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THE ORIGINS OF CAUCASIAN CIVILIZATION: THE CHRISTIAN COMPONENT

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The Caucasus has been home for members of the human race since the early Stone Age, yet it is only in comparatively recent times - in the last 1500 years or so - that the two most significant peoples of the area, the Armenians and the Georgians, have acquired truly individual cultures expressed in their own native languages. I shall not be concerned here with the origin of these peoples, with the thorny question of the mingling of newcomers and indigenous inhabitants, or with the development of social and material culture in the pre-Christian era. This paper will deal with Christian Armenia and Georgia, for it was only with their conversion that the Armenians and Georgians developed their own scripts and native literatures. Not that they were illiterate and ignorant until then. Indeed, they had played a role in the Greco-Roman world, and in the Old Persian empire and the civilizations of the Near East that had preceded it. But with the development of their own literature and art in a Christian context the Armenians and Georgians set themselves apart from these other civilizations to a certain extent and moulded more truly national cultures out of the heritage they owed to Greece, Rome and Iran. However, despite many common elements in that heritage, Armenia and Georgia did not find unity or even mutual sympathy in their Christianity.

The Armenian and Georgian scripts were invented within ecclesiastical circles for the express purpose of promoting and strengthening Christianity

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*The present paper is in the nature of a preliminary statement to form the basis for discussion. In the final draft the points most relevant for the theme of the conference will be expanded and scholarly annotation added.

in those countries. This took place in the early fifth century, two or three generations after the first introduction of Christianity. So the written sources in Armenian and Georgian do not reflect a contemporary view of the conversion of the royal families and the spread of the church, but rather the official view of later ages unfamiliar with the precise historical situation of Armenia and Georgia at the earlier time, of their active pagan culture, and of their ambiguous position between the major powers of Rome and Iran. This is particularly true of the Armenian tradition concerning the origins of Christianity there. For not only did Armenian historians ignore the division of their country into Roman and Iranian spheres of influence, they attempted to fuse the originally separate traditions of missionary activity from Syria and from Greek territory. As time went on they pushed the origins of the Armenian church further back in time. Caught up in the rivalries of Eastern Christendom the Armenians came to claim an apostolic origin for their church. There is, of course, nothing peculiar to the Armenians in this regard. The very nature of episcopal succession encouraged churches to trace their bishops back in an unbroken line to one of the original apostles, who were provided with elaborate itineraries showing the places where they had established churches on their missionary travels. But the fact that such claims played an important role in ecclesiastical politics does not make them any the more historical.

A further factor which influenced the tendentious version of the conversion of their country offered by Armenian historians was that by the time the account was put in writing the Armenian monarchy was no more. The Arsacid line came to an end in 427/8. In later generations the church,

in the person of the patriarch, more and more took the place of a national leader transcending the interminable feuding of the noble families - or at least, that is the picture that the Armenian historians, all of whom came from church circles, attempted to present. It is therefore difficult to assess the actual role of the Armenian kings in the conversion; from the shadowy figure of Trdat (Tiridates) converted by St. Gregory the Illuminator in the early fourth century, to Vram-Shapuh who encouraged the monk Mashtots and the patriarch Sahak nearly a hundred years later to invent a script and lay the foundations of a national literature. And the division of Armenia in 386/7 between Theodosius I and the shah Shapuh III, after which time the patriarchs and the surviving royal line resided in Eastern Armenia, made it difficult for later historians to appreciate the position of earlier kings and patriarchs vis-a-vis the Roman emperors. For the first Armenian patriarchate was established at Ashtishat in Taron, west of Lake Van. There was a close connection with the Greek church of Cappadocia, formalised in the requirement that each newly elected Armenian patriarch be actually consecrated in Caesarea. Thus the Armenian church was drawn into the theological and ecclesiastical quarrels of Greek Christendom and into the political problems caused by Arianizing emperors.

But despite the misleading accounts of some later writers, it is possible to indicate some of the factors that were of continuing importance in the Christian culture of Armenia. That the first missionaries there came from Syria may be deduced from the Christian Armenian vocabulary. For such basic words as "priest, monk, sabbath, hymn, congregation, preaching, fasting" were taken from Syriac. On the other hand, those terms which refer to a more organised church with an established hierarchy, "bishop, catholicos, patriarch," were taken from Greek. The Greek connection

has left its imprint in the specific activities recorded in the life of Gregory the Illuminator, who was the first bishop consecrated for the Armenian church - an event plausibly dated to 314 or so. But the Syrian connection is much more tenuous. There are, however, two interesting pointers. The Armenian historian Faustos says that James of Nisibis (an important bishop of the early 4th century who attended the council of Nicaea in 325) had been active in S. Armenia and indeed had been searching for Noah's ark in the mountains of Korduk', the biblical Ararat. (The idea that the ark landed on modern Mt. Ararat, known to the Armenians as Masis, is not an Armenian tradition and does not seem to predate the Crusades.) The second pointer is that Koriun, the biographer of Mashtots who invented the Armenian script, says that a Syrian bishop Daniel had already tried to adapt a Semitic alphabet for Armenian (circa 400) but that it was not adequate. One can only imagine that the purpose of such an invention was for Syrian missionary activity and that it was not a mere pastime. But the Armenian attempt to adapt the story of the conversion of the Edessan king Abgar by the missionary Addai or Thaddaeus to the Armenian situation is pure invention.

Even more than Armenia, Georgia was divided into two fairly distinct areas that were not in fact united until the 12th century of the Christian era. Western Georgia looked to the Black Sea. And as in past ages Greek merchants had settled along the coast from Trebizond to the Crimea, so in Christian times there were churches established along the eastern shore of the Euxine. These long established contacts, and the greater ease and rapidity of sea travel, meant that Western Georgia had closer ties with Constantinople and the church of the Byzantine empire than did land-locked

Armenia. On the other hand, central Georgia - Iberia as opposed to Colchis - looked more directly towards Armenia and Iran. It was in the Armenian Georgian borderland that Armenian missionaries were active in the 4th century; indeed the Armenian historian Faustos claims that Gregory the Illuminator's grandson, the young bishop Grigoris, was killed there. However, Christianity did take a firmer hold in Iberia on the conversion of king Mihran around the middle of the 4th century. The earliest version of that conversion (for as with the Armenian conversion story in Agathangelos, later ages added many layers of even more legendary accretion) is found in the Church History of the Latin monk Rufinus (d. 410). The story was told to him by an Iberian from the royal family, Bacurius, who had served in the Roman army as a dux on the Palestine frontier. It runs as follows:

In Iberia a captive Christian girl gained public notice by the efficacy of her prayers in curing a child; the queen too was cured of a desperate malady. One day, when the king was out hunting, there was a sudden eclipse and the king became lost. In his anxiety he vowed that if Christ, the god of the slave-girl who had cured his wife, would lead him out of the darkness he would worship him. The darkness passed, the king returned home, summoned the girl and proclaimed himself a Christian. All were converted and the king had a church built. But it proved impossible to set one of the columns in place. After the workers had gone home, the girl spent that night in prayer. And when the king returned the following day, he and everyone were astonished to see the refractory pillar hovering in space a foot above its appropriate socket. All the other columns were now easily set up, and the faith of the Georgians confirmed by these miracles. At the girl's urging, an embassy was sent to the emperor Constantine to seek priests for the newly converted land.

This story mentions no names, either for the slave girl or for the king, but the miracle of the pillar is remembered in the name of the cathedral at Mtskheta: Sveti tskhoveli, the living pillar. Bacurius, who told this story to Rufinus, is known: he was a Roman client and served in the Roman army before returning to Georgia in the early 5th century. He is mentioned by Koriun at the time of Mashtots' first journey to Georgia. The king who was converted is generally recognised to be Mihran, whose dates are unclear but who probably died in 361. The reference to Constantine is most improbable; by a common confusion his son Constantius is more likely meant. As for the slave girl, later tradition is unanimous in calling her Nino. She may have been a captive from the Armeno-Georgian frontier where there were frequent quarrels and raids, but her origins are totally unknown. The attempt by later Armenian writers to claim that Nino was one of the group of nuns that included Rhipsimé and who figure so prominently in the story of St. Gregory the Illuminator is pure fabrication. However, another building at Mtskheta has retained a memory of a further story associated with Nino which is found in both Armenian and Georgian sources. During the reign of Mihran the Georgians used to worship an image of Aramazd (Ahura-Mazda) on the hill across the Aragvi. After his conversion Mihran had the image pulled down and a cross set up in its place. The later church on the site retained the name: Juari.

Naturally the Georgian tradition assumes that all of Georgia was converted at the same time as king Mihran, just as the Armenians supposed the same with king Trdat. And later Georgian writers tell of the visit of the apostles Simon Zelotes and Andrew to Georgia, just as the Armenians claimed Thaddaeus and Bartholomew as apostolic founders. But all these

simplifications and tendentious claims are to be rejected. The conversion of Caucasia was a slow process. By the 3rd century there were unorganised groups of Christians at various places where Greek and Syrian merchants and missionaries passed. When the king was converted, as in Iberia, Armenia, and later on in Lazica, a formally organised church came into being. But there was long resistance on both the social and political levels as the History of Faustos and the Biography of Mashtots by Koriun make abundantly clear.

The influence of Syria - or more properly speaking, of Syriac Christianity which covered Syria, Mesopotamia and N.W. Iran - and the influence of Greek speaking Christianity were both vital for the development of Armenian and Georgian literature. Although these literatures both have their origins in church interests and have several common features, it is noteworthy that there are significant differences between them. For reasons which will be clear from what follows, it is more appropriate to begin with Armenia.

The actual invention of the Armenian script by Mashtots took place in N. Syria. It is therefore quite natural that the first texts translated into the new script included many Syriac ones. Indeed the first rendering of the gospels was made from Syriac, and later revised on the Greek. Mashtots and the patriarch Sahak, according to the former's biographer, founded schools where youths were taught the script and Syriac or Greek (or both) and then despatched abroad to the main centres of Christian learning: Edessa, the cities of Asia Minor, and most especially Constantinople. To this list were later added Alexandria, Athens, and other cities more famous for the pagan learning of late antiquity than the

purity of their Christian doctrine. The basic texts in liturgy, theology, church history, biblical commentary, canon law, etc., were then rendered into Armenian. By the end of their lives these translators had begun to compose original works in Armenian. Now it would be wrong to suppose that only with the invention of a script had Armenians become interested in learning and scholarship. For hundreds of years previously there had been Armenians interested in Greek culture. King Artavazd in the first century B.C., for example, had an international reputation as a writer. Armenians had studied at the great schools of the Eastern Mediterranean. Libanius in Antioch had correspondence with numerous former Armenian students and their sons who came to study with him in their turn. During the fourth century the clerics of the Armenian church had used Syriac or Greek. So the importance of Mashtots' invention was not so much that the leading circles of Armenian society suddenly became educated - they had been such all along - but that their learning was transposed into the Armenian idiom and adapted to the Armenian situation. This explains the amazing rapidity of the development of a native Armenian literature. And it also helps explain why the early historical works by Armenian authors are so indebted to foreign models for their imagery in describing events that occurred in their own land.

By the sixth century Armenian scholarly interests had expanded beyond strictly ecclesiastical texts to the world of secular learning as known in the schools and universities of the Eastern Mediterranean. Although some of the elaborate grand tours attributed to Armenian scholars have been exaggerated by the wishful thinking of their pious biographers, there is no doubt that the great cities of the Greco-Roman world offered many

attractions to Armenian students. There followed another spate of translations, this time of philosophical, grammatical, rhetorical, scientific, and other technical works, with particular emphasis on the texts used in the university of Constantinople. Commentaries on Aristotelian logic and Neo-Platonism were rendered into Armenian and new ones composed by Armenians. The works of Philo had a significant influence in their Armenian version; mathematics and astronomy were now studied in Armenian. However, the prime interest of Armenian writers and scholars remained linked to ecclesiastical concerns. There were very few authors who were not monks, priests or bishops. The private education given to the children of the nobility was not an academic but a social one; schools in the proper sense were church or monastery schools.

One other foreign centre was of importance for the developing Armenian individuality - the holy places of Palestine and the city of Jerusalem. After the time of Constantine Christians from many lands came flocking to visit the shrines of the Holy Land, to meet the internationally famous monks and ascetics who had settled there, and to admire the grand churches built at the most important sites. (According to a late and tendentious document, many of these churches were built not by Constantine but by king Trdat and Gregory the Illuminator!) Armenians and Georgians were among these visitors and they have left tangible evidence of their settlements in the form of mosaic pavements with inscriptions in their respective languages. Many of the pilgrims stayed in Palestine as monks, Armenians and Georgians at first living in Greek monasteries and worshipping in their own tongues. As confessional differences came to separate the Armenians from the Greeks and Georgians, they built their own monasteries

and churches. But the great importance of Jerusalem for the Christian Caucasus was in the field of liturgical usage and the ordering of the Christian year. The earliest ritual traditions of Armenia and Georgia owe much to those of Palestine before the rites of Constantinople came to dominate Eastern Christendom. As we shall see, later Georgian scholarship was enriched by numerous translations made from Christian texts in Arabic by Georgian monks in Palestine. But for the Armenians, their religious differences with the Greek church - and hence with the Georgians, who remained in communion with the Greeks - made Jerusalem less a place of common learning than a centre of pilgrimage. To these confessional differences and the split between the churches we must now turn.

The conversion of Armenia to Christianity entailed many consequences of a social and political nature. But not least troublesome was the fact that Armenia now became involved in the theological quarrels of Christendom, quarrels which themselves often had social and political overtones. For example, in the 4th century the pro-Arian policies of some Roman emperors caused conflict between church and state in Armenia: the kings were anxious to cultivate good relations with the Christian emperors of Constantinople, the patriarchs were anxious to preserve the true faith against the Arian heresy.

But after the invention of an Armenian script with the consequent development of a native Armenian theological tradition, and later the abolition of the Armenian monarchy with the consequent increase in the church's position as the leading national force, then the Armenian attitude to the international theological controversies of the time became a truly significant issue. In the reign of Justinian (527-565) the split between

the Greek and Armenian churches became irrevocable, despite various later attempts at reunion. It is therefore appropriate here to trace the development of the Armenian tradition and the history of the Armenian reactions to the Christological controversies that split the Christian world.

The theological problem centres in the question: how are we to interpret the Christian declaration that Jesus Christ is both truly man and Son of God? In Alexandria the tradition was to stress the divinity and unity of Christ; in Antioch and Cilicia the tradition was to place emphasis on the humanity as well as divinity of Jesus - to over-simplify a very complicated question. At the beginning of the 5th century the two main protagonists were Cyril, archbishop of Alexandria, and Theodore, bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia. Although the theologians of Asia Minor and Constantinople did not on the whole support the extremists in either group, Cyril had won the day at the third ecumenical council, held in Ephesus in 431. The Armenians were brought into the conflict because the works of Theodore were circulating in Armenia (having been brought earlier from Edessa) after Theodore's condemnation at Ephesus. Acacius, bishop of Melitene on the S.W. border of Armenia with Asia Minor, protested, sending two letters to Mashtots and Sahak to inform them of the dangerous heretical tendencies implicit in Theodore's teachings. In their reply the Armenians agreed in condemning the heretical ideas concerning the person of Christ attributed to Theodore, but denied that any such heretics existed in Armenia.

The decisive step in this controversy was taken by a pupil of Mashtots, Eznik, in his mature years the author of a unique philosophical work on

the problem of the origin of evil. In the 430's Eznik had gone to Syria to study Syriac in Edessa; from there he moved on to Constantinople, joining other Armenian students who were already there studying Greek. The theological controversies surrounding the works of Theodore induced Eznik to request an authoritative statement from the patriarch of Constantinople, Proclus. So Proclus sent a letter - his so-called "Tome" - to the Armenian clergy and nobility, explaining in detail the teaching of the council of Ephesus. The lasting significance of this letter lies in the fact that it came to serve as a basis for the Armenian theological position: the council of Ephesus became the touch-stone of orthodoxy. So when in later times the definitions of Ephesus were revised, such revisions were rejected by the Armenians as innovation.

It was only another twenty years later that the fourth ecumenical council was summoned in Chalcedon by the emperor Marcian. For the decisions of Ephesus had not brought peace and concord. No Armenian representative was present at Chalcedon; Armenian sources stress that the Armenians were at that time preoccupied with a revolt for religious freedom against the Iranian shah. But in fact no Armenian representative had attended any ecumenical council save that of Nicaea in 325, when the Armenian see was closely connected with that of Caesarea. There is no evidence that Armenian bishops from beyond the Roman-Iranian border were invited to the later councils; but whether invitations were sent and ignored, or whether invitations were not sent out as a matter of policy, is unknown.

But neither did the council of Chalcedon solve the problems to the liking of all. It was resolved that Christ, being truly God and truly man, is one person in two natures. The extremists of the Antiochene

school, the followers of Theodore and Nestorius, who in speaking of two natures were accused of separating God and man in Christ, were condemned. Their teaching was to become the standard doctrine of the Syrian church in Iran. But within the empire, major opposition to the Chalcedonian formula came from the followers of the late Cyril of Alexandria who spoke of "one nature of the divine Logos incarnate." This phrase is found in Cyril, who was misled by forgeries to suppose that it was Athanasian, and it became the rallying-cry of the opposition. In Egypt, Syria and elsewhere, the religious opposition went hand in hand with national or local feelings and separatist tendencies. But it would be rash to suppose that economic or social considerations were the prime cause of the divisions in Christendom. They did not cause them, though they did reinforce them.

A number of compromises was tried at different times. But all failed to heal the gap. Gradually the monophysites (partisans of the "one nature [physis]") developed their own theological traditions, organised themselves into separate churches and ordained their own separate clergy. This process was a long one and only concerns us here insofar as Armenia was affected.

The council of Chalcedon did not have any immediate repercussions in Armenia. When the Armenian church was asked at the beginning of the 6th century to take a dogmatic stand, the Catholicos declared that the Armenians, Georgians, Albanians (Aḷuank') and Greeks were all in agreement. But one has to bear in mind that the Henotikon of Zeno (emperor 474-491) was in force at that time within the empire. The Henotikon, published in 482, was an edict recognising the first three ecumenical councils but passing over the issue of "one" or "two" natures. The Armenians seem to have been happy with the compromise, as Zeno is referred to as the "blessed

emperor" in Armenian sources. However, the Armenian clergy were persuaded by a Syrian delegation to reject explicitly the offending council of Chalcedon, but without anathematizing the Greek church as such.

But in fact the apparent unanimity of the Greek and Armenian churches had no deep foundations. Zeno's policy of compromise was rejected in 518, when under the emperor Justin the Greek empire and church made their peace with Rome and stood firmly behind the definitions of Chalcedon. However, not until 555 were the Armenians prompted to repudiate the Greek return to Chalcedonian orthodoxy. In that year the Catholicos Nerses II and the Armenian bishops received a delegation of Syrians belonging to the monophysite church in Iran, who claimed that they were being persecuted by the majority group (the so-called "Nestorians" who held to the teaching of the school of Antioch and formed the officially recognized church in Iran) and needed to find foreign bishops to consecrate their candidate to episcopal rank. The Armenians obliged. But from the correspondence which surrounds this episode it is clear that not only was the council of Chalcedon rejected again, the Greek church was anathematized for its heresy. And only on occasion, and under pressure, did any significant group of Armenians later ever change their mind and accept communion with the Greeks.

On the other hand, in Georgia a specifically national tradition in literature and theology was slower in forming, and its ultimate development was on different lines from the tradition in Armenia. Although Armenian writers claim that Mashtots invented a script for the Georgians and the Caucasian Albanians as well as for themselves, there is no corroborating evidence. Certainly the script was invented in the fifth century in ecclesiastical circles (despite certain chauvinistic claims that it has a

much more glorious antiquity); the first texts translated into Georgian were liturgical and biblical, and it was Armenian texts that served as models. The earliest dated surviving document in the Georgian language is the inscription of the church of Bolnisi Sion (483); other inscriptions in Palestine have also been attributed to the same century. However, the volume of material translated in the early centuries of literacy in Georgia is not at all comparable with what was achieved in Armenia. Nor was there a sudden efflorescence of original compositions. The earliest narrative work is the Martyrdom of Saint Shusanik. (She was the daughter of the Armenian general Vardan Mamikonean, killed on the battlefield in the revolt against Iran in 451 and immortalised in the Histories of Elishē and Ḷazar.) Shushanik had married Varsken, vitaxa (governor of a border province) of Gogarene on the Armeno-Georgian border. But he apostatised, married the shah's daughter, and so maltreated Shushanik that she died. Although the martyrdom purports to have been written by Shushanik's father-confessor, there are reasons for supposing that the text as we have it was not composed until after the separation of the Armenian and Georgian churches. Shushanik is revered in both churches and her story is known in both languages. But Georgian scholars insist on the primacy of the Georgian version, which they regard as the first mature production of Georgian literature. Be that as it may, hagiography did remain the principal sphere of interest for Georgian writers for several centuries. Interesting and valuable as many of these texts are, they do not cover so wide a spectrum as the products of early Armenian literature. Of wider historical interest are accounts of the conversion of Georgia, the story of the legendary invasion of Alexander into the Caucasus, and lists of

Georgian kings which may go back to the seventh century. But before discussing Christian Georgian literature after that time - when, in fuller maturity, it shows interests different from those of Armenians - we should turn to the Georgian reaction to the quarrels of Eastern Christendom that caused irrevocable schisms lasting to the present.

At the council of Dvin in 505 there had been unanimity among Georgians, Armenians and Albanians in rejecting Chalcedon, though not the Greek church. The Georgian Peter, who became bishop of Mayuma near Gaza in the second half of the 5th century, had been even more violently anti-Chalcedonian. (Curiously enough, the much later Georgian Life of Peter reflects the later position of the Georgian church and makes of him a pious Chalcedonian.) But most Georgian monks who went to Palestine remained loyal Chalcedonians, joining in Greek monasteries. In the 6th century several Syrian monks went to Georgia, where they played an important role in developing local monastic communities on the Egyptian and Syrian models. These were the so-called "Thirteen Syrian Fathers" whose lives have survived in various recensions, the oldest fragments of which go back to the 6th or 7th century. These monks were refugees from monophysite Syria, and they had a significant effect on the Georgian attitude to Chalcedon.

At the second council of Dvin in 555, when the Greek church was specifically anathematized, there were no Georgians present. Nor is there any reason to suppose that the Georgians ever rejected their unity with the Greek church. Their attitude in 505 had corresponded with the official Byzantine position. Justinian's wars in Lazica only helped increase Byzantine influence, both military and religious. Hence the Georgians rejected Armenian overtures in 572, when monophysite Armenians

at home were resisting the enforced union of refugee Armenians in Contantinople following an attempted revolt against Iranian control. (This rebellion of 572, led by another Vardan Mamikonean, is not to be confused with that of 451.)

The final split between Armenians and Georgians came in 608 during the patriarchate of Kyrion. Kyrion had lived since his youth in Greek territory and then in Armenia. The Armenian Catholicos had made him bishop in Ayrarat in 594 and in 598/9 had consecrated him Catholicos of Georgia when that see fell vacant. Despite his friendship with the anti-Chalcedonian Armenian Catholicos Moses, once he was Catholicos of Georgia Kyrion showed himself more and more sympathetic to the Greek church. He refused to participate in the synod called in 607 to elect a new Armenian Catholicos (Abraham), and the following year he was denounced by an Armenian council in Dvin. In the encyclical letter promulgated on this occasion, Abraham extended to the Georgians the interdictions previously laid against the Greeks: no Armenian was to communicate with them, to eat with them, to pray with them or to marry them. The schism thus formulated was never rescinded. The Georgians had never committed themselves to the monophysite position of the Armenians, and from now on they remained in communion with the Byzantine church. This had concomitant political overtones, but it also meant that Greeks and Georgians could live and work in the same monasteries - with a profound effect on later Georgian literature and scholarship. Armenians too continued to frequent the university of Constantinople and other centres of Greek learning; and there were important groups of Chalcedonian Armenians even in Armenia proper. However, there could never be an open, unsuspicious relationship between Armenians and Greeks.

A further point in this regard needs emphasis: the difference in rites and practice. For Christians were divided not only by credal statements and theological interpretations of dogma; differences of ritual practice were (and remain) of equal if not greater significance in the perpetuation of antagonisms. A declaration by the Armenian Catholicos Moses II (574-604, mentioned above) is of particular interest and relevance. When summoned by the emperor Maurice to attend a synod in Constantinople where the union of the churches might be effected, he exclaimed: "I shall not cross the river Azat, or eat fermented bread, or drink warm water." The river Azat then marked the frontier between Byzantine and Iranian spheres of influence, but Moses is playing on its meaning "free." The references to fermented (leavened) bread and warm water are to differences between Greeks and Armenians in the celebration of the liturgy; for the latter use unleavened bread and wine unmixed with water (warmed in the Greek rite). These differences were as significant and irreconcilable as any point of doctrine.

But if Armenia and Georgia were going their own ways in the world of religion, they were forced into the same strait-jacket of political subjection to the Muslim caliphate. The position of the Caucasus was of course different from that of Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt and all the Mediterranean lands that so rapidly fell to the new invaders. For the Caucasus was not overrun or assimilated into the Muslim cultural and religious world. The Muslim authorities demanded subjection, taxes and military contingents - in many respects perpetuating the earlier relationship between the Caucasus and Sasanian Iran. Armenia, Georgia and Albania were grouped together as the province of Arminiya, with the city of Dvin

as its administrative capital. Garrisons were posted in various strategic centres, and several towns became Muslim enclaves in the midst of a native Christian population. But despite some periods of harsh oppression, especially under the Abbasids, the Armenians and Georgians were generally left to pursue their traditional ways; scholarship and the arts certainly did not come to a sudden halt.

Armenians were divided on the issue of resistance to the Muslims. Theodore Ṙshtuni, whose lands south of Lake Van were in closest contact with them, came to terms with Mu'awiyya in 653/4. But this alliance was not welcome to all Armenians. The historian Sebēos calls it an alliance with Antichrist, and the later John Catholicos says that Theodore and the other nobles who signed it "signed an oath with death and swore allegiance to hell." However, all Byzantine efforts to regain control of the Caucasus were in the end unsuccessful. Yet the hold of the Caliphs was tempered by their increasing inability to control their own far-flung empire. For the Muslim world of the 8th and 9th centuries was not a solid unity; it was too vast and disparate. Not long after the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate (750) local rulers from Spain to central Asia were claiming independence. This fragmentation in some ways worked to the advantage of the Armenians (except when abortive rebellions brought bloody reprisals). For in the ninth century the leading nobles made direct submission to the Calph, bypassing the authority of the local Muslim governors who tended to treat the provinces as their own petty kingdoms. The power and prestige gained by a few predominant families thus led to their emergence as ruling houses once Muslim domination had been overthrown.

It is not necessary for us to follow the rise and fall of individual families at this period, but one important difference between the fortunes of Armenia and Georgia must be stressed. In Armenia the leading role came to be played by the Bagratuni family, whose homelands were in the North-West, on the Chorukh river close to the Georgian frontier. Although they gained control of Northern and much of Western Armenia at the expense of the Mamikonean family (who had played the leading role in Sasanian times), they did not extend their sway over South-Eastern Armenia. Here the Artsruni family, in closer contact with the Muslim authorities and particularly with the influential emirs of Azerbaijan, gained independent standing and a royal title. So the Armenian Bagratunis failed to unite the country. Furthermore, their hold over their own lands was fragmented. Following the tradition that sons divided the inheritance, no sooner had a powerful prince extended his control than on his death the principality might be divided or fought over. The Bagratunis were recognised as princes and then kings by Constantinople and Baghdad, but their kingdom was not like that of Tigran the Great or even that of the Armenian Arsacids in the Sasanian period. It was weak and partial, perpetually splintered into smaller holdings.

On the other hand, the fortunes of the Georgian branch of the Bagratuni family show a continuous expansion and strengthening of their hand. At the beginning of the 11th century Western Georgia (Abasgia) and central Georgia (Iberia) were united under the rule of Bagrat III (1008-1014), though the eastern region, Kakheti, remained independent until 1104. Tiflis itself was not captured from the Muslims until 1122. Nonetheless, Bagrat was ruler of a formidable kingdom, which under his succesors

became the predominant power in the Caucasus, and indeed in the whole area between a declining Byzantium and a waning Caliphate.

But it is not necessary here to rehearse the well-known tale of Armenia's dismemberment by the encroaching Byzantine empire and then the fatal collapse of Byzantine defenses before the Seljuk Turks in the 11th century, or to elaborate on the expansion of Georgia in the following century. Since our purpose is to show how the Armenian and Georgian paths diverged despite the close proximity of the two countries, it will be more helpful to turn to the beginnings of the Armenian diaspora and to the divergent literary and scholarly interests of the two peoples.

Although the modern image of Armenians as urban dwellers, merchants and professional men, does not correspond at all with the patterns of Armenian society before the Seljuk invasions, even by that time the diaspora of Armenians was no new thing. From the sixth century, notably under the emperor Maurice, groups of Armenians were often deported wholesale to man the frontiers. Similarly the Sasanian shahs brought Armenian communities to their borders in central Asia. The removal of the Armenians from the kingdoms of Ani, Kars, Vaspurakan, and elsewhere to be settled in Cappadocia as the Byzantine empire expanded in the 10th and 11th centuries was but a continuation of a long-standing policy. (As was also the removal of the population of Julfa to New Julfa near Isfahan by Shah Abbas at the beginning of the 17th century.)

But some Armenians left their country willingly, either to seek their fortunes in foreign lands (and many Armenians rose to prominent rank in the Byzantine administration), or to flee persecution and the ravages of Arab or Turk. Furthermore, many Armenians had come willingly

to settle in lands won back from the Muslims by the Byzantine armies in the 10th century. It was from these colonies, plus refugees fleeing from the Turks, that Cilician Armenia was peopled.

But the Georgians, living beyond the Byzantine-Iranian sphere of military operations, were never subjected to such treatment. And since they were to the north of the main routes that led from central Asia through Iran to Aisa Minor along the Araxes valley and across the Armenian plateau, they were far less touched by the Turkish invasions. Certainly some Georgians, especially from Western Georgia, played a role in the Byzantine world. But the Georgian diaspora was rather one of individuals, notably monks and scholars, who were significant for their influence on life and culture back home.

We have already noted the Georgian monastic settlements in Palestine as early as the 5th century. In the centuries that followed, Georgian monks lived and worked not only in Palestine, but also on Mt. Sinai, Mt. Athos, the Black Mountain near Antioch, and elsewhere. In the Palestinian monasteries they made translations not only from Greek but also from Arabic, which by the end of the 8th century had largely superceded Syriac as the spoken tongue of Christians in Muslim countries. The most curious non-Christian text translated from Arabic into Georgian is the Balavariani, an adaptation of the Arabic Bilavhar and Budasaf. From the Georgian a Greek version was made, probably by Euthymius (on whom more below), and hence the Christian world came to revere the Buddha as a Christian saint. After the 8th century the influence of Armenian texts, which had been strong in the earliest period of Georgian literature, weakened as the Armenians and Georgians became increasingly hostile to each other. But

the most significant development came during the late 10th century, when Georgians began turning to Greek models in centres of Greek learning. The renewed impetus given to philosophical studies during the 11th century in Byzantium rubbed off on these Georgian scholars abroad, and had a distinct influence not only on Georgian ecclesiastical literature but also on the secular writers and poets. We ought to mention the most prominent writers of this Graecophile movement.

Among the nobles at the court of David Curopalates of Taik' (who was murdered in the year 1000) was one called John (known as John the Athonite), who in middle life abandoned his family in order to become a monk. He went to the great ascetic centre of Mt. Olympus in Bithynia. While he was there his youngest son Euthymius was taken to Constantinople as a hostage, and John managed to secure his release. Euthymius then joined his father on Mt. Olympus, where he received his education. Since this was in Greek, he began to forget his Georgian, and according to his pious biographer the Virgin Mary herself had to appear and loose his tongue, so that he became equally proficient in Georgian as he was in Greek. For his father had set him to work at an early age making translations.

But the most significant part of his work was done after John and Euthymius had moved to Mt. Athos, sometime after 965. Mt. Athos had long been a refuge for hermits living either alone or in small lauras. By the mid 10th century the monks had formed a loose organisation, but their life was changed by the arrival of Athanasius, originally a noble from Trebizond and a friend of the emperor. The emperor (Nicephorus Phocas) gave him funds to build a vast monastery, and a chrysobull giving it valuable possessions and independence from all authority save that of the

emperor. Thus began organised monasticism in the Lavra, founded in 961 on the model of the Studion in Constantinople. When John arrived on Mt. Athos, he was anxious to establish a monastery for Georgian monks. He exchanged properties in his personal possession for monasteries in Greek lands, including a laura on Mt. Athos. This now became the great monastery of Iviron (Ἰβήρων, "of the Iberians," as the Greeks called the Georgians), and it was here that Euthymius did most of his work.

The significance of Euthymius' translations was that in the field of the bible text, liturgical matters, dogmatic, hagiographical and ascetic literature, not only was new material made available but the earlier Georgian texts were superceded by strict copies of Greek ones. It is true that the Armenians at about the same time were taking a renewed interest in translating Greek literature; Gregory Magistros in the field of secular literature, his son Gregory Vkayaser in the field of hagiography. But the Armenians were anxious to preserve their own traditions, whereas with the Georgians a fresh start was made and the old largely forgotten. In less accessible places, notably Svaneti and Mt. Sinai some ancient manuscripts have survived that predate this Grecophile tendency and which have preserved the earlier Georgian versions of biblical and liturgical texts.

Euthymius' work was carried on by George, who himself became abbot of Iviron about 1046 and wrote a life of his predecessor (d. 1028). George Mtatsmindeli ("of the holy mountain") was born in Trialeti and spent his younger years in monasteries in Georgia and on the Black Mountain before going to Mt. Athos.

But the most important of these Georgian translators was Ephrem

Mtsire ("the less"), who received a Greek education at the capital of the Byzantine empire and spent his adult life in one of the monasteries on the Black Mountain. (This area between Antioch and the Mediterranean is no longer a monastic refuge, and is not so well known as Athos or Sinai. But in medieval times it was of great significance. For here Greeks, Georgians, Armenians, Syrians, and, after the arrival of the Crusaders, Latins all had monasteries. Consequently there was a great ferment of scholarly activity, as learned clerics translated texts not found in their own libraries. Armenian sources, for example, mention journeys made by scholars to this area, who went from monastery to monastery searching for the works of Syrian or Greek authors that had not yet been rendered into Armenian. The Black Mountain was therefore a much more cosmopolitan centre than Mt. Athos, though it did not rival the latter's ascetic and spiritual fame.)

Ephrem carried the work begun by Euthymius and George much further, bringing to the art of translation a rigorous method and scrupulous accuracy. Also important are the extensive scholia that he added to his translation of various texts, notably the Neo-Platonic works of Dionysius the Areopagite and the patristic writings of Gregory of Nazianzen.

The work of Euthymius, George and Ephrem is particularly significant from the point of view of Georgian theological literature. But of wider impact was the philosophical work of John Petritsi that influenced secular literature and spread Neo-Platonic ideas in medieval Georgia. Like many Georgians of his time John received his schooling in Constantinople; here his teachers were the famous philosophers Michael Psellus and John Italos. With this background John Petritsi spent the next thirty years of his life (from after 1067 to after 1100) in the monastery of Petritsos - whence his

name. This monastery, in Bulgaria, was a purely Georgian foundation. In the early 12th century John returned to Georgia to the monastery and academy of Gelati, near Kutaisi. This complex had been founded by David II the Restorer (1089-1125), Kutaisi being still the capital of the united kingdom. John headed this academy, and the philosophical tradition that he founded in Georgia was to have profound influence on Georgian culture.

Like his predecessors, John Petritsi made a number of translations of Greek theological works. But his real interests lay in the realm of philosophy, although here his actual translations number only four: two logical works of Aristotle, and one work each of the Neo-Platonists Proclus and Nemesius. His original works include a commentary on Proclus and on his own teacher Michael Psellus. But John's work cannot be judged merely by the number of his writings or by their style. For like the Armenian translators of the "Hellenophile" school of the 6th and 7th centuries, John's renderings were slavishly literal and too difficult to comprehend for them to set a new trend in Georgian literature. However, the scholastic tradition that he tried to establish did not predominate for long; it was soon swamped by the influence of secular Persian literature. Nonetheless, in the greatest achievement of medieval Georgian writing, the Man in the Panther's Skin, the blending of Persian motifs with Neo-Platonic philosophical ideas has created a truly unique epic, and one that is purely Georgian.

That Persian influence in literature should now wax and Greek should wane in the 12th century is not too surprising. The Turks who came to Asia Minor and the Caucasus had been steeped in Iranian culture and literary traditions. Throughout Armenia and Southern Georgia there were

large colonies of Muslims (as in Ani, Dvin, Gandza, Tiflis), and it is hardly surprising that their literary motifs, often derived from Persia, should have exerted a strong appeal in both Armenia and Georgia - witness the development in Armenia ecclesiastical circles of mystical poetry in the guise of love poetry based on Persian themes. On the other hand, Byzantine power had been dealt a mortal blow by the Seljuks. Direct Greek contacts in Armenia came to an end by the late 11th century, though Georgia kept in touch with Constantinople by sea. But more importantly, the Byzantine influence, culturally speaking, was primarily religious. Byzantium had little to offer to the leisured classes of the prosperous Georgian kingdom, and the masterpieces of Persian literature - but not the more sober works of theology and history in Arabic - found a ready welcome. They were translated, adapted, and on those patterns original Georgian compositions created.

It is perhaps curious that despite their even closer contacts with Iran the Armenians should never have developed a style of literature that incorporated Persian belles-lettres with their own heritage from the Hellenistic and Christian worlds. History, theology, philosophy, grammar predominate in Armenian writing. There was an interest in wisdom literature, such as the legend of Ahikar; there was a good deal of lyric poetry, primarily religious in nature; there were compilations of law, both ecclesiastical and secular; and there was a certain interest in medicine and technical subjects. Orally stirring tales circulated describing the exploits of heroes who defended Armenia from foreign invaders. The extraordinary diversity of dialect in which versions of the Sasna-dzrer (less accurately known as David of Sasun) have been recorded testifies

to the widespread popularity of this folk epic, though literary references to it are rare indeed. But medieval Armenia did not produce works comparable with the Amiran-Darejaniani, the Vis-Raminiani, or most notably the Vepkhis-Tqaosani, even though in the first centuries of literacy the breadth and sophistication of Armenian writing far exceeded that of the Georgians. So in the earlier period the latter do not have their Eznik, their Eḷishē or their Moses Khorenatsi. Of course, comparisons of this kind are always misleading. invidious and suspect of chauvinism. But this paper will have served its purpose if it has traced in summary fashion a few of the distinctive differences between Armenia and Georgia in the period when their churches and literatures grew to maturity. Although heirs to many common traditions from Iran, the Greco-Roman world and from early Christianity, Armenia and Georgia went their separate ways, divided by temperament and historical circumstance. But to the bemused observer a certain continuity may be discernible in their mutual rivalry. The debate in scholarly journals of the 1970's over the primacy of Armenia or Georgia in the field of ancient church architecture is remarkably parallel to the debate among the hagiographers 1500 years ago over the Armenian or Georgian version of the life of St. Shushanik.