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OLGA COJOCARU
TAMTA MELASHVILI
ANNA OHANJANYAN
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Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

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New Europe College

Str. Plantelor 21

023971 Bucharest

Romania

www.nec.ro; e-mail: nec@nec.ro

Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10



ANNA OHANJANYAN

Born in 1979, in Yerevan

Ph.D., Institute of Archeology and Ethnography of NASA, 2011

Thesis: *The Manuscript "Key of Truth" and Its Historiographical Significance*

Senior Researcher, Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts "Matenadaran"

Fellowships

The Southern Caucasus and its Neighbours, cc. 300–1600, CEU,

Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies, 2011- 2015

Armenian Scientific Committee, 2013-2015

Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS), CEU, 2013

ERC project OTTOCONFESSION, CEU, CEMS, 2016-2018

Participated in international conferences, workshops and symposia in Armenia, Austria, Brasil, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Russia, United States

Author of twenty seven articles and essays in Historical and Philosophical Theology, History of Confessions, Religious Studies, Codicology

Book

The Book 'Key of Truth': Theological and Historic-Philological Analyses,
(Yerevan: Yerevan State University Publishing House, 2015)

NARRATIVES OF THE ARMENIAN POLEMICS WITH THE MUSLIMS FROM THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

Abstract

The Armenian polemical literature from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries proliferated in relation to the surge of confessional consciousness within the Armenian communities under the Ottoman and Safavid rule. Early Modern inter- and cross-confessional debates on the orthodoxy shaped the broad context in which polemics with the Muslims have to be placed. The scarcity of anti-Islamic texts in the Armenian manuscript heritage compared to the abundant extant anti-Catholic polemical material has laid grounds for the assumption that Armenians were not interested in the religion of the rulers in the confessional age regardless of the fact, that the heuristic potential of the age enhanced the necessity of learning through questioning and answering. Drawing upon manuscript material this paper analyzes broader socio-historical context the polemics with the Muslims transpired within. It examines the switch in debated topics, argumentations, vocabulary and language to reveal the dialogic and heuristic aspects of anti-Muslim Armenian polemics in the age of confessions.

Keywords: polemic dialogue, Armenian anti-Muslim polemics, heuristic, confessionalization, non-knowledge, orthodoxy, cross-confessional, inter-religious, Yovhannēs Mrk'uz, Step'anos Daštec'i.

Introduction

The study of the Armenian polemics with the Muslims as inter-religious debates on faith and communal norms in Early Modern era is to be placed within the multi-confessional and multi-religious context of the period. Inter-religious polemics with both the Muslims and Jews came second after the inter-confessional and cross-confessional debates central to the Armenian communal life of the period due to the spread of Global Catholicism.

When mapping Armenian polemical literature with the Muslims from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one discovers its conspicuous scarcity compared to the prevailing quantity of polemics with the Catholic papists. The digital database I have been building in the course of the last three years¹ reveals that, out of the four hundred polemical pieces listed, only three individual solid treatises were composed to polemicise with the Shiite Muslims, to which I will return in later pages. Other than that, there are small passages or anecdotal narratives preserved in various unpublished books of questions,² vernacular literature, historiographic accounts and in what might be called a major source of bottom-up polemics—the new martyrologies.³

Another striking fact is the lacuna in scholarship. Little is said and published on the subject. Recent interest in Christian-Muslim relations among Ottoman and Safavid history scholars led to the publication and translation of a handful of new martyrological narratives. However, the most important sources remained unstudied, probably because of their pure theological character. Scholars have mostly focused on the polemicists relying solely on bio-bibliographical notes and steering clear of the analysis of polemical aspects of the treatises per se. On the other hand, some better studied texts by Soviet Armenian scholars were not decently contextualised.

The idea to resort to the polemical literature of the Early Modern period with the intention to reconstruct possible inter-religious debates was provoked by a statement in a book on Medieval Armenian polemical texts against the Muslims composed up to the beginning of the fifteenth century. It reads “even after the Middle Ages no new material was added to the Cycle [of Muhammad’s life —A.O.], no interest was detected in learning about the religion of the rulers, who were now the Ottoman Turks, the Persians, Arabs and Kurds.”⁴ Such a general understanding of Early Modern communal modes in the Ottoman and Safavid context prompted me to once again delve into the manuscript heritage in search of proof that regardless of the scarcity of material the Armenians did show interest in Islam in the Early Modern era and not only recycled Medieval anecdotes about prophet Muhammed’s life and deeds, but also composed individual pieces informed by the social discourse in a multi-religious and multi-confessional environment.

The study of the corpus of polemical texts with Muslims in Armenian and Armeno-Turkish allows us to understand the relatively small number of sources, to explain the context in which they were produced as well

as to show what was new in the polemics with the Muslims in the Early Modern era and whether it was geared towards the new conditions of cohabitation. It also enables us to find out whether and how Armenian Mediaeval polemical writings influenced the later texts in terms of topics and vocabulary through the examination of the social and political contexts and disputed themes between the Muslims and Christians. To this end, it is important to illustrate the twofold geo-political settings in which polemical literature from the given period was produced.

Historical Context of Polemics with the Muslims

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Armenian communities throughout Anatolia and the Armenian plateau came under the rule of two Islamic empires, Ottoman and Safavid. After the forced resettlement of Armenians to Persia by Shah Abbas I (1587-1629) in 1604 and the division of Armenia into Western (Ottoman) and Eastern (Safavid) parts by the bilateral agreement of 1638, Constantinople with its powerful Armenian Patriarchate and well-connected *beau monde* in the Ottoman Empire and New Julfa near Isfahan in Safavid Iran with its splendid All Saviour's monastery, printing mill and wealthy merchants, gradually became key centres for the cultural and religious life of the Armenians and set the tone for the intellectual discourse of the period, to which polemics was central.⁵ The spiritual and administrative centre of the Armenian Miaphysite (non-Chalcedonic) Church was Echmiadzin near Yerevan accommodating the throne of the supreme hierarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church, who was the ultimate decision-maker on ecclesiastical and diplomatic matters.

Given the new geo-political and socio-religious situation, the ecclesiastical life of the Armenian Church in the Ottoman and Safavid realms was run in different ways and under totally different conditions. But no matter what, it was those three cities that became central to the proliferation of confessional literature in general and inter-confessional Armenian polemical pieces in particular.

The scarcity of written polemics with the Muslims in Safavid Persia and its total absence in the Ottoman environment has to be further discussed within the given geo-political context. One should also bear in mind the broader intra-Christian confession-building strategies of the time aiming at shaping strong confessional identities through social disciplining. As

U. Lotz-Heumann argued,⁶ confessionalist strategies among Christians after the emergence of Protestantism and the Counterreformation, had affected literary genres, pieces and their authors across Europe and beyond its boundaries, whereas a parallel process coined by T. Kritic⁷ and D. Terzioglu⁸ as “sunnitization” in the Ottoman Empire was targeted at the formation of the Sunni identity as well as the reshaping of Sunni orthodoxy through the indoctrination of Muslim population. “Sunnitization” might have resulted in censorship of literary works limiting the publication activities of the Ottoman Christian subjects. In virtue of this, while literary polemics with the representatives of other confessions flourished among Armenians, the composition of polemical treatises against Sunni Muslims proved to be unfeasible. For the same reasons disputations with the Muslims in the courts (*mejlis*) and squares (*maydan*) specific to previous centuries were no longer practiced in the Ottoman lands. It seems that the delineation of the boundaries of Shiism transpired in the Safavid realm in the face of Sunni rivals, however, in contrast to Ottomans, the form of public polemics survived in Isfahan and other Persian cities. It was visible predominantly in the debates with the Catholic missionaries—the luminaries from the West, which was not always possible to pursue when it came to the Shah’s Christian subjects, such as Armenians.

The scarcity of polemical literature with the Muslims in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries might be linked as well to the shift in perceptions of the image of the “enemy.” Not that the Muslims, both Shiite and Sunni, ceased to be considered as major enemies. On the contrary, the contemporary Armenian historiographers painted the violent and unjust attitude of the Sunni towards Ottoman non-Muslim subjects in all possible blinks, as found in Eremia Çelebi K’ēōmiwrčean’s (1637-1695) unpublished *Guile of Spite of the Tačiks towards the Christians*⁹, where he provides detailed descriptions of communal modes of engagement with Sunni Muslims. In spite of his full integration into the Ottoman society, his connections with the Ottoman administrative elite and efforts to steer clear of from the critics of Islam, Eremia Çelebi reflected on the everyday harsh conflicts between the Armenians, Greeks, Syrians on the one hand and Sunni Muslims on the other, resulting in bloodshed, new martyrdoms and detention of the Christians.¹⁰ His writing might be taken as a manual for the Armenians on how to avoid conversion to Islam on a quotidian basis by the hands of the most dangerous and cunning “enemy.”¹¹ The major shift in the perception of the image of the “enemy,” at least on the level of written polemics, occurred when the Armenians encountered

the engulfing march of the agents of Global Catholicism. First encounters with the Tridentine missionaries happened as early as 1602, when the Augustinians from Goa, sponsored by Portuguese *Padroado*, visited the Eastern part of Armenia, later in 1607, accompanied by the Discalced Carmelites' mission, in 1628 by the Capuchins, in 1647 by the Jesuits, dispatched to those lands to convert Muslims and Oriental Christians, though with little success, if not total failure.¹²

In Ottoman lands, particularly in Constantinople, Catholic intrusion into the internal affairs of the Armenian Church was postponed for several decades. The establishment of *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* in 1622 and the launch of Urbanian College in 1627, gradually changed confessional dynamics within Armenian communities in Constantinople and Lviv. The forceful conversion of the Armenian Apostolic community of Lviv to Catholicism in the course of 1630-1689,¹³ pushed the spiritual centre of the Armenian Church to switch from the strategy of "good correspondence" to a more confessionalist one. Accommodationist strategies of Jesuit missionaries¹⁴ resulted in the formation of a community of Catholic Armenians (*aktarma*), participating in common worship and sacraments of the Armenian Apostolic Church.¹⁵ The tension between the Armenians and Catholic converts in the Ottoman Empire escalated when in 1695 Sultan Mustafa II (1695-1703) issued an Edict limiting the missionaries' presence in the Empire and warning Ottoman Christian subjects against conversion to the Catholic faith on the pain of execution.¹⁶ This situation served as an impetus for redefining the boundaries of the Armenian faith in the Early Modern period, meanwhile switching the vectors of polemics from the "religious others" towards "confessional others." It further brought about polemical prioritisation gravitating in the direction of "interior enemy", that is converted Catholic Armenians. Such a polemical polarisation put literary polemics with the Sunni Muslims into perspective, instead triggering the proliferation of anti-Catholic literary polemics to the fullest.

Reference of "Non-knowledge" to the anti-Muslim Armenian Polemical Tradition

To conceptualize the alleged "lack of interest" of the Armenians in learning about the religion of the rulers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries one should enquire about what was the knowledge of someone's

faith in the age of confessions. In his recent research Cornel Zwielerlein pointed to the “knowledge gaps” in confessional age due to ignorance in communication.¹⁷ He further developed the theory of “non-knowledge” that could be applied also to the literary polemics from the period in question. According to Zwielerlein, general knowledge about confessional differences, such as the schism between East and West was common, whereas if one had to ask the representatives of the respective confessions about each other’s doctrinal peculiarities or theological developments, in fact one would discover a great deal of ignorance. Although the ecclesiastical tradition was uninterrupted, the “non-knowledge” of peculiarities of each other’s confessional tradition was in virtue of the lack of communication and exchange on particular topics and ignorance of the theological and apologetical sources those traditions were anchored on. However, the uniqueness of the confessional age was in its huge heuristic potential, meaning that the confessional age actually enhanced contact and exchange between the representatives of different confessions and religions. It stimulated curiosity towards the peculiarities of each other’s faith to be learned through questioning and answering for the sake of the delineation of the boundaries of their own doctrine.¹⁸

The suggested concept of “non-knowledge” might be applicable also to the anti-Muslim Armenian literary polemics. The “non-knowledge” of the Islamic faith had already been reflected in the fourteenth-century heresiological treatise by Peter of Aragona translated from Latin into Armenian within the Armenian-Dominican circles. Peter of Aragona fused his anti-Muslim accusations with those anti-Jewish: it was a common practice in the Medieval West to associate Islamic “errors” with Judaic ones based on their common semitic origin and monotheistic views.¹⁹ Peter wrote that “those who dishonour God with their erroneous worship are the Jews, Muslims and heretics” and Muslims erred the same way as Jews and heretics did.²⁰

In reference to the seventeenth century, a good example of “non-knowledge” of Islamic apologetics is *Praecipuae Objectiones* written in the form of questions and answers in 1679 by a polyglot Capuchin missionary to Levant, Justinien de Neuvy (Michael Febvre).²¹ The book was translated into Arabic and Armenian.²² On its pages the author responds to the objections of Muslims, Jews, Armenian and Syriac “heretics.” Interestingly, Justinien responds to his imaginary Muslim opponents’ objections on the Christian faith in a manner that reveals his limited views on both Islam and Muslims’ knowledge of Christianity.²³ Bernard

Heyberger states that “missionaries were themselves ignorant of Muslim theological and apologetic literature and were unable to put in the mouths of their imaginary rival any sophisticated arguments”.²⁴ Even in actual conversations with the Muslims on the matter of faith, they were unable “to go beyond traditional Christian argumentations against Mahomet and his prophecy”.²⁵ Hence, cliché argumentations against the Muslims and their views about Christianity were copied and distributed throughout the missionary polemical literature.

In this respect, it is important to mention that the seventeenth-century Armenian polemicists possessed knowledge on Islam. The so-called Cycle of Muhammads life and deeds based on Garshuni text was instrumental in medieval polemics against the Muslims.²⁶ Its vernacular variants were introduced into the seventeenth century, although with little success among the intellectuals.²⁷ The Medieval Armenian *canon* of polemics against the Muslims stuffed with traditional Christian argumentations as well as arguments informed by the local Armenian context seemed to become outdated in the eyes of the late seventeenth-century polemicists. Although in use, those texts failed to correspond to the new context of Early Modern era and communal modes of cohabitation with the Ottoman Turks and Safavid Persians. Hence, a rethought polemical vocabulary and argumentation informed by the multi-religious social fabric in given twofold geopolitical settings had to be shaped with the focus on dialogic forms of polemics with the Muslim rulers.

Medieval Polemical Canon against the Muslims versus Early Modern Polemic Dialogues

The standard of Medieval Armenian anti-Muslim literature had been drawn by the late fourteenth-century prominent scholastic theologian, archimandrite Grigor Tat'ewac'i (1345-1409).²⁸ In the chapter *Against the Tačiks* of his seminal treatise titled *Book of Questions*,²⁹ Grigor Tat'ewac'i polemicalised with the Muslims in sixteen clauses employing traditional Christian argumentations in his refutations of Islam predominantly when it came to the Holy Trinity (Kutsal Üçlülük) and the problems of theodicy. According to Tat'ewac'i, the Muslims erred in relation to Christianity with the following clauses: 1. Denying the Trinity; 2. Considering God the Origin of both Good and Evil; 3. Rejecting the Incarnation of Logos and Considering Christ a Prophet; 4. Rejecting Christ's Divinity (he is a

human and a prophet); 5. Rejecting the Holy Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments; 6. Considering a certain Man (i.e. Muhammad) a Prophet; 7. Considering the Resurrection Corporeal; 8. Considering the Mortality of angels and human soul; 9. Despising and dishonouring the cross and icons and the Armenian practice of worshipping the Sun of Justice; 10. Indiscriminately Eating the Flesh of Contaminated Animals; 11. Forbidding Wine as *haram* (i.e. forbidden); 12. Considering Washing with Water for Purification of Sins; 13. Despising Armenians for not Being Circumcised; 14. Refusing to Apply the Fast of both the Old and New Laws; 15. Refusing the meat of Animals Slaughtered by Armenians; 16. Considering Armenians Infidels while Being such Themselves.³⁰

Against the Tačiks is composed in the form of questions and answers targeted at the monks of the prominent Tat'ew monastery in Siwnik', in the southern region of Armenia Proper.³¹ Tat'ewac'i's interlocutor is the learned Armenian Apostolic faithful in general, which becomes clear from the lines about the debate on the usefulness of wine. "If you are asked by unlearned or violent Muslims whether wine is halal or haram, reply briefly, 'For us—halal, for you—haram.'"³² Sergio La Porta has pointed to the impact of Latin polemical sources on Tat'ewac'i's *Book of Question* while analysing its anti-Jewish passages.³³ In fact, Latin sources were intensively translated by the representatives of the Latinizing school of Křna in Naxiřevan in the fourteenth century, such as Peter of Aragona and Bartholomew of Bologna. In spite of the integration of cliché argumentations, peculiar to the Medieval Latin polemical genre, a number of polemical passages of Tat'ewac'i's anti-Muslim piece were informed by local socio-religious context and forms of coexistence with contemporary Muslims. The major strategic improvement in his polemics against the Muslims is their intentional segregation from the Jews. Muslims for Tat'ewac'i are neither Judaeans, nor Christians, but rather heathens or neopagans, because Muslim circumcision is at odds with both Jewish circumcision and Christian baptism. Regardless of their common semitic and monotheistic grounds the Jews and Muslims should have fallen into separate categories.

Tat'ewac'i's *Against the Tačiks* became the Medieval *canon* of polemics against the Muslims partly reiterated by his famous pupil Matt'eos řulayec'i (d. 1420) in the book titled *Some Responses to the Questions of Infidels*.³⁴ *Against the Tačiks* cropped up in diverse vernacular miscellanea from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. Just like the anecdotal narratives about Muhammad's life, this chapter was left out of more serious anti-Muslim

Armenian polemical writings of the Early Modern period. The relative distantiation from the Medieval *canon* and argumentations for the polemics against the Muslims was conditioned with the set of new questions rising from the Early Modern patterns of living in diversity, that were to be articulated through rethought vocabulary and genres. In this regard, the polemical fashion gravitated towards dialogic forms. The early modern tendency to make polemics more practical served multiple needs and targeted multiple audiences.³⁵ Hence, in line with the spirit of era, the Armenian written polemics with the Muslims acquired conversational shape growing into polemic dialogues.

Polemic dialogues had long become a popular genre for the missionary literature of the seventeenth-century Catholic Church. In the majority of cases they served didactic needs in making sophisticated theological disputes digestible for the readership. Bernard Heyberger argued that missionary polemic dialogues followed the so-called *common habitus approach*,³⁶ meaning that the rival conversant of a Christian missionary had to be an exceptionally educated Muslim sharing the same level of intellectual potential and social status with that of the Western luminaries. It seemed to be an extremely elitist, but to some extent justified approach, taking into account the specifics of the theological debates missionaries had to carry out.

In the Armenian context, the approach of *common habitus* could be detected in the polemics of the seventeenth-century Dominican friar Paolo Piromalli (1592-1667), a missionary to Persia sponsored by the Roman Curia, whose initial goal was to organise a treaty of the Armenian Church with Rome. Piromalli was called to the court in Isfahan in 1647 to participate in a religious debate with grand vizier Khalifa Sultan (d. 1654).³⁷ He boasted to be invited by Shah Abbas II himself “to be interrogated about the Christian faith.”³⁸ Missionaries always felt superiority over Orientals, even the Shah or grand vizier. Based on his conversation with Khalifa Sultan, in 1651 Piromalli composed a polemical treatise in Persian³⁹ titled *On the Veracity of Christian Faith [to Shah Abbas II]; or To the Persian King Shah Abbas*.⁴⁰ Piromalli’s visit to the court not only testifies to the *common habitus* approach, but demonstrates the uninterruptedness of the custom of public intellectual debates in the Safavid Shiite environment, that was less common in the Ottoman realm.

The undetectability of the traces of public intellectual debates with the Sunni Muslims does not necessarily denote the complete impossibility of intellectual exchange between the Armenian and Ottoman representatives

on the matters of belief. Allusions to intellectual exchanges between the representatives of the respective religions might be found in versified theological texts, where the names of interlocutors were codified in the acrostics or marginal notes. A versified confession of faith by Suk'ias P'rusac'i (d.ca. 1707), the most learned, ambiguous and ambitious bishop of his time, gives away the name of Suk'ias' addressee in an acrostic as follows: "O, my beloved Ğendi Zade Nimetullah Č'elēbi, accept these words from Suk'ias".⁴¹ This apologetical poem introduces the basics of the Christian faith, intentionally laying stresses on the doctrine of Trinity, creation *ex nihilo*, procession of Holy Spirit from Father and unmixed one nature in Christ. It further shows that an unexposed, veiled conversation between the members of the Armenian and Muslim intellectual elite transpired even in the Ottoman milieu.

At the same time debates on belief were an everyday practice among the populace in bazaars, maydans, stores, roads, described in neo-martyrologies and historiographical accounts. The Armenian manuscript tradition preserved a unique new martyrdom of an Orthodox (Western) Syriac priest Elia Xarberdc'i, written before 1657. It contains an excessive vindication of the dogmas of the Holy Trinity and Incarnation written in Armeno-Turkish⁴²—a vernacular language intelligible to the Armenian populace—and put on the lips of Elia. The argumentation used in this polemic is Muslim reader-oriented demonstrating that it served predominantly didactic needs. A small passage from the polemic is given below.

Text in Armeno-Turkish:

Էլիֆ տէմէֆ Ալլահ տր. Գիճէ քի տօղրու էլիֆ պիր տր, Երրորդութիին տր. Պէ տէմէֆ ալքնտայ պիր ճօֆտա վար, օլ ճօֆտա քէլամ ալլահ տր, քի կօկտէն էնտի. թէ տէմէֆ մէրիամ տր քի իսա Կէլլ օլտի գառննտայ թէյին ուստինտայ իքի ճօֆտա վար Էայ Գէ՞ տր, պիրիսի Մէրիամ տր, վէ պիրիսի Իսա տր: Սէ ուստունտայ իւչ ճօֆտա վար, Էայ Գէ՞ տր. Թէրլիք վէ թէվիիտ տիր, վէ էրմանի տիլինճէ Հայր և Որդի և Սուրբ Հոգի տէնիլիք:⁴³

Transliteration to Modern Turkish:

Elif demek Allahdır, nice ki doğru elif birdir—Երրորդութիւննէր. (Üçlülüktür). Be demek altında bir nokta var, o nokta Kelam Allahdır, ki gökten indi. Te demek Miriamdır, ki İsa gel oldu karınında. Te'nin üstünde iki nokta var, ya nedir? Birisi Miriamdır, ve birisi İsadır. Se üstünde üç nokta var, ya

nedir? Teslis ve Tevhiddir ve Ermeni dilince Հայր և Որդի և Սուրբ Հոգի (Baba ve Oğul ve Kutsal Ruh) denilir.

English Translation:

Elif (ل) means God, as the straight elif is one, [which is] Trinity. Be (ب) has a dot beneath, that dot is God the Word, who descended from the heavens. Te (ت) means Mariam, whose womb Jesus descended into. Te (ت) has two dots above. What is that? One is Mariam, the other is Jesus. Se (ث) has three dots above. What is that? Trinity and Oneness, and in Armenian language it is articulated as Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

Myriad of accounts on neo-martyrs in the Ottoman Empire illustrate incidents of public polemics with the Muslim populace and elite prior to the execution of a martyr. Solely a handful out of many neo-martyrologies could be singled out as containing serious theological debates with the Sunni Muslims, one of which is undoubtedly the narrative about Elia Xarberdc'i. Other than that, there are no testimonies to open theological debates from the Early Modern Ottoman context. In contrast to it, as it was shown in the case of Paolo Piromalli, the Shiite elite was keen on accommodating public and tête-à-tête debates with educated Christians on the matter of religion. Even so, such a debate with Catholic missionaries, symbolising Western wisdom, could be possible. In the eyes of Shahs, Piromalli, for instance, represented the power of the Pope and wealthy Europe, sharing *common habitus* with the oriental rulers in terms of erudition. Such an open conversation with Shahs' Christian subjects—*dhimmis* or *rayas*—would naturally be impossible, if not for the heuristic dimension of the confessional age.

Cases of Armenian Polemic Dialogues with the Shiite Muslims

Two important instances of the Armenian polemics with the Shiite Muslims shine light on the dialogic as well as heuristic aspects of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries inter-religious literary polemics. The authors of the polemics are Yovhannēs Mrk'uz (worthless) Jułayec'i (1643-1715) and Step'anos Daštec'i or Step'anos Basiliow Širip'alankean (1653-1720). Both authors were from New Julfa near Isfahan; the former was an Armenian Apostolic *vardapet* (archimandrite, doctor of theology),

the latter—an Armenian merchant with theological background converted to Catholicism. Having known each other from New Julfa, they were at odds with each other's confessional position and views on orthodoxy and orthopraxy, but regardless of the inter-personal tensions, both authors proved to be good at polemic dialogues with the Muslims adding political and poetical dimensions to theological debates.

Yovhannēs Mrk'uz Juxayec'i known as Avānūs Khalīfā in Persian sources was well-versed in Arabic and Persian, honoured by both Armenians and Persians as a profound theologian and philosopher of the All Saviour's (Amenap'rkīč') Armenian Monastery in New Julfa. Among his students Persian Muhamed Ali Hazīn Lahījī is remembered, who studied the Gospels with Yovhannēs.⁴⁴ Mrk'uz was constantly engaged in inter-confessional orthodoxy disputes with the Catholic missionaries of Isfahan attempting to decline the miaphysite position in Christian Christology. On the other hand, the honour by the Safavid court Yovhannēs had earned for his erudition allowed him to polemicize on Islam-related topics as well. He wrote a bilingual Persian-Armenian treatise *Polemical Book to Shah Suleiman of Persia*.⁴⁵ The book is a conversation with Shah Suleiman (1666-1694) on the nature of Christian belief and a vindication of its principal dogmas written in dialogic fashion.

The conversation with Shah Suleiman begins with the latter's visitation to the All Saviour's Armenian monastery, where Yovhannēs' was a monk. The splendid monastery was famous for its lavish mural paintings, parts of which had been painted by Yovhannēs himself. The rich interior of the monastery had been attracting many renowned Christian and Muslim preachers, travellers, merchants and statesmen flowing to view the frescos and converse with the famous teacher. It seems that visits to the All Saviour's monastery served as momentum to the initiation of a theological conversation on the matter of iconodulism. It is clearly traced in the dialogue with father François Sanson, an ambassador to Safavid lands, who visited the All Saviour's monastery in 1687 with an intention to polemicize on Armenian faith. Yovhannēs writes:

Now, upon pater ambassador's visit to the monastery, after greeting each other we entered the Holy Church, and when he noticed the splendour of the Holy Church, he said, 'Blessed is the Lord, that amongst far-flung Persians you have such an adorned and gilt Church. I implore the opulent Creator to dispense its unity with the orthodox Roman Church.'⁴⁶

The excessive dialogue with Shah Suleiman starts in a similar fashion. Upon his entering into the monastery, the Shah looks around and asks the monks about the reason for having all those images painted above the prayer place. After receiving the answer that the paintings were there for knowledge, Suleiman continued:

The king says, "The knowledge based on Scriptures is better than images." Then turns to ask, "Is it possible that these paintings have a symbolic meaning or are they solely for embellishment?"

His eunuch purposely replies to him, "This is nothing else, but idolatry."

The king says, "Not possible that those do not have symbolic meaning, as these people are people of books and it is not possible for the paintings to lack symbolic meaning."

The king asked the servant Yovhannēs, "What would you say?"

The servant [Yovhannēs] replies, "Yes it is exactly as you said."

The king says, "What is the symbolic meaning of these [images]?"

Replies, "These are the means to percept invisible things, that is to say, the reflection of the unknown."

The king says, "In which way?"

Replies, "According to reason and according to the Scriptures."

The king says, "Answer according to the reason, then if I wish, you will answer according to the scriptures."

Replies, "These painted images are to perceive the mystery, as it is well known that a human being does not possess the perfection to perceive invisible things without the visible ones. Then, to perceive unknown things it was necessary to paint images lest if someone wishes the things sought to be perceived unerringly."

The king says, "What does it mean to seek the unknown in the place where it has to be known." Replies, "The one sought is God."

The king says, "It is possible [also] without those images."

Replies, "How is that?"

The king says, "With my entire nature I arrive to an assumption, that I am created and all visible things testify to the [existence of the] Creator."⁴⁷

Obviously, starting with the question about the icons Shah Suleyman embarks on questioning Yovhannēs about the Christian faith in general. The discussion revolves predominantly around the following topics: 1. Iconolatry; 2. Oneness of God (God does not have a companion); 3. Divinity and Humanity of Christ; 4. Divinity of Logos; 5. Incarnation; 6. Differentiation between visible and invisible things; 7. Second Coming of Christ; 8. Mediation of Christ.

Judging from the above quoted passage, Yovhannēs engages traditional argumentation in defending the Christian doctrine, but he refrains from the application of the Medieval Armenian anti-Muslim canon on the whole. His argumentations are influenced by Tomistic theology known to him through both translated Medieval and missionary literature. Yovhannēs prefers references from Plato, Aristotle, Pierre Abelard although in his other works he demonstrates a good knowledge of the writings of Church Fathers like Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyril of Alexandria. *Polemical Book to Shah Suleiman* is written in Latinised Armenian. In contrast to the literature produced in the Ottoman milieu, polemical writings from the Safavid part of Armenia appeared either in Latinised Classical Armenian or in Classical Armenian stuffed with loanwords from Persian.

The “novelty” in Mrk’uz’s polemics with the Muslims is the political dimension amended to the theological content. During the reins of Shah Suleiman and Husayn a crucial shift in the domestic religious policy was carried out. Contrary to Shah Abbas I and Abbas II, who were against mass conversion of the Armenians to Islam, Shah Suleiman and Husayn adopted the strategy of Imam Jafar for the Armenians and Jews, prompting mass migration of the Armenians to India and Europe. In the face of the application of the new law, Yovhannēs is more than inclined to prove the veracity of Christianity to Suleiman and remind him of Shah Abbas I, who not only allowed, but also encouraged the Armenians to build their churches as high as possible and to embellish them in every possible manner without any hint of accusation of idolatry.⁴⁸

A significant feature of Yovhannēs’ piece is the dynamic of the polemic dialogue that contributes to its heuristic character. From the very beginning Shah Suleiman demonstrates rather strong knowledge in the Scriptures, but conversing with Yovhannēs through questioning and gathering responses he adds up to his knowledge on Christianity. For this reason he commended to provide him with all the verses from the Scriptures as well as argumentations by “natural reason,” which Yovhannēs collects into two voluminous chapters including them at the end of his treatise.⁴⁹

The circumstances under which the actual polemic dialogues of Yovhannēs’ rival Step’anos Daštec’i⁵⁰ transpired were strikingly different. Step’anos pursued his education at the All Saviour’s monastery, at the feet of Step’anos Juļayec’i,⁵¹ and later he happened to study in Rome. A Catholic convert and a merchant, Step’anos roamed all over the world, from the port Bandar in the Surat region of the Mughal Empire to Italy and Holland. Despite his strong theological background, Step’anos was a

layman. He became a merchant to earn his living, but he never ceased being a theologian. Step'anos was a prolific author. His oeuvre includes polemical, historical, theological, philosophical treatises, sarcastic poems and conundrums.⁵² His polemics was usually targeted at the "confessional others," namely Yovhannēs Mrk'uz and Armenian Catholicos Alexander Jułayec'i (d. 1714) for the anti-Catholic zeal they expressed in their writings. Over the years, until 1707, he wrote seven *Conversations with the Muslims*,⁵³ through which he responded to the interrogations of his Muslim acquaintances and counterparts about the Christian belief. A Catholic Armenian (*aktarma*), he transgressed by participating in Armenian Apostolic worship and Sacraments—*communicatio in sacris*. Once he apologised to his rivals for leaving the conversation to make his way to the Apostolic Church, for it was "Vigil of the Lord and the hour of the Armenian Liturgy (*Patarag*)."⁵⁴

Step'anos' polemics with the Muslims is an excellent sample of actual dialogue with real interlocutors. In his travels to India, Europe, Turkey and elsewhere he was surrounded by both Christians of all denominations and Muslims of all kinds. Step'anos' interlocutors were predominantly Shiite Muslims—merchants, sheiks, converted Muslim Armenians in New Julfa. The polemic conversations could occur either in a Muslim's house, or in maydans, else he could encounter his interlocutors in caravanserais in India.⁵⁵ Functioning as oriental supra-religious and supra-ethnic "neutral zones" where all sorts of discussions on cultural matters transpired, caravanserais outside Persia and Turkey by that time could accommodate debates on religious topics. He exercised extreme cautiousness in polemics with his Muslim interlocutors attempting to steer clear of any sharp criticism of Islam. Before embarking on polemic conversation Step'anos already knew that neither him nor his interlocutors had any intention to be persuaded, hence, everyone would be keeping his truth. This attitude used to be common among the sixteenth century missionaries, who considered entering into polemics with the Muslims, "useless."⁵⁶ Interestingly, the situation changed in the seventeenth century, when Jesuit missionaries started to converse with the Muslims on *common habitus* grounds. Apparently Step'anos, lacking missionary vocation, kept holding his convictions as he referred to the polemics even with the most learned Muslims as "useless discourse" (*datarkabanut' iwn*),⁵⁷ that he would wish to escape instantly.

In *Conversations* Step'anos was interrogated by the Muslims 1. On Veracity of Christian faith; 2. On the Oneness of God (God has no

companion); 3. On Circumcision; 4. On Pure and Impure Animals; 5. On Wine; 6. On Veracity of Scriptures (Tovrat, Injil, Fğhran); 7. On the Prophecy of Muhammad; 8. On Icons; 9. On Christians turning Muslims and vice versa; 10. On Ablution and Water of Life; 11. Human Soul.

The debated topics were not novel, but some of Step'anos' argumentations were derived from personal experience going hand in hand with his time. He adjusted the vocabulary and formulations to his current context. Revamped argumentations appear in the discussions about wine, icons, conversions, ablution, etc. Speaking of disadvantages of the usage of wine he employs traditional argumentation about the pure nature and portions of wine used by Tat'ewac'i.⁵⁸ Yet, he brings up a brand new analogy of drugs (*opium, kuknarion, hashish*) that might heal the sick if taken in small portions and might poison if taken in huge amounts.⁵⁹ The conversation about Christian iconodulism takes place in interesting settings. Invited to a sheik's house to give classes on painting, upon being asked, Step'anos embarks on explaining the motives of Christians depicting human bodies, saints and the Son of God.⁶⁰

Step'anos' *Conversations* are saturated with poetry. Poetical polemics is a unique instance in the Armenian polemical genre from the given period. The author debates with a converted Armenian *vardapet* Yovhannēs Ĵulfayec'i, bearing the Muslim name Muhammed Ali Bek. The latter was a real historical person who publicly debated with Yovhannēs Mrk'uz by the instigation of Shah Husayn.⁶¹ The settings for Step'anos' polemics with Yovhannēs Ĵulfayec'i was the house of the former's Muslim patron in Isfahan. The Muslims kindled a theological dispute that Step'anos was willing to avoid. The uniqueness of the situations was due to the fact that it was a debate between two converts. Disputing parties were well-versed in Old and New Testaments, which enabled them to go beyond the traditional argumentation. As the dialogue evolved around the matter of ablution, Step'anos turned to poetical argumentations:

... I want you to answer, what is the water, that God promised to Ezekiel to sprinkle upon people, for that water is holy, upon whom it is sprinkled it cleanses them from contamination, and if that water is thought to be of this [ordinary] water, that we always drink and do ablution with, find out which are the fountains and wells of [that water]!... For he does not say water, so that you might think of it to be the water that we drink or do ablution with, but [says] holy water, therefor, it ought to be another water, that would be holy and different from a simple one...

You tell us, if that water is not this one, that we take *Ġusl* with, which water is it then, that Prophet commands [of] or what kind of water you [Christians] think it is?...

And I with great obedience replied, said, that, “The water, that God promises through the hands of Ezekiel refers to coming holiness, that water is [the one], that starts to spring up from the preacher of Messiah Our Lord Christ, that is to say, it is the tears falling from eyes out of repentance and sedition in the hearts of people... For until the coming of our Messiah none of the prophets learned soul-purifying power of the water of tears of repentance...

Then my aġa Mirzataġ said in a repentance form like me, “Truly it seems to me, that a teardrop grants one so much equity, while thousands of river ablutions would not suffice to grant that much purity without penitence, likewise Hāfez utters, that ...’ And before his words would take an end, the son of Mirzataġ, that is Mirza Mahmad, said...⁶²

Two Levels of the Polemic Dialogue: “Confessional” versus “Religious Others”

As briefly mentioned above, Step’anos Daštec’i composed an imposing refutation of Yovhannēs Mrk’uz’s anti-Latin theological treatise, where he meticulously opposed every sentence in *vardapet’s Brief Book on the Real and True Faith*.⁶³ The voluminous refutation to it, titled *Ratter of Truth*⁶⁴, was composed by Step’anos in 1715, after Yovhannēs passed. He blamed procrastination on the hectic merchant life on the roads and boats, but in fact, the reason might be behind his respect for *vardapet*, regardless of them being rivals. On the pages of *Ratter of Truth* Yovhannēs’ every sentence is reiterated, juxtaposed to an objection from the Catholic douphysite viewpoint. By so doing, Step’anos imitates a tête-à-tête conversation with an actual interlocutor often times starting his objections with the expression “Archimandrite! You state that...”

The comparison of Daštec’i’s Islam-related and anti-Apostolic pieces reveals the image of the “enemy” and the nuances in the attitude to religious and confessional others in the eighteenth century Armenian communities. Taking as an example the dispute around the usage of wine, a central topic in both cross-confessional and inter-religious polemics, one would divulge the shift in rhetorics of polemics when it is directed against confessional others.

The problem of wine in the inter-religious discourse had long grown out of the theological level of debate. The usage of wine by the Ottoman and Safavid Christian subjects, especially its usage during Eucharist, became a powerful socio-political tool in the hands of not only Sultans and Shahs, but also of ordinary Muslims. Eremia Çelebi imparts a number of social incidents around the issue of wine. After attending Armenian weddings Muslims would accuse the hosts of feasting during Ramadan and distributing wine to the Muslim guests, in order to solicit the 2.000 kuruş tax established for such a crime (*cürüm*), as it happened with an Armenian named Jakob from Hasköy.⁶⁵ In 1670, October 23, the pious Sultan Mehmet IV (1648-1687) prohibited the sale of alcohol across the Ottoman Empire. The usage of liquor was shortly resumed, but enriched the genre of the Armenian lamentations with a handful of new Laments on the banning of wine.⁶⁶

At the same time, in the context of inter-confessional debates the importance of wine was related to the problem of Eucharistic mixed chalice. Miaphysite Armenian Apostolic Church never mixed wine with water in the cup of Holy Communion during the Liturgy, so characteristic to Chalcedonic Churches. Unmixed chalice was the old custom of the Armenian Church, which grew into a stumbling stone for both the Armenians and the dyophysite Churches like the Greek and Latin ones.

Polemizing on the usage of wine with both the Muslims and Armenian Apostolics, Step'anos applied a different rhetoric and depth of argumentations. The comparison of the passages reveals his cautiousness to the Muslims on the one hand, and disapproval of his fellow Christians on the other:

Polemics with the Muslims on the Usefulness and Purity of Wine

My beloved ones! I want to ask you, what is that, that wine emerges from, that makes you call it unclean and always unclean? ...Isn't it from the fruit of vine and from grapes, that every nation eats from them, and makes various dishes, that I am not willing to name.⁶⁷

Polemics against Yovhannēs Mrk'uz on the Nature of Wine and Unmixed Chalice

Archimandrid! When you say that vine begets pure wine... for nowhere is seen vine begetting wine, but rather grapes, that is a fruit full of water and emerged from water and the humidity of waters, that although by the skillfulness of men, the water is extracted from the grapes and kept until it changes its taste and they called it wine. Likewise from mulled wine

they invented a new thing called vodka (ot'i), whence from the same grape water they made sweet vinegar and many other sorts of drinks and food.⁶⁸

Conclusion

The Armenian manuscript tradition preserved examples of the polemics with the Muslims from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, despite the scarcity of the material. Polemical treatises written in Persian Shiite context, on the one hand, and brief writings on social, religious and ethnic dissimilarities in the Ottoman Empire on the other, shine light on the circumstances under which polemics in real life transpired in the twofold geopolitical settings the Armenians lived in.

The shift in the image of “greater enemy” from Muslims towards Papists incited a surge of anti-Catholic Armenian polemical literature, oftentimes leaving the polemics with religious others on the margins. Along with the heuristic spirit of the confessional age the vectors as well as the fashion of polemics changed. Polemics against the Muslims turned into polemic dialogues or rather conversations with the Muslims on matters of religion and faith. The Medieval canon of polemics against the Muslims was partly applied to the Early Modern texts since most of the debated topics remained the same, while the argumentations, vocabulary, even the language, changed. The infusion of Armeno-Turkish into the polemical texts composed in the Ottoman milieu downgraded the value of theological discussion with the Muslims limiting it to the social norms of coexistence in a multi-religious environment. However, as witnessed in the polemic dialogues of Yovhannēs Mrk’uz and Step’anos Daštec’i, in the Eastern part of Armenia the theological discourse on Christian-Muslim relations managed to live up to and even exceed the Medieval standards of written polemics predominantly due to the survived culture of public debates under the conditions of *common habitus*.

Hence, the assumption about the ignorance and lack of interest of the Armenians to the religion of Muslim rulers seems to suffer from laxity. The Armenians did express interest in Islam, they were simply not keen on disputations with the Muslims that could lead either to detention and bloodshed, or prove to be “useless”.

NOTES

- ¹ The database has been built within the ERC project OTTOCONFESSION. A more complete editable and user-friendly database will be accessible after the end of the project.
- ² Books of questions extant in Early modern Armenian manuscript culture might be divided into two categories. The first, inherited from early Medieval times, is the voluminous compendia *Book of Questions* discussing sophisticated theological issues and being copied throughout the centuries. The second category appearing under the same title consists of vernacular writings in form of questions and answers encapsulating a wide range of theological, orthopractical, folk medical and other questions. Anti-Muslim passages from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are to be found predominantly in the latter category.
- ³ The corpus of Armenian neo-martyrologies has been published in the early twentieth century. *Hayoc' nor vkanerā (1155-1843) [Armenian New Martyrs (1155-1843)]*, ed. Hrachya Acharyan and Yakob Manandyan, (Vagharshapat, 1903). A handful of neo-martyrologies has been rendered into English. See Peter Cowe, "Vrt'anēs Sṙnkec'i" in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. 10 (Ottoman and Safavid Empires 1600–1700), ed. D. Thomas and J. Chesworth, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 57-67. Peter Cowe, "Martyrology of Loys Grigor," in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. 12 (Asia, and the Americas 1700-1800), ed. D. Thomas and J. Chesworth, (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 324-330; Idem "Step'anos Kafayec'i", *ibid*, 350-354, etc.
- ⁴ Seta Dadoian, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World: Paradigms of Interaction Seventh to Fourteenth Centuries*, Volume 3, Medieval Cosmopolitanism and Images of Islam, Thirteenth to Fourteenth Centuries, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2014), 183.
- ⁵ For the go-between Armenian merchants see Sebuḥ Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*, (Berkeley, New York, London: California University Press, 2011).
- ⁶ Ute Lotz-Heumann, M. Pohlig, "Confessionalization and Literature in the Empire, 1555–1700," *Central European History*, 40 (2007), 35–61.
- ⁷ Tijana Krstić, "From *Shahāda* to 'Aqīda: Confession to Islam, Catechization and Sunnitization in Sixteenth-century Ottoman Rumeli" in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. A.C.S. Peacock, (Edinburgh: University Press, 2017), 296-314.
- ⁸ Derin Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion," *Turcica* 44 (2012-13), 301-38. Idem, "Where Catechism Meets *Ilm-i hal*: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the

- Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization," *Past and Present*, 220/1 (2013), 79-114.
- ⁹ Eremia Çelebi K'ēōmiwrčean, *Nengut'iwñ maxanac' tačkak' ar k'ristoneays [Guile of the Spite of Tajiks]*, V509, f. 234r-264r.
- ¹⁰ Eremia's writing is divided into five hierarchically structured parts. He starts with the description of and warnings about the lawless strategies of Muslim rulers to Christians' conversions and ends with the behaviour of ordinary Muslims describing their deceitful conversion strategies.
- ¹¹ The author likens Muslims with the biblical serpent. Like the hatred of the serpent for the mankind cannot be elevated, so the hatred of the Muslims for the Christians cannot be ceased (Նրէ օձին թեամուրիւն ի բաց մերժիլ մարբասցի ի մարդկանէ, այսպէս և տահկաց թեամուրիւն ի բաց բառնալ կարիցէ ի քրիստոնէից): V509, f. 225v.
- ¹² John Flannery, *The Mission of the Portuguese Augustinians to Persia and Beyond (1602-1747)*, (Brill, 2013), 111-147. Christian Windler, "Ambiguous Belonging: How Catholic Missionaries in Persia and the Roman Curia dealt with Communicatio in Sacris" in *A Companion to Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*, ed. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2018), 205-234.
- ¹³ Małakia Ormanian, *Azgapatum [Narratives of the Nation]*, vol. 2, (Constantinople, 1914), 2410-2417, 2439-2443, 2476-2481, 2533-2538, 2591-2596, etc.
- ¹⁴ On Jesuit accommodationist strategies see Ines Županov, "One Civility, but Multiple Religions: Jesuit Mission among St. Thomas Christians in India (16th-17th Centuries)", *Journal of Early Modern History*, 9/3-4 (2005), 284-288.
- ¹⁵ On communicatio in sacris see Guillaume Aral, *Les Arméniens Catholiques: Étude historique, juridique et institutionnelle XVIIe- XVIIIe siècle; suivi Les Mythes de la Christianisation de l'Arménie*, (Les Édition de Nichéphore, 2017), 104-112. Cesare Santus, "La communicatio in sacris con gli "scismatici" orientali in età moderna" in *Les Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, 2014, (<https://journals.openedition.org/mefrim/1790#tocto1n2>).
- ¹⁶ For the text of Hatt-ı Şerif see Motraye A., de la, *Travels through Europe, Asia and into Part of Africa*, vol. 1, (London, 1723), 393-394. For the details, see *ibid*, 159.
- ¹⁷ Cornel Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns: the French and English in the Mediterranean, 1650-1750*, (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 118-136. Zwierlein, *Imperial*.
- ¹⁸ Petros Aragonac'i, *Girk' datastanac' [Book of Judgment]*, M484, f. 323r-327r.
- ¹⁹ Aragonac'i, *Girk'*.
- ²⁰ Michel Febvre, *Praecipuae objectiones quad virgo solent fieri per modum interrogationis a Mahumeticae legos sectoribus, Judaeis, et haereticis*
- ²¹

- Orientalibus adversus catholicos earumque solutiones*, (Rome: Typis de Propaganda Fide, 1679). Arabic translation was published by Propaganda in 1680, Armenian translation in 1681. For biographical and bibliographical overview see, Bernard Heyberger, "Justinien de Neuvy, dit Michel Febvre," *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*. Volume 9 (Western and Southern Europe 1600-1700), ed. D. Thomas and J. Chesworth, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 579-588.
- 22 Bernard Heyberger, "Polemic Dialogues between Christians and Muslims in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 55 (2012), 495-516.
- 23 Michel Febvre, *Praecipuae (Armenian translation)*, 13-53.
- 24 Bernard Heyberger, "Polemic Dialogues," 503.
- 25 Heyberger, "Polemic", 513.
- 26 For the Cycle of Muhammad's life see Dadoian, *The Armenians*, 163-187.
- 27 *Otanawor sowt margarēin Mahmēti [A poem on false prophet Muhammad]*, V242 (545), f. 222r-v. A versified enlarged variant of it has survived in a manuscript copy from the seventeenth century: Այս Մահմատ սուտ մարգարէ, // Ի հագարու իսմայէլեան // Քանզի նման է սա մկան, // Որ սատակմամբ պղծէր գրան: // This false prophet Muhammad // From the Ishmaelite Hagar // As he resembles a mouse // That contaminates milk with its pegging out... V278 (477), f. 77r-v.
- 28 Biographical and bibliographical overview in Sergio La Porta, "Gregory of Tat'ew" in: *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. 5 (1350-1500), ed. David Thomas and Alexander Mallet, (Brill, 2013), 229-238.
- 29 Grigor Tat'ewac'i, "Ēnddēm Tačkac'" in Babken Kyuleserian, *Islamē Hay Grakanut'ean mēj [Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature and Excerpts from the Kashun]*, (Vienna: Mxit'arists, 1930); French translation by Frederic Macler, "L'Islam dans la litterature arménienne," *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 1 (1932), 493-522.
- 30 I follow Dadoian's translation with couple of exceptions. Dadoian, *The Armenian*, 205-206.
- 31 For the tradition of Siwnik' monastic schools see *Armenian Gospel Iconography. The Tradition of the Glajor Gospel*, ed. Thomas F. Mathews and Avedis K. Sanjian, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1991), 14-67.
- 32 Babken Kyuleserian, *Islamē Hay Grakanut'ean mēj*, 156. Here and elsewhere I do not provide the Armenian text due to space constraints.
- 33 Sergio La Porta, "The Fourteenth-Century Armenian Polemic against Judaism and its Latin Source," *Le Muséon*, 122 (2009), 93-129.
- 34 Seta Dadoian, "Islam and Armenian Polemical Strategies at the End of an Era: Matt'ēos Jułayec'i and Grigor Tat'ewac'i," *Le Muséon*, 114 (2001), 305-326.

- 35 The surge of catechisms and brief confessions of faith in the seventeenth century played not the least role in the shift to dialogue polemics.
- 36 Here I use the term as coined by Bernard Heyberger. *Common habitus* in Herberger's understanding distinguishes social status and should not be confused with Pierre Bourdieu's usage of the word.
- 37 Khalifa Sultan occupied the office of grand vizier during the reigns of Shah Abbas I, Shah Sefi and Shah Abbas II.
- 38 Denis Halft, "Paolo Piromalli," in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. 10 (Ottoman and Safavid Empires 1600–1700), ed. D. Thomas and J. Chesworth, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 518–523.
- 39 See VAT Pers. 49. Dennis Halft argues that the treatise was originally composed in Persian and later translated into Latin by the author himself, and into Armenian by Barsef Holov, see Vat. Borg. Arm 40, //1/1, f. 1r-158v; M672, 91 fols.
- 40 A variant of Armenian translation/adaptation was published in 1674. *Yalags čsmartut'ean k'ristoneakani ar Šah Appas ark'ayn Parsic' i Polosē P'romalyē kargēn k'arozolac' vardapetē ev arhiepkaposē Naxijewanay nahangin šaradreal* [On the veracity of Christianity to the king Shah Abbas, composed by Paolo Piromalli OP, archimandrite and archbishop of Nakhijevan], (Rome: Apud Paulum Monetam, 1674). In the Armenian translation some of Piromalli's objections against Miaphysits, ie. Armenians are amended.
- 41 Ով իմ սիրելի Ղևնտիգասէ Նէյմէքոսլտի չէլէպի; M1635, f. 57v-60r.
- 42 "Patmut'iwn Eliay k'ahanayi," *Ararat* 2 (1909), 156-168.
- 43 "Patmut'iwn", 156.
- Armeno-Turkish had gradually become instrumental for the indoctrination of the Armenian populace in the age of confession-building. Since the late seventeenth century it became introduced into the inter-confessional polemical writings composed exceptionally in the Ottoman milieu. Due to the scarcity of anti-Islamic Armenian polemical writings in the Ottoman Empire, finding traces of its usage in literary polemics with the Muslims turns out to be infeasible.
- 44 For Yovhannēs Mrk'uz's biography and bibliography see Denis Halft, "Hovhannēs Mrk'uz Jułayec'i" in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. 12 (Asia, and the Americas 1700-1800), ed. D. Thomas and J. Chesworth, (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 260-265.
- 45 The book has survived in couple of manuscript copies. Its lengthy Armenian version was published in 1797. See Yovhannēs Mrk'uz, *Girk' patmut'ean arareal i Norn J'ulayow Srboy Amnap'rkč'i gerahas vani miaban Yovhannēs čgnazgeac' vardapetin vičabanut'iwn ar Šah Slēmān Parsic'*, [Book of the History: Polemical Book to Shah Suleiman of Persia by the Monk of the Splendid [All Saviour's] Monastery vardapet Yovhannēs the hermit: Composed in the All Saviour's monastery], (Calcutta, 1797).

- 46 Yovhannēs Mrk'uz, *Hakačarut'iwñ and despan patri Samsonin [Polemics with the Ambassador pater Samson]*, M727, f. 114.
- 47 Yovhannēs Mrk'uz, *Girk' patmut'ean*, 1-2.
- 48 Mrk'uz, *Girk'*, 9.
- 49 Mrk'uz, *Girk'*, 140-274.
- 50 A brief communication on Daštec'i see in *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920: With an Introductory History*, ed. Kevork B. Bardakjian, Detroit, 2000, 66-67.
- 51 Step'anos Daštec'i, M781, f. 29r, cf. M9049, f. 5r.
- 52 For his bibliography see R. Abrahamian, "Step'anos Daštec'i", *Bulletin of NAASSR*, 12 (1956), 105-106.
- 53 Step'anos Daštec'i, J346, f. 187-257. Most of them were published by Hrachik Mirzoyan in *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani*, 3/87 (1995), 106-119; *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani* 3/93 (1997), 89-100; *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani* 3/129, (2009) 113-138.
- 54 Step'anos Daštec'i, J346, f. 239.
- 55 On caravanserais in the seventeenth century see Jean Chardin, "Voyage en Pers," in: *Collection Choisie des Voyages Autour du Monde et dans les Contrées les plus Curieuses du Globe depuis Christophe Colomb jusqu'a Nos Jours*, par William Smith, vol 10, (Paris: Chez Paul Renouard, 1930), 98-100. John Baptista Tavernier, *The Six Voyages: Persian Travels*, (London, 1678), 45.
- 56 Emanuele Colombo, "Jesuits and Islam in Seventeenth-Century Europe: War, Preaching and Conversions," in *L'Islam Visto da Occidente: Cultura e religione del Seicento europeo di fronte all'Islam*, ed. Bernard Heyberger et. al., (Milan: Marietti, 2009), 327-328.
- 57 Step'anos Daštec'i, *Vičabanut'iwñ anddēm Yōhannēs J'ulfayec'woy [Polemics with Hovhannes of Julfa]*, J346, f. 231. See also Hrachik Mirzoyan, "Step'anos Daštec'u «Zruyc'-banavečeri» patmamšakut'ayin aržek'ė" [The Value of Stepanos Sashtetsi's Polemic Conversations], *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani*, 3/87 (1995), 114.
- 58 Babken Kyuleserian, *Islamė Hay Grakanut'ean mēj*. 156-157.
- 59 Step'anos Daštec'i, *Harc'umn inč' vasn ginwoyn [Interrogation concerting wine]*, J346, f. 223-225. See also, Hrachik Mirzoyan, Step'anos Daštec'u «Zruyc'-banavečeri» patmamšakut'ayin aržek'ė", *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani*, 3/87 (1995), 110.
- 60 Step'anos Daštec'i, J346, f. 228-231. Hrachik Mirzoyan, *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani*, 3/87 (1995), 110, 111-114.
- 61 Xač'atur J'ulayec'i, *Patmut'iwñ Parsic'*, [*History of Persians*], (Vagharshapat, 1905), 168. See excessive footnote in Mirzoyan's article in *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani*, 3/87 (1995), 107-108, ft nr. 1.
- 62 Step'anos Daštec'i, *Vičabanut'iwñ anddēm Yōhannēs J'ulfayec'woy*, J346, f. 237-239. Mirzoyan, *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani*, 3/87 (1995), 117-118.

- ⁶³ Yovhannēs Mrk'uz, *Girk' hamarōt vasn iskapēs ev čšmarit hawatoy, dawanut'ean ullap'ar kat'ulikē ěnt'anur hayastaneayc' ekefec'woy* [Brief book on the real and true faith of the doctrine of orthodox catholic universal Armenian church], (New Julfa, 1688).
- ⁶⁴ Step'anos Daštec'i, *Koč'nak čšmartut'ean* [Clapper of Truth], M8111, cf. M9049.
- ⁶⁵ V509, f. 250r.
- ⁶⁶ V256 (578), f. 57v-59v.
- ⁶⁷ Step'anos Daštec'i, *Harc'umn inč' vasn ginwoyn* [Some Interrogations about Wine], J346, f. 223. Mirzoyan, *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani*, 3/87 (1995), 109.
- ⁶⁸ Daštec'i, *Koč'nak*, M8111, f. 133r.

Abbreviations for the Manuscript Catalogues

J – Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate

M – Yerevan, Matenadaran

V – Venice, Mekhitarist Library

VAT Borg. Arm. – Vatican, Bibliotheca Apostolica, Borgiani Armenian Manuscript Fund

VAT Pers. – Vatican, Bibliotheca Apostolica, Persian Manuscript Fund