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39

SEBOUH ASLANIAN

**DISPERSION HISTORY AND THE POLYCENTRIC NATION:
THE ROLE OF SIMEON YEREVANTSI'S
GIRK OR KOČ ARTAVČAR
IN THE 18th CENTURY NATION REVIVAL**



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ԹՈՐԳՈՄ ԱՍԼԱՆԵԱՆԻՆ

(ԵԹՈՎՊԻԱ 1936 - ԼՈՍ ԱՆՃԵԼՆՍ 2004)

IN MEMORY OF MY DEAR UNCLE

TORKOM ASLANIAN

(ETHIOPIA 1936 - LOS ANGELES 2004)

Introduction*

The eighteenth century was a period when Armenian elites and activists first became preeminently concerned with the decline and cultural fragmentation plaguing their nation, a process that, in so far as it was real, had begun as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹ It was also a period when a cultural revival movement was launched in the diaspora and the homeland, independently and in near-simultaneity. This movement was spearheaded by three different sets of elites: the representatives of the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin, in the homeland; the erudite monks belonging to the Catholic Armenian order known as the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice; and, also in the diaspora, the merchant-activists of India with their base in Madras. These elites had disparate and conflicting agendas, but they shared one underlying commonality: they traced the malaise of the nation to the dispersed state of their people. Etchmiadzin attempted to combat this malaise by rallying

* This essay was originally published in *Bazmavep* (Venice) 2002, pp. 3-83.

1. I would like to thank Khachig Tölölyan, Razmik Panossian and Hourì Berberian for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this essay, and Father Vahan Ohanian for clarifying some of the more recondite vocabulary in *grabar*. I am also grateful to the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice and Vienna for placing their rich collection of books at my disposal. Particular acknowledgment is due to Father Vahan Hovagimian of Vienna, and Alfred Hemmat Siraky in Venice, for obliging me with many library requests. Lastly, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Hayr Hovsep for making my visits to San Lazzaro most hospitable and intellectually productive, and to my advisor, Professor Marc Nichanian, for his intellectual and moral support.

the nation around its "divine authority" as spiritual shepherd to an exiled and powerless flock. In the process, it created a national discourse centered on the Church that, more or less, accepted dispersion as a hallmark of the nation, but tried to harness its polycentric tendencies. The Mekhitarists attempted to leave aside the question of institutional authority and instead rallied to collect the dispersed fragments of the nation's culture. Most importantly, they launched a movement to cleanse and "purify" the Armenian language by compiling dictionaries and grammars. In addition, they crowned their cultural labors by publishing the first modern account of the nation's history (Mikayel Chamchian's *History of the Armenians*, 1784-1786)² that sought to recover in history what the nation had lost politically and geographically; it attempted this recovery by fashioning a narrative of national continuity whose goal was to provide wholeness and integrity in the realm of culture. The Madras community, on the other hand, sought to displace and replace the traditional Armenian (self) image as a geographically fragmented and dispersed ethno-religious community by a new Enlightenment conception of the nation as a political community grounded in its native territory and represented and led by its elected sovereign authorities.

This essay discusses the first of these triadic responses, and indirectly addresses the other two. It focuses on the work of Simeon Yerevantsi (d. 1780), arguably the most gifted and effective Catholicos of the eighteenth century. Though ignored in current scholarship on the eighteenth century Armenian revival, Yerevantsi is a crucial figure for understanding the crisis of his times. In fact, his book *Girk' or koči partavčar* (A Book Called Fulfillment of a Pledge) is in part a meditation on this crisis and an implicit response to, and rejection of, the prognoses advanced by the Mekhitarists, on the one hand, and the Madras activists, on the other.

In what follows, I will provide a textual analysis of *Partavčar* as a discourse on the crisis of the nation conceptualized as a crisis of dispersion. I will argue that Yerevantsi's text deserves a close reading for at least three reasons, the last of which has broader theoretical implications. First, it is central to our understanding of diaspora and dispersion and the valence and implications the latter terms had for the Armenian elites of the

2. CHAMCHIAN, M., *Patmow'iwn Hayoc' i skzbanē ašxarhi minčew c'am Teārn 1784* [The History of the Armenians from the Beginning of the World Until the Year of Our Lord 1784], 3 volumes, Venice, 1784-1786.

time. Second, it helps to illuminate current discussions on the formation of Armenian nationalist thought in the nineteenth century since, as I will demonstrate, Yerevantsi's work provided an exemplary discourse on the nation and is equipped with foundational myths that were subsequently reassessed and transformed by the nationalist elite. In other words, many of the symbolic elements of nineteenth century nationalist thought (the notion of being a "chosen people" and the significance of the "motherland" for instance) are present in Yerevantsi's work, albeit in their pre-secularized forms. Third, it enables us to see more clearly the central role of the eighteenth century Enlightenment on shifting the "semantic terrain" under both nation and dispersion, and as such promises to reformulate some of our conventional theories concerning the nature of (and nexus between) nationalism and diaspora. By this, I am referring to how eighteenth century notions of nations as territorially grounded communities with secular (and sovereign) representative authorities came to insert themselves into conceptualizations of "dispersion" or "diaspora" (including and especially in the Armenian case) as not just a trait of geographically scattered communities, or as Biblical punishment for a "chosen people," but as a sign of a national malaise or illness that could be cured by a return to the native homeland. Yerevantsi helps us identify this shift in an oblique or rather oppositional manner; he does this not because he accepts this new formulation, but precisely because in consciously rejecting it, he explicitly formulates the concept.

Before I turn to Yerevantsi's work, it is important first to provide a historical discussion on Armenian dispersions and clarify some of the key features of the eighteenth century crisis as its contemporaries perceived it. The latter will help us to embed and situate the different revivalist responses of the Armenian elite and, in particular, will shed contextual light on the significance and import of Yerevantsi's reformist agenda.

Dispersion History and the Polycentric Nation

The collapse of the Bagratuni kingdom in the eleventh century precipitated the first major wave of Armenian dispersion from the homeland. Large numbers of Armenians (including the landowning nobility, the top echelons of the Church and their client populations) fled south, where they established small principalities in the Levant and gradually consolidated power in what began as the diaspora state of Cilicia and became a kingdom that endured until the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Other nobles moved with their courts, clergy and some peasants and dependents west to Byzantine controlled territory such as Sebastopolis/Sepastia (present day Sivas) and then north to populate mostly urban centers such as Kaffa and Tana along the southern rim of the Crimean peninsula. These communities later acted as "way-stations" for more Armenians arriving from the homeland in the first half of the thirteenth century after the Mongols had overrun their lands. Some of the new migrants remained in the Crimea, while others fanned out further northwest to Polish-controlled Galicia and Transylvania, where they founded colonies in Gamenits and most notably in Lvov.³

3. See ALBOYADJIAN, A., *Patmow'iwn Hay galfakanow'ean* [History of Armenian Emigrations] vol. 2, Cairo, 1955; and ABRAHAMIAN, A., *Hamarōt owrowagic hay galfavayrerow patmow'ean* [A Concise Outline of the History of Armenian Expatriate Communities] vol. 1, Yerevan, 1964. For an excellent historical overview with extensive bibliographic references, see SCHÜTZ, E., *An Armeno-Kipchak document of 1640 from Lvov and its background in Armenia and in the Diaspora*, in

By the sixteenth century two empires, Ottoman and Safavid Persian, had come to dominate and divide the Armenian Plateau, with the lion's share falling on the Ottoman side of the frontier. After a century of predatory Safavid-Ottoman campaigns over the geopolitical frontier territory had concluded in 1639, many Armenians found themselves in what Tölölyan refers to as "intra-state diasporas," that is, in communities outside the ancestral lands but within the jurisdictional boundaries of the state that controlled and administered them.⁴ A significant portion of these communities gradually coalesced around key imperial administrative centers, most notably in Constantinople. The invitation and settlement of prominent Armenian families and religious leaders in the new Ottoman capital paved way for the establishment of the Armenian Patriarchate in 1461. This in turn laid the basis for the *millet* system that, by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had become a unique institutional framework of "indirect rule," whereby the Ottoman sultan ruled his Armenian (and other non-Muslim) subjects through the intermediation of the merchant elite who were allied with and eventually controlled the clergy and the Patriarchate with its institutions.⁵ A similar situation prevailed on the Safavid side of the frontier, albeit with a much more violent etiology. The

Between the Danube and the Caucasus, KARA, G. (ed.), Budapest, 1987, and NADEL-GOLOBIČ, E., *Armenians and Jews in Medieval Lvov: Their Role in Oriental Trade, 1400-1600*, in *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, XX (3-4), 1979.

4. TÖLÖLYAN, K., *Exile Government in the Armenian Polity, Governments-in-Exile in Contemporary World Politics*, SHAIN, Y. (ed.), New York, 1991, p. 170.
5. The traditional date, ascribed by Mikayel Chamchian, for the establishment of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople is 1461, when a certain Hovagim, Bishop of Bursa, is said to have moved to the Ottoman capital along with six prominent Armenian families, thereby taking charge of the Armenian millet. Though this account was accepted as the conventional wisdom throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, it has recently come under scrutiny by several scholars who consider it as a kind of "invented tradition." Bardakjian and Braude, for instance, have argued that the Patriarchate assumed its full functions of leading the millet only after the expansion of the Ottoman state's "infrastructural power," to use Michael Mann's term, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the millet "system" as we know it came to be institutionalized. This contention seems to be borne out by Yerevantsi's account (see below). For the "revisionist" view on the Patriarchate and the institution of the millet, see BARDAKJIAN, K. B., *The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople*, and BRAUDE, B., *Foundation Myths of the Millet System*, in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 1, BRAUDE, B. - LEWIS, B. (ed.), New York, 1982. For Chamchian's account, see his *History*, vol. 3, p. 500.

intra-state diaspora there owes its origins to the Ottoman-Safavid war of 1604-1605, when Shah 'Abbas I uprooted up to three hundred thousand Armenians from their lands and deported them to Persia in a conscious policy of economic and urban renewal.⁶ Some of these deportees, particularly those from the trading town of Julfa on the Arax, were given privileged treatment and resettled on the outskirts of Isfahan, where they founded the mercantile colony of New Julfa. What started as a "victim diaspora" soon became one of the most prosperous "trade diasporas" of the seventeenth century. Employed as a domestic "service gentry"⁸ for the Safavid state, and invested with a privileged status as middlemen traders of the "shah's silk for Europe's silver,"⁹ the New Julfa merchants established small offshoot trade diasporas across Europe (Venice, Amsterdam, Livorno, Marseille), Russia (Saint Petersburg and Moscow) and in India (mostly clustered in Madras, Surat, Calcutta and Bombay) and further in the East.¹⁰ With the sharp decline of the Iranian economy in the late seventeenth century, many of these merchant families permanently settled in their European and Russian trading outposts in the west and the north and

6. The numbers of deportees varies from 80,000 to 400,000, depending on whether the figure is attributed to the great deportation of 1604-1605 or to all the deportations during the reign of Shah 'Abbas I. Most contemporary accounts put the number at 300,000. According to Edmund Schütz, the more likely estimate is 100,000. SCHÜTZ, op.cit., pp. 260-261. For the historical context of the deportations, see BAGHDIA NTZ - McCABE, I., *The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver*, Atlanta, Georgia, 1998; HERZIG, E.M., *The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa, Isfahan: A Study in pre-modern Asian Trade*, Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1991, Chapter 1; GHOUGASSIAN, V., *The Rise of the Armenian Diocese of New Julfa in the Seventeenth Century*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1998, chapter 2; GREGORIAN, V., *Minorities of Isfahan: The Armenian Community of Isfahan 1587-1722*, in *Iranian Studies*, VII/3-4, 1974; MATTHEE, R., *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver 1600-1730*, Cambridge, 1999, chapter 3. It should be noted that there were Armenian communities in Iran predating the reign of Shah Abbas I, but these were numerically insignificant compared to the intra-state diasporas of the seventeenth century.
7. These typologies are elaborated in COHEN, R., *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, London, 2001. For an earlier discussion of "trade diaspora" and its insightful application to the Armenian case, see CURTIN, Ph., *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge, 1984, especially pp. 179-206.
8. MATTHEE, op.cit., pp. 6 and 84-89.
9. See BAGHDIA NTZ, op.cit.
10. The subject is scrupulously addressed by HERZIG, op.cit., pp. 132-151, and BAGHDIA NTZ, op.cit.

especially in Madras in the east, where they had a symbiotic but increasingly uneasy relationship with the English East India Company.¹¹

Though geographically scattered, these more recent communities of dispersion, along with the earlier ones dating back to the twelfth century, were loosely linked through a network of "portable" institutions and elites. The merchants were one group within this elite. Their rise to prominence as the leading patrons of Armenian society came on the heels of the decline and then extermination of the *naxarar* class of landowning nobility in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹² They periodically stepped in to rescue the Church from onerous debts, paid for the upkeep of monasteries and churches, and commissioned manuscripts. Their patronage and capital shored up a string of printing presses from Amsterdam and Livorno (the hubs of Armenian printing in the second half of the seventeenth century) to Venice and Constantinople (where

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11. See FERRIER, W. R., *The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century*, in *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, vol. 26, no. 1, 1973; SETH, M., *Armenians in India*, Calcutta, 1937. See also my *English Prize law and Armenian Maritime Merchants in the Indian Ocean: Making Sense of the Santa Catharina Trial, 1748-1752*, forthcoming in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*.
 12. Even as the Turco-Mongol invasions of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries dealt a final blow to the *naxarar* class in the homeland, descendants of this class continued to survive until the eighteenth century in their former military/"feudal" capacity in Gharabagh, where they constituted the leading five dynastic families known as the "meliks," and also in parts of Cilicia. Others persisted in a more concealed fashion as hereditary representatives of the Armenian Church, as was the case with the Catholicosate of Gantsasar or Albania, which was a hereditary "fief" of the Hasan Jalalian family. On the nature and elimination of the *naxarar* class in Armenia, see the classic work of ADONTZ, N., *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, translated with partial revisions, bibliographic note, and appendices by GARSOÏAN, N., Louvain, 1970, and MANANDIAN, H., *Fēowdalizmā hin Hayastanowm* [Feudalism in Ancient Armenia], Yerevan, 1934. See also the reformulated account in TOUMANOFF, C., *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*, Washington, D.C., 1963. On the rise of the merchant class, see Aa.Vv., *Hay Żołovrdi Patmow'iwn* [History of the Armenian People], vol. 4, Yerevan, 1972; KOUYMIJIAN, D., *From Disintegration to Reintegration: Armenians at the Start of the Modern Era, XVIth-XVIIth Centuries*, in *Revue du Monde Armenien* 1 (1994); LIBARIDIAN, J., *The Ideology of Armenian Liberation: The Development of Armenian Political Thought Before the Revolutionary Movement (1639-1885)*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 1987, chapter 1 and especially chapter 2.

Armenian publishing had gravitated a century later¹³) as well as Madras and Calcutta (important publishers of secular works¹⁴)—all bases predominantly settled by New Julfa merchants.¹⁵ The merchants were also responsible for creating an incipient “diasporic public sphere”¹⁶ of readers and consumers of books. Though few merchants were cultural producers or authors in their own right, many were direct commissioners. Moreover, by the late eighteenth century they had begun financing schools and setting up cultural societies, particularly in the Ottoman capital and in the mercantile communities of India.¹⁷

13. KEVORKIAN, R., *Livre imprimé et culture écrite dans l'Arménie des XXI et XVII siècles*, in *Révue des Études Arméniennes* (hereafter cited as REArm), XVI, 1982; Idem, *L'imprimerie Surb Ejmiacin et Surb Sargis Zoravar et le conflit entre Arméniens et Catholiques à Constantinople (1696-1748)*, in REArm., n.s., vol. XV. For historical background, among other works, see ISHKHANIAN, R., *Hay grki patmowfiwn*, [History of the Armenian Book], volume 1, Yerevan, 1977; LEO, *Haykakan tpagrowfiwn* [Armenian Printing], Tiflis, 1902. For a comprehensive catalogue of printed books, see VOSGANIAN, N., *Hay girkə. 1512-1800 towakannerin*, [The Armenian Book: From 1512 to 1800], Yerevan, 1988.

14. On the publishing history of the Armenians in India, see IRAZEG, H., *Patmowfiwn hndkahay tpagrowfiwn* [History of Armenian Printing in India], GHOUASSIAN, V. (ed.), Antelias, 1986; KHACHADRIAN, H., *Madrasi tpagratian patmowfiwnic'* [Concerning the History of the Printing House of Madras], in *Lraber hasarakakan gitowfiwnneri*, 3, 1984.

15. On the role of the merchant class in financing printing houses in the diaspora, see BAGHDIAantz - McCABE, I., *Merchant Capital and Knowledge: The Financing of Early Printing Presses by the Eurasian Silk Trade of New Julfa*, in *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Art, Religion, and Society*, MATHEWS, T.F. - WIECK, R.S. (eds.), New York, 1998.

16. The term is Khachig Tölölyan's, who adopts Jürgen Habermas' popular formulation from his 1962 landmark study (*The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*) to explore the Armenian diaspora in the modern context. See his *Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation*, in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Spring 2000. A theoretical inquiry on the role of early modern diasporic public spheres in shoring up Armenian (or for that matter any other diasporic) identity remains to be done.

17. For a documentary and episodic history of Armenian cultural societies from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, see POGHOSIAN, P.E., *Patmowfiwn Hay mšakowfiyin ankerowfiwnnerow* [History of Armenian Cultural Associations], in *Handes Amsorya* (Vienna, November/December 1951—October/December 1967). For the development of cultural societies in early nineteenth century India, see SETH, M., *The Armenians in India*, op.cit.

But the most dominant elites were the representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The leaders of this institution had become the *de facto* representatives of the "nation" after the collapse of the last Armenian states and the disappearance of the *naxarar* class.¹⁸ They spoke for the nation whether in the role of intermediaries with their imperial rulers (as in the Patriarchate in Constantinople, or in the case of Etchmiadzin to its local rulers and the Persian Shah), or as supplicants to Western Christendom on the several occasions when Armenians made disconcerted efforts to liberate their homeland from Muslim rule.¹⁹ The Church also had administrative and juridical power over its flock: it owned and managed properties, collected taxes, and was "empowered to judge a range of cases."²⁰ Moreover, and perhaps most significantly, it acted as a patrolling agent for Armenian identity. It did this through a complex and multi-tiered system of Episcopal dioceses that, in the absence of a state, provided a loose and portable infrastructure for the communities in dispersion and functioned as a "boundary maintenance mechanism."²¹ Nearly all the communities in the diaspora (both intra- and inter-state ones) had at least one church, a parish school and a circuit of circulating priests, nuncios/legates and mobile scribes. Some like New Julfa, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Lvov, had their own diocese, equipped with monastic centers of learning, scriptoria or printing presses and reigning local archbishops. In all this, the Church, with its spiritual center in Etchmiadzin, helped shape Armenian identity. It embodied the diasporic "mythomoteur" or founding myth and acted as both compass and anchor for Armenians, "rooting" the fragments in dispersion to a spiritual reference point (Etchmiadzin) in the homeland.²²

18. My formulation here draws from two essays by TÖLÖLYAN, K., *The Role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Diaspora*, in *Armenian Review*, Spring 1988, and *Exile Government in the Armenian Polity*, as well as LIBARIDIAN, op.cit., p. 30.

19. On the Church's "clerical diplomacy," see LIBARIDIAN, op.cit., pp. 16-29, and TÖLÖLYAN, *The Role...*, op.cit., p. 56.

20. TÖLÖLYAN, *Exile Government*, op.cit., p. 129.

21. The term partially derives from the work of the anthropologist Frederik Barth and was elaborated and applied to the "archetypal diasporas" of Jews and Armenians by John A. Armstrong. See his *Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas*, in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 70, June 1976.

22. The concept of *mythomoteur* is elaborated by Armstrong in his *Nations Before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1982, and especially by SMITH, A., *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, 1986. A *mythomoteur* is a collection of "myth-symbol

While these boundary maintenance mechanisms enabled the Armenians to survive as a distinct ethno-religious community over long spans of time and despite the absence of state institutions of their own, they were also precarious and porous. Indeed, by the eighteenth century they were unable to prevent a full-blown crisis from emerging. The Armenian elites and activists of the period were cognizant of this crisis and identified three of its primary symptoms; interestingly, they diagnosed all three symptoms as originating from one common source: diasporic existence and dispersion. The first symptom consisted of what we may broadly call the "crisis of language or education"; its principal characteristics were low levels of literacy and the growing rift between the "clerisy" with its literary language known as *grabar* (which itself was "corrupted" or "distorted" under the gradual influence of Latin²³), on the one hand, and the bulk of the population with its proliferating, fragmented and dispersed local vernaculars, on the other.²⁴ What is more, the elite were conscious of the fact that many Armenians in the dispersion did not even have their dialects to rely on. Those in the Crimea and Poland, for instance, spoke and wrote a hybrid language known as Armeno-Kipchak, an amalgam of the Turkic dialect of the Crimean Tatars (who dominated the region) spliced with Armenian words and written in the Armenian script.²⁵ Similarly, many in the Ottoman intra-state diasporas (especially those in and around Constantinople) spoke Armeno-Turkish, again consisting of vernacular Turkish, with religious vocabulary in Armenian, written in the Armenian script.²⁶ From the perspective of the elite (whether

complexes," or a founding political myth, that links a group's identity in relation to a specific territory. For diasporic peoples such as the Jews and the Armenians, the notion of sacral center plays a crucial role in defining their *mythomoteurs*. See also ARMSTRONG, *Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas*.

23. AJARIAN, H., *Hayoc' lezowi patmow'iwn* [*The History of the Armenian Language*] vol. 2, Yerevan, 1945, pp. 296-323.
24. *Grapar* had ceased to be a spoken language at the latest by the eleventh and twelfth centuries and was subsequently used solely as the language of the clerical literati until its rapid decline in the second half of the nineteenth century. See the classic work of AJARIAN, H., *op.cit.*, and NICHANIAN, M., *Âges et Usages de la Langue Arménienne*, Paris, 1989.
25. See AJARIAN, *op.cit.*, pp. 255-295, and especially SCHÜTZ, *op.cit.*
26. See AJARIAN, *op.cit.*, and STEPANIAN, H., *Hayatai' t'owrkerēn grakanow'iwnə* (*Atbiwragitakan hetazōtow'iwn*) [*Armeno-Turkish Literature (A Source-study Investigation)*], Yerevan, 2001. Interestingly, Ajarian points out that Catholic

in Madras, Constantinople, Venice or Etchmiadzin), this linguistic rift between the clergy and its flock and the fragmentary state of whatever was left of the Armenian language was seen as undermining the social cohesion of the nation, both within and across the diaspora and the homeland. The one group within the constellation of Armenian elites that did most to counteract this crisis was the Catholic Armenian order in Venice known as the Mekhitarist Congregation. Led by their founder Mekhitar of Sepastia, the Mekhitarists defined their identity in what can be called dualistic terms: on the one hand, they were Catholics by confession and hence owed their loyalty to the Church of Rome, while, on the other, they were Armenians by "nationality" and were thus committed to the welfare of their nation.²⁷ To be sure, this distinction between religion and nation

Armenians provided the most fertile ground for Armeno-Turkish. The printed literature in this language, mostly of a religious nature but also including texts on history—Chamchian's *History* went through three separate Armeno-Turkish editions (1812, 1852 and 1867)—was promoted primarily by the Mekhitarists, and done so on practical grounds. The Triest branch of the order, founded in 1775, took the lead in this respect. It should be noted that, despite being almost entirely alien languages, Armeno-Kipchak and Armeno-Turkish nonetheless functioned as boundary maintenance mechanisms. In this respect, they played a similar role in the Armenian diaspora as Judeo-Arabic, Ladino and Yiddish did in the Jewish communities of dispersion. In both cases, while an alien language was adopted for general communication as well as for literary purposes (the first books printed in the Armenian community of Lvov were in Armeno-Kipchak), two important restrictions were maintained. First, the written word, which in both cases was laden with sacral connotations, remained in the group's original script. Second, vocabulary that was offensive to the group's religious/sacral identity was systematically avoided. See ARMSTRONG, *Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas*, op.cit., p. 396, and SAFRAN, W., *Comparing Diasporas: A Review Essay*, in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Winter 1999, p. 278. Unfortunately, neither Armstrong nor (especially) Safran are aware of the existence of Armeno-Kipchak or Armeno-Turkish and consequently regard the Jewish examples as exemplary and singular cases of such boundary maintenance mechanisms.

27. In the colophon to his translation and printing of the Bible, Abbot Mekhitar defined his credo, which was also the credo of his Congregation, as follows: "Though I love both my nation and my efforts for its benefit, my heart will never come loose from the orthodox faith of the Church of Rome. Conversely, though I am entirely subjected and will subject myself to being faithful to the throne of Rome—for which our father Saint Gregory the Illuminator stands as an example for me—my love for and my efforts to labor for the benefit of my nation (though it may scorn me on account of such faithfulness) will never slacken." *Astowacašownē (The Bible)*, Venice, 1733, p. 1279. In other words, Mekhitar was saying that he would strive neither to sacrifice his nation for his confession, nor his confession for his nation, a difficult position to

was not always easy to negotiate, especially since its significance was lost on other Armenian Catholics and members of the Apostolic Church. Nonetheless, it provided the Mekhitarists with a highly original vantage point for their cultural interventions. It was in this context that the Mekhitarists sought to reform and cleanse the classical language from its "Latinizing" and other foreign influences. Their project was to rescue grabar from the same "catastrophe" that had befallen the vernacular, which, "being disordered [անկանոն] and without a guide, has become divided and multiplied [փետեկոտեալ է բազմացեալ] into as many parts as there are population regions or especially cities or villages."²⁸ One of their first works to address this problem was Abbot Mekhitar's *K'erakanow'iwn Grabari lezowi* (Grammar of the Grabar Language), published in 1730, and trailing by three years a similar work for the vernacular, *Girk' K'erakanow'ean Ašxarhabar lezowi* (A Book of Grammar for the Vernacular Language). Even more important was their monumental *Bargirk' Haykazean Lezowī*²⁹ (Dictionary of the Armenian Language),

maintain given that, in the eighteenth century and even much later, religion was seen as a constitutive element of collective identity and that neither the Armenian Church nor that of Rome recognized the difference between these two spheres of identity. For a broad account of the Mekhitarist position on matters relating to Armenian identity, see YARDEMIAN, D., *Mxit'arean galaparakan ew Mxit'arean inknow'iwn* [The Mekhitarist Ideal and Mekhitarist Identity], Venice, 1994.

28. *Bargirk' Haykazean Lezowi* [Dictionary of the Armenian Language] vol. 1 Venice, 1749, p. 6. That Abbot Mkhitar regarded the dispersion of the nation as the source for the crisis of the nation's language and education is evident from his description of the state of the vernacular: "On account of the fact that our nation was driven away to live in numerous foreign lands, it speaks in multiple tongues and mixes into the Armenian language uncountable foreign words from each nation in whose lands it happens to reside, as the inhabitants of the East have done with the Indians, the Persians, the Georgians, the Arabs, the Assyrians, the Turks and their likes, and those in the West have done with the Franks, the Hungarians [qəṣṣnūg], the Greeks, the Bulgarians, the Tatars [Ulyhtpuugh or Scythians, i.e., the Crimean Armenians who spoke and wrote in Armeno-Kipchak] and their likes. Because of this, those who live in one region do not understand the language of another region, at least in part." Ibid., p. 6. Given the cacophonous nature of the vernacular(s), Mekhitar naturally chose to concentrate on restoring and standardizing grabar, which he saw as being (ideally) "the only language common to all."
29. Work on this two-volume dictionary had commenced in 1727. The first volume was published in 1749; the second one in 1769. See DJEMJEMIAN, S., *Mxit'ar Abbahōr hratarak'akan arakelow'iwnā* [The Publishing Mission of Abbot Mekhitar], Venice, 1980, pp. 221-247, and NICHANIAN, M., *Enlightenment and Historical Thought*, in *Enlightenment and Diaspora: The Armenian and Jewish Cases*, pp. 117-121.

a work that aspired to be (and, until the 1830s, was) a “canon of education” that sought to “guide the multitudes to employ the language in a uniform fashion.”³⁰

Concomitantly, and intertwined with the crisis of education, there was a crisis in historical memory.³¹ By the eighteenth century, the leading members of the diasporic elite were concerned that most ordinary Armenians (both within and without the diaspora, both laymen and some members of the literate class of clerics) had lost touch with the former history of their people. This was partly the result of the absence of manuscript histories, which were rare and inaccessible to most Armenians, as well as the dramatic decline of educational centers in the homeland on the heels of predatory invasions across the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Although printed texts of a few classical histories (including Movses Khorenatsi’s classic *History*, Agathangelos and others) were available on the market and could partially alleviate this crisis, up until the second half of the eighteenth century they were few and far in between. What is more, as Marc Nichanian has suggested, the rhetorical and allegorical style of their classical narratives could no longer resonate with the increasingly secularized and modern concerns of Armenian readers in such places as Madras and Constantinople.³²

Here as well, the Mekhitarists were at the forefront. Along with the intellectual-activists of Madras (to whom we shall return later), they were the first to become acutely aware of this crisis and its implications on the nation’s identity; hence their “totalizing” project of gathering, assembling and ordering an archive in San Lazzaro that could serve to reconstitute the fragmented and dispersed past, and fashion a historical narrative that was *national in form*. The fruit of these labors was Mikayel Chamchian’s three-volume *History of the Armenians* (1784-1786), which remained the standard national history text for much of the nineteenth century. With this publication, along with their manuals of grammar, their *Dictionary*, and many other works in the field of geography and European translations—and, in the early part of the nineteenth century, the periodical press—the Mekhitarists played a leading role as diasporic reformers of

30. *Bārgirk’ Haykazean Lezowī*, p. 6.

31. I have briefly discussed this issue in my “*The Treason of the Intellectuals*”: *Reflections on the Uses of Revisionism and Nationalism in Armenian historiography*, in *Armenian Forum*, spring 2003 pp. 1-38.

32. NICHANIAN, M., *Enlightenment and Historical Thought*, op.cit., p. 91.

the nation. They were the leading outlet for Armenian printed books in the eighteenth century, supplying a transnational market of literary consumers stretching from Transylvania, Constantinople and Smyrna in the West, all the way to the towns and provinces in the homeland and to Madras and Calcutta in the East.³³ However, the Catholic aspect of their identity, to which we shall return later, made their publication and revival activities suspect to the hierarchy of the Armenian Church.

The third symptom of the crisis, which we shall call the “crisis of the center,” was the most corrosive. The latter was connected, on the one hand, to the absence of a clear geographic and political center for Armenian life, and more specifically to the fact that most Armenians were partitioned between rival Ottoman and Persian dominions. Without a fixed center of authority where they could appeal to resolve their problems, Armenians sought assistance from Rome (as was the case in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the several Catholic missions to Europe), and from as far away as the Palatinate of Germany (the case of Israel Ori at the end of the seventeenth century) and London, Moscow and Tiflis (as did Joseph Emin in the following century). The only place in the homeland that could provide them with a semblance of a secular political center was the region of Gharabagh, where the remnants of the Armenian nobility (the Meliks) had survived. It was here that in 1722 a rebellion led by Davit Beg, and sustained by Georgian power from the north, succeeded in establishing a transitory period of independence. But this region itself was geographically peripheral to the lives of most Armenians, and Davit Beg’s rebellion was crushed after his death in 1728. Alongside and reflecting this multiplicity and heterogeneity of political and authority centers, there was a deeper crisis of polycentrism affecting the religious identity of the Armenians that in turn was tied to the status of Etchmiadzin as a viable compass and anchor for Armenian memory. Herein lay the problem of the Church, which up to the eighteenth century translated into a problem for the nation. To understand its broad implications, we must briefly compare and contrast the Armenian predicament in the diaspora with that of the Jewish dispersion.

By the fifth century CE if not earlier, the overwhelming majority of Jews were living in the diaspora.³⁴ The resulting tenuous demo-

33. DJEMJEMIAN, S., *The Publishing Mission of Abbot Mkhitar*, op.cit., pp. 260-318.

34. In this and the following paragraph, I have thought through and elaborated some of Benjamin Braude’s astute speculations on the comparative history of Armenian and

graphic link with the homeland, which in effect was a symbolic rather than demographic homeland, was compensated for with a spiritual bond focusing exclusively on Jerusalem as a kind of pilgrimage shrine, an imaginary icon of identity for all Jews in the dispersion. Jerusalem's centrality in Jewish identity and memory—its role as the hub of the diasporic *mythomoteur* that symbolically linked the margins of the dispersion to the geographic center in the homeland—was never seriously challenged during the long centuries of exile. Even as old centers of learning became residual and new ones emerged, they never displaced the aura of the Holy City. On the contrary, their symbolic location in Jewish memory was always qualified by reference to the originary site of loyalty. Hence “the Jerusalem of such and such...” In other words, they were derivative or secondary *lieux de mémoire*, to borrow Pierre Nora's felicitous term;³⁵ their symbolic capital was contingent on their subordinate position to Jerusalem.

The reverse situation held for the Armenians. What makes the Armenian case unique, as Braude has pointed out, is its singular degree of polycentricity.³⁶ Unlike the Jewish case, Armenian ties with the homeland were demographically strong, but the territorial or spiritual focus of their “myth-symbol complexes” was tenuous. To be sure, like the Jews, the Armenians also defined their identity along confessional lines; they too had their own version of being the “Chosen People,” a claim they bolstered with Armenia's conversion to Christianity by Gregory the Illuminator in the early years of the fourth century. The “originary” site of this conversion, Etchmiadzin, also had a spiritual significance as the sacral center of the Armenian Church and by extension of the nation. But unlike Jerusalem, Etchmiadzin's grip on Armenian memory and identity

Jewish diasporas. See his *The Nexus between Diaspora, Enlightenment and Nation: Thoughts on Comparative History*, in *Enlightenment and Diaspora: The Armenian and Jewish Cases*, HOVANISSIAN, R.G. - MYERS, D.N. (eds.), Atlanta, 1999.

35. *Les lieux de mémoire*, NORA, P. (ed.), Paris, 1993, translated into English as *The Realms of Memory*, 3 vols, KRITZMAN, L. (trans.), New York, 1996. For the significance(s) of the term, see Nora's introductory essay in volume 1.

36. *Idem*, p. 16. Braude's use of the term “polycentrism” to characterize the Armenian diaspora and its relationship to its homeland is fascinating and theoretically suggestive. Unfortunately, however, Braude largely concludes his discussion on Armenian polycentrism at the beginning of the fifteenth century, thus stopping short of realizing the full implications of dispersion and polycentrism as catalysts for the Armenian “revival” movement in the eighteenth century.

was fragile and fissiparous. Under the pressure of weak, geographically shifting, and often disappearing states, Etchmiadzin habitually gave way to alternative, and at times competing, centers of loyalty, as the leaders of the Church were forced to give precedence to the "portability" of the institution of the Catholicosate over its ordinary site or lieu. Indeed, from the fifth to the tenth centuries, Dvin (485) had come to displace Etchmiadzin as the mother seat of the Catholicosate. Subsequently, the Catholicosate had moved west to the island of Aghtamar (927) in Lake Van, followed by Argina (947), then the Bagratuni capital of Ani (992). After the fall of the Bagratunis, in the middle of the twelfth century it shifted again this time southwest to Hromkla (1149) on the Euphrates and, in the late thirteenth century, to the Cilician capital of Sis (1293). It was only in 1441, when the Catholicosate of Sis made overtures to the Church of Rome, that Etchmiadzin once again reassumed its place as the spiritual center of Armenian life, but not without leaving Sis behind as a regional Catholicosate. Since by then the Armenians were not only a dispersed but also a stateless people (the kingdom of Cilicia having collapsed in the last quarter of the previous century), the weight of representing and centering the "nation" had fallen on the shoulders of the Church. But the Church, despite its relocation to its sacral center, never recovered from the centrifugal forces that had marked its earlier history.³⁷

In fact, between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the Armenian Church faced one of the most volatile periods in its history, as the earlier tendency of "serial polycentricity" (Etchmiadzin, Dvin, Aghtamar, Argina, Ani, Hromkla, Sis and back to Etchmiadzin) had given way to "simultaneous polycentricity" to use Benjamin Braude's term—a dangerous combination.³⁸ At this time, several alternative and at times rival claimants to Etchmiadzin's traditional authority as the center for the

37. This is only a partial inventory. For other sites, see GULESERIAN, B., *Patmow'iwn Katolikosate' Kilikiyoy* [History of the Catholicosate of Cilicia], Beirut, 1939, pp. 5-7. For a concise overview of the movements of the Church and its various centers, see ULUHOGIAN, G., *Un'Antica Mappa dell'Armenia: Monasteri e santuari dal I al XVII secolo*, Ravenna, 2000, pp. 23-29.

38. Idem, p. 16. To be sure, the tendency towards simultaneous polycentricity also existed before 1441, as the case of Aghtamar (1113) and several other "anti-Catholicosates" dating back to 590 demonstrates. However, unlike their post-fifteenth century counterparts, these rival centers were the exception rather than the rule. For a listing of the earlier "anti-Catholicosates," see GULESERIAN, B., *Patmow'iwn Katolikosate' Kilikiyoy*, op.cit., p. 7.

dispersed nation had proliferated and were operating in the open. Some, like the Patriarchates of Jerusalem (founded by the Fatimids of Egypt in 1311) and Constantinople, had surfaced from within the Church's own back yard. Though both were officially under Etchmiadzin's symbolic authority, under the tutelage of the Ottoman state and the support of the rising Amira class, they had become semi-autonomous institutions with *de facto* and *de jure* powers of their own.³⁹ This was particularly true for the Patriarchate of Constantinople, whose expanding jurisdictional space mirrored the growth of Ottoman power and came at the expense of dispossessing Etchmiadzin of one diocesan see after another in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁰ As for the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, it too was in theory under the Holy See's jurisdiction,⁴¹ but its location within Ottoman territory had similarly contributed to its increasing autonomy. So much was this the case that, sporadically between 1664 and 1680, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem functioned as an independent "Catholicosate for Ottoman Armenians" with the former abbot of the Saint James monastery, Eghiazar Aintabtsi, presiding as the Catholicos.⁴²

39. On the Amira class, see BARSOUMIAN, H., *The Dual Role of the Armenian Amira Class within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian Millet (1750-1850)*, in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, BRAUDE, B. - LEWIS, B. (eds.), New York, 1982.

40. According to Hagop Siruni, the number of Sees under the Patriarchate's authority had dramatically risen to seven by end of the sixteenth century, with three additional Sees coming into its fold by the end of the next century. SIRUNI, H., *Polis ew ir dera (Constantinople and its Role)*, vol. 1, Beirut, 1965, pp. 452-453. This expansion enabled the Armenian Patriarchate to become the official regulating institution for the Armenian millet, whose empire-wide network was only consolidated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See BRAUDE, B., *Foundation Myths of the Millet System* and BARDAKJIAN, *The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate*.

41. After it had broken away from Sis in 1311—largely in opposition to the Holy See of Cilicia's overtures to the Church of Rome—the Patriarchate had returned to its former subordinate position as a diocesan see of Sis and had remained so until sometime in the middle of the seventeenth century, at which point it had become a satellite see of Etchmiadzin. See GULESERIAN, *Patmowt'iwn Kat'olikosac' Kilikioy*, op.cit., pp. 1263-1264.

42. In his bid to transform the Patriarchate of Jerusalem into a separate and all embracing Catholicosate for the Ottoman Armenians, Eghiazar had succeeded in attaining a firman from the Sublime Porte, which supported his plans since it was in its interest to separate its Armenian subjects from the spiritual (and administrative/financial) authority of Persian-controlled Etchmiadzin. Eghiazar had also relied on Catholicos Khachadur Kaghadatsi of Sis, who anointed him as Catholicos in exchange for finan-

Etchmiadzin also faced rivalry from the Catholicosates in Aghtamar, Sis and Gantsasar (located in Gharabagh and also known as the Catholicosate of Albania until its dissolution in 1828). The first two had survived the fall of Cilician Armenia and were now operating independently of the Holy See's jurisdictional authority; they were, at times, regarded as "anti-Catholicosates" not only on account of their effrontery towards Etchmiadzin but also because they had periodically listed towards the Church of Rome. The semi-autonomous status of the Catholicosate of Albania, on the other hand, dated back to earlier days but was reinforced in the sixteenth century due to Etchmiadzin's weak position and was, in all likelihood, further bolstered in the early part of the eighteenth century when Gantsasar benefited from its close ties with the meliks of Gharabagh during their brief period of independence.

In addition to these contenders, the Church faced its most radical challenge from Catholic missionaries. The latter had first appeared during the Cilician period, made inroads into the Armenian homeland

cial remuneration and an exemption of Sis's diocesan sees from the jurisdiction of Eghiazar's newly emergent Catholicosate. One of Eghiazar's first acts as Catholicos was to proclaim an edict announcing that all diocesan sees within the Empire, excluding those belonging to Sis but including those hitherto within Etchmiadzin's field of jurisdiction, would henceforth come under Jerusalem's supreme authority. Through the intervention of the Porte, Eghiazar also ordered the exile of Etchmiadzin's Persia-based legates from Ottoman territory. He renounced his title as Catholicos of Jerusalem in 1681 (thus reverting Jerusalem back to a Patriarchate), when, following the death of Catholicos Hagop Jughayetsi of Etchmiadzin during the previous year, Etchmiadzin's electoral synod offered him the throne of the Catholicos of All Armenians. According to Hagop Anasian, this offer was made to prevent Eghiazar from switching allegiances to the Church of Rome. Evidently, the anti-Catholicos was en route to Rome, where he was prepared to make a profession of the faith, when a special delegation from Etchmiadzin interceded with the offer. (See ANASIAN, H., *XVII dari azatagrakan šaržowmnern arewmtean Hayastanowm*, [The XVIIth Century Liberation Movements in Western Armenia], Yerevan, 1961, pp. 262-266). Anasian's overall interpretation of Eghiazar's decision to transform the Patriarchate of Jerusalem into a separate Catholicosate for Ottoman Armenians has been called into question, among others, by Ashot Hovanissian (see his review essay in *Patmbanasirakan Handēs*, 3, 1963) and Siruni (op.cit.), who provides a commentary on the debate. It is worth noting that before becoming a Catholicos, Eghiazar was the Patriarch of Jerusalem (1649), the Patriarch of Constantinople (1651-1652, when he was forced to resign), and Vice-Patriarch of Jerusalem (1657). For a detailed discussion of the vicissitudes of this period, see ORMANIAN, op.cit., pp. 2550-2576; ANASIAN, op.cit., pp. 241-272; and SIRUNI, op.cit., pp. 522-537 and 541-551.

proper in the fourteenth century with the founding of the Armenian Catholic community in Nakhichevan known as the *Fratres Unitores*, and had received a fresh impetus after the Vatican centralized missionary activity with the creation of the *Congregazione di Propaganda Fide* (referred to as the *Propaganda Fide*) in 1622. The opening of the *Collegio Urbaniano* in Rome (1627), where Armenian recruits (known as "Collegians") were later trained and sent to the field, and the establishment there of a press for the printing of liturgical and religious books in Armenian, led to more Catholic gains.⁴³ By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Catholic Armenian community in Constantinople alone was reported as numbering some twenty thousand members, a figure that rose by the end of the century.⁴⁴ In addition, a separate Armenian Catholic Patriarchate of Cilicia was established in 1742 (based in Bzommar, Lebanon, after 1749) with its own presiding Catholicos,⁴⁵ and the earlier missions in Nakhichevan were redoubled in the seventeenth century.⁴⁶ These factors not only further reinforced the polycentric tendencies jeopardizing Etchmiadzin's role as the symbolic center of the nation, but also posed the gravest threat to the Armenian Church's integrity. This was because, unlike Etchmiadzin's other rivals within the Church, the Catholic

43. For a general introduction on the Propaganda Fide, see FRAZEE, C.A., *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire, 1453-1923*, London, 1983, especially chapter 6. For its policies toward the Armenians and its role in training Armenian recruits and publishing missionary literature in Armenian, see Sahak Djemjeman's meticulously documented works, *Naxijewani Hayoc' varžaranə ew Hromə* [The Armenian College in Nakhichevan and Rome] Venice, 2000 and *Hay tpagrowfiwnə ew Hrom (17 dar)* [Armenian Printing and Rome (17th Century)], Venice, 1989. See also AMATUNI, G., *Oskan Vardapet Erewanc'i ew ir zamanakə* [Voskan Vardapet Yerevantsi and his Times], Venice, 1975.

44. Idem, p. 182 and 185. To be sure, the Vatican was printing books in Armenian as early as 1584, when *Tomar Grigorean* (The Gregorian Calendar) was published in its Armenian translation.

45. Idem, pp. 185-189; see also the discussion in ZEKIYAN, B.L., *Armenians and the Vatican During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Mekhitar and the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate*, in *Het Christelijk Oosten*, (2000).

46. See DJEMJEMIAN, S., *Naxijewani Hayoc' varžaranə ew Hromə*, op.cit.. A missionary report to the Propaganda Fide in 1601 indicates that the number of Armenian Catholics in the region was close to 19,400. (Idem, p. 7). It should be noted that Nakhichevan's Armenian Catholic community, like the rest of the Armenians in the area, were dealt a severe blow by the deportations carried out under Shah Abbas I in 1604-1605. Unlike the other Armenians, however, the Catholic Armenians were allowed to return to their homes due to Vatican's intervention with the Safavid court.

missionaries, led by the Collegians, regarded the Armenian Church as “schismatic” and “heretical” and called for its union and conformity with Rome. The Mekhitarist position, in this respect, was an exception, since they favored an “ecumenical” communion between the two churches without questioning the orthodoxy of the Armenian Church and its liturgical-canonic traditions.⁴⁷ This position, however, was not understood in the eighteenth century and was consequently rejected both by Rome and Etchmiadzin.

Finally, in the last quarter of the century the Holy See confronted potential defiance from the secular discourse of Armenian intellectual-activists in Madras. Though not a strong presence initially, and certainly not one that consciously positioned itself against the Church, this threat to Etchmiadzin’s authority and its position in the constellation of new institutional and discursive formations was to be the most successful over the long term. The Church itself, as we shall see, only resisted the Madras activists briefly during the 1770s, but seems to have collaborated with them subsequently. By the second half of the next century, the secular agenda advanced by the “Madras Group” had triumphed over the Church agenda as a new generation of intellectuals edged out the representatives of the Church in assuming the role of dominant elite for the nation. The emergence of this challenge, to which we shall return later, can be traced back to the merchant activists of Madras, who were the first in the dispersion to consciously formulate an Enlightenment notion of nationhood, equipped with its own concept of a secular “center,” in which the Church was divested of its supreme authority as shepherd to the nation.

Simeon Yerevantsi’s long intellectual and religious career as the Supreme Catholicos of the Holy See was devoted to combating these polycentric tendencies. Though Yerevantsi was aware of the first two symptoms of the crisis afflicting the nation (i.e., that of language/education and historical memory), he framed his intervention squarely on the crisis of polycentrism as it affected Etchmiadzin, and read the other two

47. I have relied here on Zekian’s typology of the various tendencies historically characterizing relations between the Vatican and the Armenian Church, and for the position of the Mekhitarist Congregation within this typology. See art.cit., p. 252. For an exceptionally lucid discussion of the Congregation’s national orientation and their position on the Armenian Church, see OUTOUNJIAN, A., *Polsahay hamaynkneri miowf’ean xndirā ew M. Č’amč’ean* [*The Question of the Union of Armenian Communities of Constantinople and M. Chamchian*] in *Banber Erewani hamalsarani* (1978), no. 3.

crises in light of his response to polycentrism. In the process, he not only formulated a new doctrine for the Church, but also created a novel discourse of the nation. This discourse, as we shall see, represented the nation as a religious community dispersed over space and territory but bound together and "imagined" through its supreme sacral marker and center in the homeland: the institution of the Catholicosate in Etchmiadzin.