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## The Catholics of the Armenian Rite in Armenia and Georgia (1828–1909)

*Jakub Osiecki*

Since the Catholic Church of the Armenian rite was founded in the 1742, members of this community have often been torn between old Armenian religious traditions and the Vatican's "new" policy towards them.<sup>1</sup> The identity of believers, especially in the South Caucasus, was created in response to both new and old factors, including the Ottoman Empire (an Islamic state), the Russian Orthodox Church, relations to Armenian Apostolic Church (Echmiatsin's Catholicosate), and protestant missions to the Middle East and Asia Minor. In the twentieth century, two tragic events took place: Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire, and the Bolshevik invasion of the South Caucasus. The chronological range of this paper and the problems it explores reflect the nineteenth- and twentieth-century social and political transformations which had an impact not only on the whole Armenian ethnos but also on its parts, including the Catholic Armenians.<sup>2</sup>

In approaching this question, it is worth asking whether the study of the history of Catholic Armenians in the context of the history of the entire Armenian nation is a legitimate approach. One may undoubtedly claim that the fate of this religious community during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth was closely connected to the history of Armenia. However, and paradoxically, there remains a problem with Armenian-studies literature related to this Church, for works composed by representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church often downplay the position and

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<sup>1</sup> In 1622 pope Gregory XV established a new institution within the Catholic Church's Sacred Congregation for the Propaganda of the Faith (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*), which conducted missionary activity and evangelisation in (among other areas) the Middle East, South Caucasus and North Africa. One of its main aims was to bring long-established Christian communities such as the Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians and Armenians closer to Mother Church.

<sup>2</sup> In his anthropological research into Armenian Catholics ("Franks"), Harutjun Marutian of the Armenian Academy of Sciences refers to the Armenian *sub-ethnos*. This term was widespread in Russian-language ethnographical literature. A sub-ethnos is an ethnic system which is a structural part of an ethnos (<http://gumilevica.kulichki.net/ARGS/args800.htm>).

role of the Armenian Catholic Church.<sup>3</sup> It was therefore necessary to draw on material from the Vatican Archives, and in particular the *Archivio Segreteria di Stato della Santa Sede*, and from the Central Historical Archives of Georgia (formerly known as Imperial Archives of the Governor of the Caucasus), and to consult biographical records.<sup>4</sup> It will also be important to engage in analogous research in Turkish archives. Due to political factors beyond their control, the Armenian Catholics in Transcaucasia did not develop a centre of spiritual power or establish a seminary during the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. There was no group of clergymen in the Caucasus, no elite to engage in collecting or “producing” documents describing the activities and the history of this sub-ethnos. The most influential scholarly and religious centres in Armenian Catholicism were established elsewhere, in Vienna, Venice, Rome, Constantinople, and Beirut. This is a completely different case from that of the Armenian Apostolic Church. This Church had its centre of political and religious authority in Echmiatsin – including its own seminary – and has been described in numerous historiographical and research works.

In the historical memory of all Armenians the year 1828 has symbolic significance;<sup>5</sup> it marks the liberation of Armenians from the Muslim yoke and the recovery from the Persians of Erivan, the capital of the Erivan Khanate, and the future capital of Armenia. In 1829 the great armed conflicts in the Caucasus between Russia, Turkey (in the form of the Ottoman Empire)<sup>6</sup> and Persia finally ended. Military success was followed by a time of cultural and social development for the Armenian people, which enjoyed favourable conditions due to the political situation in the region. The Armenians were granted the right to settle unhindered in the Russian (tsarist) part of Transcaucasia. In the first months of 1829 this right had

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<sup>3</sup> Even now, it is quite obvious to clergy of the Armenian Apostolic Church that the term “Armenian Church” refers only to the Armenian Holy Apostolic Church. They recommend that Armenian Catholics use the term “community”. See TORKOM POSTAJIAN, *The Armenian Church and others* (Los Angeles: Torkom Postajian Press, 2005), 97–98.

<sup>4</sup> As part of this research, the author conducted 26 biographical interviews, using the methodology of oral history, with elderly inhabitants of Catholic villages in Armenia and Georgia. The research for this project was undertaken with the financial support of the Polish National Center of Sciences (DEC – 2012/N/HS3/00864).

<sup>5</sup> BABKEN ARAKELIAN ET AL., *Istorija Armjanskogo Naroda* (Erevan: Luys, 1981), 121–129.

<sup>6</sup> The terms “Turkey” and “Ottoman Empire” will here be used interchangeably.

already been taken up by 50 thousand families, and this constituted the beginning of a mass migration of Armenians,<sup>7</sup> Catholic Armenians also took part in this exodus.

In the history of Russia and the Caucasus the period of Nicholas I's rule (1825–1855) was characterised by a particularly tolerant attitude toward Armenians, including Catholic Armenians.<sup>8</sup> By the mid-1850s this community, under the spiritual supervision of Latin bishops from Saratov and Tiraspol, had built about a dozen churches in South Caucasus, either new foundations or replacing older chapels. However, after Nicholas I's death, the community's situation worsened. The lack of contact with Rome, Beirut and Constantinople, pressure from the tsarist administration, and the unificatory tendencies initiated on by the Armenian Apostolic Church all brought about a polarisation of the attitudes of Catholic Armenians, and nationalist sentiments, including anti-Georgian and anti-Latin ideas, spread. At the same time a process of assimilation and rapprochement between the Catholics of the Armenian rite and the clergy and adherents of the Armenian Apostolic Church was taking place. Moreover, there was a considerable decline in the relations of the Armenian Catholics to Rome after 1870 and their boycott of the decisions of the First Vatican Council. However, the Roman Catholic Church did not give up the attempts at reconciliation or a re-rapprochement with the Catholic Armenians. In 1883, during Leo XIII's pontificate, the Pontificio Collegio Armeno, a seminary for Armenian Catholic clergymen, was founded in Rome. In 1909, however, perceiving the difficulties arising from their political, cultural and religious context, the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* decided to remove the Armenian Catholics from the jurisdiction of the Tiraspolian bishops and to establish an autonomous Apostolic Administration for Armenian Catholics in South Caucasus and the whole of Russia.

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<sup>7</sup> RICHARD HOVHANNISIAN, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 8.

<sup>8</sup> In the first half of the nineteenth century, Persia also changed its rhetoric about Armenians. Both empires supported the Armenian Church in their own territories, probably in the hope that they would receive the loyalty and commitment of the Armenian people in any future armed conflicts. It was common in both empires to grant privileges to the Armenian nobility or tax exemptions for the construction of sacred buildings. GEORGE A. BOURMOUTIAN, 'Armeno-Iranian relations under the Qajars up to conclusion of the Treaty of Torkamānčāy', in: Ehsan Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985–2011), 15 vols: vol. 2, 1987, 475–476.



A further turning point was the year 1936. The invasion of the Bolsheviks and the gradual atheisation of religious life after 1920 heralded the annihilation of the Armenian Catholics and other Christians in the South Caucasus. The persecutions of the clergy of the Catholic Church of the Armenian Rite and the Church's adherents began with widespread anti-religious propaganda and the collectivisation of rural areas, especially after 1929. In 1936, the demise of the Armenian Catholic community was brought about by the arrest of its last hierarch and deputy apostolic administrator, Father Karapet Dirlukian.

### **The migration of Armenian Catholics to the Russian Transcaucasia**

There is no certainty as to when the Catholics of the Armenian rite first appeared in the South Caucasus (the present-day Republics of Armenia and Georgia),<sup>9</sup> but it was probably around 1800.<sup>10</sup> In a letter dating to the 5th of March 1830, the prefect of the Capuchin mission in Tiflis, Filippo da Foran, mentioned 280 families (that is, between 2,000 and 3,000 people) who had arrived from Turkey. In compliance with the order of the Congregation *De Propaganda Fide* he reported that he had supported this community in the organisation of its religious life and helped improve the conditions under which they were living. However, the Armenian Catholics had arrived with their own clergymen, so that pastoral support from the Latin clergy was unnecessary. This first group of Armenian Catholics inspired the later mass migration of their fellow adherents.

In the context of the removal of the Armenian ethnos to Caucasus, the Treaty of Turkmenchay, signed by Abbas Mirza, Gen. Ivan Paskevich and Alexander Obriesskov in 1828, is of considerable importance. This agreement confirmed the end of the two-year Persian-Russian conflict. It is often considered a symbol of the liberation of the Erivan Khanate and the Nakhchivan Khanate from Persian-Muslim domination, but it also marks

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<sup>9</sup> The oldest centre of Akhaltsikhe must be mentioned, similarly as in the case of the city of Ivrit. It is possible that the jurisdiction of Nakhchivan bishops also covered Akhaltsikhe.

<sup>10</sup> Question des Catholiques Géorgiens de rite Arménien et du changement de ce rite, 36, in: Archivio della Segreteria di Stato / Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Città del Vaticano [hereafter: AA EE SS], Pro Russia IV, Orientali in Russia, Positione 25 scatola, Fasc. 157.

the beginning of the mass migration of Armenians from Muslim countries, initially Persia, and a few years later Turkey, to Russia. The treaty's signatories agreed that the people of the Persian area referred to as Azerbaijan<sup>11</sup> would hold, for five years, the right to move into Russian territory.<sup>12</sup> The tsar, who wished to avoid social conflict in Russian Transcaucasia and to secure the peace in strategic points, including the fortresses of Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsykh, chose to establish parity between Christians and Muslims in these territories, in place of the earlier Islamic majority.<sup>13</sup> The tsar allowed Christian Armenians to settle in the borderlands of his empire; they were a loyal people, who ensured the security of Russia's borders during later wars. The treaty did not mention the Armenians explicitly,<sup>14</sup> but subsequent events indicate that the tsar and his officials were specifically interested in the Armenian people. For example, the Committee for the Affairs of Displaced Persons, directed by Lazar Lazaryan, known as "the main initiator of the emigration of Armenians from Persia", was established in 1828 in St Petersburg.<sup>15</sup> The mass migration<sup>16</sup> involved

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<sup>11</sup> This refers to Persian Azerbaijan, and not to the area of the present-day Republic of Azerbaijan.

<sup>12</sup> The complete text of the peace Treaty of Turkmenchay can be found in: A. SASONOV ET AL. (eds), *Pod stjagom Rosii, Sbornik arxivnykh dokumentov* (Moscow: Russkaja kniga, 1992), 314–315.

<sup>13</sup> ALFRED RAMBAUD, *Russia* (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier and Son, 1900), 2 vols: vol. 2, 232–240.

<sup>14</sup> The words "Armenia" or "Armenians" do not appear in the text of the treaty. However, it seems obvious that the reference to the possibility of "repatriation" concerned mainly the Armenian and the Assyrian peoples. This was "repatriation" because it referred to families whose ancestors had been displaced from the area of the Aras Valley by the Persians at the beginning of the 17th century and moved to the region of New Julfa, Isfahan. See S. POGHOSIAN/A. ASRIAN/CH. STEPANIAN/E. HOVHANNISIAN, Հայոց պատմություն [= *Armenian history*] (Yerevan: WMW-Print 2009), 114; RAZMIK PANOSSIAN, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 78–79.

<sup>15</sup> ALEXANDER GRIBOYEDOV, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenii* (Petrograd: Izdanie razrjada isjasčnoj slovesnosti Akademii Nauk, 1911–17), 3 vols: vol. 3, 1917, 267.

<sup>16</sup> Given their history in the 17th century, for Armenian researchers, the migration of their fellow countrymen from Persia to Russia in 1828 represented repatriation. In the majority of cases the Armenian people found themselves in Persian territory due to earlier forced displacements conducted during the reign of Shah Abbas in the 17th century. At that time, they settled in the region of Isfahan. However, it must be asked whether it is legitimate to speak about repatriation of any people who had lived away from their fatherland for more than two hundred years.

many abuses; these were diligently recorded by Alexander Griboyedov, the famous Russian writer, poet and diplomat.<sup>17</sup> Griboyedov believed that the greatest mistake of the tsarist administration had been to direct the Persian Armenians to the isolated lands located north of the Aras River, where the Christian settlements took on an almost pioneering nature amongst an exclusively Muslim native population made up of Caucasian Tatars, Turks and Kurds. Historians have estimated that between 40,000 and 50,000 people were displaced to Russia, mostly Armenians and Assyrians from the Persian cities of Tabriz, Maku, Khoy, Salmas, Urmia, and Ardabil. They settled mostly in the lands of the former Erivan Khanate.<sup>18</sup> This group of Persian Armenians doubtlessly included also Armenian Catholics, but their precise number remains unknown. Some of the refugees settled near the Aragats volcanic massif; others settled in Erevan. Ivan Chopin suggests, in one of the first statistical and demographical works (published in 1831), that when the first stage of displacement was complete the population of Armenian Catholics in the entire Armenian Oblast (the former Erivan Khanate) was constituted by just 30 families, or between 250 and 300 people.<sup>19</sup>

Another, much larger, group of Armenian Catholics, which has been much better studied by historians, reached the South Caucasus after the Russo-Turkish War (1827–29). The peace agreement which ended this conflict was concluded in Adrianople (Edirne) on 2 September 1829, and gave Russia control of almost the entire eastern coast of the Black Sea, from the Kuban River to Poti, along with the regions of Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe,<sup>20</sup> and the whole of Circassia. As in the 1828 Treaty of Turkmenchay between Russian and Persia, the Armenians were granted the right to leave their former homes and to transfer their moveable posses-

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<sup>17</sup> GRIBOYEDOV, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenii* (as note 15), 267.

<sup>18</sup> The Assyrians settled, *inter alia* in Dvin (30 km away from Erivan).

<sup>19</sup> IVAN CHOPIN, *Istoričeskii pamiatnik sostoianiiia Armianskoi Oblasti v epokhu eia prisoedinenija k Rossiiskoi Imperii* (St Petersburg: Tipografija Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk, 1852), 654.

<sup>20</sup> Today these territories belong to Georgia. In the 19th century, the percentage of Georgian Orthodox Christians in these areas was small. The majority were Muslims: Turks, Kurds or Christians had been forcibly converted to Islam a century earlier. Akhaltsikhe, however, was razed, and of 50,000 people only around 400 survived. See HARUTIUN MARUTIAN, 'Gorod Axalcxa. Voprosi etničeskoj istorii i traditsionogo žilishchiiia', *Vestnik Obščestvennix Nauk* 6 (1990) 19–33: 20.

sions from Turkey to the Russian part of Transcaucasia.<sup>21</sup> These Armenian migrations were directly related to the flight of Muslim Turks from Transcaucasia. Thousands of adherents of Islam were exiled to Turkey from the region of present-day Adjara and Javakheti. The Armenians who came from the Ottoman Empire frequently settled in the villages and on the land which had been left by Muslims. The tsarist officials initially wanted to place the Armenian groups in the Transcaucasia areas, Talin, Shirak, Lori and around Lake Sevan; in the Georgian Javakheti; and in Tiflis. However, some also settled in the North Caucasus, in Sukhumi, Rostov-on-Don, Armavir, New Nakhichevan, and Krasnodar.<sup>22</sup> In all these regions and cities, both Armenians of the Apostolic (Gregorian) denomination and Armenian Catholics settled in greater or lesser numbers. In the majority of cases the Armenian Catholics had been the inhabitants of Kars, Beyazit, Van, Muš, Erzurum.<sup>23</sup> However, the total number of Armenian Catholics who came from Turkey to Russia in the 1830s did not exceed 20,000.<sup>24</sup> The exodus of the Armenian people – including both Catholic and Apostolic Armenians – from Turkey to Russia was associated with persecution by Turkish Muslims, but above all with tax-related economic oppression of Christians.

Religious factors, including the social position of Christian minorities in Muslim states, played an important role in Russian policy in conquering new territories. Tsarist propaganda also presented this Russo-Turkish conflict (1828–1829) in terms of religious rhetoric, a feature of the presentation of the majority of wars initiated by tsar Nicolas I in Russian publi-

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<sup>21</sup> The treaty did not specifically mention the Armenian people; instead the authors of the document used the term “borderland people”. See ROBERT J. KERNER, ‘Russia’s New Policy in the Near East after the Peace of Adrianople’, *Cambridge Historical Journal* 5 (1937), no. 2, 280–290: 288.

<sup>22</sup> I. KUZNECOV, ‘Severo-zapadnii Kavkaz (Krasnodarskii Krai) Što proisxodit z etničeskimi menšinstvami’, *Diaspory* 4 (2001) 68–89: 68–69.

<sup>23</sup> Sometimes historians accept the number of families instead of people as a measure. One family, household (Arm. տուն) represented between eight and ten people. However, when these figures are calculated, they do overlap. ARAKELIAN, *Istoria Armianskogo Naroda* (as note 5), 133, and BOGHOS L. ZEKIYAN, *The Armenian Way to Modernity* (Venezia: Supernova, 1997), 62.

<sup>24</sup> TYMON TYTUS CHMIELEWSKI, *Gruziński katolicyzm w XIX i na początku XX wieku w świetle archiwów watykańskich* (Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 1998), 292–310.

cations.<sup>25</sup> For the tsar, the only solution to the worsening situation of Christians in the Ottoman Empire was military intervention. Nicholas I was convinced that all Armenians, whether Apostolic or Catholic, were endangered in Turkey as a result of the apparently too rapid development of the Armenian and Catholic *millet* (that is, a religious community recognised by the Turks) at the beginning of the 19th century,<sup>26</sup> about which Nicholas I consulted Pope Leo XIII, among others.<sup>27</sup> However, even before the war with Turkey was over, Nicholas I was considering not only the annexation of the lands of the Ottoman Empire but also the displacement of Armenian people to the recently conquered Russian Transcaucasia, as a means of improving the situation of the Catholics.

The tsar's correspondence with the pope and the *commercium epistolarum* between the tsar and the viceroy of the Caucasus clearly show the pro-Armenian sentiment of Russians during this period. This was confirmed by the conferral of a special status on the Caucasus to Armenian Catholics after 1829, including the right to erect sacred buildings.<sup>28</sup> Nicholas I gave permission for the reconstruction of all the 32 Catholic churches which had been destroyed between 1826 and 1829.<sup>29</sup> Over the next 20 years, on the eve of the signing of the concordat between Rome and Moscow (1847), about a dozen existing houses of prayer, churches and chapels were rebuilt within present-day Armenia and Georgia, and new

<sup>25</sup> WIKTORIA ŚLIWOWSKA, *Mikołaj I i jego czasy* (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1965), 215.

<sup>26</sup> In 1830/31, due to the intervention of France, the Ottoman Empire defined a separate *millet* for Armenian Catholics, apart from the existing Armenian *millet* for the adherents of the Apostolic Church. STANFORD J. SHAW/EZEL K. SHAW, *Historia Imperium Osmańskiego i Republiki Tureckiej, 1808–1975* (Warsaw: Dialog, 2012), 2 vols: vol. 2, 2012, 210–211.

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas I to Leo XII, Bazardgik, 2 July 1828, in: AA EE SS, *Periodo I. Russia e Polonia*, vol. 4, 74–75.

<sup>28</sup> O postroike cerkvei dlja Ormian-katolikov, f. 1645/o. 1/d. 1, Centralne Archiwum Historyczne, Gruzja (Saistorio Tsentraluri Arkiwi, Central Historical Archive of Georgia, Tbilisi) [hereafter: CHAG], 11–14.

<sup>29</sup> This probably refers to the meetings for prayer organised in private houses, for no other document confirms the existence of so many Armenian Catholic churches in this region of Turkey in the eighteenth century or at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These buildings must, therefore, be new churches constructed by Catholic Armenians who fled from the Ottoman Empire. For the building of churches in the South Caucasus coordinated by the order of Capuchins, see: Chmielewski, *Gruziński katolicyzm* (as note 24), 112–118.



buildings were constructed. These included churches at: Akhaltsikhe (the first Armenian Catholic church in this city was built in 1836), Tori, Alastan, Varevan, Turtshk, Khulgumo, Bavra, Kartikash, Khizabavra, Udokmana, Emti, Abatchev, Cchaltbila, Vale, Neohreb, Sukhlis, Ude, Arali, Alexandropol, Tapadolak, Karaklisa, Palutli, Kaftarli, Hazanchi, Muslukhli, Shishtapa, Jiteli – Jitnkov, Shahnazar, Sarchapet, Karaklisa, Shishtapa, and Siachat – Ararat.

The construction of sacred buildings persisted throughout the 1840s and 1850s, a trend which became associated with the arrival of a further wave of Armenian Catholics, who reached Russia after the Crimean War. Numerous groups of Catholic adherents financed subsequent investments. In 1864, during Pius IX's pontificate and at the time of the guardianship over Armenian Catholics exercised by Bishop Ferdinand Kahn in the deanery of Akhaltsikhe, there were four parishes (led by Jacobus Awgarow-Cziteziwani, Gregorius Mepissow, Joachim Mazmanow and Jacobus Muradow) and one cathedral church, the Cathedral of the Assumption of Mary. Across Transcaucasia, pastoral duties were performed by dozens of priests.<sup>30</sup> In total, according to the first printed *schematismus* of the Catholic Church of the South Caucasus, in 1864 there were 38 parish churches, and the number of adherents was 11,794.

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<sup>30</sup> Jacob Chitezivani, Gregory Mepisov, John Mamulov, Jacob Peikarov, Joachim Mazmanov, Jacob Muradov, Joseph Khutsianov, Simon Sehadinov, Peter Agoshov. In the Akhalkalaki oblast: Thomas Nahapetov (Tori), Peter Darpinov (Alastan), Cyprian Sarukhanov (Alastan), Manas Eritsianov (Alastan), Aristakes Shaganov (Varevan), Moses Sarkisov (Turtshk), Karapet Sarkisov (Khulgumo), Simon Aslanov (Bavra), Jacob Shitkhanov (Kartikash), John Asdadurov (Khizabavra), Alexander Ovelian (Udokmana), Gregory Seropov (Emti). In the Akhurian deanery the following people took care of the faithful: Gregory Saarov (Abatchev), Paul Poghosov (Cchaltbila), Mkrticz Tersimonov (Cchaltbila), Stephen Zakarov (Vale), Paul Gazarov (Neohreb), Michael Abrahamov (Sukhlis), Stephen Gazalov (Ude), Paul Balakhov (Arali). In the Erivan province in the Alexandropol deanery one should mention the following people: Alexander Araratov (Alexandropol), Sarkis Mihitarow (Alexandropol), Peter Gregorov (Tapadolak), Khachatur Kalashov (Karaklisa), Peter Gazarov (Palutli), Paul Nahapetov (Kaftarli), Michael Ohanesov (Hazanchi), Izaak Abrahamov (Muslukhli), Paul Mikirtchov (Shishtapa), Abraham Abrahamov (Jiteli – Jitnkow), Paul Ohanesov (Shahnazar), Mkrtich Termartirosov (Sarchapet), Gregory Seckhposov (Karaklisa), Anthony Martirosov (Shishtapa), Jacob Veltsian (Karaklisa Minor), John Arunov (Siachat – Ararat). *Directorium Officii Divini et Missae Sacrifici ad usum utriusque cleri Dioecesis Tiraspolesis* (Vilnius, Jozef Zawadzki: 1864), 72–95.

The Russian-Turkish conflict, which ended in 1878, brought about another exodus of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire to Russia. Looking at data relating to the whole of the 19th century, the mass nature of the flights of Armenians to Russia is clear. On the basis of the provisions of the Berlin congress, the migration of Armenians from Russia to Turkey was also anchored in law. However, the Russian Empire also agreed to receive further groups of Armenian Catholics, due in part to the incorporation of the Artvin province into Russia.<sup>31</sup> Between 1864 and 1897, the number of adherents of the Catholic Church of the Armenian rite rose by over 25,000 (250%), and according to an 1897 census, the number of Armenian Catholics was 36,114.<sup>32</sup>

In 1909 Sarkis Ter-Abrahamian<sup>33</sup> became the Apostolic Administrator for the Armenian Catholics, responsible for Russia and the entire Caucasus, with his seat in Tiflis. At this time there were seven efficiently functioning deaneries in the Northern and South Caucasus, with more than 150 parishes and 172 churches. By 1920, according to one of the last *schematismi*, the Catholic Church of the Armenian rite had 57,984 adherents<sup>34</sup> and more than 40 priests.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> For the history of the Artvin diocese in the 19th century, see: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01765a.htm> (accessed on: 12/04/2015).

<sup>32</sup> See [http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus\\_rel\\_97.php?reg=3](http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_rel_97.php?reg=3) (accessed on: 12/04/2015).

<sup>33</sup> Sarkis Ter-Abrahamian was born on 5 February (Old Style 24 January) 1868. He took holy orders on 9 November (O.S. 27 September) 1894, and assumed responsibility for the Apostolic Administration for the Armenian Catholics for Russia and the entire Caucasus on 12 September (O.S. 31 August) 1909.

<sup>34</sup> This figure covered also the North Caucasus and Crimea; however, numbers there were not numerous. *Օրացոյց եւ պատկեր տօնից 1920* [= *Calendar and image of holidays 1920*] (Tiflis: Տպարան Վրաստ. Հանրապետութեան Քաղաքն. Միութ., 1920), 95. Petrowicz provides slightly different data concerning the number of the adherents: 66,618 adherents, 47 priests and 45 churches. GREGORIO PETROWICZ, *La chiesa armena in Polonia e nei paesi limitrofi* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di studi ecclesiastici, 1988), 368.

<sup>35</sup> H. Dionesios Kalatazov, Ter Anton Gaboyan, Ter Hakop Kirakosian, Franciszkos Aghadzanian, Ter Stanislaus Kachkachov, Ter Stepan Zakarian, Ter Howanes Albertian, Ter Anton Halachian, Ter Poghos Eseyan, Howhanses Ter Poghosian, Ter Howhanes Zakarian, Ter Poghos Boyadzian, Howhanes Zakarian, Petros Alachachian, Ter Karapet Yekenian, Ter Poghos Tatenov, Ter Towmas Chilingarov, Ter Gabriel Gozalov, Ter Poghos Chachatryan, Ter Kerowbe Ter-Poghosian, Ter Grigor Kahana Saharian, Ter Hakob Saharian, Ter Simeon Ghevondian, Serowbe Merabashvili, Ter Poghos Howhanisian, Alexan Melkonian, Ter Towmas Igitkhanov, Ter Alozios



The demographical growth is thus clear. The reasons for the dynamics of the growth of the Armenian Catholic population in the Transcaucasia seem to be equally evident. They have to do above all with the mass migrations of 1828, 1856, and 1878; a high population growth; the privileges offered by the organs of the Russian state, especially during Nicholas I's reign; and the liberty which was granted by the Russians to the Armenian people.<sup>36</sup> This growth manifested itself both in rural areas and in the cities of Transcaucasia. Akhaltsikhe, one of the most important and oldest religious centres of Catholics in Georgia, is an example which illustrates this growth.<sup>37</sup> In 1830, its total Catholic population – including Armenians, Georgians, Poles – numbered about 1,500.<sup>38</sup> The city was completely destroyed during the war in 1877; thereafter the city and its surrounding region were resettled by Christian refugees from the Ottoman Empire. By 1884 the number of Armenian Catholics had increased to 3,047, and constituted nearly 20% of the city's population;<sup>39</sup> by 1916 this number had

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Chilingarov, Ter Towmas Igitkhanov, Ter Poghos Khachatrian, Ter Simeon Ghevondian, Ter Kostandianos Sheshaberidze, Ter Mkrtich Pozoyan, Ter Stepan Avetisian, Hakob Grigorian, Ter Simeon Khaczaturian, Ter Howhanes Ter Hakobian, Ter Mkrtich (Sedrak) Igitian, Ter Mkrtich (Sedrak), Ter Mikayel Kotanchian, Ter Anton Ter Antonian, Ter Howhanes Ter Poghosian, Ter Petros Davtyan, Ter Mikayel (Arshak) Araratian, Bagrat Gharibdzanin, Ter Petros Nuridzanian, Ter Martiros Nikoyan, Ter Jakob Ter Abrahamian, Ter Anton Petosian, Stepan Ter Grigorian, Ter Hovanes Darbinian, Ter David Kostanian, Ter Stepan Grigorian, Ter Howhanes Ter Mikaelian, Ter Grigor Hekimian, Ter Harutiun Kostanian, Ter Barseh Minasian, Ter Hakob Mkrtchian and others. On the basis of *Opugnjg 1920* (as note 34).

<sup>36</sup> RONALD GRIGOR SUNY, *Looking toward Ararat. Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 38–40.

<sup>37</sup> Tbilisi remains the oldest Catholic centre in the Caucasus. In 1329 the Avignon pope, John XXII, established an episcopal seat there. From that time, Tbilisi is described in Vatican documents as “Civitas Thephelicensis”. Akhaltsikhe is home to one of the oldest Catholic Churches in Georgia: St Cross Church, built in 1691.

<sup>38</sup> In 1830 Fillipo da Forano wrote from Akhaltsikhe to the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*: “Over the last two years, an additional 320 new Armenian Catholic families (about 1,500 people) from Turkish *wilayahs* have come to Georgia (city of Erzerum and Van) and more are expected to come”. Quoted after CHMIELEWSKI, *Gruziński katolicyzm* (as note 24), 136.

<sup>39</sup> HARUTIUN MARUTIAN, ‘Voprosi etnicheskoi istorii i traditsionogo zhilishchiia’, *Vestnik Obščestvennix Nauk* 6 (1990), 18–33: 23.

increased to 10,231, making Akhaltsikhe the inofficial capital of Armenian Catholicism.<sup>40</sup>

The last wave of Armenian Catholics to reach Armenia and Georgia from Turkey did so during the First World War. However, the evidence is ambiguous. That the number of Catholics increased can be seen from two *schematismi* of the Catholic Church, one dating to 1912, before the armed conflict and before mass deportations of Armenians from Turkey which ended in the Armenian genocide; and the other dating to 1920, the period before the Sovietisation of the Caucasus. A comparison of the data for the South Caucasus deaneries indicates a growth in the number of adherents (predominantly refugees), except in those deaneries where military activities took place or where mass murders of Armenian people were perpetrated by the Turks, namely Ardahan and Artvin. The Ardahan deanery was dissolved after the end of the First World War, for by then there were almost no Christians in this area. It seems that those adherents who were not slaughtered moved to the east, seeking refuge in the Russian Empire (Bolshevik Russia),<sup>41</sup> so that the greatest growth of the number of Armenian Catholic adherents was recorded in Kars, a border region, where the deanery increased by more than two thousand adherents.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Օրացոյց եւ պատկեր տօնից* [= *Calendar and image of holidays*] (Aleksandropol: Apostolic Administration for Armenian Catholics in Russia and South Caucasus, 1916), 194.

<sup>41</sup> In the early days of the war Russia established a special institution (Kavkazkii Komitet Pomošči Postradavšim ot Voyny), which was supposed to provide assistance to the victims and those who were injured in the course of military activities. On 4 November 1914, the Apostolic Administrator for the Armenian Catholics received the first resources – 525 roubles. This was a rather big amount of money, although according to other documents, the financial situation of Armenian Catholics – especially in the city of Axalcixe – was very difficult. Letter (No. 715, Tiflis) dated 4 November 1914 to the Apostolic Administrator of the Catholic Armenians in the Russian Empire [author's archive]; letter/document dated 26 September 1914 from the curate of Most Holy Mother of God Parish to the Apostolic Administrator of the Armenian Catholics in the Russian Empire, Archimandrite Sarkis Ter-Abrahamian [author's archive].

<sup>42</sup> P. XMIELNITSKII, *Karskaja Oblast'. Vojenno statističeskii i geografičeskii obzor* (Tiflis: Tip. Kants. Glavnon. grazhd. chastyu na Kavkaz, Loris Melikov, 1897).

Deanery/Year	1912 <sup>43</sup>	1920 <sup>44</sup>
Tiflis	2,150	2,275
Artvin	7,856	3,923
Akhaltzikhe	9,653	9,808
Akhalkalaki	12,130	13,245
Alexandropol	10,519	11,179
Ardahan	1,690	–
Kars	2,631	4,596
Lori	7,180	8,221

### Relations with Rome, St Petersburg and Echmiatsin

In terms of their numbers, then, the community of Armenian Catholics was developing during the 19th century. However, they were unable to appoint a national bishop or to establish episcopal structures, and this resulted in a lack of spiritual leadership for both the adherents and the clergy, the lack of a seminary (very few clergy could be ordained in the Armenian rite) and the lack of an efficiently functioning system of education based on parish schools (priests might offer classes or religious instruction, but these were generally at a very basic level). These legislative-religious challenges continued through most of the 19th century.

The first act to regulate the activities of the community was the concordat signed by Russia and the Holy See in 1847. Through it, the tsar permitted the establishment of the community of Armenian Catholics in the South Caucasus,<sup>45</sup> although without the direct supervision of a bishop. The Armenian Catholics received a suffragan bishop, and all Catholic (i.e. Latin rite and Armenian rite) parishes in the Caucasus were subor-

<sup>43</sup> *Օրացոյց եւ պատկեր տօնից 1912* [= *Calendar and image of holidays*] (Tiflis: Տպ. Օր. Ն. Աղանեանի, 1912), 80–98.

<sup>44</sup> *Օրացոյց 1920* (as note 34), 66–88.

<sup>45</sup> In the Russian Empire there was already an Armenian Catholic Church, but it existed in the region of Lvov. In the wake of the partition of Poland the Armenian Catholics arrived in Russia; their seat was the Lvovian diocese. For more information about the functioning of the Armenian Catholic Church in Russian in the nineteenth century see: K. STOPKA, *Pomniki minionej chwały* (Kraków: Ormiańskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne, 2002).

minated to the Latin Tiraspol bishop (Saratov).<sup>46</sup> However, in 1848, only a year after the signing of the concordat, the Russian minister for foreign affairs, Karl Robert Nesselrode, suggested to the Vatican that a separate diocesan administration for Armenian Catholics be established in the South Caucasus. Nesselrode wanted to grant to the Armenian Catholics religious and political powers equivalent to the rights of the Catholic, Latin dioceses. At the same time Russia gave the Vatican to understand that it would expect Paul David Shagulov (in the Russian version of his name) *or* Shagulianti (in the Georgian version) to be appointed the bishop in Akhaltsikhe or in Tiflis.<sup>47</sup> Shagulov was offered an annual salary of 1,000 roubles. Surprised by this direct offer from St Petersburg, the Vatican rejected this idea, not least because consent would have meant *de facto* recognition of the primacy of Russian secular authority over the Vatican's ecclesiastical authority, which no pope or prefect of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide could allow.<sup>48</sup> The appointment of a pro-vicar in this region with responsibility for the Armenian rite within the framework of the diocese of Tiraspol, with the Latin bishop as his direct superior, was considered sufficient.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> For the text of the concordat, see: AA EE SS, Russia e Polonia I, Anno 1847, Volume X, 402, Carteggio tra E. mo Segr di Stato ed il Ministro Russo sulla stessa materia e Promemoria del Governo Russo sullo stabilimento di un Vescovo Armeno a Tiflis. For the negotiations in the context of the Catholics of Georgia and the Caucasus, which were related to the Concordat, see CHMIELEWSKI, *Gruziński katolicyzm* (as note 24), 173–183.

<sup>47</sup> In 1788 Father Paul David Shagulov (Shagulianti) entered the Collegium Urbanum, a Latin Catholic seminary, in Rome. In 1794 he took holy orders and in 1801 he was nominated as pro-vicar in Akhaltsikhe by the apostolic vicar in Constantinople. CHMIELEWSKI, *Gruziński katolicyzm* (as note 24), 130.

<sup>48</sup> A few years later, the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* drafted its own plan and on 28 July 1842, Pope Gregory XII issued a memorial about this matter. However, the *Congregatio* did not plan to establish autonomous structures of the Catholic Church of the Armenian rite in the South Caucasus.

<sup>49</sup> This was a procedure that was peculiar to the Catholic Church, according to which minority Catholic communities in non-Catholic areas were jurisdictionally subordinate to the Latin bishop of a given area. The policy was intended to limit the establishment of independent Churches and to prevent schisms within the one Roman Catholic Church. These matters were (and are) regulated by *The Code of Canon of Oriental Churches*; see: [http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG1199/\\_PIN.HTM#80](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG1199/_PIN.HTM#80), for instance canon 671 (accessed 04/11/2016).

A controversy was caused also by the candidature of the future bishop, Paul Shagulov. Shagulov's attempts to maintain fasts peculiar to the Armenian rite caused a conflict with the Latin clergy in the South Caucasus, since many of the Italian priests-missionaries did not understand the Armenians' strict attachment to the rite and the tradition and their reluctance to accept Latinising tendencies.<sup>50</sup> An important factor here was the distance of the Caucasus from Rome and the fact that the cardinals were often ill-informed not only about the religious situation but also about the political situation.

There was a common opinion in the Vatican that the local tsarist military government, the so-called *Namiestichestvo Kavkaza*, or military governor of the Caucasus, had political aspirations towards Turkey, and it was claimed that St Petersburg was currying favour with certain circles in order to extend its control. Using the policy of *divide et impera*, Russia intended to appoint itself the patron of all the Armenian Catholics in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>51</sup> The Vatican also received unsettling correspondence from Tiflis, which gave rise to the fear that the Armenian Catholics (supported by Russian authorities) might abandon the jurisdiction of the Latin bishops, become independent and embrace the Armenian Apostolic Church, thus causing a schism within Roman Catholicism. The information which reached the Vatican was circumstantial, but it caused the Roman curia real concern. Rome did not want schism, but it was also obvious that the lack of a bishop eventually had the power to destroy diocesan structures, an equally bad solution for the Armenian Catholics.<sup>52</sup> Shagulov did not live to be nominated a bishop: he died in 1854, still a suffragan, and after his death the Armenia Catholic Spiritual Council, which had its seat in the city of Akhaltsikhe, assumed leadership of the Armenian Catholics.

The question of the funding of an Armenian seminary in the Caucasus also proved problematic. *De iure* the concordat merely guaranteed that Catholics of the Armenian rite would be able to study in the seminary in

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<sup>50</sup> CHMIELEWSKI, *Gruziński katolicyzm* (as note 24), 141–152.

<sup>51</sup> MORITZ DEUTSCHMANN, *Iran and Russian Imperialism: The Ideal Anarchists, 1800–1914* (London: Routledge, 2016), 49–50.

<sup>52</sup> PETROWICZ, *La chiesa armena* (as note 34), 360.

Saratov, and for this purpose a tutor for the Armenians was appointed. However, the idea of undertaking theological studies directed by Latin priests was not popular among Armenian Catholics, and there is evidence that the clergy of the Latin rite emphasised their sense of superiority in comparison to the clergy of the Armenian rite, criticising the Armenians for their limited knowledge of the dogmas, doctrines and the history of the Latin Catholic Church, and for their lack of knowledge of foreign languages, especially Latin and German.<sup>53</sup> Antagonism increased between the Latin clergy and the Armenian clergy, until, some decades later, a complete schism occurred.

The believers and clergy of the Armenian Catholic Church long remained apolitical, although by the end of the 19th century they had become susceptible to national sentiment, which did not sit easily with a commitment to the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Catholic Church of the Armenian rite in the 1840s and 1850s gradually became a homogeneous community consisting exclusively of people who either had an Armenian background or spoke Armenian. The use of Armenian as the liturgical language was of paramount importance, particularly in the Georgian-Armenian conflict, which broke out in Javakheti in the 1840s. This controversy quickly developed into open antagonism.

Opportunities for Georgian Catholics were even more restricted than those of the Armenian Catholics.<sup>54</sup> The Georgian Catholics did not have even their own clergy; instead they had Latin missionaries – the Georgians used Latin as their liturgical language – who for a long time seem to have functioned with an exclusively local focus, with little or no contact

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>54</sup> The first Georgian Catholics had been converted from the Georgian Orthodox Church in the 14th century when a Catholic bishopric was established in Tbilisi, but the tradition of the Catholic Church in Tiflis dates back to the 12th century. The Georgian rulers tolerated – indeed in some cases almost encouraged – the presence of the Catholic Church. However, the number of Catholics in Georgia was small, and in almost all cases they were taken care of by Latin clergymen. In the 19th century there were only a few communities which were classified as Georgian Catholic. One group of Georgians of the Byzantine rite in the Caucasus gradually joined the Armenian Catholic Church. Another group, which was particularly active in Constantinople, established its own order in 1861.



with the Vatican.<sup>55</sup> This left the question open: who were the Georgian Catholic Georgians? Scholars most frequently discuss the communities from Khizabavra, Vale, Ude and Arali, who were probably Armenians who were already integrated with Georgian society, that is, people who had come to the Caucasus from Persia (Nakhichevan) or from Turkey during the eighteenth century. As a result of their national and religious distinctiveness, they neither embraced Islam nor became integrated into the Georgian Orthodox Church. However, it is also certain that ecclesiastically they did not constitute an independent administrative unit, for the Vatican sources do not mention them at all.<sup>56</sup> We know very little about the number of Georgian Catholics, but it is clear that they never had more than about four thousand adherents;<sup>57</sup> indeed, at the beginning of the twentieth century they only had two churches: one in Batumi and one in Tiflis. After the Armenian influx in the 1840s and 1850s the Armenians came to dominate the Georgian Catholics, imposing on them Armenian language, liturgy and culture. However, after the Capuchins were expelled from Russia on 1 January 1845, the question of the liturgy became a priority.<sup>58</sup> The Georgian Catholics desired to keep their own liturgical language. However, because they also wanted to remain true to their Catholic faith, their leaders, both in the capital and in Jawakhet province, decided that it would be more justifiable to remain true to Roman Catholicism – albeit in the Armenian variant – than to join the Georgian Orthodox Church. As a consequence, they found themselves forced into a rapprochement with the Armenian Catholics. However, the question of liturgical language then became a problem. In this question, the Armenians were not flexible: their liturgy and their prayers were conducted in Armenian, and their prayer

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<sup>55</sup> The Catholic Georgians celebrated liturgy in Latin. Georgian was introduced in these communities only after 1905.

<sup>56</sup> The documents which describe the activity of the Roman Catholic Church from 1865 – *Acta Sanctae Sedis* – do not mention this community at all.

<sup>57</sup> MICHEL TAMARASHVILI, *L'Église géorgienne des origines jusqu'à nos jours* (Rome: chez l'auteur, 1910), 835–836.

<sup>58</sup> For more information about the Capuchin mission in Russia, see: AA EE SS, Russia e Polonia, vol. 9, 1845, Cattolici armeni e latini in Georgia, 187; A letter from the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide to Giovanni Brunelli segreteria della sacra congregazione degli affari ecclesiastici straordinari, 129, AA EE SS, Russia e Polonia I, vol. 7, 1843–44.



books were also published in Armenian.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, many of the Armenian Catholic clergy had a very nationalist attitude, and the Armenian Catholics increasingly claimed the right to call themselves the only Catholic nation in the Caucasus, forgetting the fact that the etymology of the word “Catholic” derives from “common”, “universal”.<sup>60</sup>

However, it seems that few Georgian Catholic believers complained about “Armenisation”; rather this controversy should be considered a political intrigue involving the Armenian Catholic and Georgian Catholic clergy.<sup>61</sup> In 1886, the Georgian Catholic inhabitants of four villages (Khibavra, Ude, Vale and Arali) collectively petitioned the Roman curia for assistance, hoping that at least one priest could be sent to Transcaucasia who would be a bi-ritualist, and thus able to preside both at the Georgian Catholic, or Graeco-Georgian (Byzantine), rite and in Latin. Unfortunately, although the authorities in Rome were not unsympathetic, no priest of Georgian origin was ever sent to the Caucasus, and the last group of Georgian Catholics (not to be assimilated into the Armenian Catholic Church) lived in the Ottoman Empire, in Constantinople and Ardaghan<sup>62</sup>.

Meanwhile the clergy who represented the Catholic Church of the Armenian rite in the South Caucasus began to demand that the pope appoint a national bishop and establish an Armenian seminary. However, the requests of this group also went unfulfilled. Rome saw that the Armenian Catholics were a substantial, well-organised and dedicated group, but the Roman cardinal-prefects were suspicious of the strong national sentiment of the Armenian clergy and their latent “anti-Latinity”. Moreover, the

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<sup>59</sup> The Bible was not frequently found on the bookshelves of nineteenth-century Catholic homes, but was considered a holy book to be read only by clergy. Prayer books (Arm. *Աղոթագիրք*) enjoyed great popularity.

<sup>60</sup> P. BERURIANC, ‘Հայ-կաթոլիկութեան մուտքը Վրաստան եւ վրացախօս հայ-կաթոլիկները’ [= ‘The commencement of Armenian Catholicism in Georgia and the Georgian speaking Armenian Catholics’], *Mšak* 26 (1888) [no pages]. This article was reprinted in the following periodical: *Kron ev Hasarakutsiun* 12 (2010) 93–101.

<sup>61</sup> The Georgian Byzantine Rite Catholic community was established after the Schism in the 11th century but because of its smallness never gained the status of “church”. In 14th century in Tbilisi – the capital of Georgia – a Latin bishopric was established. From 1626 to 1845 Theatines and Capuchins were operating in Georgia.

<sup>62</sup> When religious freedom in Russia was introduced in 1905, some of the Georgian Catholics returned to the Byzantine rite in liturgy, but a separate diocese was never established for them. The Georgian Catholic Church was re-established after the collapse of Soviet Union. Nowadays, it generally uses Latin in its liturgy.

“Catholic nature” of the Armenians was commonly called into question. On the other hand, the Vatican hoped that the Armenian Catholics could support the missionary activity of the *Propaganda Fide* amongst some groups of Muslims (i.e. Ossetians) – those who had been converted from the Georgian Orthodox Catholic faith and had been forced to accept Islam two hundred years earlier.<sup>63</sup> There can be no doubt that these new converts were supposed to be more interested in what in Rome was viewed as the more prestigious Latin rite than in the Armenian rite, and this led to a top-down Latinisation of the Armenians. That is why, in 1883, during Leo XIII’s pontificate, a seminary for Armenian Catholics, the *Pontificio Collegio Armeno*, was established in Rome.<sup>64</sup> However, its seminarians were above all Armenians who came from the Ottoman Empire: the only Russian Armenians to study at the *Pontificio Collegio Armeno* came from Atvin diocese: a total of just five men over the period between 1884 and 1921.

However, Rome’s attitude towards Catholic Armenians from the South Caucasus cannot be evaluated only in national-religious terms of “Latinity” or “Armenian-ness”. At the beginning of the 19th century, when they were still not numerous, both the Armenian Catholics and the Roman Catholics were subject to the nuncio of Tabriz; later they were under the authority of the local missionaries, the Capuchins of Tbilisi; then under the patriarch from Constantinople; finally, from 1847 to 1909, they were subject to the bishop of Tiraspol. In 1909, the Apostolic Administration was established for Catholic Armenians. Theoretically, the Armenians had direct contact with the Latin Church, but in practice relations with Rome were distant: Pius IX and his successors as well as the Congregation were not particularly interested in this region, and from 1847 to 1902 no Latin bishop visited Transcaucasia. Instead, the Roman Catholic Church focussed its efforts on the Ottoman Empire. In Turkey all Catholics (the majority of them were Armenians) received their *millet* in 1830/31; they also had their own patriarch, bishops, seminaries, schools and relief organisations. In the Caucasus the situation of this Church was

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<sup>63</sup> In the 1840s, the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* raised a credit in a bank in Lyon which was supposed to fund the construction of churches and “to bring the people who sympathise with the Catholic faith closer to the Church of the Mother”. CHMIELEWSKI, *Gruziński katolicyzm* (as note 24), 111.

<sup>64</sup> The *Pontificio Collegio Armeno* was founded by the papal letter *Benigna Hominum Parens*, issued on the 1st of March 1883.

radically different, and the Armenian Catholics did not have an official patron. Before the death of tsar Nicholas I, the Russian governors of the Caucasus recognised the aspirations of the Armenian Catholics, and frequently promised them the realisation of their religious and political hopes. Thereafter, the situation changed, and conflict arose between the Vatican and St Petersburg over the appointment of a Catholic Bishop for the Church of the Armenian rite. Whenever a potential candidate was identified, such as Shagulov, he was discovered not to meet the requirements of one of the key interest groups: the local community, the Russian government or the Holy See. This state of deadlock continued for decades.

The Armenian Catholics persistently appealed to Rome to appoint at least one *vartapet*<sup>65</sup> to be their official spiritual leader. This in turn raised suspicions amongst Georgians and inspired fear of further nationalist, pro-Armenian activities, as well as concerns about the so-called “Armenisation” of all Catholics. During the nineteenth century, Georgian adherents regularly complained to Rome about Armenian nationalism and the anti-Latin attitude of the Armenian clergy. In response, Shagulov complained that Armenian traditions and their calendar were not respected by Latin clergy, whilst the Latin missionaries reported about the nationalism and anti-Ultramontanism of the Armenian Catholics. Similar letters were also written to the tsar and to the *namestnik* of the Caucasus, and these probably had a better chance of being interpreted correctly; it seems unlikely that Roman cardinals were (or wanted to be) *au courant* with the reality of the Caucasus.

The anti-Latin attitudes of the Catholic Armenians seem first to have been mentioned in 1860, when bishop Selvian from Erzurum wrote to the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* in Rome, complaining: “The Armenian Catholics in the Caucasus are quite isolated and live in a context of a non-Catholic influence. The situation is steadily getting worse, first due to the activity of the Dominican monks, and now due to the activities of archbishop Ferdinand Kahn. Saratov and the Caucasus are 19 days’ journey apart. The only chance (for the Armenian Catholics) is to completely embrace the Latin rite. Otherwise they will drift away from the Latin

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<sup>65</sup> In the Armenian Apostolic Church tradition, this is an unmarried priest who holds a PhD in Theology.

Church completely.”<sup>66</sup> In 1861 the pope admonished archbishop Kahn – to no avail – to take responsibility for his adherents and make a visit to the Caucasus. On 12th October 1869, Anton Glakhov wrote to the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* describing the “bad state of affairs” for which he believed the Armenian Catholic clergy to be responsible.<sup>67</sup> Glakhov also complained about the growing influence of sects and schismatics (by which he probably meant the Armenians of the Apostolic rite); he too requested an episcopal visit. According to Glakhov, the problems were caused by the Armenian Catholics themselves: once it had become clear that the Holy See had no intention of appointing of a national bishop, Glakhov claimed, Armenians had begun to plot with the Governor of the Caucasus. Without consulting the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* they engaged in talks with the Russian secular authorities with the aim of securing an episcopal nomination for one of their countrymen. Glakhov’s appeal to the pope was made in response to these developments: he requested that the pope did not yield to the demands of the Armenians that he appoint a bishop, but requested that he should rather send a spiritual leader to the South Caucasus to oversee the Latin Church as a whole, and not only the church of the Armenian rite.

The controversy regarding the Armenian Catholics, both those from the Ottoman Empire and those from the Caucasus, had escalated three years earlier.<sup>68</sup> In 1866 Peter IX Hasun was appointed cardinal and the spiritual leader for the Armenian Catholics, but without consultation with the Armenian clergy and laity.<sup>69</sup> However, in the Armenian Catholic tradition the choice of their superior was made with the participation of the clergy and lay people: it was the Elective Assembly, and not the pope, that had the authority to choose a new spiritual leader. Armenian Catholics in the South Caucasus therefore did not recognise Hasun as their superior and called for a boycott of his ministry. In contrast, the Vatican saw it as

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<sup>66</sup> CHMIELEWSKI, *Gruziński katolicyzm* (as note 24), 260.

<sup>67</sup> CHMIELEWSKI, *Gruziński katolicyzm* (as note 24), 86.

<sup>68</sup> Note by the editor: For the following, see also the contributions by Herman H. Schwedt and Klaus Unterburger in this issue of *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift*.

<sup>69</sup> Armenian Catholics had earlier complained to the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* that the Roman Catholic Church did not understand their tradition. For instance, an Armenian Catholic clergyman from Transcaucasia complained about changes to the liturgical calendar and the introduction of new commemorations into the Armenian calendar: *Erezione di vescovado per gli Armeni. Nuove Disposizioni*, AA EE SS, Russia e Polonia I, Georgia 1843, pos. 150, fasc. 39 (the whole body of texts).

natural that all episcopal nominations were made by the pope and the cardinals, and not by the local faithful. In the years that followed, the pope frequently exhorted the Catholic faithful in the Caucasus to come to reason, and to abandon a path which had led to religious division. However, the Armenian Catholics did not relent. Indeed, the dogma of papal infallibility, recognised by the First Vatican Council in 1870, strengthened their conviction that they might legitimately secede from a Church ordered according to Roman Catholic principles. For the adherents of the Armenian rite, the root of their faith and tradition was the principle of conciliarity. The most important decisions concerning the future of the Church must be made in a collegial manner involving both lay people and clergy, and not in an *ex cathedra* manner by one member of the clergy, even if this cleric was the pope himself.<sup>70</sup>

In 1873, in an attempt to settle the conflict, Pius IX issued the encyclical *Quartus Supra*, addressed to the Armenian Catholics in the Caucasus and Turkey. This did not change anything; indeed, by then the schism had been a fact for three years.<sup>71</sup> The Vatican's approach as formulated in the encyclical also left no room for doubt: only the Catholic Church "follows the path of the truth", and the Armenian schismatics were "possessed by evil". Referring to the recent election of Hasun as the Armenian Catholic patriarch, Pius IX emphasised that "the Holy See is entitled to choose one of the three candidates recommended for the position of the bishop by the faithful and the clergymen or to make a completely independent choice," thus defending the controversial decision to nominate Anton Hasun as cardinal.

The symbolic confirmation of the schism was Bishop Malachia Ormanian's breakaway from the Armenian Catholic Church to the Apostolic Armenian Church along with 72 clergy and faithful. This confirmed the division. The Apostolic Armenian Church, which had long been competing for the faithful with the Armenian Catholics in the Caucasus, tri-

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<sup>70</sup> The introduction of the dogma of papal infallibility caused considerable controversy, not only amongst Armenian Catholics, but across the entire Roman Catholic Church, and especially amongst Eastern rite Catholics.

<sup>71</sup> The *Quartus Supra* encyclical and the letters of both the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* and the *Congregation of Eastern Churches* refer to the "neo-Constantinopolitan schism". See <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9quartu.htm> (accessed on 13/04/2015); Mons. Stefano Pietro X Azarian Patriarcha armeno-cattolico di Cilicia propone al card. Segretario di Stato la convocazione in Costantinopoli di un congresso scientifico per l'adozione del Calendario Gregoriano in Oriente, 1, AA EE SS, Turchia II, pos. 1, fasc. 1.



umphed. The Armenian (Gregorian) patriarch of Constantinople, Nerses Varjapetian, is supposed to have said in a sermon addressed to Malachia Ormanian and the remaining clergy when they professed their faith in the Georgian rite: “What you have done is not a betrayal of the Catholic faith. You have returned to your own home. The one in which you used to live was perhaps better decorated, but this (Apostolic) home is your own.”<sup>72</sup>

In 1878, the Russo-Turkish war ended, and as a consequence of the territorial gains of the Russian Empire, the tsar annexed the entire Artvin diocese, which had previously been a part of the Armenian Catholic Church in the Ottoman Empire. There appeared to be a new hope of establishing a bishopric. Artvin had a seminary and a number of elementary schools managed by Armenian Catholic clergy. This appeared to offer a unique opportunity to establish permanent organisational structures for the Armenian Catholic Church in Russia. The only remaining problems related to the official authorisation of the new bishop, and to the Church structure which was to be entrusted to him by the tsar. However, this proved a considerable challenge to both the local Armenian Catholic Church and the Vatican. The negotiations, which were conducted over many years, remained inconclusive, and the bishop, Howhanes Mkrtich Zakkarian, despite the fact that he had been consecrated in Artvin, was accepted neither by the laity nor by the tsarist administration.<sup>73</sup> The faithful accused Zakkarian of acting to the detriment of the community of which he was supposed to be a leader. They also demanded that the governor (in Russian: *namestnik*) of the Caucasus should respect the tradition of their Church and reject a candidate who had not been agreed with the laity. According to the Armenian Catholics, Zakkarian “Latinised the Armenian Catholics and downplayed the significance of the Armenian rite”; he “catechised young people according to the Roman-Catholic model”; moreover, he “forced the clergymen to engage in studies at the Collegio Armeno in Rome”.<sup>74</sup> Zakkarian’s unofficial opponent was Father Maximilian Arłowski (Orłowski), the dean of the Tiraspol chapter and a spiritual inspector, who probably met with the Governor of the Caucasus in the 1870s, even when he still was the curate of the parish of St Peter and St Paul in Tiflis.

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<sup>72</sup> POSTAJIAN, *The Armenian Church* (as note 3), 113.

<sup>73</sup> PETROWICZ, *La chiesa armena* (as note 34), 360.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

Eventually, on 16 April 1886, on the basis of decree no. 784 issued by the governor of the Caucasus, the Artvin diocese was dissolved. The Catholic population of Kars and Artvin was subordinated in terms both of religion and jurisdiction to the Council of the Armenian Catholics in Akhaltsikhe. Instead of a confirmation of his episcopal nomination, Zakarian was informed by the governor of the Caucasus, Alexander Dondukov-Korsakov, that a salary had been allocated to him due to his retirement. Odessa was designated as his permanent place of residence.<sup>75</sup>

The religious drift of the Armenian Catholics away from the Latin Church intensified gradually from the mid-nineteenth century, and it was at its most intense in that century's final years. In a report about the situation of the Church in the Caucasus written by Michel Tamarashvili (Tamaratti) at the turn of the twentieth century,<sup>76</sup> Tamarashvili remarked that the clergy of the Catholic Church of the Armenian rite were closer in terms both of religion and identity to the 'schismatics' – i.e. the Armenian Apostolic Church – than to the Holy See.<sup>77</sup> In 1909 Pope Pius X, recognising that the secession was progressing on all levels, established a special organ for the Catholic Armenians within the Church, the Apostolic Administration for the Catholic Armenians in Russia and the entire Caucasus. In December 1920, the Bolshevik Red Army entered South Caucasus and gained full control over the region. Nonetheless, the Armenian Catholic Church was able to operate without major obstacles till the end of the 1920s. However, in 1930, the religious and political situation changed drastically when the spiritual leader of the Armenian Catholics, Hakob Ter Bagratian, was arrested by the soviet secret police and persecutions of lay people and clergy started. Catholics in the Ottoman Empire also found themselves in danger in this period, since the genocide of the Armenian nation in Turkey resulted in the almost complete destruction of the Armenian network of parishes. Armenian Catholic communities in Marash, Galatia, Kesaria, Tigranakert, Mush, Trapizon, Adana, Karin and many other places disappeared forever.

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<sup>75</sup> The Ukase of governor Aleksandr Dondukov-Korsakov, 12, AA EE SS, Russia III, pos. 697, fasc. 215, Artvin 1893–1894.

<sup>76</sup> It is worthwhile to note that this clergyman of Georgian origin had outstandingly anti-Armenian views.

<sup>77</sup> MICHEL TAMARATTI, *Rapport sur l'église latine de l'assomption de Tiflis en Géorgie* (Venezia: Tipografia Societa di M. S. fra Compositori Tipografi, 1903), 13, AA EE SS, Russia III, pos. 882–885, fasc. 283.



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### *Zusammenfassung*

Nach dem Russisch-Türkischen Krieg (1828–29) siedelten sich viele katholische Armenier aus dem Osmanischen Reich in Landstrichen und Ortschaften im Südkaukasus an, welche die muslimische Bevölkerung infolge des Kriegsausgangs zuvor hatte verlassen müssen. Im Laufe des 19. Jahrhunderts wuchs die Zahl der armenischen Katholiken im Südkaukasus stetig (1897 waren es einer Volkszählung zufolge über 36 000 Personen). Trotz eindringlichen päpstlichen Schreiben, sich den Papstdogmen des Ersten Vatikanums zu unterwerfen, legten die Armenier dem Prinzip der Synodalität höheres Gewicht bei: Entscheidungen sollten in kollegialer Weise von Laien und Geistlichen gemeinsam gefällt werden. Der Autor beschreibt, wie sich die katholischen Armenier seit der Jahrhundertmitte von der lateinischen Kirche entfernten, ein Prozess, der sich bis zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts verstärkte. Michel Tamarashvili (Tamaratti) stellte zu Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts fest, dass die Geistlichen des armenisch-katholischen Ritus der (in seiner Perspektive «schismatischen») Armenisch-Apostolischen Kirche religiös näherstehe als dem Heiligen Stuhl. Um weiterem Auseinanderdriften entgegenzuwirken, errichtete Papst Pius X. 1909 die Apostolische Administration für die katholischen Armenier in Russland und dem gesamten Kaukasus.

### *Key Words – Schlüsselwörter*

South Caucasus – First Vatican Council – Armenian Catholics – Russian Empire – Ottoman Empire.