

Ghewond

History

Source 1

1.

[1] First [we shall discuss] those called Amir al-Mu'mnin [Commander(s) of the Faithful]. Muhammad (Mahmet) [ca. 570-632] died after exercising power for twenty years. In the eleventh year of the [reign of the] pious, God-pleasing Emperor Heraclius [610-641] of Byzantium, [Muhammad] was succeeded by Abu Bakr [632-634], 'Umar [634-644], and 'Uthman [644-656] [who ruled] for thirty-eight years. As long as the God-crowned Heraclius was living, [the Arabs] did not dare to conduct raids against Judaea, because [Heraclius'] reputation for bravery was widespread, and he terrified them. Thus [Heraclius] held the rule of Judaea and Asorestan until the end of his life.

Once Heraclius' son [Constantine III, 613-641] had come to rule [g3] in his father's stead, the Lord awakened the spirits of malevolent men so that through them the blood of Christians would be shed in vengeance, because we had sinned before the Lord God. [The Arabs] began to form brigades and mass troops against Constantine's realm, against Judaea and Asorestan, having for support the command of their law-giver, that sower of darnel, to "Go against the countries and put them under your rule, for the plenty of the world has been given to us for our enjoyment. Eat the meat of the select ones of the countries, and drink the blood of the mighty." The Jews were their supporters and leaders, having gone to the camp at Madiam and told them: "God promised Abraham that He would deliver up the inhabitants of the world in service [to him]; and we are his heirs and sons of the patriarch. Because of our wickedness, God became disgusted with us and lifted the scepter of kingship from us, subjecting us to the servitude of slavery. But you, too, are children of Abraham and sons of the patriarch. Arise with us and save us from service to the emperor of the Byzantines, and together we shall hold our realm." [The Arabs] were encouraged further hearing this, and went against Judaea.

News reached the emperor of the Byzantines, who wrote [g4] to the general in Judaea, saying: "I have heard that the Saracens have arisen and attacked Judaea and Asorestan. Gather up your troops, go fight against them and block them, so they do not spread their raiding over our country, bringing the sword and death to it. Now put on your armor and organize your troops." [The general], upon receiving the imperial order, wrote to the military commanders who were under his authority, wherever they happened to be, to come to him. Coming quickly, altogether they formed a mighty army which went before

the marauder who had grown strong and was coming against them. Now [the two sides] faced each other in the confines [of the place called] the Rock of Arabia. [The Byzantines] saw the boundless host of the Madiam army, as numerous as a swarm of locusts, with [their] incalculable number of camels and horses. Then the Byzantine troops displayed great ignorance, for they put the army's supplies out in the open at a great distance from themselves. And, leaving their horses at the camp, they went forth to make war on foot, armored, against [the Arabs]. Exhausted from the sun's heat, the hot rocks and sand, and from the weight of their weapons, they fell upon the enemy [*end of grabar* (Classical Armenian) text page 5; henceforth shown as, for example, g5].

[The Arabs], who had rested themselves, quickly leaped on their mounts and attacked, delivering many blows to the Byzantine troops and putting the rest to flight, pursuing them to the Byzantine camp, and generally killing many of them.

Then the Ishmaelites, having loaded up with looted Byzantine treasures and after robbing those who had fallen to their swords, returned in joy to their own land. Thereafter they ruled over Judaea and Asorestan, putting the land and country of the blessed city of Jerusalem under taxation. Thus, from that time forth, Judaea and Asorik' ceased paying taxes to the emperor of Byzantium, since the army of the Byzantines was unable to resist the Ishmaelites. And so Ishmael came to rule over Judaea.

2.

[2] A year later [the Arabs] became insolent toward the shah of Iran. They assembled a multitude of troops and came against the shah of Iran whose name was Yazdgird (Yazkert) [III, 632-651], the grandson of Xosrov [II, 590, 591-628]. Yazdgird also assembled his troops to battle [g6], but he was unable to withstand them. [The Arabs] struck the [Iranian] troops, destroying them with the sword, and they struck and killed the shah. With that, the kingdom of the Iranians ended, having lasted 481 years. The Ishmaelites pillaged the country and the royal treasury and took [the spoil] to their own land. A large body of troops separated and started raiding the land of the Armenians from the Iranian side, capturing the districts of Mark' and Goght'n and the village (*dastakert*) of Naxjawan. Many men were killed by the sword; others, with women and children, were made captives and taken across the Arax (Erasx) River at the ford of Jugha. The army then divided into two parts, one part transporting the captives to their own land, and the other brigade raiding through the district of Artaz against the Byzantine general named Procopius, who was encamped in the district of Kogovit, near the borders of Bazudzor and Marduts'ayk'. Prince T'e'odoros of the R'shtunik' clan alerted Procopius that "troops of the marauding Ishmaelites have arisen and are coming against us."

But Procopius, placing his faith in the multitude of his troops and not in God Who determines [the outcome of] the battle, wrote nothing in reply to the prince of the Armenians. [T'e'odoros R'shtunik'], who was embittered by the destruction of the land of the Armenians and by the laziness of the general [g7], impatiently wrote [to Procopius] two and three times. General [Procopius], getting angry at the prince [who was in his presence], threw the scepter he was holding in his hand at [T'e'odorus]. [T'e'odorus] left him, saddened, and immediately ordered the forces under his authority to "arm and go against the Ishmaelites." The troops mounted their horses and went to a hill named Eghbark' where they held the summits of the gorges, waiting to ambush [the Arabs]. They slew many of them, took booty from the fallen, and went on to the district of Garhni, having separated from the [Byzantine] general. Then Procopius ordered his own troops to go against the enemy. The army of the Ishmaelites rushed against them, destroying most of the Byzantines. The survivors took to flight and [the Arabs] pursued them to their camp and then they themselves returned to their own camp to rest. They say that there were more than 60,000 Byzantine troops [involved there], while the Ishmaelites had less than 10,000 men. The next day, gathering up the spoil stored in the camp, [the Arab army] turned about and returned to its own land.

This occurred in the twenty-second year of Abu Bakr and 'Uthman and 'Umar, the Ishmaelite caliphs. For the next three years they ceased coming against the land of the Armenians. However, in the twenty-sixth year of their rule, once again they attacked the land of the Armenians with a very large force [g8].

3.

[3] In the second year of the Byzantine emperor Constantine, who was Heraclius' grandson, news reached Prince T'e'odoros that the marauders had arisen and were coming against the land. He took his troops and wanted to get hold of gorges at the Dzora pass, but was unable to get there in advance [of the Arab army] because the enemy had attacked with the speed of winged snakes. Thus they left Armenian forces behind them and headed to the capital city of Dwin. They found the city devoid of fighting men, because all of them had gone along with Prince T'e'odoros. All they encountered there were women, children, and other people who were not soldiers. They came against the city and quickly took the fortress. They killed the men they discovered and took into captivity the women and children, some 35,000 souls.

Tell me, who is capable of lamenting in a worthy fashion the wretchedness of these disasters? For they occurred everywhere. The holy churches, which the pagans were not worthy to enter, were pulled apart, demolished, and trampled under the loathsome feet of the infidels. Priests, deacons, and worshippers were slaughtered [g9] by the insolent

and merciless enemy. Delicate women, who had never experienced adversity, were whipped and dragged into the square crying out laments for the fate that awaited them. Similarly, the multitude of captives with their sons and daughters were in the same calamity, groaning and sighing. They did not know who was more worthy of lamentation, those who had been slain by the infidel's sword, or the sons and daughters left alive who were to be seized and taken, to be alienated from the faith of Christ and its spiritual and divine glorification. Though there were many weeping and mourning the pitiful sight of blood-spattered bodies fallen on top of one another, [the survivors] were not in a condition to gather up the bodies and bury them. How very appropriate [to this situation] is the prophet's lament: "O God, the heathen have come into thy inheritance; they have defiled thy holy temple. They have given the bodies of thy servant to the birds of the air for food, the flesh of thy saints to the beasts of the earth. And there was none to bury them" [see Psalms 79: 1-3]. All these disastrous horrors, which Judaea had experienced before, were now visited upon us.

When the troops of the Armenians with the lords (naxarars) and Prince [T'e'odoros R'shtuni] saw the ferocity of the marauders who had come against them, their resolve weakened and they were unable to attack the pillaging enemy. Even though they saw their women and children being led away into captivity, [the Armenian troops] were unable to resist [g10], because they were few in number. Rather, they just sat sobbing, lamenting, and grieving for their women and children. The Hagarenes transported [the captives] to the country of Syria, and then they ceased coming against the land of the Armenians for ten years.

[4] However in the thirty-sixth year of their rule, they assembled a force and again attacked the land of the Armenians. The leaders [of this expedition] were 'Uthman and Oqba. When they reached the borders of Armenia, they divided into three fronts and began their raiding. One front went by way of the land of Vaspurakan, capturing towns and fortresses as far as the city of Naxjawan. Another front went through Taro'n, and the third front reached Kogovit and besieged the fortress of Artsap'. Locating an entrance to the fortress, they went in secretly at night. They found the guards sleeping, and so they took that fortress. They bound the men they encountered there. Then they negligently took their pleasure, having abominably foul intercourse with the women. But all-seeing God took pity on [the Armenians], not ignoring those who believed in His Name. As retribution for the evils [the Arabs had] wrought, He sent Prince T'e'odoros who, roaring like a lion, took six hundred armed men and quickly went against the marauders who had arrived there. Appearing at [the fortress] suddenly, [T'e'odoros and his troops] killed some 3,000 of the enemy, freed the bound [men], pursued the few survivors, and retrieved the captives [g11]. Then, collecting the enemy's loot and booty, they turned back joyfully glorifying God Who demanded vengeance from their enemy. As for that [other front of the] army about which I narrated earlier, it took its spoil and captives and went to the land of Syria. After that they stopped [raiding] for two years.

Having wrought such evil deeds during their day, the princes of the Ishmaelites—Abu Bakr, 'Uthman, and 'Umar—died.

4.

Succeeding them, a certain Mu'awiya held authority for nineteen years and four months, and then died [661-680]. [We shall now describe] Prince Grigor who lived in [Mu'awiya's] time, the events that took place in the land of the Armenians, and the deaths of the princes.

The caliph of the Tachiks [Arabs] began to assemble troops to come against the land of the Armenians in the first year of [Mu'awiya's] reign, which was the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Emperor Constans [II, 641-668], the grandson of Heraclius. News of this reached Emperor Constans who ordered the general in the Cilician area to go against them. [Constans] removed Prince T'e'odoros from his authority because of the treachery he had worked against general Procopius, and put in his stead [g12] a certain Smbat from the Bagratid clan, sending him along with his general. He wrote to T'e'odoros R'shtuni, who previously was the [presiding] prince, saying: "Arise and come with us to battle, bringing along the troops under your control." However [T'e'odoros] did not want to go. [Constans] wrote a second time: "If you do not accompany us to fight the marauder, on our return I shall exterminate your House, [removing it] from the [other] clans of our [empire]." Frightened by these threats, [T'e'odoros] dressed his son, Vard, to go to Prince Smbat, ordering him to deal treacherously with his allies, and to unite with the enemy. [Vard] went to the general of the Byzantines and [together] they set off for Syria, crossing the bridge on the Euphrates. T'e'odoros' son then went to the general and requested that he be appointed as guard over the pontoon bridge. [The general] ordered that [Vard] guard the front of the bridge.

[5] When the two sides clashed in battle and the wounded fell on both sides, again the Tachik fighters became strong, putting the Byzantine troops to flight. This occurred on Holy Saturday, on the eve of Easter. Once T'e'odoros' son observed the Ishmaelite victory, gathering his strength he crossed to the other side of the river and severed the bridge's [connecting] ropes, so that the [Byzantine] fugitives would not survive. Getting the Byzantine troops in their midst [the Arabs] hurled some of them into the river, though some of them escaped and fled to Byzantine territory. Thereafter the Byzantine emperor's courage abandoned him [g13], since he realized that the collapse of his authority was the Lord's doing. From that point on he ceased going against the Ishmaelites.

Now the caliph of the Ishmaelites wrote an edict to the land of the Armenians: "If you do not pay taxes to me and come under the yoke of my service, I shall put all of you to the

sword." Nerse's, the chief-priest of the Armenians and builder of [the church of] St. Gregory, together with the princes and lords of the land assembled and agreed to become tributary to the tyranny of the Ishmaelites. [The Arabs] requested hostages, and [the assembly] gave [them] two of the Armenian lords, Grigor from the Mamikonean House and Smbat from the Bagratuni House. Mu'awiya, caliph of the Ishmaelites, took them and levied a 500 dahekan annual tax on the land of the Armenians [in exchange for allowing them] to remain without fear in their dwellings.

In the second year of his reign Mu'awiya summoned Grigor and Smbat, who were hostages at the royal court. He gave to Grigor the honor of [the position of presiding] prince of the Armenians [ca. 662-684/85], and sent them back to the land of the Armenians with numerous gifts. There was great peace during the years of his rule.

Mu'awiya's son, Yazid [I, 680-683] succeeded him, living for two years and five months before dying. He had kept taxes over the land of the Armenians at the same rate [as his father].

After [Yazid], 'Abd al-Malik [685-705], son of Marwan [I, 684-685] ruled. He lived for twenty-one years before dying. An account of his deeds follows [g14].

[Abd al-Malik] was a cruel and warlike man. In the second year of his rule there was a fierce conflict, warfare, and a great bloodletting among the Tachiks which continued for three years, claiming innumerable lives, and which fulfilled the prophecy of David: "Their swords shall enter their own hearts and their bows shall be broken" [Psalm 37:15]. Instead of the shedding of innocent blood and the merciless slaughter which [the Arabs] visited upon the Christian peoples, the blood of the guilty was shed and God demanded vengeance upon those who had insulted His servants, a vengeance visited upon them by their very own hands.

Grigor, [presiding] prince of the Armenians, kept the land of the Armenians in a peaceful state throughout his reign, free from all raids and attacks. For he was a God-fearing man, perfectly pious in the faith, charitable, hospitable, and [a man who] cared about the poor. In the village of Aruch in the district of Aragatsotn he built a wonderfully appointed and adorned house of worship as a memorial to his own name, to glorify the Lord's name.

[6] During the war which broke out among the Tachiks, the Armenians, Georgians, and Aghuanians ceased to pay tribute to them, having been tributary for thirty years. This rebellion lasted for three years. In the fourth year [g15], a northern people called Khazars (Xazirk') ruled over the land of the Armenians and they killed Prince Grigor and many Georgian and Aghuanian lords and princes in battle. [The Khazars] spread out raiding across the land of the Armenians, seizing numerous districts and villages. Then, collecting their loot and captives, they returned to their own land.

5.

[The following chapter concerns] the reign of Ashot, the conflagration caused by the Romans, and the death of Ashot.

After the death of Grigor, Ashot patrik [the patrician] succeeded him in the authority of [presiding] prince. [Ashot] of the Bagratuni clan was a prominent grandee among the Armenian lords, rich and mighty in authority, virtuous and modest in all wordly matters, more noble and more acquainted than all others with piety toward God. He concerned himself with all manner of benevolent work, was interested in education, and adorned the churches of God with doctoral arts and groups of clerics and splendid [ritual] vessels, all out of his treasury. He built a church [called Amenap'rkich'] at Dariwnk', the seat (ostan) of his realm, and placed in it the icon of the life-giving incarnation of Christ with its miraculous powers, which he had taken from the West, naming the church after it [Amenap'rkich' "Savior of All"] [g16].

In the first year of his reign, a star of astonishing aspect appeared like a column of light shedding light from its own tail, and they called it a comet. It became a symbol of [the coming of] famine, the sword, and great violence.

In the second year of the reign of Emperor Justinian [II, 685-695, 705-711] and during the reign of Ashot patrik, [Justinian] sent a large force against our land of Armenia. They came and destroyed the land with looting, subjecting numerous beautiful buildings to fire and turning them into ruins. And then [the Byzantine troops] returned to their own land. However the Byzantine grandees became inimical toward Justinian, cut off his nose, and exiled him. In his place they enthroned Leo [Leontius, 695-698], Apsimeros Tiberius [Tiberius III Apsimar, 698-705] and Theodosius [III, 715-717]. Meanwhile Justinian had gone to the land of the Khazars, married the daughter of the Khaqan/Qaghan (Xak'an), the king of the Khazars, and requested auxiliary troops from him. [The Khaqan] provided many troops and sent along with them an extremely mighty man, named True'gh [Terbelis/Tervel, khan of the Bulgars, 700/701-718], Justinian's father-in-law. Arriving in Constantinople, [Justinian] fought and conquered his adversaries and established his reign for a second time. True'gh died in the battle. Then [Justinian] sent the other Khazar troops back to their own land with many gifts and valuable goods.

Ashot held authority for four years [g17]. In the fourth year of his rule a looting brigade of the sons of Ishmael attacked the land of the Armenians. These sons of sin and children of impiety worked their wickedness on the towns of Mark', at Xram, Jugha, and Xoshakunik' for they tortured the men, demanding taxes, and they planned to molest the women with their loathsome and obscene intercourse. News of these crimes reached Prince Ashot who immediately ordered his troops to go against them. [The Armenians]

put [almost] all of them to the sword, while the remainder were put to flight. Once the wily son of Satan saw this attack, he became more violent and ordered his troops to spread the [looted] treasures in the field before the Armenian troops. The latter, carelessly turning attention to the booty, slacked off in their pursuit [of the Arabs]. Only Prince Smbat with a few men continued pursuing them. The enemy, growing stronger, turned back on them, wounding the [presiding] prince of the Armenians. However [Smbat's] soldiers gave a shout and [the remaining troops] arrived quickly, striking and killing the enemy. They took the prince, fatally wounded, to Kogovit where he died in his bed, gloriously [689]. He was buried in his [clan's] mausoleum in the village of Dariwnk' [g18].

6.

[7] [This chapter] concerns the battle which occurred in the swamp.

After the events which we have just narrated, the emperor of the Byzantines, who was called Apsimar and who succeeded Emperor Justinian, again sent a force [to Armenia] with orders to capture Smbat, the son of Varaztirots'. This was in revenge for Smbat's desertion of the Byzantine army on account of his father Varaztirots', whom the Byzantines had slain. They came and fought against him in the swampy plain of Payik. Many of the Armenian troops were killed, since they were few, as were many of the Byzantine troops. Once Smbat realized that he could not withstand the Byzantine army, he escaped by a hairsbreadth with a few men. The Byzantine troops returned to their own land.

7.

Now I shall again discuss the unbelievable disasters which befell us from the Ishmaelites. In the sixteenth year of the reign of 'Abd al-Malik' [685-705], Satan again inflamed his malevolent heart and [the caliph] ordered his troops to come against our land. The military commander was the bloodthirsty [g19] and diabolical Muhammad (Mahmet) [ibn Marwan] who swore a vow to his prince [his brother, Caliph 'Abd al-Malik'] that he would not replace his sword in its scabbard until he had plunged it into our land. Boasting, he went to the district of Jermadzor mercilessly putting to the sword whomever he found, as he had promised. However, since many people had been warned in advance about his coming they had taken precautions and sought refuge in the fortresses. [Muhammad ibn Marwan] also took numerous strongholds through deceit, falsely urging them to make peace. But once they had secured [that peace], they descended into the fortresses and put their swords to work, killing the men, and taking captive the women

and children. Such a crisis descended on our land that [the living] envied the dead who had departed this world in peaceful rest, rather than endure a life of such misery.

Two years later his impiety came to a head, and [Muhammad] began to spew forth his deadly poison. He planned death for the monastery of Saint Gregory. For [the Arabs] had seen the wonderful, venerable, and revered [church] vessels which the kings, princes and lords of this land had accumulated there. They saw too the [monastery's] arrangements of the angelic orders of priests, the goodly discipline of vardapets and worshippers, and [they heard] the angelic hymns [sung] across the country. These things wounded their inflamed souls and so they treacherously planned a fatal ruination for them. A brigade of the infidels went to spend the night under their roof. Getting up [g20] in the night, they strangled one of their own servants and threw him into a ditch. When morning had dawned, they arose to leave. Then they sought for the servant whom they themselves had killed, and were unable to find him. They visited many difficulties and dangers upon the monastic community. Then they initiated a search and found [the dead servant's body] in the ditch where they had thrown it. Immediately they began piling up all kinds of falsehoods and then seized everyone from the youngest to the oldest, and put them into prison. They wrote an edict to the bloodthirsty Muhammad explaining what had been done to them and asking what sort of death [the clerics] should be subjected to. When [Muhammad] had heard this, he told them to judge [the clerics] themselves as they wished, and to confiscate the church's belongings as booty. Having received the unjust order, executioners moved to implement that command of their satanic father, who was a murderer from the very start and never knew righteousness, as we learn from the Lord. They removed from prison all the people bound with ropes, cut off their hands and feet, hanged them from trees, and ended their lives.

[8] Who could endure [hearing about] the unbelievable disasters visited upon them without weeping? The blessed church grew dim without the beauty of its altar, and the sound of heavenly glorification [ceased]. Silent were the spiritual, rational orders of the [divine] mass which the blessed [clerics] offered with the purest of thoughts. The glow of the lamps, which illuminated the evening like the day, had been extinguished. Gone was the fragrance [g21] of sweet-smelling incense, and [gone were] the prayers of the priests dedicated to the atonement of the people seeking peace from humane God. One could say that the altar of the Lord had been stripped of all splendor. Oh the suffering of Christ! How did He permit the infidels to slander the people who glorify Him and to give them such bitter deaths? Rather, He wanted to bestow eternal life [on them] through a transitory death, so that by sharing in His torments they would also share in His glory, and so that those who were crucified with Christ would also be crowned along with Him. Those who had died with Him would be reborn with Him and eternally inherit the rest they were promised. Similarly, those who collaborated with Satan will inherit with him the many different bitter torments which have been prepared for him, the fire, darkness, unending lament, tears, and the gnashing of teeth, about which He who has prepared them knows. All these things will befall those who work iniquity.

As regards the aforementioned Muhammad, after accomplishing all these evil deeds, he went to Syria with much spoil. Meanwhile the inhabitants of our land were left like the burned husks of wheat which are thrown at the feet of swine.

8.

When general Muhammad left for Syria, he left an Ishmaelite prince [Abu Shaykh ibn Abdullah, 701-703] as his replacement in the land of Armenia. The latter hatched an evil plan to eliminate the nobility and their cavalry from Armenia. His treachery was quickly revealed to Smbat of the Bagratuni House and to other lords and their cavalry. When [Smbat] realized the [truth about the] plot, he summoned to him his clan members from the army of the nobles: Smbat, son of Prince Ashot, Vard, son of Prince T'e'odoros, and his brother, Ashot, as well as other lords. He sought to find some way for them to save their lives. The decision adopted was to yield and leave the land, and to go to the Byzantine emperor. Some of the lords of the land of Vaspurakan then separated and departed, going to a plain called Ar'estakoghm on the Vaspurakan border where a certain monk resided, in order to ask him about these matters. For [the monk] was a blessed and select man, full of spiritual wisdom. He lamented and bemoaned the destruction of the land and the churches and the draining away of the lordly clans, but was unable to suggest anything except that they should be careful and beware [g23] of treachery. Offering prayers for them, [the monk] entrusted them to the grace of God, and sent them away.

[9] They went along the bank of the Arax River and crossed into the borders of Ughaye', reaching the great town of Akor'i. Meanwhile the Ishmaelite troops which were in the city of Naxjawan chased after them and did not let off the pursuit, since there were more than five thousand of them and they wanted to devour [the Armenians] alive. When the Armenian troops learned that the marauders had arisen and were coming upon them, they crossed the Arax River [again] and encamped at the town of Vardanakert. The Tachik [Arab] troops continued to come after them. Then the Armenian forces sent a message to the Tachik troops, saying: "Why are you pursuing us? What wrong have we done you? Behold, our country lies before you, we are giving you our dwelling place, our vineyards, forests, and estates. Why do you also seek our lives? Let us quit our borders." However, the Ishmaelite troops did not want to listen, since their hearts had been hardened by the Lord so that they would be put to the sword. The Armenian troops secured the roads of the town and placed guards over them until dawn. They themselves spent the entire night in prayerful vigils, looking to the mighty right hand of God for aid and a just verdict on themselves and their enemies. As soon as day broke, when morning matins had ended, they celebrated the divine mass and those [g24] worthy of it communed in the Lord's body and blood, regarding it as their last rites. They ate a small meal to strengthen their bodies, and then immediately arose and organized themselves brigade by brigade and

front by front, and went into battle. Aid from Almighty God came to the Armenian forces, for although there were less than two thousand troops, nonetheless they slaughtered many [Arabs] with their swords. [At that season] the days were already quite cold and icy, and then the weather turned even more bitterly cold, preventing the Ishmaelite troops from unleashing their might. They had spent the entire night sleeping on the snow. When day broke, they fell to [the Armenians'] swords. Those [Arabs] who escaped the sword fled and went on to the Arax River which had [lightly] frozen over from the cold. With that multitude of troops on the ice, [the ice gave way] and those who had escaped the sword fell through it into the depths to drown. A small number of the fugitives, some three hundred, turned [for aid] to tikin ("Lady") Shushan. But Smbat, Ashot's son, went in pursuit with his troops, wanting to kill them. Tikin Shushan came before him with many entreaties and was able to save those who had come [to her] on foot, naked, barefoot, and wounded. She bandaged their wounds, brought them back to health, and outfitted them with goodly clothing. She also provided pack animals from her own herd [for them] and then sent them to the caliph of the Ishmaelites [g25], 'Abd al-Malik. As a result she received great thanks from him and also magnificent gifts.

The army troops, engorged with the enemy's spoil, sent glad tidings of their victory to the Byzantine emperor. As gifts from the enemy's loot they also had delivered to him choice Tachik horses and the noses which they had severed from the [Arabs'] corpses.

The emperor received that gift greatly offering thanks to the Creator and [expressing] gratitude to Smbat, the lords with him, and their troops. He also bestowed on [Smbat] the dignity of curopalates, in a royal fashion. [Smbat] received this honor from the emperor, took his own troops, and went to the land of Tayk' where he entered the fortress called T'uxark', and took precautions against the sons of Ishmael.

[10] In this period, another marauder came against the troops which were in parts of the land of Vaspurakan. They came against them in the district of R'shtunik' at the village called Gukank', where the two sides faced off. When [the Arabs] saw that [the Armenians] were few in number, they forcefully attacked them. But then again God showed His mercy and came to their aid. [The Armenians] put all [the Arabs] to the sword except for two hundred and eighty men who fled into a church. [The Armenians] were unable to get at them [g26] and so they planned to set the sanctuary on fire. However the prince of the Vaspurakan area, Smbat, son of Ashot, did not allow them to commit this sacrilege, saying: "God forbid that we do such a thing to the dwelling place of the glory of God, Who has given such a victory to us." So they set up guards to stand watch until the sanctuary itself should give them up and expel them. After a while, one of the Ishmaelite troops who was their commander sought reconciliation, in order to save his own life. Then he went to the Armenian troops and said: "We have heard that Christian folk are merciful when they see people in misery, that they feel pity and show mercy. Show mercy to us and grant us our lives as a gift, and take our belongings as booty." General Smbat responded: "We are taught by our Lord that the merciful are the ones worthy of mercy. You, however, are a merciless people, unworthy of mercy, nor

shall we show it to you." When the Ishmaelite heard this, he said: "At least grant me my own life and do not kill me, and [in exchange] I will deliver the rest of them into your hands." [The Armenians] agreed not to kill him. He went back into [the church] and said: "We have no hope staying here, since they will not show us mercy. Rather, come on and let us get out of here. Should they kill us we will attain the paradise promised to us by our law-giver, Muhammad. Should they let us survive, we will live" [g27].

Encouraged by these words, they all went outside and were immediately put to the sword. As for the man they had promised not to kill, he was thrown into the depths of the sea alive. Then [the Armenians] collected spoil from the fallen, divided it up amongst themselves, and departed to their own places.