



## ABRAHAM OF CRETE

**ABRAHAM OF CRETE** (Kretats'i; b. Kandia, Crete, ?- d. Ejmiatsin, 18 April 1737), a leader of the Armenian Church and the author of a chronicle about Nāder Shah Afšār. Abraham was the bishop of Tekirdag (Rodosto, Thrace) and the Armenian prelate of Thrace from 1708 to 1734. He also spent two years (1719-20) in Jerusalem. In April 1734 he went on a pilgrimage to the holy shrines in eastern Armenia (Persian Armenia). During his visit, the supreme patriarch of the Armenian church, Catholicos (Kat'oḡikos) Abraham II, passed away and appointed him as his successor. The Turkish governor of Erevan was glad to confirm an Ottoman subject to the highest post in the Armenian religious hierarchy and, despite Abraham's protests, he was named the 110th leader of the Armenian Church. He was the catholicos from November 1734 until his death at the Holy See of [Ejmiatsin](#).

Abraham's stay in Persian Armenia came at a crucial period. For, Nāder Khan (later Nāder Shah), after deposing Shah Ṭahmāsb II, marched on Transcaucasia to repel the Ottoman Turks from the former Safavid possessions in eastern Armenia and eastern Georgia. By the end of 1735 Nāder had recovered all the former Safavid territories (save Qandahār in Afghanistan), and in March 1736 he was crowned king of Persia.

During the last two years of his life, Abraham wrote a Chronicle (*Patmut'iwn*), in which he detailed the arrival of Nāder in the land of Ararat, his campaigns against the Turks, and his coronation in the Moḡān Plain. The Chronicle is one



of the few non-Persian primary sources on the events that occurred in Transcaucasia and northwestern Persia during the years 1734-36. In some cases, the Chronicle is the only source on certain events, which are not available in the two major sources of the time, Estrābādi/Astarābādi's *Tāriḵ-e jahāngošā-ye nāderi* or Moḥammad-Kāẓem Marvi's *Ālamārā-ye nāderi*. The destruction of Old Šamāḵi by Nāder in the spring of 1735 was carried out in two stages and Turkish prisoners were used to construct New Šamāḵi (Kretats'i, *Patmut'iwn*, tr. Bournoutian, pp. 108-109). The Chronicle provides a valuable description of the terrible economic conditions in northern Persia and Transcaucasia, following the Ottoman invasion of the region in 1723. The requisitioning of food and animals left many villages destitute (p. 125). Shortage of food forced many of Nāder's guests to depart prior to or immediately following the coronation (p. 120). The supply of coins became so low that they virtually disappeared. The unspecified epidemic (probably cholera or typhus), which killed many, is not mentioned in other sources.

The most valuable part of this chronicle for Persian history is the 65-page description of the council (*qurultāy*), which had gathered to place Nāder on the throne and to start the Afšār dynasty in Persia. Persian primary sources have only a few pages on this gathering. No other source provides such details on the council and the ceremonies. The different accommodations; the food and drinks; the music, musicians, and types of instruments; the various dancers and tight-rope walkers; the daily audiences; the elaborate process of making Nāder the choice of the assembled grandees; the description of the troops and attendants and their arms and clothing; the comprehensive list of the delegates and guests (including the Russian envoy and Abraham); the types and the value of the numerous robes of honor (*kal'at*); the physical description of the Moḡān Plain, the temporary bridges across the Arax and Kur rivers; and the entire coronation ceremony are all vividly described (pp. 56-118).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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