

Article

An Historical Evaluation of the Covenants of the Prophet Muḥammad and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in the Matenadaran †

Gayane Mkrtumyan

Faculty of Oriental Studies, Yerevan State University, Yerevan 0025, Armenia; gayanemkrtumyan1@gmail.com

† I would like to thank Prof. Ibrahim Zein and Mr. Ahmed El-Wakil for their kind assistance in finalizing this article.

Abstract: This article analyzes the manuscripts in the Matenadaran in Yerevan, Armenia that are ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and their translations into Farsi and Armenian. These important manuscripts have until now been neglected by scholars, and so we will here provide a general overview of them and how they were received by the Armenian Apostolic Church. I herein demonstrate how these documents were recognized by Muslim authorities, shedding light on how Muslim rulers managed the affairs of their Christian subjects. These documents, it would seem, also influenced the decrees of Muslim rulers to the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Keywords: covenant; Prophet Muhammad; Ali ibn Abi Talib; Matenadaran; Armenia; Armenian Apostolic Church



Citation: Mkrtumyan, Gayane. 2021. An Historical Evaluation of the Covenants of the Prophet Muḥammad and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in the Matenadaran. *Religions* 12: 138. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12020138>

Academic Editor: John Andrew Morrow

Received: 28 December 2020
Accepted: 18 February 2021
Published: 21 February 2021

Publisher’s Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The Matenadaran, which is officially known as the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, is the world’s largest repository of Armenian manuscripts. Situated in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, the Matenadaran was established in 1959 CE during the Soviet era, having incorporated the collection of manuscripts that was held by the Armenian Church in Etchmiadzin. It is therefore of great significance that we find within its archives copies of covenants ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib to the Christian communities of their time. These documents were translated from their original Arabic into Ottoman Turkish, Farsi, and Armenian, indicating that they were regarded as authoritative by the Sunni and Shī’a authorities who were ruling the affairs of their Christian subjects.

Since 301 CE, when Christianity was proclaimed as the state religion of Armenia, the Armenian Apostolic Church has played a major role in the external and internal life of the country as the Armenian Catholicos often took over the reins of the head of state. In the early days of their conquests, the Arabs were tolerant of non-Christian populations, granting them freedom of life, property, and religion, on the condition that they pay them a tribute.

The tradition of formulating treaties with non-Muslims communities appears to have been based on a precedent set by the Prophet Muḥammad which subsequently guided the official policy of future Muslim Caliphs and generals. Sebeos (writing circa 41 AH/661 CE) records how Mu’āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān made a treaty with the Armenian prince, T’ēodoros, the lord of R̄shtunik’, in around 652–653 CE/32 AH (Sebeos 1999). The Arab historian al-Balādhurī reports the *Capitulation Treaty* of Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah, which he issued to the people of Dvin (*Dabīl*), the then capital of Armenia, during the Caliphate of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (r. 644 CE/23 AH–656 CE/35 AH):

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

This is a writ from Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah to the Christians of Dvin, along with its Magian and Jewish populations, those who are present and those who are

absent (*shāhidahum wa ghā'ibahum*). I have granted you security over your persons, wealth, churches, places of worship, and city wall (*'alā anfusikum wa amwālikum wa kanā'isikum wa bay'ikum wa sūr madīnatikum*). You are now secure and we are bound to honor the covenant (*al-'ahd*) as long as you also fulfil it and pay the *jizyah* and the *kharāj*. Allah is a witness and sufficient is He as a witness (*wa kafā bihi shahīdan*).

It was sealed by Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah. (al-Balādhurī 1987)

Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah's *Capitulation Treaty* shares a number of parallelisms with the Prophet's *Compact with the Christians of Najrān* and other early treaties from the era of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (Zein and El-Wakil 2020a, 2020b). The phrase '*wa kafā bihi shahīdan*' echoes its variant '*wa kafā bi-l-Lahi shahīdan*' which we find in the covenants of the Prophet and 'Alī, and which we will examine later in this article. These parallelisms suggest that the text recorded by al-Balādhurī is generally speaking an accurate transcription of the original document.

The Armenian historian Ghevond (ewond) who lived in the second/eighth century tells us that when Mu'āwiyah acceded to the Caliphate, he issued the following edict to the Armenians:

If you refuse to pay tribute to me, and if you do not submit unto me in servitude, I shall bring sword and slaughter unto all. (ewond 1982)

According to Ghevond, the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (r. 685 CE/65 AH–705 CE/86 AH) sent his brother Muḥammad to conquer Armenia in 701/81 AH CE. The battle near the village of Vardanakert took place in 703 CE/83 AH and ended in victory for the Armenians. Muḥammad ibn Marwān subsequently prepared a counter-offensive which led the Armenian Catholicos Sahak III Dzoraporetsi (677 CE/57 AH–703 CE/83 AH) "to go and meet the army of Ismael, to negotiate with its commander in peaceful terms, and appease him at the cost of servitude and submission."¹ However, upon reaching Harran, the Catholicos fell ill, and feeling imminent death, he wrote an irrevocable letter that he asked to be delivered to Muḥammad ibn Marwān in which he agreed to enter into a covenant with him:

Now I swear to you in the name of the living God, and set before you this treaty of the covenant of God who offered it to Ismael, your father, promising him the whole world to be at his service and in obedience to him. [I ask you], therefore, to make peace with my people for they shall serve you and pay tribute to you, to keep your sword away from [their] blood and your hands from pillage for they shall obey you wholeheartedly.

The letter made a tremendous impact on Muḥammad ibn Marwān, who kneeling before the Catholicos' body, took his hand and said he acknowledged his wisdom. Ghevond explains that those who had accompanied Catholicos Sahak III "secured word of oath in writing from the commander of the Ismaelites."² After they returned, the inhabitants of Armenia were informed of "the oath and the written promise"³ that was granted to them "and ever since submitted themselves to the Ismaelites in slavery."⁴ This treaty has been known in Armenian tradition ever since as the "Little Manshūr."

Though Sebeos and Ghevond make no reference to a covenant granted to the Armenians by the Prophet himself, the Armenian historian Samuel of Ani (d. 1185 CE/ c. a. 581 AH) does nonetheless make a passing reference to it:

Then Mahmet stayed the sword, and by the word of his instruction they subjected to themselves the greater part of the universe. With an eternal oath he sealed a deed for the land of Armenia, (that) they could freely observe Christianity. And

¹ (ewond 1982), p. 62.

² Ibid., p. 63

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

he sold (*vačareac*) them their faith, taking from every household four drachmas, three bushels of *xorbal*, one nose-bag, one cord of hair, and one gauntlet. But from the priests, nobles and cavalry he ordered no tax to be taken. (Thomson 1994)

Leon Arpee reports in his book, *A History of Armenian Christianity*, an observation made by Giragos Vartabed, an Armenian writer of the second half of the 13th century, how the Catholicos Hovhannes IV Otznetsi (r. 717 CE/99 AH–728 CE/109 AH), at the close of his audience with either the Caliph ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-Azīz (r. 717 CE/99 AH–720 CE/101 AH) or the Caliph Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (724 CE/105 AH–743 CE/125 AH), obtained a threefold petition for the Armenian nation concerning their “(1) freedom of private conscience, (2) freedom of public worship, and (3) freedom of churches and clergy from taxation” (Arpee 1946). These rights, it would seem, were a re-affirmation of those stipulated in the covenant allegedly given by the Prophet to the Armenian Christians. As Arpee explains,

A tradition is repeated also by Giragos to the effect that the Prophet of Islam granted the Armenians freedom to hold the Christian faith on the condition of a tribute from each household of “four dirhems of money, three measures of wheat, a saddlebag, a rope of hair, and a towel.”⁵

When the ‘Abbāsids acceded to power, the tolerant attitude of the Umayyads toward their subjects changed significantly. Ghevond recalls how under the Caliphate of Abū Ja‘far al-Mansūr (754 CE/136 AH–775 CE/158 AH) “the imposition of taxes upon our land of Armenia weighed extremely heavy.”⁶ Al-Mansūr oppressed his subjects so much that they, having nothing else to pay, dug up the graves of their dead relatives hoping to find something valuable there as the Arabs collected taxes not only from the living, but also from the deceased. From the eighth century onward, the Arabs, began to confiscate and appropriate lands belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church, as evidenced by Armenian historiography. Notwithstanding some of the difficulties which the Armenian nation faced throughout their history, it does on the whole appear unlikely for the Armenian Apostolic Church to have survived all of these centuries without some sort of legal precedent that they could invoke and which was recognized as authoritative by their Muslim rulers.

2. First Contact with the Armenian Apostolic Church

The Armenian Apostolic Church in Jerusalem maintains a tradition that Patriarch Abraham I (d. 669 CE/49 AH) received an *Edict* from the Prophet Muḥammad in which he offered the Armenians protection for their lives, property, and churches. In an article published in *The California Courier* on 11 September 2018, and whose title reads “Prophet Muhammad’s Rarely-Known Decree to the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem,” Harut Sassounian explains,

Two months ago, I read a fascinating article published in the Armenian newspaper *Aztag* in Beirut, Lebanon, by Dr. Garbis Harboyan of Montreal, Canada, who had uncovered the details of the communication between Prophet Muhammad and the then Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem and their successors.

Dr. Harboyan mentioned his sources as: Gregory Krikorian’s, “Through the eye of an Armenian needle,” published by the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia in 2002. Krikorian had stated that his book was the summary and English translation of “History of Jerusalem,” a two-volume, 1385-page book by Dikran Sayalians, published by the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1931. Dr. Harboyan also mentioned that he had recently seen the book, “Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem,” by Bezalel Narkiss, Michael E. Stone, and Avedis Sanjian, published in New York, in 1979, which included a copy of Prophet Muhammad’s decree to the Armenian Patriarchate. (Sassounian 2018)

⁵ (ewond 1982).

⁶ Ibid. pp. 127–28.

According to Krikorian, “Patriarch Abraham and his 40 or so followers swore on behalf of those referred to in the charter to pay all proper dues and to recognize no other governors than the Moslem ones.” Whether these 40 men were part of the delegation from Najrān that visited the Prophet or whether they were conflated with them is not known (Scher 1983). Whatever be the case, Krikorian provides us with an English translation of the Prophet’s *Edict* which reads as follows:

I Muhammad, son of Abdullah, Prophet and servant of the Lord give honour to Patriarch Abraham, the archbishops, bishops and priests in Jerusalem, Damascus and elsewhere in the boundaries of Arabia, and those people subject to them in Jerusalem that is to say the Ethiopians, the Copts and the Assyrians and recognise their monasteries, churches, schools, properties and their lands. I Muhammad, Prophet with the witness of the Lord and those men and women around me in their mercy grant to the Armenians the churches found in Jerusalem, the Holy Sepulchre, the great church of S. Hagop (called Mar Jacob), the monastery of the prison of Jesus, the church of Bethlehem and the chapels of S. John and those in Samaria (Nablus) and the rear places of prayer in the Holy Sepulchre and all Golgotha with its upper story and the tomb of Christ where they maintain light. Further I grant them all the places of pilgrimage, and the hills, valleys, and land and revenues thereof, as witnessed by God and his Prophet and all Moslem faithful. (Krikorian 2002; Also see Kashīshyān 2009; Yevadian 2010)⁷

It is said that the Prophet’s *Edict* to the Armenian Patriarch Abraham I was later affirmed by the second Caliph of Islam, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (Tchamkerten 2006). The Armenian Patriarchate also holds a recension of ‘Umar’s *Capitulation Treaty with the Christians of Jerusalem*, which reads slightly differently to the text found in al-Ṭabarī;⁸ a copy of ‘Umar’s *Covenant with the Christians of Jerusalem* reproduced on a certificate issued by a Muslim judge early in the 20th century (Akyüz 2002); a copy of a covenant of the Prophet scribed by Mu‘āwiyah (Ghazarian 2008; Nersessian 2001)⁹ and finally copy of the covenant of ‘Alī.¹⁰ The edicts and covenants of the Prophet, ‘Umar and ‘Alī were later confirmed by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 1193 CE/589 AH) in his own *fermān* whose opening reads as follows:

This [writ] is granted by Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn Ibn Muẓaffar: Glory be to God who allowed me to open the gates of the Holy City and cleansed its temples of the idols. We address greetings and blessings to Muḥammad Ibn Abdallāh, who went through hardship in order to bring peace upon humanity, greetings to his associates too.

This is what Muḥammad wrote and the same was reconfirmed by the prince of the magnificent temple, the Sultan Ṣalāḥ ed-Dīn (may God extend the days of his rule to eternity and bestow upon him all that is good and blissful in afterlife). As our lord ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may God be pleased at him and increase his glory) bowed to the will of Muḥammad, we too must obey and follow his path. Among the Christian peoples, they [Muḥammad and ‘Umar] decided to designate the Armenians and their co-religionists the Ethiopians, Copts and Syrian Christians, as subjects of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him). ‘Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb and ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (may God be pleased with them) followed his decision. (Dadoyan 2013)

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s *fermān* was issued on the 20th of Rajab 582 AH/5 October AD 1186 though it was not the only decree from a Muslim ruler that recognized the rights of the Armenians. As Sassounian explains,

⁷ Yevadian reproduced the French translation of R. P. Paylaguian. Though Kashīshyān reported the text in Arabic, the original manuscript which he transcribed and which Krikorian and Paylaguian relied upon is unknown.

⁸ I was personally able to get a copy of this Capitulation Treaty. An Arabic transcript can be consulted in Kashīshyān (2009, pp. 36–37).

⁹ Nersessian’s entries 75 and 76 seem to allude to two copies of the covenant of the Prophet.

¹⁰ (Ghazarian 2008, p. 68).

In 1517 AD, Ottoman Sultan Selim occupied Jerusalem and issued his decree which confirmed the privileges bestowed upon the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem by Prophet Muhammad, Khalif Omar, and Salahuddin. Sultan Selim's successor, Sultan Suleiman, issued his own decree reconfirming the Armenian rights in Jerusalem. Subsequent Sultans also issued decrees, such as Mehmed IV in 1659 AD, Sultan Mahmud I in 1735 AD, and Sultan Abdulmejid I in 1853 AD. (Sassounian 2018)

The presence of copies of edicts and covenants attributed to the Prophet, 'Umar, and 'Alī in church archives, from the Middle Ages onward, illustrates that these were replicated and issued to Christian communities that were officially recognized by Muslim authorities. The copies of the Prophet and 'Alī's covenants in the Matenadaran thus symbolize the renewal of the Muslims' protection of Armenian Christians. These covenants have thus been invoked throughout the centuries, having been attested by the highest judicial Muslim authorities again and again for the benefit of the Armenian nation. Muslim rulers would consequently issue their own decrees in line with that tradition, though their terms and conditions would vary to accommodate the socio-political needs of their day. These edicts were in turn accepted by the Armenian community as legitimate in defining the relationship between Muslims and Christians.

3. Copies of the Prophet's Covenant in the Matenadaran

Muslim sources and Armenian tradition agree that the Prophet issued documents of protection to the Christian communities of his time to guarantee their rights and status as protected people. Hakob Anasian tells us that, during the Arab, Persian, and Turkish rule over Armenia, the Armenian nation requested that they be granted documents of protection based on the covenant of the Prophet (Anasian 1987). Anasian took particular care to index and classify copies of these covenants, and though their language may be in Arabic, Farsi, or Turkish, all of them are written in Arabic script.

The most important document in the Matenadaran is MS 358, which is an Arabic copy of the Prophet's *Covenant with the Christians of the World* with a Farsi translation superimposed on it and which, it seems, stems from the 17th century. Though this document was copied and distributed to different churches, it also appears to have made its way to the archives of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The covenant translated by Arpee in his work, *A History of Armenian Christianity: From the Beginning to Our Own Time*, is also another recension of it, which we can tell from its date. It has merely been modified to suit Shī'a leanings by allowing temporary marriages, recognizing the Imām as the head of state, and by removing Mu'āwiyah's name as scribe (Arpee 1946; Minasyan 1984).¹¹

My colleagues Ibrahim Zein and Ahmed El-Wakil from Hamad Bin Khalifa University brought to my attention a manuscript housed in the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, which Father Tatul Anushyan graciously allowed them to photograph, and which appears to be yet another copy of the Prophet's *Covenant with the Christians of the World*. Though I have not been able to examine the copies of the covenant of the Prophet scribed by Mu'āwiyah in the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, it would come to me as no surprise if they averred themselves to be additional copies the Prophet's *Covenant with the Christians of the World*.

The first Armenian translation of the Prophet's *Covenant with the Christians of the World* in the Matenadaran is MS 6984, which was made from an unknown Farsi manuscript. Though the list of witnesses has been preserved along with the year date of 4 AH, the name of the scribe is missing. The second manuscript, MS 2622, which is also an Armenian translation of another Farsi manuscript, has the following introduction: "A translation into Farsi of a great scroll, also known as the covenant, and which the Prophet Muḥammad

¹¹ (Arpee 1946, pp. 356–60). Levon Minasyan may have referred to this same copy in his work. Like Arpee's text, the copy recorded by Minasyan has the date preserved but has the scribe's name missing.

contracted with the Christians.” Of great importance is that the scribe, rather than being Mu’āwiyah, is said to have been ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, even though the date is Monday in the last day of the fourth month of the fourth year of the Hijra. It was translated into Armenian by Bishop Tadius Beknazaryan, who noted that the original was written in the Kūfic script, and that its Farsi translation resides in the All Saviour’s Cathedral Archive in New Julfa in Iran. Importantly, Beknazaryan noted that the document was recognized as authoritative by the Muslim religious scholars of Persia. (Ter Hovhanyants 1880–1881, p. 153).

The third manuscript, MS 2826, is an Armenian translation of the Prophet’s *Covenant with the Armenian Christians* from a Farsi manuscript. This same covenant was documented by Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh in his book *Majmū’at al-Wathā’iq al-Siyāsiyyah li-l-’ahd al-Nabarwī wa-l-Khilāfat al-Rāshidah* (Ḥamīdullāh 1987). It bears at the end of it the witnesses names, but interestingly, unlike the copy documented by Ḥamīdullāh that was written “on a Monday in the sacred month of Dhū al-Ḥijja in the second year of the noble Hijra,” it is instead written on the Monday in the last day of the fourth month of the fourth year of the Hijra by Mu’āwiyah.¹²

MS 272, which was scribed by Muḥammad ‘Alī Tabrizī and is dated to Sha’bān 1296 AH/21 July–19 August 1879 CE, is said to have been copied from an old scroll. It currently resides in the Archives of the Divan of the Catholicos of All Armenians in the Matenadaran. This copy of the covenant does not have the scribe’s name or the names of witnesses. The amount stipulated as *jizyah* is 4 dīnārs and 12 dirhams (Kostikyan 2017), but this is most certainly a mistake in translation as it differs from MS 358 and other Arabic copies of the covenants, which stipulate a rate of 4 dirhāms for the ordinary folk and 12 dirhāms for the rich.

The Arabic text of MS 358¹³ has been transcribed in Appendix A, and what follows is an English translation based on the reconstructed Master Template done by Ahmed El-Wakil and Walaa Nasrallah (El-Wakil and Nasrallah 2017). Readers should note that there is a lacuna at the start of the manuscript and that whenever the Arabic transcription suffered from some deficiencies, the Master Template was consulted to get a better sense of the original meaning. Finally, it should be noted that despite differences in language and length, MSs 6984, 2826, 2622, 272, and 358 are all very similar to one another in terms of their content. This consistency implies that they have roots in some original Arabic text that was copied and disseminated to different Christian communities living under Muslim rule.

4. Translation of MS 358

- 1 . . . Christian [religion], in the Eastern Arab lands and in the Western lands, those who are foreign, near and far, be they known or unknown—a writ which constitutes an authoritative covenant, a definitive decree, and a testament from him so that justice may prevail and for it to stand as an inviolable pact of protection.
- 2 He who observes it holds to the religion of Islam and is worthy of it. As for he who jeopardizes and violates the covenant by opposing and transgressing what I have commanded therein, then he has broken the covenant of God, denied its attestation, forsaken his protection, and made himself subject to the divine curse, regardless of whether he be one embedded with authority or anyone else from among the believers and the Muslims.
- 3 I begin by granting them the covenants and attestations which they have requested from me and from all those who follow my creed from among the Muslims so that I give them the covenant of God and His attestation, as well as His protection and the protection of His prophets, messengers, chosen ones and saints from among the believers and the Muslims and that it be binding among the first and the last of them.
- 4 My protection and attestation are the most stringent that God has taken from a prophet who has been sent or from an angel who is stationed near [the divine throne], rendering the obligations due to the covenant of God mandatory, as well as obedience and adherence to it.

¹² (Anasian 1987, p. 629).

¹³ (Kostikyan 2017, p. 144, entry 198).

- 5 I protect their communities within my frontiers with all my power, horses, men, weapons, strength, the logistics at my disposal, and my followers from among the believers in every region where the enemy lies, whether they be close or far, and in times of peace and war.
- 6 I protect their heartlands and I remove all harm that may reach them or their churches, places of worship, monasteries, and pilgrimage places wherever they may be—in the mountains, valleys, deserts, inhabited regions, plains, rugged terrains, isolated regions, or inside buildings.
- 7 I place their religion and property under my protection wherever they may be on land or at sea, in the East or in the West, as I protect myself, those who are close to me, and those who follow my creed from among the believers and the Muslims. I have taken them under my protection and granted them security from all harm, mischief, retributions, and harmful repercussions. I defend them from all enemies who wish them harm along with myself, my followers, helpers, and the people of my creed. This is because they are my subjects and people to whom I have granted my protection.
- 8 It is my duty, as I extend my governance over them, to care for them and protect them from all harm so that it does not reach them unless it first reaches me and my Companions who with me defend the heartlands of Islam.
- 9 I remove from them all mischief that subjects of a covenant have to bear of supplies which they give as loaned goods and as land taxes except for what they voluntarily consent to. They should not be forced or compelled in this matter.
- 10 It is not permitted to remove a bishop from his bishopric, a monk from his monastic life, a Christian from his Christianity, an ascetic from his hermitage, or a pilgrim from his pilgrimage. Nor is it permitted to destroy any part of their churches or to take parts of their buildings to construct mosques or the homes of Muslims. Whoever does such a thing will have violated the covenant of God, opposed His messenger, and betrayed the protection granted to him by God.
- 11 It is not permitted to impose the *jizyah* or any kind of land tax on monks, bishops, and those hermits who by devotion wear woolen clothing or live alone in the mountains or in other regions secluded from human habitation.
- 12 As for those Christians who have not consecrated their lives to monasticism and who are neither monks nor clergymen, the *jizyah* that is prescribed on them will either be at a rate of 4 dirhams per year or the provision of a decorated garment made of cotton or a valuable textile from Yemen to support the Muslims and strengthen the Treasury. If it is too difficult for them to provide a garment, or the amount prescribed on them, then they should provide whatever they can, and this should only be done if they willingly consent.
- 13 The *jizyah* shall not surpass more than twelve dirhams per year for large businesses at sea and at deep-sea which exploit mines for precious stones, gold and silver, including those who are wealthy and powerful among those who have professed the Christian religion so long as they are inhabitants and residents of the land.
- 14 The traveler who is not a resident in the land and he who is a foreigner will not have to pay the land-tax or the *jizyah* except if he has inherited land over which the one who commands authority has a monetary right. He must pay as others do without being charged in excess of what has been stipulated and he should not be made to bear what is beyond his strength or means in the cultivation, development, and harvest of the land. He should not be taxed excessively above the limit that has been set for landowners who are inhabitants of the land.
- 15 The people under our protection will not be obliged to go to war with the Muslims or take part in combat and face their enemies. The people under our protection are not to engage in war and it is precisely for this reason that we have given them our protection so that they be discharged from this obligation.
- 16 The Muslims shall be responsible for their safety and protection. The Christians will not be obliged to equip the Muslims for any of their wars against their enemies by means of weapons and horses unless they freely decide to contribute. Whoever does so will be the object of praise and gratitude, his help shall not be forgotten and he shall be rewarded.
- 17 No one who follows the Christian creed will be forced to enter into the religion Islam. And dispute not with the People of the Book except with means that are better [reference to Qur'an 29:46]. They must be covered by the wing of mercy. All mischief and harm that could reach them must be repelled, wherever they may find themselves and wherever they may be.

- 18 If a Christian were to commit a crime or an offense, the Muslims must stand by his side, help him, and support him by paying the penalty of his offense. They should encourage reconciliation between him and the victim either through a ransom or by negotiating a pardon.
- 19 The Christians must not be abandoned and left without help and assistance. This is because I have given them the covenant of God to ensure that they have the same rights and obligations as the Muslims. Furthermore, the Muslims have an obligation toward them with respect to the covenant to guarantee their right of protection and to prevent all bloodshed. The Muslims have accepted that every mischief be removed from them and the Christians have agreed to be bound to the Muslims so that they and the Muslims become partners with one another in the mutual rights and obligations that they both share.
- 20 Christians must not be subject to suffer abuse on the subject of marriages except for what they themselves consent to. Christian families should not be compelled to marry off their girls to Muslims and they should not be subject to any maltreatment if they decline a suitor or refuse a marriage proposal. Such marriages should only take place if they desire them and with their approval and consent.
- 21 If a Muslim man takes a Christian woman as his wife, he must respect her Christian beliefs. He must support her religious aspirations so that she may receive religious instruction from her clerical authorities, and he must allow her to fulfill her religious obligations. He must never prevent her from doing this. He must also not force her to act contrary to her religion or abuse her so that she eventually leaves it. If he does this, and forces her, then he has broken the covenant of God and violated its attestation which has been given to the Christians by the Messenger of God, and in the sight of God he is among the liars.
- 22 The Christians hold the right to request assistance from the Muslims to help them repair their churches, monasteries or for any other matter pertaining to their religious affairs. If they do so, then the Muslims must help them without the aim of receiving any compensation. On the contrary, they should aim to restore that religion out of faithfulness to the covenant of the Messenger of God as a donation and gift to them from God and His messenger. This is because they have been granted the protection of God, as well as the protection of His messenger (*dhimmat Allāh wa dhimmat rasūl Allāh*).
- 23 In matters of war between them and their enemies, the Muslims shall not force any Christian to be a messenger, guide, helper, informant, or to be involved in any other duty of war. Whoever obliges any one of them to do such a thing will have committed an injustice, disobeyed the Messenger of God and become free of his protection except he who upholds the stipulations which Muḥammad the Messenger of God has issued in favor of those who follow the Christian creed.
- 24 He has also placed conditions in their religion concerning their pact of protection which they must abide by as part of the covenant which they have contracted with him. Among other things, none of them are to support an enemy of war against the Muslims, either openly or covertly. None of them are to shelter the enemies of the Muslims in their homes from which they could await the moment to launch an attack. These enemies [of the Muslims] should never be allowed to halt in the regions, villages, places of worship, or in any other place belonging to their co-religionists.
- 25 They must not provide any assistance to the Muslims' enemies by furnishing them with weapons, horses, men or other logistics. They must not allow them to deposit any of their wealth with them and they must not exchange any correspondence. They are not to host them as guests except that it should be in a monastery where they are seeking refuge for their lives and protection for their religion.
- 26 The Christians must host the Muslims along with their mounts for three days and three nights when they halt among them. They must offer them, wherever they are found, and wherever they are stationed, the same food to that which they consume. They are not obliged to do any more, for in fulfilling this obligation they have removed all harm and mischief that may reach the Muslims.
- 27 If one of the Muslims needs to hide in one of their homes or in one of their places of worship, they must grant him hospitality, help him, and stand by his side so long as the Muslims remain in hiding. They must conceal him from the enemy, not disclose his whereabouts, and accommodate for all of his needs.

- 28 Whoever contravenes any of these conditions or transgresses them by altering them has freed himself of the protection of God and that of His messenger (*dhimmat Allāh wa dhimmat rasūlihi*). The Christians possess the covenants and attestations which I took from their religious scholars, monks and other Christians among the People of the Book. It is the most stringent trust that God and His prophet have placed on his community so that they may abide by what the Prophet himself has decreed on them and on all Muslims. It is to ensure their protection and as a recognition of the covenant until the Hour arrives and the world comes to an end.
- 29 The witnesses to this writ which Muḥammad the Messenger of God wrote between himself and the Christians are:
- 30 [1] Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq;
 [2] ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb;
 [3] ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān;
 [4] ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib;
 [5] Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān;
 [6] Abū al-Dardā;
 [7] Abū Hurayrah;
 [8] ‘Abdullāh ibn Maṣ‘ūd;
 [9] ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās;
 [10] Ḥamzah ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib;
 Al-Faḍl ibn al-‘Abbās;
 [12] Al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām;
 [13] Ṭalhah ibn ‘Abdullāh;
 [14] Sa‘d ibn Mu‘ādh;
 [15] Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubādah;
 [16] Thābit ibn Qays;
 [17] Zayd ibn Thābit;
 [18] ‘Abdullāh ibn Yazīd;
 [19] Ḥarqūz ibn Zuhayr;
 [20] Zayd ibn Arqam;
 [21] Usāmah ibn Zayd;
 [22] Sahl ibn Bayḍā;
 [23] ‘Unman ibn Maṭ‘ūn;
 [24] Khuwān ibn Jubayr;
 [25] Abū al-‘āliyah;
 [26] ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘āṣ;
 [27] Abū Hudhayfah ibn ‘Utbah ibn Rab‘ah;
 [28] ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir;
 [29] Hāshim ibn ‘Utbah ibn Abī Waqqāṣ;
 [30] Ḥassān ibn Thābit;
 [31] Ka‘b ibn Mālik;
 [32] ‘Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah; and
 [33] Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib.
- 31 It was written by Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abū Sufyān, dictated to him by the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, on Monday at the end of the fourth month of the fourth year of the Hijrah in Madīnah. And sufficient is God as a witness to this writ (*wa kafā bi-l-Lahī shahīdan*)!
- 32 It was written at the request of Kalsāy Dardamī.
- 33 Whoever changes it, then the curse of God is upon him. God knows best and is Most Wise!

5. Copies of ‘Alī’s Covenant with the Christians in the Matendaran

The Matendaran possesses two copies of a covenant that ‘Alī granted to the Christians of his time, reiterating the main terms and conditions stipulated by the Prophet to Christians. The first copy is catalogued as MS 357 and is dated to 2 Shawwāl 1105 AH/28 May 1694 CE.¹⁴ It is written in Farsi, but its script is very faint, which makes it very difficult to be deciphered. According to Anasian, ‘Alī’s *Covenant with the Christians* is in fact a renewal of

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 143–42, entry 197.

the Prophet's *Covenant with the Christians of the World*, which he believed 'Alī had written on behalf of his master in 4 AH.¹⁵

A copy of 'Alī's *Covenant with the Christians* is said to exist on the island of San Lazzaro degli Armeni in Venice, home to the Armenian Catholic Monastery of the Mekhitarists.¹⁶ The Armenian scholar Kalust Shermazanyan also reported that he found a Farsi copy of 'Alī's *Covenant with the Christians* in Ardabil bearing numerous official stamps. It is said to have been requested by Armenian dignitaries, among them well-respected clergymen, a copy of which was thereafter sent to Etchmiadzin.¹⁷

Three copies of 'Alī's *Covenant with the Christians* whose contents are more or less identical to MS 357 have been documented by Levon Minasyan. The first manuscript he found was in Echmiadzin, the second in New Julfa, and the third in the Chehel Sotoon Palace in Isfahan. The text from New Julfa which Minasyan transcribed¹⁸ is more less identical to that documented by Johannes Avdall who commented that the copy he had come across

was first translated into Armenian by Gregor Campan, on 15 January 1767 in As-trachan and afterward by M. Saragian, authenticated by Joakim Gregor Bagratuni of Constantinople in the year 1804. I was in possession of a copy of the original document, written in Cufic characters, which I lent some years ago to the late Henry Torrens, Esq., Vice-President of the Asiatic Society, for translation and insertion in the Journal. It appears that this rare piece of antiquity was lost or mislaid among his unpublished papers. The following is a correct and faithful version from the Armenian translation of the Edict or Covenant of the Caliph 'Alī. (Avdall 1870)

The covenant documented by Minasyan begins by explaining that the original Arabic copy was written in Kūfic script by "Hishām ibn 'Utbah ibn Abī Waqāṣ" at the behest of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. The Armenian translation which Avdall used to make his own English translation was thus reliant on a Farsi translation of an Arabic manuscript. The English translation of the introduction of 'Alī's *Covenant with the Christians* reported by Avdall therefore reads as follows:

"Praise and thanksgiving to the Creator of the universe, and blessings upon the great chief and benign Muhammad and his sacred tribe.

"After all this, it is the purport of the translation [i.e., from Arabic to Farsi] of the Covenant, which was written by Hāshim, the son of Athap ['Utbah], the son of Valas [Waqāṣ], according to the command of the blessed chief of the Arabians, and of the Lion of God, of the holy of the holies, of Alī, the grandson of Abūṭālib, the exalted, in Cufic character, in the celebrated domicile of Kharanthala, in the magnificent palace [a reference to the Monastery of Dhū al-Kifl, who is the Prophet Ezekiel according to MS 8855], in the month of Ḥafar, in the fortieth year of Hijrah.¹⁹

The second copy of 'Alī's *Covenant with the Christians* in the Matenadaran is catalogued as MS 130 in the Archives of the Divan of the Catholicos of All Armenians. It is written on red buffalo skin, with parts of it being burned and the introductory text missing, but it is virtually identical to all Persian copies. As it is difficult to read because the full text is missing, I was fortunate enough to locate an Arabic copy of 'Alī's *Covenant with the Christians* at the National Library in Tehran, which is catalogued there as MS 8855. Just like the Prophet's *Exordium to the Covenant with the Christians of Najrān*,²⁰ this copy states that a delegation of 40 Christian dignitaries visited 'Alī. What is more, their names are the same

¹⁵ (Anasian 1987, p. 631).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ (Minasyan 1984, pp. 14–20).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ (Minasyan 1984, p. 45). Also see (Scher 1983 pp. 602–10 [282–90]).

as in the *Exordium*, which could perhaps indicate that the Christians of Najrān, now located in Iraq, continued to foster diplomatic ties between different Christian denominations and the newly established Caliphate. It should be noted that though the texts documented by Minasyan and Avdall also mention the Christian delegates' names, unlike MS 8855, they do not specify the amount that should be paid as *jizyah*.

The Arabic text of MS 8855 appears to be virtually identical to the copy of Alī's *Covenant with the Christians* that is housed in the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem.²¹ What follows is a translation of MS 8855 based on the translation of Avdall. The Arabic typescript may be consulted in Appendix B. The English translation has incorporated the Arabic corrections made to MS 8855 based on MS 358 and the Prophet's *Exordium* to the Christians of Najrān.

6. Translation of MS 8855

- 1 In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
- 2 This is a copy of the covenant which was written in the Monastery of Ezekiel (Dhū al-Kifl), peace be upon him. We praise God Most High and His servant [Muḥammad].
- 3 Whereas certain Christian men of erudition, God-fearing and honoured for their loyalty, namely the 'āqib, Sayyid, 'Abd al-Yashū', Ibn Ḥajj, Abraham the monk, and the bishop 'Isā, who forty in number and being men of distinction from among the Christians, communicated with me that they wished to enact this covenant. They knew my right and agreed to uphold what we had agreed upon after our meeting. They rendered every assistance in their power to our agents whom we had sent at the frontiers.
- 4 After their departure they earned my trust and loyalty, abiding to the covenant which I solicited with them as well as on behalf of all the followers of Islam in the East and in the West. To this end they are under my fostering care and protection for as long as I live, and even after my death, as long as the religion of Islam and the true faith shall prevail.
- 5 It shall be the duty of all potentates, princes, and Muslims, to carry out my covenant which has now been attested. So long as the sea shall be capable of wetting the shores, rain shall descend from heaven, grass shall grow from the earth, stars shall give light, and the dawn shall rise upon the traveler, no man shall dare violate or alter my covenant, nor increase and decrease or change the same, because he that increases violates my covenant and decreases my signs.
- 6 And those who alter this covenant shall be considered infringers of that which I have bestowed on them, and in league with those who do not profess loyalty to me from among the followers of my religion. They have transgressed the covenant of God, may His name be glorified, violated its binding authority, and incurred just indignation from God. And God is sufficient as a witness (*wa kafā bi-l-Lahi shahīdan*)!
- 7 The Sayyid, the bishop and those whose names have been mentioned before of the men of distinction among the Christians, have received a covenant and a binding authority for all their co-religionists living under the shadow of Islam. By virtue of this covenant there shall be perpetual peace and tranquility between Christians and Muslims. The contents of this covenant are forever binding, and I have given it to them of my own accord based on what I have solicited with them, and with a cheerful countenance. I shall abide by the covenant of protection and act according to it so long as they shall be faithful to me and continue in their loyalty to my government and take no part in opposing me and the people who follow my way. By remaining steadfast in the observance of this covenant they shall resemble the Muslims while the Muslims shall have no choice but to abide by it.

²¹ (Ghazarian 2008, p. 68). A comparison of the image of Alī's *Covenant with the Christians* reproduced by Ghazarian to MS 8855 appears to reveal that we are dealing with two recensions of the same text.

- 8 Moreover, I have convened together the grandees of the Muslims and my leading Companions, and in their presence, I have established the covenant which the Christians requested of me. I have written down and recorded for them conditions and stipulations, which are hereafter to stand firm and remain in force. Should in future any person of rank and authority oppress them and treat them with cruelty, they are to present this record of my covenant, because it is incumbent on all persons of rank and authority and on all Muslims to act according to our behests. Those in rank and authority need to comply with our mandates and obey our will in conformity with the covenant of protection which I have made and established with them by remaining loyal to it. There shall be no disobedience or opposition to my commands and wishes. Moreover, it is politic and expedient not to molest and oppress the Christians, so that by the adoption of a conciliatory course, they might be induced to comply with the stipulations contained in my covenant and be considered among my helpers.
- 9 Thus my covenant is a burden and obligation to its recipients, and wearisome and irksome to maliciously disposed and evil-minded persons. I desire that there be no contention by the Christians against the followers of the religion of Islam so that the latter not act against what I have written concerning the Christians who have proved themselves worthy of my favor and benevolence. My covenant inspires grace and acts of goodness to save the Christians from troubles and vexations, God willing.
- 10 I begin my covenant by giving them the attestations which they requested from me and all of my followers (*jamī' ahl shī'atī*) among the Muslims, that I give them the covenant of God and its attestation, along with my protection and that of God's prophets, chosen ones, and of all holy men, be they believers or Muslims, the first and the last one of them. My covenant and attestation are the most stringent that God has revealed to a divinely sent prophet or an angel in proximity [to the divine throne], requiring obedience to its stipulations. Faithfulness to the covenant of God is therefore an obligation because the Christians under my authority are my subjects, and I am ruler over them. It is as such my duty to have a benevolent eye over them and to protect them from all evil and troubles, and that these never reach them unless they first reach my Companions and I who together protect the Islamic heartlands.
- 11 I remove from them burdensome taxations which subjects are customarily accustomed to. No demand should be made from them beyond what is written down and sanctioned. The bishops should not be removed from their bishopric. The monks and hermits should not be disturbed in their solitudes nor removed from their monasteries. The Christians should not be converted from their Christianity and no pilgrim should be prevented from making his pilgrimage. Their churches and monasteries should not be destroyed by the Muslims and taken for their homes or mosques. Nobody should remove or pull down the bells from the steeples of their churches.
- 12 The 'āqib, the Sayyid, 'Abd al-Yashū', Ibn Ḥajj, Abraham the monk, and the bishop 'Isā have agreed that the *jizya* which will be levied on every Christian shall be 33 dirhāms and a third in silver. This is what I have stipulated for them as an authoritative written decree and covenant, and as a practice which must be observed.
- 13 Whoever observes the covenant holds strongly to the religion of Islam and the good that is therein, while he who fails to uphold the stipulations which I have made or changes them, opposing what I have commanded, has violated the covenant of God and its attestation. Therefore, let no crowned head or man of authority of the Muslims or believers compel the Christians to profess the religion of Islam and dispute with them except in a kindly manner [reference to Qur'an 29:46].
- 14 The Muslims must take the Christians under the shadow of their mercy and clemency, protect them from all sorts of oppression and tribulations wherever they may be found and wherever they may reside. And if the Christian people be in want of money or in need of pecuniary help for the building of churches and monasteries, or for matters pertaining to their religion, then the Muslims ought to assist them and supply them with the necessary means. This should be provided to them as a gift from God and His messenger as part of the pact of protection that is owed to them, not as a debt which they will incur.

- 15 If anyone should infringe the contents of my covenant, then he is a wrongdoer and disobedient to the Messenger of God, and he will assuredly be deprived of his protection. The stipulations which were made by the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, need to be piously observed as he has made them binding on himself and all of the Muslims. They are dutybound to carry out his orders by succoring and commiserating them at all times, so long as this world shall last and God will rule over us.
- 16 It was written by Hishām ibn 'Utba ibn al-Waqāṣ in the presence of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, in the Monastery of Ezekiel, peace be upon him, in the month of Ṣafar, in the fortieth year of the Hijrah. Glory be to God who is exalted!

7. Conclusions

The Arabic and Farsi manuscripts of the covenants of the Prophet Muḥammad and of 'Alī copied between the 15th and 19th centuries appear to be linked to covenants that were originally issued during the early conquests. Islamic scholars have reported how the Prophet and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs wrote numerous political documents during their time. Of particular importance is the Prophet's *Treaty with the Christians of Najrān*, which has been documented in Islamic sources and *The Chronicle of Seert*. The similarities of content, language, and structure indicate that both recensions were either derived or influenced from one or more some source document issued by the Prophet.

Overall, the covenants of the Prophet and 'Alī have intrigued a number of Armenian scholars. The very fact that these were copied out, translated, issued, renewed, and acknowledged by Muslim authorities indicates their authoritativeness. As more studies continue to be done on the covenants, and more manuscripts come to be available, it is hoped that their historicity and how they influenced Muslim policy throughout the centuries will be better understood. Needless to say, the very fact that they were recognized as legitimate by Muslim authorities and the Armenian Apostolic Church sets a significant precedent for the forging of harmonious relations between Muslims and Christians.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix A Transcript of MS 358

- 1 ... لنصرانية في شرق أرض العرب وغربها وأعجمها وقربها وبعيدها ومعروفها ومجهولها كتابا جعله لهم عهداً مرعياً وسجلاً منشوراً وصية
منه تقيم فيهم عدله وذمة محفوظة
- 2 من رعاها كان بالإسلام متمسكاً ولما فيه من خير مستأهلاً ومن ضيعها ونكث العهد الذي فيها وخالفه إلى غيره وتعدى فيه ما أمرت به
كان لعهد الله ناكثاً وليثاقه نافيا ولذمته مستهيناً وللعنة مستوجباً سلطاناً كان أو غيره من المؤمنين والمسلمين
- 3 فبدأت فيه بإعطاء العهود على نفسي والمواثيق التي سألوها عني ومن جميع أهل ملتي من مسلمين²² بأن أعطيهم عهد الله وميثاقه وذمته
وذمة انبيائه ورسله وأصفيائه وأوليائه من مسلمين والمؤمنين في الأولين والآخرين
- 4 وذمتي وميثاقي أشد ما أخذ الله على نبي مرسل أو ملك مقرب من حق الطاعة وإيتاء الفريضة والوفا بعهد الله
- 5 أن أحوط قاصتهم في ثغوري بخيلي ورجلي وسلاحي وقوتي وعددي وأعواني وأتباعي من المؤمنين في كل ناحية من نواحي العدو بعيداً
كانوا أم قريباً سلماً كانوا أم حرباً
- 6 أن أحمي بيضتهم وأذب عنهم وعن كنائسهم وبيوت صلواتهم وموضع الرهبان منهم ومواطن السياحة حيث كانوا من جبل أو
وادي أو مفازة أو عمران أو سهل أو حزن أو رمل أو بناء

- 7 وأن أحوط دينهم وملكهم حيث كانوا وأين كانوا من برّ وبحر في شرق أو غرب بما أحوط به نفسي وحامتي²⁴ وأهل ملتي من المؤمنين والمسلمين وأن أدخلهم في أمني وأماني من كل دية²⁵ أو مكروه أو مؤونة أو تبعة وأن أكون ذاباً عنهم كل عدو يريدني وإياهم بنفسي وأتباعي وأعواني وأهل ملتي لأنهم رعيتي وأهل ذمتي
- 8 وأنا ذو سلطة عليهم فبذلك يجب علي رعيتهم وحفظهم من كل مكروه وأن لا يصل إليهم حتى يصل إلي و إلى أصحابي والذابين عن بيضة الإسلام معي
- 9 وأن أعزل عنهم الأذى في المؤمن التي يحمل أهل العهد من العارية والخراج إلا ما طابت به أنفسهم ليس عليهم جبر ولا إكراه على شيء من ذلك
- 10 ولا تغير²⁶ أسقف عن أسقفية ولا راهب عن رهبانيته ولا نصراني عن نصرانيته ولا راهب عن صومعته ولا ساحج عن سياحته ولا يهدم بيت من بيوت كنائسهم ولا يدخل شيء من بيوتهم في بناء المساجد ولا منازل المسلمين فمن فعل ذلك فقد نكث عهد الله وخالف رسول الله وخان ذمة الله
- 11 وأن لا يحمل الرهبان ولا الأساقفة و²⁷ تعبد منهم وتأله بلباس الصوف التوحيد في الجبال والمواضع المتباعدة عن الأمصار شيئاً من الجزية ولا الخراج
- 12 وأنه ليس على غيرهم من النصارى ممن هو ليس بمتعبد ولا راهب ولا ساحج من الجزية إلا أربعة دراهم في كل عام أو ثوب حبرة أو عصب اليمين²⁸ إعانة للمسلمين وقوة في بيت المال فإن لم يسهل عليهم الثوب لم يلووا ثمنه إلا أن تطيب بذلك أنفسهم
- 13 وأنه لا يجاوز في الجزية على أصحاب التجارات العظام في البحر والغوص واستخراج معادن الجواهر والذهب والفضة وذوي الأموال الفاشية والقوة ممن أنتحل النصرانية أكثر من اثني عشر درهماً في كل عام الجملة إذا كانوا للموضع قاطنين وبه مقيمين
- 14 وإنه ليس يعرض لعابر سبيل ليس من قاطني البلد ولا أهل اجتياز ممن لا يعرف موضعه بخراج ولا جزية إلا أن يكون في يده ميراث من ميراث الأرضين ممن يجب عليه مال السلطان من حق فيؤدي ذلك على ما يؤدي مثله ولا يجازي عليه ولا يحمل منه إلا قدر طاقته وقوته على نحو ذلك الأرض وعمارتها وإقبال ثمرها لا يكلف شططاً ولا يجاز به حد أصحاب الخراج من نظرائه
- 15 ولا يكلف أهل الذمة الخروج مع المسلمين إلى عدوهم للملاقاتة الحرب ومكاشفة الأقران لأنه ليس على أهل الذمة مباشرة القتال وإنما أعطوا الذمة على أن يكلفوا
- 16 وأن لا²⁹ يكون المسلمون ذباباً عنهم وحرزاً من دونهم ولا يكرهون على تجهيز أحد من المسلمين إلى الحرب التي يلقون فيها عدوهم بقوة من سلاح ولا خيل إلا أن يتبرع إليهم فيحمد على ذلك من تبرع به وعرف له ذلك وكوفي عليه
- 17 ولا يجبر أحد ممن كان على ملة النصرانية على الإسلام كرهاً ولا يجادلوا إلا بالتي هي أحسن ويخفف لهم جناح الرحمة ويكف عنهم الأذى والمكروه حيث كانوا وأين كانوا
- 18 وإن جرّ أحد من النصارى جريرة أو جناية فعلى المسلمين نصره ومنعه والذب عنه والغرم عن جريرة والدخول في الصلح بينه وبين من أصاب فإما منأ عليه وإما فداء يفادي به
- 19 ولا يخذلوا ولا يرفضوا ولا يتركوا هملاً على أني أعطيتهم عهد الله على أن لهم ما للمسلمين وعليهم ما على المسلمين وللمسلمين ما لهم وعلى المسلمين ما عليهم بالعهد الذي استوجبوا به حقن الدماء والذب عن الحرمه به استوجبوا أن يذب عنهم كل مكروه ويدخل لهم في كل مرفق حتى يكون للمسلمين شركاً فيما لهم وفيما عليهم

- 20 ولهم أن لا يحملوا من أمر النكاح شططاً لا يراودونهم ولا يكره الأهل البيت منهم على تزويج المسلم ولا يضاروا في ذلك إن منعوا خاطباً وأبوا تزويجاً وإن ذلك لا يكون إلا بطيبة أنفسهم ومساحة أهوائهم إن أحبوه ورضوا به
- 21 وإذا صارت النصرانية عند المسلم فعلية أن يرضى نصرانيتها ويتبعها هواها في دينها من الاقتداء بروسائها والأخذ بمعالم دينها لا يمنعها ذلك ولا يكرهها على تركه ولا يضارها في رفض دينها فإن فعل ذلك وأكرهها عليه فقد خالف عهد الله وعصا ميثاق رسول الله وهو عند الله من الكاذبين
- 22 ولهم إن احتاجوا إلى ممة كئاسهم أو صوامعهم وشيء من مصلحة دينهم إلى ردف من المسلمين أو معونة على ممة أن يرفدوا على ذلك ويعاونوا ويقووا ولا يكون ذلك عليهم ديناً بل معونة لهم على مصلحة دينهم ووفاء لهم لعهد رسول الله هبة موهوبة لهم ذمة الله وذمة رسول الله عليهم
- 23 ولا يكره أحد منهم أن يكون في الحرب بين المسلمين عدوهم رسولاً ولا دليلاً ولا عوناً ولا متسخرأ في شيء مما يبين من الحرب فمن فعل ذلك كان ظالماً ولرسول الله عاصياً ومن وصيته متخلفاً هذه الشروط التي شرط محمد رسول الله لأهل ملة النصرانية
- 24 واشتد عليهم في دينهم أموراً وفي ذمتهم عليهم التمسك بها والوفاء بما عاهدوا عليه منها ألا يكون أحد منهم عيناً لأحد من أهل الحرب والمسلمين في سر ولا علانية ولا يوا في منازلهم عدواً للمسلمين يريدون به وجود الفرصة ونهزة الريبة ولا ينزلوا أوطانهم ولا شيء من مساكن عبادهم ولا عمرهم من أهل الملة
- 25 ولا يرفدوا أحد من أهل الحرب على المسلمين بقوة وعارية السلاح ولا الخيل ولا الرجال ولا يستودعوا لهم مالاً ولا حامة ولا يعينونهم بلسان ولا يد ولا يكتبونهم ولا يضايقوهم إلا أن يكونوا في دار تقية يدينون فيها عن أنفسهم ويدرون عن دماهم ورعاية دينهم
- 26 ولا يمنعوا أحداً من المسلمين قراءة ثلاثة أيام ولياليها بأنفسهم أولاً ودواهم من حيث كانوا وأين أرادوا ويبدلون لهم القرى الذي منه يأكلون ولا يكلفوا سوى ذلك فيحملوا الأذية عليهم والمكروه
- 27 وإن احتيج الي اختفاء أحد من المسلمين في منازلهم ومواطن أعمارهم أن يأوهم و يرفدوهم ويواسوهم فيما عاشوا به ما كانوا محتفين إذا كتموا عنهم ولم يظهروا العدو على عورتهم ولم يخلوا بشيء من الواجب عليهم في ذلك
- 28 فمن نكث منهم شيئاً من هذه الشروط وتعدها إلى غيره فهو بريء من ذمة الله وذمة رسوله عليهم بذلك العهد والمواثيق التي أخذت على الأحرار والرهبان والنصارى من أهل الكتاب وأشد ما أخذ نبي على أمته من الأيمان والوفاء بذلك أين كانوا وحيث كانوا وعلى رسول الله الوفاء بما جعلوا لهم على نفسه وعلى المسلمين رعاية ذلك لهم ومعرفتهم به والالتفاء إليه أبداً حتى تقوم الساعة وتنقضي الدنيا
- 29 وشهد هذا الكتاب الذي كتبه محمد رسول الله بينه وبين النصارى والذي أشرت عليهم وكتب لهم هذا العهد لنا
- 30 أبو بكر الصديق
وعمر بن الخطاب
وعثمان بن عفان
وعلي بن أبي طالب
ومعاوية بن أبي سفيان
وأبو الدرداء

وأبو هريرة
وعبد الله بن مسعود
وعبد الله بن العباس
وحمزة بن عبد المطلب
والفضل بن العباس
والزبير بن العوام
وطلحة بن عبد الله
وسعد بن معاذ
وسعد بن عباد
وثابت بن قيس
وزيد بن ثابت
وعبد الله بن يزيد
وحر قوس بن زهير
وزيد بن أرقم
وأسماء بن زيد
وسهل بن بيضا
وعنمن بن مطعون
وخوان بن حبير
وأبو العالية
وعبد الله بن عمرو بن العاص
وأبو حذيفة بن عتبة بن ربيعة
وعمار بن ياسر
وهاشم بن عتبة بن أبي وقاص
وحسان بن ثابت
وكعب بن مالك

وعبد بن رواحة

وجعفر بن أبي طالب

31 وكتب معاوية بن أبو سفيان بإملاء رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يوم الاثنين التمام أربعة أشهر من السنة الرابعة من هجرة المدينة وكفى بالله شهيداً على ما في هذا الكتاب

32 كتب لأجل كلسايى دردمي

33 من تبدل منها فعليه لعنت الله والله اعلم وأحكم

Appendix B Transcript of MS 8855

- 1 بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
- 2 هذا كتاب العهد المكتوب بدير حزقييل ذي الكفل عليه السلام نحمد الله تعالى وعلى عبده،
- 3 إن ناساً من علماء النصارى وأهل التقوة والمودة منهم وكان منهم العاقب وسيد وعبد اليشوع وابن تحن وإبراهيم الراهب عيسى الاسقف وكان منهم أربعين نفساً من أكابر النصارى ممن رغبوا في رعاية عهدي والمعرفة بحقي والحفظ لما فارقوني عليه والاعانة لمن كان من رسلنا في أطراف الثغور
- 4 فاستوجوا بذلك أمانتي ومودتي ووفائي لما عاهدتهم عليه وأعطيهم من نفسي على جميع أهل الإسلام من شرق الأرض وغربها إنهم في ذمتي ما دمت حياً بعد وفاتي إذا أمانتي الله ما ثبت دين الإسلام وما ظهرت دعوة الإيتمان
- 5 لأن ذلك من عهدي وميثاقي جميع ولاية السلاطين وغيرهم من المسلمين وما بلّ بحر صوفة وما جائت³⁰ السماء بقطرة والأرض بنبات وما أضائت³¹ نجوم الليل وتبين الصبح للسايرين ليس لأحد نقضه وتبديله ولا الزيادة فيه والانتقاص منه لأن الزيادة فيه تفسد عهدي والنقصان منه ينقص آياتي.
- 6 ولإن تبديله يلزمي الغدر على ما أعطيته على نفسي ومن خالفني من أهل ملتي فقد نكث عهد الله تقديس اسمه واطل³² عن ميثاقه وصارت عليه حجة الله تعالى وكفى بالله شهيداً
- 7 وأن السيد والاسقف والمذكورين وأكابر النصارى التمسوا كتابنا ليكون عهداً وميثاقاً لجميع النصارى القاطنين تحت ظل الإسلام وفيه أمانة وكفاية بينهم وبين المسلمين عهداً لهم أبداً ووفاء مني بما عاهدتهم عليه وأعطيهم من طيبة نفسي وأحببت بذلك أن أتم الصنيعة في الذمة من كانت حاله حال استقامة فيما بيني وبينهم وكف الأذية عني وعن أهل مذهبي وأن أجعل ذلك شرطاً وعهداً مرعياً وأماناً معروفاً يمثل المسلمون ويأخذ به المؤمنون

²² The text has the definite article missing and should read المسلمين.

²³ The text has the definite article missing and should read المسلمين.

²⁴ The text should read خاصتي.

²⁵ The text should read أذية.

²⁶ The verb should read يغير.

²⁷ The pronoun من missing.

²⁸ The text should read اليمن.

²⁹ The negation should not be there. The text should read وأن يكون المسلمون.

- 8 وأحضرت ذلك رؤساء المسلمين وأفضل أصحابي ووكدت على نفسي العهد الذي طلبوا وأرادوا وكتبت لهم شرطاً يكون عند أعقابهم فإذا نكث أحد العهد ليظهره عند المسلمين من كان منهم سلطاناً أو غير سلطان وأن على السلطان إنفاذ ما أمرت به ليستكمل موافقة الوفاء والتحلي إلى عهدي والحجرات³³ الذمة والشرط الذي أعطيت من نفسي لثلاث تكون الحجة عليه بمخالفة أمري وعلى المسلمين واجب أن لا يأذنبهم³⁴ وأن يكملوا لهم العهد الذي جعلته لهم ليدخلوا في باب الوفاء وليكونوا لي أعواناً على الخير الذي كفتت به
- 9 فمن استوجب ذلك عندي وكان عوناً على الدعوة وغيظاً لأهل التكذيب والتشكيك ولثلاث يكون الحجة لأحد من أهل النصرانية على أحد فمن ينتحل دين الإسلام بمخالفة ما وصفت في هذا الكتاب والوفاء لهم بما استوجبوا عندي واستحقوا وكان ذلك يدعوا إلى استتمام المعروف ويحج إلى مكارم الأخلاق ويأمر بالحسنى وينهى عن السوء وفيها إتباع الصدق وإتيان الحق إن شاء الله تعالى
- 10 فبدأت فيه بإعطاء العهد على نفسي والمواثيق التي سئلوا عني وعن جميع أهل شعيتي من المسلمين بأن أعطيهم عهد الله وميثاقه وذمتي وذمة أنبيائه وأصفياه وأوليائه من المؤمنين والمسلمين في الأولين والآخرين وعهدي وميثاقي وأشهد³⁵ ما أخذ الله على نبي مرسل أو ملك مقرب من حق الطاعة وإتيان الفريضة والوفاء بعهد الله لأنهم رعيتي وأهل ذمتي وابدوا البسطة³⁶ عليهم وبذلك يجب علي رعايتهم وحفظهم من كل مكروه ولا يصل الأذى إليهم حتى يصل ذلك إلي وإلى أصحابي الذاتين عن بيضة الإسلام
- 11 وأن أعزل عنهم الأذى في المؤمن الذي يحمل أهل العهد من الغاذية³⁷ سوى أذكره في هذا الشرط وليس عليهم قهر ولا إكراه على شيء من ذلك ولا تغيير أسقف عن أسقفية ولا راهب عن رهبانته ولا نصراني عن نصرانيته ولا زاهد عن صومعته ولا ساحج عن سياحته ولا يهدم بيت من بيوت بيعهم وديارتهم ولا يدخل شيء من بيوتهم في بناء المساجد ولا منازل المسلمين ولا يعطل شيء من نواقيسهم³⁸
- 12 وواقفت العاقب والسيد وعبد اليسوع وابن حجج وإبراهيم الراهب وعيسى الأسقف أن يد³⁹ الجزية عن كل نصراني كل عام مبلغ ثلاث و ثلاثين درهماً وثلاث فضة وجعلت ذلك عليهم مقاطعة وشرطاً لهم وعهداً مرعياً وسجلاً منشوراً وسنة محفوظة
- 13 أوله من دعاها كان بالإسلام متمسكاً ولما فيه من الخير مستأهلاً ومن ضيع هذا الشرط الذي كتبتة وخالف إلى غيره وتعدى فيه ما أمرت كان لعهد الله ناكثاً وميثاقه ناقضاً وبدينه مستهيناً وللعنة مستوجباً سلطان كان أم غيره من المؤمنين والمسلمين ولا يخير أحد كان على ملة النصرانية كرهاً على السلامة ولا يجادلوا إلا بالأحسن
- 14 ويحفظونهم⁴⁰ جناح الرحمة ويكف عنهم أيدي المكروه حيث وجدوا وأين كانوا أولهم أن يحتاجوا في مؤنة بيعهم ومصلحة دياراتهم وصوامعهم أو شيء في مصلحة دينهم إلى رد من المسلمين وتقوية لهم على ذمة أن ردوا على رمة⁴¹ وأن تعاونوا⁴² ولا يكون ذلك عليهم ديناً بل تقوية على مصلحتهم وذمتهم ووفاء لهم ووهبة موهوبة لهم ومنة لله ورسوله عليهم
- 15 ومن خالف هذا الشرط كان ظالماً ورسول الله عاصياً ومن ذمته متخلفاً ولا يسعه إلا الإتمام والوفاء لهم بهذا الشرايط⁴³ التي شرطت لهم وعلى أمير المؤمنين علي بن أبي طالب طالب الوفاء له لما جعل لهم على نفسه وعلى المسلمين رعاية ذلك وحفظهم والاتهاء إليه أبداً حتى تقوم الساعة ويقضي الله بنا
- 16 وكتبته⁴⁴ هشام بن عتبة بن الوقاص بحضرة أمير المؤمنين علي بن أبي طالب وذلك في دير حزقيل ذي الكفل عليه السلام في صفر سنة أربعين للهجرة والحمد لله تعالى

³⁰ The text should read جاءت.

³¹ The text should read أضاءت.

³² The text should read أضلّ.

³³ The text should read أنجاز. See (?), p. 609 [289B19-religions-1073805].

³⁴ The text should read يؤذوهم. See (?), p. 609 [289B19-religions-1073805].

³⁵ The text should read أشدّ. See Arabic transcript of MS 358, sections 4 and 28.

References and Notes

- Akyüz, Gabriel. 2002. *Osmanlı Devletinde Süryani Kilisesi*. Mardin: Kirkklar Kilisesi, p. 146.
- al-Balādhurī, Aḥmad ibn Yahyā ibn Jabir. 1987. *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān*. Beirut: Mū'assasat al-Ma'ārif, p. 282.
- Anasian, Hakob. 1987. *Little Works*. Los Angeles: American Armenian International College, p. 627.
- Arpee, Leon. 1946. *A History of Armenian Christianity: From the Beginning to Our Own Time*. Paramus: Armenian Missionary Association of America, p. 355.
- Avdall, Johannes. 1870. A Covenant of 'Alī, Fourth Caliph of Baghdād, Granting Certain Immunities and Privileges to the Armenian nation. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 39: 60–64.
- Dadoyan, Seta B. 2013. *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World: Armenian Realpolitik in the Medieval Islamic World: Paradigms of Interaction Seventh to Fourteenth Centuries*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, vol. 2, pp. 169–70.
- El-Wakil, Ahmed, and Walaa Nasrallah. 2017. The Prophet Muḥammad's Covenant with the Armenian Christians: A Critical Edition based on the Reconstructed Master Template. In *Islām and the People of the Book*. Edited by John Andrew Morrow. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, vol. 2, pp. 502–7.
- Ghazarian, Jacob G. 2008. Armenians in Islamic Jerusalem. *Journal of Islamic Jerusalem Studies* 9: 59–80.
- Ḥamīdullāh, Muḥammad. 1987. *Majmū'at al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsiyyah li-l-'ahd al-Nabawī wa-l-Khilāfat al-Rāshidah*. Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, pp. 556–60.
- Ter Hovhanyants, Harutiun. 1880–1881. *History of New Julfa at Isfahan, New Julfa*. Vol. 2, 153. (In Armenian)
- Kashīshyān, Alexandre. 2009. Al-Arman fī al-Quds mundhu 2000 'ām. *Al-Turāth al-'Arabī* 113: 33–46.
- Kostikyan, Kristine. 2017. *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Matenadaran*. Yerevan: Nairi, pp. 122–23, entry 161.
- Krikorian, Gregory. 2002. *Through the Eye of an Armenian Needle*. Antelias: Lebanon, p. 22.
- ewond. 1982. *History of Lewond the Eminent Vardapet of the Armenians*. Translated by Zaven Arzoumanian. Wynnewood: St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Church, p. 53.
- Yevadian, Maxim. 2010. *Des Serviteurs Fidèles: Les Enfants de l'Arménie au Service de l'État Turc*. Lyon: Sources d'Arménie, p. 16.
- Minasyan, Levon. 1984. *Two Covenants of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Commander of the Faithful 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, New Julfa. 5–13. (In Farsi)
- Nersessian, Vrej. 2001. *Treasures from the Ark: 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Art*. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, p. 154.
- Sassounian, Harut. 2018. Prophet Muhammad's Rarely-Known Decree to the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem. *The California Courier*. September 11. Available online: <http://www.thecaliforniacourier.com/prophet-muhammads-rarely-known-decree-to-the-armenian-patriarch-of-jerusalem/> (accessed on 20 February 2021).
- Scher, Addai. 1983. *Histoire Nestorienne Inédite: Chronique de Séert, Deuxième Partie*. *Patrologia Orientalis*, Tome XIII, Fascicule 4, No. 65, 1918. Turnhout: Brepols, p. 605 [285].
- Sebeos. 1999. *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*. Historical commentary by James Howard-Johnston. Translated by R. W. Thomson. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, p. 143.
- Tchamkerten, Astrig. 2006. *Les Gulbenkian à Jérusalem*. Lisbon: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, p. 17.
- Thomson, Robert W. 1994. Muḥammad and the Origin of Islam in Armenian Literary Tradition. In *Studies in Armenian Literature and Christianity*. Edited by Thomson. London: Routledge, pp. 829–58.
- Zein, Ibrahim, and Ahmed El-Wakil. 2020a. Khālīd b. al-Walīd's Treaty with the People of Damascus: Identifying the Source Document through Shared and Competing Historical Memories. *Journal of Islamic Studies* 31: 295–328. [CrossRef]
- Zein, Ibrahim, and Ahmed El-Wakil. 2020b. Remembering the Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad: Shared Historical Memory of Good Governance and Peaceful Co-Existence. *Al-Shajarah* 25: 219–62.

³⁶ The text should read وأنا ذو السلطنة.

³⁷ The text should read العارية. See Arabic transcript of MS 358, section 9.

³⁸ The text should read نواقيسهم.

³⁹ The text should read يؤدوا.

⁴⁰ The word تحت is missing.

⁴¹ The text should read مرمه.

⁴² The text should read يعانوا.

⁴³ The text should read بهذه الشروط or بهذه الشرائط.

⁴⁴ The text should read وكتبه.