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For Further Information, please contact:
Ms. Gloria Caudill, Administrator
Armenian Studies Program
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Tel: (734) 763-0622
Email: gcaudill@umich.edu

An International Conference
“The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: A Comparative Perspective”
Held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

An international conference entitled: “The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: a comparative perspective,” organized by the Armenian Studies Program and co-sponsored by nine University of Michigan institutes, centers and departments, was held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 16-19 October, 2008. Twenty-three scholars from Armenia, Bulgaria, Canada, England, France, Georgia, Israel, Italy, Russia, Sweden and the USA read papers and held discussions on the Armenian Apocalyptic tradition in a comparative context. Three presentations visually illustrated the manifestations of the apocalyptic traditions in Armenian art and architecture.

The idea of a conference on the theme was initially independently conceived by Kevork B. Bardakjian (University of Michigan) and Sergio La Porta (Hebrew University of Jerusalem). It was agreed to hold conferences in both the Hebrew University and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The first was held in Jerusalem (2007) and the second followed at Ann Arbor.

Since the Armenian apocalyptic tradition, in the wider context of the term, has been an inadequately explored realm, both conferences blazed a trail by covering much ground in the field. The Ann Arbor conference stressed the comparative aspects of such texts with groundbreaking accomplishments in some respects. Armenian apocalyptic literature was reviewed in a wider chronological and thematic range, and in a comparative fashion, against a background of traditional apocalyptic literature, highlighted by renowned scholars in the fields of Jewish, Syriac, Byzantine, Ethiopic, Slavonic, Bulgarian and Manichaean apocalypticism. The findings of the scholars were meaningfully supplemented by some most interesting discussions that contributed considerably to the integration of Armenian into the wider context of apocalyptic studies. The new light shed on the Armenian texts accentuated the importance of further and deeper studies into the standard tradition and its diverse expressions that go far beyond the traditional confines of the genre, particularly in the late medieval and early modern as well as the contemporary eras. Similarly, the conference clearly brought out the growing significance of apocalypticism as an agent for the genesis of national identity and underlined the need for new definitions and approaches by which

the apocalyptic worldview might be appreciated as a phenomenon common to all cultures.

Plans are under way to publish the proceedings as a volume in English. Prof. Kevork B. Bardakjian was the main convener of the conference.