

Here we are not concerned about verifying the dates since there are definitely reliable sources¹ and there is a need for those sources, but what concerns us is that this story is repeated in almost all the studies related to the history of Armash. In particular, the summarized edition of congregations of Armash (“from the treasurer’s box at the congregation”) Archimandrite Arsen Keyvetsi in the book by Priest Hovh. Mavian has been saved and released with the new edition by Armenologist H. Kurdian². Here also the establishment of the monastery is linked to nuncio Bishop Thaddeus, better yet, the note kept by His Holiness Kaputik is repeated in its entirety, but there are also new manuscript records, one of which dates back to 1593, and the other — to 1661, which is the records of Yeremia Keomurjian, who participated in the inauguration of the church in Ghshla village “on Ascension Day”.

M. Ormanian, as can be guessed from the references, used Mavian’s book (but the main copy, not the recapitulation of Keyvetsi), as well as the aforementioned book by His Holiness Bartholomew, and retold the story. As a matter of fact, there was also a Turkish version of this story in which, according to M. Ormanian, “there is an extra detail, according to which not only Bishop Thaddeus saw a dream in Kafa, but also one of the chiefs of Kafa, a prince by the name of Chalel bey, who promised the bishop all kinds of assistance”.³ The story (it would be better to refer to it as a tale) of the establishment by Bishop Thaddeus is retold in the same way by Father Senior Priest Mikayel Yeramian in the booklet “History of Armash” written in the beginning of the previous century — first extensively, and then briefly⁴.

We could list other publications recalling the foundation⁵, but this may merely interest professionals, and our goal is to show the real picture of the foundation.

In a word, M. Ormanian is right — there are truly few sources. However, today, a century after the record of the erudite scholar, the situation has changed significantly; in 1915, in Jerusalem, Archimandrite Mesrob

¹ According to Teroyents or his source, the structure of Armash dates back to 1629 because the viceroy is identified with Satrazam Khusrev Pasha, and the latter was in Izmit (Nicomido) on 2 May of that year (there, p. 108).

² The edition-summary was completed in 1888. See H. Kurdian, History and Constitution of the Monastery of Armash, “Hask”, June-July 1971, pp. 242-251, October-December, pp. 388-394, January-February 1972, pp. 23-30, March-April, pp. 118-124, May-June, pp. 180-186. What should be noted as a simple misunderstanding is the statement of information given by Archimandrite Arsen Keyvetsi stating that Mavian wrote the “History of Armash” “at the age of seventy in 1885-1886”, at the request of Abbot Archbishop Khoren Ashgjan (see “Hask”, 1971, p. 245), whom the publisher fully trusts. However, in the aforementioned article by Hovh. Teroyents (“Yerevak”, 1859, p. 209) the book of Mavian is recalled.

³ Archbishop Maghakia Ormanian, History of the Monastery of Armash, “Shoghakat”, 1956, p. 368.

⁴ The brief version was released, edited by G. Pamboukjian and B. Topjian, Yerevan, 1991.

⁵ Ex.: in the calendar of the Armenian Holy Savior Hospital for the year 1900 (pp. 175-186), the author of which, according to G. Pamboukjian, could have been philologist Hrand Asadour. See Father Senior Priest Mikayel Yeramian, History of Armash, p. 8.

Nshanian released the book “Chronology” by Grigor Kamakhetsi in which Armash and its founding leader are mentioned. After telling about an officiating priest at mass who was not ordained, but was self-proclaimed, our historian continues with the following: “He, by the name of Thaddeus, infidel bishop who had fornicated, who was at the newly built Monastery of Armash, who was careless and was not afraid of God and was not ashamed of people, he did not know about Lent and the day during which meat or milk dishes may be eaten, he was a drunkard, he did not repent, but would hopelessly do evil, was unkind and naughty and died without feeling impenitence. And at night, he suddenly committed an illegal act and ordained a friar and priest, and sent them to the other side, in the middle of their village referred to as **Ghlijgegh**, and I referred to it as **Bulamaj** since it was dirtier like a mortar, and this beauty became a reality after nine years”⁶.

This was composed in the 17th century (1635), and as it appears, it wasn't edited successfully — a bishop can't make something come true in a village; thus, we must think that the episode related to Thaddeus is inserted in the story related to the pastor. However, in this case, this is not the important thing. What is important is that Thaddeus is a real and historical individual, and the period of his service as an abbot before the 1630s “when the Monastery of Armash was newly built”. Contrary to the mission of “legate” and “person distributing the Muron, Kamakhetsi does not know anything in regard to this, but M. Ormanian builds the whole theory related to Thaddeus on the mentioned cases. As a matter of fact, if Kamakhetsi was a legate of Etchmiadzin, he would not dare to condense his unworthiness that much since he had to be a reverend father who would fulfill the will of the Catholicos.

H. Kurdian, being the first one to discuss this matter, focused on the information contained in Simeon Lehatsi's “Book of Travels”: In 1609-10, he visits “Nikia, which is currently referred to as Chinik Iznik” where “there were two pastors of the city and fifteen (15) Armenian families”. After staying here for twelve days, Lehatsi passes “through a village by the name of Zakara where there was a pastor and thirty Armenian families. From there he approached a flat place, on one side there was a forest, and on the other — a rocky mountain, and on this mountain there was a small stony monastery, and there was a bishop from the residence of Kapos of Yerznka and two malazs (celibate clergymen). And near the monastery there were three new villages built, an **Armenian Safi**. We stayed there for three days”⁷. The year 1609-10, which we indicated, is inferred by two following cases indicated in the mentioned episode in the Book of Travels of Lehatsi: In Tekirdag he saw the tomb of Archimandrite Hagop Cheyunts who, according to the information of Grigor Kamakhetsi, died in 1608⁸, and after Zakara, he

⁶ Chronicle of Grigor Archimandrite Kamakhetsi or Daranaghtso, published by Archimandrite Mesrob Nshanian, Jerusalem, 1915, pp. 478-79.

⁷ Book of Travels of Simeon scribe Lehatsi: Chronicles and Memoirs, studied and published by H. Nerses Akinian, Vienna, 1936, pp. 42-3.

⁸ Grigor Kamakhetsi, indicated book, p. 320.

passes to Izmit, and then “Stambol” and stays there for three months, and on 11 June 1611, leaves for “Etrna”⁹. So, he should have been in the Zakara/Sakara settlement in the period between those years.

H. N. Akinian, who published Lehatsi’s Book of Travels, particularly annotated the following in addition to our cited lines (“...From there he approached a flat place... and there was a bishop from the residence of Kapos of Yerznka and two malazs”): “This unquestionably refers to the Monastery of Armash; the insinuated bishop will be Thaddeus, whom Grigor Daranaghtsi recalls.”¹⁰

A long time had passed since H. Kurdian noticed that the “Kapos Monastery of Yerznka” of Lehatsi was the Kayipos Monastery of Yerznka¹¹; thus, by combining the data of Daranaghtsi and Lehatsi, Bishop Thaddeus is from Yerznka, and was truly the abbot of the Monastery of Armash in the first decades of the 17th century. Thus, the chronicle inferred by M. Ormanian is substantiated: “...it is necessary to unquestionably acknowledge the year of the nine-year expedition of Kuyucu Murad Pasha (1611) as the exact year of foundation of the Monastery of Armash by Bishop Thaddeus”¹². We say substantiated in general, and are not going into details. The year 1611 may be revisited since the stony monastery existed a year before that and “there was a bishop from the residence of Kapos of Yerznka and two malazs (celibate clergymen)”¹³. However, surprisingly, S. Lehatsi, who had been on site for three days and had specified the origin of the bishop, does not refer to the monastery as “newly built”. Thus, it is necessary to understand the information of Kamakhetsi as information that concerns renovation, not the foundation of the Monastery; moreover, the renovation was supposed to be carried out after the visit of Lehatsi. Thus, the year 1611 is not the unequivocally accepted year of foundation of the Monastery of Armash, and Bishop Thaddeus is not unequivocally the founder of the Monastery of Armash, as H. Kurdian thought with certainty.

Based on the other pieces of information of Kamakhetsi, we know that a little while after the year 1612 (no less than one or two years), the historian was “on the mountain of Nicomid”, “near the newly built Monastery of Armash made by hand, for the Holy Virgin”, and here he hosted Archimandrite Karapet who was persecuted by the “malicious Bishop Hovhannes”¹⁴. From the episode about a thievish person with the nickname Chankchi and who appeared in Nikia in 1623 it is also clear that it was not by accident that the historian referred to the Monastery of Armash as a monastery that he built with his hands. Kamakhetsi applied for donations in Constantinople for construction of the Monastery of Armash and the Holy

⁹ Book of Travels of Simeon scribe Lehatsi, p. 44.

¹⁰ Same as previous note, p. 42, ann. 2.

¹¹ H. Kurdian, When was the Monastery of Armash founded? “Bazmavep”, 1957, p. 68. See also H. Kurdian, Yeriza and Colony of Churches: Historical Pasigraphy Volume I, Venice, 1953, pp. 304-05.

¹² M. Ormanian, indicated in the book, p. 369.

¹³ Malaz means celibate clergyman.

¹⁴ Grigor Kamakhetsi, indicated in the book, p. 361.

Archangel Church of the Palace twice and was left empty-handed¹⁵. The fact that he was truly linked to the Monastery of Armash for a long time is also confirmed with the information stated in the memoir of the Bible that he transcribed in 1605-21. Here we read the following: “Remember my prayer for your Arujektsi Varhat, who went to Noragegh of Armash. He and his consort provided a variety of foods and other useful items that God will reward, amen”, then “after five pages” there is the following annotation: “I wrote these five pages at the vicarage of Armash”¹⁶. Telling about his vagabond life, Kamakhetsi goes on to write the following: “Now it is written...and in the Nicomid mountainous region, which is currently referred to as Ghojayle, at the door of the newly built monastery, near the newly built Monastery of Armash. And from there we returned to our abode...”¹⁷.

Summing up all the information of Grigor Kamakhetsi, we can conclude that the historian truly participated in the construction or renovation of the Monastery of Armash, and with the foundation of the Monastery of Armash, he refers to it as a monastery that was built by him; moreover, he finds it necessary to refer to the village and monastery as “Norashen” (newly built in Armenian). However, as in many other medieval sources, especially in the memoirs on the walls of places of worship, “Norashen” very often means “nor shenatsats” (newly built in Armenian), “nor norogvats” (newly renovated in Armenian), not newly built “ee kordo” (with instruments in Armenian).

¹⁵ Same as above, p. 423.

¹⁶ There, p. 609. The manuscript belonged to M. Ormanian, it is currently in Jerusalem, No 3043. For description see N. Bogharian, *Main List...*, Vol. IX. Jerusalem, 1979, pp. 235-43; For republication of memoir see “*Archives of Armenian Manuscripts*”, 17th century, Vol. II, compiled by Vazgen Hakobyan, Ashot Hovhannisyan, Yerevan, 1978, pp. 52-61.

¹⁷ There, p. 611