

**A**  
**HISTORY OF ARMENIA**

**By**  
**VAHAN M. KURKJIAN**

**With Maps and Illustrations**

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A  
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BY  
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**To the memory of Armenian  
martyrs and heroes**

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The Author

The invention of the Armenian alphabet and the translation of the Bible into Armenian in 432, heralding its Golden Age of literature, produced a legion of historians, who too often, however, accepted legend for history.

Coming down to modern times, a step toward methodical history was taken by Mekhitarist Fathers of Venice. The three volumes of Armenian history by Fr. Michayel Tchamtchian, whose recital begins with 1784 B.C., are a welcome contribution. To him we owe the identification of a 2107-year line of rulers called "Haigazants," from Haig, legendary founder of the nation, to Vahé, who fell in battle against Alexander the Great. To these he added succeeding dynasties—Arshakuni, Bagratuni and Roupinian.

A fine Armenian history up to the 11th century is that of Kevork Aslan (1928). As a masterly work on the pre-Christian era, we have the "Critical History of the Cuneiform Period of Armenia", by Astig Khatchatrian (1933). Covering 2400 years—3,000 to 600 B.C.—it is rich in geographic and ethnographic data. The History of Armenia from the Tenth to the Sixth Century B.C., by Nicolas Adontz, covers the period of Urartu and Nairi. René Grousset, who wrote its preface, declared that Adontz had established a sound continuity between pre-Armenian Armenia and "Haigan" Armenia. He praised the land as the citadel of a "grand race," the "cradle of an original civilization." Other foreign Armenologists and Orientalists are Layard, Kretschmer, Rawlinson, Maspero, Lehmann-Haupt, Lynch, Sayce, Macler, Gelzer, Marquardt, Gutschmid, and Jacques de Morgan. Victor Langlois translated the early chroniclers from Armenian into French. Dulaurier translated the Armenian and other historians of the Crusaders.

Even today, regrettably enough, one dare not tell in detail the whole pitiful story of Armenia's wrongs. Fate has been parsimonious towards the Armenians. The great Christian powers have expressed sympathy for them, but went no further. The Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, which promised them a homeland, in fact, decreed an Armenian state, was ignored by Europe; and three years later, meeting at Lausanne, the great powers admitted, "We can do nothing."

James Viscount Bryce, historian and diplomat, British Ambassador to the United States, said of Armenia in 1916:

"Those who have learnt what the Armenian race has shown itself capable of doing in the field of art and literature, and who have

learnt from history how true it has been to the Christian faith, and how tenacious of its national life, will hope that the time has now at last come when it will be delivered from the load of brutal tyranny that has so long cramped its energies, and allowed to take its place among the free and progressive peoples of the world. It is the only one of the native races of western Asia that is capable of restoring productive industry and assured prosperity to those now-desolated regions that were the earliest homes of civilization.”\*

Lord Bryce’s hopes were not to be fulfilled; worse was still in store for Armenia. But it was not crushed. Braced by the never-failing sympathy of its children all over the world, it is maintaining its entity in a part of the homeland. Without attempting to grope for the unpredictable, may I close this preface by a comment from an eminent anthropologist and Orientalist, Professor von Luschan:

“Homogeneous in language, in religion and physical type, the Armenians may serve as an exemplar. The homogeneity of this people, which is not found in equal or similar degree in any other civilized nation, is interesting as proving that the striking geographical, linguistic and religious isolation of Armenia during its development and florescence has consolidated the type to such an extent that even today, many centuries after the fall of the kingdom it continues almost entirely uniform.”

VAHAN M. KURKJIAN

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\*From Lord Bryce’s Introduction to *Armenian Legends and Poems*, illustrated and compiled by Zabelle C. Boyajian of London, 1916.

## CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>		<i>Page</i>
	PREFACE	
I	THE LAND	1
II	BEFORE THE DAWN	6
III	THE NEIGHBORS OF ARMENIA	14
IV	ANCESTRAL STOCKS	19
V	THE HITTITE EMPIRE	26
VI	THE COUNTRY OF HAYASA-KHAYASHA	32
VII	THE KINGDOM OF URARTU	37
VIII	THE BEGINNINGS OF ARMENIA	49
IX	ARMENIA AS XENOPHON SAW IT	55
X	ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND HIS SUCCESSORS	60
XI	ARTASHESIAN AND ZAREHIAN KINGDOMS OF ARMENIA	64
XII	THE ARMENIAN KINGDOM	68
XIII	TIGRAN THE GREAT	74
XIV	ARTAVAZD—THE LAST TIGRANS	84
XV	RIVALRY BETWEEN PARTHIA AND ROME	90
XVI	PERSIAN CIVILIZATION	100
XVII	THE ARSACIDS (ARSHAKUNIS) OF ARMENIA	105
XVIII	TRDAT III AND ST. GRIGOR (GREGORY)	113
XIX	SUCCESSORS OF TRDAT—PARTITION OF ARMENIA	123
XX	PERIOD OF THE MARZBANS—BATTLE OF AVARAIR	139
XXI	VAHAN MAMIKONIAN AND THE PATRIOTIC UPRISINGS	153
XXII	ARMENIA IN THE FIFTH AND SIXTH CENTURIES	164
XXIII	THE ARAB KHALIFATE	173
XXIV	THE BAGRATID DYNASTY—THE BAGRATUNI	186
XXV	MAGNIFICENCE TO BE SOON FOLLOWED BY CALAMITY	195
XXVI	DESTRUCTION OF ANI AND SPREAD OF THE TURKISH POWER	206

XXVII	THE BARONY OF CILICIAN ARMENIA	213
XXVIII	GREEKS, CRUSADERS AND MOSLEMS—RISE OF LEON II	227
XXIX	THE KINGDOM OF CILICIAN ARMENIA—MONGOL INVASION	235
XXX	THE MEMLOUKS ARE ADDED TO ARMENIA'S FOES	246
XXXI	FRENCH-ARMENIAN DYNASTY: END OF KINGDOM	258
XXXII	ARMENIA AFTER THE LOSS OF HER INDEPENDENCE	278
XXXIII	THE TRAGIC PRELUDE	293
XXXIV	ARMENIAN MYTHOLOGY	300
XXXV	THE FEUDAL SYSTEM IN ARMENIA	311
XXXVI	THE ARMENIAN CHURCH—EARLY HISTORY	329
XXXVII	THE PAULIKIANS AND THE TONDRAKIANS	345
XXXVIII	NEW EFFORTS TOWARDS CHURCH UNITY	349
XXXIX	LEANING TOWARDS UNITY	353
XL	THE ARMENIAN LANGUAGE	365
XLI	ARMENIAN LITERATURE	369
XLII	MODERN ARMENIAN LITERATURE	406
XLIII	ARCHITECTURE IN ARMENIA	425
XLIV	ARMENIAN SCULPTURE AND PAINTING	435
XLV	ARMENIAN MUSIC—SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS	441
XLVI	HISTORY OF EDUCATION AMONG THE ARMENIANS	447
XLVII	THE ARMENIANS OUTSIDE OF ARMENIA	460
XLVIII	THE ARMENIAN REPUBLIC	474
	EPILOGUE	489
XLIX	ARMENIAN SOVIET SOCIALISTIC REPUBLIC	490
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	494
	CHRONOLOGY	501
	INDEX	507