

Armenian sources, many of which are known through specialized studies. However, an important source illustrating the "countless machinations" to which Ricaut has alluded and which, to the best of my knowledge, is still unknown in historiographical research, is an early eighteenth-century document from the pen of Urakh Grigor of Erzerum. This text provides a detailed account of how Armenian artisans in the Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire were compelled, in order to practice their craft as members of trade guilds, to participate in Islamic rituals with Turkish craftsmen, thereby subjecting them to enticements of apostasy.

I discovered this unique document authored by Urakh Grigor and entitled "Haghags nshanats' ew aruestits' ew mek'enayits' neraynots'n" (Concerning the Symbols, Artifices, and Machinations of the Antichrists) in MS 9121 of the Matenadaran in Erevan, and in 1952 I presented a paper about it at a meeting of the Institute of History of the Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences.⁸

Urakh Grigor was born in Erzerum in 1661 and died some time after the year 1710. This information is found in a family chronicle written by Grigor himself (Matenadaran MS 7715) and published in 1951.

The text "Concerning the Symbols, Artifices, and Machinations of the Antichrists" is found in Urakh Grigor's "Meknut'iwn Hayt-nut'ean Hovhannu: Haghags Nerin" (Commentary on John's Revelation: Concerning Antichrist). The latter work (preserved in Matenadaran MS 9121) is a commentary on Chapter 13 of Revelation. Urakh Grigor identifies the beast bearing the number 666 in this chapter with the Prophet Muhammad, who is said to be the Antichrist. Throughout his commentary, Grigor speaks of the growing strength and rule of the antichrists (that is, the Muslims), and he cites as proof of his assertions evidence from contemporary Turkish life. Commenting on the verse, "And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth of a lion" (Rev. 13:2), Grigor describes the Turkish rulers of his time as follows:

Behold, it is apparent to all, and visible even to the blind, that wherever the feet of these antichrists reach they trample underfoot, eat and pulverize everything, and that which remains underfoot they crush like a bear, because such is the character of the bear and such is their character as well. Their mouth is like a lion's [mouth], because it is evident to all that when they speak with humans, they growl and terrify them. And just as an extremely repulsive odor exudes from the mouth of a lion, a terrible excretion is emitted from their mouths, too, when they speak with Christians. It is likewise apparent to all that they are like a tiger, which has dark black stripes from head to toe which among all the beasts is the haughtiest and swiftest, and much more bloodthirsty than all the beasts. The antichrists also are the same from their heads to their toes, that is, from the smallest to the largest,