

# The Borgiani Armeni 65 Manuscript

## A Witness to Early Modern Armenian Religious-Economic Diasporic Connectivity Between Aleppo, Jerusalem and Beyond<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The manuscript Borgiani armeni 65 from the collection of Vatican Apostolic Library is one of the 137 Armenian documents preserved there. The document is rare in its kind as it contains different pages from different time periods of Armenian history bound together. The page 8r of it is a unique letter written in 1711 in the monastery of Saint James – the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Besides being an invaluable source for historical analysis, it can also be perceived as a representation of early modern connectivity among Armenian churches in the Ottoman Empire. In this case, the letter is an alms-collecting request to the Armenian Diocese of Beroea (Aleppo). Besides being considered a tool of early modern connectivity and mobility, the performative turn in the requesting part of the letter allows it to be analyzed from a unique angle.

### Keywords

Armenian history, early modern, connectivity, alms-collecting, Jerusalem, manuscript

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<sup>1</sup> Here, I would like to express my gratitude to the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to the Holy See, namely His Excellency Mr. Garen Nazarian for providing the exceptional opportunity to conduct my research in the libraries and archives of Vatican. I am also forever grateful to the Congregation of Armenian Catholic Sisters of Immaculate Conception for providing a shelter to stay while conducting my research in Rome. I would also like to say thanks to Armine Melkonyan and Sossi Sousani, along with others, for helping me with translation from Classical Armenian.

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The Armenian manuscript collection in the Vatican Apostolic Library (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana) constitutes a relatively small but significant part of it. The number of the Armenian codices in the Vatican Library is 137, 125 of which received a detailed scientific description in the catalogue by Eugene Tisserant<sup>3</sup> (1884–1972), a cardinal, the dean of the College of Cardinals, the prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches (1936–59) and a librarian in the Vatican Library (Arlen, 10). Tisserant’s description includes the Borgiani armeni, Vaticani armeni, Barberiniani orientali and Chisiani collections. The Borgiani armeni collection consists of 88 manuscripts, from which the document Borgiani armeni 65 is the subject of our research.

The Borgiani armeni 65 manuscript<sup>4</sup> is an excellent example of a historical document not only for its chronological integrity but also because of its significance. The manuscript consists of nine pages, each of which, presumably, is written in different time periods, presumably even centuries. Interestingly, the pages have different sizes reaching up to 134 cm while being bound together constituting one document. Their forms, too, are controversially different: either slightly bigger than a standard size (in fact, page-size standards for manuscripts are also questionable) or too long and narrow stretching out of the borders of the document’s cover.

Two of the pages have illustrations as well as the names of the illustrated historical figures written in Armenian either above or below them. The first one is a long piece of paper representing Saint Mary and Jesus (the iconographical style of Virgin Mary Odigitria),<sup>5</sup> Saint Gregory the Illuminator, the founder and first head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian king Trdat (Tiridates) III (298–330) who, together with Saint Gregory, proclaimed Christianity as the state religion of Armenia, Saint Stephen<sup>6</sup> and Saint John the Baptist (or Forerunner as indicated in Armenian in the text -Գարսապէտ/Garabed). The second miniature depicts the apostles Paul and Peter on the upper two sides of the arched decoration, and David, the Catholicos of All Armenians and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in a sitting position under the main arch. The figure kneeling in front of him, as it can be assumed from Tisserant’s description, is bishop Aristaces. Despite their simple proportions,

<sup>3</sup> Eugène Tisserant. *Codices Armeni Bybliothecae Vaticanae Borgiani, Vaticani, Barberiniani, Chisiani* (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1927).

<sup>4</sup> The digital copy of the manuscript can be found on the website of the Vatican Apostolic Library through this link.

<sup>5</sup> Odigitria or Hodegetria (Our Lady Guide of Wayfarers), was said to be St. Luke’s painting of the Virgin carried from Jerusalem to Constantinople’s Odigôn monastery. It depicts a standing Madonna with the Child in the act of blessing carried on her left arm, while her right arm is either touching or uplifted to the Christ Child.

<sup>6</sup> Saint Stephen is the first of all martyrs, the first archdeacon martyred for Christ, who shed his blood for the love of Christ. He was one of the seven deacons chosen by the apostles in the first century. Deacons were the earliest pastors of the Christian Church.

these miniatures are significant testimonies, as they depict not only Biblical figures such as Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the apostles Paul and Peter, but also key historical figures from fourth-century Armenia mentioned above. Additionally, two pages of the manuscript contain stamps indicating that these documents are official agreements.

Based on the fact that the manuscript is a combination of papers from different periods of time, one can find several historical names that make the content unique. Despite lacking the standard narration of the biblical stories, it nonetheless contains prayers and praises (*գոհաբանություն/gohabanowt'yown*). Notably, each page of the manuscript constitutes a distinct document—be it a letter, a testimonial (*վկայագիր/vkayagir*), a decree (*կոնդակ/kondak*), or a commemoration of an event.

The page 8r of Borgiani armeni 65 is the focus of my interest. According to Tisserant's catalogue, it is a letter of the patriarch of Jerusalem to the Armenians of Beroea and their leader Peter, formerly the assistant of the Catholics of Cilicia, to request alms for the church of St. Sepulchers (Tisserant, 1927, 107). Based on the colophon, it can be calculated that the letter was written on August 30, 1711 “at the gate of the famous and ecumenical place where Christ dwelt, the great saint of the Lord, Saint James, the principal diocese of all Armenians, to the glory of God, the holy house of the judgment of the world.”<sup>7</sup>

The content of the letter contains several key aspects to consider when studying early modern history in general and the history of the Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate in particular. It starts with a long and opulent praise towards Jesus Christ, Saint Mary and the Apostles, as well as all the priests and pilgrims who visited Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the main purpose of the letter is revealed in the second part of the document where the writer, presumably the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, addresses his pleas to the representatives of the Diocese of Beroea. In it, he asks for a donation of 200 *ghurūsh* (Dror Ze'svi, 1996, 143) — a silver coin used in Ottoman Empire taxation system — to the Armenian church of Jerusalem.

The translation is as follows:

... rejoice growing ceaselessly while giving your mercy, be honoured every hour keeping the gold set by God and consigned by the apostles to the treasury of Jerusalem, with which you can celebrate every Sunday the feast of Christ's

<sup>7</sup> This is the original Armenian: “Գրեցավ նամակս օրհնութեան ըստ Հայկազնեաց տումարիս, և ի թուարանութեան ոճկ ին. և օգոստոսի լ. ի սբ քաղաքս Երուսաղէմ. Առ որան մեծահոջակ և տիե(զ)երական քսանիստ սբ Աթոռոյս Մեծի տն եղբօրն սբյն Յակովբայ. և նախագահ վիճակիս ամ հայոց ի փառս ալ, և սբ տանս դատաստանի աշխարհի. ծանուցումս վայելուչ. հայր մեր. բոլոր սրտիւ.” All translations in this text are mine. While I am grateful to those who have helped me with the translation, I take responsibility for any shortcomings.

resurrection according to Paul. Similarly, grant 200 ghurūsh with your generous mercy that was given the other year from the hands of envoy magister Joseph. In order to fill the holy grave of Christ with light with a hope for his saving grace...<sup>8</sup>

This brief passage documents that the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, one of the most important and influential Armenian spiritual centres, was experiencing financial difficulties at the beginning of the eighteenth century, whereas the Diocese of Beroea was supposedly in a financially more stable condition, and thus held a more influential position, at least among the Armenian church centres in the Ottoman Empire.

When studying the situation of the Armenian church in the Ottoman Empire in the modern period, Sanjian notes that the Ottoman government forced Armenian cities to obey the newly established Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem adopted its subordination to Constantinople in administrative functions. The Patriarch of Jerusalem also fulfilled the powers delegated to the Patriarch of Constantinople as leader of the Ottoman Armenian Millet throughout the dioceses under his control. He was given a lot of authority over local government, was in charge of collecting communal taxes, and was the only one who registered births, marriages, and deaths (Sanjian, 2003, 63). The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, consistently requiring financial assistance, generally operated under the subordination of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In fact, it may have taken advantage as it received financial support from the Constantinople Patriarchate (Der Matossian 2011, 25). The reason was that throughout the four centuries of Ottoman rule, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, in Palestine, excessive official and other criminal levies, bribery, and forced loans with high-interest rates depleted all the resources of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. As a result, the Patriarchate spent more than its real income and thus got into significant debt (Sanjian, 63).

Beroea, which was the Greek and Roman name of the city of Aleppo, was one of the thriving urban centres in the early modern period. Its location at one end

<sup>8</sup> "...խնդացէք հանապազ աճելով ի տուրս ողորմութիւնք ձերոյ, պանծացէք յամենայն ժամու հաստատուն ունելով իմօջի ձերում զԱստուածասահման, և զԱռաքելւաւանդ գանձանակն սրբոյ Երուսաղէմիս, որով և եթ կարէք պատուել ըստ Պողոսի գտօն յարութեանն Քրիստոսի յամենայն կիրակի, ընդ նմին ևս ԲՃ դուռուշ նուիրակութիւն պարգևելով սրբոց տնօրինականացս նորին առատատուր ողորմութեամբ ձերով. Որ և աստածօր այն ամ եկն և եհաս առ մեզ ձեռամբ յորդողի և ժողովողի գնոյնս ի մէջ հաստատեալ նուիրակ տէր Յովսէփ վարդապետի: Որպէս զի լուսագին լիցի Աստուածաբնակ սբ Գերեզմանիս Քրիստոսի յուսարով ի շնորհս կենսունակ փրկագործութենէ նորա..."

of the Silk Road, which passed through Central Asia and Mesopotamia, made it a significant place. It was the largest city in the Syrian area and the third largest in the Ottoman Empire after Cairo and Constantinople (now Istanbul) for many years (Russell, 1794, 1-2). This turned Aleppo into one of the most prosperous cities in the early modern world. Notably, in some aspects, eighteenth-century Aleppo was a typical city of Ottoman Syria at the time, but in others, it was remarkable, maybe unique of its kind. Located at the crossroads of the pre-modern Middle East's regional and global commerce, it had been a renowned station for the East-West trade as early as the fifteenth century, with Venetian, and later English, Dutch, and other European trading houses quartered within its precincts, transacting business with local merchants on a regular basis (Salibi 1994, 194–196).

The Armenian presence in Aleppo can be dated back as early as the sixteenth century while not excluding the fact of much earlier settlements (sixth century) (Semerdjian 2009, 29). Armenian settlement happened in parallel with the enlargement of the general population in the Judayda quarter, and the growth of the Christian population that constituted almost twenty percent of Aleppo's total population by the eighteenth century (Raymond, 2008, 1). Upon settlement, Armenians established hostels to receive weary Armenian pilgrims on their travels to and from Jerusalem (Sanjian 1965, 152). This pilgrimage route was described by Simeon Lehasi's (Simeon of Poland) first-person travel accounts (Akinian, 1936). One of the first dioceses of the Armenian Apostolic Church outside of the Armenian mainland is the Armenian Diocese of Beroea, which includes the Syrian cities of Aleppo and Deir ez-Zor, Idlib, Latakia, and Raqqa.

It should be noted that by the early seventeenth century Armenians had already built a considerably powerful reputation in the quarter: two main churches, the Holy Mother of God church (Sourb Asdvadzadzin) dated from 1429, and the Forty Martyrs' church (Sourb K'arasnits') dating from 1455, had been serving the community's religious needs, and served as the bishop's residence. The Armenian Church's Holy See of Cilicia had jurisdiction over it. There was also a pilgrim hostel inscribed with the letters 'hokidun,' meaning 'spiritual house,' which belonged to the Jerusalem Patriarchate (Semerdjian, 58).

In line with the colophon stating the date and place of writing the letter, there is an additional small text written vertically on the same page that gives no more information than calling for the veneration of the holy place where the Armenian patriarchal seat was established and is enshrined by the Holy Virgin. The writer requests more pilgrims to the Holy Land and to the Saint James monastery from

the church of Aleppo so that the patriarchy can economically benefit from them and in this manner continue its peaceful existence. The concluding words of sincere gratitude to God and to their followers seemed important to repeat: an act determined to seal this request by reminding its readers of the spiritual weight of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It is interesting to follow the lines of the letter as it develops not only the way of requesting something, but also contains words of praise and warnings to stay away from scammers and thieves when dealing with donations.<sup>9</sup>

The aesthetic qualities of the language of the letter deserve special admiration. The text is filled with beautiful praise words, prayers, and words of gratitude. If we divide the text into three parts, considering the first part as an introduction, the second and main one as a request filled with gratitude, and the third as a conclusion, we can find some exquisitely rendered phrases from the second part of the document. Such phrases as “May the blessings of the Almighty God pour on you a flow of graces, a fount of God-given love, an execution of a crowned hope...”<sup>10</sup> are representations of heightened acknowledgement and praise. To bless the recipients of the letter with their assistance and receive God’s blessing, the author sends prayers and desires to heaven. The language he used containing high register and ornamentation is not just a superfluous exaggeration but is central to the rhetorical strategy of soliciting support for the Patriarchate. It is part of the wielding of its religious authority.

The way the writer approached the language as a means of communication carries a performative act in it. The performativity of language is studied by the philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Dewey. They both argued that the meaning of words and sentences becomes contextually determinate through the tacit agreement in action of the participants in communicative practices (Medina, 2010). This suggests that the meaning or interpretation of a speech act is not in the hands

<sup>9</sup> “...Քանզի յայժմոյս վասն մեղանաց մերոց բ(ա)զում խափեփայք ելեալ շրջ ընդ յաշխարհ յանուն սուրբ Երուսաղէմիս. զգուշ կացեք, սիրելի որդիք մեր ի Տէր, ի նոցանէ. զի գողք են աւագակք. որպէս լուեալ ենք թէ. ոմանք մարդիք չարք. աշխարհականք. և քահանայք. խորելով գտուրս ողորմութիւնք ձերոյ արգելուն զձեզ լիպալէս հաղորդիլ իշնորհաց սուրբ տեղոյս, և զրկեն զսուրբ տունս աստուծոյ. ի բարերարութենէդ ձերմէ, մի և մի իւրիք հաւատայք այնպիսեաց անխիղճ արանց. մանաւանդ յայնցանէ որք դալլ պատանք արարեալ շրջագային ծախելով միամիտ ժողովրդոցդ որպէս թէ ի վերս սուրբ գերեզմանին լուսածրիցեն, մի ընդունիք գնսս և մի զպատանս նոցին...” The translation is as follows: “For now because of our sins, many deceivers came from the world to holy Jerusalem. Beware of them, beloved sons of God, for they are thieves and robbers, some are wicked men, laymen, and even priests. They will steal your alms and not let you take them to the holy places. They will plunder the holy houses of God. Do not, in your goodness, believe such unscrupulous men, who have made and sold false bandages of Christ! Do not accept them and their traps!”

<sup>10</sup> “Արինութիւն Հօրն անեղականի... իջեալ ցօղեսցին ի ձեզ հոսմունք շնորհաց... բղխմունք աստուածապատուէր սիրոյ, գործառնութիւնք պատկառէտ յուսոյ...”

of anyone in particular, but in the hands of all speakers/writers taken collectively, that is, in the hands of the linguistic community. This way, the performativity in the letter to some extent confirms the legitimacy and the commanding influence of the writer, who, as a patriarch, consequently becomes a representative of the collective side of the Armenian Patriarchate.

It can be noted that the situation in the congregation in the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries was unstable. Because of the fact that the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and that of Constantinople were joint institutions, there were occasional disputes between them: some representatives of the clergy would sit in Constantinople while claiming the rights of the congregation in the name of the leader of Jerusalem. Controversies regarding the Jerusalem Patriarchate's management of the city's finances, internal operations, and the selection of new patriarchs frequently damaged its reputation. The Monastic Brotherhood's bishops and priests chose the patriarchs of Jerusalem from among its own members until the end of the 17th century (Sanjian, 64). However, in the second half of the 17th century, certain irregularities began to occur in the selection process of the patriarchs. Ecclesiastics frequently loaned confiscated property and holy objects in order to satisfy their bigger financial obligations. As for the Ottoman government, stability was not as important as political expediency and financial gain.

Notably, the Jerusalem See always kept a special representative in Constantinople who served in two capacities: as a mediator between the two Patriarchates, upholding the interests of his see; and as a representative of Jerusalem to the Sublime Porte, submitting various petitions on behalf of his see, either on his own or more frequently in consultation and cooperation with the Armenian leaders in the city. There were also two assistants to the representative – *braviraks*, those who were sent to the capital every year after Easter to make preparations for and to accompany the pilgrims in the following year, and nuncios, who were the connecting envoys among different religious centres (Narkis et al, 1979, 18).

The Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate was disbanded between 1657 and 1659, and then for a decade starting in 1704, the city was ruled by special commissioners sent from Constantinople. This was the time when several disagreements arose between the representatives of the Armenian church elite to take over the leadership of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. In the centre of one of the disputes appeared Eghiazar Hromklayec'i, the patriarch of the Saint James Monastery, whose name is mentioned in the letter and who was re-established on the holy throne three times (1664–65, 1666–68, 1670–77). Although his name is mentioned very briefly in the

text as a threat to deceivers, it is still worth studying some episodes from the years of his leadership.

Eghiazar H'romklayec'i (in other sources Aynt'apc'i) had been appointed as the patriarchal vicar by the then-Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Astvaçatowr Tarontsi (1645–1664). These two were the heads of the patriarchal seat, succeeding one another for about fifteen years. Eghiazar had great ambitions to be ordained as a Catholicos and to rule over the Armenians within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, leaving the mainland of Armenia and the spiritual leadership of the Armenians in the Persian Empire to the Mother See of Ējmiatsin (Sawalanian, 1931, 608). For this reason, he wrote a set of regulations with twelve articles against the Catholicos Hakob of Ējmiatsin (Sawalanian 1931, 608). The inhabitants of the city did not approve of Eghiazar and tried to remove him from power in every way. Reverend Martiros, who, together with Eghiazar, was appointed as vicar by Astvaçatowr Patriarch appealed to the grand vizier to take away the proclamation of the patriarchate from Eghiazar's hand. Still, some representatives from the Armenian wealthy lay community, one of them being Apro Ćelebi, stood by Eghiazar's side, supporting him. The dispute between the two clerics continued and was finally resolved through an agreement signed by a number of prominent Armenian Ćelebis in 1666.

As reconciliation was not established, the disagreements started again and for two years the patriarchate changed hands between Eghiazar, former patriarch Astvaçatowr, and Martiros. In the end, Martiros vardapet, defending the name and honour of Eghiazar, appointed Reverend Xaçatowr Beriatsi (from Beroea) as his deputy, and went to Constantinople via Beria (Beroea) to answer Eghiazar's prosecutors. Saint Jacob's congregants gathered in Ējmiatsin and sent a manifesto with their signature to Jerusalem, asking Eghiazar not to ignore the patriarchate and take back Martiros, his prodigal son.

Astvaçatowr patriarch died in 1670, bequeathing the leadership of the see of Jerusalem to Martiros, who came to Jerusalem to take over the position. Eghiazar, learning about the death of Astvaçatowr, returned to seize the throne of the Catholicos. Arriving in 1672, he proclaimed himself Patriarch and Catholicos. After some negotiations, Eghiazar and Minas made peace with each other. Not being able to take all the patriarchal rights from Eghiazar's hands and not wanting to endanger the internal peace of the Armenian Church, the congregants of St. Ējmiatsin were forced to recognize his supremacy over the Armenian Church (Sawalanian, 1931, 637). Thus, the union of the Armenian church was confirmed again. At the same time, it should be noted that the huge debts remained one of the primary factors

hindering the development of the monastery. According to Sawalanian, those debts did not arise from the disturbances and internal riots in the Jerusalem Patriarchate but accrued due to the competition between the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and that of Constantinople to snatch the leadership of Saint James monastery from hand to hand (Sawalanian, 1931, 645).

The emulation to take over the leadership of the patriarchate continued until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Even though the patriarchal seat was headed by a number of clergymen following one another, they managed to retain a more or less stable life in the Patriarchate. Sawalanian mentions Sahak Apowšexc'i (1708–1714), taking up the leadership of the patriarchate on December 30, 1708, and ruling until Hovhannes Kolot Bağišec'i (1715–1741).

While analysing the letter of Borgiani armeni 65 it is seen that the date of its composition coincides with the time of Patriarch Sahak's tenure. Both Sawalanian and another historian Barnabas Kantsakets'i, only state about Sahak Apowšexc'i's being a cunning intelligent person devoted to the church, who significantly eased the congregation's debts with his activities (Kewleserian, 1904, 6). Barnabas Kantsakets'i in his "*Sequence of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem*" (*Yachortut' inw badriark'ats'n Erusagbemi i Yagovpay arak'eloy dearneghpore minch'ew ts'mers zhamanag; Historia Patriarcharum Hierosolymitanorum*), mentions Sahak, but limits himself to mentioning just the name as the next leader of the patriarchate, and does not elaborate on his work and activities (Kantsakets'i, 1872, 58). It can be assumed that the letter of Borgiani armeni 65 was written by (or at least during his leadership of) Sahak patriarch.

From 1697 to 1704 the Patriarchate was led by Minas Hamdec'i, who, after making a number of important visits to other Armenian congregations in the Ottoman Empire, came and settled in his post. He carried out a number of important constructions inside the monastery and established friendly relations with the Franciscans. Minas Patriarch was persecuted by both Greeks and Jews because of the monastery's debts. But he treated the Greeks with love and considered the Franciscans as friends. He wrote a congratulatory message to Clement the eleventh Pope of Rome on his election as Pope in 1700 (Sawalanian, 1931, 662). After the death of Minas Hamdec'i (or Amdec'i), various priests sat on the patriarchal chair for a short time until it passed to Grigor the Chainbearer<sup>11</sup> (1715–1749), who was destined to free the patriarchate from large debts (Sawalanian, 1931, 672; Kantsakets'i, 1872, 60).

<sup>11</sup> On the life and tenancy of Grigor Chainbearer, see Kantsakets'i 1872, 60–61; Ch'amch'yan 1786, 770–775; Poghosyan, 2017.

The manuscript Borgiani armeni 65 is a unique example of a historical document both with its structure and the significance it holds. Not only does it contain the idea of the Armenian ecumenical letters and praises of the eighteenth century, but also stands for a representation of ecclesiastical networks, or in other words, connectivity during the early modern stage. In fact, the early modern period should not be understood as a fixed entity defined by static characteristics. Instead, it can be seen as a dynamic formation shaped by historical events that enabled cross-cultural interaction and exchange. (Bentley 2007, 13). The cross-cultural exchange of the early modern period would find its representation in forms of “demographic leaps, monetization and silver, administrative centralization, paper bureaucracy, banking-state nexuses, tax-farming ... religious confessionalization, renaissances, literary genres of self-expression, secular history writing, etc.” (Strathern 2018, 325). The global connections of the early modern period had significant consequences, resulting in fundamental transformations in economic frameworks and political power dynamics across all continents (Parker 2010, 3), we may assert that these interactions extended from inter-regional to intercontinental exchanges.

The letter in the focus of this research is also an example of a trans-regional religious conjunction or cooperation. It documents the connections formed between two religious institutions, in this case, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Armenian Diocese of Beroea. Historical sources, such as the works by Tigran Sawalanian, Barnabas Kantsakets'i and Vartaped Hovhannes Hanne,<sup>12</sup> inform us that different centres of the Armenian Church, particularly the Ējmiatsin Catholicosate, the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the smaller units under their subordination (in Sis, Aleppo and elsewhere) were in constant cooperation. Through delegates, the Armenian clerical elite would send monetary aid, important letters, kondaks (decrees) or pastoral letters to their subordinate or equal religious centres in order to resolve a number of issues related to the Armenian Church.

Moreover, not only were the people who wrote or transmitted these documents important agents, but also the writings themselves. One of those writings was the letter discussed here. It can be considered a tool for strengthening inter-church, inter-regional ties and influencing the course of more global historical events. As Sebouh Aslanian elaborates on the act of alms collecting, besides a collector, it required “a portfolio of paper tools” (Aslanian 2023, 268). The letter here became in

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<sup>12</sup> Hovhannes Hanne was a cleric in the Saint James monastery who wrote “*A book of history of the holy and great city of God, Jerusalem, and of the holy deeds of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Kirk' badmut'ean srpoy ew medzi k'aghak'is Asdudzoy Erusaghēmis ew srpots' dnōrinaganats' degheats' Dearn meroy Yisusi K'risdosi), Constantinople, Printing house “Yovhannēsi ew Bōghosi”, 1782.

its own way the carrier of the performative act, that kind of paper tool from the side of the Patriarchate to claim their authority while recognizing the diocese's power to help from their side. The "tacit agreement" (see footnote 11) between the two religious centres was sealed with the performative step of this document.

The idea of connectivity, that is, the networks of scholarly and literary exchange, international trade, kinship, and patronage linked to mobility, migration, or the state of constant movement in a word, can be implied from the letter from the Borgiani armeni 65 manuscript. Sebouh Aslanian describes letters of recommendation, certificates of Catholicity, letters of credit and bills of exchange, and certificates for alms as "paper instruments" (Aslanian 2023, 268). Given the fact of its content and the background of probable reason to write it, Borgiani armeni 65 can be regarded as such. This comes to prove the fact that some churches already in the eighteenth century (even though a considerable amount of churches were involved in confessionalism as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century) continued to deal with socio-economic issues, in this way being involved also in religio-political processes.

These kinds of processes were called "confessionalization," a term coined by Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling to describe and analyse the rise and politicization of religious piety and religious revival (Aslanian 2023, 241).<sup>13</sup> Other scholars like Lotz-Heumann and Pohlig suggest that "confessionalization proceeds from the general observation that in both the Middle Ages and in the early modern period the religious and the secular were closely linked" (Lotz-Heumann and Pohlig, 2007). Undoubtedly, the early modern period, according to Schilling, saw the influences of the earlier forms of confessionalism, the traces of which would be found in the "long-sixteenth century," when inter-connections between religious, political, and societal lines of development happened (Heinz 1992, 206). In addition, he asserted that confessionalization "is a fundamental social transformation that includes ecclesiastical-religious, psychological-cultural, as well as political and social changes." The "formation of confessions" is defined as the prominence given to religious-cultural systems that can be clearly distinguished from one another by their doctrine, ceremonies, spirituality, and the everyday culture of their people. It also includes the rise of early modern confessional churches as institutions (Brady 2016, 4). The strong results of confessionalization were the reconfiguration of Catholic missionary fervour and the "globalization" of its proselytization activities in Europe

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<sup>13</sup> Here Aslanian suggests reading Lotz-Heumann, Ute, 2013; Brady, 2004; Wolfgang, 1999. See also Lotz-Heumann, Ute, 2001; Schilling, Tóth, 2006; Janse, 2010.

that began in 1622 under the direction of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, also known as the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*.<sup>14</sup>

Confessionalization is evident in the analyzed document through stamps on selected sections. These stamps were the marks of several Armenian religious centres or bishops from those centres or representatives of the amira class. Amiras were a group of Armenian bankers and officials (from the Arabic *amir*, meaning chief or commander). They held administrative positions in state institutions making financial and industrial deals. Consequently, they managed to establish close connections with the palace, the central administration, and Turkish officialdom. These representatives of the Armenian elite, unofficial officials, as it would be, had many privileges in Ottoman society.

It was the *amiras*, along with *khojas* and *čelebis*, another two groups of the ruling class in the Armenian millet system<sup>15</sup> in the Ottoman Empire, who made deals with viziers, pashas, and tax farmers, meanwhile patronizing the Armenian schools, churches, hospitals, etc., eventually becoming the leaders of Armenian millets, especially in Istanbul in the second half of the eighteenth century (Barsoumian 2006, 16). Presumably, these wealthy people acted as guarantors in the process of alms collecting. As a matter of fact, alms collecting required a good deal of travel, often across enormous distances. For many Eastern Christian churches and monastic orders, the figure of the alms collector was vital for their economic welfare and for survival. When describing the process, Aslanian cites the words of Joseph Georgirenes, a Greek archbishop from the seventeenth century, that alms collecting in Europe was an important element of the religious economy of Eastern Christian religious centres, generally utilized to avoid paying the head tax (*'harach'/'kharaj'*) to Ottoman authorities while also satisfying other basic necessities (Aslanian 2023, 244; Georgirenes 1678, 99).

The early modern Armenian history being a system of not only the reality of the mainland but also the Armenian communities worldwide is a proof of Armenian mobility. The movement across long distances as a part of migration, forced or voluntary, being developed in the early modern world from 1500–1800, as a consequence of pilgrimages, trade, missionary work, espionage, and communication and negotiations, or the search for new life, constituted the factors of mobility.

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<sup>14</sup> On the history of SCPF, see Bayer 1721; Guilday 1921; Griffin 1930; Mažeikis 2007; Martinelli 2010; Ubaldi 1882

<sup>15</sup> Founded during Tanzimat Reformation period in 1839 and lasted up until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, millets were the administration of separate religious communities that acknowledged each community's authority in regulating its internal affairs, primarily through the independent religious court system and schools. See Barsoumian 1997, 183; Ceylan 2002.

The dispersion of hundreds of thousands of Armenians in the 17th–18th centuries across state boundaries and throughout the world’s oceans and seas was a process that had a significant impact on early modern Armenian history. The role of trade-diaspora merchants, priests, pilgrims, and printers with their printed books was crucial in the early modern Armenian mobilities (Aslanian 2020).

Consequently, the Armenian church played a large part in the mobility process, as the great majority of the “intelligentsia” was made up of members of the clergy. Mobility in turn became “a process that had its own agents, opponents and beneficiaries” (Ghobrial 2019, 243–280). It can be noted that the role of nuncios and summoners or *hraviraks*, who in one way or another had an influence on the negotiations, the development of various relations, and the course of history, was important in the whole circuit of early modern mobility.

The fact that the church was involved not only in religious manifestations, but also in social, economic, and political affairs brings performativity to the forefront. The religious authorities had to find ways to “perform” their existence in a way that they were to get involved in mobility ties, send delegates, and alms collectors to other “associate” religious centres in the pursuit of building networks and thus benefiting somehow from them. The performative turn had to be implemented in the communicational manner as well. Consequently, they would ornament their letters, certificates, or other kinds of edicts with praise words, gratitude, and blessings. With this the church, being the representation of the purest spiritual place on Earth would prove its authoritative position.

In summary, such fundraising activities could be perceived as a component of mobility and “charity networks” as Aslanian defines them. The financial difficulties of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem made it dependent on its neighbouring Armenian religious centres and thus became a part of the early modern connectivity. The testimonials, decrees, and letters sent to various dioceses or even to the Holy Papacy, apart from their purely substantive meaning, haphazardly acted as “paper instruments” for the development of inter-communal diasporic connectivity. The letter from the Saint James Monastery in Jerusalem to the Forty Martyrs church in Beroea, as a part of the Borgiani armeni 65 manuscript, stands for proof of such connectivity. Connectivity closely tied to mobility had to be performative in its way to be more tangible and/or legitimate. That is why different tools, among them request letters, filled with praise and blessings, had to be used.

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