



GILANENTZ CHRONICLE

GILANENTZ CHRONICLE, a compendium of reports collated as a journal by Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz (Gilanenc'), which constitutes an important source for the history of events in Transcaucasia and Persia during the period March 1722 to August 1723, notably the Afghan invasion and siege of Isfahan.

The Gilanentz chronicle exists today in a single known manuscript, which is not the original text but a Russian translation prepared for General Levashov (Lockhart, p. 507). The journal was published for the first time in two parts in separate issues of the Armenian journal *Krunk Hayoc' Ašxarhi* (Tiflis, February-March, 1863, pp. a81-212), in the original New Julfan language in which it was written interspersed with Russian, Arabic, Turkish, and Italian, on the basis of a now lost manuscript. The version in *Krunk* was subsequently translated into Russian (tr. K. Patkanov as *Dnevnik osady Ispagani afganami*, Zapiski Imperatorskoï Akademii Nauk 17, St. Petersburg, 1870) but remained largely unnoticed until the appearance of its English translation, published in 1959. The English translation was reportedly prepared by a physician in New Julfa, Caro Owen Minasian, at the suggestion of Laurence Lockhart, who wanted to use it as a source for his *Fall of the Šafavî Dynasty* (Lockhart, p. 507 n. 1; tr. as *The Chronicle of Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz Concerning the Afghan Invasion of Persia in 1722, the Siege of Isfahan, and the Repercussions in Northern Persia, Russia, and Turkey*, with intro. and additional notes by L. Lockhart, Lisbon, 1959). It is also available in Persian (tr. M. Mehriān as *Soqūṭ-e Ešfahān*, Isfahan, 1334 Š./1965, repr. Tehran, 1992) and Turkish (ed. and tr. H. Andreasyan, *Osmanlı-Iran-Rus ilişkilerine ait iki kaynak I: Petros di Sarkis*



Gilanentzin Kronolojisi, Istanbul, 1974).

Along with the works of Thaddeus Kruzinski and Jonas Hanway (qq.v.), the Gilanentz chronicle remains one of the rare Armenian sources for the history of Safavid Persia in the third decade of the 18th century. If Hanway's account is an amalgamation of other sources, and Kruzinski's is an eyewitness account in narrative form, the chronicle is neither. It consists of letters and reports written by Gilanentz himself, but the original accounts are often from other sources. They were intelligence reports written during time of war and addressed to Archbishop Minas Tigranian, an Armenian prelate in Astrakhan; they were not intended to be a consistent text for publication. There are 133 reports in all, mostly dated, and arranged in two main parts in the 1863 edition: the first part is about Isfahan, the second about Gīlān, the Ottoman Empire, and Transcaucasia; however, the first four reports concern Qazvīn and Šamāḳī. The reports are put together in epistolary form; the whole text is a long letter, last dated 21 August 1723 according to the old calendar, before it was sent to Minas in Astrakhan. Archbishop Minas was a prominent figure in Armenian nationalist political circles. He had been chosen by the Armenian *melik*'s and princes to accompany Israēl Orii on his travels to submit the Armenian hopes for liberation to the courts of Peter the Great and other European rulers. When Orii died in 1711 in Astrakhan after a failed mission in Isfahan, where his nationalist ideas were not welcomed by the conservative New Julfan merchants attached to the Safavids, Minas continued the mission alone. It was this same archbishop who ten years later, in 1722, commissioned Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz to leave Astrakhan for Rašt and report to him after Peter the Great's annexation of the region. It is now clear that the Russian officers and court were given the reports (Hovannisian, pp. 225-30) in exchange for the promises of aid in the national liberation of the Armenians, but there is no real way of knowing how much the author of the letters knew about Minas' attachment to the Russian court. Lockhart is of the opinion that Gilanentz was unaware of the connection.

Gilanentz is the only author of these reports, but not an eyewitness to all the information within them; he always carefully qualifies the information he brings and notes if it is merely hearsay or speculation. Many of the reports which concern Isfahan were given to him by a certain Joseph Apislamaian. An Armenian born in Tiflis, Joseph was attached as secretary and interpreter to Ange de Gardane, a French representative who eventually resided in Isfahan (Lockhart, p. 505; see *EIr.* X, pp. 129-30). Joseph was an eyewitness to the most



famous scene of the chronicle, an emotional account of Shah Solṭān H̄roṣayn surrendering his throne. The siege of Isfahan, the attempts of the New Julfans to defend the shah's palace with European arms, the confiscation of these arms by the *qezelbāš*, the financial exactions from the New Julfans who refuse to pay homage to the Afghans, the battle of Isfahan, the victory of the Afghans, the famine which ensued, form the heart of his account (reports 5 to 89). Two other Armenians also gave him reports that he included in his letters.

Petros, who listened to these accounts and recorded them, was from the wealthy New Julfan family of Gilanentz. A commemorative inscription on All Saviour's Cathedral bearing their name still exists in New Julfa (Hovannisian, p. 219). The Gilanentz were one of the twenty prominent families ruling the civic affairs of the suburb (Tēr Yohaneanc', I, p. 50 note 6); many of these families left Persia after 1671 (Baghdiantz [McCabe], 1998, pp. 70-73). Previous scholars have mistakenly thought that Petros was born and raised in New Julfa (Hovannisian, p. 219). He grew up in Astrakhan, as his ties and vocabulary prove, and also resided in Italy. His Europeanized name speaks of his residency in Italy, a common occurrence for a New Julfan silk trading family of high stature in the late 17th century (Baghdiantz [McCabe], 1993, chap. 12). Reference is found to Petros financing the printing of a book on the Armenian press of Amsterdam and to the dedication of another book to him by the famous printer Lucas of Vanand. He came to Gilān from Astrakhan to found what has been called the Armenian Squadron. It was chiefly a reconnaissance unit subsidized on his funds alone. The chronicle clarifies that the New Julfan merchants, loyal to the Safavids, refused financial help to the Squadron, which fought on the Russian side. Nevertheless, the Squadron gave all the Armenians of Persia the reputation of being Russian sympathizers, something Gilanentz laments as it caused resentment and massacres. The tsar would sign a peace agreement with the Ottomans without informing his allies, the Armenian Squadron, or the shah.

Petros di Sarkis Gilanentz died in battle in December 1724; he is remembered in Armenian historiography as a heroic figure who sacrificed his fortune and his life at the service of Armenian national liberation. Without taking account of his European education and upbringing, it has been remarked that he was the only wealthy merchant of New Julfa to participate in this movement (Hovannisian, p. 232). Once the fact that most of his life was spent in Russia and Italy is pointed out, however, his pro-Russian stance is understandable, and it is no longer surprising that he participated in Armenian national



aspirations as encouraged by the Russians or that he did not share the conservative politics of the pro-Safavid New Julfans in Persia, among which his family no longer belonged (Baghdiantz [McCabe], 1993, pp. 210-12; idem, 1998, chap. 12). The chronicle is the only source of information about Gilanentz save some letters in the Moscow archives, which remain to be studied (Moskovskii glavnyi arkhiv, Ministerstva inostrannykh diel, diela armansk, 1725, no. 1; Moskovskii archiv gosudarstvennoi kollegi inostrannyikh diel, I, 326-79).

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