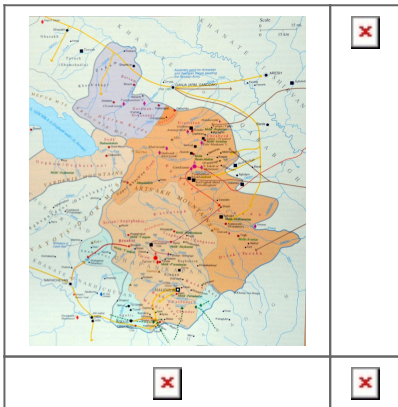
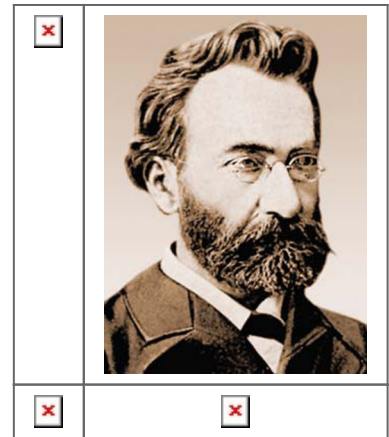


L'écrivain Raffi à lire à la bibliothèque Mardiguian de NAASR

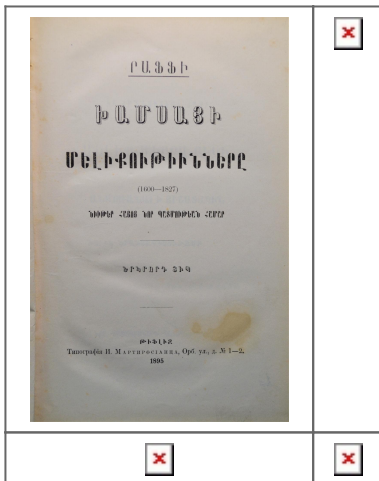
While taking note of the anniversary of the capture of Shushi this week in 1992, one of the key events in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, we look back at two noteworthy books from NAASR's Mardigian Library from the late 19th century that explore the then recent past of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabagh: *Khamsayi Melik'ut'iwnnerë* (Խամսայի Մելիքութիւններ) by Raffi and *Gaghtnik' Gharabaghi* (Գաղտնիք Ղարաբաղի) by Apresi Beknazareants'.



By far the better known of the two is Raffi's *Khamsayi Melik'ut'iwnnerë*, The Five Melikdoms [of Karabagh], 1600-1827, his historical work on the five principalities (*khamsa*=five in Arabic; *melik*=ruler or authority) of Artsakh that existed on the territory of modern Nagorno Karabakh up into the 19th century. (See map extracted from Robert Hewsen's *Armenia: A Historical Atlas*.)

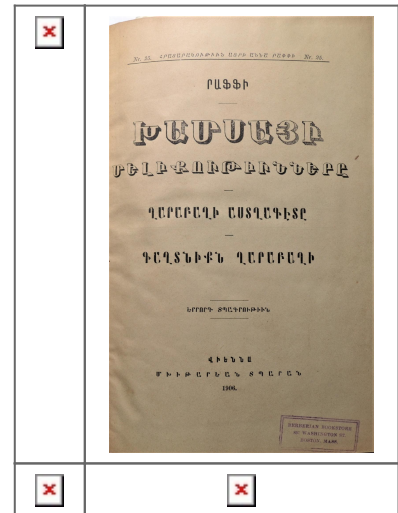


Raffi (Hakob Melik Hakobian, 1835-1888) was, of course, one of the leading Armenian authors of the 19th century. As Kevork Bardakjian says, “Few modern Armenian writers can rival the impact and appeal of Raffi.” Through his copious works including novels, poems, reports, essays, and historical studies he tried to awaken Armenians’ interest in their past, identity, and rights. Raffi’s writings were widely read by Armenians of the time and remain popular to this day. “Raffi looked up to the ‘crowd,’ the educated and well-informed masses, to bring about radical change” and presented “the public with new concepts of social and political justice” (Bardakjian, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature 1500-1920*).



Khamsayi Melik'ut'iwinnerë is the result of his deep studies of and journeys to Artsakh, studying manuscripts, oral histories, and making detailed observations to write the history of the Armenian melikdoms of Karabagh. “The project was undertaken with a view to collecting additional material for *Dawit' Bek* [Raffi’s novel published in 1881] and to reviving and evaluating the latest manifestation of Armenian political power in the region” (Bardakjian).

Ara Stepan Melkonian's translation of *Khamsayi Melik'ut'iwnnerě*, The Five Melikdoms of Karabagh (1600-1827), was published by Taderon Press in 2010.



Khamsayi Melik'ut'iwnnerě was originally published in 1882 in Tiflis (Tbilisi). NAASR's Mardigian Library holds copies of the 2nd edition published in 1895 in Tiflis by Martiroseants as well as the 3rd edition of 1906 published in Vienna by the Mkhitarian Press. The third edition is significantly augmented by Raffi's translation of Russian writer Platon P. Zubov's 1834 novel *Gharabaghi astghagetě* (The Astrologer of Karabagh), originally published in Tiflis in 1882, and Raffi's critique of the book *Gaghtnik' Gharabaghi*. (An English translation of *The Astrologer of Karabagh* by Artashes Emin and edited by Ara Ghazarians, was published in 2013.)