

*The Snare of Glory: A Call for Liberation from Madras*

Satenig Badwagan Toufanian (Paris)

The *Snare of Glory* (Hakob and Shahamir Shahamirian, Madras, 1773/1788) is today considered as the First Armenian Constitution, but there are many ambiguities about the meaning of the word constitution. So, is the *Snare* a constitution in the modern sense of the word? Should it be included in the overall movement of constitutionalism and republicanism of the eighteenth century?

Through the presentation of some aspects of the constitutional draft outlined in the *Snare*, one cannot avoid questioning the constitutional as well as the republican nature of this text.

To some extent, the text appears to have a common ground with the new currents of thought: the authors constantly seek ways to prevent the arbitrariness of political power, they assert the legitimacy of political autonomy and the possibility of a representative republic in Armenia. However, the *Snare* is a composite text with some inconsistencies. These inconsistencies could be related to the duality of the authors or to the length of time over which the work in question was authored; more deeply, conflicting logics can be observed. They can be seen in particular through two discrepancies as the superposition of a constitutional monarchy model on that of a representative republic, or the affirmation of a universal, but two-tiered citizenship... Finally, one must try to resolve these paradoxes: why the first Armenian constitutional draft was conceived in Madras ? And by merchants instead of political leaders?

The pluricultural city of Madras opened up, for the authors, new horizons and liberties. Escaping the *dhimmi* status, far from the power of Ējmiatsin, accessing the intensive flow of the contemporary information and currents of thought, these Julfan merchants, going beyond the economic field to involve into the political and diplomatic ones, developed a wide-ranging set of reflections about political matters and introduced new secular views in modern Armenian political thought.

**Bio:** *Saténig Batwagan-Toufanian graduated in Philosophy from the University of Paris, holds a degree in Classical Armenian from the Institut catholique and has a doctorate in History from the EHESS (École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris) under the direction of Claire Mouradian. In 2018, she published Le Piège de l'orgueil, une constitution républicaine en Orient au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle (Presses de l'Inalco), based on her thesis, a translation into French and a study of The Snare of Glory, by H. Shahamirian. She has contributed to collective works such as Loin de l'Ararat (Hazan), Chrétiens d'Orient (Mardaga), RésoNAMces n° 4 ("La pensée politique arménienne, genèse et dilemmes"). She has also participated in the "Madras Day" festival, in Chennai, with two exhibitions (2014 : "Armenians in Madras" and 2015 : "Old Armenian Altar Curtains Made in Madras"). In 2020, she published a short novel: Rendez-Vous à Madras (Thaddée) currently being translated into English.*