

**EXAMINING THE ROLE OF JURISPRUDENTIAL DEBATES IN RELATIONS  
BETWEEN ETCHMIADZIN AND THE QAJAR GOVERNMENT (BASED ON THE  
PERSIAN ORDERS OF MATENADARAN)**

**Mohammad Reza Alam**

Professor, Department of History, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran  
(Corresponding author) alam@scu.ac.ir, 00989161133698 (Orchid Code 0009-0005-8700-6011)

**Abbas Eghbal Mehran**

PhD student in History of Islamic Iran, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran  
[abass.em1987@gmail.com](mailto:abass.em1987@gmail.com), 009189119839 (Orchid Code 0000-0002-5184-3003)

**Seyyed Karim Mousavi**

Doctoral student of criminal law and criminology, Higher Education Institute of Science and  
Education affiliated to Al-Mustafa Al-Alamiya Society, Qom, Iran K.mosavi1400@gmail.com

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**Abstract.** *Jurisprudential debates have played an important role in the relations between the Etchmiadzin Church and the Qajar government. These debates have served as a means of legitimizing the government and regulating social and political interactions between the two parties. On the one hand, Islamic jurisprudence helped the Qajar government to strengthen its influence over the Armenians by using religious principles. On the other hand, jurisprudential and religious differences between Shia and Armenian Christianity have caused tensions in relations and created challenges in cultural and social interactions. This research examines the mutual effects of these debates on the relations between Etchmiadzin and the Qajar government and analyzes the role of jurisprudence in the formation of religious and political identities in this historical period. This research aims to examine the role of jurisprudential debates in the relations between Etchmiadzin and the Qajar government with an analytical perspective. Therefore, it seeks to answer the following questions: 1- What was the role of Islamic jurisprudence in regulating the relations between the Etchmiadzin Church and the Qajar government? 2- How could jurisprudential debates help strengthen or weaken the political and social relations between Etchmiadzin and the Qajar government? The research findings indicate that jurisprudential and religious debates acted as a legitimizing tool for the Qajar government and helped strengthen their relations with the Etchmiadzin Church. Jurisprudential and religious disputes between the Shiites and Armenians have caused tensions and challenges in the relations between Etchmiadzin and the Qajar government, which have affected social and political interactions.*

**Keywords:** *jurisprudential debates, Qajar Etchmiadzin, Armenians, Matnadaran.*

## ИЗУЧЕНИЕ РОЛИ ЮРИДИЧЕСКИХ ДЕБАТОВ В ОТНОШЕНИЯХ МЕЖДУ ЭЧМИАДЗИНОМ И ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВОМ КАДЖАРОВ (НА ОСНОВЕ ПЕРСИДСКИХ ПОСТАНОВЛЕНИЙ МАТЕНАДАРАНА)

***Аннотация.** Юридические дебаты сыграли важную роль в отношениях между Эчмиадзинской церковью и правительством Каджаров. Эти дебаты служили средством легитимации правительства и регулирования социальных и политических взаимодействий между двумя сторонами. С одной стороны, исламская юриспруденция помогла правительству Каджаров усилить свое влияние на армян, используя религиозные принципы. С другой стороны, юридические и религиозные различия между шиитами и армянским христианством вызвали напряженность в отношениях и создали проблемы в культурном и социальном взаимодействии. В этом исследовании изучается взаимное влияние этих дебатов на отношения между Эчмиадзином и правительством Каджаров и анализируется роль юриспруденции в формировании религиозных и политических идентичностей в этот исторический период. Целью данного исследования является изучение роли юридических дебатов в отношениях между Эчмиадзином и правительством Каджаров с аналитической точки зрения. Поэтому оно стремится ответить на следующие вопросы: 1- Какова была роль исламской юриспруденции в регулировании отношений между Эчмиадзинской церковью и правительством Каджаров? 2- Как юридические дебаты могли помочь укрепить или ослабить политические и социальные отношения между Эчмиадзином и правительством Каджаров? Результаты исследования показывают, что юридические и религиозные дебаты действовали как инструмент легитимации для правительства Каджаров и помогли укрепить их отношения с Эчмиадзинской церковью. Юридические и религиозные споры между шиитами и армянами вызвали напряженность и проблемы в отношениях между Эчмиадзином и правительством Каджаров, что повлияло на социальное и политическое взаимодействие.*

***Ключевые слова:** юридические дебаты, Каджарский Эчмиадзин, армяне, Матнадаран.*

### **Introduction**

The relations between the Church of Etchmiadzin and the Qajar government in the 19th century were particularly complex due to the religious and cultural diversity of Iranian society, especially in the Armenian-populated areas. One of the key factors in these relations was jurisprudential and religious debates, which not only affected political interactions but also had a profound impact on religious and social identities.

Islamic jurisprudence, as a legal and moral system, played an important role in determining the rights and duties of religious minorities. As an Islamic state, the Qajar government used jurisprudence to legitimize its policies towards minorities. Based on jurisprudential principles, Armenians and other religious minorities were recognized in Iran, but this recognition was accompanied by certain restrictions and conditions.

For example, the “dhimma” law, which allowed religious minorities to worship freely, at the same time required them to pay certain taxes and observe certain social laws. On the other hand, the Echmiadzin Church, as the Armenian religious leadership institution, tried to preserve the cultural and religious identity of the Armenian community by using its jurisprudential and religious principles. The church not only promoted religious customs and traditions, but also played an active role in social and economic fields. Relations between Echmiadzin and the Qajar government were often influenced by these jurisprudential debates; in such a way that both sides tried to resolve existing issues through negotiation and agreement. However, there were also tensions in these relations. Sometimes, different interpretations of jurisprudential debates could lead to disputes. For example, when the Qajar government sought to increase taxes or limit the rights of Armenians, the Echmiadzin Church reacted strongly and tried to defend the rights of the

Armenian community by citing jurisprudential principles. These reactions could have fueled social and political tensions and even provoked unrest in the Armenian-populated areas. Finally, it can be said that jurisprudential debates were not only a means of legitimizing the policies of the Qajar government, but also acted as a determining factor in the relations between Echmiadzin and the government. These debates helped to shape religious and political identities, while at the same time creating challenges that required dialogue and understanding between the two sides. In this regard, a closer examination of these relations can contribute to a better understanding of the social and political history of Iran during the Qajar era.

### **Background**

Until now, no independent and comprehensive research has been conducted analytically on the role of jurisprudential issues in the relations between Echmiadzin and the Qajar government (based on the documents of the Persian decrees of the Matenadaran), and only one independent book entitled *The Persian Decrees of the Matenadaran*, which was a rereading of those decrees by Gostikian (2021), has been written. In the field of political, social and economic history of Armenia in the Middle Ages, the Persian documents of the archive of the manuscripts of the "Matnadaran" in Yerevan provide very valuable information. The first attempts to scientifically examine these documents were made by Catholicos Simeon Yerevantsi (1763-1780), and their results are presented in one of his works called "Jamber". For the above study, only the collection of documents in the Echmiadzin Church and several neighboring religious

centers was available to the author. However, since then, with the gradual collection of many documents and evidence from other places, the collection of the aforementioned documents has increased significantly in terms of volume and number, and the most important of them, with Armenian and Russian translations, along with the original text of the documents, was printed and published in Yerevan by Hakob Papazian (1968) in two volumes with an introduction, commentary, and detailed footnotes. Research has been conducted using the documents of the Persian orders of the Matenadaran, including Fatemeh Orji (1400 AH) who examined "Abbas Mirza's relations with the Echmiadzin Church based on archival documents" based on a number of documents of the Matenadaran. In Orji's research, an attempt has been made to examine the relations of Prince Abbas Mirza with the Armenians, and especially Echmiadzin, in order to examine Iran's efforts to maintain these interactions and also to maintain its historical sovereignty over that land. Alam, Avakian, and Iqbal (1401 AH) in a study titled "The Role of the Church in the Relations between Armenians and the Qajar Kings with Emphasis on the Persian Edicts of the Matenadaran" examined the role of Echmiadzin - as a religious institution during the Qajar period - in regulating the relations between Armenians and the Iranian government based on the Edicts of the Matenadaran. In a way, the stability and durability of the Armenian nation was indebted to Echmiadzin, and the Qajar kings also established contact with the Armenians living in Iran through this religious institution. In another study, Farshid Norouzi, Houshang Khosrow Beigi, and Nizam Ali Dehnavi (1401) titled "Territorial Divisions in Connection with Dynasty Governance in Iran in the Early Qajar Period (1264 AH/1210 AH)" examined the Qajars' use of other strategies and policies in order to maintain and administer the territory of the enclave states of Iran in the early days of their rule, in addition to using the power of the sword. Alizadeh Moghadam and Hashemipour (1394) titled "The Cultural Status of the Armenians of Bushehr in the Qajar Period Based on Documents of this Period" examined the cultural status of the Armenians of Bushehr in terms of the cultural growth of that region, as well as the effects they had on the educational institutions and press affairs of that period. Also, Aziznejad (2019) in his research "Relations between the Yerevan Khanate and Georgia and the Role of Peripheral Powers during the Rule of Hossein Ali Khan Qajar of Yerevan" deals with the role of the Sukh-ul-Jişi Khans of Yerevan and their privileged position in the South Caucasus region.

### **Jurisprudential Issues**

The Qajar period in Iranian history was a time when Armenian society faced many challenges and developments. During this period, jurisprudential and religious issues were raised as a means to preserve the cultural and religious identity of Armenians in the face of social and political pressures. Issues such as inheritance, religious freedom, non-conversion of religion, and

religious ceremonies not only had legal and jurisprudential aspects, but also acted as key elements in the formation of collective identity and social cohesion of Armenians. The issue of inheritance among Armenians, due to the existence of specific religious and jurisprudential laws, played an important role in the distribution of assets and the preservation of family wealth. These laws, in addition to being regulated based on religious principles, also helped to strengthen family and social relations. Religious freedom was another important issue that allowed Armenians to continue living in a society that was often influenced by Islam while preserving their religion and culture. This freedom not only meant that the religious rights of Armenians were not violated, but also allowed them to hold their religious ceremonies without fear of repression. Not changing their religion was also a fundamental principle in Armenian society. This principle not only indicated adherence to religious faith and beliefs, but also helped strengthen the national and cultural identity of Armenians. Religious ceremonies during the Qajar period, as symbols of identity and culture, played a significant role in maintaining social cohesion and strengthening bonds between members of society. These ceremonies, which included various celebrations, rituals, and ceremonies, provided an opportunity to renew the covenant with religious and cultural values.

#### **Inheritance of Armenians who convert to Islam**

The Qajar kings had also issued decrees on the inheritance of Armenians who convert from Christianity to Islam, so that according to the royal decree, every Armenian who converts to Islam inherits like a Muslim. In fact, the issuance of this decree was a continuation of the decree of Shah Sultan Hussein Safavi (Savory R., P.251.). He had also issued a decree [attributed to] Imam Jafar Sadiq stating that anyone who converts to Islam can inherit all the property of their deceased non-Muslim relatives. (Ghokasian, 2016:261) "Every Armenian subject of the state who is blessed with this honorable Islam, and after Islam, each of the relatives and relatives who are in the religion of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), when they die, the new person who is in the religion of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), will take possession of all the remains and estates of the deceased according to the inheritance, and the other relatives and heirs of the deceased will receive no share or inheritance. Although this meaning is not contradictory according to Sharia law, but also according to the law of serfdom, since that community follows the honorable religion of Islam, their respect and favoritism towards the general public of Muslims, especially towards our noble deputies, it is necessary for us to open the door of justice and fairness in this regard to the general situation of the Armenian subjects of this state. It is decreed that each of those members of the community who have embraced Islam shall inherit from their deceased relatives and relatives in the same way as other Muslims, in whatever way Muslims are entitled to inheritance. The new Muslims shall also inherit from the relatives of the

deceased in the Christian religion who are entitled to inheritance and share. For example, if a son has embraced Islam and his father has died in the Christian religion, and his mother is a Christian daughter, that Muslim son shall inherit from the property of the deceased Christian father two-thirds, and another third shall be established and divided specifically for the inheritance rights of that Christian daughter” (Gostikian, 2021:86).

### **Religious Freedom and Non-Conformity**

Iran is a land of great religions and faiths, and the monotheistic approach of Islam has made it possible for followers of other heavenly religions to continue living in Iran, and inappropriate behavior towards followers of other religions has been considered and condemned in Islamic ethics and laws. Inappropriate behavior has its roots in a misunderstanding of Islam, baseless prejudices, wrong domestic policies, or foreign interference. Armenians in Iran have lived a peaceful life alongside Iranians throughout various historical periods, with the history of this non-violence dating back to the Achaemenid era until the issuance of Cyrus' Charter of Human Rights. "Armenia was considered a possession of the Achaemenids during the reign of Cyrus. Due to his expansionist policies, Cyrus soon captured Babylon and crowned himself in its great temple. It was in this place that he issued his famous charter on respecting freedom of religion and the rights of conquered nations, which certainly included the Armenian nation" (Pirnia, 1994, Vol. 1:336-337). The lack of coercion, oppression, and strictness towards Armenians regarding Christianity was always condemned by the kings and governments of the time. In the decree of Shah Suleiman Safavi prohibiting the interference of Iranian officials in the religious affairs of the Armenians (1669 AD/1079 AH), this matter was emphasized. This tradition and respect for the Christian religion were a common thing in the policies of the Iranian governments. "The world's judgment was obeyed when at this time, the chiefs of the Jews, Stephan and Ratabit, came to the court of the world and informed that the Armenians of the Mehrasia of Julah, Faridan, Barvari, Kandeman and Lanjan belonged to the Masharaliyya, the rulers, the owners of the fields, the owners of the annual crops, etc., entered into the lands belonging to him, forced the marriages of the said people, and prevented the collection of zakat and donations from the said Armenians, and did not allow them to practice the religion and customs of the family of Christ. Some of the Armenians there also entered into the said matter, did not obey, and were slow in performing the usual customs. In this regard, the request for the number of Ashraf was made by the Highness and Highness of the Safi Qoli Bey Yuzbashi. "Forever for the promises. Therefore, we have decreed that if the deeds were true, none of the rulers, the tyuldars, the annuals, etc., would enter the ammunition belonging to him contrary to the order and calculation, collect the zakat and donations of the aforementioned Armenians, and would not interfere in the marriages and contracts of the aforementioned Armenians, and the

aforementioned Armenian community would act according to their own custom, which they practiced with the former Mehraşianis, with the Masharaliyya, under the responsibility of the Highness and Excellency of the Panah Safi Qoli Bey Yuzbashi, who presented a calculated aid and considered it forbidden in this regard, not to demand a new amount every year" (Archives of the Monastery of the Savior of All, available in Shelf 6, File 41, Document 63). The Armenians of New Julfa were always forced to live with difficulties. The Shah personally visited the Monastery of the Savior of All and engaged in theological and ideological discussions with the Armenian monks, especially Hovhannes Vardayat (Vardapet Jułayeci, 1797; Ter Yovhaneanc, Vol.I, PP. 202-203).

Occasionally, Muslim agents were sent to New Julfa to proclaim that Christians who converted to Islam would enjoy benefits and privileges (Ter Yovhaneanc Y, Vol. I, P.203). In order to be more easily recognized by the general public, Armenians had to wear their clothes with a collar that opened below the neck (Vardapet Jułayeci, 1797; Ter Yovhaneanc, Vol.I, PP. 202-203). and wear a piece of old cloth hanging from their backs. They were not allowed to enter the city on horseback, and they were not allowed to go to the market on rainy days, lest they defile the property of Muslim merchants with their wet clothes or have an encounter with Muslims. (Khamenei, 2009:67). They were given the humiliating task of carrying the bodies of executed criminals, and they were forced to pay an additional tax to cover the cost of grain that was to be fed to the royal family's poultry (Vardapet Jułayeci, 1797; Ter Yovhaneanc, Vol.I, p. 208).

Muslims broke thousands of tombstones in Armenian cemeteries in the shape of one of the four archangels to symbolize the circumcision of dead Christians and their conversion to Islam (Vardapet Jułayeci, 1797; Ter Yovhaneanc, Vol.I, p.206 ). Tadeusz Judas Kruszyński, a Polish Catholic missionary who had been working for the Jesuits in Isfahan for twenty years in the early 18th century, gave the following example of the anti-Christian behavior prevalent during the reign of Shah Sultan Hussein: "In the time of the previous Shahs, they were tried according to the laws of the Lex Talionis, but since Shah Sultan Hussein ascended the throne, the mullahs claimed that it was shameful to cut off the head of a Muslim for the sake of an infidel, a Christian. They tried to make this principle not a law but a custom in all provinces, that any Muslim who killed an Armenian could only be sentenced to pay his family one donkey's load of grain for subsistence." (Kruszyński, 1729, P.219). The Church, as a Christian religious institution, was the only connecting factor between the Armenian people and the Qajar government. This church, while being trusted by both parties, played an important and key role in resolving disputes and organizing Armenian issues and their religious freedom during the reigns of Agha Mohammad Khan and Fath Ali Shah Qajar. A review of historical developments and documents

clearly shows that the principled policy of the Muslim Qajar government was to provide serious and continuous support to its Christian subjects, especially the Armenians. In such a way that Muslims did not force Armenians to convert to Islam and did not violate their religious beliefs and rituals, they issued important decrees: "His Highness the Caliph Dawud should know that it has been decreed by the Supreme Court that in the aforementioned Ojaq and in the villages and farms inhabited by Armenians, no one from the Muslim community may ring bells, beat boards, shout, or carry dead bodies in the manner previously prescribed, and that no one from the Muslim community may interfere or interfere with them in performing the aforementioned duties in accordance with their own beliefs and laws. No one may interfere with or occupy the properties, farms, and gardens purchased and endowed by the Ojaq or the church without His Highness's order, prohibition, permission, and permission. If anyone from the Muslim community has a claim, he may not make a claim without the order of the world, and the Muslim community is not authorized or permitted to force the Armenians to convert to Islam." (Gostikian, 2021:8) Armenians enjoyed religious freedom during the Qajar period. "Today, a ceremony titled "Garden Party" was held in the Galustian Garden belonging to Master Galustian with the participation of the consuls of foreign countries, Armenians, Zoroastrians, Muslims, and the British. The host was Mozahid al-Dawla, the political representative of Iran in Kolkata, and the occasion was the presence of the newly formed group "Iranian Society" and a speech by some of its members. First, the representative of the Armenians, Masrub, and a member of the aforementioned community, recounted the history of Armenian life and their services to Iran and said that Armenians have always been free in Iran in their religious rituals" (Farahani, 2006, Vol. 3:22). The Qajar kings also emphasized that if anyone has any questions about the religion and practice of Christianity, they should go to Christian scholars and talk to them. In order to prevent the seizure of the property of the Armenian Christian nation by Muslims, they had also issued decrees to the rulers and governors of the regions. "His Highness the Caliph Ephrem should know that since the authority of the Armenians here is at our disposal under the imperial affection, and it is necessary for us to protect their religion and honor, therefore, His Highness decrees that the Armenians should keep these borders in accordance with the law of Jesus Christ, which they have been acting in the same way under His Highness until now, and prohibit them from being occupied by the Christian nation. If anyone has any questions about their religion and practice, he should go to "His Excellency, come and debate with His Excellency and the scholars of the nation of Christ and hear his answer. He should have this in a regular and regular manner" (Gostikian, 2021:68).

The Qajar kings, in accordance with the internal laws of the Armenians, had decreed that the internal hierarchy in the field of determining the great and the small, the noble and the non-

noble, should be determined by the Caliph, and that the determination of ranks among the Armenians should be the sole responsibility of the Caliph, the Supreme Patriarch of the Church, and that all Armenians should be subject to this royal order. "His Highness the Caliph Ephrem should know that the petition of His Highness the Holy See, in consideration of the opinion of Mehr Zia, became apparent and evident. He had stated that among the Christian nation, the determination of the great and the small, the noble and the non-noble should be determined and determined by His Highness, and that the great and the nobles among the said nation are considered honorable. Out of mercy to His Highness, His Highness granted His Highness' request and granted it. The decree of the obligatory obedience of the followers was issued by His Highness the Grand Amir al-Amr al-Azzam, Hussein Khan, Sardar Begirbegi of Yerevan, which considers the nobility of the said nation to be determined and determined by His Highness, and prohibits anyone who is considered honorable by His Highness "He considers it necessary to respect him" (Gostikian, 2021:36).

### **Religious ceremonies**

The Greeks and Attica were the first to teach the Armenians the laws and customs of Christianity. These teachers and missionaries taught them the doctrines of the Holy Spirit and religious concepts in the religious way of the Greeks, that is, in the tradition and method from the Father to the Son - not the Father to the Son. He believes in the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the body of Christ. The Armenians, like the Uticas, believe that Christ had a distinct nature, so the Armenians follow the beliefs of the Monophysites, the Jacobites in the East of the Earth have this in their prayers. They read the Word of God and various hymns and prayers in their own language, as was customary in the fourth century and has not changed anything. Also, their beliefs about sacred images are moderate and are not unusual, noisy or blasphemous. In the consecration of bread and wine, all the people of the church participate in it, and everyone from monks and priests to children eat simple bread and drink wine from the same cup (Chardin, 1372, vol. 1:411). Armenians were followers of the Gregorian Church, which had separated from the Orthodox Church according to the decision of the Council of Chalcedon. Armenians lived mostly in the village of "Chekhor Sogd", but a large number of them lived in Jolfa, Isfahan, and a smaller number in Darahdan and other cities (Ravandi, 1354, vol. 3:5). However, while Iran had an absolute majority of followers of Islam, there was no country in the Middle East that had as many Christian citizens as Iran. When Armenia separated from Iran, almost all its inhabitants preferred life under the yoke of the Iranians to the Turks, and as a result, they migrated en masse to Iran and dispersed throughout different parts of the country. The Persians welcomed them warmly, and soon most of them were wealthy and financially independent (Drouville, 1991:115). During the reign of Shah Abbas Safavi, some restrictions were imposed on the performance of

religious ceremonies. "When I had visited all the details of the church, I was taken to the house of the patriarch, who treated me very well and embraced me, and since I was a Christian, he asked me to intercede when I returned to His Majesty the Shah so that the Armenians could freely perform their religious ceremonies, and to restore the former exemptions to them, and to restore what the Turks had taken from them. After dinner, I returned to the camp with the companions assigned to me by the Shah and the companions sent with me by the Armenians. When I returned to Yerevan, I dismounted my horse while passing in front of the royal tent and went to His Majesty's presence to report what had happened to me in Armenia" (Daryabol, 1351:65). The policy of the Qajar government in dealing with religious minorities was similar to previous policies, and even in periods such as Abbas Mirza and Amir Kabir, religious tolerance, the right to freedom of worship, and equal social rights were established. Armenians in Iran always had freedoms from the kings of the time to perform their religious ceremonies. In such a way that, considering the economic functions, trade, and loyalty to the land and water in which they grew and lived, this matter gave the governments of the time double attention to granting them freedom to perform rituals. Armenians also have three other holidays throughout the year, and these three holidays are the Ascension (the ascension of Christ), the Annunciation (the day when Gabriel (peace be upon him) announces the incarnation of the Spirit to Mary (peace be upon her), and the Feast of St. George. Especially on this last holiday, Armenians practiced extraordinary worship and asceticism. Some did not eat anything for three days and some for five consecutive days (Taverniyeh, 1369:431).

During the reign of Mohammad Shah Qajar, Christian Armenians were treated with compassion and intellectual perspective. So much so that the era of Mohammad Shah became known as the Age of Enlightenment. The result of tolerance and tolerance during this period was the closer relationship between Christian Armenians and the Muslim people in the geographical area of Iran. Mohammad Shah Qajar reminded the French ambassador about the relationship and cooperation with Christian Armenians and their freedom: "There are 30,000 Christian families living in my territory, who are also good people. You are aware that I treat them and the rest of my subjects equally, and this is something I have promoted for a long time. They never dared to do such a thing in Turkey. I have mixed Christians and Muslims in the Iranian army. Now Christian officers, brigadiers, and colonels are in charge of the command of Muslims, and you know them yourself, don't you?" (Nateq, 1378:248). The decrees of the Qajar government emphasized that regarding the Armenian religious ceremonies, which included ringing bells, beating boards, shouting and carrying out the dead, no Muslim should prevent or interfere with them from carrying out their religious law. The Qajar government supported the performance of Armenian religious ceremonies in such a way that it made exceptions for them. Another

important decree from Fath Ali Shah addressed to the Archbishop of Echmiadzin is at hand, in which the following items were emphasized: exemption and payment of taxes and duties; obliging Muslim tenants to pay rent to Armenians, burying the dead without difficulty, ringing the bell and entering the church without any prohibition; prohibiting the harassment of priests; prohibiting the forced conversion of Armenians; exemption from road tolls for Armenians who come from the Ottoman Empire for pilgrimage; free use of the Karhi and Ushakat rivers (Bournoutian, , 2003.Dos.55).

"On the occasion of the Armenian religious ceremony held annually in mourning and condolence for the murder of Jesus Christ, the trustees of the Armenian prayer houses in Tehran asked the Tehran military government, since Armenians were supposed to go to the "prayer house" for three hours on Friday night, 2/9/1300, from the previous night until almost morning, and perform their religious rituals, that the military government agents not prevent the movement of Armenians that night so that the Armenians could freely go to the "prayer houses" at Darvaze Qazvin and Darvaze Shah Abdol Azim that night and perform their religious rituals. The trustees of the Armenian prayer houses in Tehran also asked the Tehran military government to allow them to publish an announcement in Armenian on this matter" (Farahani, 2006, Vol. 3:11). A review of historical developments and documents clearly proves that the principled policy of the Qajar Muslim government was serious and continuous support for its Christian subjects, especially the Armenians. In fact, they issued important decrees regarding the non-compulsion of Armenians to convert to Islam by Muslims and the non-infringement of their religious customs and rituals. "It was decreed by Humayun that His Highness the Caliph Dawud, the Caliph of the Church, should consider that if any of the Muslim community has a claim, he should not make a claim without the command of the world, and that the Muslim community is not authorized and permitted to bring Armenians into the fold of Islam by force and coercion. It is decreed that His Highness the Amir al-Amra, the Azam Beglarbey, Chekhor Saad, and other Beglarbeys, and the rulers of the Sultan's protected provinces, as prescribed, shall not violate or deviate from the meaning of the firm royal decree. As it has been decreed, each one considers normality and aggression to be a matter of the royal policy, and they intend to respect His Highness the Masharalieh, and they are bound by the decree not to deviate from it." (Gostikian, 2021:8). The Qajar government always had great respect for the protection of the Armenians living in its territory and had ordered all the rulers of the provinces and regions not to force any of the Armenians to accept Islam by force. Issuing such decrees would further facilitate the coexistence of the two Muslim and Christian peoples living in the territory of Iran. "It was decreed that His Highness, the High One, the One who is the source of honor, protection, majesty, and favor, the refuge of sincerity and devotion, the Chief of the Christian Grand Patriarchs and the Head of the

Christian Patriarchate, the Caliph of the Caliphate, David, the Caliph of the Church, with the consideration of the mercy of the Almighty, the explanation of the noble and honorable, should know that since according to the decree of the King of Humayun, if any of the people of Islam has a claim, they should not make their claims without the order of the world, obey the king, and should not force any of the Armenians to accept the honor of Islam, so that in reality, they should consolidate and organize their affairs and be independent in the affairs assigned to them, so that none of them can do anything about the affairs of the Caliphate of the Christian nation, so that it is not permissible to violate or transgress" (Gostikian, 2021:13). During the Qajar period, Armenians had freedom in their clothing and the government did not force them to wear the type of clothing that the government wanted. Armenian women chose their own clothing. In 1309 AH, Nasser al-Din Shah traveled to Persia. On this trip, Dr. Gerard Fourier, a French court physician who had been appointed to this position since 1306 AH, was one of his companions. The story of the Shah and the court physician about the type of clothing that Armenian women chose of their own free will and the Qajar government did not impose any obligation on them is somewhat new. The important point of this story is that Armenian women are very close to Iranian women in terms of clothing. In fact, due to their adherence to Christianity and their deep religious belief in the sanctity of clothing, they were very careful about the sanctity of clothing. The first story about freedom in clothing is narrated by Dr. Fourier: "18 Dhu al-Qa'dah 1309 AH / June 14: We passed a large town whose inhabitants are Armenians and their priests came to welcome us with knowledge. The women of this town wear tall, cylindrical hats wrapped in red cloth, and hide their pale faces with a white, flowered scarf tied around their mouths. No one forces these Christian women to wear this veil; they themselves have chosen to observe this Islamic custom" (Fouwriya, 2006:371). Nasser al-Din Shah, like Fourier, is seeing this attire for the first time and is equally amazed. "Then we reached the village of Kalav, which was located under the left-hand mountain, that is, at the very mouth that leads to Astana, and is owned by Mohammad Taqi Khan, the son of Haji Reza Qoli Khan. The subjects of Kalav are mostly Armenians. When we arrived here, we saw that all the people of the village were standing on the road. In a strange way, the Armenian women had all covered their heads like shawls and hats, and had also covered their chins and mouths. They also had a priest who was wearing a robe. Their attire and appearance were not without spectacle" (Qajar, 2008:70).

### **Conclusion**

Echmiadzin, the most important religious center of the Armenians, had a significant impact on the religious, political and social developments in Armenia. The impact of Echmiadzin is particularly noteworthy during the Qajar period. Despite the turbulent history of the Armenian people, what was agreed upon by all Armenians and somehow preserved their unity and

prevented their disintegration was the religious institution called Christianity. In order to prevent Yerevan, and especially the Echmiadzin Church, from getting close to the Russians, the Shiite Qajar government sought to strengthen relations with them in order to prevent their close relations with the Russians by attracting the attention of the leaders of Echmiadzin. Armenians in Iran always had freedoms from the kings of the time to perform their religious ceremonies, such as ringing bells, beating boards, shouting and raising the dead, tax exemption, performing rituals and ceremonies, building churches, collecting zakat, and dealing with the situation of subordinate churches. So that, considering the economic, commercial and loyalty functions they had towards the water and land in which they grew and lived, this matter gave the governments of the time double attention to granting them freedom. The Qajar government had specified the scope of authority of the Caliph Echmiadzin. This delegation of authority in the matter of punishment and discipline, determining the great and the small, distinguishing noble and non-noble and the type of treatment of the Caliph with the Armenians and determining the ranks among the Armenians was solely the responsibility of the Caliph Echmiadzin, which in fact expresses the importance of the Caliph and his position in the eyes of the Qajar government. A review of historical developments and documents clearly shows that the principled policy of the Shiite Muslim Qajar government was serious and continuous support for its Christian subjects, especially the Armenians, based on a stable coexistence and the absence of religious conflicts. So that they issued important decrees regarding the non-compulsion of the Armenians to convert to Islam by Muslims and the non-infringement of their religious rituals and customs. Given the trust that the Qajar government had in the head of the Armenian Church, as well as the connection that existed between the Armenians and Echmiadzin, Echmiadzin played an intermediary and regulatory role in the process of religious relations between the Shiite Qajar government and the Christian Armenians living in the geographical territory of Iran.

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