

Shahinian, Ani
University of Oxford
St. Cross College
D.Phil. in Armenian History and Theology
New Research on Ancient Armenia
2nd Geneva Workshop for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Researchers
University of Geneva, 31 May – 1 June 2019

Abstract

This paper is a preliminary investigation into how Christian martyrdom was understood in late Medieval Armenia (end of 14th and early 15th centuries), with special focus on the development of the theology of martyrdom through the writings of the theologian and scholar Grigor C‘erenc‘ Xlatec‘i (1349 – 1425 A.D.). I have chosen to examine martyrdom events in history around Lake Van due to the region’s outsized influence, throughout Armenia’s history, on Armenian political and religious life. Key theological texts were composed and compiled in monasteries surrounding Lake Van. Theologian Grigor Xlatec‘i, who was also a 15th century Christian neomartyr and author of neo-martyrologies, served as the final compiler, redactor, and editor of the *Yaysmawurk‘* [Armenian Menologium] in the Lake Van region, at the *Sourb Step‘anos Naxavka*, in *C‘ipnavank‘* [The Monastery of Saint Stephen, the Protomartyr, at C‘ipnavank‘]. Through his writings, Xlatec‘i provides insight into the entangled daily relations between Christians and Muslims in the Armenian Highland in the late Medieval period. Xlatec‘i’s writings as a whole, and the works of his contemporaries, convey the social realities of assimilation, conversion, persecution, and martyrdom as lived and experienced by the Christian population in a rapidly changing demographics of the Armenian Highlands.