Yerevantsi and the Politics of "Centering like a Nation-State" 48

Not much is known about Simeon Yerevantsi’s background.49 As his sobriquet implies, he was born in Yerevan, most likely in 1710, and seems to have hailed from a family of noble lineage.50

48. I thank Töloýyan for suggesting this turn of phrase.
49. The best accounts on Yerevantsi’s life and work are found in ORMANIAN, op.cit., pp. 3019-3136; AGHANIANTS, K., Simeon Yerevantsu Gensagrutun’e [The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi] in Diwan Hayoc’ patmow’tean (herein after DHP), volume 3, Tiflis, 1894, pp. XXXVIII-CLXLVI; and LEO, Hayoc’ Patmow’tean [History of the Armenians] vol. 3, book 2, Yerevan, 1973, pp. 321-328, 460-464. It should be noted that of the latter, only Leo provides a perceptive, albeit short, discussion of Yerevantsi’s Partavčar, while Ormanian and Aghaniants, in their otherwise expert commentaries on Yerevantsi’s work, only mention Partavčar in passing. See also the entry under “Simeon Yerevantsi” in Yerevantsi’s posthumously published work, Jampré, (consult footnote 77 below for full references) where useful biographical information is provided. This segment of the text, however, was almost certainly inserted into Jampré after Yerevantsi’s death and should not be considered an autobiographical account. For additional biographical and historical background, see Hay žołovrdi patmow’tean [History of the Armenian People] vol. 4, Yerevan, 1972, and the articles in the special issue of Etchmiadzin, Yerevan, 1972, particularly HADIDYAN, A., Simeon Yerevantsi, 1710-1780, and KEVORKIAN, B., Simeon Katolikos Erewanc’ow jankéra Hayoc’ Ekelec’ow miasnow’tean ew Hay žołovrdi azgapałhpanman gorcown [The Efforts of Catholicos Simeon Yerevantsi in the Work of the Unity of the Armenian Church and the National Preservation of the Armenian People].
50. Aghaniants and Ormanian raise doubts about the claim, made not by Yerevantsi but by his contemporaries and others in the nineteenth century, that the Catholicos was
At an early age he was sent to the monastic school in Etchmiadzin. After studying with Catholicos Shamakhetsi, he proved himself a gifted scholar and later joined the school’s teaching staff as one of its leading tbirs (scribe or scholar). Some of his students went on to distinguish themselves in the service of the Holy See. Their ranks included two future Catholicoi, several archbishops and a number of vardapets.51

In the early 1740s, Yerevantsi was dispatched as an assistant legate (*nowirakowtean ʻognakan*) to Bayazid (then in Ottoman territory, whereas Etchmiadzin was in Persian territory) where his oratorical skills so impressed Archbishop Harutiuun Jughayetsi that the latter requested from the then Catholicos Jahgetsi (1737-1751) that the young tbir accompany him as an assistant during his legatorial mission to India. Following Jughayetsi’s untimely death, the title of legate to India fell to Yerevantsi, who at the time was only a candidate awaiting anointment to the celibate priesthood. Yerevantsi spent three and a half years preaching, raising funds, and extensively traveling throughout the Armenian communities in India, as well as in New Julfa, before returning to the Holy See in 1747. Apparently, he had won quite a following among the Armenian merchants in India, to the point that the latter personally appealed to Catholicos Jahgetsi to reassign their legate back to India after promoting him to the rank of vardapet. The Catholicos bestowed the title upon Yerevantsi, but refused to reappoint him to India when it became clear that the new vardapet had thrown in his lot with the growing opposition to Jahgetsi’s

related to the Broshian family, whose ancestors were among the leading *naxarar* clans in Siunik in the twelfth century. The two authors note, however, that the question of Yerevantsi’s nobility remains a possibility in light of the fact that members of the *naxarar* class often survived under the guise of the clerical elite, and used their real or putative links to the nobility as assets to shore up their authority. For instance, the Hasan Jalalian catholicoi of Gantsasar claimed descent from the nobility of Gharabagh, the Ajapahians of Sis traced themselves to the Rubenid dynasty of Cilicia, and the Catholicoi of Aghtamar were believed, as late as the eighteenth century, to have inherited the political mantle of the Ardsruni kings in Vaspurakan. See LIBARIDIAN, op.cit., p. 21.

51. The two Catholicoi were David and Daniel, ruling from 1801 to 1807, and 1807 to 1808, respectively; the most notable archbishop was Hovsep Arghutianz, the prelate of Nor Nakhichevan and later of Saint Petersburg, who was actively involved with the Armenian community of India and played a pivotal role in cementing Russian-Armenian relations in the 1790s. See AGHANIANTS, The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi, p. LXXVI.
Yerevantsi then took refuge in Constantinople (the Catholicos had issued warrants for his arrest) where his reputation continued to flourish; he taught religion and philosophy at the school originally founded by the renowned Patriarch Hovhannes Kolot and expanded under the Patriarchate of Nalian. In 1751 he traveled to Jerusalem as part of an official delegation from the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, thereafter returning to Etchmiadzin in 1755 to assist with the election to the Catholicos seat of his former mentor Shamakhetsi. After the death of Catholicos Shamakhetsi in 1763, Yerevantsi, who was then a legate in Constantinople and Smyrna, returned to Etchmiadzin and was shortly afterwards raised to the pontifical throne. His election was not swift, since he was not even one of the candidates when deliberations on choosing the next head of the Church had commenced. Due to the absence of a clear contender, however, the electoral synod finally settled on Yerevantsi. He was then rushed into office without consulting the Armenians in Constantinople, for fear that they might oppose the newcomer.

By the time he rose to the Catholicos throne, Yerevantsi was already a hardened veteran of diasporan culture and politics; his long, itinerant years at the service of the Holy See had exposed him to the cultural privations marking Armenian life in the eighteenth century. They had also enabled him to witness the proselytizing work of the Vatican’s missionaries in New Julfa and Constantinople and, at the same time, to observe the

52. See ORMANIAN, op.cit., pp. 3021-3022 for details on Yerevantsi’s position in the factional disputes and hostility towards Jahgetsi’s Catholicosate.
53. For Kolot’s role as a reformer of Armenian education and his long tenure as Patriarch in Constantinople, see GULESERIAN, B., Kolot Yovhannes Patriark, Patmagrakan ew banasirakan oswomnasirrowt’iwn [Patriarch Kolot Hovhannes, A Historiographic and Philological Study], Vienna, 1904. See also the essays in the special issue of Bazmavep (1978) and particularly Sahak Djemjemian’s Nor niw’ter Kostandnowpolsoy erfankayišatq Patriark Yovhannes Koloti masin (katowac Sowrb Lazari diwanên) [New Materials Concerning the Blessed Memory of Patriarch Hovhaness Kolot of Constantinople, (Culled from the Archives of San Lazzaro], Bazmavep, 1978.
54. ORMANIAN, op.cit., pp. 3022-3023.
immense popularity of Mekhitarist publications in the book markets of Constantinople, Smyrna, Madras and other places where an Armenian reading public existed. Yerevantsi was apprehensive about the revival work of the Mekhitarists on account of their Roman Catholic orientation, but he also admired and wanted to emulate their successful deployment of European print technology and knowledge. It was against this backdrop that he therefore set out to transform Etchmiadzin from a cultural backwater into a new beacon for the revival of Armenian learning. At the hub of his revivalist agenda was the establishment of a printing press in Etchmiadzin. Though the first Armenian book was printed 1512 and printing had become a crucial component in the revival of Armenian letters in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, before Yerevantsi’s time, its centers of operation had always been anchored in the diasporic communities where printing facilities were easy to come by and the merchant elite had a significant presence. To be sure, previous Catholicos had attempted to import print technology to the homeland, but their efforts were fruitless; the closest Armenian printers reached to Etchmiadzin was Constantinople (1568, 1677-1678 and to 1698 to present) and New Julfa (1636-1642, 1646-1647 and 1687/8-1693). Thus, when Yerevantsi installed a press in the compound of the Holy See in 1771, it marked the first time that European “print culture” had taken root in the homeland.

The idea of founding a press had first occurred to Yerevantsi while serving as a legate in India. It was there that he had befriended a wealthy merchant named Mikayel Khojajanian (also known as Krikor Agha Chekigents) who had predicted that the young legate would one day rise to the position of Catholicos, on which occasion he promised to donate large sums to Etchmiadzin for the purpose of opening a printing press and a school. When this came true, Khojajanian lived up to his pledge and provided the Holy See 18,000 rupees, some of which was

57. For historical background, see works cited in footnote 13 above.
58. ISHKHANIAN, op.cit., pp. 385-386; VOSGANIAN, op.cit.; and KEVORKIAN, Livre imprimé et culture écrite dans l’Arménie des XXI et XVII siècles, and L’imprimerie Surb Ejmiacin et Surb Sargis Zoravar et le conflit entre Arméniens et Catholiques à Constantinople (1696-1748). The dates for this and the following footnote are for the period preceding the establishment of Yerevantsi’s press.
60. This figure is mentioned in a letter by the Mekhitarist Father Manuel Emirzian, one of two legates sent by Abbot Melkonian to India in 1770 with the purpose of raising

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used to import a press and create Armenian fonts. Shortly after establishing the press, Yerevantsi also decided to have a paper mill built in Etchmiadzin in order to surmount the logistical and financial barriers of ordering paper from Europe. This was accomplished once again through the patronage of Khojajanian who, through a European contact in India,

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funds. Relaying important information to the mother convent in Venice, Father Manuel writes the following about Khojajanian’s donation: “During these days, a certain Armenian who lives here gave Etchmiadzin 18,000 rupees, so that in segments of six thousand [rupees], they may hastily construct a belfry, a school and a printing press; and he has compelled them to immediately print books and gather children. Books of history, political governance, and secular learning and proverbs are very much sought after here...” Letter of Father Manuel in Madras to Abbot Melkonian in Venice, February 6, 1771. An excerpt of this letter, with minor digressions from the original, is reproduced in Sahag Djemjemian’s Mikayel Chamchian and his History of the Armenians, Venice, 1983, p. 18.

A little more than a year after assuming office in 1763, Yerevantsi first turned to the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople for assistance in obtaining Armenian types or fonts from local printers in the city and in neighboring Smyrna. He also appealed as far as Amsterdam, where a merchant from New Julfa by the name of Arakel Boghosian had just cast new fonts. But these initial efforts proved to be futile, since in 1766 he had not yet succeeded in acquiring fonts. He then turned for assistance to a certain Sarkis Vardapet, who had created Armenian fonts in Venice and tried to persuade him to either sell or donate his fonts to the Holy See. This does not seem to have worked either, because the following year, Yerevantsi was once again requesting help from a printer named Margos in Smyrna. Unfortunately, due to the dearth of documentary material, the origin of Etchmiadzin’s fonts has not been sufficiently elucidated. There is some evidence, however, that Yerevantsi eventually succeeded in having his own fonts created in situ by relying on local knowledge. In this connection, the colophon of Թուռակյուծ (1774) ascribes the molding of the new fonts to the “clerk Harutiuun Etchmiadsnetsi, who is the engraver and carver of all the fonts, engravings, tables, proportions and floral designs, as well as being the printer of this work.” (Թուռակյուծ, Etchmiadzin, 1774, p. 562) The colophon of Yerevantsi’s first book, Գիրք ալտիկ կոչի զբոսարան հոգեվոր [A Book of Prayers called a Place of Spiritual Pleasure], published in 1772, also contains similar information. For an insightful discussion of the history of Etchmiadzin’s press, see AGHANIANTS, The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi, op.cit., pp. CLV-CLXVII; ORMANIAN, op.cit., pp. 3099-3100; and SHAHNAZARIAN, Sh., Nor niwter Hayastani arajin iparani verabereal [New Materials Concerning the First Printing Press of Armenia], in Patma-banasirakan Handês, 1972.

61. A little more than a year after assuming office in 1763, Yerevantsi first turned to the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople for assistance in obtaining Armenian types or fonts from local printers in the city and in neighboring Smyrna. He also appealed as far as Amsterdam, where a merchant from New Julfa by the name of Arakel Boghosian had just cast new fonts. But these initial efforts proved to be futile, since in 1766 he had not yet succeeded in acquiring fonts. He then turned for assistance to a certain Sarkis Vardapet, who had created Armenian fonts in Venice and tried to persuade him to either sell or donate his fonts to the Holy See. This does not seem to have worked either, because the following year, Yerevantsi was once again requesting help from a printer named Margos in Smyrna. Unfortunately, due to the dearth of documentary material, the origin of Etchmiadzin’s fonts has not been sufficiently elucidated. There is some evidence, however, that Yerevantsi eventually succeeded in having his own fonts created in situ by relying on local knowledge. In this connection, the colophon of Թուռակյուծ (1774) ascribes the molding of the new fonts to the “clerk Harutiuun Etchmiadsnetsi, who is the engraver and carver of all the fonts, engravings, tables, proportions and floral designs, as well as being the printer of this work.” (Թուռակյուծ, Etchmiadzin, 1774, p. 562) The colophon of Yerevantsi’s first book, Գիրք ալտիկ կոչի զբոսարան հոգեվոր [A Book of Prayers called a Place of Spiritual Pleasure], published in 1772, also contains similar information. For an insightful discussion of the history of Etchmiadzin’s press, see AGHANIANTS, The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi, op.cit., pp. CLV-CLXVII; ORMANIAN, op.cit., pp. 3099-3100; and SHAHNAZARIAN, Sh., Nor niwter Hayastani arajin iparani verabereal [New Materials Concerning the First Printing Press of Armenia], in Patma-banasirakan Handês, 1972.

62. Yerevantsi’s Yișatakaran names Khojajanian’s European contact as a “Monsieur Alexandre De Lasche [ձայակ Ալեքսանդր Լասչ] in the city of Pondicherry,” to whom the Catholicos sent a letter of gratitude “for he was the one who sent me the two French paper-makers, as per the request of Chekigents Krikor Agha.” The
arranged for two French paper-manufacturers to travel to Etchmiadzin to set up a mill and train the local monks. The mill was finally opened in 1776 after considerable delays and difficulties, some of which are recounted in the memoirs compiled by Yerevantsi’s scribe.63

One of the first publications from Etchmiadzin’s press was Yerevantsi’s Tōnacement or Calendar of Religious Holidays.64 Published in

Yiṣatakan also recounts that the Catholicos sent the aforementioned “letter and a holy insignia [qalqūnu taw qumnop ṣuwaqū],” which he placed in his letter to Krikor Agha, so that he shall have it [i.e., the letter] translated and, along with the holy insignia, deliver it to him [i.e., Monsieur De Lasche].” AGHANIANTS, DHP, vol. 8, pp. 417-418. Interestingly, the Armenian merchant Hovhannes Tovmajian, who traveled to Madras in 1768-1769, met the same “Monsieur De Lasche, a certain French merchant in Madras,” in the company of the local Armenian merchants, including Shahamir Shahamirian who was Khojajanian’s close friend and collaborator. Tovmajian describes the Frenchman as a merchant working for the French East India Company, headquartered in Pondichery. See his fascinating autobiography, Vark'ew patmowtwint Tovmacean Mahtesi Tër Tovhannis Kostandnowpopseccowoy oroy and eresow Têrowtwins šrijeal vačarakanowteamb ew howsk yetoy verstin darj ara-real i bnik kalak iwr Kostandnowpolis jeñadri and kahanay yIgnatios yepis-koposı eştanasnerord ami hasaki iworw ew apa ekeal dadarı i vans rabownapeti meci Mxit'aray abbay Hör i Venetik [The Life and History of Mahdesi Tër Hovhannes Tovmagan of Constantinople who, after wondering through thirty states conducting commerce, once again returns to his native city of Constantinople where he is anointed a celibate priest by Bishop Ignatius at the age of seventy and then comes to repose at the monastery of the great master, Abbot Mkhitar, in Venice], Manuscript no. 1688, library of the Mekhitarist Congregation, Venice, San Lazzaro, pp. 255-257.

63. We know that arrangements for procuring “paper specialists” were underway as early as 1772, since Yerevantsi and Khojajanian were by then corresponding with each other concerning the difficulties of acquiring assistance from European manufacturers. According to Aghaniants, Yerevantsi had initially attempted to acquire assistance from New Julfa, Persia, where paper makers were also available, before he was forced to turn to France. See “The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi,” pp. CLXIII. Concerning the relationship between the French paper specialists and the monks in Etchmiadzin, including the draconian punishments Yerevantsi threatened to administer to them when they continued to delay their work and then refused to share the secrets of their trade with the monks, see DHP, vol. 8, pp. 581-583; AGHANIANTS, The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi, op.cit., pp. CLXIV-CLXV; ORMANIAN, op.cit., p. 3101; and Partavčar, pp. 222-224. See also the brief comments in SHAHNARZARIAN, Sh., cit., p. 282 and Hay şolovrdi patmowtwyn, p. 625.

64. Tōnacement was the third book published by Etchmiadzin’s press. It was preceded by Girk alūtic or koči zbősaran hogewor [A Book of Prayers called a Place of Spiritual Pleasure] and Talaran [Song-Book], both authored by Yerevantsi and printed in 1772. See SHAHNARZARIAN, Sh., cit., p. 283, and VOSGANIAN, op.cit., pp. 487 and 489.
1774, this work reformed the Armenian Church calendar by introducing a standardized system of dates for the celebration of such feasts as Easter or Christmas (as well as the holidays of national saints), in place of the previous calendar, which varied from year to year and region to region. Interestingly, the primary stimulus for this undertaking came from the work of the Mekhitarist monk, Hagopos Chamchian (the brother of the famous historian), who in 1758 had begun to publish, in serial form, his Օրացոց. As he was with other Mekhitarist publications, Yerevantsi was apprehensive about the popularity of this work among the Armenians in Constantinople (including those who belonged to the Apostolic Church). He regarded its steady diffusion of Latin rites and traditions among the Armenians as a source of “corruption” and “distortion” of the nation’s spiritual domain. Seizing the moment, he thus re-structured Etchmiadzin’s calendar and, in doing so, strove to wrest away from the Mekhitarists (and Catholics in general) the influence they were exerting on the Holy See’s flock. Referring to the Mekhitarist publication as a “bearer of poison” (թունարան) or “poisonous guide” (թունացոց, a play on words with Թունացոց or Calendar of Holidays) that “should be avoided as one avoids a fundamental heresy,” he wrote: “Matters such as this caused us to under-

65. There is a cryptic reference to the publication of Թունացոց in the archives of the Mekhitarist Congregation in which Mikayel Chamchian, writing to Abbot Melkonian, refers to hearsay in Constantinople concerning the publication of a “Թունարագիրք” (or Calendar) by Yerevantsi. The letter is dated July 1, 1770, which suggests that it is either a typographical error or that rumors about Թունացոց were already in circulation at the time. The latter case seems more likely, since Yerevantsi’s ambition to restructure the Armenian calendar was no secret to the Armenians in Constantinople. Yerevantsi had himself publicized his plans in a work he published there in 1660 while serving as a legate. In the colophon of this work, entitled Տարեկան Օրացոց (Yearly Calendar), he had declared: “We also have at hand a grand Calendar [մայր Թունացոց], created upon the thirty-six letters of our alphabet, individually [...], which we are prepared to print.” For reasons that remain unknown, no such work was published until the appearance of Yerevantsi’s Թունացոց some fourteen years later. See VOSGANIAN, Hay գիրք, op.cit., pp. 449-450 for the colophon material whence I have drawn my excerpt. According to Vosganian, Տարեկան Օրացոց was published anonymously, which is why she does not attribute the work to Yerevantsi or anyone else in her catalogue. However, Ormanian has persuasively demonstrated that the work in question belongs to Yerevantsi’s pen, a claim that is bolstered by the fact that Yerevantsi’s Թունացոց was also “created upon the thirty-six letters” of the alphabet. The matter cannot be resolved since there are no known surviving copies of Տարեկան Օրացոց. See ORMANIAN, op.cit., pp. 3102-3103. For an excerpt of Chamchian’s letter, see Մայր դիվան Մստիսլավի Վենետիկ Ի Սուրբ Ղազար (Grand Archive of the Mekhitarists of Venice at San Lazzaro), 1707-1773, DAYAN, Gh. (ed.), Venice, 1930, p. 347.
take this work, so that by warning our dear nation and making them aware of the [Mekhitarists's] knavery, deception, and especially the quality of their faith, our nation would become cautious with them.”66 He then ordered his flock, through the powers invested in him as Catholicos, to first “rid that poisonous guide [i.e., Chamchian’s Orac’oyc] in its entirety from your midst and to condemn it in full,” and second “to acquire this

66. Tōnac’oyc’, p. 17. Yerevantsi is scurrilous in his sweeping denunciation of the Mekhitarists and their growing influence. Referring to them as “newfangled Catholics” [noraboys loterak’ank, a pejorative term he used not for Lutherans or Protestants, whose numbers were negligible at the time, but for Armenian Catholics, including both Jesuits and Mekhitarists], he asks his readers in Tōnac’oyc’ whether the Mekhitarists were really qualified to invent a “a yearly booklet, which is a plaything for children,” based on their haughty assumption that “our nation did not have competent scholars who could set their own church holidays to order.” He then characterized them as “foxes [cakamowtk or those which burrow under ground, used here figuratively], insignificant entities, and not even worthy of being remembered.” Idem, p. 18. (Interestingly, Yerevantsi does not mention them by their real name, not in Tōnac’oyc’ and not even in his yišatak’arans; even Hagopos Chamchian’s name is nowhere to be found.) “Should we rely on such people,” he then asks, “about whom it is uncertain as to which faith they follow, dubious as to which nation or people they belong to, and unknown as to who or where they are, and to what calling they respond.” Ibid., p. 18. One can argue that Yerevantsi’s disparaging comments here are addressed not to the Mekhitarists but to those Armenians working directly for the Propaganda Fide and its Collegio Urbaniano, also known as “Collegians.” However, it is evident from the context that Yerevantsi’s broadsides are aimed principally at the Mekhitarists, without, at the same time, excluding the Collegians. The Mekhitarists, in their turn, dismissed Yerevantsi’s writings for their “heretical” ideas against the Rome. The short caustic entry under “Simon Yerevantsi” in Kensagrowt’iwn ereweli aranc’ [Biography of Eminent People], MAŁAK-TEOPLELEANC, M. (ed.), Venice, 1839, volume 2, states the following: “He was the first among Armenian Catholicoi who dared, in writing, to arm himself against the Holy Throne of Rome, which no one else among those who succeeded our Saint Gregory the Illuminator to the See [of Etchmiadzin] had done. Although Catholicos Ghazar wrote such heretical things, he wrote them before he became Catholicos. This book of Simeon’s, entitled Partav’čar, was filled with so much intolerable nonsense, impudence and ignorance against the Holy Throne of Rome, where he labored to demonstrate that our nation has not altered any of its church doctrines and worship. It did not sell, however. And after writing all this, he himself twisted [xainakeac] the former classification of the holidays of our holy fathers by inventing a new classification according to his fancies and his own system. Consequently, those members of our nation living under Ottoman rule did not accept it at first but only after many years had passed.” Idem, p. 454. It should be noted that the author is mistaken about Partav’čar’s date of publication, which occurred not before but after Tōnac’oyc’ had already come to light. On Yerevantsi’s usage of the term Loterank, see AGHANIANTS, DHP, vol. 3, p. 827, footnote 10; see also below for a fuller discussion of Yerevantsi’s polemic with Catholic Armenians and particularly with the Mekhitarists.
new Tēnako’yoc’ and henceforth to conduct yourselves in accordance with it. The cost of ignoring these orders was excommunication. The Yerevantsi’s new calendar was not merely an idle exercise in setting native dates to the ones proposed by the Mekhitarists; nor was it simply an effort to remove Catholic holidays and their corresponding saints from the religious practices of Armenian Apostolics in Constantinople. It was rather calculated to produce a much more subtle but enduring effect, one that is intimately related to the synergy between temporal and national consciousness. After all, the idea of the calendar, as Benedict Anderson and others have noted, lies at the heart of imagining (and hence “inventing”) national communities. Its manipulation is pivotal in shaping national consciousness in at least three related ways. First, the calendar helps to generate uniform rituals and practices on a collective level by plotting these rituals/practices along a standardized temporal framework. This “common temporal order” enables individuals—who otherwise lead anonymous lives separated from each other by space and time—to become aware of themselves as living “parallel” to others and thus identify themselves, through their shared and simultaneous rituals, as members of the same community rooted in time. Second, the calendar and calendrical reforms not only reflect but also constitute and promote social difference and segregation. They are agents simultaneously of

68. “Behold, with our high authority that comes from the God-descended Holy Throne, and from the divinely miraculous right hand of our father Saint Gregory the Illuminator, and with the authority of our Catholicosate, we declare that henceforth those who love, receive, and employ that deceitful booklet shall be excommunicated or anathemized.” Tēnako’yoc’, p. 17.
69. ANDERSON, B., Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, London, 1991. It goes without saying that Anderson’s key word “imagined” (a household term by now among scholars of nationalism and adjacent fields of inquiry) should not be confused with “imaginary,” as in something false or non-existent. For Anderson, the nation is an “imagined community” in the sense that “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” (6) What is important in this context is the presence of “print-capitalism” or print culture in general, which creates the technical and cultural means through which individuals, who are separated from one another by space, can identify with larger, anonymous publics.
70. Idem, pp. 24-25 and 194.
temporal segregation and integration, of external differentiation and internal standardization. The Gregorian reforms of the Julian calendar in 1582, for instance, clearly accentuated the Catholic/Protestant divide for more than a century, as did Constantine's calendrical reform of the fourth century CE that temporally severed the celebration of Easter from the Jewish Passover, thereby reinforcing the new "identity through difference" of the Church by setting Christianity apart from Judaism. The third feature of the calendar that makes it particularly suitable to shaping group, and especially national, identity is what I call the notion of "centering"—a key strategy of nation-making and a hallmark of modern nation-states. The calendar acts as a supreme centering device by firmly anchoring collective rituals to a homogenized temporal center (i.e., the new system of dates) as well as to the institution that administers and manipulates that center (i.e., the nation-state in most modern cases). That is why nation-making and center-establishing are often engineered by manipulation of the calendar, as with the new French Calendar after the Revolution of 1789.

Forging national identity through temporal "centering" was also Yerevantsi's strategy. His example illustrates—Anderson's claims notwithstanding—that such strategies of "centering" need not rely on the nation-state and its institutions; they can also be pursued in diasporic settings. Indeed, in Yerevantsi's case, "centering" was carried out through the institution of the Church and the Catholicosate in lieu of (and in opposition to) a nation-state (hence my term "centering like a nation-state"). Yerevantsi pursued this policy of centering through various means, including his attempt to establish religious standardization and the homogenization of calendar time, both of which aimed at rooting the dispersed and polycentric nation to the institution of the Catholicosate at Etchmiadzin. Seen in this light, his Tōnac'oyc'thus thus takes on a magnified significance. Its purpose, as Yerevantsi told his readers in his Preface, was to furnish the nation with a new temporal and spatial center (i.e., Etchmiadzin), so as to allow those celebrating the holidays of national saints, synchronically across the scattered body of the dispersion and homeland, to be unified in time and space through their ritual devotion to Etchmiadzin, and simultaneously to be set apart from the Catholic

Armenians. In short, given the importance of religious holidays in shaping national memory and identity in the eighteenth century—and the success of Catholic infiltration into this domain—the publication of Tonačo'yec must be considered a significant feat for Etchmiadzin. Its dissemination throughout the communities of dispersion—particularly in Constantinople and across India—was given high priority as a vital strategy in Yerevantsi’s larger project of combating the polycentric forces jeopardizing Etchmiadzin’s role as the nation’s center. Just as important, in this regard, was the publication of Partavčar, to which we shall return in our commentary below. Printing of this work commenced in 1779 but was only completed three years later, when Yerevantsi had already passed away. Like everything else Yerevantsi wrote or did, this work also aimed at centering the nation on the sacram center of Etchmiadzin.

73. As Ormanian astutely remarks, “the idea of segregating Catholic Armenians from the circle of Armenians by way of introducing liturgical distinctions and obstructing their influence by making their calendar non-usable, was, in some way, part of Simeon’s [i.e., Yerevantsi’s] intention.” The plan, as Ormanian also notes, was partially successful since the Mekhitarists, the Andonians and the Catholicosate of Armenian Catholics in Lebanon categorically rejected Yerevantsi’s new calendar. Idem, pp. 3106-3107.

74. The Yišatakaran provides detailed information on the number of copies of Tonačo'yec sent to Basra, Baghdad and India, and their allocation throughout the communities of dispersion there. See AGHANIANTS, DHP, vol. 8, pp. 422-423.

75. Ironically, instead of unifying or “centering” (Apostolic) Armenians, Yerevantsi’s calendrical reform may have initially reinforced pre-existing polycentric divisions within the nation. In effect, the publication of Tonačo'yec, as Ormanian and others have noted, drove a wedge between Ottoman and Persian Armenians, creating a calendrical dissonance between these two communities. On the one hand, after Etchmiadzin spent considerable efforts at flooding the diaspora with copies of Tonačo'yec and making its application mandatory through the circulation of edicts and encyclicals, most Armenians living under Persian dominion (including those in India and the East) accepted the new calendar shortly after its publication. This was not the case, however, for the Ottoman Armenians, especially those in Constantinople. The Catholic Armenians there dismissed it for obvious reasons, and particularly because Yerevantsi had incorporated Grigor Tatévac'i and Yovhan Orotnec'i—Armenian Church fathers known for their virulent opposition to Rome and the Council of Chalcedon—into the pantheon of Armenian saints. As for the Apostolic community, they too failed to immediately embrace the calendrical reform. Even Patriarch Zakaria was at first disinclined to adopt it since, in his view, Yerevantsi had not consulted Constantinople in undertaking his monumental project, in light of which, enforcing the new Calendar would have only legitimized the highhanded manner in which Etchmiadzin was treat-
The same logic of “centering like a nation-state” also animates the momentous administrative changes Yerevantsi introduced into the management of Etchmiadzin’s affairs. In this respect, one of his first measures as Catholicos was to literally set the Holy See’s papers in order. He did this by commissioning several collections of documents with the aim of facilitating the efficient settlement of legal disputes between the Holy See and the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Jerusalem, as well as with the rival Catholicosates. These collections included detailed inventories of Etchmiadzin’s diocesan sees as well as the legates it had appointed to them. Yerevantsi also pioneered the tradition of maintaining official memoirs (yisatakaran) or books of annals in which summaries of edicts and correspondences of Catholicoi (beginning with himself) were duly recorded. In addition, he embarked on a systematic policy of archiving the Patriarchate. Zakaria eventually agreed to the new reforms in 1776, but even then the Armenians of Constantinople (and arguably most Ottoman Armenians) did not heed his decision. After Yerevantsi’s death, when Zakaria was re-elected as Patriarch in 1784, he banned the new calendar and even had copies of it burned. The Calendar was re-instituted a few years later by his successor, Patriarch Daniel, at which time it became widely used throughout the Empire. It therefore took about fifteen years after the proclamation of Tōnacoyc’ for Ottoman Armenians to come around to restructuring their lives according to Etchmiadzin’s new temporal framework. See Ormanian’s perspicacious treatment of the issue in op.cit., pp. 3108-3109; AGHANIANTS, The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi, op.cit., pp. CLXVIII-CLXXI; and PERPEREAN, A., Hayoc’ Patmowt’wn [History of the Armenians], Constantinople, 1870, pp. 2 and 5.

76. This is the collection that was later published by Kyut Kahana Aghaniants under the title Diwan Hayoc’ patmowt’ean (DHP). (See footnote 43 above). Volumes 3, 8 and 11 of this monumental work contain Yerevantsi’s yisatakaran, covering the period of his tenure as Catholicos. The latter not only offer us the most extensive archives on Yerevantsi, but also contain a mine of information on various aspects of life in the dispersion communities. It should be noted that the opening and closing volumes are the work of the scribe Hovhannes Keghamatsi (later re-christened as Vardapat Issahag), who was the first to undertake this laborious task. The middle volume is the work of Hovhannes the Scribe. Most of the information drawn below is from the second volume of the yisatakaran. For information on the compilers, see AGHANIANTS, DHP, vol. 3, footnote 1 on p. 807 and vol. 11, footnote 1. After his promotion to the rank of vardapat and then Bishop in the early 1770s, Keghamatsi temporarily ceased to work as Yerevantsi’s personal scribe and took upon himself, among other things, the task of supervising Echmiadzin’s press. He resumed his former duties of compiling the yisatakaran following the death of Hovhannes the Scribe in 1776. The colophon of Tōnacoyc’ refers to him as “the spiritual son of our Holiness, Issahag Yepiscopos Keghamatsi, who, in his indefatigable labors, is the general organizer and supervisor of this work and its intendant.” (Tōnacoyc’, p. 562).
ing and taxonomizing Etchmiadzin’s legal and ecclesiastical documents, its edicts, proclamations, encyclicals/bulls, its diocesan financial accounts and landholdings, starting with the earliest contracts and title deeds granted to the Holy See by the secular authorities that, at various times, had ruled over it. This extremely valuable collection, known as Jampre (from the French word chambre⁷⁷), was compiled in 1765 but only discovered and published in 1873.⁷⁸

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77. In the eighteenth century, the word chambre not only designated a chamber or room, but was also a term used by the Catholic Church, as well as by the European states of the time, to refer to a special chamber where official archives were stored. Yerevantsi, as Ormanian points out, most likely came across the term during his years in Constantinople where he was in frequent contact with Armenian clergy who had close ties to the Vatican. See ORMANIAN, op.cit., p. 3029.

78. Yerevantsi writes in his Introduction to Jampre that his goal is to use history (the record of the past, the events of the present and the possibilities of the future—this is his formulation) as a mirror through which the Mother See and its servants, including the Catholicoi, will be able to chart a course in time. He presents his endeavor as follows: “To bring to light and to burnish the good works [zarareceal barerarowt’iwns] and gilded deeds [oskepayl] of the blessed ancestors (which have been covered as if they had disappeared in the darkness of oblivion and ignorance) so that with their brilliant names they shall be permanently glorified in the temple of God at the Holy See. Therefore, I propose to write this book ... which contains, in its entirety, the state of the Holy See, for I have recorded in it all of its conditions, that is to say how it was established, how it existed and how those who occupied its seat were managed or conducted, both internally and externally. [I have also narrated] the spread of its power and honor, and its occasional weakness and sorrow, and I have recounted concerning the Catholicoi who sat there... and I have related the history of their possessions, how and when they had it, that is to say, their diocesan regions, prelacies and also [certain] productive places with their conditions, such as those that paid taxes to it [mlkatow]: villages, ... fields, watermills, ... dwellings, stores or shops... We have also recorded here those realities that are significant and worthy of being remembered, as well as the useful and harmful occurrences of the past, as examples and as a mirror for the future, so that by having what is useful at hand, you shall avoid what is harmful. We have also recorded here all the conditions of our lands and of our neighboring monasteries along with their conditions. Finally, our intention and aim of our effort has been the following: that this book become a complete compendium of knowledge [hanrakanap’tis parownakot], a mirror and informant [canowcanot] to everyone concerning the conditions and future of the Holy See and our monasteries, and an everlasting and always useful monument to the truth of the past as a precaution to what can come later.” At the end of his introductory remarks, Yerevantsi commands his successors to continue his work. Jampre: Girk or koči yišatakaran arja­nacîwcič, hayeli ew parownakoł bnaćič srboy ańoroys, ew iwroy šrjakayić vanorčic’ič [Jampre: A Book Called a Memoir that Registers, a Mirror and Container of all the Conditions of the Holy See, and its Surrounding Monasteries], Vagharshapat, 1873, pp. 3-4.
Jampre begins with a discourse of origins whose primary goal is to invest Etchmiadzin and the institution of the Catholicosate with Biblical authority by comparing its foundation to the Ark of the Covenant of the Israelites. Just as God had shown Moses the form of the temple to be consecrated in a sacred place, which would act as a “mother, educator and sanctuary for the Ancient People [i.e., the Israelites],” likewise writes Yerevantsi, “in more recent times [i.e., in the early fourth century CE], He showed the form of this temple to Saint Gregory (who was the leader of the New Israel) to consecrate, in a special site, a dwelling place for Him [which would act] as a mother, educator and sanctuary for the New People, the nation of the Armenians.” It goes without saying that the allusion here is to Christ’s descent at Etchmiadzin, (the descent of the “only begotten one”) which paves way for Saint Gregory’s consecration of the Holy See on that site. In this fashion, Yerevantsi suggests, Etchmiadzin became a New Jerusalem for the Armenian nation, the pivot and shrine of the nation’s memory and identity.

Yerevantsi then describes how the Holy See was initially “resplendent in its power” but how, with the weakening of the Armenian kingdoms, its authority too began to slowly crumble. He outlines the peregrinations of the Catholicosate from its sacral site to neighboring Dvin, Argina, Ani, Hromkla and Sis, and finally back to its origins in Etchmiadzin. As regrettable as these shifts were, they were nonetheless understandable, he argues, since the leaders of the Church were concerned for the safety of their institution. In other words, given the political uncertainties of the period, Yerevantsi seems to be suggesting that rescuing the “office” could take precedence over the sacredness of the lieu or site. Once the Catholicosate returned to Etchmiadzin (1441), however, the story changed. Dissent, rivalry and polycentrism took root, first with the survival of what he considered to be the renegade Catholicosates of Sis and Aghtamar, and then with the growing defiance of the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Constantinople. The order of power and authority became disordered and the center was lost. Yerevantsi’s principal reason for compiling Jampre was to restore the authority of this “center” and to reaffirm the supremacy of Etchmiadzin and its Catholicos. In a separate chapter addressing the Holy See’s relations with the Patriarchates, Yerevantsi writes:

The spiritual authority of the Holy See extends and spreads out to all places and to all corners of the world where
Armenian-born and Apostolic [Արմենացիական] people and religious assemblies may be found. For wherever churches and clergy, priests and laymen belonging to the Armenian nation exist, under whatever name they may be called, they are entirely bound and enclosed by the authority of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin and its Catholicoi who are successors to Saint Gregory the Illuminator of Armenia. And it is the special authority of the Catholicoi who sit [at Etchmiadzin] to consecrate all Armenian churches, to reform them, to keep them in order, to remove those that are superfluous, to bring to perfection those that are defective, to correct those that have deviated, to remove and to dissolve from the ranks of the Church those that are unworthy and incapable of being corrected...and to dispatch legates as their representatives, at the proper time, to everyone so as to ascertain and become informed about the conditions of the churches and clergy.79

Yerevantsi then targets Etchmiadzin’s polycentric rivals one by one, beginning with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Though a relatively innocuous threat at Yerevantsi’s time, the Patriarchate’s offenses needed to be redressed because of its short-lived bid to become a renegade Catholicosate for Ottoman Armenians.

And Jerusalem is neither a Patriarchate nor a Prelate [Արքապաշտ], for it has no specific see for itself, nor churches or a diocesan flock [ինքնավար խումբ]. Jerusalem is not even a country and realm of the Armenians, because it was formerly a city and country of the Greeks and sometimes, during the rule of the Christian kings, even of their Patriarchate. Later, when it was ruled by the nation of the Ottomans, the Greek Patriarchate and the power of the Christian kings disappeared altogether from there. Thenceforth, it became a general place for the pilgrimage of all Christians, as a result of which, each of them [i.e., Christians] received a special place for themselves, where they built monasteries and Churches, and where each nation stationed its attendants and guardians, so that, by settling there, they would protect their sites and provide sanctuary for

79. Idem, p. 52.
their compatriots. This is also the case with [the Armenians], who are there only as attendants and guardians of the sacred sites which belong to the Armenian nation.  

Much the same applied to the Patriarchate of Constantinople: And likewise with Constantinople, which is not a city or country of the Armenians but of the Greeks, where the Greek Patriarchate was located and continues to exist. But in recent times, and during the dispersion of our nation, when some of them also went there for the purpose of conducting commerce, and in the gradual increase of their population they even settled there, they began to receive their own Armenian churches as a result of which it became necessary for them to have their own prelate [ununqîganûn], which they came to acquire through the permission of the Catholicos. After the power of the Ottomans increased, and when our princes [i.e., the new merchant elite] and general population began to frequent there [i.e., Constantinople], the Prelates began to protest, became arrogant and disregarded the spiritual canons or orders and disrespected the esteem of the Catholicos [um nunû huûnîqûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûûû
Etchmiadzin was insignificant to that power and was also in a backwater of Persian imperial (and later Romanov) realm. That proximity to the Ottoman center, as previously noted, enabled the Patriarch of Constantinople, over time, to gradually remove and appropriate nearly all the diocesan prelacies on Ottoman territory hitherto under Etchmiadzin’s authority. The resulting breach of jurisdictional authority undermined the Holy See’s symbolic place in the religious imaginary of the nation, not to mention shrinking its financial resources; what is more, it curtailed the power of the Catholicos to dispense and maintain the “orthodoxy” of the faith among its dispersed flock. Yerevantsi describes these encroachments and then highlights, in particular, how the Patriarchate’s insubordination was fomenting heresy and corruption:

Because of this, unbelief [փուրակառնարաքեղ] Catholicism [Մատուգարաքեղ] and many unlawful things became frequent in those parts [ճակատաքարու] and still multiply from day to day. And since their prelates reside there under the permission of the Turks and strive only to remit their taxes to the crown and to corrupt themselves, whereas the Catholicosate is under the rule of the Persians, it is not possible for him [i.e., the Catholicos] to rule over them, to impose penalties on them and to mete out corporeal punishment on others. It can only excommunicate them, which does not solve anything since the power of the Ottomans is dangerous and only harm can come from it and not any good, especially since the worm is inside and not on the surface.

It was in light of these views that Yerevantsi devised a scheme to directly subordinate the Patriarchate of Constantinople to his rule. In a brash move, he created a separate office, that of the vice-Catholicos, which would be located in Constantinople to directly supervise (hence control and centralize) the affairs of the Patriarch. To this end, in 1764 he delegated Abraham Asdabatsi to the Ottoman capital, but the plan backfired as Astabatsi’s presence created intense opposition from the local amiras who resented coming under Etchmiadzin’s direct mandate. Asdabatsi attempted to consolidate power by relying on merchants from

83. Idem, p. 56-57.
the Eastern provinces, but to no avail; he was expelled by a royal firman from the capital and returned to Etchmiadzin.84

As for the Catholicosates of Sis, Aghtamar and Albania, Yerevantsi devoted separate chapters in Jampre to exposing their renegade claims to independent authority. The first two were under Etchmiadzin’s control by the time Yerevantsi had assumed the throne of the Catholicosate. Their defiance of Etchmiadzin’s symbolic authority and their attempts at infringing on its diocesan sees, according to Yerevantsi, were successfully rebuffed by his predecessors, despite the Sublime Porte’s tendency to favor Ottoman-based representatives of the Armenian Church over Etchmiadzin. The Catholicosate of Albania, on the other hand, had continued to expand the autonomy it had acquired in the twelfth century when the Mother See was weakened due to the restless movements of its Catholicosate. By the eighteenth century it had encroached on Etchmiadzin’s diocesan sees in Russia, but this too was rebuffed when Yerevantsi succeeded in restoring these sees to the Holy See and in subordinating Gantsasar to the authority of the Catholicos at Etchmiadzin.85

But Yerevantsi reserved his most scathing remarks for the Armenian Catholics or Alt’armayk’.86 In a separate text, published as the conclusion to his Tönacoyc’, he singled them out for special censure. The Armenian Catholics, he argued, were “apostates” who had “disowned the nation and church that gave birth to and nourished them” for no other reason than “bodily pleasures and unbridled gluttony.”87 They had to be

85. For the Catholicosate of Sis, see Jampre, pp. 98-99; for Aghtamar, see Idem, pp. 91-97; and for Albania, see Idem, pp. 63-91. On Yerevantsi’s relations with the Catholicosate of Albania, clearly his most serious challenge within the Church after the Patriarchate of Constantinople, see AGHANIANTS, The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi, op.cit., pp. c-cxx, and ORMANIAN, op.cit., pp. 3052-3053.
86. The term Alt’armay (Alt’armayk’ for plural) is a Turkish loan word (from Aktarma/k) which means 1) to move or to change, in its verbal form, or 2) an apostate, as a noun. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was widely used among Armenian Apostolics, in its second connotation, as a pejorative designation for Armenian Catholics. Yerevantsi employs the term interchangeably with Lot’erank (see footnote 66 above). For a brief explanation, see AGHANIANTS, DHP, vol. 3, p. 828, footnote 23; and AJARIAN, Hayoc’ lezowi patmowt’iwn, op.cit., p. 283.
87. Tönacoyc’, p. 545.
branded as “foes” because, having left their church for the comforts of Europe, they had turned back to “revile” their own confession and nation. In a particularly graphic passage, Yerevantsi likened them to dangerous parasites on the body-spirit of the nation:

They are like moths who have come out of a piece of clothing and are piercing holes in that same garment, or like wood-worms who appear out of wood only to corrode that same wood. They are the small foxes [ինչու ինչպիսի ինչու] that spoil our fields. They are the forerunners of the Anti-Christ [իտարծունիք տարբեր], who have already arrived. They are the ones who stemmed from us but were not from us, for had they been one of us they would have remained with us... They are despicable and worthy of being chased away like poisonous serpents and like deceitful foxes that blight the canons and orders of our sacred church.

Moths or small foxes Catholic Armenians may have been for Yerevantsi, but the fact was that they were the Holy See’s most formidable opponents. For, in Yerevantsi’s view at least, not only did they defy Etchmiadzin’s role as the supreme center of the Armenians (which is what the Patriarchates and rival Catholicosates were also doing), they also questioned the very orthodoxy and independence of the Armenian Church. They did this either by labeling it a heretical institution in need of being subsumed under the Church of Rome (which was the bellicose position of the Collegians) or by striving to “ecumenically” unite it with Rome, albeit without going so far as to label its teachings as heresy (which

88. Inter-confessional feuds between Catholic Armenians and Apostolics were rife in the eighteenth century, especially in Constantinople, where the Patriarchate frequently resorted to the Porte in its determined and on occasion violent persecution of Catholic missionaries and converts. However, as Leo points out, the extreme to which Yerevantsi took his anti-Catholic zeal was unparalleled. “He began a campaign of persecution against Catholic priests working on the border of Georgia and elsewhere not only through the collaboration of [King] Heracles [of Georgia] but also through that of the local Muslim rulers... Wherever Armenians who had joined the Catholics were discovered, they were sent to Etchmiadzin through the local authorities. There, Simeon would punish them and would release them only after he had received their confession of sins. These inquisitorial practices constitute the darkest aspect of Simeon’s tenure as Catholicos.” LEO, Hayoc’ patmowt’iwn, op.cit., p. 280. For inter-confessional violence in Constantinople, see SIRUNI, op.cit.

89. Տոնակցություն, p. 550.
was the dovish policy of the Mekhitarists). For Yerevantsi, this was a distinction without a difference since, in his view, what mattered most was the charge of “apostasy.” Regardless of the Mekhitarist claim that one could be Armenian by ethnicity or “nationality” and Catholic by confession, Yerevantsi insisted that membership in the nation entailed 1) belonging to the Armenian Church, and 2) accepting the “divine right” of Etchmiadzin as the sacral center of the nation. On this count, even the dissenters of Sis or Aghtamar could be seen as operating within the fold of the nation, despite their essentially administrative, not religious, form of defiance of the Holy See; the Mekhitarists and especially the Collegians, on the other hand, according to Yerevantsi, had entirely broken with the nation, thus making them even more treacherous.

The Catholic Armenians were also pernicious for Yerevantsi because, unlike the dissenters within the Armenian Church, they were armed with the best that European power and technology had to offer, against which Etchmiadzin’s resources were rather meager. “Their lands [i.e., Europe] are filled with all good things and all resources,” Yerevantsi wrote, alluding to both the Collegians in Rome and the Mekhitarists in Venice. Their “instruments and craftsmen are plenty and affordable, and they are entirely free and bear no grief from being under the exactions and despotism of Muslim rulers since their authority rests with the Christians.”

In short, unlike Etchmiadzin’s workers who labored under predatory conditions, the Mekhitarists and Collegians could operate in an environment where work could be “successfully accomplished without any barriers.” This, in addition to their easy access to print technology (“their most powerful craft of deception” and the secret of their success), gave them an edge over Etchmiadzin, a fact that was not lost on Yerevantsi since one of the principal reasons why he established a press at the Holy See was to turn the weapons of the Catholics against them:

[In this manner] they darken their slanderous pages with mockery and loquacity, they ornament the exterior [of their books] as they please, load them up in their ships and send them here and there as though they were rare and astonishing new things. And they sell them at four or five times the price. Now upon seeing their beautiful appearance,
our innocent and blessed nation thinks they are filled with unknown knowledge. And if it happens that among these works one out of a hundred or a thousand turns out to be useful and acceptable, that is because it has been stolen from our works.93

The rest of the books, however, were “full of fables” and poisonous doctrines that “twisted and deformed” the spiritual precepts of “our blessed ancestors.”94 To be sure, the Catholic Armenians made much of their “suffer[ing] and toil[ing] on account of your welfare so that you shall be educated,” Yerevantsi told his readers; but the fact is that “with such deceptive means they sucked and continue to suck the blood of some of our feeble people.”95

Throughout this long and extraordinary diatribe, Yerevantsi never once mentions his opponents by name. He holds no distinctions between Collegians or Mekhitarists, as noted earlier. However, on two occasions he makes oblique remarks, suggesting that the Mekhitarists were among his primary targets. The first is the allusion to Hagopos Chamchian’s *Oracoyc’* (again not mentioned by name), which indeed provides the overall context and condition of possibility for his diatribe.96 The other and more intriguing pointer is the clue he drops in the context of his discussion of “small foxes” and “wood-worms,” where he characterizes his foes as “those who have disowned us and our church, who consider us to be schismatic and strayed, and write their names and place them above that of ours [հեղինակություն երկրի հեղինակություն].”97 This must surely be considered as one of the most singular passages in the entire text since it reveals to the reader that the Mekhitarists are in fact behind the nameless mask of Yerevantsi’s foe; after all, they were the only Catholic Armenians who printed the name of the “Catholicos of All Armenians” anywhere on their

95. Idem, p. 546.
96. See the discussion above and the Preface of *Töncöyc’*.
98. This custom, which was an integral part of the Mkhitarist orientation on matters concerning the orthodoxy of the Armenian Church, was discontinued in 1800. Since the Collegians or other Catholic proselytizers working for the Propaganda Fide did not recognize the orthodoxy of the Armenian Church, they did not place the name of the Catholicos on their title pages.
Immediately after this sentence, Yerevantsi asks:

How is it worthy of us to consider such apostates [նաևագնդում] as our friends or to accept their deviant books?

On account of this, I beseech you all, my dear Armenian nation, [...] to totally scorn and despise them [արագտագրմում], to shun them [արագտվածություն], to chase them from your midst as deadly enemies of your souls and bodies. In the first place, condemn and annihilate [անհաստատ] their deceitful and poisonous books from among you. For though on the surface they may appear beautiful, their contents are filled with fetid substance [գործուղակցում] and deception, as is the case with fatal medicine that is covered with honey. If they [these books] are about matters of faith and belief [սբանակ] the traditions of the church, then we have quite a few such books from our blessed ancestors.59

Though Yerevantsi anathemized the religious publications with which the Mekhitarists and Collegians were flooding the markets of Constantinople and India, his attitude towards their strictly secular books (i.e., those that did “not contain things against our faith, confession or church”100) was slightly more accommodating. Faced with the growing demand for and unrivaled quality of Mekhitarist publications in the field of grammar and lexicography in particular, Yerevantsi could not but yield to the pressures of the reading public. He thus grudgingly granted his flock permission, if need be, to consult such books. However, he counseled them to treat these works as though foreigners had written them. Readers should “enter” their pages, he wrote, invoking the metaphor of the book as a distant and alien country, as “spies” entering a foreign land; that is they should take what is useful and leave aside what is “vile.”101 In any case, he promised his followers that Etchmiadzin would soon outpace
the Mekhitarists and Collegians by producing “better and more important works than theirs, for we have been working and keeping a vigil for five years in order to acquire and establish this craft [of printing].”

Yerevantsi’s diatribe against Catholic Armenians demonstrates the seriousness with which he took the Catholic threat. More than all other rivals, these “newfangled Catholics” jeopardized Etchmiadzin’s sacral position as “centering center” of both religion and nation. The diatribe also suggests that Yerevantsi was selective in his condemnation, at least as far as the Mekhitarists were concerned. He rejected those aspects of their intervention in the crisis of the eighteenth century that dealt with religious matters. But he was compelled to reluctantly accept their contribution in the realm of language and Western knowledge. Even this, however, was a provisional measure, since he planned to devote Etchmiadzin’s press to the task of overtaking the Mekhitarists in their own game. How he would have reacted to the Mekhitarist “conquest of the historical world” pioneered by Mikayel Chamchian’s masterpiece (not to mention their interventions in geography and in the field of education), had he lived long enough to see it, is an interesting question. More than likely, like his former student Archbishop Arghutiantz, he would have dismissed it on grounds that it distorted the history of the nation and the doctrines of the Church.

Let us now turn to the discourse of dispersion and the nation found in Partavčar. As we shall see, the latter contains the theoretical elaboration of the policies Yerevantsi pursued while in office. It is also an

102. Idem, pp. 553-554.
103. The term is from Ernest Cassirer’s classic work, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, Princeton, 1951. For its application to the Mekhitarist enterprise and particularly to Chamchian, see Nichanian’s discussion in Enlightenment and Historical Thought, op.cit., pp. 96-97.
104. Arghutiantz was one of the first to reproach Chamchian’s History of the Armenians as a work filled with distortions, a charge that Chamchian refuted in a sardonic letter he sent to the Archbishop, bearing the signature of Bishop Harutiun Basentsi of Constantinople. Arghutiantz’s text was published in Madras in 1791 as Ïrinak handisawor canow’emaw ew olboc... (Unfortunately, I have not been able to consult this source.) For the polemic between Arghutiantz and Chamchian, and the texts of their correspondence, see LEO, Hayoc’ Patmawt’wn, op.cit., pp. 464-467; see also a fuller version of the texts in AGHANIANTS, The Biography of Simeon Yerevantsi, op.cit., pp. CXXXVIII-CXLIV, and Djemjemian’s brief discussion in his Mikayel
epistolary form of the classificatory scheme and strategy of “centering like a nation-state” found in Jampre and Tönaćeoyć, including the diatribe against Armenian Catholics contained in its Conclusion. Moreover, Partavčar is a pivotal text in Yerevantsi’s oeuvre because it is in its pages that Yerevantsi most explicitly links his strategy of “centering,” elaborated in the two previous works, to the larger problematic of dispersion and diaspora. Hitherto, the link between these three works has not been noted by others, including Ormanian and Aghaniants, who are two of the most prolific commentators on Yerevantsi’s life and work.
From Nerses the servant of Christ and, through his compassion, the Catholicos of the Armenians to all of you believers of the Armenian race, to those living in our realm of Armenia in the East, to those who have migrated and settled in the numerous countries of the West, to those who have moved among nations with foreign tongues, to those who, because of our sins, have been scattered to all the corners of the world, to cities, castles, villages, lands—to all of you, to the high priests, princes and subjects, to mounted and foot soldiers, to heads of regions and overseers, to the landed nobility and peasants, to the merchants and craftsmen, and to all of them who, according to their preferences and will, have embraced the various fields of life, and also to the men and women, to the children and youth, to the adults and elderly, who conduct themselves in accordance to the rules of this world and to those who follow a celestial calling, we greet you all with love and peace from the redeeming Holy Cross that is most agreeable to God, from the apostolic relics that have received the fiery
tongues of the spirit, from the right hand of the Illuminator, and from our Seat.\textsuperscript{105}

With these words, Nerses Shnorhali opened his Թուղց էնդհանրական (General Epistle) in 1166, nestled in the castle of Hromkla, where sixteen years earlier his family had been forced to relocate the institution of the Catholicosate.\textsuperscript{106} Shnorhali’s graceful and poetic epistle is marked with the spirit of urgency. It was composed on the heels of the displacement of his people and the loss of their last kingdom in the homeland. Shnorhali had just mounted the throne as the Catholicos. His Church was wracked by dissension. In his epistle, he writes about his responsibility to discharge God’s injunction to become a “good shepherd and bring down the providential commandments to the flowing meadows, and to rear our flock with the nourishing waters of the wisdom of the spirit.”\textsuperscript{107}

But how can we perform our duties, [he wrote,] ... and chase the wolves and cure the wounded when the shepherd and the flock find themselves so far apart from each other? How can we become a guide to those who refuse to follow their leader’s traces towards the royal course to heaven, but rather choose to advance along the wide boulevard that conducts them directly to the bowels of Hell? How can we be interceders of God with such men who do not want to maintain the covenant sworn with God ... but rather, breaching it, willingly follow evil... Now, because this is the general picture, I am terrified and I tremble from the fear of God’s judgment, lest this work of stewardship entrusted to me by Him shall give rise to disrespect instead of glory, to shame instead of an unfading crown. What am I to do to save my soul from these terrifying threats? I am perplexed because on account of the calamities of our times and the presence of multiple powers it is impossible to go around to all of them [i.e., the Armenians], to all the parts of the world, and to preach God’s

\textsuperscript{105}NERSES SHNORHALI, Nersesi Șnorhalwoy Katolikosi Hayoc țowlt șndhan­rakan ar hamôrên hayasêr azins [The General Epistle to the Entire Armenian Nation by Nerses Shnorhali, the Catholicos of the Armenians], Venice, 1830, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{106}Between 1066 and 1203, the Catholicosate remained in the naxarar family of the Pahlavuni, from which Shnorhali hailed.

\textsuperscript{107}Idem, p. 5.
word like the holy apostles. Our nation does not even have a
capital where the king resides or an assembly so that, sitting
on the pontifical and doctoral seat, we could teach the com-
mandments of God to our people like the first patriarchs and
doctors. Rather, we have fled like dear from the hunters and
the hounds and have taken shelter in this cavern [i.e.,
Hromkla]...

Then, comparing his predicament to that of the apostle Paul
who, though in manacles, dutifully preached the Gospel of orthodoxy
through his epistles from afar, he wrote: “Like him, constrained in this
scorching cavern—as in a voluntary prison and manacles—we are forced
to speak through the writing of our hands with everyone who has ears to
listen instead of speaking through words.”

A little over six hundred years later, Simeon Yerevantsi
addressed the nation from his own “scorching cavern” at Etchmiadzin. He
too wrote with the same siege mentality. Though, unlike Shnorhali before
him, his pontifical throne had finally come to rest in its original site at
Etchmiadzin, he too felt confronted with what he perceived as unprece-
dented dissension and polycentric dispersion. His ability to travel among
his scattered followers, to “bridle” and “redirect” the diffusers of heresy
and dissent in their midst, was also restricted by the presence of “multiple
powers.” Thus, self-consciously modeling his discourse after Shnorhali’s,
Yerevantsi likened himself to the apostle Paul:

On account of the calamitous events of our times, I am
unable to come and to appear in person before all of you,
which is in any case impossible to do. As a result, I am com-
pelled to write this small booklet and to send it to you all,
informing you in particular...about that which I am obliged
to tell you and that to which you are obliged to listen and
know, and especially to carry out. Because of this, I beg you
all in the name of Christ to accept it willingly, to read it inteli-
gently, and to comprehend and carry out its ideas, as though
I were present before you and speaking to you in person.

108. Idem, pp. 5-6.
109. Idem, p. 7
110. Partavčar, pp. 4-5.
Girk' or koči Partavčar, pace its author’s admission, is not a “small booklet.” It is rather a lengthy polemic and exhortation in one. The work is comprised of two sections, the first of which addresses doctrinal issues dividing the Armenian Apostolic Church from that of Rome. Yerevantsi presents here a spirited defense of Etchmiadzin's official position against the Council of Chalcedon and a theological vindication of the doctrine of monophysism as the core doctrine of the Armenian faith. His arguments in these pages are rehearsals of earlier points raised by others, including Nalian. What is original about Partavčar, however, is the second and longer section of the work.

Chapter six of the second section, running for nearly sixty-five pages, contains the kernel of YerevantSi’s peculiar discourse on the nation and the key to understanding his policy of “centering like a nation-state.” It is entitled: “Exhortation to the Armenian Nation, so that they may be emboldened in their learning of books, may bear with patience their various temptations for the sake of their faith, may keep in mind our Saint Gregory the Illuminator and his Seat of Holy Etchmiadzin, may recognize it as their unique spiritual parent and as the cause for the enlightenment of the Armenian nation to which they are obliged to remain obedient and true wherever they may be, and so that they may remain unwavering in their faith and confession.”

In the fashion of Shnorhali (though his name is not invoked), this epistle within an epistle is addressed to the entire nation. The context, however, suggests that its primary recipients are the wealthy merchants and literate elites in urban diasporic centers stretching from Constantinople, the Crimea and Transylvania in the West to New Julfa, India and the far-flung commercial settlements in the East. The fact that Shnorhali’s T'owl’t Andhanrakan is like a specter informing almost everything Yerevantsi writes in these pages is not arbitrary; Shnorhali, after all, was among the first Armenian Catholicoi to invoke the term Spiurk or dispersion/diaspora in his sermon, and certainly the first to examine the malaise of the Church-nation through the lens of dispersion. But the motives and historical context for Yerevantsi’s own epistle are decisively different from that of Shnorhali. Partavčar is in fact deeply marked not only with the trauma of dispersion (which was, in any case, much more widespread in

111. LEO, Hayoc' Patmowt'iwn, p. 461.
112. Partavčar, p. 264.
Yerevantsi’s time) but also with the concerns of a Catholicos who was eminently aware of the fact that he was living in the shadows of the modern; allusions to the superiority of European states, technology and knowledge, a faint cognizance of the Enlightenment and its impact on shifting the semantic terrain of nation and dispersion—these are all present but repressed under the surface of Yerevantsi’s writing; they are also precisely what make this text such a unique document for reading the eighteenth century crisis.

The chapter on exhortation opens with a diagnosis of the crisis of education. “I see everywhere,” Yerevantsi writes, “that the knowledge, study and reading of books has decreased and lessened as though it were regarded as a superfluous thing, as a result of which it has been extinguished and has disappeared from our nation.” He then compares this to the high levels of literacy and knowledge of books in other nations, especially the Christian ones (that is to say the nations of Europe), but also among the Muslim and even the pagan nations. The other nations, Yerevantsi states, have schools and special places of learning in their cities, towns and marketplaces, “as if it were an obligation for everyone to know how to read and write according to their capabilities.”113 In the Armenian nation, on the other hand, the opposite is the case. The Armenians, wherever “they happen to be in the dispersion, have no schools of learning, nor teachers or instructors nor any students.”114 This was partially because those who were “wealthy and belong to illustrious families deem it a great shame and a mark of failure for themselves and their reputation to educate their children in the learning of books, as though it were a vulgar and useless craft unworthy of them.”115 That is why instead of educating their young they train them in the secular crafts. Yerevantsi also blames the diasporic merchant elite for neglecting to create institutions of learning for their less fortunate compatriots, despite the possibilities and wealth at their disposal.116

Given the lamentable situation in the diaspora, the task of educating the nation’s children should have naturally fallen on the monasteries and schools in the homeland. But it was precisely here that the crisis had struck most severely. In one of the most striking passages in

114. Idem, p. 266.
Partavčar, Yerevantsi addresses this issue and interestingly links it to the dispersion of the nation from its native lands and its consequent alienation from the mother Church in Etchmiadzin. Referring to “the blessed and golden age” in the past, he writes:

Alas in these times, everything has changed for the opposite. Our nation almost in its entirety was exiled from its native lands [בּ פְּנֹתֻּ לַפְּלַמְּרְתָּו] and scattered among all nations and foreign kingdoms. The land of the Armenians has remained almost desolate and has ceased from being worked upon by our nation [גּוּפְּרְפְּרְפְּרְפְּלְפְּעַ גְּגְוָהְלָטָו גְּגְוָהְלָטָו]. Our divine monasteries and churches have become desolate and now serve as dwellings for wild beasts. Only the Holy See of Etchmiadzin with so many run down monasteries has remained as a mother deprived of her children. She is in inconsolable grief, for she sees her offspring withdrawn from her through a journey without return, separated and estranged from each other physically and in habits [דָּפְּנְפְּנְפְּנְפְּלְפְּעַ], through language and manners, and she is not capable of bringing them to unity, of domesticating them [כּוּפְּנְפְּנְפְּפְּפִּפְּפְּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּפִּפְּp].

As we have noted above, Yerevantsi was not the only Armenian leader to perceive the crisis in education as one of the primary symptoms of the larger crisis of dispersion and polycentricity. The Mekhitarists had

also realized the severity of this crisis and had turned their efforts to “totalizing” the ensemble of the nation’s cultural and literary artifacts (rare manuscripts and so on) into an archive, which they then used to restore the “purity” of the classical language and to reconstruct the nation’s history. The crisis was also felt on the distant shores of Madras, where it was diagnosed in modern national terms, that is to say, for the intellectual-activists of Madras, ignorance was seen as the principal barrier preventing the new generation from remembering the illustrious deeds of their ancestors; hence the reason why they looked upon education as an instrument for resuscitating the lost virtues and glory of the nation (see below). In contrast to the latter, Yerevantsi’s reading of the crisis, as with everything else he undertook as Catholicos, was inflected by his fears over Etchmiadzin’s vulnerable place in the polycentric field characterizing the religious-national imaginary of Armenians. For Yerevantsi, the difference between education and ignorance was the difference between faith and apostasy or spiritual purity and pollution, which in turn meant the difference between being Armenian and non-Armenian:

It is on account of this ignorance of our nation that so many people adhering to the Catholic faith, so many Armenian Catholics and deceivers freely enter our nation and circulate fearlessly and audaciously from house to house, city to city, and town to town...and [in this fashion] they corrupt our nation. For they see [us] as a city without fortifications...and they say and teach as they please. And as our whole nation, including the prelates, priests and population, is ignorant and uninformed about its own laws and confession, there is no one who can confront and vitiate their false preaching.118

In short, for Yerevantsi education was a means of fortifying Etchmiadzin’s religious traditions, and by extension maintaining the reli-

118. Idem, pp. 267-268. Addressing the connection between education and religious uprightness, Yerevantsi writes elsewhere that other nations did not deem it worthy to “consider [illiterate people] in the ranks of men. Consequently, if there happened to be arguments or discussions on matters of faith, religious precepts or other things that pertain to religion, all of them, even their peasant laborers, women and children, would instantly and freely reply by defending their religion as though they were accomplished vardapets of the Church aware of their laws, as we have certainly witnessed and know. As for our nation, we have witnessed the opposite of what we have said.” Idem, p. 266.
gious boundaries around the nation. It is in this light that he therefore exhorts the Armenians, particularly the diasporic merchant elite, to instruct their children at an early age before they are trained in the crafts, provided they heed the following caveat: “Strive to follow the orthodox persons of our nation and take care not to mix with the Armenian Catholics [ուրիշայության].”

In the same epistle, Yerevantsi counsels his flock to willingly bear the sorrows, grief and tribulations of life in the dispersion with patience. These hardships may seem bitter, he writes, but they are nonetheless “signs of God’s supreme love and not of hatred.” The fact is that God “loves the Armenian nation in a special and unique manner among all the Christians and finds it particularly suitable and worthy of his kingdom.” On account of this, he “punishes and admonishes us [ապահովի, գրավում] more and places us at the mercy of foreigners so that they may torture and beat us mercilessly and discipline us with various calamities [ուրռուս, սպառում] for us not to be educated in a disorderly way following our impudent manners [քիչ, տարած, մարդուն, վերացնում հաշվեր, կարգածվում].” In other words, for Yerevantsi homelessness and suffering in the dispersion are the only paths to following Christ, so long as they are suffered in the name of the faith. In this, the predicament of the Armenians is a continuation of the exile and dispersion of the Israelites. The only difference is that the Israelites, according to Yerevantsi, had broken their covenant with the Lord, following which God had abandoned them and had instead taken the “New Israel” into adoption, namely the Christians. And among the nations of the New Israel, he had marked the Armenians for distinction, which is why unlike the other nations who lived in comfort, God subjected the Armenians to the temptations and tribulations of exile as he had once done with the Israelites.

121. Idem, p. 286.
124. “All these difficulties that you bear, the persecutions, the sorrows, poverty, your exile from your ancestral lands and your servitude to foreigners—all of these in their entirety are signs of the utmost love and compassion that God has towards us than towards any other nation, whom he keeps in comfort in this life. For he wills that we provi-
Elaborating on the view that the Armenians had inherited the mantle of chosenness once bestowed upon the Jews, Yerevantsi refers to the Babylonian exile of the Israelites. His paradigmatic text is the Book of Jeremiah, where the prophet bewails the dispersion and separation of the Israelites from the bosom of their mother Jerusalem. Yerevantsi’s concerns are also those of Jeremiah’s, namely that diasporic existence might prove to be too difficult and tempting for the Armenians, that on account of the vast distances separating them from their own Jerusalem at Etchmiadzin they might forget their (religious) identity and traditions:

Because of your sins and as punishment to you, God removed and exiled you from your fatherland, from your native country [הַפּוּחַלְך] and noble inheritance [עַתּוּנְתָּ יָדְעוּיִשְׁתֵּנְסִיפַּת]. And he separated you from the bosom and embrace of your mother—the holy church of Armenia—and he sent you into exile by scattering you among foreign nations and foreign tongues where you shall remain until he takes pity on you and once again visits upon you. For that reason, he commands you with compassion through this epistle that upon entering the various countries and various nations, and upon your seeing the diverse sects, faiths and religions of the many nations, you should take caution from them and should not follow or resemble them. Rather, you should keep your own faith saying in your mind and heart that our faith, confession and religion is that which we have received from the hands of our ancestor Saint Gregory the Illuminator.

In sum, despite its dark side, dispersion was a mark of providential distinction. It transformed the Armenians (like the Jews before them) into God's “chosen people.” Like the Jews, but superceding and replacing them, the Armenians would be delivered to the Promised Land if they kept their covenant with the Lord, which could only occur if the nation in dis-

persion was unwavering in faith and commitment to its own Jerusalem, that is to say, Etchmiadzin.

At this juncture, Yerevantsi addresses the unique features of the Armenian nation. The immediate comparison he can make is with the European nations of the same period.

Among so many nations, the Armenian nation is unique, singular, notable, and famous. Dispersed and scattered to all the uttermost extremities of the world, it does not have an earthly kingdom or a special realm or assembly [երուսալիմունի գործուղու], or an exclusive support or bond [երուսալիմունի գործուղու] that can enable our entire nation to ground itself on it, and always, keeping that into consideration, to remain connected and dependent on it [այս ուրույնությունը մաքր կնի առկայանին և այս ուրույնությունը կից կրենական գործուղու]. Other sister nations, having a corporeal head, rely upon it, and connected to it, always remain dependent on it and are recognized in name through it [կառավարությունների ու անկայունությունների]. And wherever they move and however long they remain there, in the end they always have recourse to their particular head [իր գործուղու], their support and their realm upon which they are dependent. And if they don’t take recourse to it by themselves, the head forcibly draws them towards itself, as is evident.¹²⁷

Immediately after this normative inversion of the Armenian predicament, he writes:

The Armenian nation does not possess this corporeal head in order for it to be able to assemble our nation around itself and to preserve it in its name, as we have stated. On account of this, if they [the Armenians] happen to be in a comfortable and safe place, they remain there. And if they suffer in that place, they move to another one, as is certain. However, in the realm of spirituality [հարստության], by the grace of God there remains for our nation, in the native and noble lands of the Armenians, a special place and support, and a

¹²⁷ Idem, p. 319.
special head and lever [?] [πρύτανη] on which our entire nation relies and where it is connected to itself, where everyone being dependent, can be recognized, renowned and distinguished from other nations.\textsuperscript{128}

What is remarkable about these passages is the distinction Yerevantsi introduces between “special head,” on the one hand, and “earthly kingdom,” “particular realm” and “special assembly,” on the other. The “special head” in Yerevantsi’s description really means the sacral center of Etchmiadzin that can act as both a compass of orientation and anchor and root for the fragments of the nation; it is the supreme “centering center,” both temporally (in terms of the Calendar), spatially (in terms of its sacred lieu in the heart of the homeland) and religiously/culturally (in terms of being the origin and dispenser of religious/cultural orthodoxy that helps define the Armenians as a bounded nation and, in doing so, segregates them from the “other,” especially the Catholics and Muslims). This is the seal that makes the Armenians so exceptional; though they are a nation without a territorialized secular center, and though they are scattered and spatially fragmented, they nonetheless have a holy site in their homeland that “represents” them religiously and keeps them distinct from their neighbors. Yerevantsi was conscious of the fact that these traits set the Armenians apart from the modern norm of nationhood that was beginning to coalesce in eighteenth century Europe. That is why he characterized the latter by the triangulated hallmarks of “earthly kingdom,” “particular realm” and “special assembly” or, to put it in other words, by a centralizing state, a clearly demarcated territory, and governmental or administrative institutions such as assemblies or parliaments (as was the case with France and especially Britain). Yerevantsi was also aware that the European norm had certain advantages absent in the Armenian case; after all, the “corporeal head forcibly draws them [those members of the nation that had strayed from the center, both geographically and in terms of “moral deviance”] towards itself.”\textsuperscript{129} Despite these advantages, however, he still regarded the Armenian exception as a mark

\textsuperscript{128} Idem, pp.319-320.

\textsuperscript{129} Although I cannot produce textual proof for this, I think it is safe to assume that Yerevantsi acquired first hand experience of the advantages of the European model while serving as legate in Constantinople, where the representatives of the European states had legal and political rights over their subjects on Ottoman territory.
of distinction bestowed by God. The dispersion, albeit violent and painful, had to be endured by the nation because it was the price for being “chosen”; it tested the nation’s character (through hardship, punishment, and temptation) and prepared the way for the “Promised Land.” Here is the crux of the matter for Yerevantsi: the Promised Land both in the sense of the “living land” (լիճի կղզու տարածք) of Ararat (i.e., the Armenian homeland) and the kingdom of God, could only be vouchsafed through the Messiah. Providence is the historical actor in this scenario, not the “nation.”

Herein lies the difference between Yerevantsi’s essentially millenarian or messianic discourse and, as we shall see below, that of his Enlightenment counterparts in Madras. We shall come back to this later, but suffice to say here that, despite Yerevantsi’s strategy of “centering like a nation-state,” there is no modern diasporic discourse of “return to the homeland” in his work, nor any hint of privileging the liberation of the nation on its territory. On the contrary, as his bellicose confrontation with the Madras activists demonstrates, Yerevantsi was opposed to schemes of “national liberation” inspired by Enlightenment ideals not only because they were impractical and perilous in his view, but also because they went against the prerogatives of the Holy See as the representative institution of the nation. This, in part, explains his staunch opposition to the liberation efforts of Joseph Emin, a Madras-raised Armenian who had traveled to England to learn the “art of warfare” and the fruits of European wisdom (i.e., the Enlightenment) and had then “returned” to the homeland to dispense his new ideas to his countrymen. Thus in the absence of messianic intervention, the task of “unifying” and “bridling” the unruly nation in dispersion would fall on Etchmiadzin and its Catholicos as the “spiritual head” of the nation.

130. Tölölyan’s claim that references to Providence in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Armenian national discourse in India amounted to seeing God as a secular agent of history is true for the Madras intellectuals, but certainly does not apply to Yerevantsi. For him God was anything but a secular agent. See TÖLÖLYAN, K., Textual Nation: Poetry and Nationalism in Armenian Political Culture, in Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation, SUNY, R.G. - KENNEDY, M.D. (eds.), Ann Arbor, 1999, p. 90.

To top things off, Yerevantsi then outlines what can only be referred to as the “divine right” of the Catholicosate as the sole spiritual head or representative of the nation. He ties his argument to the medieval notion of kings as elected representatives of God on earth. In his view, God initially appointed kings to maintain order and rank in society and to act as his divine representatives. However, since there was no order and God was not properly worshipped, God sent his only begotten one to act as his representative. Christ thus became king and lord, the bearer of both supernatural and natural authority. He then delegated his powers to the twelve disciples and ordered them to convert all the nations. “And among these twelve substitutes [for Christ], two were allotted to the country and nation of the Armenians, that is Thaddeus and Bartholomew.”

When they were unable to fully convert the nation, they asked God to bestow the future right of conversion and of divine representation onto Saint Gregory. “Therefore, in accordance to the pleas of our holy evangelists, Christ conferred [the right of divine representation] to Saint Gregory the Illuminator.” The Illuminator then founded the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin and emancipated the Armenians from the dominion of the “invisible pharaoh,” that is from idolatry and Zoroastrianism. After his passing away, his authority was transmitted to the Catholicoi who succeeded him. Thus the institution and person of the Catholicos, as well as the site of the institution, acquired the divine right to represent the nation. The Catholicos became the sole intercessor of Christ with the Armenians, the link in a long chain of surrogates for Gregory and through him to the two evangelists and to Christ.

Gregory the Illuminator is ours; only he and no one else is the leader of your religious order [υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ Πνεύματος Χριστοῦ], whom you are fully obligated to follow, especially in matters of faith and tradition. Because he is the successor to Christ [υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ Πνεύματος Χριστοῦ] and is his closest kin from our nation, and it is through him that our entire nation communi-

132. The use of the term in this context is Töloļyan’s. See his brief but cogent comments on Yerevantsi in Textual Nation, p. 90. Yerevantsi, it should be noted, does not explicitly use this terminology, though his discussion makes it abundantly clear that this is what he means.

133. Partavčar, p. 306. For a more thorough discussion of Thaddeus and Bartholomew’s role in converting the Armenians, see chapter 2 of Jampre, pp. 9-17.

cates with and recognizes Christ and partakes of his grace. And only his replacement [i.e., the Catholicos] is the commander and spiritual ruler at the head of the entire nation, and everyone is obligated to obey him in accordance to the arrangement of Christ, our God. Because only the successor [of Gregory] directly and completely [[ŋnuqtu] receives spiritual grace and all orders from Christ [quOhruqtu] and renders and distributes them by himself to those closest to him, to his successors [[ŋtuŋnuqu], and through their hands to all the flock until the last one.13

To sum up, thus far I have been arguing that throughout his three principal texts (i.e., Tōna'oyc', Jampre and Partavčar), Yerevantsi pursues what I call the strategy of “centering like a nation-state.” The purpose of this strategy, I have shown, is to offer a cure to the general crisis of dispersion afflicting the Armenians during the eighteenth century and particularly to two of its primary symptoms: the crisis of education and polycentricity. I have also attempted to demonstrate that this cure took the shape of a new discourse on the nation that represents the latter as an imagined community dispersed in space but bounded by religion and centered on the institution of the Catholicosate in Etchmiadzin. To tease out this discourse from Yerevantsi’s texts, I have been reading the latter, up to this point, against the backdrop of Yerevantsi’s critique of the polycentric tendencies stemming from the rivalry of the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Constantinople and the competing Catholicosates (Sis, Aghtamar and Gantsasar), on the one hand, and from the Armenian Catholics (including the Mekhitarists), on the other. I would like to now interpolate another element into my reading of Yerevantsi, namely the work of the Madras intellectual-activists. Such a move is indispensable for a thicker interpretation of Yerevantsi’s discourse, especially in Partavčar, since the latter was also written as an implicit or symptomatic response to and criticism of the Madras activists and their work.

135.Idem, p. 314. See also Jampre, chapter 8, pp. S1ff. It is interesting to note that as Yerevantsi was battling the “heresies” of Rome, he was simultaneously borrowing one of its ideological stratagems, namely the religious and earthly power of the Pope as the sole intercessor between Christ and his believers.
Seven years before the printing of Yerevantsi’s book, another work was published in the Armenian community of Madras. Like Partavčar, it also addressed the problematic of dispersion, polycentrism and their discontents. But its interpretation of this problematic and the solutions it prescribed were antithetical to those embraced by Yerevantsi. The book was Nor tetrak or koči yordorak136 [New Book Called Exhortation] authored by Hagop Shahamirian, the son of the most prominent Armenian merchant in Madras (Shahamir Shahamirian) and an influential member of the Armenian diasporic merchant elite.

136. Nor tetrak or koči yordorak, Madras, 1772/1773. For the controversy surrounding the authorship of this book, see footnote 156 below. For the secondary literature on Yordorak and other Madras publications, see, among others, Tadevos Avdalbekian’s path-breaking essays published mostly in the 1920s and collected in his Hayagitakan hetazotowtïwnner [Armenological Studies], Yerevan, 1969; LEO, Hayoc’ Patmowtiwn, vol. 3, book 2, Yerevan, 1973; HOVANNISIAN, A., Joseph Emin, Yerevan, 1989; TELUNTS, M., Hay azgayin-azatagrakan šaržowna XVIII dari erkrod kèsin ew irawakalakakan mitk [The Armenian National Liberation Movement during the Second Half of the XVIIIth Century and Legal-Political Thought], Yerevan, 1995. The latter discusses the relationship between Joseph Emin’s work and the activities of the Madras activists, a topic that deserves further treatment but lies outside the scope of the present essay. All subsequent references to Yordorak are to its Eastern Armenian translation by B. Khatchatrian (Yerevan, 1991).
Yordorak began with a different diagnosis of the crisis plaguing Armenians in the eighteenth century. It traced the source of this crisis to the collapse of Armenian statehood in the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. The latter had deprived the Armenians of their defining center and had turned them into "vagabonds and drifters in foreign lands, dispersed from their homeland like brushwood and reed in the wind, and scattered on the face of the world." Stateless and dispersed, the Armenians, it argued, had lost their lands to alien nations who ruled over them and to whom they paid onerous taxes; their morals and virtues, under the weight of diasporic existence, were also corrupted and decayed. What was worse, they had fallen into a deep "slumber" marked by the loss of historical memory of their own past glory. Yordorak was thus "composed for the awakening of the Armenian youth from the weak and idle drowsiness of the sleep of slothfulness." The book's narrative sections opens with the following diagnosis of the dual crises of education and historical memory:

As we have directed so many exhortations to our nation, we feel obliged to inform our compatriots about our illustrious royal power, which we have lost in its entirety and which remains almost unknown to many. The reason for this is the following...with the disappearance of our power, all of our virtues also disappeared from us. Our schools-universities and educational-secondary schools were also plundered, and with the exception of the monasteries, which are not [open] to the common people, there was no place where perhaps education and knowledge could have been propagated, so that in such manner our nation could have once again flourished. Hence the reason as to why neither the works of the philosophers nor the history books of our ancestors or the ancients were preserved, by reading of which perhaps [our compatriots] could have become informed about the lives of those mighty fighters [qoqamri ḥmās] and men, and by means of which they could have become informed [huun ḥmās] in their deeds and thus endeavored to emulate their ancestors. Therefore...we desire nothing else

137. Yordorak, p. 133.
138. This is Yordorak's subtitle.
but to reclaim our rightful and noble inheritance, which we have lost because of our disorderliness, laziness [and] ignorance...through prudence and courage.\textsuperscript{139}

\textit{Yordorak} then provided a history of the nation as a means of remedying historical memory and exhorting a unified armed struggle against Persian and Ottoman domination. The latter was to be carried out by training the Armenian youth in the “arts of warfare” and coordinating an uprising with the assistance of the remnants of Armenian nobility (or meliks) of Gharabagh. The model for this uprising, as Tölölyan and others have noted, was the Davit Beg rebellion of 1722, whose memory was fresh for the generation that grew up under British influence in India, but had frequent contact with the homeland.\textsuperscript{140} Like the Davit Beg rebellion fifty years earlier, the armed struggle advocated (but not explicitly outlined) by the author of this pamphlet was to take place under the auspices of the Bakration dynasty of Georgia and possibly through Russian support.

What is more significant, \textit{Yordorak} offered a novel explanation and cure for the nation’s dispersion. We noted earlier that for Yerevantsi the final cause for the disappearance of the Armenian kingdoms, and the origin of dispersion and degradation, was God’s wrath against the sins of the Armenians and simultaneously his election of them as His new “chosen people.” Similar Biblical accounts (but not necessarily with the same emphasis on the doctrine of “choseness”) are found in the works of Armenian historians, Catholicoi (such as Shnorhali) and scribes before the late eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{141} In contrast, \textit{Yordorak’s} account is truly modern;

\textsuperscript{139}. Idem, pp. 54-55.
\textsuperscript{140}. TÖLÖLYAN, \textit{Textual Nation}, op.cit., p. 91.
\textsuperscript{141}. To fully appreciate the originality of \textit{Yordorak’s} discourse in this respect, consider for a moment the remarkable narrative found in Simeon Lehatsi’s \textit{Travel Journal}, composed in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Leaving his native Poland on a pilgrimage to the holy sites, Lehatsi arrived in Venice and then Rome in 1612 only to be dazzled by the extraordinary wealth and comfort he found there. Rome’s “numerous riches, state treasuries, palaces and multiple-story houses made of limestone” left a deep impression on the Armenian pilgrim. But what astonished him most was the fact that “their kingdom and pontificate have stood firm from the beginning until the present.” This, Lehatsi attributed to Roman piety and purity of faith. The Romans, he wrote, had avoided the seven cardinal sins “on account of which God has filled them with spiritual and worldly virtues and has bestowed a plenitude of riches upon them—
its vocabulary is not drawn from the books of Exodus, Jeremiah, or the Gospels, as it is in Yerevantsi’s discourse (although this too exists as a layer in the text) but principally from the works of the Enlightenment in Europe. Following Montesquieu, Voltaire and others (though without mentioning any of them), Yordorak proposed “causal explanations” for worldly events. The collapse of Armenian statehood, it argued, stemmed from the peculiar nature of the naxarar system that characterized Armenian society in the classical period. This social structure fostered despotism or autocratic rule and created centrifugal tendencies (a form of polycentrism in situ, on the pre-diasporic ground of the homeland) that jeopardized and enfeebled the nation, thus leaving it vulnerable to foreign conquest. Lack of education, internal enmity and disunity, the gradual decay of virtues, and slothfulness were other factors contributing to the collapse.142 “From all that has been said,” Shahamirian wrote at the conclusion of his discussion, “it appears that we alone are to blame for our

with gold and silver, houses and places, property and goods, with sons and daughters, so that, as they say, they can live to see the children of their children.” (91) More importantly, they had preserved “good juridical distinctions” between religious and secular realms, subordinating secular affairs to the power of the Church hierarchy. Lehatsi then lamented over his countrymen’s degraded status:

“Alas…these good distinctions [puþh uuuhûuðûu] have been entirely removed and have disappeared from our nation. They have become confused and disordered [çuunuðuþhpñpñhûu], leaving no distinctions between the great and the small, the priests and the laymen. For the laymen judge the clergy and the monks, and also the priests, the vartapets and the bishops. They not only pass sentence on them and refuse to accept their authority [qûñ umnûaû ñhuunuðuþhpññûu umûmû ñ î ngûuðût]… They have no fear of God and suffer no shame from men; rather they are lewd and audacious [juunuðuûhû], and this not just at the present moment, but also from the beginning and from the times of our kings. For what kinds of evil deeds did they bring to bear, while they were Christians, on our holy and God-pleasing Catholicoi Nerses, Sahak, and other saints, as well as on the grandchildren of our holy Illuminator? On account of all this, they received the appropriate punishment from the just Lord, because of which the principalities and kingdoms of the much-celebrated clans of the Arshakuni, Pakraduni and also the Pahlavuni were taken away. And we became the ridicule and scorn of our neighbors, and were delivered into the hands of iniquitous enemies…Dispersed and scattered, we fell from the esteem of all nations because of our sins.” Siméon dpri Lehac’woy owlegrowt’iwn, taregrowt’iwn ew yisatak’arank [The Travel Journal, Annals and Colophons of the Scribe Simeon Lehatsi], AGINIAN, N. (ed.), Vienna, 1936, pp. 109-110 and 82.

142. See Idem, chapter 7, pp. 129-151 for these arguments.
own misfortunes and not God." These explanations were later elaborated in a theoretical and historical introduction to a constitutional treatise entitled Orogayt' patarə [Snare of Glory] where "absolute monarchy" and what Montesquieu had earlier dubbed as the "spirit of despotic regimes" were seen as primary causes for the nation's lamentable state.

But the most remarkable feature of Yordorak and especially of Orogayt' was their radical re-imagining of the nation's "center" or what Yerevantsi called the "special head." Breaking away from traditional modes of thinking, these works advocated that such a center could only be located on the native territory of the homeland, the myth-symbol complex represented by the land of Ararat. More importantly, they asserted that only a popularly elected senate or parliament (town Hayoc')—and by implication not the sacral institution of Etchmiadzin and its ruling Catholicos—could serve the role of "centering center" for the nation. The parliament, consisting of representatives elected on the basis of their merit

143. Idem, p. 150.
144. Girk' anowaneal Orogayt' patarə [Book Entitled the Snare of Glory], Madras, 1787/88, reissued in Tiflis, 1913. The authorship and date of publication of this work, like that of Yordorak, have been a source of controversy. Orogayt' s title page attributes the work to Hagop Shahamirian and gives the date of publication as 1773. Before the publication of Tadevos Avdalbekian's brilliant studies in the 1920s, most scholars accepted this information at face value. Avdalbekian, however, noted that several passages in the text (including references to George Washington and the American War of Independence, as well as allusions to the death of the Persian ruler Kerim Khan, both of which occurred in the second half of the 1770s) would be anachronistic if the information on Orogayt's title page were to be taken for granted. Moreover, through a rigorous examination of Shahamir Shahamirian's correspondences with Etchmiadzin and King Heraclius of Georgia, Avdalbekian concluded that 1) the work in question must have been published between 1787 and 1788, and 2) it was authored not by Hagop Shahamirian (who had passed away in 1774) but by his father, Shahamir. A. Hovanissian's subsequent work on Joseph Emin reinforced Avdalbekian's claim concerning the book's publication date, but conclusively demonstrated that Orogayt's first, theoretical section was written as early as 1773, and 2) was most likely authored, in part, by Hagop. See footnote 154 below. All references below are to the Tiflis edition of Orogayt'.
145. On the significance and radically new usage of this term, see AVDALBEKIAN, Hay azatagrakan šarźman erkow hosank XVIII dari verjerowm, [Two Currents of the Armenian Liberation Movement Towards the End of the XVIIIth Century], Hayagitakan hetazőtőtwiwnner, pp. 220-222.
and held accountable to an “unshakable and incorruptible constitution,” would then represent the nation’s collective or general will. A prime minister (naxarar) would also be elected every three years and would be held in check by the constitution. In this fashion, the entire nation would be sovereign over itself. Shahamirian explained this in Orogayt' after highlighting the dangers of absolute monarchy or despotism (whose arbitrary sovereignty, he argued, was against natural law) against which he defined his new republican concept of popular sovereignty: “Therefore, it would be very beneficial for us and our country, if the Armenian nation in its entirety, and freely with its natural nature [փհուր փուրփուր], ruled over itself. As there won’t exist any distinctions between the great and small, hatred, jealousy and avarice will be removed and everyone will equally assume the glory of monarchy [ուր ուր ուրուր] at the time of their birth, and they shall all stand as kings over their own country for all the days of their lives.” The upshot of this republican vision was that Etchmiadzin would be stripped of its “divine right” to represent the nation; indeed, the proposed constitution even restricted the power of “ecclesiastic” officials to interfere in the nation’s secular affairs.

146. Yordorak is very parsimonious in its discussion of the future shape of sovereignty. In one of its few references to this matter, it states: “It would be best if authority depended on select and great councilors and various kinds of houses of parliament by means of an unshakable and incorruptible constitution.” (132) It then goes on to explain how such a system would be beneficial both for the king and the population, suggesting that the regime of preference in Yordorak is a constitutional monarchy envisaged on the British model. In contrast, the detailed discussion of sovereignty in Orogayt’s first section (which is then codified in the constitutional statutes contained in the text’s lengthy second part) indicates a preference for a mercantilist republic, albeit modified to accommodate the possibility of lifetime tenure as prime minister for one of the members of the Bakration dynasty in Georgia.


148. Article 156 of the Constitution states: “Let it not happen that any members of the clergy dare to interfere in the deliberations or the work of sovereignty or in the affairs of secular members [of the nation], save for those ecclesiastics who are representatives in parliament.” Idem, p. 263. The same stipulation is present in the legal statutes of the Armenian community in Madras contained in Shahamir Shahamirian’s Girk' or koči nšawak [Book Called Guideline], Madras, 1783. Though Orogayt', like Nšawak, advocated the separation of church and state, it nonetheless reserved certain privileges for Etchmiadzin such as the constitutional caveat restricting the post of Prime Minister to a member of the Armenian Church and making membership into the national Church a prerequisite for the right of land ownership.
In short, what Shahamirian and the other Madras activists were striving for, albeit by ever so dexterously dressing their new ideas in the old language of the gospels, was to turn Yerevantsi on his head. Rather than accept dispersion as a normative hallmark of Armenian nationhood (or as a mark of providential distinction), they called for its reversal. And instead of centering the dispersed nation around and through the religious institution of the Catholicosate, they appealed for the establishment, in the homeland, of an "earthly kingdom," a "particular realm" and a "special assembly" (the triangulated hallmarks of European nationhood that Yerevantsi noted only to define his "singular" nation against them) that would "be able to assemble [the] nation around [themselves] and to preserve it in [their] name." In other words, they wanted to transform the Armenians "from a series of religious communities" in dispersion to a "collectivity that could become a nation" in the Enlightenment sense of the term. They aspired to do this by appropriating, and interpolating into their discourse, two novel elements introduced by the Enlightenment into pre-modern ways of imagining nationhood and identity: territoriality and popular sovereignty.

Given these views, it should come as no surprise that the Madras treatises would not be well received by the new Catholicos. Initially though, it seems that Shahamir Shahamirian and Mikayel Khojajanian, the two leading merchants who had invested their money and hopes into printing Yordorak, were unaware of the backlash their work was to provoke. On the contrary, they had anticipated winning over Yerevantsi's support. To this end, a year after the book's publication, Khojajanian wrote to his friend the Catholicos, informing him that two copies of the new treatise were on their way to Etchmiadzin. He also asked the Catholicos to send one copy to Melik Hovsep in Gharabagh, with whom (as with others in Gharabagh) he and Shahamirian were already in contact. Yerevantsi wrote back saying that he would dispatch a letter of

149. TÖLÖLYAN, Textual Nation, op.cit., p. 80.
150. DHP, vol. 8, pp. 413. For a selection of letters exchanged between Shahamirian and his correspondents in Etchmiadzin and Tiflis, see Pavel Chobanian's important publication, Hndkahay Galtcaxi Patmowftw (Norayayt Vaweragrj) [The History of the Indo-Armenian diaspora settlement (Newly discovered Documents)], in Patmabanasirakan Handes, Yerevan, 1988 (1), pp.183-192, and TER AVETISIAN, S., Nyowter Hndkastani Haykakan Galowt'i Patmowtyan Hamar, [Materials for the History of the Armenian diaspora of India], in Erewani Petakan Hamalsaran,
gratitude to Shahamirian as soon as the books had arrived. At this point, the scribe, who kept a detailed summary of the correspondences, takes note of the Catholicos’s growing apprehension concerning the new publication. The Catholicos, it seems, was taken aback by the fact that the Madras community had founded a press (incidentally in the same year as Yerevantsi’s own press) and had dared to print books without Etchmiadzin’s prior consent. In a letter dated May 1775, he therefore “ordered Shahamirian to inform him [i.e., the Catholicos] about the books he intended to print before their publication, lest they may be unskilful and unworthy in their composition and intention, and therefore give occasion for our enemies to smile.” 151 The Catholicos was also aghast at the possibility of “new and deviant things [այսունչպես թռչա]” that might create additional “barriers for our nation, church, faith and religion.” 152

These suspicions were borne out when the two mentioned copies of Yordorak finally arrived in Etchmiadzin in 1776. Evidently, a letter by Khojajanian and Shahamirian accompanied the books counseling Yerevantsi to mediate a pact between King Heraclius of Georgia and the “princes of Ałowank” (i.e., the meliks of Gharabagh). The two Madras merchants also advised the Catholicos to begin a correspondence with Catherine the Great of Russia (under whose protection they wanted to establish their new republic), going so far as to provide his Holiness with templates of letters. 153 In addition, they recommended that the Holy See collect special taxes from the population to fund military training and to organize an armed struggle. 154 There is also conclusive evidence, based on extensive summaries provided by Yerevantsi’s scribe, that Shahamirian had sent a manuscript copy of Orogayt’s first theoretical and historical section in response to the Catholicos’s order to inspect copies of future works slated for publication. 155

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153. Idem, p. 575. The practice of providing templates for letters or petitions was an integral part of the Madras Group’s activities. See the sample templates in Orogayt’s constitutional section.
155. Yerevantsi’s Yișatakaran gives a detailed description of the constitutional arrangements proposed by the Shahamirian circle, including the replacement of the Prime
Yerevantsi’s reaction to the texts and letters could not have been more irate. As the head of the Church and a seasoned negotiator with the various powers that ruled over his flock, he was concerned with the inherent political dangers the work posed to Armenians living under Persian and Ottoman rule. Rebellion, in his view, would not usher in liberation but destruction both for the masses and for the Church. But what is more interesting from our perspective is his rejection of the book based on its “diabolic” [νησωμηνης] and “impure” [μηδημης] or sacrilegious ideas and their ramifications on the authority of the institution he led. After all, the role assigned to the Church in the book’s constitutional section was at best minimal, and Yerevantsi was naturally unwilling to endorse a work with an Enlightenment conception of secular authority that would signal an end to Etchmiadzin’s divine right of representing the nation.

The Catholicos vented his wrath directly on Movses Baghramian, who is listed on the title page of Yordorak as the work’s Minister every year, the creation of a standing army, the election of twenty-two members of Parliament and so on. (Ibidem). Since these details are not mentioned in Yordorak, it is most likely that the information was culled from a manuscript copy of Orogayt’s first section. If this were to be the case, as I think it is, then it would mean that Orogayt’s main outline and first theoretical part was already composed in 1773, thus corresponding to the date of composition given on the book’s title page and colophon. For additional arguments to this end, see A. Hovannisian’s masterful appendix in his Joseph Emin, a work that, in addition to Avdalbekian’s studies, remains the standard bearer in the historiography of the Madras Group. Hovannisian bolsters this thesis with a scrupulous examination of five manuscript copies of Orogayt found in the Matenataran. As he points out, one of these manuscripts contains only the first “historico-theoretical” section of the work, minus the anachronistic paragraphs mentioned in footnote 143 above, indicating that 1) the core of the first section was composed in 1773 before the following section containing the statutes and articles of the future constitution was written, and 2) that it was sent to Etchmiadzin in response to Yerevantsi’s new policy of press censorship. Interestingly, the scribe who provides the resume of the Madras Group’s constitutional theories mentions that the Prime Minister would be elected every year, which corresponds to the manuscript copy but differs from the provision of three years mentioned in the final printed version of Orogayt. (See Orogayt, p. 155) For the Yisatakaran’s summary of Yordorak’s main arguments, see Idem, p. 574. I thank Professor Marc Nichanian for providing me with the Eastern Armenian translation of Hovannisian’s work.

“assistant,” but whom Yerevantsi took to be the real author of the tract. In a special edict, he excommunicated the Gharabagh native and forbade his compatriots from consorting with him. “Let his offspring be cursed,” Yerevantsi wrote, “for he has disgraced us and our nation before other nations, and has entirely dismantled the Armenian race.” Interestingly though, he was unable (and unwilling) to publicly condemn Shahamirian (both father and son) or Khojajanian for

157. Yerevantsi’s scribe provides the following biographical sketch of Baghramian: “For at this time, there was a deceitful person [in Madras] by the name of Movses, who they say had spent some time with the now-deceased Prelate of New Julfa, Vardapet Kevork, from whom he had received a modest education and some training in the crafts. This native of Gharabagh, though brainless, bereft of intellect, and without circumspection and imprudent, was treated with great respect in Madras as an illustrious scholar. Hagop, the son of Shahamir Agha, studied at his feet. And Shahamir Agha, having established a press, had placed his son at the helm and appointed this demoniac as the organizer and corrector/editor of the books published at the press.” Referring to Yordorak and the proposals sent to Yerevantsi, the secretary writes: “As we stated earlier, that book was written by the raving Movses, but perhaps because he was fearful of being punished by his Holiness, he did not attribute the authorship of the book to himself but rather to Hagop, the son of Shahamir Agha. And we realized that these proposals and the authorship of the book came from that demoniac, and that he was the one who exhorted them [Shahamirian’s group including the two Shahamirians and Khojajanian] to this end by praising the gallantry of the Meliks of Khamsa [i.e., of Gharabagh], on account that he himself is from Khamsa.” (DHP, vol. 3, p. 576) The vexed question of Yordorak’s authorship revolves around this quotation. Before the publication of this volume of Yerevantsi’s Yištakaran (1908), scholars, following the information provided on Yordorak’s title page and colophon, had unanimously attributed the work to Hagop Shahamirian. Subsequently, it became the ruling consensus to ascribe the work to Baghramian, mostly based on the statements made by the Yištakaran’s scribe and Yerevantsi’s decision to excommunicate Baghramian for having authored the “diabolic” work. Some scholars, such as Leo and Avdalbekian, have also attributed the work to Baghramian on grounds that 1) Yordorak’s discourse was deeply shaped by the ideas and activities of Joseph Emin, and that 2) Baghramian, who was Emin’s collaborator, was the person most likely capable of transforming these ideas into a book. One of the few scholars to challenge this “orthodoxy” and to re-attribute the work to Hagop Shahamirian is A. Mnatsakanian. See his persuasive analysis in Ov ե «Nor tetrak or koči yordorak...» grki helinaka [Who is the Author of the book ‘New Book Called Exhortation...’?], in Patma-banasirakan Handės, 2, 1962.


159. In any case, Hagop Shahamirian had passed away in 1774 at the age of 29 while on a
their involvement in the project. They were, after all, wealthy merchants or išxank (princes) whose monetary support was indispensable to the Holy See. He did, however, personally rebuke Khojajanian for coming under Baghramian’s deceptive sway, and addressed the following severe reprimand to Shahamirian, which is intriguing for what it reveals about Etchmiadsin’s outlook on the role of printing in Armenian society and on the relations of power and authority between the Church hierarchy in Etchmiadzin and the merchant elite in the diaspora:

The founder of a printing press must be either the head of a nation and the caretaker of the general public, who prints the works of the blessed ancestors for the illumination of the nation, as did Catholicos Hagop Jughayetsi; or he must be a wise or learned man, notable and famous for his knowledge, who publishes useful writings compiled by himself for the benefit of the populace. Or, there are even those who, though they may not be learned men or leaders of a people, having established printing presses, publish and sell works acceptable to the public with the permission of the superiors, for the purpose of earning a livelihood. Now, you are neither a ruler nor caretaker of a people, nor an acclaimed man of learning, nor are you a mere commoner in need of a livelihood. Rather, you are a prince [h2̄htuuvî] from a noble family, most wealthy and prosperous, and a leading lay merchant occupied with worldly concerns [qīuunuq NSURL่าûsûûq ûû wû̄tûâââûqûûq ûû îûûûûûûqûû]. So why was it necessary for you, or how was it befitting your honor, to have printing characters brought with so much labor from France to set up a press and to appoint the son of a prince [i.e., Hagop] as a printer, which is a profession for commoners and the meanest pauper? And to print such books which are destructive for the nation, compiled by a nonentity [i.e., Baghramian] who is an insignificant pedant!

In the same letter, the Catholicos ordered Shahamirian to close down his press, burn existing copies of the offensive book, and even

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commercial visit to Malacca, East Indies, where he was buried on his own estate. See SETH, op.cit., pp. 251 and 592.

160. DHP, p. 577.
threatened the wealthy merchant with public excommunication. Shahamirian’s only path to redemption was to comply with the following five conditions:

First, you must burn that book in its entirety, and those that are dispersed here and there you shall also strive and succeed in burning them. Second, you must completely shut down that printing press. And while they print books in Constantinople, and at one point in Amsterdam and also at times in Smyrna, they do not do so without [our] permission, whereas you only recently founded your press and printed that harmful [չեռնունութեն] book without asking for our consent. Let it not happen that, on account of the extreme distance of that place, either you or your proselytes print such a thing again without first consulting with us! Therefore, the best thing for you is to abolish your press, since you do not even have skilled workers who, with prudent intentions, can choose what is useful from that which can bring harm. As for that pedant who passes himself for a skilled person, he does not know what he does! Thus, your publication, bereft of skill and prudence, cannot bring any good to the nation but only shame and harm. ...Third, do not write any more letters to the Meliks [of Gharabagh] with such pernicious words, since from the traffic of your letters rumors might arise, or one of your letters might fall into the hands of the Muslims [հ օծմունիւճզ ւատղու], which will be harmful to our nation. Fourth, I order you not to send any more useless proposals [to us] ... Fifth, that the deceitful [իւռպութավ] Movses should be either driven away from you or, considered as a pariah [ի անձանուն բունեակի հուատկուն], should not be brought into contact with you, since it is a great shame for you to follow the hair-brained ideas of such a fool and to place them in the nation’s mouth [ի ատթաունիւ պետու տաթլատ]. Finally, I am issuing an excommunication for that non-entity [չեպ] Movses and ordering everyone there not to communicate with him either in words or through deeds lest they join his curse and condemnation [ի չեռնունութչա եղբայուղ ի չեռնունունուարակերտ կուլփի]. And if you comply with these five commandments, which are entirely beneficial, you will
be praised and shall be blessed by God and by us. But if you ignore them and fail to carry them out, I will be forced, through a general encyclical sent to all countries, to write about your illegal acts.\(^{161}\)

The threats seem to have worked. Immediately afterward, the activities of the Madras group came to a halt. The Shahamirian press did not publish another work during Yerevantsi’s lifetime.\(^{162}\) Baghramian, who was excommunicated, was forced into exile, spending the next seven years roving between Persia, Yemen and Egypt, where he conducted commerce as an “incognito” agent for Shahamirian.\(^{163}\) More significantly, due

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162. To be sure, two other works were published at this time: *Patmowtiwn mnaac'ordac' Hayoc' ew Vrac'* [Remnants of the History of the Armenians and Georgians], and *Patmowtiwn varowc' ew gorcoc' Natêr Şah tagaworin* [History of the Life and Work of Nader Shah, the King]. The first was published in 1775, just before Yerevantsi imposed his press censorship, while the second appeared in 1780, the year of the Catholicos’s death.

163. Baghramian’s excommunication was lifted in 1780 by Yerevantsi’s successor, Catholicos Garnetsi, in response to Shahamir Shahamirian’s continued pleas. In a letter to Shahamirian, the new Catholicos informed him that the decision to release Baghramian from his anathema was taken by Yerevantsi before he had passed away. See *Diwan Hayoc' patmowt'ean, Nor šark, Łowkas Karnec'i* [Archive of Armenian History, New Series, Ghugas Garnetsi], vol. 1, GRIGORIAN, V. (ed.), Yerevan, 1984, p. 205. For Baghramian’s peripatetic life as a fugitive merchant, see EMIN, J., *Life and Adventures*, op.cit., pp. 472-473. Baghramian, it should be noted, was Emin’s relative and collaborator in the 1760s, when the two were active in the Caucasus. Emin then met up with him in Madras during his first visit there in 1772, where he also met, for the first time, Shahamir Shahamirian. (Incidentally, Emin’s arrival in Madras coincided with the founding of Hagop Shahamirian’s press and the publication of *Yordorak*.) Subsequently, on Emin’s second visit to India eleven years later, he stayed with Baghramian in Bombay, where the latter had temporarily settled after his excommunication was lifted, thus ending his years of truancy in exile. Concerning Baghramian’s past, Emin provides the following cryptic account (circumventing the issue of Baghramian’s excommunication) in his autobiography (written in the third person): “when [his relation Mussess, i.e., Baghramian] left Emin in Georgia, [he] went prudently to Madras; where, understanding tolerably well the Armenian grammar, he introduced himself to Mr. Chamier’s [sic] favour, and was retained to teach his sons. In two or three years, Mr. Chamier gave Mussess a commission with goods to Suez, and thence to Egypt. On his coming back from that voyage with some gain, Mr. Chamier, finding him capable, entrusted him with greater merchandise, and a ship for Bushir in Persia; and also with valuable India goods and China wares to
to the risk of excommunication from Etchmiadzin, Shahamirian had to suppress the first part of *Orogayt’* (already written as early as 1773), a manuscript copy of which he was compelled to send to Yerevantsi. It was only after Ghugas Garnetsi was elected in 1780 as the next Catholicos that the Madras elite resumed their publishing and revival activities. In 1783 they published Shahamir Shahamirian’s *Girk’ or koči Nšawak* (*A Book Called Guideline*), which outlined the “republican” statutes for the Armenian community of Madras and specifically demarcated a separate and subordinate role of authority for the Church. (Interestingly, *Nšawak* also contained a proposal to repatriate Armenians to Khizlar in southern Russia as a way-station for their eventual return to the homeland.) Four or five years later, when Etchmiadzin had loosened its grip on censorship in Madras, Shahamirian was finally able to print his constitutional treatise.

The above episode sheds important light on the intellectual fissures and cracks setting apart the responses of Etchmiadzin and Madras to the eighteenth century crisis of dispersion and polycentricity. First, it illustrates that Etchmiadzin’s reading of this crisis was framed in a biblical narrative that represented the Armenians as a geographically dispersed and extra-territorial community, religiously unified through its loyalty to the institution of the Catholicosate. Though, in this picture, dispersion and the absence of statehood are seen as sources of the nation’s ills, they are tolerated and indeed justified as signs of religious distinction, or as proofs for the “chosen” status of Armenians. Emancipation or “liberation” are present in this reading, but they are couched in the rhetoric of millenari-

Shiraz...in order to establish a factory there, and to sell his merchandise. ...Mussess, wisely observing that the country [i.e., Persia] was going to ruin through destructive civil wars...went to Bombay...[where] he thought proper to stay...by the order of Mr. Chamier till such time as he should be called for.” Ibid., p. 472. By the time Emin had come across his former collaborator in Bombay, Baghramian had apparently become rich while acting as a shipper and broker of Shahamirian’s goods, thus earning a ticket into upper class Armenian society in India. Emin found him so “transformed, behaving imperiously and haughtily,” that he only lodged with him for two weeks. So much had Baghramian’s social status changed that Catholicos Garnetsi addressed him as “Baron Bagharamian [sic]” and kept up a correspondence with the former apostate, going so far as to beg for his forgiveness involving a case where Etchmiadzin’s legate to India had failed to pay him a special visit. See Garnetsi’s letter dated 1791 in AGHANIANTS, DHP, *Łowkas Katolikos* 1780-1800, volume 4, Tiflis, 1899, pp. 559-562.


78
anism whereby only an external intervention from Providence (as in the figure of Moses or the Messiah) can reconstitute the lost glory and homeland of the past. Yerevantsi’s discourse also suggests that legitimate authority for the nation flows from above; it is Christ who bestows upon Etchmiadzin and the Catholicos the divine right to represent and rule the Armenians. All of this stands in stark contrast to the Madras group’s Enlightenment-inspired concept of the nation as a politicized and territorialized collectivity. In light of this (European) model of territorially embedded nationhood, the Madras intellectual-activists could only see in the dispersion state of their nation an aberrant stigma of decadence and decay, an anomaly to the ruling European paradigm. Dispersion and diaspora in their reading thus become a symptom of illness, despite the fact that for them it had meant prosperity unattainable in the homeland, which needed to be cured by a return to and restoration of the re-territorialized nation’s grandeur. Moreover, relying on the Enlightenment’s new discourse on the nation, the Madras group conceived of legitimate authority not by recourse to the language of divine rights (of Catholicoi or kings) but through that of natural rights and popular sovereignty. For them, the nation contained its own source of legitimacy. In addition to highlighting these crucial distinctions, the clash between Yerevantsi and the Madras activists demonstrates that the line separating those who espoused Enlightenment ideals from their counterparts who represented institutionalized religion was not as blurry as some scholars have suggested. On the contrary, it was fraught with tension and antagonism leading to censorship and book burning.

165 This is unfortunately one of the leitmotifs in some of the essays gathered in Enlightenment and Diaspora: The Armenian and Jewish Cases, HOVANNISIAN, R.G - MYERS, D.N. (eds.), Atlanta, Georgia, 1999. See Ara Sanjian’s review in Haigazian Armenological Review, 2001.
Coda, or the Secularization of Yerevantsi's discourse

I began this essay with a general discussion of the crisis of dispersion afflicting the Armenians during the eighteenth century, and outlined, in particular, three of its symptoms: the crisis of education and language, the crisis of historical memory and the crisis of the center. Under the cumulative effect of this general crisis, I suggested that the leading Armenian elites of the period perceived their people as a polycentric nation, scattered and fragmented geographically, linguistically, and most importantly in terms of religious and confessional loyalty. Of the three principal groups of elites to address this problem, Catholicos Simeon Yerevantsi, leading the revival movement in Etchmiadzin, sought to center the nation on the sacred institution of the Catholicosate. In the process, Yerevantsi formulated a discourse on the nation that represented the Armenians as a "chosen people" who were territorially dispersed, but religiously unified in their devotion to the Holy See in their homeland.

The emergence of a new constellation of secular elite during the nineteenth century undermined and displaced Yerevantsi's views on the nation. The latter elaborated a secular discourse on nationality and nationalism that rejected dispersion as a justifiable hallmark of the nation and sought to invest the Armenians with the right to self-determination in their homeland. To be sure, while they secularized Yerevantsi's ideas, these elites retained many features of his discourse, such as the view that Armenians were a "chosen people" destined to fulfill a special mission in history, or that the Land of Ararat was specially marked as a sacred site.
for the nation. But this sacredness was no longer that of religion but of
the nation.

One of the most explicit forms of secularization involved not
only Etchmiadzin's sacral place as the center of the nation, but also the
very category of religion as a constitutive and founding element of the
nation's identity. This transformation was already present, albeit in a mar-
ginal form, in the work of the Madras activists, but it was only in the sec-
ond half of the nineteenth century that it became an integral part of
Armenian intellectuals' "articulation of the nation." The novelist and
nationalist intellectual Raffi highlighted this in one of his essays on
national belonging. Writing in the late 1870s, on the heels of renewed
Apostolic-Catholic clashes in Constantinople, Raffi rebuked some of his
countrymen for once again stoking the flames of inter-confessional dis-
sent. In his view, the advocates of both religious factions were rekindling
"an outdated view that had lost its significance for the Enlightened
nations" of Europe, namely that "religion, which is to say the Church,
ought to be recognized as the foundation of the nation, so that whoever
leaves that church is severed from belonging to the whole nation." In
place of a church-centered view of the nation, Raffi appealed to a new dis-
course of nationhood which was so radical and novel that it had required
the coining of new words in the Armenian language: Azgowl'iwon or
nationality, and Azgaynowtiwn or nationalism. "The idea of nationality
(Azgowl'iwon)," he wrote,
is established not by religion but rather by [a nationality's]
racial characteristics, among which language occupies the
first place, which is and always remains the base for the
preservation of the nation. ...Whether he is a Catholic, a
Protestant or an Apostolic, the Armenian always remains an
Armenian on account of the fact that he or she shares the
same racial characteristics, speaks with the same language,
belongs to the same clan (dohm)."
In this picture, confessional or religious preferences (including the choice of being an atheist, for Raffi) are seen as secondary identities belonging to the private sphere of the family and civil society. As such, for Raffi, they are subordinated to a more integrationist view of nationality as a trans-religious and trans-regional political community of common descent. Thus, notwithstanding Yerevantsi’s earlier claims, “confessional differences” did not signify “national differences.” This was because, for Raffi and his generation of secular elite, the real ties that transformed a people into a nationality were no longer religious but consisted of the post-Enlightenment notion of “racial characteristics” and the Romantic (Herderian) view of language as the principal vehicle for “expressing” a nation’s “soul.” Relying on this novel conception of Azgowt’iwn/nationality, Raffi thus exhorted his countrymen to strive to unify the detached segments of their nation “not through religious ties but in the name of nationality.” Only then, he argued, would the Armenians cease to be a series of religious communities and would begin making themselves recognized as a nation. Seen in this light, what Yerevantsi had articulated in his Partavčar and other works could not have been a nation or nationality, but an ethno-religious community.

Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, these ideas, along with the Madras activist’s Enlightenment-inspired formulation of the nation as a territorialized and politicized community, paved way for the emergence of Armenian political parties. By that time, the Shahamirians (both father and son) and their intellectual coterie (Baghramian, Emin and others) were no longer part of Armenian memory; Joseph Emin’s work, for instance, was only translated into Armenian in 1958 and of the other Madras publications, only Orogayt was reissued and only in 1913, long after the rise of the political parties had altered the course of Armenian history. Despite their neglect, however, the Madras activists’ pioneering ideas had indirectly come to define Armenian political and social life on the eve of the entrance of the political parties onto the stage of history. The latter displaced Yerevantsi views on Etchmiadzin’s role as sacral center and representative institution of the nation, but not without first secularizing the notion of chosenness and the

sacred nature of the motherland as the site of the nation, to which Yerevantsi had done most to contribute. They also politicized the Mekhitarists's concept of the nation as a culturally unified and historically rooted community. Lastly, the political parties and the new elite indirectly appropriated the Madras activists' discourse on the nation as a political community grounded on its center in the homeland, but sought to transform what was a minority and peripheral discourse into a political reality through galvanizing and mobilizing the masses in the name of nationalism.
Այս գրականության գրականության նպատակը տալուց Պատմություն և գրականություն տեսանություն համար տեսակետ ունի, որը գրականության զարգացման համար կարևոր է։ Պատմություն և գրականություն զարգացման համար ուշադրություն տրում է։ Պատմության և գրականության զարգացման համար ուշադրություն տրում է։
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispersion History and the Polycentric Nation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yerevantsi and the Politics of “Centering like a Nation-State”</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girk or koči Partavčar and the Doctrine of Divine Rights</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissent and Punishment: Burning Books in Madras</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda, or the Secularization of Yerevantsi’s discourse</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Συμφωνία</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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