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OBLIGATIONS AND RIGHTS OF DEACONESSSES (NUNS)
OF THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH
IN NEW JULFA (ISFAHAN IN PERSIA)
IN THE YEARS 1623-1954. A CANONICAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to analyse, using the historical-legal method, the obligations and rights of the Armenian deaconesses in New Julfa (Isfahan in Persia) between 1623 and 1954, i.e. from the time of the erection of St. Catherine's Monastery until the death of the last of the nuns. The results of the analysis will be used to verify the hypothesis that the closure of this Monastery occurred primarily due to neglect of nurturing the monastic lifestyle. This subject has been scarcely addressed in the literature and there has been a general lack of studies on this topic written in Polish. The primary source material will be two articles published in Jerusalem between 1944 and 1945: s.n., "Nor Īowlayi S. Katarinean anapatē" ["Saint Catherine's Monastery in New Julfa"], *Sion* 10-12:192-99 and 1-2: 23-27. In addition, this study will be based on the sparse literature on the subject relating to Armenian deaconesses in New Julfa written in German [Arat 1990], English [Oghlukian 1994; Ervine 2007, 17-56; Ghougassian et

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al. s.d.; Dum-Tragut 2013, 71-85], Armenian [s.n. 1944, 192-99; 1945, 23-27] and Russian [Казарян 2022, 5-23]. The romanisation of Armenian names will follow the rules adopted by the Commission on Standardisation of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland [Pisowicz s.d.].

1. ARMENIAN DIASPORA

[Old] Julfa, currently located in the Islamic Republic of Iran, is a city founded by King Tigranes in the 6th century BC. Historically, the city was founded in the territory of Greater Armenia on a rocky strip of land wedged between the Aras River to the south and a mountainous range to the north. [Old] Julfa was situated on the left bank of the Aras River at a distance of about 32 km south-east of the city of Nakhchivan. [Old] Julfa, according to a diplomatic account compiled in 1602 by Sefer Muratowicz († after 1631), was inhabited by ca. 15,000 Armenian families [Muratowicz 1777, 8; Ghougassian et al. s.d.].

The two empires, both Ottoman and Persian, engaged in endless war battles with each other, divided the historic territories of Greater Armenia between themselves in the early 17th century. Abbas I the Great († 1629), the Persian Shah, leaving his former lands, including the Aras Valley, to the Ottoman Empire, chose Isfahan as his new capital. Seeking artisans proficient in the arts, he forcibly resettled the Armenians, who had hitherto resided in the Aras Valley, including the [Old] Julfa. The Shah resettled ca. 400,000 Armenians to Isfahan in 1604; some of these forcibly resettled Armenians then established a district of Isfahan located on the land called “Kāṣṣa” on the opposite side of the Zayandeh River. This district was later called New Julfa, becoming over time an important centre of Armenian culture, with a scriptorium established in 1607 and a printing house founded in 1638. New Julfa became an important hub for trade conducted in the Middle East over the next few decades. Enterprising Armenians organised a network of trade factories spread over a vast area located between Cadiz on the Pyrenean Peninsula and Petersburg in the West and the Philippines and Indonesia “looking out” to the Pacific in the East [Mutafian 2018, 12-13; Barry 2019, 79].

In 1614 Abbas I the Great ordered the construction of an Armenian cathedral in Isfahan, where both Armenian and Catholic clergy could cele-

brate their services. At the same time, the Armenian cathedral in Etchmiadzin, historically located in Greater Armenia, was to be demolished and the stones from its demolition were to be used for the construction of a new cathedral in Isfahan. However, Կ՛աճա Նազար, a prominent merchant and future mayor of New Julfa, managed to persuade the Shah to abandon this plan and thus, thanks to him, the Etchmiadzin Cathedral has survived to the present day. On the other hand, the other stones were deposited in St. Catherine's (of Alexandria) Monastery next to St. George's Church [Ghougassian et al. s.d.].¹

2. SAINT CATHERINE'S MONASTERY

In 1623, Xač'atur Vardapet Kesarac'i († 1646), a young, energetic, well-educated and holy man who enjoyed the moral and financial support of the local Armenian diaspora, became Bishop of New Julfa. During the first six years of his ministry, Xač'atur Vardapet Kesarac'i established a college at his seat, the Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour, and opened five other Armenian schools at Armenian parish temples [Ghougassian 1998, 89-91].

In the same year, i.e. in 1623, the Monastery of St. Catherine (of Alexandria) (*Surb Katarine kusanac anapat*), called desert/hermitage (*anapat*), was erected. In the literature, the initiative for the foundation of this monastery is attributed either to Xač'atur'i Vardapet'i Kesarac'i [Ghougassian s.d.; s.n. 1944, 197] or to Catholicos Movsēs'owi Tat'evac'i [Ervin 2007, 31]. This monastic congregation started with three nuns from [Old] Julfa: Urupsana, Taguhi and Hrip'simē, who organised monastic life according to Armenian models. The nuns brought with them, from [Old] Julfa, the relics of St. Catherine (of Alexandria), St. Hrip'simē and St. John the Baptist. The foundation was a success, since the monastic congregation already numbered thirty-three nuns in 1702; Talitha became

¹ The Italian traveller Pietro Della Valle († 1652), while staying in Isfahan between 1617 and 1619, ca. twelve years after the dramatic deportation, noted that Armenians in New Julfa had by then managed to build ten churches, while only six new churches had been erected in Isfahan itself [Ghougassian et al. s.d.]. Among these churches, two in particular stand out to this day for their unparalleled beauty: the Most Holy Saviour Church (1654) and the one called "Bethlehem" (1627). By the mid-20th century, twelve of these churches had survived the tumultuous history, eight of which were regularly used for liturgical services and the other four only occasionally [s.n. 1944, 192].

the first mother superior, while Maria became the second [s.n. 1944, 196; Oghlukian 1994, 29]; in 1839 the community numbered only sixteen nuns [Chaillot 2020, 42]. The material funds for the establishment of the monastery were provided by Կ՛աճա Exiazar Lāzāriān, grandfather of Aghazar Lāzāriān and his two sisters Catherine and Tajlum. St. Catherine's Monastery was the first monastery of Armenian nuns to be erected within the present borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran [s.n. s.d. d].

The wings of the monastery on three sides surrounded the structure of St. George's Church (*Gharib Church*), which was probably founded in 1611 by Կ՛աճա Exiazar Lāzāriān. From an architectural point of view, the church presents a rectangle measuring 9 x 5.6 m with a small arched dome with eight skylights. Inside, the plastered walls of the church are made of brick and clay, with iconographic representations of the twelve apostles in the chancel. The church retains a foundation inscription carved on the stone in front of the altar, however, without a date: "to the memory of Miss Catherine and Tajlum" [s.n. s.d. b, c, e]. The nuns had 33 small and also narrow cells at their disposal [ibid.]. In addition, a small room was built in 1842 to house a priest, which may indicate that the community of nuns was at least periodically accompanied by a presbyter. This room was also used for guests visiting the nuns. The monastery was surrounded by a high wall to ensure seclusion and security for the monastic community. Each cell was provided with a table-bench, while the floor was lined with wood, which the nuns used for resting [s.n. 1944, 195]. The monastery was inhabited by a total of about 200 nuns during the four centuries of its existence [s.n. s.d. d]. There was even a fruitless attempt to revive it in 1937, but this failed, and the last nun belonging to the monastery died in 1954 [Arat 1990, 77; Chaillot 2020, 42].

3. THE DAILY PROGRAMME OF THE MONASTIC CONGREGATION

In addition to private prayers, the nun was obliged to participate in the "Divinum Officium," in which outsiders were not allowed to take part, which can still be seen today in the internal structure of St. George's Church. Each nun was obliged to attend the "Divinum Officium" three times: matins and lauds (*gišeraĵian* and *arawotean*) before sunrise, ves-

pers (*erekojean*) and compline (*xatalakan*) at dusk [s.n. 1945, 24]. The nuns were allowed to go to nearby Armenian monasteries and churches to participate in services, however, only on the major liturgical Armenian holidays [Arat 1990, 79].

A postulant had to be in her twenties to become a nun. Furthermore, the postulant was educated by each nun, as there was neither a “novitiate” nor a novice mistress. If any postulant was presented to the superior by a nun, then she could take her “vows”; and after a short time, the superior would present her candidature to the bishop, who would grant the nun the first four “lower orders” [s.n. 1944, 199]. Deficiencies with regard to the organisation of formation must be considered as one of the reasons that led to the closure of this monastery.

4. STATUTES OF 1855

Archbishop T'adēos Begnazarian († 1863) granted the monastery in 1855 the *Statutes* he himself edited [Chaillot 2020, 42]. Unfortunately, their text in its entirety has not survived; however, parts of them were reproduced by Xoren Xowc'ean in 1914 in a work dedicated to the history of the female Monastery of St. Stephen in Tiflis, Georgia [Xowc'ean 1914].

St. Catherine's Monastery was placed under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Diocese of Isfahan of the Great House of Cilicia. The monastery was governed by an executive body called the “Council of Governors of St. Catherine's Monastery” [henceforth: “Council”]. This “Council” consisted of experienced clergy appointed by the archbishop or his vicar. The “Council” met every Saturday in the monastery buildings to discuss issues related to monastic life. One of the “Council” members was the economic director, whose responsibility it was to keep the monastery's accounts under review. The “Council” ensured that the material goods belonging to the monastery were preserved in good condition and kept an eye on the state of income and expenditure. The “Council” could not transfer real estate or incur loans on pledge; within its competence the Council could only lease property after publishing an offer. The monastery could be a creditor, while it could only borrow with the consent of the archbishop, the vicar or just the “Council”. Two nuns, as stewards, acting on behalf of the archbishop, undertook actions with the consent and knowledge of the “Council”

and the superior. The stewards presented detailed accounts to the “Council” every Saturday in the presence of the superior and the monastic community. At the beginning of each month the “Council” approved the list of income and expenditure of the previous month. At the beginning of the calendar year the “Council” presented to the archbishop with the accounts, notarial deeds, the up-to-date list of properties and rent-paying tenants from the previous calendar year. Nuns and postulants were obliged to strictly observe the rules of discipline; none of them could leave the walls of the monastery and go to the homes of their relatives or friends without the permission of the superior. In addition, nuns and postulants were obliged to be in church regularly during the hours of liturgical celebrations. The nuns and postulants were obliged to follow the instructions and obey the orders given by the “Council” and the superior. The superior oversaw the observance of discipline by the nuns and postulants and the correct celebration of the “Officium Divinum”; she was thus tasked with admonishing recalcitrant nuns and postulants. If, after a second admonition, any of the nuns or postulants failed to correct their reprehensible behaviour, the superior had to inform the “Council”. If the disobedient nun or postulant did not correct her conduct after the third admonition, the “Council” would notify the ecclesiastical authority. The archbishop decided to inflict ecclesiastical penance on the defiant nun or postulant, which consisted, for instance, in a temporary ban on the use of the orarion (*ourar*) by the deaconess, or such a postulant or nun was definitively expelled from the monastery. The nuns were obliged to undertake cooperation with the Armenian Women’s Benevolent Association in New Julfa, which took care of orphans and girls from poor Armenian families, coming to their aid in the education process at the New Julfa school [ibid., 96-99].

From the point of view of canon law, the content of the *Statutes* can hardly be considered complete. The *Statutes* omit norms regulating, *inter alia*, the election of the superior and the length of her term of office, admission to the monastery, taking “vows” and other similar issues, which are not included in the above canons. The *Statutes* completely omit norms relating to, *inter alia*, the formation of nuns, the status of deaconesses and the scope of obligations and rights of a monastic-liturgical nature. The monastery was governed by the above *Statutes* until 1954 [Oghlukian 1994, 33-34].

5. DIACONISSARUM ORDO

According to extant sources, the institution of deaconesses in the Armenian Apostolic Church did not originate earlier than in the 9th century. The Armenian Apostolic Church, after all, did not practice the anointing of the entire female body at baptism, which was the immediate reason for the introduction of the female diaconate, among others, in the Syriac Church. The genesis of the Armenian women's diaconate, whether it was more liturgical or pastoral in nature, remains in dispute. It seems that the genesis of Armenian deaconesses should be traced to female monasticism, which, remaining dispersed, suffered from a chronic shortage of clergy. Women were appointed as deaconesses in places where the activities of a presbyter or deacon were subject to numerous restrictions. The semantics of the term deaconess (*hawatawork'*) is ambiguous and in Armenian can mean: a nun, an unmarried or married woman dedicated to God and a hermit. The institution of the deaconess in the Armenian Apostolic Church never had the character of a permanent institution, as deaconesses acted in dispersion and their occurrence was essentially local. The responsibilities and rights of deaconesses in New Julfa were significantly narrower than those of deacons themselves, despite the use of the same rite for their "ordination" by the bishop; in a sense, deaconesses resembled subdeacons more than deacons [ibid., 41-42].

Archbishop T'adēos Begnazarian "ordained" the first nun as a deaconess in 1851 [Chaillot 2020, 42]. It is presumed that only a few nuns from the monastery of New Julfa were "ordained" as deaconesses. The other nuns received only four "lower orders". Since each superior had to be previously "ordained" as a deaconess, she were therefore titled archdeaconess [Oghlukian 1994, 29-30].

6. CONSECRATION OF DEACONESES

The rite for the "ordination" of Armenian deaconesses dates back to the 12th century, being copied many times in manuscripts until the 18th century. The rite was usually entitled: "the ordination of female deacons who are deaconesses". First, Psalm 44 (45) was recited, and then the bishop recited the prayer: "Gracious and merciful God, who by Thy command cre-

ated all things through the incarnation of Thine only-begotten Son, Thou have made male and female equal in holiness. As it pleased Thou to grant the graces of the Holy Spirit not only to man but also to woman, so now choose this Thy servant to serve the needs of Thy Holy Church and grant her the graces of the Holy Spirit to preserve her without blemish and tarnish in the justice, mercy and love of Christ, to whom, with Thee Father Almighty, the life-giving and saving Holy Spirit is due glory, praise and honour” [own translation after Arat 1990, 93-94]. In Kristin Arat’s view, this prayer is not a consecration prayer but only a blessing, since deaconesses were “ordained” without the laying on of hands, as was the case when “lower orders” were conferred [ibid., 94-95].

The text of the rite for the “ordination” of deaconesses used in New Julfa in the 19th and 20th centuries has not been preserved [ibid., 101]. One would have to assume that deaconesses in New Julfa were counted among the clergy [ibid., 102].

7. VESTMENTS OF A DEACONESS

The deaconesses of the Armenian Apostolic Church used their own attire, as mentioned in sources from the 12th century. Deaconesses wore a habit with a veil, a small metal cross on the chest and an orarion (*owrar*) over the right shoulder. Deaconesses in Persia, and thus in New Julfa, in surviving photographs from the 19th and 20th centuries, wore a white transparent veil during the Divine Liturgy, which covered them almost from head to foot [Oghlukian 1994, 39-40]. During the “Divinum officium”, the deaconess wore a robe (*p’ilon*) with a hood (*kngowł*), which she put on her head already in the church.²

8. MONASTIC-LITURGICAL ACTIVITY

One of the main monastic-liturgical tasks of the deaconesses in the New Julfa was to participate in the “Divinum officium.” In addition, she

² Contemporary deaconesses in Istanbul, Turkey, for instance, wear a deacon’s robe, a black veil and an orarion (*owrar*), see Arat 1990, 87-89.

could proclaim the Gospel during the Divine Liturgy and the “ektenia,” participate in the Great Entrance and administer incense during the liturgy. Nuns could only actively participate in the Divine Liturgy as deaconesses in the monastic church of St. George [Arat 1990, 89-92].

9. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY

The Armenian community in New Julfa (in the mid-19th century) became so prosperous that it had its own schools for boys, a vocational school for boys, a library, a printing house and published a newspaper, maintained a medical centre and an orphanage. Armenians also supported various associations and funded numerous social, charitable, educational, cultural, theatrical and sporting programmes.³

However, it was not until the initiative of Archbishop T’adēos Begnazarian in 1858 that Manuk Yordananean of Java founded the first school for girls in New Julfa, which was opened within the walls of St. Catherine’s Monastery. 28 female students started in the first year; the school was run by nuns from the monastery. The school building included classrooms, a library, dining rooms and a kitchen [s.n. s.d. a]. Girls studying at the school were granted the privilege of attending the liturgical services celebrated in the monastery church of St. George on the day before and “ipsa die” of Armenian ceremonies; only sick schoolgirls were exempted from this obligation [s.n. 1945, 26]. The nuns, in order to pay off the debt generated by their educational activities, baked for sale confections called “gaz” and “loz”, very well-known in Isfahan, Persia. Schooling dedicated to girls in the mid-19th century was a rather peculiar phenomenon in the world at that time [s.n. s.d. a].

³ The Armenian population in New Julfa grew significantly in the early 20th century, estimated to be around 3367 people living in 711 families. The first sign of the revival of Armenian culture in New Julfa was the funding in 1834 by Samean Trading of Madras, India, of a school for boys at St. Stephen’s Church in New Julfa. The curriculum at this school included Armenian grammar, arithmetic, geography, calligraphy, Persian and English. The foundation of the next two schools for boys in New Julfa was financed in 1843 by the Abgarean family from India and in 1853 by Margar Suk’iasean from Java, respectively. The first school was funded at St. Mary’s Church, while the second was funded at St. Minas Church. Tuition was free at these schools and boys were also provided with textbooks and other school supplies free of charge [Ghougassian et al. s.d.].

Archbishop Grigoris Hovhannisyan († 1888) visited Armenian communities scattered in India, Burma and Java in 1878 to raise sufficient funds for the expansion of the Central Armenian School in New Julfa. The new building of the Central Armenian School was open only in 1880, it also combined the three previously autonomous schools operating in New Julfa [s.n. 1944, 197].

Nāṣer-al-Din Shah Qajar († 1896) under Archbishop Grigoris Hovhannisyan awarded an annual grant of 100 toman to St. Catherine's Monastery and the newly built Central Armenian School, which took place in 1880 and 1882 respectively [Arak'el de Tabriz 2005, 56].

Subsequently, in 1892, the school hitherto run by the nuns of St. Catherine's Monastery was legally incorporated into the Central Armenian School, the name of which was simultaneously changed to the Armenian School for Boys and Girls in New Julfa [s.n. 1944, 197].

Although physically the girls' school continued to operate within the walls of the monastery, due to the significant increase in the number of girls, the decision was taken to start a fundraising for a new school building. The collection was conducted among the Armenian diaspora in India and Java. Owing to the efforts of Archbishop Malachi Terunyan, 4,000 toman were collected, which made it possible to build a new school building in 1900. The new school was already outside the walls of St. Catherine's Monastery. The school equipment was moved to the new school building [s.n. s.d. a] Thus ended the work of the nuns (deaconesses) of St. Catherine's Monastery at the girls' school in New Julfa, which had begun in 1858.⁴

⁴ Reza Shah Pahlavi († 1941) decided in 1936 to introduce a uniform curriculum in Persian, actively promoting the establishment of an Iranian nation state. The Minister of Education defined the qualifications required for school principals and teachers. Armenian schools, previously operating independently, came under direct government control, and the teaching of the Armenian language and the organisation of Armenian cultural events were strictly prohibited. The new policy led to the dismissal of Armenian teachers. Protests by students, parents and the Armenian clergy encouraged the emergence of "underground" teaching in private Armenian homes. Subsequently, Mohammad Reza Shah († 1979) allowed Old Armenian to be taught as the Armenian Apostolic Church's own language for a maximum of 8-10 hours per week in 1943, which helped Armenians to retain their national identity. In recent years, many Armenians have emigrated from New Julfa to the Republic of Armenia and the USA, but despite this, the Armenian diaspora continues to be vibrantly alive. Its spiritual foundation is the Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour and 10 active parish churches. Currently, the Armenian education system has about 1,000 students, ranging from kindergarten to

10. CARING AND NURTURING ACTIVITIES

Around the beginning of the 20th century the monastic community began to suffer from a crisis that manifested itself, among other things, in a drastic decrease in the number of nuns, the cause of which, according to Kristin Arat, should be attributed to the establishment of charitable and educational institutions within the monastic walls [Arat 1990, 78; s.n. 1944, 196]. A carpet-weaving manufactory was established in the monastery in 1901, employing ca. 25-30 girls studying at the local school [ibid., 198]. On the initiative of Fr. Bagrat Vardazaryan, another two-storey building was built on the monastery grounds in 1907, this time for an orphanage-workshop [ibid.]. The deaconesses (nuns), with their lack of formation, concentrated on undertaking care and nurturing activities, especially when the school for girls had already been moved to a new building outside the monastery walls. As it was necessary for the deaconesses (nuns) to carry out this activity in order to find sufficient financial resources to continue it, this meant that they were forced to be in a constant search for new sources of income [Ervin 2007, 32].

11. ATTEMPTED REVIVAL

The last Superior of St. Catherine's Monastery, Elizabeth Israelyan, went to Jerusalem in 1944 to visit her brother, Guregh Israelyan († 1949), born also in New Julfa, who was Patriarch of Jerusalem. The Superior hoped to persuade him to allow her to move the community of St. Catherine's Monastery to Jerusalem, where she could undertake similar activities to those previously carried out in New Julfa. However, the patriarch, despite the considerable staff needs at the school run at the Monastery of St. James the Apostle in Jerusalem, rejected her request because of the hypothetical possibility of being accused of nepotism [ibid.].

high school. Armenians in 2005 celebrated the 400th anniversary of their stay in New Julfa [Ghougassian et al. s.d.].

CONCLUSION

Historical and legal data on the deaconesses of St. Catherine's monastery in New Julfa are still incomplete. The deaconesses of the Armenian Apostolic Church operated in New Julfa from 1623 to 1954. The scope of their obligations and rights included performing activities of a monastic-liturgical nature in St. George's Church and the monastery, which characterised the ministry of Armenian deaconesses almost until the end of the 20th century. The external activities of deaconesses in the Armenian diaspora included providing education for girls and caring for orphans. The deaconesses cooperated with the Armenian Women's Benevolent Association in New Julfa, which took care of orphans and girls from poor Armenian families. It was the educational, caring and nurturing activities and, above all, the undertaking of charitable activities that contributed to the decline of this monastery. Successive superiors ceased to focus on the care for the development of the monastic community and the formation of individual nuns, concentrating rather on external "activism". Explaining the reasons for the closure of St. Catherine's Monastery still requires further research due to the incompleteness of the surviving sources.

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**Obligations and Rights of Deaconesses (Nuns)
of the Armenian Apostolic Church in New Julfa (Isfahan in Persia)
in the Years 1623-1954.
A Canonical Analysis**

Abstract

The aim of the article is to present, from a historical and legal perspective, the rights and obligations of Armenian deaconesses in St. Catherine's Monastery in New Julfa (Isfahan, in Persia) in the years 1623-1954. The author, based on sources and sparse literature, analyses the forms of activity of Armenian deaconesses. The nuns (deaconesses) kept monastic lifestyle in accordance with the principles of Armenian monasticism and their *Statutes* of 1855. To develop the Armenian language and culture, the monastery ran a school for Armenian girls in the years 1858-1900. The author formulates the hypothesis that in 1954 this monastery was closed because the formation of the nuns was neglected, too few candidates applied to the monastery, socio-political changes took place in Persia and the nuns were constantly looking for the necessary material resources. The nuns neglected Armenian monastic lifestyle and instead were principally occupied with educational activities, running a school for girls and periodically running an orphanage. It seems that when the school for girls was closed in the monastery, it caused an ideological crisis in the community because there was no material basis for further functioning and no purpose for existing in the Persian Armenian diaspora. Unfortunately, attempts to revive monastic lifestyle in this monastery in 1944 ended in a failure.

Keywords: St. Catherine's Monaster; Хаճ'atur Vardapet Kesarac'i; Կ'āja Exiazar Lāzāriān; T'adēos Begnazarian; St. Stephen's Monastery in Tiflis; Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia; orarion.

**Obowiązki i prawa diakonis (mniszek)
Apostolskiego Kościoła Ormiańskiego w Nowej Dżulfie
(w Isfahanie w Persji) w latach 1623-1954.
Studium prawno-kanoniczne**

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest zaprezentowanie w ujęciu historyczno-prawnym praw i obowiązków ormiańskich diakonis w monasterze św. Katarzyny w Nowej Dżulfie (Isfahan w Persji) w latach 1623-1954. Autor na podstawie źródeł i nielicznej literatury analizuje formy podejmowanych aktywności przez ormiańskie diakonisy. Mniszki (diakonisy) prowadziły życie monastyczne zgodnie z zasadami monastycyzmu ormiańskiego

oraz ich *Statutów* z 1855 r. Monastery w celu krzewienia języka i kultury ormiańskiej prowadził w latach 1858-1900 szkołę dla ormiańskich dziewcząt. Autor stawia tezę, że ze względu na niedostatki w formacji, niską liczbę kandydatek do życia monastycznego, zmiany społeczno-polityczne w Persji oraz ciągłą pogoń za środkami materialnymi niezbędnymi do funkcjonowania monasteru, doszło w 1954 r. do zamknięcia tego monasteru. Mniszki zaniedbały prowadzenia monastycznego ormiańskiego stylu życia. Natomiast poświęciły się przede wszystkim działalności edukacyjno-wychowawczej prowadząc żeńską szkołę oraz okresowo sierociniec-warsztat. Wydaje się, kiedy w monasterze zamknięto żeńską szkołę, wywołało to kryzys ideowy we wspólnocie, ponieważ zabrakło podstaw materialnych funkcjonowania oraz celu istnienia w diasporze ormiańskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: Monastery św. Katarzyny; Xač'atur Vardapet Kesarac'i; K'āja Exiazar Lāzāriān; T'adēos Begnazarian; Monastery św. Szczepana w Tiflisie; Katoликos Wielkiego Domu Cylicji; orarion.

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