

HISTORY OF ARMENIA

BY

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Chamichian

FROM B. C. 2247 TO THE YEAR OF CHRIST 1780,
OR 1229 OF THE ARMENIAN ERA,

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL ARMENIAN,

BY

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TO WHICH IS APPENDED A CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY BY THE
TRANSLATOR FROM THE YEAR 1780 TO THE PRESENT DATE.

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Armenia. To trace the cause more remotely, we might say, that in him also was fulfilled the promise made by God to Abraham, the great patriarch of his family, that kings should proceed from him, to govern not only the Israelites, but other nations. This had happened before in Armenia, by the kingly power being vested in the hands of the Arsacidæ descended from Ketura ; and now again in the Bagratians from Sarah, of whose government we have now to record the events. In doing this we shall follow the same method as before, noting in each king's reign his contemporary pontiffs. We now proceed to give an account of Ashot, called the First, as being the first Bagratian king of Armenia, and grandson of Ashot surnamed Misaker.

CHAPTER I.

The reign of Ashot the First, and the pontificates of Zechariah and George the Second.

A. D. 856.
 Haican
 era 305.

ON the chiefs of Armenia being sent to Bagdad, of which we gave a detailed account in the last book, Ashot the son of Sumbat the Confessor, assumed the government of his tribe, the Bagratians, and exercised the power of general of the Armenians, under the pre-

fecture of Shekhey. In his public duties Ashot displayed such an amiable disposition, that he was universally esteemed. Mild, unassuming, and at the same time eminently gifted with those talents that dignify human nature, every thing that he performed gave pleasure to all who were affected by it. His fame was not confined to his own countrymen, for foreigners from different nations, having experienced kindness at his hands, carried his reputation to their countries. It is also said, that those who from political or other causes were hostile to him, could not help avowing his worth and their regret at not being able to make him their friend. The Caliph of Bagdad, of whom we have had occasion so often to speak, having heard of the excellent character that Ashot bore, and desirous of shewing how he appreciated it, determined to confer on him the government of Armenia. For this purpose he sent to that country a chief named Ali Armeney, the son of Vahey an Armenian apostate, bearing rich presents, and splendid official robes, and directed him to invest Ashot with the supreme power. This occurred in the year of our Lord 859, or of the Armenian era 308. Hence commenced the Bagratian rule in Armenia.

A. D. 859.
Haican
era 308.

Ashot, upon his elevation to the government

A. D. 860.
Haican
era 309.

of Armenia, immediately proceeded to improve the condition of the country. He reorganized the army, increased the allowances of the military, and appointed his brother Abas general; a brave and skilful man, who afterwards greatly distinguished himself against the enemies of his country. Ashot sometimes resided in the city of Ani, which was built by his grandfather, and sometimes in Erazgavors, that is, Shirakavan in the province of Shirak. He had several daughters, the eldest of whom was married to Vasak the Seunian, otherwise called Gabur, by whom she had four sons, Gregory, Ashot, Isaac, and Vasil, or Vasak. All these we designate by the common name of Seunies from their father. The second daughter of Ashot was married to Gregory the Arzrunian, who was otherwise known as Derenick, prince of the province of Vaspurakan; a wise and valiant character. To these two, with Vasak the Sisaken chief, and his brother Ashot, were distributed the principal offices in the state. Likewise the three brothers, from the tribe of Seunies, Sumbat, Isaac, and Babken, were also kept near the person of Ashot. These individuals will be known in the course of the history by the name of Sisakans.

A. D. 861. When Ashot and his chiefs had succeeded
 ^{Armenian}
 era 310. in bringing the country into a tolerably flou-

rishing state, it was invaded by an army of 80,000 men, gathered from different nations, and headed by Jahap the son of Sevada and grandson of Jahap, of whom we have before spoken, who had undertaken this expedition with a view to subdue Armenia and to seize upon the government. His army having arrived on the banks of the river Arax, encamped there. Here it was attacked by Abas the Armenian general, who had hastily marched at the head of 40,000 men to repel the invaders. In this conflict success declared itself in favour of the Armenians, the enemy being routed with great slaughter. So complete was the overthrow of the invaders, that of their vast army only sixteen, with Jahap their general, escaped. The river Arax, on the banks of which this encounter took place, was almost choked up by the number of the corpses that were thrown into it. The news of this terrible event spreading into the adjacent countries, caused the Armenians to be regarded with a feeling of terror. The site of the battle, from the number of the victorious army being 40,000, was henceforward called the Field of the Forties.

At this period a new Caliph succeeded to the throne of Bagdad. The Armenian chiefs who had been sent thither by Bulah, and forced by threats of torture outwardly to deny their

A. D. 862.
Haican
era 311.

faith, now petitioned the new Caliph to permit them to return to their native country. He kindly granted their request; when they set out for Armenia accompanied by Nana the Syrian deacon. On their arrival they publicly recanted their apostacy, and repenting of the sin they had committed, glorified the only true and just God.

At this period the Armenians situated in the division of the Greeks were much molested by Photius, the Greek patriarch at Constantinople, a very learned man, but who had obtained his election to the patriarchate by unlawful means. Photius renewed the old disputes about the council of Chalcedon, and called the Armenians Zanzalicians, or followers of Jacob Zanzalus. Zechariah the pontiff, on coming to the knowledge of this, wrote him a friendly letter, in which he explained the reasons which induced his countrymen to reject the council of Chalcedon. To this Photius made a very long reply, wherein he set forth the sound doctrine of that holy council, and declared, that whatever the Armenians had heard prejudicial to it was false. He also addressed Ashot the prince urging him to accept this council, and forwarding to him a piece of the wood of the true cross. This letter and relic was brought by Vahan, or Johan, the

Archbishop of Nice, who also received directions from the Patriarch, to convene a meeting of Bishops to discuss the matter in question on his arrival in Armenia.

Vahan being arrived, the pontiff and the prince consenting to what the former suggested, a meeting was held in Shirakavan, A. D. 862, H. E. 311, which was attended by Ashot and many eminent laymen. After many subjects had been treated of, Vahan delivered a long discourse concerning the trinity and the incarnation, and laid before the assembly fifteen chapters, containing an orthodox creed, the last of which decreed the acceptance of the council of Chalcedon. After the meeting was concluded, Isaac surnamed Miruth, and also Apicuresh, who according to Asolnik the historian, was bishop of Taics, having arrived at Shirakavan, opposed the proceedings which had just taken place, and raised much commotion in the nation. Zechariah the pontiff, however, by his prudent measures and praiseworthy example succeeded in quieting all murmurs, and bringing the Armenians to an union of religious sentiment. His conduct in these, as well as other affairs, gained him the respect and esteem of all. The Caliph having just at this time sent Hisey the son of the late governor Shekhey to visit the Armenians, and to enquire into their affairs,

A. D. 862.
Haican
era 312.

A. D. 863.
Haican
era 312.

the visitor was so much pleased with Zechariah, that he ordered a standard, on which was marked a cross, to be carried before the pontiff. This was an ancient custom, but for some time before had been suffered to grow into disuse. Zechariah was the author of many religious treatises, containing annotations on the Gospel, an explanation of the Songs of Solomon, with a few other works. After remaining in the pontificate twenty-one years he died. In his time flourished Hamam the monk, surnamed Arevelzie, or the Orientalist, who wrote commentaries on the Proverbs of Solomon, the thirty-eighth chapter of the book of Job, the 118th Psalm, and on a few other religious works. He was the author of some treatises on grammar, and a history of Armenia. None of his works have survived him. Two of his contemporaries, Gagik, abbot of the convent of St. Atom, and his deacon Gregory, conjointly wrote an account of the saints, with a work called Atomagir, or the book of Atom, which was used at the commencement of the daily church readings by the Armenians.

Contemporary with these was Johannes, a physician and very learned man, and great linguist, he wrote the life of Dionysius the Areopagite, and translated some few histories of the acts of certain saints.

A. D. 867.
Haican
era 316.

At this period Basilius, an Armenian of the

family of the Arsacidæ was elevated to the imperial throne at Constantinople. It being the custom with all the members of this family, on their being invested with kingly power, to have the ceremony of their coronations performed by a Bagratian, Basilius on this occasion sent a chief of the name of Neketas, or Nicodemus, to Ashot, entreating him to come to him for the purpose of fulfilling this ancient custom. Ashot being unable from the nature of his situation, to perform this office in person, sent to Constantinople a splendid crown, which being received, Basilius testified much affection for him, calling him his beloved son, and making a treaty with him for the continuance of their friendship.

The pontifical chair being vacant by the death of Zechariah, George the Second, from the village of Garney was elevated to it. He was a prudent yet cheerful man, and managed the spiritual affairs of the people in a praiseworthy manner.

A. D. 876.
Haican
era 325.

This pontiff, together with the chiefs of the nation, having observed with pleasure the satisfaction which Ashot gave all ranks of the people in the administration of his government, drew up a petition to the Caliph, soliciting him to appoint Ashot king of Armenia, promising at the same time not to fall off from their obedience to the authority at Bagdad, nor in any way

A. D. 885.
Haican
era 334.

attempt to lessen the tribute which they were accustomed to pay. This petition was presented by Hisey, the visitor before mentioned; and the Caliph, well aware of Ashot's merit, to the great joy of all the Armenians consented to their prayer. He accordingly sent Ashot a crown, with the other ornaments of royalty. Basilius the emperor, on being made acquainted with this event, also sent him a magnificent crown. Ashot thus patronized by two emperors, ascended with great splendor the throne of Armenia. He immediately restored all the ancient royal usages, adding thereto what was required by the difference of the times. Every thing appeared to be renewed with the restoration of royalty. Armenia became again great and flourishing, no one remaining unemployed, and no place being suffered to fall into decay. Ashot removed the seat of his government to the city of Bagran or Bagaran. Having regulated anew the whole of the laws regarding the internal government of the kingdom, Ashot marched with a body of troops towards Mount Caucasus, where the people had recently broken out into rebellion. Having arrived at Gugars, he by conciliatory measures restored order there, and marching to Uti, effected the same there by the same means. On his departure he appointed regular governors

for these places, from whose skill and wisdom he could hope the best results. A short time afterwards, Ashot's son-in-law, Gregory the Arzrunian, proved disobedient to him, and assuming the government of the two provinces of Hier and Zarwand, openly revolted. A multitude of foreigners, however, who had taken up their residence in these provinces, disliking the conduct of Gregory, waylaid and killed him. He was thus punished by the hands of strangers for a fault which he had committed against his kindred, and this event, which under any other circumstances would have been viewed with horror, and visited with the most signal marks of the royal vengeance, was regarded as a public benefit, and the perpetrators of the murder were permitted to pass with impunity. His body was afterward brought to Vaspurakan by his son Ashot, who succeeded to all the honours and dignities of his father.

Shortly after Ashot lost his other son-in-law, Vasak the Seunian, who died, and was succeeded in his dignities by his son Gregory Supan the Second. Marem the wife of the deceased, ever after lived in the greatest religious seclusion and monastic severity.

Contentions now broke out amongst the people of Vanand and numberless were the fights that ensued. Abas the general proceeded thither at

A. D. 886.
Haican
era 335.

A. D. 887.
Haican
era 336.

A. D. 888.
Haican
era 337.

the head of a few troops and succeeded in reconciling them with each other. No sooner was this effected than the tribe of Gugars revolted. But Sumbat the son of Ashot, then governor of the town of Erazgavors, acting with admirable promptitude, gathered a large body of men, and attacking the rebels forced them to sue for peace. This being granted, Sumbat retired to the fortress of Shamshudey or Shamshuldey (or *the three arrows*) where he thenceforward resided.

A. D. 888.
Haican
era 337.

When Armenia became quite tranquillized, Ashot set out on a visit to Armenia Minor, accompanied by the celebrated prince Mekhrick, and a detachment of troops. He first arrived at Sebastia, whence he passed to Constantinople, to exchange civilities with Leo the emperor, son of Basilius. His reception at this city was magnificent; Leo being at that time at war with the Bulgarians, entreated Ashot to afford him assistance, upon which Mekhrick, with the Armenians who had accompanied him, was directed to remain with the imperial troops until the conclusion of the war. Some time afterwards, when no longer required, Mekhrick returned to Armenia Minor, where he took up his residence.

A. D. 889.
Haican
era 338.

On the return of Ashot from Constantinople he fell sick at a place called Carspar Aparaj,

near the province of Shirak. His malady increasing, he sent for George the pontiff, and received the sacrament from him; after which he caused large sums to be distributed to the poor at the church doors, and in hospitals, convents, and almshouses. His last hour approaching, he received a benediction from the pontiff, and then resigned up his soul, in the seventy-first year of his age. He had been in possession of the supreme power in Armenia for a period of thirty-one years, twenty-six of them under the title of prefect or governor, the remaining five as king.

His remains were afterwards brought to Bagaran, where they were interred with all the magnificence due to a monarch so much and so justly beloved. All the chiefs and bishops present at the capital appeared in the train of public mourners, beside a numberless concourse of clergy and laity, the whole attended with the solemnity and grandeur of a military procession. The troops also appeared in their peculiar costumes, and greatly added to the impressive nature of the scene. Three of his sons, David, Isaac, and Shapuh, followed their father's remains to the grave. His eldest son, Sumbat, was in Gugars, Abas his brother in Vanand.