew and son-in-law Jahāngīr in 1447 CE. I have identified these junctures on the basis of two Armenian commemorative notes (*hišatakaranner* or *yišatakaranner*), which were produced in 898 AE (November 29, 1448–November 28, 1449 CE) and have been edited by Xaç'ikyan in his monumental collection of commemorative notes dating to the fifteenth century CE. As I will argue in greater detail below, the two texts share with other Armenian and Muslim sources from the same period and area an acute awareness of the significance of architectural patronage in the performative establishment of Armenian Christian clerical elites in Diyarbakır and its surroundings. Accordingly, I contend that highly visible Armenian Christian interventions in the built environment of Diyarbakır and the nearby fortress of Ergani manifest moments of significant collaboration between Mkrtič' Nalaš and the Aqqyunlu rulers *qara* 'Uthmān, Ḥamza, and Jahāngīr.

In addressing this manifestation of Armenian–Turkmen interlacement in the architectural patronage of churches, previous scholarship has focused on the motivations

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14. See the discussion in H. Jordheim, "Synchronizing the World: Synchronism as Historiographical Practice, Then and Now," *History of the Present* 7, no. 1 (2017): 59–95.

15. The full text of Mkrtič' Nalaš's *Response to the Letters of the Latin Christians* is edited in Ē. Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Nalaš* (Erevan: Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakč'ut'yun, 1965), 192–97. The concluding synchronisms and poem are also included in the monumental work of L. S. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari hayeren jeḡagrerī hišatakaranner* (Erevan: Haykakan SSR [vol. 3: SSH] Gitut'yunneri Akademiayi Hratarakč'ut'yun, 1955–67), 1:464–65. For the other contents of this miscellany, formerly held at the monastery of Lim on the eponymous island in Lake Van, see G. Hovsep'yan (as Garegin c. Vardapet), "Mkrtič' Nalaši t'ult'ə Florenc'ioy žolovi art'iw," *Ararat* 5–6 [title page: 3–4] (1916): 413–17, at 415–16. The latest entry in this list appears to be item (e), a "commemorative note" (*yišatakararan*) including biographical information in the hand of the late nineteenth-century CE scholar Ē. vardapet P'irālēmēan, *incipit* "I, Ēond" (*Es Ēond*), immediately following Mkrtič' Nalaš's *Response*. For him, see A. Melk'onyan, "Ēvond Vardapet P'irālemyani garcuneut'yunə ew grakan žarāngut'yan xndirə (Norahayt Ink'nakensagrakani Art'iv)," *Banber Matenadarani* 30 (2020): 408–20.

of Muslim Turkmen rulers to “permit” the (re)construction of Christian sites of worship.<sup>16</sup> This approach brings together various instances in which Christian sites of worship were rebuilt under Muslim rulers during the fifteenth century CE and beyond, but it arguably conflates the very diverse motivations of Christian patrons by taking their interest in building for granted. By contrast, the present contribution suggests that the reasons that led Mkrtič’ Nalaš to (re)build some of the most prominent monuments in his province reflect specific junctures in his own career. Similarly, the detailed reconstruction of three synchronisms undertaken in this article serves as a caution against homogenizing the very specific contexts and circumstances within which Muslim rulers negotiated monumental architectural patronage inside their realms.

In addition, the foundation inscription of the church of Saint Mary within the fortress of Ergani, reconstructed below, states explicitly that the foundation took place “according to the order of *qara* ‘Uthmān” (*hramanaw Awt’man xanin*). The wording reflects the common structure of Arabic monumental epigraphy commemorating architectural patronage in the name of the ruler at defensive structures and Muslim sites of worship in the Turkmen realms. Such inscriptions commonly begin with the Arabic equivalent of this phrase (*amara bi*-[verbal noun denoting construction], “[the ruler] ordered [construction of this project]”).<sup>17</sup> The parallelism of epigraphic templates in Armenian and Arabic calls into question the established assumption that a Muslim ruler should be intrinsically motivated to construct mosques and to restrict the building of churches. Instead, we may ask whether the commission of monumental architecture within the realm of a given ruler was structured by a supracommunitarian framework of expectations concerning the obligations of the ruler and the ruled. Therefore, the dominant opposition is not necessarily one of Muslims against non-Muslims, but possibly one of the ruler against the (homogenized) subjects. Of course, this does not negate the strong likelihood that the expectations and experiences of these subjects differed according to their religious affiliations and social status.

Subsequent research may well clarify these and similar questions. For now, this essay uses the concept of synchronisms to avoid overstating the significance of the religious opposition between Muslim Aqqyunlu rulers and the Armenian Christian elites within their realm.

### **The Beginnings of Aqqyunlu Rule in Diyarbakır, 1400–1433 CE, and the Advent of Mkrtič’ Nalaš**

To contextualize the entanglement of Aqqyunlu and Armenian clerical elites in and around Diyarbakır during the tenure of Mkrtič’ Nalaš, we need to reconstruct their respective historical trajectories, leading to the first synchronism of 1433 CE. The present section

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16. In addition to the relevant sections of Carlson, *Christianity*, 63–68, see the discussion of the building and rebuilding of Syriac orthodox churches during the second half of the fifteenth century CE in Palmer, “John bar Šayallāh,” 192–93 and 199–202.

17. Among extant Arabic inscriptions in Aqqyunlu Diyarbakır, see, for instance, inscription 861 Diyarbakır (*amara bi-‘amal hādhā al-tajdīd*, commemorating architectural patronage, possibly of the water infrastructure of the town, on the inner face of the city wall) and inscription 874 Diyarbakır (*amara bi-‘amalihi*, on the prayer hall of the great mosque) as edited in B. Konyar, *Diyarbakır Tarihi* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1936), 2:144–45.

summarizes the first three decades of Aqqyunlu rule over Diyarbakır and provides an overview of Mkrtič' Nalaš's career until his appointment to this town in 1430 CE. Methodologically, this section proceeds through a close reading of sources representing various genres and mediums, offering some methodological observations that underpin the subsequent parts of the article.

According to the authoritative reconstruction of Woods, Aqqyunlu rule over Diyarbakır began during Timur's third campaign to Anatolia in 1400 CE, when Timur invested İbrāhīm, a son of his Aqqyunlu ally *qara* 'Uthmān, with control of the city in recognition of his military prowess.<sup>18</sup> Although İbrāhīm b. *qara* 'Uthmān died in battle while defending Diyarbakır in the army of his father against a Mamluk invasion in 1407 CE,<sup>19</sup> he may conceivably be commemorated by a small mosque now known as İbrahim Bey Mescidi off Dabanoğlu Sokak in the northeastern quadrant of Diyarbakır.<sup>20</sup>

Few sources describe the period of Aqqyunlu rule over Diyarbakır between the death of İbrāhīm b. *qara* 'Uthmān in 1407 CE and the first synchronism linking *qara* 'Uthmān and Mkrtič' Nalaš in Diyarbakır and Ergani in 1433 CE.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, the occupation of Çemişgezek to the west of Diyarbakır in 826/1423 CE and that of Silvan and Tercil to its east in 827/1424 CE signal the ongoing consolidation of *qara* 'Uthmān's rule over the environs of Diyarbakır, which reached a preliminary conclusion with the appropriation of Harput in 832/1429 CE and Mardin in 835/1432 CE.<sup>22</sup>

The period between 1430 and 1433 CE was overshadowed by the military conflict between *qara* 'Uthmān and his erstwhile Mamluk overlords following the former's occupation

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18. Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 41, following Tihirānī, *Kitāb-i Diyārbakriyya*, ed. N. Lugal and F. Sümer (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1962–64), 48.

19. Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 45.

20. For this mosque, see Ş. Beysanoğlu, *Anıtları ve Kitâbeleri ile Diyarbakır Tarihi* (repr. Ankara: MN Tanıtım, 1996), 463–64; Ş. Beysanoğlu, *Kısaltılmış Diyarbakır Tarihi ve Âbideleri* (Istanbul: Şehir Matbaası, 1963), 140; M. Sözen, *Diyarbakır'da Türk Mimarisi* (Istanbul: Gün Matbaası, 1971), 117–19; and M. Sözen, *Anadolu'da Akkoyunlu Mimarisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu, 1981), 112–14, as well as the plan given by C. Parla, "Diyarbakır Surları ve Kent Tarihi," *Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Mimarlık Fakültesi Dergisi* 22, no. 1 (2005): 57–84, at 75. A *waqf* sustaining this mosque is mentioned in the list in Ş. Beysanoğlu (as A. Şevket Kavut), "Diyarbakırda Vakıflar," *Karacadağ* 2, no. 19 (1939): 17–19, at 18. Although this mosque is commonly dated to the period of Aqqyunlu rule, it does not display any foundation inscription. The İbrāhīm to whom it is conventionally attributed—a nephew (*yeğen*) of the later Aqqyunlu ruler Qāsim—is a phantom not attested by any fifteenth-century CE source. A brother of Qāsim named İbrāhīm is mentioned in Konyar, *Diyarbakır*, 1:212. This brother is, however, not mentioned in any of the narratives set in late Aqqyunlu Diyarbakır in the sixteenth-century CE Ottoman hagiography of Gulshanī, *Manāqib-i İbrāhīm Gulshanī*, ed. T. Yazıcı (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1982), 272–85, or in the historical reconstructions of late Aqqyunlu rule over this town by R. M. Savory in "The Consolidation of Şafawid Power in Persia," *Der Islam* 41 (1965): 71–94, at 75–76, and by J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont in "Un 'Fetihname' Zû-l-Ķâdiride dans les Archives Ottomanes," *Turcica* 2 (1970): 138–50. It thus seems reasonable to attribute the İbrahim Bey Mescidi to the first Aqqyunlu ruler of Diyarbakır, İbrāhīm b. *qara* 'Uthmān Aqqyunlu.

21. See Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 45–50.

22. *Ibid.*, 50–52.

of the citadel of Harput.<sup>23</sup> In Sha‘bān 835/1743 AS/April 1432 CE,<sup>24</sup> *qara* ‘Uthmān’s son Ḥamza succeeded in establishing himself as the governor of Mardin. Although Ibn Ḥajar suggests that *qara* ‘Uthmān sent the keys of the citadel to Barsbāy as a token of submission and thereby preempted an already planned Mamluk campaign,<sup>25</sup> an inscription above the entrance connecting the citadel to the town names Shāhrukh as the overlord of *qara* ‘Uthmān and Ḥamza.<sup>26</sup> This inscription displays the date 835 in the last line and also contains a catalog of the Aqqyunlu territories ruled by *qara* ‘Uthmān at this point that runs as follows: “He [*qara* ‘Uthmān] rules over well-protected Diyarbakır together with Ergani, Urfa, Harput, Tercil, al-Raqqā, Ra’s al-‘Ayn, Savur, Erzincan, Kemah, Çemişgezek, [Şebin-] Karahisar, \*Kazbakh\*, and Bayburt.”<sup>27</sup> Although differing in some respects from the map of *qara* ‘Uthmān’s realm suggested by Woods,<sup>28</sup> this catalog clearly shows that *qara* ‘Uthmān and his son Ḥamza intended to establish Diyarbakır as a regional center in a consolidated realm that included Mardin and its citadel.

The more extensive of the two Armenian sources describing Mkrtič‘ Našaš’s career until 898 AE/1448–49 CE suggests that he was consecrated archbishop of Diyarbakır in 879 AE (December 4, 1429–December 3, 1430 CE) by the Armenian catholicos Kostandin VI Vahkac‘i.<sup>29</sup> Mkrtič‘ Našaš’s presence in Diyarbakır is first attested by a note written in the town in 880 AE (December 4, 1430–December 3, 1431 CE) that names him as bishop and archbishop.<sup>30</sup> As suggested by Stomer von Reichenbach,<sup>31</sup> a letter dispatched to King (subsequently emperor) Sigismund of Luxembourg in September 1430 CE by *qara* ‘Uthmān Aqqyunlu was written in Diyarbakır.<sup>32</sup> If Mkrtič‘ Našaš indeed arrived at his post in or

23. Ibid.

24. For the date, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’ al-ghumr bi-abnā’ al-‘umr*, ed. Ḥ. Ḥabashī (Cairo: Majlis al-A‘lā li-l-Shu‘ūn al-Islāmiyya, Lajnat Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1972), 3:473, as well as the independent account of one of the continuators of Barebraeus, *Chronography*, facsimile ed. E. A. Wallis Budge (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 195r, col. ii.

25. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā’ al-ghumr*, 3:473.

26. Inscription 835 Mardin. I am currently preparing a full edition of this important source.

27. *Wa-ḥakama ‘alā Āmid al-maḥrūsa wa-Arqaṇin wa-l-Ruhā wa-Kharbirt wa-Tarjil wa-l-Raqqā wa-Ra’s al-‘Ayn wa-l-Şawr wa-Arzinjan wa-Kamākh wa-Chimishgazak wa-Qarāḥiṣār wa-\*KZBK\* wa-Bāyburt.*

28. See Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 55. The omission of Palu and Kiğı may reflect the relative autonomy of the lateral branches of *qara* ‘Uthmān’s family ruling there.

29. Xaç‘ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:625.

30. Ibid., 1:403. Mkrtič‘ Našaš’s arrival in Diyarbakır has recently been discussed on the basis of these two notes in A. Sargsyan, “‘Nawd i berac‘ t‘et‘ewac‘oy . . .’: Mkrtič‘ Našaš u Kat‘olikosakan At‘orə,” *Banber Hayagitut‘yan* 1, no. 25 (2021): 107–27, at 108–9.

31. W. Stomer von Reichenbach, “König Siegmunds Gesandte in den Orient,” in *Festschrift für Hermann Heimpel*, 591–609 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 597.

32. For the date of the letter, see W. Stomer von Reichenbach, “Diplomatische Kontakte des Herrschers vom Weißen Hammel, Uthman genannt Qara Yuluq, mit dem Deutschen König Sigismund im September 1430–März 1431 zu gemeinsamem Vorgehen mit dem Timuriden Schah-Ruch gegen die Türken,” *Südostforschungen* 20 (1961): 267–72, at 268, and W. Stomer von Reichenbach, “Eine Botschaft des Turkmenenfürsten Qara Yuluq an König Sigismund auf dem Nürnberger Reichstag im März 1431,” *Jahrbuch für fränkische Landsforschung* 22 (1962): 433–41, at 441. Although not corroborated by any explicit indications, this suggestion was tacitly

before September 1430 CE, this date could be posited as the first attested point of personal contact between Mkrtič' Našaš and *qara* 'Uthmān.

To fully realize the potential of the Armenian sources, some methodological observations must be made. The first observation concerns the genre of commemorative notes (*hišatakaranner* or *yišatakaranner*), which encompasses a range of different types of texts. Significantly, it includes colophons in the classical sense, as well as notes pertaining to other genres that were added during the production of a manuscript or after its completion. Consequently, I do not apply the established term “colophons” to all such notes, as it could be misleading in comparative contexts, including scribal traditions other than the Armenian one. Instead, I use “commemorative notes” to include the variety of notes made accessible by the editions of Armenian colleagues.

The second methodological observation concerns the internal structure of these Armenian commemorative notes. In the classical introductory discussion of Xaç'ikyan as continued by the selective translation and commentary of Sanjian, these notes are lumped together as products of a decentralized “writing of the oppressed,” evoking the image of lone village priests writing either in icy cold or while being devoured by flies.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, subsequent research has shown not only that “colophons proper” are linked in intertextual frameworks of reference and adaptation<sup>34</sup> but also that a significant portion of these texts pertains to a repertoire of elite self-representation deployed by monastic and other elites.<sup>35</sup>

Accordingly, Armenian commemorative notes are most valuable if analyzed systematically together with other mediums of Armenian Christian elite self-representation in a given time and place. The latter could include monumental epigraphy, performative interactions with Muslim and non-Muslim power brokers, or architectural patronage. If we trace the places of production of manuscript notes mentioning Mkrtič' Našaš between 1430 and 1450 CE, we can discern a spatial cluster of Armenian clerical and monastic foundations that recognized the authority of the Armenian archbishop of Diyarbakır. In addition to Diyarbakır itself, these localities include the monastery of Erkan<sup>36</sup> in modern-day Geçimli/Hozat /Tunceli,<sup>37</sup> the

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accepted by Woods in *Aqquyunlu*, 57, and appears plausible.

33. A. K. Sanjian, *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, 1301–1480* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 9–29. For a pathbreaking synthetic discussion of the material contained in his edition, see Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:vii–lxvi and 2:vii–cxxxvi. See also the magisterial analysis of the genre of Armenian commemorative notes by X. A. Harut'yunyan in *Hayeren jeṛagreri hišatakarannerə* (Erevan: Matenadaran Maštoc' i Anvan Hin Jeṛagreri Institut, 2019).

34. See E. van Elverdinghe, *Modèles et copies: Étude d'une formule des colophons de manuscrits arméniens, VIII<sup>e</sup>–XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Louvain: Peeters, 2022), as well as the description of structural features across the tradition of Armenian commemorative notes in A. Sirinian, “On the Historical and Literary Value of the Colophon in Armenian Manuscripts,” in *Armenian Philology in the Modern Era*, ed. V. Calzolari, 65–100 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), and the case study of A. Sirinian, “Towards a Structural Analysis of Armenian Colophons,” *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin* 8, no. 1 (2022): 91–120.

35. For an exemplary study of the use of commemorative notes together with other genres and mediums by Zak'aria III of Ałt'amar, see Vardanyan, “Maštoc',” 167–231.

36. I consistently use the modern name of Erkan in this article instead of the differing forms of the toponym as given by the Armenian sources.

37. For this monastery, see J. M. Thierry, “Le couvent Erkeyn Ęnkuzik' en Dersim,” *Revue des études*

monastery of Karmir Vank' at Gözlüçayır/Çemişgezek/Tunceli,<sup>38</sup> the important monastery and church of Saint Mary established by Mkrtič' Nalaš himself at the citadel of Ergani/Diyarbakır that will be discussed in greater detail below, Mardin, and (attested by a lone Armenian manuscript) Siverek/Urfa.<sup>39</sup> Roughly the same area is indicated by a commemorative note written by Mkrtič' Nalaš as the illuminator of a gospel manuscript that was probably produced around 1449 CE.<sup>40</sup> Here, Mkrtič' Nalaš signs as “the bishop of the town of Diyarbakır, Mardin, Urfa, T'ilkuran, Hani, and Ergani,”<sup>41</sup> which again closely corresponds to the southern half of the area ruled in the name of Aqqyunlu rulers in this period.<sup>42</sup>

*arméniennes* 20 (1986–87): 381–417; for its decoration, see also M. Kulaz and İ. İğit, “Tunceli-Hozat Geçimli Köyü (Erkayn-Enkuzik) Kilisesi Taş Süsleme Örnekleri,” *Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 44 (2019): 239–71. The discursive negotiation of memories of twentieth-century CE genocide and mass killings in Dersim at this locality is evocatively reconstructed in A. Törne, “On the Grounds Where They Will Walk in a Hundred Years' Time': Struggling with the Heritage of Violent Past in Post-genocidal Tunceli,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 20 (2015), online, at paras. 28–38.

38. [J.] M. Thierry, *Répertoire des monastères arméniens* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993), 84.

39. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:471. Although not strictly within the period between 1430 and 1450 CE, a connection between Mkrtič' Nalaš and the important monastery of Awagvank' near Kemah is implied by the indication in Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:632, that a manuscript containing illuminations and a commemorative note in the hand of Mkrtič' Nalaš, evidently written in Diyarbakır, was held at Awagvank' in 900 AE (November 29, 1450–November 28, 1451 CE). For a more extensive version of the same note, see Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Nalaš*, 187–91. For the monastery of Awagvank', see Thierry, *Répertoire*, 33, as well as J.-M. Thierry, “Le Mont Sepuh: Étude archéologique,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 21 (1988): 385–449, at 409–17.

40. The manuscript featuring this note was dated to 1418–22 CE by B. Sargisean, *Mayr c'uc'ak hayerēn je'agrac' matenadaranin Mxit'areanc' i Venetik* (Venice: S. Lazar, 1914), 115. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:292, includes the note written by Mkrtič' Nalaš together with other notes in the same manuscript under the year 871 AE/1421–22 CE. This is chronologically impossible, as Mkrtič' Nalaš had not yet been appointed to Diyarbakır at this time. I suggest 898 AE/1448–49 CE as a very approximate *terminus ad quem*, before the cataclysmic Qaraqyunlu invasion of 1450 CE and toward the zenith of Mkrtič' Nalaš's career.

41. Mkrtič' [ . . . ] *episkopos Amit' k'alaq'i ew Mertənay, Urhayu ew T'ilkurna, Hinu ew Arnu*; Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:292. See also the more extensive edition of the same passage in Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Nalaš*, 190, and the edition of this note contained in the authoritative catalog of Sargisean, *C'uc'ak*, 115. The toponym of T'ilkuran is also mentioned in the historical note by Davit' of Mardin as *T'ilguran*; see V. A. Hakobyan, *Manr žamanakagrut'yunner, XIII–XVIII dari* (Erevan: Haykakan SSR Gitut'yunneri Akademiayi Hratarakč'ut'yun, 1951–56), 2:210, and N. Polarean, *Mayr c'uc'ak je'agrac' srboč' Yakobeanč'* (Jerusalem: Tparan Srboč' Yakobeanč', 1966–91), 4:324. It also appears in the Persian Aqqyunlu court chronicle of T'ihri, *Diyārbakriyya*, 233, as *Tall-i Gabrān*, literally “hill of the unbelievers.” According to [Sevan Nişanyan's Index Anatolicus](#), the toponym refers to the contemporary village of Uzunyol/Harran/Şanlıurfa. The tell or *höyük* to which the fifteenth-century CE village owed its name is clearly visible in satellite images on Google Maps. An Armenian settlement at this location in the fifteenth century CE is indicated by the name of a certain Şahrman T'ilkuranc'i, who is named as contributing decisively to the rebuilding of the cathedral of Diyarbakır in 1447 CE (Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:629; see below), and of the Armenian patriarch at Cilicia, Hovhannēs T'ilkuranc'i, who assumed office in 1489 CE. For *Hin* as the name of Hani/Diyarbakır, see the travelogue of a Mamluk envoy to Aqqyunlu Tabrīz in 1471 CE: “I asked the inhabitants of this town for its name and some said it was *Hayn* while others said it was *ʿAyn*, [ . . . ] and some said it was *Hayn*.” See Ibn Ajā, *Ta'rīkh al-Amīr Yashbak*, ed. ʿA. A. Ṭulaymāt (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1973), 98. In light of the Armenian form of *Hin* written by Mkrtič' Nalaš, it may be worth considering whether the unvocalized Arabic *rasm* of Ibn Ajā's report should be interpreted as indicating a vernacular *ē* as in *Hēn*, *Ēn*, and *Hēn*.

42. Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 55 and 72; cf. Sargsyan, “Mkrtič',” 111–14.

Across this regional cluster, some eighteen notes written during the twenty years between 1430 and 1450 CE are included in Xaç'ikyan's edition, all but one of which name either Mkrtič' Našaš or his counterpart Aṛak'el of Bitlis at the monastery of Erkan (see below).<sup>43</sup> This wealth of attestations contrasts with the one note written in Diyarbakır in 874 AE (December 5, 1424–December 4, 1425 CE)<sup>44</sup> and the two notes written in Mardin in 875 AE (December 5, 1425–December 4, 1426 CE),<sup>45</sup> which constitute the sole surviving texts written in this area over the preceding thirty years between 1400 and 1430 CE. To be sure, this contrast may reflect the vagaries of manuscript survival, and the appearance of further manuscript notes in the future may well change the picture. But according to the preliminary database of notes consulted for this article, the period between 1430 and 1450 CE appears to have witnessed an expanded production of Armenian manuscripts and manuscript notes across the Aqquyunlu holdings centered on Diyarbakır compared with the period between 1400 and 1430 CE.

In addition to sites such as Ergani and Diyarbakır that were administered directly by Mkrtič' Našaš himself, a significant number of the manuscript notes within this regional cluster acknowledging the authority of Mkrtič' Našaš and the Aqquyunlu rulers of Diyarbakır are linked to the monastic community of Erkan.<sup>46</sup> All of these were written between 880 and 884 AE (December 4, 1430–December 2, 1435 CE) and attest to a refoundation of the monastic community led by Aṛak'el of Bitlis in or immediately before 880 AE/1430–31 CE (*i norašēn anapatīs* [. . . , of Erkan] *i t'vakaniš hayoc' 880*).<sup>47</sup> This evidence shows that the

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43. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:292 [*sub anno* 871 AE following the colophon of the manuscript but evidently written around 1449 CE], 403–6, 408–9, 426, 439–40, 442–43, 449–50, 458, 464–65, 466, 471–72, 492, 575–76, 589–90, 622–31, 632, and 634–36 [not naming any bishop or catholicos]. *Pace* the suggestion of the index in Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:805, the locality of *Ēnkuzeac' anapat* mentioned in the commemorative note written in 883 AE (December 3, 1433–December 2, 1434 CE) and edited in Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:442, must be identified with the monastery of Erkan in the village of Geçimli/Hozat/Tunceli. This is confirmed by the note's reference to the joint dedication of the church of Erkan to Saints Mary and John the Precursor, by the reference to nearby Çemişgezek, and the leadership of the monastic community at this location by Aṛak'el of Bitlis. In a conference presentation in 2018, A Saratikyan suggested that the *Kot'ip'oroy Vank'* proposed by Xaç'ikyan (*ŽE dari*, 1:805) as the location where this note was written should be identified with an archeological site near the contemporary village of *Kot'i* in Tavuš Province in modern Armenia. The importance of her identification of this site for other manuscripts notwithstanding, the arguments presented above conclusively demonstrate that this cannot be the same *Ēnkuzeac' anapat* that is mentioned in the commemorative note. I thank Dr. Saratikyan for discussing the identification with me by email.

44. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:344.

45. *Ibid.*, 1:354 and 358.

46. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:408, 426, 442, 449–50, and 458.

47. My citation of the earliest note follows the edition of Połarean, *C'uc'ak*, 1:128; cf. Thierry, "Erkayn Ēnkuzik'," 392–95 and 399. The first part of this note, including the reference to the newly established monastery, is also preserved in a later miscellany (*žořovacu*) edited by Połarean, *C'uc'ak*, 8:46. Note that the same description of the monastery as newly reestablished (*norašēn*) also appears in a different commemorative note in the same manuscript that is dated to 884 AE (December 3, 1434–December 2, 1435 CE); see Połarean, *C'uc'ak*, 1:128. Therefore, the reestablishment may have predated the year 880 AE/1430–31 CE. For Aṛak'el of Bitlis, see also S. P. Cowe, "Aṛak'el Bałiřec'i," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 5, 1350–1500, ed. D. Thomson, A. Mallett, et al., 346–50 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

revival of Armenian manuscript production and religious architecture led by Mkrtič' Nalaš was centered on the metropolis (*mayrak'alak'*) of Diyarbakır and its military backstop at the citadel of Ergani, as well as the subordinate center of Erkan.<sup>48</sup> Within the early Aqquyunlu realm, the location of Erkan in today's Geçimli/Hozat/Tunceli marks the nexus between the southern center of Diyarbakır, ruled directly by *qara* ʿUthmān and his sons, and the northern center of Erzincan. Aqquyunlu control over this crucial overland route was consolidated with the occupation of the citadel of Harput in 832/1429 CE.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, the arrival of Mkrtič' Nalaš and Aṛak'el of Bitlis at Diyarbakır and Erkan, respectively, followed immediately upon the consolidation of Aqquyunlu rule over the area.

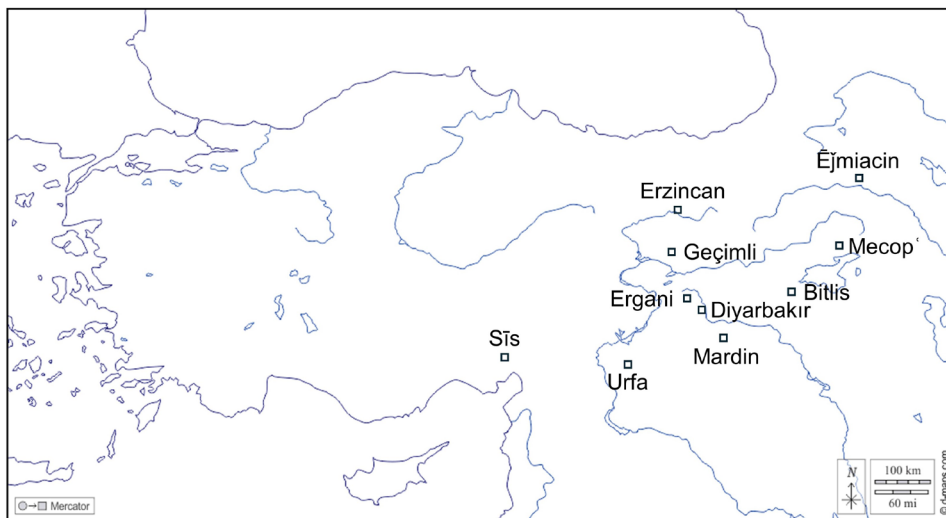


Fig. 1.  
The Aqquyunlu  
realms and their  
surroundings,  
ca. 1430–50 CE

Mkrtič' Nalaš and Aṛak'el of Bitlis assumed leadership of Diyarbakır and Erkan in or shortly before 1430 CE, and their biographies can usefully be compared with one another. Although this point is made explicitly only in connection with Mkrtič' Nalaš,<sup>50</sup> it seems that the simultaneous appointment of the two men was a strategic move by the newly elected Armenian catholicos Kostandin VI Vahkac'i, who assumed office in 1429 CE, to revive Armenian clerical foundations within the Aqquyunlu realm.<sup>51</sup> As already mentioned, this period was overshadowed by military conflict between *qara* ʿUthmān Aqquyunlu and the Mamluk overlords of the Cilician Armenian catholicate. Consequently, the amiable expansion of Kostandin's influence across the southern Aqquyunlu realm cannot be explained as the result of friendly relations between the Mamluks and *qara* ʿUthmān.<sup>52</sup> Although the citadel

48. For the necessity of emending the toponym read by Xaç'ikyan as Arzn to Arln/Ergani, see the discussion of the foundation of the monastery and church of Saint Mary in 1433 CE below.

49. Woods, *Aqquyunlu*, 50–52.

50. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:625.

51. For the date, see Ōrmanean, *Hayoc' ekelec'in*, 271.

52. For a Mamluk fiscal decree commemorating a strategic collaboration between Mamluk rulers and Armenian Christian clergy in the mid-fifteenth century CE, see P. Bourjekian, "The Mamluk Inscription of the St. James Armenian Monastery inside the Armenian Quarter of the Old City, Jerusalem," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 22 (2016): 239–51.

above the catholicate at Sīs was commonly ruled by a governor appointed directly by the Mamluk sultan,<sup>53</sup> the Ramaḡānid *beylik* in the Cilician plain to the south of Sīs clearly enjoyed some sort of local autonomy. In the absence of any clear Mamluk motivation to support the revival of Armenian clerical infrastructure in the southern Aqqyunlu realm at this time, it appears that Kostandin's appointment of Mkrtič' Našaš and Aṛak'el of Bitlis was driven by his own aims and ambitions.

Before leading the monastic community at Erkan, Aṛak'el of Bitlis is well attested as one of the closest students of Grigor Cerenc', the well-known Armenian author of versified histories and bishop of Arckē/Adilcevaz, who died on May 27, 874 AE/1425 CE.<sup>54</sup> A note written by Aṛak'el in 871 AE (December 6, 1421–December 5, 1422 CE) places him at the monastery of Aṛak'eloc' Vank' (*Łazaru Vank'*) near Kepenek/Merkez/Muṣ.<sup>55</sup> As indicated by his cognomen, Bališec'i, he originally hailed from the town of Bitlis, specifically from the nearby village of Poṛ (today's Değirmenaltı/Merkez/Bitlis), where Mkrtič' Našaš also grew up.<sup>56</sup> By contrast, no reference to the monastic foundation at Erkan or any ties between this area and Aṛak'el himself is known from the period before 1430 CE. It thus appears likely that Kostandin appointed Aṛak'el as an “up-and-coming” candidate who hailed from the region around Lake Van, which was traditionally oriented toward the rival catholicate at Ałt'amar and/or the anti-Uniate alliance centered on the monastery of Mecop' near Erciṣ/Van.<sup>57</sup> Politically, this region was dominated by Qaraqyunlu and Rūzakī Kurdish dispensations at the time.<sup>58</sup> Aṛak'el's appointment to the leadership of the reconstituted monastic community

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53. For the occupation of the fortress at Sīs by the Dulghādirid/Dhū al-Qādirid ruler *shāh* Suwār as one of the reasons for the military escalation between *shāh* Suwār and his Mamluk overlords in the 870s/1460s–1470s CE, see the eyewitness account of the negotiation conducted with *shāh* Suwār in Ibn Ajā, *Ta'rikh*, 90, as well as the subsequent eyewitness description of the fortress at 132. For the military role of Sīs within the Mamluk defensive system in Cilicia, see S. Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485–91* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 51–52. For the factual autonomy of the Ramaḡānid and Dulghādirid vassals of the Mamluks in the 1430s and 1450s CE, see also V. Adriaenssens and J. van Steenberghe, “Mamluk Authorities and Anatolian Realities: Jānibak al-Šūfī, Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy, and the Story of a Social Network in the Mamluk/Anatolian Frontier Zone, 1435–1438,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26, no. 4 (2016), 591–630, and M. Dekkiche, “Crossing the Line: Mamluk Response to Qaramanid Threat in the Fifteenth Century according to MS ar. 4440 (BnF, Paris),” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 80, no. 2 (2017): 253–81.

54. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE Dari*, 1:293–94 and 333–34. A biography of Grigor Cerenc' is given in T'ovma Mecop'ec'i, *Patmagrut'yun*, ed. L. [S.] Xaç'ikyan (Erevan: Magalat', 1999), 60–62; see also H. Ač'aryan, *Hayoc' anjnanunneri ba'aran* (Erevan: Petakan Hamalsarani Hratarakč'ut'yun, 1942–62), 1:608–10.

55. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:293.

56. Thierry, “Erkayn Ānkuzik',” 394.

57. For the healing of the schism between the catholicates of Ałt'amar and Sīs, see Hewsen, “Sefedinian,” 125–26.

58. For the numismatic evidence of coins minted before 1429 CE in the name of Iskandar Qaraqyunlu at Bitlis, Erciṣ, Gevaṣ/Waṣṡān, and Adilcevaz, see S. Album, “A Hoard of Silver Coins from the Time of Iskandar Qarā-Qoyūnlū,” *Numismatic Chronicle* 7, no. 16 (1976): 109–57, at 141–42 and 144. The political impact of Rūzakī rulers centered on Bitlis is traceable mainly through Armenian commemorative notes; see the methodological evaluation of T. A. Sinclair in “The Use of Colophons and Minor Chronicles in the Writing of Armenian and Turkish History,” *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 10 (2000): 45–53, at 47–48, and in “The Armenians and the Kurdish Emirs of Bitlis under the Kara Koyunlu,” in *Armenian Baghesh/Bitlis and Taron/Mush*, ed. R. G. Hovannisian, 155–74 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2001). For the principality of Hakkari, see A. Xaç'atryan [Khachatrian], “The Kurdish Principality of Hakkariya (14th–15th Centuries),” *Iran and the Caucasus* 7, no. 1–2

at Erkan decisively advanced his career. His initial authority and acceptance as leader must have depended on his endorsement by Kostandin VI and his ability to establish good relations with the Aqqyunlu rulers and other power brokers in the region.

By contrast, the interpersonal networks sustaining the early career of Mkrtič' Nalaš are less clear, as much of the information we have about his career before his appointment at Diyarbakır is contained in two commemorative notes penned by himself. Because of the loss of the original manuscript, the first of these notes survives only in the edition of P'irġalēmean, who consulted the manuscript in Van in 1868 CE.<sup>59</sup> This note is dated 867 AE (December 7, 1417–December 6, 1418 CE) and likely constituted the colophon proper of a menology (*yaysmawurk'*) copied by Mkrtič' Nalaš in his home village of Poř near Bitlis.<sup>60</sup> As attested by other notes, his father was named Ařak'el;<sup>61</sup> the father does not appear to be mentioned anywhere else.<sup>62</sup> The second note is found in a Bible manuscript from Ahlat that was begun in 867 AE/1417–18 CE and completed in 871 AE/1421–22 CE.<sup>63</sup> In this undated note, Mkrtič' Nalaš suggests that he contributed to the manuscript as an illuminator (*całkof*).<sup>64</sup> His skill as an illuminator also motivated his subsequent choice of the Persophone pen name (*takhalluř*) Nalaš, derived from the Arabic and Persian *naqqāsh*, “painter.”

Although this second note might be interpreted as placing Mkrtič' Nalaš at Ahlat at some point during the period specified in the main colophon, it is also possible that he produced his contributions to the manuscript somewhere else or even that his illuminations postdate the production of the text.<sup>65</sup> The works of T'ovma of Mecop' have frequently been used in modern historiography to contextualize the milieu in which Mkrtič' Nalaš grew up and received his education.<sup>66</sup> However, he is not mentioned in T'ovma's historiographical writings,<sup>67</sup> even if some connection between the two is implied by the suggestion made by the colophon of a manuscript completed at the monastery of Mecop' in 881 AE (December 4, 1431–December 2, 1432 CE) that Mkrtič' Nalaš supplied the illuminations. Like his contribution to the Ahlat manuscript, his contribution to the Mecop' manuscript is undated

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(2003): 37–58. For the chronologically unclear evidence of coins minted in the name of Rūzakī rulers of Bitlis, see M. B. Severova, “O monetah kurdskih pravitelej Bidlisa konca XIV–XVI v.,” in *Četvertaâ Vserosskijskaâ Numizmatičeskaâ Konferenciâ, Tezisy Dokladov*, 43–45 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyj Istoričeskij Muzej, 1996).

59. L. P'irġalēmean, *Nōtark' Hayoc'* (Istanbul: Tpagr. Niřan K. Pērpērean, 1888), 55–56, reprinted in Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:215, and Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Nalaš*, 185. For the architectural remains and inscriptions at the convent of Saint Anania of Poř where Mkrtič' Nalaš wrote this note, see J. M. Thierry, *Monuments arméniens du Vaspurakan* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1989), 357–62.

60. For the suggestion that Mkrtič' Nalaš was born in Değirmenaltı, see the main Armenian source commemorating the ascendancy of Mkrtič' Nalaš until 898 AE/1448–49 CE: Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:622.

61. *Ibid.*, 1:622 and 632; for the latter, see also the reprint in Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Nalaš*, 187.

62. See the index of Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:674, s.v. “Ařak'el 52.”

63. For the dated main colophon of the manuscript, see *ibid.*, 1:291.

64. *Ibid.*, 1:292.

65. Another note that certainly postdates the appointment of Mkrtič' Nalaš at Diyarbakır is edited in *ibid.*, 1:292.

66. See, for instance, Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Nalaš*, 11–24 and 41–67.

67. This assessment is based on the absence of any references to Mkrtič' Nalaš in the index of T'ovma's *Patmagrut'yun*.

and may have postdated his appointment to Diyarbakır.<sup>68</sup>

In any case, nothing suggests a connection between Mkrtič' Našaš and Diyarbakır before his arrival, most likely in 879 AE/1429–30 CE.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, it is likely that the simultaneous appointments of Arak'el and Mkrtič' Našaš reflect the influence of Kostandin VI and the consolidation of Diyarbakır as the southern center of the Aqqyunlu realm ruled by *qara* 'Uthmān. As a promising outsider like Arak'el, Mkrtič' Našaš must have owed his initial status to the support of the Armenian patriarch as well as his ability to establish good relations with local elites. These relations produced their first fruit in the form of the foundation of the church and monastery of Saint Mary inside the citadel of Ergani in 1433 CE.

### **Synchronism I: Qara 'Uthmān, Mkrtič' Našaš, and the Foundation of the Church of Saint Mary at the Fortress of Ergani in 1433 CE**

In his note dated 898 AE/1448–49 CE commemorating the completion of illuminations in a Bible manuscript, Mkrtič' Našaš refers to himself as “the deplorable sinner Mkrtič', who is a bishop in name only, and is known by the sobriquet Našaš. He is the builder (*šinoł*) of the holy cathedral (*surb kat'ulikēin*) in the metropolis of Diyarbakır (*Yamit' mayrak'alak'*) and of the sublime church of Saint Mary (*barjr astuacacnin*) in the fortress of Ergani (*i yamurn Arłnu*).”<sup>70</sup> The more extensive narrative of his career indicates that his foundation of a church and monastic community inside the citadel of Ergani took place in 882 AE (December 3, 1432–December 2, 1433 CE).<sup>71</sup> Subsequent references to this foundation are dated to 886 AE (December 2, 1436–December 1st 1437 CE; *Mkrtič' [Našaš] veraditoł yamurn Arzni barjr astuacacnin ew Amit' šahastan k'alak'i*),<sup>72</sup> 893 AE (December 1, 1443–November 29, 1444 CE),<sup>73</sup> and 894 AE (November 30, 1445–November 29, 1446 CE).<sup>74</sup>

68. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:424.

69. For this date, see the later main note describing his career: *ibid.*, 1:625.

70. *Ibid.*, 1:632; see also Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Našaš*, 187, and Sargisean, *C'uc'ak*, 116.

71. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:627.

72. *Ibid.*, 1:471. Sanjian (*Colophons*, 393) proposes reading Arzn as a by-form of Arłn/Ergani. In this note, the suggestion is supported by the context, *pace* Xaç'ikyan's suggestion in the geographical index to Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:803, that Arzn represents the earlier town of Aljn or Xarzan, equivalent to Islamic Arzan and ancient Tigranocerta. For the town of Tigranocerta/Arzan, see T. Sinclair, “The Site of Tigranocerta I,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 25 (1994–95): 183–254, and *idem*, “The Site of Tigranocerta II,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 26 (1996–97): 51–117. The abandonment of the site in the fifteenth century CE is discussed by Sinclair in “Tigranocerta II,” 105–7; see also the description of the site as being in the process of being abandoned in the thirteenth-century CE geographical dictionary of Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, ed. M. 'A. al-Mar'ashlī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2008), 1/2:125–26. Sinclair cites Xaç'ikyan's edition of the Armenian commemorative notes pertaining to the fifteenth century CE elsewhere in his article, but he implicitly follows Sanjian in rejecting Xaç'ikyan's identification of Arzn as Aljn/Xarzan. The second attestation of Arzn in an Armenian note edited by Xaç'ikyan (*ŽE dari*, 1:449) constitutes a phantom, *pace* its inclusion in Sanjian, *Colophons*, 182, as the toponym is not included in the authoritative edition of the same note by Połarean, *C'uc'ak*, 1:131; the earlier edition of A. Siwrmēean, *Mayr c'uc'ak hayerēn jeṛagrac' Erusalēmi srboč' Yakobeanc' vank'i* (Venice: Mxit'arean Tparan S. Łazar, 1948), 1:129–33; or its commented translation by Thierry in “Erkayn Ğnkuzik',” 392–95. Thierry, too, uses Xaç'ikyan's edition of the commemorative notes but implicitly rejects Xaç'ikyan's reading of this note.

73. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:576.

74. *Ibid.*, 1:590.



Fig. 2. The remains of the church of Saint Mary at the citadel of Ergani in 2018. Photo by author.

Little remains of this church today (see Fig. 2).<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, a preliminary edition of the foundation inscription formerly displayed above the main entrance was published by Sruanjteanc',<sup>76</sup> which enables the following confident reconstruction: "This church was erected thanks to the support of God and according to the order of 'Uthmān *khān* during the holy episcopate of Mkrtič' Nalaš in the year 883 AE."<sup>77</sup> The difference between the date of 882 AE/1432–33 CE given for the foundation of the church in the commemorative note<sup>78</sup>

75. In addition to the most detailed description in H. Oskean, *Sebastiayi, Xarberdi, Tiarbēk'iri ew Trapizoni nahangneru vank'erə* (Vienna: Mxit'arean Tparan, 1962), 173–95, see also the brief description of the remains of the Meryem Ana Kilisesi in Konyar, *Diyarbekir*, 3:346 and *resim* 228.

76. G. Sruanjteanc', *T'oros Albar Hayastani Čambord* (Istanbul: Tpagrut'yun E. M. Tntesean, 1879), 2:174.

77. *Awžandakut'eamb astucoy ew hramanaw Awt'man xanin kangnec'aw xoran s[urb] veraditolut'eamb N[a]l[a]š Mkrtič' ep[iskopo]s t'v[akanis] 883*. As already pointed out by P'irġalēmean (*Nōtark'*, 132) and affirmed by Oskean (*Vank'erə*, 191), the original reading of the date as 803 AE as proposed by Sruanjteanc' is impossible to reconcile with the biography of Mkrtič' Nalaš. Although 893 AE, the emended date proposed by P'irġalēmean, lies within the lifetime of Mkrtič' Nalaš, *qara* 'Uthmān had died by this date. By contrast, the date of 883 AE fits much better with the fifteenth-century CE sources describing the foundation of the church of Saint Mary and the monastic community at Ergani. Accordingly, I propose that 883 AE marks the completion of the building originally commissioned in 882 AE as indicated by the commemorative note in Xač'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:627. *Qara* 'Uthmān's title was read as *šāh* (*šahin*) by Sruanjteanc' (*T'oros*, 2:174), and this reading was followed by P'irġalēmean (*Nōtark'*, 132). The emendation to *khān* follows a suggestion by Oskean (*Vank'erə*, 191), which is convincing because of its resonance with the designation of *qara* 'Uthmān as *khān* (*i paronut'ean Awt'manbēk xani*) in the Armenian commemorative note written in Erġayn Ėnkuzeac' in 884 AE/1434–35 CE and edited in Polarean, *C'uc'ak*, 1:131; see also the partial edition in Xač'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:449.

78. Xač'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:627.

and the date of 883 AE/1433–34 CE displayed in the building inscription likely marks the period between the commencement of construction activity and its conclusion. Contrary to the suggestion apparently first attested in the early seventeenth-century CE travelogue of Simēon Lehač'i that the church had been founded by some of the apostles,<sup>79</sup> the building inscription and the notes clearly indicate that the church was newly founded by Mkrtič' Našaš.

Although Mkrtič' Našaš's good relations with *qara* ʿUthmān and his successors are a recurring theme in the extensive account of his career,<sup>80</sup> the suggestion made in the building inscription that the foundation was established on the explicit command of the Turkmen ruler (*hramanaw Awt'man xanin*) is striking. At the same time, the highly visible location of the inscription above the main entrance makes it very unlikely that *qara* ʿUthmān was not actively involved in the foundation. This interpretation is further strengthened by an Armenian note written in Ergani in 894 AE/1445–46 CE that states explicitly that *qara* ʿUthmān built (!) the church.<sup>81</sup> In this regard, the building inscription at the church of Saint Mary parallels the only other Armenian inscription ostensibly composed in the voice of a Turkmen ruler. This inscription was commissioned no later than 1420 CE and was originally displayed on the façade of the monastic church of Arcowaber in the contemporary village of Salmanağa/Erciş/Van, confirming the possession of landed properties by the monastic community.<sup>82</sup> The inscription describes the role of the Turkmen ruler *qara* Yūsuf Qaraqyunlu in the exact same terminology of an explicit command (*hramanaw Usuf paron*)<sup>83</sup> as at Ergani.

Overall, the Armenian sources describing the establishment of the church and monastic community of Saint Mary within the citadel of Ergani indicate that the initial foundation took place in 882 AE/1432–33 CE and involved *qara* ʿUthmān in a way that could plausibly be represented as his ordering the building of the church. Subsequently, the conclusion of the construction or at least of one of its stages was commemorated by the building inscription completed in the following year, 883 AE/1433–34 CE.

Significantly, *qara* ʿUthmān stayed at the citadel of Ergani in the summer of 1433 CE, and this sojourn marked a critical turning point in his establishment of a contiguous Aqqyunlu realm centered on Diyarbakır. Even if he sent the keys of the citadel of Mardin to Barsbāy

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79. See Simēon Lehač'i, *Ulegrut'yun*, ed. N. Akinean (Vienna: Mxit'arean Tparan, 1936), 203. Arguably, the claim that the foundation was established by some of the apostles reflects its prestige and importance at the time of Simēon's visit. In addition, the suggestion that the foundation predated the advent of Islam may also have resonated with the Islamic prohibition on the establishment of new non-Muslim houses of worship in Islamic lands, discussed in greater detail below.

80. See Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:622–31.

81. *Awt'man Bahadurin or zsurb ekelec'is šineac' i gluxs amur klayin Arlnoy*, edited in Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:590.

82. See G. Leube, "Armenian Monastic Elites Harnessing the 'Turkmen' State? I: Layout, Text, and Textual Commentary of the Armenian Inscription at Arcowaber (1420 A.D. or Earlier)," *Iran and the Caucasus* 28 (2024): 1–26.

83. *Ibid.*, 6.

in 1432 CE, as reported by Ibn Ḥajar,<sup>84</sup> Aqquyunlu-Mamluk tensions escalated in 1433 CE with a massive campaign led by Barsbāy himself that culminated in the siege of Diyarbakır between May 28 and July 2, 1433 CE.<sup>85</sup> During this siege, *qara* ʿUthmān retreated to the citadel of Ergani,<sup>86</sup> which guarded the most important mountain pass over the western Taurus linking the southern part of the Aqquyunlu realm around Diyarbakır to the earlier Aqquyunlu holdings to the north.<sup>87</sup> The Mamluk siege of Diyarbakır was subsequently lifted following an agreement between *qara* ʿUthmān and Barsbāy.<sup>88</sup> Although the main biographical source for the life of Mkrtičʿ Našaš gives only the year of the foundation of the church of Saint Mary (882 AE/1433 CE),<sup>89</sup> it seems likely that it took place during *qara* ʿUthmān’s retreat from Diyarbakır to Ergani between May 28 and July 2.

Beyond this plausible timeframe, however, it is much more difficult to identify and evaluate the roles of the actors involved in this highly visible performative act. Tentatively, I propose that the establishment of the church within the citadel of Ergani suggests that Mkrtičʿ Našaš accompanied the Aqquyunlu ruler and his administrative elite on their retreat from Diyarbakır to avoid the imminent Mamluk siege. This argument is premised on the assumption that had Mkrtičʿ Našaš instead remained in Diyarbakır, possibly to help organize the town’s defense, the church would have been established in Diyarbakır.<sup>90</sup> However, no extant source explicitly mentions where Mkrtičʿ Našaš was during the siege. Nevertheless, I believe it likely that Mkrtičʿ Našaš accompanied *qara* ʿUthmān on his retreat to Ergani, as his subsequent (re)foundation of a cathedral in Diyarbakır under *qara* ʿUthmān’s son Ḥamza clearly attests to his willingness to establish a substantial foundation in this town.

The synchronism that brought together *qara* ʿUthmān and Mkrtičʿ Našaš in the citadel of Ergani in the summer of 1433 CE and led to the foundation of the church of Saint Mary as a product of their joint agency can be traced back to a set of ambitions and concerns shared by the two figures. First, both likely regarded the citadel of Ergani as safely beyond the immediate reach of the invading Mamluk army while sufficiently close to the besieged regional center of Diyarbakır. Second, both probably chose Ergani as the site at which to wait out the Mamluk siege because it enabled the maintenance of clear lines of communication

84. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 3:473.

85. Woods, *Aqquyunlu*, 52; see also the eyewitness account of Ibn Taghrībirdī in *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, ed. F. M. Shaltūt et al. (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿĀmma li-Quṣūr al-Thaqāfa, 2008), 15:7–34, which is complemented by the contemporary Armenian description of the military conflict between *qara* ʿUthmān and Barsbāy penned in the 1430s CE at Derjki Anapat (located in today’s Güresin/Divriği/Sivas; see Thierry, *Répertoire*, 77) and edited in Polarean, *Cʿucʿak*, 9:402.

86. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 15:14.

87. See A. Schachner, *Assyriens Könige an einer der Quellen des Tigris* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 2009), 1–3, as well as the additional remarks by K. Radner in Schacher, *Assyriens Könige*, 200–201.

88. Woods, *Aqquyunlu*, 52.

89. Xaçʿikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:627.

90. That Christian inhabitants were expected to participate in the defense of Diyarbakır against a besieging army is implied by the account of the town’s occupation by *qara* ʿUthmān’s son Ḥamza contained in the Aqquyunlu court chronicle of Ṭihrānī, *Diyārbakriyya*, 136; see also the recent translation of this passage in Leube, *Relational Iconography*, 346.

and, if necessary, further retreat to regions beyond the Euphrates River that accepted their authority. Finally, the exceptional strength of Ergani's citadel must have made it equally attractive to the Aqquyunlu ruler and the Armenian bishop of Diyarbakır. According to the extensive version of his career, Mkrtič' Našaš subsequently used the newly established church of Saint Mary as a refuge for liberated Christian captives before sending them on their way.<sup>91</sup>

The foundation of the church of Saint Mary inside the citadel of Ergani thus manifested the overlapping interests of *qara* 'Uthmān and Mkrtič' Našaš during the Mamluk siege of Diyarbakır in 1433 CE. When the building inscription of the church was unveiled in the following year, both must have looked back on their joint retreat as marking a crucial stage in their parallel projects of establishing Diyarbakır as a regional center under their leadership. Possibly because the church was built outside Diyarbakır and its supraregional visibility, no opposition to this joint foundation is recorded in sources from the fifteenth century CE. This situation contrasts sharply with the circumstances of the next synchronism, when local and transregional opposition culminated in the demolition of the dome of the newly rebuilt cathedral of Diyarbakır.

### **Synchronism II: Ḥamza Aqquyunlu, Mkrtič' Našaš, and the Demolition of the Dome of the Cathedral of Diyarbakır, ca. 1444 CE**

In addition to establishing the church of Saint Mary at Ergani, Mkrtič' Našaš names the rebuilding of the cathedral in the metropolis of Diyarbakır (*surb kat' ulikēin or Yamit' mayrak'alak'*) as his main achievement in the note he wrote in 898 AE/1448–49 CE.<sup>92</sup> According to the note, he initiated the refoundation of the cathedral dedicated to Saint Theodore<sup>93</sup> in 888 AE (December 2, 1438–December 1, 1439 CE),<sup>94</sup> during the reign of *qara* 'Uthmān's son Ḥamza.

Some aspirations to greater autonomy within the Armenian church on Mkrtič' Našaš's part are arguably already reflected in a commemorative note written in Diyarbakır immediately after his arrival in 880 AE/1430–31 CE, “during the catholicate (*i hayrapetut'iwn*) of Lord Kostandin [VI] Vahkac'i and the incumbency in the town of Diyarbakır of Lord Mkrtič', the learned theologian (*astuacaban vardapeti*), the archbishop of the entirety of Mesopotamia, and the viceregent of the catholicos of the inhabitants of Armenia (*eresp'oxani kat'olikosi amenayn Hayastaneayc'*).”<sup>95</sup> However, the start of Mkrtič' Našaš's ambitious rebuilding project during the fair season of 1439 CE coincides with the incipient movement leading to the refoundation of the catholicate at Ējmiacin/Vaḷaršapat in 1441 CE.<sup>96</sup> Accordingly,

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91. See Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:626.

92. Ibid., 1:632; see also Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Našaš*, 187.

93. Both *surb T'oros* and *surb T'ēodoros* appear in this note; see Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:626 and 627.

94. *Sksani veranorogel* [. . .] *kat'ulikēn or Yamit' šahastani*; ibid., 1:627.

95. Ibid., 1:403; Sargsyan, “Mkrtič',” 108–9.

96. See the overview in Ōrmanean, *Hayoc' ekelec'in*, 105–10, as well as A. S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity* (London: Methuen, 1968), 334, and the discussion in D. Kouymjian, “Cilicia and Its Catholicosate from the Fall of the Armenian Kingdom to 1915,” in *Armenian Cilicia*, ed. R. H. Hovannisian and S. Payaslian, 297–308

the decision of Mkrtič' Nalaš to launch the highly visible reconstruction of a cathedral in Diyarbakır was probably motivated by a wish to secure greater autonomy within the Armenian ecclesiastical hierarchy in the transitory period between the death of Kostandin VI Vahkac'i and the subsequent reestablishment of the patriarchal see at Ējmiacin/Vaḷaršapat.

Within the political history of the Islamicate Middle East, the reestablishment of an Armenian catholicate at Ējmiacin/Vaḷaršapat in 1441 CE coincided with the stabilization of Timurid influence over western Iran during the final years of Shāhrukh's reign. Within his long-standing conflict with the Qaraqyunlu ruler Iskandar b. qara Yūsuf, the Timurid ruler Shāhrukh had appointed Iskandar's brother Jahānshāh to rule over Tabrīz and Ādharbāyjān in 839/1436 CE.<sup>97</sup> During Jahānshāh's rule, the Timurid armies were led by Shāhrukh's son Jūkī mīrzā.<sup>98</sup> After the failure of Iskandar's last attempt to challenge his brother,<sup>99</sup> Iskandar died in Dhū al-Qa'da 841/April–May 1438 CE while besieged by Jahānshāh's forces in the citadel of Alinjaq, contemporary Əlincə.<sup>100</sup> Album has shown that the consolidation of Jahānshāh's rule was manifested in the same year of 841/1438 CE in his issuance of coins in the name of his overlord Shāhrukh.<sup>101</sup> Against this background, the reestablishment of an Armenian catholicate in the upper Aras valley or Chukhur-i Sa'd at Ējmiacin/Vaḷaršapat in 1441 CE reflects the stabilization of Jahānshāh's control over this area after the capture of Alinjaq.

Following the death of Iskandar Qaraqyunlu in 1438 CE, which coincided with the passing of the Mamluk sultan Barsbāy in the same year, a gradual rapprochement between the great powers of the Timurids and the Mamluks consolidated the rule of Jahānshāh Qaraqyunlu from Tabrīz and that of Ḥamza Aqqyunlu from Diyarbakır.<sup>102</sup> As indicated by their minting of so-called *shāhrukhī* reformed *tankas*, which imply recognition of Timurid

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(Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2008), 299–303. Three short narratives describing the refoundation of the patriarchal see at Ējmiacin are edited in T'ovma, *Patmagrut'yun*, 218–75. It should be noted that Kostandin VI Vahkac'i already refers to himself as the catholicos of Vaḷaršapat in the Latin translation of the letters, dated July 25, 1438 CE, with which he appointed his delegation to the Council of Florence. See G. Hofmann, *Documenta Concilii Florentini de Unione Orientalium*, vol. 2, *De Unione Armenorum* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1935), 11 (*Constantinus servus servorum domini nostri Iesu Christi cum decore et honore et voluntate patriarcha super populum Armenorum patriarcha Vagarsabat*, dated July 25, 1438 CE) and 13 (*Constantinus servus servorum domoni nostri Iesu Christi cum gratia dei constitutus patriarcha Vagarsabat*). The reaction ascribed to the Byzantine emperor in the documents edited by Hofmann upon his hearing of the union between the Armenian and Latin churches (*ἀρεστόν ἐστι λίαν τὸ σπουδαζόμενον*, “better late than never”; Hofmann, *Documenta*, 17–18) deserves notice.

97. Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 248; Sümer, *Kara Koyunlular*, 134–37; and Aka, *Kara Koyunlular*, 24–25.

98. See Sümer, *Kara Koyunlular*, 134–37.

99. The most detailed reconstruction of the final campaign of Iskandar Qaraqyunlu is given in *ibid.*, 137–42.

100. See Ṭihirānī, *Diyārbakriyya*, 144–46. The date follows al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-Īmī' li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'*, ed. 'A. Ḥ. 'Abd al-Raḥmān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003), 2:250; see also the discussion of the date of Iskandar's death in Aka, *Kara Koyunlular*, 26.

101. See S. Album, *Checklist of Islamic Coins*, 3rd ed. (Santa Rosa, CA: Stephen Album Rare Coins, 2011), 269.

102. Cf. M. Dekkiche, “New Source, New Debate: Re-evaluation of the Mamluk-Timurid Struggle for Religious Supremacy in the Hijaz (Paris, BnF MS ar. 4440),” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 18 (2014–15): 247–71, at 253.

supremacy,<sup>103</sup> both Jahānshāh and Ḥamza should be considered exponents of Shāhrukh's hegemony, in spite of the ongoing challenges that Ḥamza faced from other Aqqyunlu contenders for supreme leadership.<sup>104</sup> Unfortunately for Mkrtič' Nalaš, this transregional rapprochement of Islamic rulers in Shāhrukh's shadow manifested itself in external pressure on Ḥamza Aqqyunlu to demolish the magnificently rebuilt Armenian Christian cathedral in Diyarbakır, which had been finished in 1443 CE after four years of work.<sup>105</sup> Although no extant source gives a precise date for this demolition, it likely occurred during the fair season of 1444 CE, after the rebuilt cathedral had become transregionally known and before the death of Ḥamza Aqqyunlu in late October 1444 CE.<sup>106</sup>

After praising the splendor of the rebuilt cathedral by noting that its cupola was higher than the minarets of the town's mosques,<sup>107</sup> the extensive narrative of Mkrtič' Nalaš's career reports: "The Christ-hating Muslims (*azgn Mahmetakank'*) [. . .] complained to the [Mamluk] sultan of Egypt (*sult'ann Egyptosi*), to the [Timurid] ruler of the Persians (*t'agaworn Parsic'*), and the [Ottoman] sultan of the Roman realms (*sult'ann Hořomac' tann*). [. . .] These sent envoys (*arak'ec'in*) to sultan Ḥamza to demolish the beautiful holy cathedral."<sup>108</sup> Capitulating to this pressure, Ḥamza ordered the demolition of the dome, and Mkrtič' Nalaš left Diyarbakır to go into exile. It is unclear how and why interpersonal networks within Ḥamza's realm conveyed discontent to external Muslim rulers. Nonetheless, the responsibility ascribed by this note to Muslim rulers outside the Aqqyunlu realm ruled by Ḥamza in effecting the demolition of the dome is corroborated by the unpublished and undated Arabic text of a diplomatic letter from the Mamluk ruler Jaqmaq to Shāhrukh's son Jūkī *mīrzā*.<sup>109</sup> The pertinent passages of this missive can be translated as follows:

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103. See the beautiful photograph of such *tankas* prominently displaying the name of the Timurid ruler Shāhrukh in Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 71.

104. For the internal Aqqyunlu power struggles, see Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 67–71. Notwithstanding the continuing challenges to Ḥamza's leadership reconstructed by Woods, the ambitious rebuilding program at the cathedral of Diyarbakır directed by Mkrtič' Nalaš indicates a fair degree of stability and prosperity under Ḥamza's rule. Similarly, the establishment of the now defunct Hamza Bey Mescidi in the area adjacent to the old citadel (*iç kale*) of Diyarbakır before its Ottoman enlargement in the early sixteenth century CE must be attributed to the period of Ḥamza's supreme rule over Diyarbakır and likewise attests to favorable conditions during his reign. For the former location of this mosque, see Parla, "Surları," 75. Its remains are not discernible in Gertrude Bell's photograph showing the view from the *kale höyük* to the southeast in 1909 (GB 3 1 14 1 82); the remains of the mosque may form part of a cluster of buildings visible on the right inside the Ottoman walls of the current *iç kale*.

105. The date of the work's completion is nowhere explicitly stated. The suggested year of 1443 CE is based on the information that the rebuilding began in the warm season of 1439 CE and Mkrtič' Nalaš spent four years (*d am*) on it; see Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE Dari*, 1:627. It is likely that the construction would have been concluded in the warm months, so perhaps in May or June 1443 CE.

106. See Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 71.

107. *Glux gmbet'in barjr ēr k'an zmnarayic'n*; Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:627.

108. *Ibid.*, 1:627–28.

109. For a collection of sample letters (*munsha'āt*) preserved in MS BnF ar. 4440 that also contains this missive, see the overview by F. Bauden, "Les relations diplomatiques entre les sultans mamlouks circassiens et les autres pouvoirs du Dār al-islām: L'apport du ms. ar. 4440 (BNF, Paris)," *Annales islamologiques* 41 (2007): 1–29, as well as the exemplary discussion of correspondence between the Mamluk court and the Qaraqyunlu

Regarding what your honor mentions concerning the proper mode of dealing with *amīr* Ḥamza Aqquyunlu (*maʿnā al-amīr Ḥamza*), and that it may be preferable to arrive at an understanding with him instead of opposing him [. . .], let us begin by informing your honor of the reason we became angry with him. [An exposition on Ḥamza’s injustice toward his subjects and his plundering of merchants and pilgrims traveling through his realm.] In addition, it came to our noble attention that he renewed a church in his town of Diyarbakır (*bi-madīnatihī Āmid*) that had been in ruins for a long time and rebuilt it [. . .] in a form better than the original. It is evident that the true belief (*islām*) of whoever supports such an undertaking is blemished. He must be severely reproached for this public favoring of the Christians (*iḥsānihī ilā al-naṣārā*) as regards the rebuilding of their churches (*ʿimārat kanāʾisihim*), as well as the disfavor shown to the Muslims in his rulings. [Jaqmaq nonetheless accepts the intercession of Jūkī *mīrzā* and agrees to forgive Ḥamza if Ḥamza repents.]<sup>110</sup>

Although the letter is preserved in an undated form, it must have been written in the period between the completion of the cathedral’s reconstruction in summer 1443 CE and Ḥamza’s death in October 1444 CE. Within this period, we must further allow for sufficient time for news of the rebuilt cathedral to spread beyond the Aqquyunlu realm and prompt opposition, as well as for Mkrtič’ Našaš to reach exile in Crimea after the demolition of the dome (see below) before being informed of Ḥamza’s passing.

From the text of the letter, it can be inferred that Jaqmaq was replying to a request from Jūkī *mīrzā* to reach an agreement with Ḥamza; this request, in turn, may have been made in response to an earlier missive from Jaqmaq expressing the discontent of the Mamluk sultan with the Aqquyunlu ruler at Diyarbakır. The Mamluk chronicles mention a delegation “from the children of Shāhrukh,” likely including Jūkī *mīrzā*, in Shaʿbān 846/December 1442 CE,<sup>111</sup> but this date precedes the likely completion of the rebuilding. It appears, then, that Jaqmaq’s response quoted above followed the favorable reception of Jūkī *mīrzā*’s delegation a year or two earlier and a subsequent request sent by the latter to Jaqmaq. Although no such letter is explicitly recorded by the Mamluk chronicles in early 1443 CE, Ibn Taghrībirdī notes the arrival of envoys from Jūkī *mīrzā*’s father Shāhrukh and Shāhrukh’s protégé Jahānshāh Qaraqyunlu in Cairo on Tuesday, Jumādā II 27, 847/October 22, 1443 CE.<sup>112</sup> As the rebuilding of the cathedral at Diyarbakır was likely concluded at this point, this embassy may also have delivered a missive from Jūkī *mīrzā* interceding on behalf of his

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in M. Dekkiche, “The Letter and Its Response: The Exchanges between the Qara Qoyunlu and the Mamluk Sultan; MS Arabe 4440 (BnF, Paris),” *Arabica* 63 (2016): 579–626.

110. MS BnF Ar. 4440, fol. 66r–66v.

111. See Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-duhūr fī madā al-ayyām wa-l-shuhūr*, ed. M. K. ʿIzz al-Dīn (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1990), 1:75, as well as Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr*, ed. M. Muṣṭafā (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1982–2008), 2:236. The account of Ibn Iyās appears to be based on the text of Ibn Taghrībirdī.

112. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith*, 1:95. The date is consistent with the day of the week indicated by Ibn Taghrībirdī.

brother-in-law Ḥamza Aqqyunlu,<sup>113</sup> prompting the abovementioned reply. According to this argument, the missive should be dated to early November 1443 CE, and it contributed to the demolition of the dome of the cathedral of Diyarbakır by Ḥamza Aqqyunlu at some point during the first half of 1444 CE.

In Mamluk Cairo, Jaqmaq's insistence that no new churches should be built is perhaps connected to an episode described in detail by Ibn Ḥajar and dated to Muḥarram 846/May–June 1442 CE, a bit more than a year before Jaqmaq composed his missive.<sup>114</sup> According to Ibn Ḥajar's account, a suspicion that several Christian churches and Jewish synagogues in Cairo had been built anew or rebuilt in a form more splendid than the original foundation led to the confiscation or reduced rebuilding of several houses of worship.<sup>115</sup> That Jaqmaq's letter had resonance in Mamluk Cairo is suggested by its inclusion in the collection of exemplary letters in which it has been preserved. Accordingly, it may be worth considering whether Jaqmaq's condemnation of Ḥamza's approval of the Diyarbakır cathedral's reconstruction was at least in part directed at an internal audience of Muslim elites and networks in Cairo who remembered the earlier controversy described in detail by Ibn Ḥajar.

Although the Aqqyunlu court chronicle of Ṭihrānī, written for Ḥamza's nephew *uzun* Ḥasan, contains a very disparaging account of Ḥamza's rule in Diyarbakır that claims that he consistently showed favor to Christians and disfavor to the Muslim inhabitants of the town,<sup>116</sup> Ṭihrānī does not mention the rebuilding of the cathedral. This omission may well reflect the continued visibility of the cathedral during *uzun* Ḥasan's rule over Diyarbakır following its rebuilding during the incumbency of his brother Jahāngīr in 1447 CE, discussed in detail below. By contrast, the Ottoman hagiographic history of Ibrāhīm Gulshanī includes the building of Christian churches prominently among the ill deeds of Ḥamza Aqqyunlu and contrasts Ḥamza's injustice with the enforcement of Islamic normativity by the first Ottoman governor of Diyarbakır, *bıyıqlı* or *fātiḥ* Muḥammad *pāshā*, who demolished the cathedral to build the mosque known as the Kurşunlu Camii in its location:<sup>117</sup>

At this time, the infidels (*kāfirler*) constructed one or two pretentious churches (*bir iki ʿālī kilisālar yapırlar*), in which they assembled constantly, giving him [Ḥamza] large amounts of money on every occasion. [. . . By contrast, *bıyıqlı* Muḥammad] refused to flatter the infidels by accepting their money, and fighting back against the pride of the infidels (*anf al-kuffār*), he remade this church into a splendid mosque. “This is the true guidance of God, by which He leads whom He wants!” [Qurʾān 6:88].<sup>118</sup>

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113. For the marriage of Jūki *mīrzā* to a daughter of *qara* ʿUthmān, see Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 62.

114. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 4:196–98.

115. *Ibid.*.

116. Ṭihrānī, *Diyārbakriyya*, 136–37; see also the translation and contextualization in Leube, *Relational Iconography*, 346–48.

117. For the demolition of the cathedral of Diyarbakır in 1518 CE under *bıyıqlı* Muḥammad, see C. Maranci, “The Art and Architecture of Amida (Diarbekir) and Edessa (Urfa),” in *Armenian Tigranakert/Diarbekir and Edessa/Urfa*, ed. R. G. Hovannisian, 165–89 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2006), 170–71.

118. Gulshanī, *Manāqib*, 14.

Although the suggestion that the (Armenian) Christians of Diyarbakır paid large amounts of money to Ḥamza to facilitate the rebuilding of the cathedral resonates with the account of Mkrtič' Našaš's career,<sup>119</sup> it may well be rooted in a shared understanding of how the patronage of rulers could be obtained by non-Muslims in the preindustrial Islamic Middle East. In any case, the demolition of the dome of the rebuilt cathedral of Diyarbakır demonstrates that the transregional consolidation of Shāhrukh's hegemony restricted the possibilities for performative and specifically Christian self-representation available to Mkrtič' Našaš.

All extant sources agree in framing the conflict as one between (Armenian) Christians and Muslims. However, the setback to Mkrtič' Našaš's ambitions to establish Diyarbakır as a supraregional center within the Armenian Christian world might also be connected to the consolidation of Armenian ecclesiastical hierarchies after the transitory period that culminated in the reestablishment of the patriarchate at Ējmiacin/Vaḥaršapat in 1441 CE. From this perspective, the performative reversal of Mkrtič' Našaš's ambitious (re)building project in 1444 CE manifested the subalternity of Diyarbakır both within the Armenian Christian hierarchy and among the Persophone rulerly elites subordinate to Shāhrukh during the final years of his reign.

### Synchronism III: Jahāngīr Aqquyunlu and the Rebuilding of the Cathedral in 1447 CE

According to the extensive Armenian account of the career of Mkrtič' Našaš, he went into exile when Ḥamza ordered the demolition of the dome of the cathedral of Diyarbakır.<sup>120</sup> The destinations named in the account, Kaffa/Feodosiâ and Istanbul (*i Kafay ew Ystampōl*), should probably be understood as an inclusive designation for travels across the Black Sea region. The narrative goes on to report that after Ḥamza's death in late October 1444 CE,<sup>121</sup> Ḥamza's nephew and successor Jahāngīr facilitated Mkrtič' Našaš's return to Diyarbakır.<sup>122</sup> If, as the Aqquyunlu court chronicle of Ṭihrānī claims, Jahāngīr's succession occurred against the wishes of his uncle,<sup>123</sup> his return invitation to Mkrtič' Našaš was likely intended to support the consolidation of his rule.

Mkrtič' Našaš reportedly offered the considerable sum of 3,000 *tanka* to the Muslim power brokers of Diyarbakır (*paronac'n ew mecamecac'n*) and succeeded in having the dome reconstructed in the remarkably short time of only ten days; the work was completed on August 6, 896/1447 CE.<sup>124</sup> Although the Armenian text highlights the role of the local Armenian Christian elite in facilitating the rebuilding,<sup>125</sup> we subsequently learn that Mkrtič'

119. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:626–28. For “building permits” granted to Christian elites by Turkmen rulers in exchange for money, see the comprehensive discussion in Carlson, *Christianity*, 63–68.

120. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:628.

121. For the date, see Woods, *Aqquyunlu*, 71.

122. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:628.

123. Ṭihrānī, *Diyārbakriyya*, 168–70.

124. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:628–29. Although the text suggests that the work was completed on a Monday (*erkušabt'i*), the day in question was in fact a Sunday.

125. Among those named as contributing decisively to the rebuilding are two goldsmiths, one of whom is

Našaš had brought with him considerable funds and valuable artifacts, which he had obtained during his sojourn in Kaffa/Feodosiâ.<sup>126</sup> In this context, it is highly significant that his contact in Crimea, described as “the great *vardapet* Sargis” (*mec vardapetn Sargis*),<sup>127</sup> is the same *vardapet* Sargis from Kaffa/Feodosiâ who had served as the main negotiator for the union between the Armenian church and the pope declared at the Council of Florence in 1438 CE.<sup>128</sup> In the Latin translation of the July 25, 1438 CE, letter in which the Armenian patriarch Kostandin VI appoints his delegation to the pope, this Sargis is explicitly named as the patriarch’s plenipotentiary.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, the performative self-representation of Diyarbakır’s urban Christian Armenian elite as facilitating the rebuilding of the cathedral intersected with external support granted to Mkrtič' Našaš by Uniate power brokers within the Armenian church. Although we know that Mkrtič' Našaš authored a theological treatise that underlines the differences between the respective teachings of the Armenian and Latin churches,<sup>130</sup> it may be wise not to overstate the stability of inner-Armenian doctrinal boundaries in the decade following the Council of Florence in 1438 CE and the reestablishment of the patriarchate at Ējmiacin/Vašaršapat.<sup>131</sup> In any case, Mkrtič' Našaš’s acquisition of significant capital from Uniate figures in Crimea should be interpreted as indicating his continued ambition for an independent and somewhat autonomous role within the Armenian ecclesiastical hierarchy of eastern Anatolia.

Within the political history of the “Persophonie,” Jahāngīr’s permission to rebuild the cathedral in August 1447 CE must be understood in the context of the deterioration of Timurid hegemony over western Iran after the death of Shāhrukh in March 1447 CE.<sup>132</sup>

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described as “viceregent and commander” (*or ēr eres'oxan ew hramanatar*), and one locksmith (*darbin*).

126. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:629–30.

127. *Ibid.*, 1:629.

128. For the identities of the Armenian envoys to the Council of Florence, see S. Obertyński, *Die florentiner Union der polnischen Armenier und ihr Bischofskatalog* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1934), 10. See also Atiya, *History*, 334, and G. Alberigo et al., *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000), 2:534–59. This Sargis may also be identical to the Sargis *k'ahanay* who is included in an intercessory list inscribed in a Xaç'k'ar at Kaffa/Feodosiâ that is dated to August 8, 874 AE/1425 CE; see the edition of this inscription in G. M. Grigoryan, *Divan Hay vimagrut'yan VII: Ukraina, Moldova* (Erevan: HH GAA Gitut'yun Hratarakčut'yun, 1996), 34. See also his recurring mention in commemorative notes in the index to Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:781, s.v. “Sargis 79.”

129. *Cum plenaria nostra potentate dedi Sarkis Vertebebet, quid est, erit loco personae meae [. . . sequuntur alii], ut eant ad synodum*; Hofmann, *Documenta*, 13.

130. See the edition in Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Našaš*, 192–97; the partial edition in Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:464–65; the *descriptio princeps* in Hovsep'yan, “Mkrtič',” *passim*; and the recent analysis in Sargsyan, “Mkrtič',” *passim*. For a recent Armenian theological appraisal of the Uniate decree issued at the Council of Florence, see A. Manukean, “Hay ew hromēakan kat'olik ekefec'ineru miut'eān verjīn p'orzə Florentioy mēj ew 'Decretum pro Armenis' kam 'hrahāng ar Hays' kondakə,” in *Sen Arevšatyan* 90, 58–94 (Erevan: Matenadaran, 2020).

131. The open acknowledgment of Sargis’s support of Mkrtič' Našaš in the account of the latter’s career demonstrates that collaboration with individuals who would in hindsight be clearly identifiable as proponents of the union between the Armenian and Latin churches was uncontroversial in Diyarbakır in the second half of the 1440s CE.

132. See Woods, *Aqquyunlu*, 73.

According to Woods, Jahāngīr subsequently decided to grant asylum to the Qaraqyunlu contender Alwand b. Iskandar after Alwand's abortive revolt against his uncle Jahānshāh in early 1448 CE.<sup>133</sup> Jahāngīr's facilitation of the cathedral's reconstruction thus complemented his commission of another building project, likely directed at strengthening the town walls near the pre-Ottoman citadel (*iç kale*) and commemorated in a fragmentarily preserved inscription from 853/1449 CE.<sup>134</sup> Taken together, these two available glimpses of architectural patronage in Diyarbakır during the early reign of Jahāngīr Aqqyunlu point to a comprehensive program aimed at garnering the support of the urban elites while preparing the fortifications of the town for the imminent conflict with Jahānshāh.

### **Outlook and Conclusion: The Invasion of Jahānshāh as a Cataclysm in the Early Aqqyunlu History of Diyarbakır**

After occupying the formerly Aqqyunlu town of Erzincan in 1450 CE, Jahānshāh Qaraqyunlu dispatched an army led by Rustam b. Tarkhān to the southern part of the Aqqyunlu realm established by *qara* ʿUthmān.<sup>135</sup> The ensuing collapse of social order around Diyarbakır, Mardin, and Urfa is remembered vividly in several Armenian historiographical accounts.<sup>136</sup> A tantalizing note by a certain Davit' of Mardin suggests that Mkrtič' Nalaš's son Mesrop died during a pitched battle between Aqqyunlu and Qaraqyunlu troops that was fought under the walls of Diyarbakır.<sup>137</sup> Consequently, the splendor of the period that followed the return of Mkrtič' Nalaš and the rebuilding of his cathedral, commemorated in the notes written about and by him in 898 AE/1448–49 CE,<sup>138</sup> contrasts sharply with subsequent ruin. The devastation of the southern part of the Aqqyunlu realm coincides not only with the death of Mkrtič' Nalaš's son but also with the obscurity of the second half of Mkrtič' Nalaš's tenure in Diyarbakır. Although *uzun* Ḥasan eventually reconsolidated Aqqyunlu rule, his conquest of the Qaraqyunlu territory centered on Tabrīz in 1467–69 CE irreversibly marginalized Diyarbakır as a supraregional capital. Within the Armenian church, the city's subordination was then manifested in the early Ottoman demolition of Mkrtič' Nalaš's glorious cathedral and the foundation of a mosque in its former location by the local governor, *bıyıqlı* Muḥammad, in the 1520s CE.

133. *Ibid.*, 74. Alwand's flight to the area around Lake Van is incidentally described by Mkrtič' Nalaš himself in a commemorative note edited in Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Nalaš*, 187–91, at 190.

134. The two extant fragments of the inscription originally likely displayed near the pre-Ottoman citadel that can be attributed to the patronage of Jahāngīr Aqqyunlu display the date of 853 and the name of Jahāngīr together with some of his titles. They are today found on the inner face of the northern town walls facing Karaman Sokak, adjacent to the citadel. I am currently preparing a full edition of both fragments.

135. See Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 74–75.

136. In addition to the eyewitness account of Davit' of Mardin, discussed below, see, for example, the anonymous short historiography edited in Hakobyan, *Žamanakagrut'yunner*, 1:167–73, at 167–68, and the note written in Harput (Xarberd) in 902 AE (November 28, 1452–November 27, 1453 CE) by Davit' *episkopos*, edited in Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 2:30–31.

137. Hakobyan, *Žamanakagrut'yunner*, 2:210. Note that Mesrop is described as a priest (*ērēc'*) by Davit' of Mardin, and this description is corroborated by the narrative edited in Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE Dari*, 1:630–31. It is unclear how he came to die in the midst of a battle without serving in one of the two Turkmen armies.

138. Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari*, 1:622–31, 632.

My recounting of the history of Diyarbakır during the seventeen years between 1433 and 1450 CE as structured by synchronisms linking Mkrtič' Nalaš to the Aqqyunlu rulers *qara* ʿUthmān, Ḥamza, and Jahāngīr demonstrates that we must see Persophone etatist and Armenian clerical trajectories as entangled. As noted in the introduction, my approach methodically avoids attributing primacy to any specific individuals in specific situations wherever such primacy is not explicitly indicated by our sources. This policy is motivated by the hope that the reconstruction of synchronisms between Armenian and Aqqyunlu history in and around Diyarbakır enables us to continue “reading one into the other.” Accordingly, the present article consciously attempts to understand the etatist trajectories of Islamicate state formation in the first half of the fifteenth century CE as multidirectional and open-ended. These multidirectional processes of state formation are manifest in the performative engagement of Aqqyunlu rulers and Armenian clerical elites in architectural patronage.

This approach does not deny the importance of analyzing how Aqqyunlu sultans interacted with Armenian clerical elites or how Mkrtič' Nalaš navigated successive stages of Aqqyunlu history. But both sides of this entanglement should arguably be seen as embedded in a multidirectional and gradual process of consolidating an “etatist social infrastructure” that was driven jointly by a variety of actors and interpersonal networks. I sincerely hope that the present article contributes to the ongoing rediscovery of this and similar entanglements, which counteract the seductive explanatory power of monocausal and ideological simplifications in the name of nation, linguistic identity, or religion.

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