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THE ARAB INVASIONS AND THE RISE OF THE BAGRATUNI (640–884)

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The explosive expansion of the Arabs in the middle of the seventh century totally revolutionized the face of the Near East and modified radically the history of the Armenian plateau for centuries to come. Externally, the total conquest of the Sasanian Empire by the Arabs and the retreat of Byzantium to a defensive position far to the west had a twofold effect on Armenia. No counterbalancing power was left in the area to support and protect the Armenians against the new conquerors. The balance of powers maintained for so long between Rome and Iran was irremediably broken for some two centuries in favor of total Arab domination. Once this domination was established, however, Armenia found itself for the first time in almost a millennium outside the theater of international warfare which was now pursued either farther west in Asia Minor or to the south in Mesopotamia. Internally, almost all the Armenian territories found themselves reunited as the Arabs reached north of the plateau to Tiflis in Iberia and westward to the Euphrates and beyond. All the lines of demarcation bisecting the country, whether those of 387 or of 591, disappeared, and only the southernmost border of the districts of Ałjnik' (Aghdznik) and Korček' (Korchek) were fused with Arab Mesopotamia. This overall unification, however, covered a gradual

inner fragmentation as the overriding authority of the Mamikoneans (Mamikonians) uniting the military forces of the country as a function of their office of *sparapet*, or commander-in-chief, began to be challenged. There is no doubt that the Mamikoneans were still the dominant family of the sixth and perhaps even the seventh centuries with their extensive domains in northern Tayk', southern Tarōn and Sasun, the central Bagrewand (Bagrevand) and Aragacotn (Aragatsotn), and with their powerful supporters, the Kamsarakan lords of Širak (Shirak) and Aršarunik' (Arsharunik), as well as the Gnuni of Manazkert north of Lake Van. They generally continued to pursue the traditional pro-Byzantine policy of their house, but their power was not undisputed, as it had been before, and gradually declined. The Bagratuni had achieved authority as early as 481, when Sahak Bagratuni had briefly been chosen *marzpan* by the Armenian rebels, and the far more brilliant career of his descendant Smbat *Xosrov šnum* in the first decades of the seventh century had greatly enhanced the prestige of this house whose main base was in Sper, in the extreme northwest of the plateau, but who also held other domains in Kogovit with the stronghold of Daroynk', east of Bagrewand, and in southern Tmorik'. Other houses were also powerful: the house of Siwnik' maintained its autonomy to the southeast of Lake Sevan, while the Řštuni (Rshtuni) controlled their own territories south of Lake Van as well as those of the Bznuni northwest of the lake, and the Kamsarakan held the north-central districts of Širak and Aršarunik'. When the emperor Heraclius, on the eve of the Arab invasion, created the new title of *išxan* (ishkhan) or "prince" of Armenia, challenging the authority of both the *sparapet* commanding the troops of Persarmenia and the almost-powerless Persian *marzpan*, and further joined to it the high imperial dignity of the *curopalates*, he bypassed the obvious great magnates to choose a minor *naxarar*, David Saharuni, who was then succeeded by the *sparapet* of Persarmenia, Theodore Řštuni, under whom the two halves of Armenia were reunited in 639. Thus the chaotic events of the mid-seventh century encouraged the jockeying for power among ambitious *naxarars*.

The Arab Conquest of Armenia

As "all the Armenian nobles lost land through their disunity and only the God-loving and valiant *išxan* of the Řštuni put in order the troops of his region and watched day and night," (Sebēos, xxix, p. 94) the first

Arab raid coming from the Mesopotamian border districts of Ałjnik' and Korček' broke into Tarōn over the pass of Bafeš (Baghesh)/Bidlis and swept northward through Xlat' (Khlat) on the north shore of Lake Van. The Arab army then went on through the districts of Bznunik', Aliovit (Aghiovit), and Kogovit to the undefended capital of Duin, which it took and sacked on October 6, 640, taking loot and captives. Theodore Rštuni, who had now officially received from the Byzantine emperor the titles of *išxan* and *curopalates*, attempted a counterattack into Mesopotamia ca. 642, but a second raid coming this time from Azerbaijan (Adherbajjan) in the east struck at the region of Gołt'n (Goghtn) and Naxčawan (Nakhchavan) in the valley of the Araxes. The Arabs conquered Artaz in Vaspurakan and met the joint forces of Byzantium and Theodore Rštuni, whose disagreement led to the rout of the imperial army in Mardastan in 643 or 644.

These early raids and others that may have occurred in 644-645 were merely plundering expeditions; their dating is highly controversial, since the Arab sources composed at least two centuries later contradict one another and Armenian sources are equally confused, while Greek evidence is nonexistent for this period. The great campaign of 650, sent by the governor of Syria and future Caliph Mu'āwiyah, was a far graver matter, as Armenia was seriously divided internally by the high-handed Byzantine policy. Denounced to the imperial authorities, Theodore Rštuni was replaced by the former Persian *marzpan* Varaz Tiroc' Bagratuni, son of Smbat *Xosrov šnum*, then reinstated once more in his dignity at the death of Varaz Tiroc' "whether the Armenian princes liked it or not." At the same time, a decree of the Byzantine emperor imposing Chalcedonianism on Armenia provoked a council held at Duin in 648 or 649 under the presidency of Theodore Rštuni and the kat'olikos Nersēs III, which once again rejected the union, and consequently removed any hope of help from the empire.

The Arab army, coming once more from Azerbaijan, divided into three branches, one directed at Arran/Caucasian Albania, another at Vaspurakan where it was defeated by Theodore, and the third, breaking diagonally through Ayrarat (the heartland of Armenia) all the way to Tayk' and K'art'li or eastern Iberia, ultimately returned to join the Arab forces besieging Naxčawan on the Araxes. Left without support by Byzantium or the vanished Sasanians, and perhaps embittered by the political and religious pressures to which he had been subjected, Theodore Rštuni took the crucial step of breaking with the empire. He concluded with Mu'āwiyah a treaty whose favorable terms have been

preserved in the *History of Pseudo-Sebēos*, although Armenian ecclesiastical historians understandably accuse their acquiescing magnates of “having made a covenant with death and an alliance with Hell”:(Sebēos, xxxv, p. 132)

Let this be the covenant of agreement between me [Mu‘āwiyah] and you for as many years as you shall wish. And I shall not take tribute from you for 7 [3?] years, then in accordance with the oath, you will give as much as you wish. And you will keep 15,000 horsemen in your country and give [them] bread from the country, and I shall reckon it in the royal tribute. And I shall not summon the cavalry to Syria, but wherever else I shall order you, you should be ready for action. And I shall not send *emirs* into your fortresses, no Tačik [Tadjik] cavalry, not even a single horseman. No enemy shall enter into Armenia, and if the Roman [emperor] comes against you, I shall send troops to your assistance, as many as you shall wish. And I swear before the great God that I do not lie. (Sebēos, xxxv, p. 133)

Freedom of religion was also assured by a contemporary agreement between the Arab general and the city of Duin cited by the Arab ninth century historian al-Balādhurī:

In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful. This is a treaty of Ḥabīb ibn-Maslamah with the Christians, Magians and Jews of Dabīl [Duin], including those present and absent. I have granted you safety for your lives, possessions, churches, places of worship, and city wall. Thus ye are safe and we are bound to fulfil our covenant, so long as you fulfil yours and pay the poll-tax and *kharāj*. Thereunto Allah is witness; and it suffices to have him as witness. (al. Balādhurī, II, pp. 314-15)

At first, the counterattack of the Byzantine emperor in 652/3 was well received by a number of *naxarars* and by the kat‘ořikos Nersēs III, who had taken refuge in the northwestern border district Tayk‘. “The emperor and all his troops cursed the lord of Řštunik‘ and took away the dignity of his authority.” Muřel Mamikonean was named in his place “commander of the cavalry,” and the emperor took up residence at Duin in the palace of the kat‘ořikos. But Theodore took refuge in his own strongholds, and neither the moun-

taineers of Siwnik' nor Caucasian Albania could be subdued by the imperial army.

The preaching of Sunday of the Council of Chalcedon in the church of St. Gregory [at Duin]. And the celebration of the liturgy in Roman [Greek] fashion by a Roman priest, and the communion of the emperor and the Kat'olikos, and all the bishops, who willingly and who unwillingly . . . (Sebēos, xxxv, p. 136)

only increased the tension. The emperor returned home without having accomplished anything, the kat'olikos again took refuge in Tayk', and Theodore Rštuni, still more embittered, returned, having been honored by Mu'āwiyah at Damascus and given "authority over Virk' [Iberia], Ałuank' (Aghvank) [Albania] and Siwnik' in exchange for his allegiance.

The intensified war between Byzantium and the Arabs continued to devastate Armenia for a time. The stronghold of Karin/Theodosiopolis, renamed Kālīkālā by the Arabs, fell in 653, and 2,000 Arabs from Syria and Mesopotamia were brought there and given land. Profiting from the death of Theodore Rštuni in 654, the emperor briefly named as *išxan* Hamazasp Mamikonean, who reaffirmed the ties of Armenia with Constantinople, while the Arabs were distracted by the internal quarrels that followed the murder of the caliph 'Uthmān. The kat'olikos Nersēs III returned to finish his church dedicated to the Vigilant Heavenly Host at Zuart'noc' (Zvartnots). But with the accession of the first Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiyah in 661, Arab domination over Armenia was reaffirmed once and for all. A council of magnates presided over by the kat'olikos Nersēs III accepted the inevitable and agreed to send hostages to the Arab capital and pay a yearly tribute of 500 gold *dahekans*. In exchange, the caliph Mu'āwiyah freed the hostages and installed Hamazasp's brother Grigor Mamikonean "with great honor" as *išxan* of Armenia, a dignity he held for more than twenty years until his death:

During his reign, Grigor, Prince of Armenia, governed the land of the Armenians peacefully and kept it free from all marauding and attack. He feared God in perfect piety, was charitable, hospitable and cared for the poor. It was [Grigor] who built a house of worship in the town of Aruch [Aruč], in the district of Aragatsots [Aragacotn], an elegant

church to the glory of the name of the Lord, and adorned it in memory of his [own] name. (Łewond, ch. 4, p. 54)

The claim is confirmed by the dedicatory inscription commemorating Grigor and his wife Helinē/Helen on the great domed basilica of Aruč west of Erevan.

Armenia in the Seventh Century

The description of Grigor's *išxanate* by Łewond the Priest, just cited, is, to be sure, idyllic and exaggerated. The country was not constantly at peace, since Grigor himself ceased to pay tribute and revolted against the Arabs in 680 at the death of the caliph Mu'āwiyah and is also said to have died battling a northern Turkic Khazar invasion in 685. A few years after his death, the emperor Justinian II overran Armenia in a last attempt to reconquer the country and took away hostages, perhaps even the kat'olikos Sahak III (677-703). Even so, the first period of Arab domination immediately after the conquest was not seriously damaging for Armenia, and there is no perceptible cultural break with the preceding period of the *Marzpanate*. As we have already noted, the unity of the territory was re-created by the disappearance of internal political divisions. Far from being an annexed territory, Armenia through almost the whole of the seventh century had the status of an autonomous, if tributary, state whose sphere of influence, far from being reduced, was extended northward, as we shall see, to the adjacent lands. No Arab troops were stationed in Armenia, except in the Mesopotamian border districts, and no foreign governors were sent to Armenia until the end of the century.

The relatively mild terms of Mu'āwiyah's treaty are readily explainable by the Arab need for the support of the famous Armenian cavalry, especially at home as a barrier against the Khazars, whom their Byzantine allies urged to attack the caliphate from the rear by raiding southward through the Caucasian passes or by forcing the Arab fortified position at Derbent on the Caspian. Since manpower was of primary importance, taxes remained relatively light. According to Łewond, the 500 *dahekans* of Mu'āwiyah's tribute were not increased by his son. In the words of the later Armenian chronicler Samuel of Ani, the Arabs

took from each house four [silver] *dirrhems*, three *modii* [about 30 kg.] of sifted wheat, one hempen rope and a gauntlet. But it was

ordered to levy no taxes from priests, as from the *azat* and from cavalrymen. (Manandyan, 1965, p. 130)

A Syrian chronicle observes that until the early eighth century,

This entire country was noted for its innumerable population, many vineyards, fields of grain, and all kinds of magnificent trees. (Manandyan, 1965, p. 130)

The excavations of the city of Duin show not only the reconstruction of the church and the extensive palace, but an active urban life as well. The sharp increase in the number of coins found there, from less than two dozen for the fifth and sixth centuries to more than 300 for the seventh, is an index of the rising trade. The great cathedral churches built by the Kamsarakan and the Mamikonean next to their palaces at T'alın and Aruč in Aragacotn, as well as those elsewhere at Vařarřapat, Őjun (Odzun), and Sisian, the smaller foundations that proliferated throughout the country, and the numerous sculptured stelae that date from the seventh century, all testify to the continuity of the building activity begun during the *Marzpanate* and serve as a concomitant index of economic stability and prosperity, while their dedicatory inscriptions indicate the survival and concern of the *naxarar tuns*.

There is, finally, no evidence of religious persecution during this period and even in the earlier part of the eighth century. Ecclesiastical sources record no forcible conversions, and the two martyrs, David of Duin and Vahan of Gořt'n, were Muslims converted to Christianity and consequently punishable as renegades under Islamic law. On the contrary, the activity of the kat'olikate was not constrained. The kat'olikos Anastas (662-667) sought a perpetual calendar from the great mathematician Anania řirakac'i, although the death of the patriarch precluded its adoption. The relics of St. Gregory the Illuminator were solemnly transferred from his burial place in northwestern Daranalık' to Vařarřapat, a portion granted to Albania (underscoring the close link between the two churches), and the Armenian patronage reiterated again by the kat'olikos Elias (703-717). Once again, Lewond praises the successor of Grigor Mamikonean, the "patrician" Ařot (Ashot) Bagratuni, as an opulent, magnificent and charitable prince,

zealous in his love of learning; and he adorned the churches of God with the arts of spiritual [*vardapetakan*] teaching and with a multi-

tude of ministers; and he honored them with distinguished services at his own expense. And he built a church in his domain of Dariwnk'. (Łewond, ch. 5)

As late as the first quarter of the eighth century, the great kat'olikos and theologian Yovhannēs Ōjnec'i (Hovhannes Odznetsi) (717-728) could reform the church and give it a firm doctrinal base by completing the first collection of Armenian canons; repress the heresies of the native Paulicians (who were violent iconoclasts) and of the Phantasiasts (who denied that Christ had had a real body); and call two councils (at Duin in 719 against the heretics and at Manazkert in 725/6 to reaffirm the dogmatic position of the Armenian Church and its agreement with the Syrian Church) without any interference from the Arab authorities. On the contrary, Asoġik affirms that upon Yovhannēs's probably apocryphal visit to Baghdad, the caliph "was struck with admiration, doubled his consideration and regard and sent him back to Armenia covered with honors and gifts." (Asoġik, 1883, II, ii, p. 133)

The Creation of the Province of Armīniya and the Period of Arab Domination

Both Armenian and Arab sources agree that the situation in Armenia worsened perceptibly with the last decade of the seventh century. The ravages of the Khazar invasions continued throughout the eighth century. More fundamentally, not only did the invasions of Justinian II wreak havoc in Armenia, which the Greek troops treated as enemy territory, but they probably contributed to the decision of the caliphate to conquer the land outright and put an end to its semiautonomous status. At the same time, the general regularization of the vast Muslim empire, with its concurrent fiscal demands, and the increasing Muslim piety of the later Umayyad caliphs, and especially their Abbasid successors, could not fail to have a deleterious effect on Armenia at a time when Byzantium, embroiled at home in the Iconoclastic controversy of the eighth century, could provide neither support nor a counterbalancing force to the preponderance of the caliphate in the Near East.

In 693 the Umayyad caliph appointed his brother Muḥammad ibn Marwān governor of Armenia, Adherbaijan/Azerbaijan and Djazira or Upper Mesopotamia, reaching all the way to Melitēnē in the west. His authority was recognized in the same year by the new *išxan* of Armenia,

Smbat Bagratuni (693-726), but Byzantine troops remained in the south, and a new imperial campaign even attempted to retake the country in 698. The reconquering expedition of Muḥammad ibn Marwān took place in 701, according to both Armenian and Arabic sources. Moving northward from Mesopotamia, he entered the Armenia border district of Mokk', where he succeeded in obtaining by deceit the fortresses, which he dismantled, putting the men to the sword and sending the women and children into captivity. From there he moved northward into the central districts of Greater Armenia. The struggle for Duin was arduous and protracted, and the Armenian capital had to be taken twice, but Muḥammad ibn Marwān ultimately subdued the entire country as well as Iberia and Caucasian Albania. The formal annexation of Armenia must date from this period, although the confusion of Arab sources, which usually date it from the earlier expedition of 650, has obscured this fact. An Arab province called Armīniya, including not only most of the Armenian plateau except for the southern border annexed to the Djazira, but also Eastern Iberia and Caucasian Albania, was created, with Duin as its capital and as the residence of the Muslim governor, or *ostikan*. Arab garrisons were quartered at Duin as well as in a number of other cities, including Tiflis in the far north. Karin/Ḳālīkalā and Melitēnē/Malatia became the anchor points of the Arab military system in the west. Muḥammad ibn Marwān was installed as the first *ostikan* of Armīniya, although some authority was conceded to the native magnates, since the title of *išxan* of Armenia was maintained almost continually and the traditional office of *sparapet* reappeared in the eighth century, even though it was no longer hereditary in the Mamikonean house as it had been formerly.

The new *ostikan* inaugurated his rule by the removal of both the *išxan* of Armenia Smbat Bagratuni and the kat'olikos Sahak III, who were sent to Damascus. Islamic law was rigorously applied, the Persian martyr David of Duin was executed, and monasteries were brutally ravaged. The Armenian sources complain bitterly of the *ostikan*,

a wicked, insolent and an impudent man, extremely malicious by nature; he implanted within himself the seeds of hypocrisy like the venom of a serpent and tortured the princes and the *azats* of Armenia with bonds and plundered the property and the possessions of many people. Then he also put the great Sahak [III] in fetters and sent him to Damascus. Along with him he also sent the prince of Armenia, Smbat son of Smbat. He plundered the entire ornaments of the

churches of Christ and made the old and the young wail, mourn and grieve. (Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc 'i, xx, p. 107)

Angered and alarmed by this policy, the *išxan* Smbat, who returned from the Umayyad capital of Damascus in 703, took counsel with the *naxarars*, among them his own brother Ašot and Vard, the son of Theodore Rštuni, and decided to turn for help to Byzantium. At first the Armenians were victorious at Vardanakert on the lower Araxes, and the rebellion spread from Vanand in the west to Vaspurakan in the southeast, but Smbat then retired to the north of Tayk' and Muḥammad ibn Marwān was sent again to subdue Armenia. The posthumous embassy of the kat'ofikos Sahak III, who had died on the way but whose body, bearing a letter imploring Muḥammad to spare the Armenians, was brought to Harran by his bishops, saved the church and even extended its authority. The new kat'ofikos Ełia (Eghia)/Elias (703-717) was authorized to hold a council in Partaw (Partav)/Bardha'a at which he deposed the Albanian kat'ofikos accused of Chalcedonianism, had him exiled together with his supporter, the widow of the prince of Albania, and consecrated a new kat'ofikos for Albania, whose dependence on the Armenian Church in this period is evident from these proceedings. The secular Armenian nobles, however, did not fare so well. Defeated by Muḥammad ibn Marwān in 705, the *išxan* Smbat Bagratuni, who had received from Byzantium the title of *curopalates*, fled for refuge to the imperial territory on the eastern shore of the Black Sea and Muḥammad ibn Marwān retook Duin, which had been captured by the rebels. At the order of the Muslim authorities, the governor of Naxčawan summoned the Armenian *naxarars* on the pretext of a census, which would include them in the cavalry register. According to Łewond, those of noble birth were separated from the others who were locked in the churches of Naxčawan and Goł'n, farther down the Araxes, and set on fire. The nobles, stripped of their wealth under torture, were then executed in their turn. Only a few magnates are mentioned by name among the victims, but the sources assert that almost the entire Armenian nobility perished or was deported, and "our realm made heirless of its *naxarars*."

The massacre of Naxčawan did not destroy the Armenia clans, since only the adult *naxarars* had been exterminated, but it crippled them for a generation. However, the Arabs still needed Armenian collaboration against the Khazar threat, and the ferocious policy of Naxčawan was not continued. The new Arab *ostikan*, whom Łewond praises as a "prudent man full of worldly wisdom," pacified Armenia,

urged the exiles to return, and Smbat Bagratuni resumed his office of *išxan* probably in 709 rather than 711. The city of Duin was rebuilt by the *ostikan*

stronger and greater in size than it was before; he fortified it with gates and buttresses, surrounded the city wall with a moat and filled it with water for the protection of the fortress. (Łewond, ch. 10, p. 67)

This relatively benevolent policy was maintained for a time, the activity of the kat'olikos Yovhannēs Ōjnec 'i received no check from the Muslim authorities, and, as noted earlier, the execution of Prince Vahan of Golt'n ca. 737 cannot be interpreted strictly as an act of persecution, since he had been taken prisoner as a child after the massacre of Naxčawan, raised as a Muslim, and abjured that faith upon his return to Armenia. On the secular side, the *išxan* Smbat is recorded for the last time as being present at the Council of Manazkert, but nothing is known of the later part of his rule. At first his successor as *išxan*, Ašot Bagratuni, the grandson of his earlier namesake praised by Łewond, does not seem to have been recognized officially by the Muslim authorities for some five years, although he held the office *de facto*. But in 732 the new *ostikan* came to Duin and conferred on him "the authority of patrician over the realm of Armenia by order of [the caliph] Hišam and honored him greatly." Thereafter Ašot collaborated effectively in the Muslim campaign against the Khazars and shared in the booty. The *ostikan* also authorized the payment to the Armenian cavalry of a yearly stipend of 100,000 *dirhems* retroactive for the three years that it had been withheld. Hence, not only had the institution of the Armenian cavalry rapidly recovered from the bloodbath of Naxčawan, but the Muslim authorities still took the responsibility of its maintenance.

Three factors contributed to the reversal of this enlightened policy and provoked a new Armenian explosion in the middle of the eighth century. Even before the disappearance of the Arab dynasty of the Umayyads and the accession of the more strictly Muslim dynasty of the Abbasids in 750, the tax policy of the caliphate had undergone radical change. As a result of a general census of the Armenian lands taken in 724-725, all tax privileges were revoked and taxes were now levied not by household, as before, but by head, by size of property, and on cattle as well, thus greatly increasing the fiscal burden of the country. The disappearance of international trade resulting from the endemic Byzantine-Arab warfare added to the country's economic woes. Equally

damaging for the stability of the country was the increasing rivalry of its two greatest houses. Long accustomed to a preponderant position in Armenia, the Mamikonean viewed as a direct threat to their prestige the rising power of the Bagratuni, who were favored by the Umayyad governors. The grant of the *išxanate* to Ašot Bagratuni in 732, making this office all but hereditary in the Bagratuni house, outraged the Mamikonean brothers Grigor and David, but the immediate result of their protest was their own exile to Yemen at the order of the *ostikan*. At the death of the caliph Hišam in 743, however, the brothers returned to Armenia, began to oppress the magnates of Vaspurakan and raised a general rebellion in which they attacked the *išxan* Ašot, (Łewond, ch. 25, pp. 117-18) who barely escaped with his life. Reversing the previous situation, Ašot now fled to complain to the caliph at Damascus, while Grigor Mamikonean took over his office of *išxan* with the approval of the local *ostikan*. Unfortunately for the Mamikonean, the tide turned against them once again. The last Umayyad caliph, who had greatly benefited from the support of Ašot Bagratuni and his troops in his claim for the throne, refused to ratify the decision of his *ostikan*. Ašot consequently returned to Armenia with great honor at the order of the caliph, David Mamikonean was executed, and Grigor could only bide his time awaiting an opportunity to avenge his brother.

The overthrow of the Umayyad dynasty and the usurpation of the Abbasids a few years later provided an opportunity both for the vengeance of the Mamikonean and for the growing dissatisfaction in Armenia in general. The Armenian magnates met together in 748 and persuaded the *išxan* Ašot, now bereft of his patron, to join with them, albeit unwillingly. The rebels made contact with the Byzantine emperor Constantine V, whose successful campaigns against the Muslims had brought him to Asia Minor and who was operating in Pontus at the time. The Armenians also received the support of an anonymous group called by Łewond "sons of sinfulness who know neither the fear of God nor awe of princes nor respect of the elders," who were probably the Paulician heretics condemned earlier by Yovhannēs Ōjnec'i (Garsoian, 1967, pp. 136-37), and whose numbers and power were increasing on the Upper Euphrates at that time. Another revolt in Sasun to the south helped distract the Arabs, and the rebels succeeded in capturing the major Muslim stronghold of Karin. These initial successes failed, however, to abate the tension between the Mamikonean and the Bagratuni and to preserve a united front against the Arabs. Ašot Bagratuni sought to withdraw from the rebels and was seized and blinded at the order of

Grigor Mamikonean. The fragmentation of the rebellion spelled its doom. No help came from Byzantium. Grigor Mamikonean sickened and died at Karin in 749, and his brother Mušel failed to obtain official recognition. Ašot “the Blind” nominally continued to rule the country despite his handicap, but by 750 the new Abbasid caliph had successfully reestablished the mastery of the Muslims over Armenia.

The collapse of the second rebellion within the century seriously sapped the strength of the Armenian nobility. The greatest sufferers were undoubtedly the Mamikonean, who lost all of their domains except for Bagrewand and Tayk'. The Bagratuni, suspect to the new dynasty because of their support of the Umayyads, went into temporary eclipse, were forced to abandon Kogovit, and withdrew from Vaspurakan, where the Arcruni seemingly began to entrench themselves, although the history of this family remains obscure until the middle of the next century. Karin was retaken, refortified, and garrisoned with Arab troops from the Djazira. The emperor Constantine V, who had given no help to the Armenians against the Arabs, now compounded the damage by transferring the Armenian population from the districts of Karin and Melitēnē to the Balkans in 755. The new Abbasid caliph sent his brother on a tour of all his dominions. According to Łewond,

[he] first went to the land of Armenia and caused grave torment and endangered all, leaving them in extreme poverty, to the extent of claiming taxes on behalf of the dead . . . he cruelly tortured the inhabitants of our country by imposing a heavy poll tax, equivalent to many silver *zuzēs*, and branding everyone's neck with lead seal.

[In response], the houses of the nobles, some willingly and others not, gave horses, precious clothing, and other provisions of gold and silver as gifts, just to fill the mouth of the dragon which had come to attack and corrupt the country. (Łewond, ch. 28, p. 123)

The Bagratuni regained their position in 753 as one of them, Sahak, was named *išxan* while his kinsman Smbat, the son of Ašot the Blind, appears at the same time in the revived office of *sparapet*. Nevertheless, the exactions increased still further under the new *ostikan*, who ruled Armenia on three occasions (752-754, 759-770, 775-780), even though his mother was said to have been an Armenian princess, the daughter of the “patrician” of Siwnik'. The support of the Armenian cavalry was now stopped. “A set number of horsemen was demanded from the princes and they were compelled to maintain this military contingent at [the expense] of their own

house." Lewond (ch. 33, pp. 127-129) even insists that the supply of silver gave out, so that taxes had to be paid in kind, and that they fell alike on *naxarar* and *ramik* as well as on the clergy. The population hid or fled from this extortionate policy, and some of the magnates abandoned their homes and emigrated, as did Šapuh Amatuni who, according to Asołik, moved to the empire with 12,000 of his retainers.

The revolt brought on by these oppressive measures began in Vaspurakan, which was simultaneously threatened by the infiltration of Muslims from Azerbaijan. These were met by three brothers from the Arcruni house now ruling Vaspurakan after the district had been abandoned by the Bagratuni. By 762 all three brothers were dead and the *išxan* Sahak Bagratuni may also have been put to death. Still, the rebellion continued to smolder, and the leadership now passed for the last time to the Mamikonean.

According to Lewond, the first signal of the great rebellion of 774-775 was given by Artawazd Mamikonean, who killed a Muslim tax collector in the northwestern district of Širak and was consequently driven to flight into Byzantine territory by the *ostikan*, who compelled the Armenian *sparapet* Smbat to accompany him. Artawazd's example was then followed by his kinsman Mušel Mamikonean, who massacred the tax collectors in his district and withdrew into the fortress of Artagers in Aršarunik'. He then went on to raid in Bagrewand, laid siege to the fortress of Kars, defeated an Arab contingent sent from Duin near Bagawan, and pursued them as far as the Mamikonean center in Aruč. Encouraged by these early successes and inspired by a messianic prophecy, interestingly branded as false by Lewond, perhaps wise after the event:

Behold, the hour of your salvation has come, and now shortly the scepter of the kingdom shall soon be restored once again to the house of T'orgom. (Lewond, ch. 34, p. 131)

The Armenian *naxarars* flocked to his support. They bound themselves to each other by an oath, despite the prudent advice of Ašot Bagratuni (the son of the former *išxan* Sahak), who is said to have attempted to dissuade them from this perilous enterprise at a time when the Abbasid caliphate was at the height of its power. The rebels even succeeded in persuading the *sparapet* Smbat to join them, albeit against his will, but the Bagratuni house was divided, as Ašot continued to oppose the rebellion, while the Arcruni and their supporters stayed in Vaspurakan, thus splitting the Armenian forces in two.

Mušel Mamikonean and Smbat *sparapet* moved to besiege Karin while the Arcrunis retired to their fortresses at the opposite end of Armenia when a new Muslim army of 30,000 invaded Armenia in the spring of 775 from the Mesopotamian border region of the Diyār-Bakr. The Arabs first turned eastward to Xlat' on Lake Van, and on April 15, 775, destroyed the infantry of the Arcruni coalition at Arčēš (Archesh) on the north shore of the lake. The Muslims then moved northwestward through Apahunik', and on April 25, on the banks of the Euphrates/Arsanias (Murad Su) in the district of Bagrewand, they routed the second Armenian army which was hastening back from the siege of Karin. The disastrous battle of Bagrewand left most of the Armenians, nobles and *ramik* alike, as well as both their leaders, Mušel Mamikonean and the *sparapet* Smbat Bagratuni, dead in the field.

The Appearance of the Muslim Emirates

There is little doubt that the aftermath of the battle of Bagrewand marked one of the darkest hours in Armenian history. Bled three times in as many generations, some of the *naxarar* houses failed to recover. The Bagratuni, perhaps the least hurt, paid for their loyalty to the vanished Umayyad dynasty by the loss of their domains of Tmorik', Kogovit, and whatever was left of their possessions in Vaspurakan and the south, with the exception of the small district of Mokka'. The *sparapet*'s son, Ašot, later known as *Msaquer* (the meat or man-eater), was driven to take refuge in the fastness of his mountain domain in northwestern Sper, farthest removed from the Arab threat. His prudent cousin and namesake Ašot, son of the former *išxan* Sahak, may have been appointed *išxan* by the Muslims in 775 because of his refusal to join the rebellion, though even here, the quasi-monopoly of the Bagratuni on this office was temporarily broken in 781 by the appointment of a relatively minor *naxarar*, Tačat Anjewac'i (Tadjat Andzevatsi), driven back to the east from Byzantium by the antagonism of the empress Irene. The *sparapet* Bagrat Bagratuni was to die of exhaustion with the other magnates serving with the Armenian cavalry against the Khazars in the Caspian region of Arran through the unbearable heat of the summer of 784.

Other houses were still less fortunate. The Gnuni lords of Añiovit, driven from their domain after the death of their *tanutēr* Vahan on the field of Bagrewand, implored the help of Ašot Bagratuni and were moved by him to northwestern Tayk', whence they may have passed

altogether into Byzantine territory. The Amatuni lost most of their possessions, except Artaz in Vaspurakan, where they became a minor house. The last of the Kamsarakan, Nerseh, died in Arran together with the *sparapet* Bagrat Bagratuni and the *išxan* of Armenia, Tačat Anjewac'i. The house of Gołt'n had vanished even earlier with the martyrdom of its *tanutēr* Vahan in 737. Nor do we hear any more of the Rštuni and Saharuni. Perhaps worst hit of the great magnates were the Mamikonean leaders of the rebellion of 774-775, who had lost their *tanutēr* Samuēl as well as their leader Mušel himself at Bagrewand. Both of Mušel's sons, who had taken refuge in Vaspurakan, were put to death by Meružan Arcruni, who blamed their father's revolt for the woes it had brought on Armenia. Of Mušel's four daughters, one, whose name has not even been preserved, sought safety in marriage with a newly come Arab freebooter named *Djahḥāf*. Of the vast Mamikonean domains, nothing was left but minor branches surviving in a portion of Tarōn and for a time in Bagrewand. Even the Arcruni did not long enjoy the safety of their growing domains in Vaspurakan. The new *ostikan* appointed by the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd at his accession in 786 was at first welcomed by them at Duin, but he soon threw all three Arcruni brothers into chains. Meružan saved himself through conversion to Islam, but his brothers, Hamazasp and Sahak, who refused to apostatize, suffered martyrs' deaths. The brilliant building activity of the earlier part of the century significantly came to an abrupt stop, not to be resumed for a full century.

The marriage of an heiress of the great Mamikonean house with an unknown Arab adventurer is an indication of the profound political and even demographic change in the life of Greater Armenia, which paralleled the migration or disappearance of many of its native *naxarar* houses. Up to the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd at the end of the eighth century, no appreciable Arab population had settled on the Armenian plateau, although the infiltration of the north Arabian tribe of Bakr into the border district of Ałjnik', with its main city of Amida, then part of the *Djazīra*, was so massive that the names of both the region and the city were transformed respectively into *Diyār* (house, land) of Bakr and Diyarbakir. Listing the governors sent by Hārūn al-Rashīd, the ninth-century Arab historian Ya'kūbī, who was familiar with Armenia since his grandfather had been *ostikan* in 775 at the time of the great rebellion and he had served there himself in his youth, now commented on the influx of Arabs into the country:

Rashīd appointed Yūsuf ibn Rashīd al-Sulami in place of Khuzayma ibn Khazim. He transplanted a mass of Nizārī to this land, and [until then] the Yemenites had formed a majority in Armīniya, but in the days of Yūsuf, the Nizārī increased in number. Then he [Hārūn] named Yazīd ibn Mazyad ibn Za‘ida al-Shaybānī and he brought from every side so many of the Rab‘īa that they now form a majority, and he controlled the land so strictly that no one dared move in it.

After him came ‘Abd-al-Kabīr ibn ‘Abd-al-Hamid . . . whose home was Harrān. He came with a multitude of men from Diyār Muḍār, stayed only four months and left. (Ter Ghewondyan, 1976, p. 31)

As the studies of the Armenian scholar Aram Ter Ghewondyan have now demonstrated, the *ostikans* of the Shaybānī house, who governed the Diyār-Bakr and Armīniya in almost hereditary succession in this period, infiltrated the plateau on the southwestern shore of Lake Van, although their main migration was in the Caspian district of Sharwān north of the Kura River. The *ostikan* sent to govern the province of Armīniya by the Abbasids between 752 and 780 was the first to shift his residence in 789 to Partaw/Bardha‘a on the lower Kura, leaving a deputy in the capital of Duin in Armenia proper, and the Shāybanā created a hereditary principality for themselves in Azerbaijan. The foundation of the city of Ganjak (modern Ganja in the Azerbaijani republic) in 844 helped to accelerate the Islamization of the eastern districts bordering on Armenian proper. The main activity of the other great tribe, the Sulaym, who alternated with the Shaybānī in the hereditary governorship of Armīniya, was more damaging to Armenia itself.

We do not know the exact path or date of the Arab settlements in Armenia, but they unquestionably benefited from the vacuum created by the weakening or disappearance of the *naxarar* houses after Bagrewand. The Ḳaysite/Kaysikk‘ subgroup of the Sulaym began to move into Aliovit, abandoned by the Gnuni, and spread around the northern shore of Lake Van at Ḳlat‘, Arčēš, and especially to the stronghold of Manazkert. Their kinsmen, the ‘Uthmānids/Ut‘manikk‘, installed themselves at Berkri, east of the lake. The Mamikonean son-in-law Djahḥḥāf seems to have been a member of the same family, although it is possible that he was a Kurd rather than an Arab. We know very little of Djahḥḥāf’s background, nor does he seem to have settled in a specific place, but the later Armenian historian Vardan Arewelc‘i (Areveltsi) explicitly states that he “was planning to gain

control of the whole land through his wife.” (ch. 41, p. 182) In pursuing this policy, Djahḥāf fought both Ašot Bagratuni for the control of Ašovit and the representatives of the caliphate. He briefly seized Duin, but according to Vardan “the citizens fell on [his son] Abdl Melik’, killed him, and closed the city gate” (Ibid). The Djahḥāfids were routed, although they did not disappear at once, as Vardan claimed, since Djahḥāf’s grandson was married to a Bagratuni princess and raised a rebellion in the twenties of the ninth century, while another member of the family created trouble in Siwnik’ until his defeat by the local prince, and at least one more member of the family is recorded. The Djahḥāfids were probably little more than brigands looting wherever the opportunity presented itself and then disappearing in the face of resistance. Nevertheless, Djahḥāf’s son was sufficiently settled to have struck coins in his name, probably at Manazkert, since they carry the mint mark “Bahunays” from the district of Bahunis/Apahunik’ to which the city belonged. The establishment of the Ḳaysites around Lake Van was far more extensive and permanent.

These Arab settlements were designed primarily for defensive purposes to bolster the Arab frontier defensive system, the *thughurs* in their war against Byzantium. Despite Ya’kūbī’s claim, the Arabs never formed anything like a majority of the population on the Armenian plateau in this period. The new emirates soon fought against each other and against the representatives of the caliphate. Their rulers intermarried with the neighboring Armenian magnates, and some converted to Christianity, as did the emirs of Arzn in Aġjnik’ and Balēš/Bidlis on the borders of Tarōn, who married Bagratuni and Arcruni princesses in successive generations of the mid-ninth century and supported their Armenian kinsmen against the Muslims. Nevertheless, the emirates were no longer mere garrisons or governors who came and went in rapid succession. Their establishment in the heartland of Armenia, as well as on its borders, and as far north as Tiflis in Iberia, often provided an advance march for Muslim invasions, especially from Azerbaijan, which regularly used Goġt’n and Naxčawan in the valley of the Araxes as stages in their advance on Duin. Even more fundamentally, they controlled the main urban centers of Armenia: the capital of Duin as well as Naxčawan on the main transit road of the valley of the Araxes; the military stronghold of Karin in the west; Ḳlat’, Arčēš, and Berkri on the shore of Lake Van; Manazkert, where an Armenian mint was located, as well as in the capital. Thus their presence transformed and complicated the decentralized internal pattern of the country by the addition of

a new and alien element that increased the difficulty of achieving a unified and stable political system.

The Rise of the Bagratuni

Tragic though they were, the troubled last years of the eighth century also proved to be a turning point in the history of medieval Armenia. On the international scene, Byzantium still generally remained militarily on the defense first half of the ninth century, although tentative religious overtures were unsuccessfully made to Ašot *Msaker* around 811-813. The establishment of a Paulician republic on the Upper Euphrates protected the northwestern region of Armenia from direct attack from the west. The creation of the Arab military frontier zones or *thughurs* based on Melitēnē and Karin removed the theater of war from the center of Armenia, as did the residence of the *ostikan* of Armīniya at Partaw/Berdha'a in Azerbaijan rather than at Duin in Armenia proper. The brilliance of the Abbasid caliphate dimmed rapidly after the great caliphs of the early ninth century, and the Arab emirs of Armenia pursued with each generation a local policy of native dynasts, which increasingly placed them at odds with the attempts at control of the *ostikan* sent from the Abbasid capital of Baghdad.

Internally, the guerrilla activity carried on by Ašot *Msaker* from Sper began to bear fruit. He took most of Tayk' and Tarōn from the Mamikonean, and his struggle with the *Djahhāfids* gave him control of Aršarunik'. More important, his war against the Arab emir allowed Ašot to resume the traditional Bagratid stance of loyalty toward the caliphate against local rebels, and so to pursue his expansionist policies undisturbed by the Muslim authorities. The discovery of silver mines in Sper not only helped to relieve the tax burden of the country in general, but helped Ašot *Msaker* acquire the domains of the now-ruined Kamsarakan: Aršarunik' and Širak, with the fortress of Ani. De facto, if not de jure, Ašot was *išxan* of Armenia before the end of the eighth century, a title that was conceded to him officially by the caliphate in 804, according to the Armenian chronicler Samuel of Ani, while his brother Šapuh assumed the dignity of *sparapet*. Farther north, the establishment of another branch of the family headed by Vasak, the uncle of Ašot *Msaker*, in the decade following the battle marked the beginning of the future royal house of the Bagratuni of Iberia.

The development of the two other great houses of medieval Armenia, the Arcruni of Vaspurakan and the princes of Siwnik', cannot be traced with equal clarity. There is no doubt that the Arcruni were consolidating themselves in Vaspurakan through the first half of the ninth century, as is evident from later reports and from their domination of the other great houses of the area, who either disappeared altogether or reemerged as Arcruni vassals in the course of this period. The growing concern of the caliphate, and perhaps its policy of support to the Bagratids so as to create a counterbalancing power in Armenia, all likewise suggest the growing power of the Arcruni and their gradual control of the entire area of Vaspurakan, but the confusion of their family historian T'ovma Arcruni does not permit any more precise account until the second half of the ninth century. The history of Siwnik' is likewise difficult to trace through this period. The region had always shown signs of autonomy and separatism in earlier times and had even succeeded in having its autonomy recognized by the Sasanians in the sixth century. Almost nothing is known concerning its history for more than a century, but at the beginning of the great rebellion of Bābak against the caliphate in Azerbaijan (817-836), Vasak prince of Siwnik' sought to benefit from this challenge to the authority of the Abbasids and gave his daughter in marriage to the rebel. The alliance with Bābak was not always advantageous for Siwnik', as we shall see, and after Vasak's death in 821 his lands were divided between his two sons: Sahak, prince of western Siwnik' or Gełakunik' (Geghakunik), with the famous religious and intellectual center of Makenoc' (Makenots) Vank', and P'ilippos, prince of eastern Siwnik' or Vayoc' Jor (Vayots Dzor) (modern Eghegnadzor), southeast of Lake Sevan, where the local dynasts were to erect the still more distinguished monastic center of Tat'ew (Tatev). The internal quarrels of the princes delayed the development of Siwnik', but here too, the seeds of a major non-Bagratid principality had been sown early in the ninth century.

The revival of Armenia did not, however, proceed smoothly or unchecked. In the west, the caliphate, alarmed by the accumulation of power in the hands of Ašot *Msaker*, made the most of his death in 826 to divide the Bagratuni dignities and lands between two of his sons. The eldest, Bagarat, held the southern territories of Tarōn and Sasun with the new prestigious title of *išxanac' išxan* "Prince of Princes" (ca. 826-851). His youngest brother Smbat, usually known as *Xostovanot* (*Khostovanogh*), "the Confessor," who had been a hostage at the Abbasid court, received his uncle Šapuh's office of *sparapet* and kept

the northern Bagratuni domains of Sper and Tayk'. The quarrels of the two brothers intensified this division. To the east, the great revolt of Babak in Azerbaijan during the first part of the ninth century distracted most of the attention and forces of the caliph for two decades and allowed considerable freedom of action to the Armenian *naxarars*. In the acid words of the Arab historian al-Balādhuri:

[Harun al-Rashid's *ostikan*] . . . introduced the system by which Dabil [Duin] and an-Nashawa [Naxčawan] paid land tax according to the area, not the produce. The Armenian patricians did not cease to hold their lands as usual, each trying to protect his own region; and whenever an 'āmil [tax collector] would come to the frontier they would coax him; and if they found in him purity and severity, as well as force and equipment, they would give the *kharāj* and render submission, otherwise they would deem him weak and look down upon him. (al-Balādhurī, II, p. 330)

But this freedom increased neither their unity nor the peace of Armenia. In Siwnik', Bābak's marriage to the daughter of Vasak had allowed him to establish himself in the districts of Arcax (Artsakh) and Balasakan in 824, which he controlled for twelve years, until the end of his career. But the rebellion of the local dynasts against the overlordship of Bābak led only to his devastation of Gelakunik' and Balasakan. In the central provinces, the continuing success of Bābak against the caliphate encouraged a challenge to the authority of the contemporary Shaybāni *ostikan*. Joining together in one of the local alliances between the Christian *naxarars* and Muslim emirs that was to characterize the history of medieval Armenia, Sahak, prince of western Siwnik', the Djahhāfid emir and the usually cautious *sparapet* Smbat, abandoning on this occasion the loyalist tradition of the Bagratuni house toward the caliphate, disregarded the conciliatory intervention of the kat'olikos Dawit' II and defied the *ostikan* in 831/2, according to the Armenian historian Yovhannēs "the Kat'olikos." (Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i, xxv, p. 117). Unfortunately for the rebels, the Prince of Princes Bagarat held aloof with the forces of the south, and the *ostikan*, taking the initiative of the attack, routed them in a bloody battle on the Hrazdan River north of Duin. Sahak of Siwnik' was killed, and his domain passed to his son Grigor Sup'an I. The Djahhāfid emir fled to Siwnik' to bring more trouble on the region, and Smbat *sparapet* took refuge in his northern domains. The

disturbances related to the insurrection of Bābak continued until 836, when the major campaign mounted by Afshin, appointed by the caliph, finally succeeded in detaching the princes of Albania, Siwnik', and Arcax from Bābak by promises of autonomy and tax remission, and thus obtained the betrayal and capture of the rebel in 837.

Religious quarrels added to the internal dissensions and opposed Bagarat Bagratuni to his brother Smbat *sparapet*, thus dividing Armenia between northern and southern parties. The election of the new kat'olikos Yovhannēs of Ovayk', in 833 provoked denunciations against him to the Prince of Princes Bagarat Bagratuni, who after some years had him deposed and relegated to the monastery of Ayrivank'. He simultaneously informed the Armenian bishops of the necessity to elect a new primate. Fortunately for Yovhannēs of Ovayk', he found a champion in the *sparapet* Smbat and the northern magnates, who called together a synod that restored the kat'olikos to his throne, which he occupied until 855 in spite of the opposition to Bagarat Bagratuni and his southern supporters, among whom we find his nephew Ašot Arcruni. The patriarchate of Yovhannēs of Ovayk' was also marked by a resurgence of heresy in the district of T'ondrak, south of Manazkert, which gave the heretics their name. The historian Asolik mistakenly attributed the appearance of the first T'ondrakec'i (Tondraketsi) leader to the time of the later kat'olikos Yovhannēs the Historian, but his near contemporary, the learned prince Grigor Magistros, correctly observed that

This accursed one appeared in the days of the Lord John and of Smbat Bagratuni. (Garsoïan, 1967, p. 140)

which must be a reference to the alliance of the kat'olikos Yovhannēs of Ovayk' and Smbat *sparapet*. This doctrine of the heretics has been hotly disputed, although it bore manifest resemblances to that of the earlier Paulicians condemned by the kat'olikos Yovhannēs Ōjnec'i. Consequently, the appearance of the T'ondrakec'i in this period in Armenia may well have been caused by the eastward flight of Byzantine Paulicians, whose rigid iconoclasm subjected them to persecution within the empire after the victory of the opposed iconodule doctrine at the Council of Orthodoxy held in 843. It has also been suggested that the T'ondrakec'i had been influenced by the social theories of the followers of Bābak, although this thesis of social unrest among the lower classes of society cannot be demonstrated, since the heretical doctrine eventually reached into the ruling class of the magnates as

well as the hierarchy of the church, whose peace the heretics were to disturb for centuries to come.

A last attempt to reestablish full control over Armenia was made by the Abbasids after their final crushing of Bābak's revolt, and the attention given by all Arab historians to the Armenian rebellion of 850 to 855 reflects the alarm of the caliphate. The new caliph, al-Mutawakkil (847-861), sent a new *ostikan* to collect the Armenian tribute in 850. The Prince of Princes Bagarat sent an embassy bearing gifts and the tribute to meet him at the border, but would not allow him or the tax collectors to cross into Armenia or move freely within the country. The *ostikan* withdrew, though he left two deputies to put down the southern alliance of Bagarat and Ašot Arcruni of Vaspurakan, who had risen with their supporters and scattered the Muslim forces. The *ostikan's* son and successor was only partially successful. He attacked Ašot Arcruni from the direction of Azerbaijan but failed to capture him. However, he succeeded in seizing Bagarat Bagratuni through treachery and sent him off in 851 to the new Abbasid capital of Sāmarrā before falling himself in the struggle to overcome the Armenian mountaineers in the southern districts of ʒoyt' (Khoyt) and Sasun.

Deciding to crush the rebellion once and for all, the caliph al-Mutawakkil then sent a formidable army, to whose leaders he had promised hereditary holdings in Armenia, under the command of the Turkish general Bughā al-Kabir "the Elder." Bughā began his advance by moving from the borderland of the Diyār-Bakr against the southern magnates and began the conquest of the country piecemeal. The division of Armenia into the southern and northern groups of magnates, the absence of its two leaders with the captivity of Bagarat and the refusal of Smbat *sparapet* to join the rebels, facilitated his task. According to the historian T'ovma Arcruni, the

Tačiks [Muslims] of Armenia who dwelt in various regions of the land and guided Bughā on his way in and out of the country. (Thomas Artsruni, III. ii, p. 198)

Coming to ʒlat' on Lake Van, Bughā divided his army in two. Half went to devastate the districts south of the lake. He himself, accompanied by the *sparapet* Smbat, the official native ruler of Armenia during his brother's absence, moved to Vaspurakan, where he forced the capitulation of Ašot Arcruni and sent him, with his son Grigor-Derenik, as well as other *naxarars* from Vaspurakan to join Bagarat in captivity at

Sāmarrā. Ašot's brother Gurgēn continued the guerrilla war in Vaspurakan, and even defeated the Arabs with the help of the local nobles at the "Bloody Lake" (Arian lič/Arian lij). But he too was soon captured and sent to Sāmarrā, while Vaspurakan was ravaged and a multitude of prisoners sold into slavery. Having completed the conquest of the south, Bughā now moved to Duin and attacked the northern magnates, who were faced with the choice of apostasy or annihilation. In the spring of 853 Bughā attacked Siwnik', penetrated into western Iberia, where he defeated and killed the local Muslim emir and burned the city of Tiflis, and overran Caucasian Albania. The entire province of Armīniya was now overcome and ravaged until Bughā's triumphant return to Sāmarrā, bringing a multitude of captive *naxarars*, among them the *sparapet* Smbat whose neutrality or continuous loyalty to the Muslim authorities had not saved him from sharing the fate of the other Armenian magnates.

The condition of Armenia after the devastating expeditions of Bughā was once more tragic. The Arab emirs profited from the captivity of the Armenian princes to expand their own possessions. The captives at Sāmarrā, who included almost all the Armenian magnates—the Prince of Princes Bagarat Bagratuni with his two sons; Smbat *sparapet*; Ašot Arcruni with his brother Gurgēn and his son Grigor-Derenik; the princes of eastern and western Siwnik'; Grigor Mamikonean, prince of Bagrewand, as well as the lords of numerous minor houses—given once again the choice between conversion to Islam or death, agreed to at least a nominal apostasy and eventually made their way home in disgrace after the death of al-Mutawakkil in 861. Only Smbat *sparapet* "the Confessor" refused to compromise his faith, despite his ambiguous political stance, and died in captivity at Sāmarrā after 862.

Outwardly, then, the situation of 855 seemingly resembled the one that had followed the earlier Armenian defeat at Bagrewand, but neither the international nor the internal conditions were the same. The resurgence of Byzantium under the warlike reign of the Armenian emperor Basil I "the Macedonian" (867-886) threatened the rapidly decaying Abbasids in the second half of the ninth century. Al-Mutawakkil's brutal repression had been a last effort. The return to an international balance of power created a favorable climate for the return of Armenian independence, which now developed unchecked. In Vaspurakan, another Arcruni, Gurgēn, prince of Mardastan, continued the guerrilla war against the Arabs and maintained himself in the Arcruni's domain in a series of actions now clearly recorded by the Arcruni house historian T'ovma but that also formed the core of the national epic of *Dawit' of*

Sasun. Similarly, in the north Ašot Bagratuni, the son of the captive Smbat "the Confessor," returned to the policy of his grandfather Ašot *Msaker* and harried the Arabs with increasing success from his refuge in Tayk'. The reconstitution of the principalities of the Arcruni and Bagratuni was already on the way, and another crucial, if intangible, element had been added to the growing fortune of the Bagratuni. Through the martyr's death of the earlier Smbat *sparapet* on the field of Bagrewand and the steadfastness of his grandson and namesake the *sparapet*, Smbat "the Confessor" at Sāmarrā, in the face of Muslim pressure and the concessions of the other magnates, the Bagratuni now finally achieved the spiritual prestige that the death of St. Vardan at Awarayr had so long conferred on the Mamikonean.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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