

# Łevond Vardapet P'irtalēmean's Pastoral and Scholarly Activities in Manchester (1873-78) and the Armenian Community

Armine Melkonyan

Matenadaran-Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, Yerevan, Armenia

**Abstract** This article presents an episode from the history of the Armenian community in Manchester during the pastorate of Łevond Vardapet P'irtalēmean (1873-8) – a prominent philologist, poet, traveller, and church figure from Vaspurakan. Some intra-community issues, cultural and social activities of the Manchester Armenians, and their attitudes towards Łevond Vardapet, as reflected in the periodicals of the time, are discussed. Based on P'irtalēmean's notes and colophons, this essay also presents his works composed or arranged in Manchester (Dictionary of Provincial Words, Collection of Seals, Chronology, and the volumes of Armenian Colophons).

**Keywords** Łevond Vardapet P'irtalēmean. Manchester. Armenian community. Colophon. Manuscript.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 A Biographical Account of Łevond Vardapet. – 3 Łevond Vardapet in Manchester: Intra-Community Concerns. – 4 Łevond Vardapet P'irtalēmean's Scholarly Activities in Manchester. – 5 Concluding Remarks.



## Peer review

Submitted 2024-06-28  
Accepted 2024-08-06  
Published 2024-10-31

## Open access

© 2024 Melkonyan | © 4.0



**Citation** Melkonyan, A. (2024). "Łevond Vardapet P'irtalēmean's Pastoral and Scholarly Activities in Manchester (1873-78) and the Armenian Community". *Armeniaca*, 3, 179-196.

**DOI** 10.30687/arm/2974-6051/2024/01/006

In memory of Gġorg Tġr-Vardanean, with gratitude for his encouragement and valuable advice in studying Łevond Vardapet's life and work.

## 1 Introduction

The Armenian community in Great Britain was formed in the 1830s when Armenian merchants from Constantinople, Smyrna and other places settled in London, Manchester, and Liverpool.<sup>1</sup> In 1862, Karapet Vardapet Šahnazarean (1862-66), a well-known clergyman and scholar of the time,<sup>2</sup> was invited from Paris to organise the spiritual and religious life of a small community of about thirty people. With the donations from Armenian emigrants, he rented a chapel for church services. Karapet Vardapet Šahnazarean was followed at intervals by Xorġn Vardapet Kiwroyean (1866-70; 1872-3), Sargis Vardapet T'ġodorean (1870) and priest Nersġs Palapanean (1870-72).<sup>3</sup> In 1870, the Armenian Church of the Holy Trinity was built on Upper Brook Street, where the Armenians used to live, with funds provided by the community members (Gouligian 2020, 19-22, 24). In 1873, after the resignation of Xorġn Vardapet Kiwroyean, on 15 August, the meeting of community representatives sent a letter to the Patriarchate of Constantinople (the Patriarch at the time was Archbishop Mkrtiġ' Xrimean) on the issue of electing a new leader. Łevond Vardapet P'irġalġmean, a famous clergyman, philologist, poet, and traveller, was chosen from the list of candidates and submitted by the Patriarchate.<sup>4</sup>

In his study on the Armenian community of Manchester, Bishop Mušġl Serobean provides some valuable details about the years of Łevond Vardapet's pastorate (1911, 54-65). These are mainly drawn from the records of community meetings and other historical sources. Recently, in the National Archives of Armenia, I found the Provincial Dictionary, the Chronology, and the eighteenth volume of the Collection of Armenian Colophons<sup>5</sup> compiled by P'irġalġmean in Manchester.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, it came to my attention that the Collection of Colophons (M6273) and the Collection of Seals (M10013) of P'irġalġmean, housed in the Matenadaran-Maštoc' Institute of Ancient

<sup>1</sup> For more on the formation of the Armenian community in Great Britain, cf. Eliazarean 1996, 43-59; 2013, 111-39; Mrmrean 1908, 47-50; George 2002.

<sup>2</sup> In 1863-64, he published the *Series of Armenian Historians* in his Paris-based printing house, and the *Erkragund* (The Globe) newspaper in Manchester. For more about Šahnazarean, see Kostanean 1910.

<sup>3</sup> For the periods of their activities, cf. Serobean 1911, 26-54.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Charter, the community had the right to choose the parish priest.

<sup>5</sup> This volume contains colophons from the 1510-30s.

<sup>6</sup> National Archives of Armenia, collection 332, catalogue 1, documents 653, 780, 781.

Manuscripts,<sup>7</sup> were also compiled in Manchester. These works, which are also briefly outlined in the paper, are of great importance for the study of Armenian history and culture. The focus of this essay, however, is on P'irĽalĽemean's inscriptions and colophons, which shed light on his scholarly activities in Manchester. In order to gain an insight into the inner life of the Manchester Armenians and their relationship with their pastor during this period, I will discuss the series of articles dedicated to the Manchester Armenian community in the official journal *Ararat* of the Mother See of Holy Ējmiacin in 1875, as well as the 1877 publication by Vahan Vardapet Bastameanc', who travelled to Europe for educational purposes.

Thus, based on the works produced by Ľevond P'irĽalĽemean in Manchester and the information provided in their colophons, as well as the archival documents and articles published in nineteenth-century periodicals, this study aims to present the activities of one of the most prominent Armenian spiritual and cultural figures of the time in Manchester, exploring both his role as a pastor and his contributions as a scholar.

## 2 A Biographical Account of Ľevond Vardapet

Ľevond Vardapet P'irĽalĽemean<sup>8</sup> (baptismal name: Martiros) was born in the city of Van, in 1830 [figs 1-2]. In 1852, three years after settling in the Monastery of the Lim Desert, he was ordained a deacon in the Surb Nšan Church in Van, and in 1860 he received the rank of Vardapet.<sup>9</sup> In 1859 P'irĽalĽemean moved to Varagavank', where he carried out spiritual, educational and cultural activities; he was the agent of the magazine *Arcui Vaspurakan*, reporting and participating in its publishing work. However, he spent most of his life travelling in Western and Eastern Armenia, as well as in the Armenian-populated areas of the Ottoman Empire, copying thousands of manuscript colophons, epigraphic inscriptions and epitaphs, collecting provincial words and chronological sources, and recording ethnographic material. Ľevond Vardapet is best known for compiling the first collection of the Armenian manuscript colophons (cf. Awetean 2018, 239-45). Thanks to this collection, we have information about many manuscripts that are now thought to be lost (Tĕr-Vardanean 2015, 48-50). P'irĽalĽemean left his

<sup>7</sup> Matenadaran-Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, Yerevan, is marked in this paper with the sigla M.

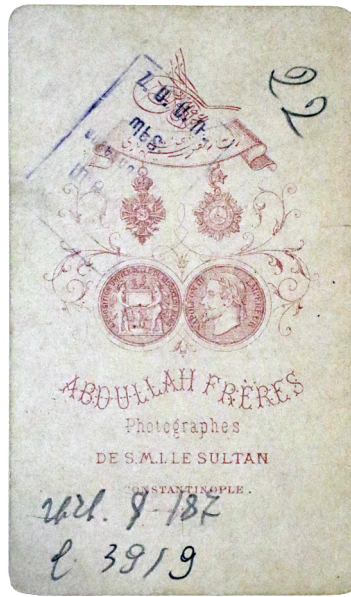
<sup>8</sup> In George 2002, 25, Ľevond Vardapet is mentioned as "Vartabed Perghalenian".

<sup>9</sup> While describing and studying the Homiliary 4677 from the Maštoc' Matenadaran collection, I came across Ľevond Vardapet's autobiographical colophon, on the basis of which I conducted a separate research; cf. Melk'onyan 2020, 408-20. Therefore, the details of his biography and literary legacy will not be discussed in this article. Cf. also *Murč* 1903, 73-87; Tĕr-Mkrtič'ean 1996, 249-61.

own inscriptions in the manuscripts he used, which are relevant to the study of the history of individual manuscripts (cf. Sirinian 2003, 83-6; 2005, 235-6, 238; 2022, 234-44). During his third visit to the Mother See in the summer of 1889, Łevond Vardapet compiled the collection of epitaphs of the St. Ĕjmiacin Congregational Cemetery (cf. Harut'yunyan, Melk'onyan 2021, 141-61). Of particular interest are his travelogues, in which he describes Armenian churches and monasteries, the everyday life of the people, their customs, dishes, etc. (P'irlalēmeanc' 1871; 1882). In December 1890, accompanying Archbishop Mkrtrič' Xrimean, P'irlalēmean left for Jerusalem, where he died in 1891 (at the age of 61), and was buried in the local Armenian cemetery.<sup>10</sup> The colophons in M9027 indicate that he continued to classify and collect sources in Jerusalem. The manuscript ends with the inscription "14 April 1891, in Holy Jerusalem",<sup>11</sup> which was probably the last note written by Łevond Vardapet.



**Figure 1** Łevond Vardapet P'irlalēmean. Matenadaran-Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, "Personal archival fond", file 187, doc. 39/9



**Figure 2** The verso of the picture with the seal of the photographers. Matenadaran-Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, "Personal archival fond", file 187, doc. 39/9

**10** The versified epitaph of 15 lines was composed by Mkrtrič' Xrimean, cf. Aławnuni 1929, 235; Sawalaneanc' 1931, 1285-6; Melk'onean 2022, 352-3.

**11** M9027, 101v: 1891 ապրիլի 14 ի Սուրբ Երուսաղէմ. All translations from Armenian are made by the Author.

### 3 Ľevond Vardapet in Manchester: Intra-Community Concerns

Thus, in 1873, after being elected the parish priest of the Armenian community in Manchester, Ľevond Vardapet left for Great Britain. At that time, there were about 80-90 Armenians living in Manchester, mostly merchants and students from the Ottoman Empire and Russia (*Ararat* 1875, 9: 358).

This is how P'irĽalĽmean describes his arrival:

The undersigned, a humble parish priest of the Armenian community of Manchester, was appointed, at their request, inspector and pastor of the little spiritual flock of Christ, in September 1873, under the Patriarchate of Archbishop Mkrtič' Xrimean, and with his *kondak* [pastoral letter] of blessing and a letter of recommendation, relying on God, I left Constantinople, set out on a journey and came by sea on a steamer named Hagia Sophia to Liverpool, one of the principal and commercial cities of England, and from there I came by a railway carriage to Manchester to our dearly loved people.<sup>12</sup>

From the extensive autobiography included in his Collection of Seals [fig. 3], we learn that before coming to Manchester, P'irĽalĽmean had settled in Constantinople; in 1872, he was elected a National Deputy (ազգային երեսփոխան), and on 29 April 1873 he received from Archbishop Nikolayos AĽasean the high degree of special authority and Supreme Vardapet (cf. M10013, 36v-37r). In the same source, he mentions the exact date of his departure for Manchester:

On the fifteenth of September, leaving Constantinople, he<sup>13</sup> went to Smyrna, Malta and Liverpool, and from there to Manchester, where he remained until Saturday 7 June 1875, when he wrote briefly about his past. (37r)

<sup>12</sup> Serobeian 1911, 54-5: Ստորագրեալս խոնարհ դէտ Մանչէստրի հայ հասարակութեան, ըստ խնդրանաց նոցին կարգեցայ տեսուչ և հովիւ հոգևոր փոքրիկ հօտին Քրիստոյսի, ի 1873 ամի, յամենան Սեպտեմբերի, յաւուրս պատրիարքութեան Խրիմեան Սկրտիչ Արքեպիսկոպոսի, և Նորին օրինութեան կրնդակաւ և յանձնարարական նամակաւ, յՎստուած ապաստանեալ թողի գՊոլիս, անկայ ի չու, և եկի ծովային ճանապարհորդութեամբ Այա Սօֆիա անուն շոգենաւաւ մինչ ի Լիվրքու, որ Է մինն ի գլխաւոր և ի վաճառաշահ քաղաքացն Անգլիոյ, և անտի ևս շոգեկառօք եկի ի Մանչէստր առ սիրելի ժողովուրդս մեր. Serobeian (55) informs that this inscription is found in the Register of Baptisms and Burials of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Manchester, on pages 52-5 of which P'irĽalĽmean wrote a Chronology.

<sup>13</sup> The autobiography is written in the third person next to his private seal.

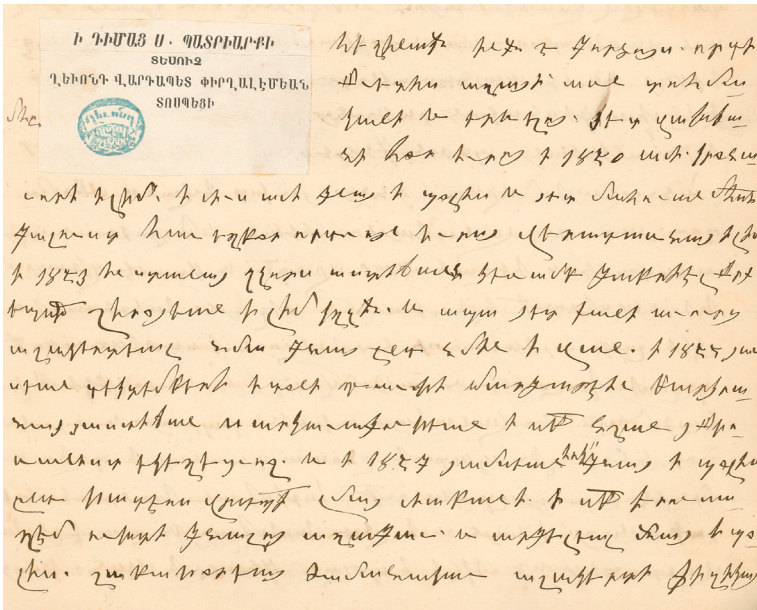


Figure 3 A fragment of P'irtalēmean's autobiography and his seal from Matenadaran-Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, M10013, fol. 32r

This autobiography was written two years after P'irtalēmean had settled in Manchester and assumed his duties as parish priest.

In the same year, 1875, an extensive series of articles, criticising the Armenian community of Manchester and its leader, appeared in the Constantinople-based newspaper *Ōragir*. The same material was re-published in issues 9-12, 1875, of *Ararat* (1875, 9: 357-8, 10: 397-9, 11: 438-40, 12: 466-70). The anonymous author is referred to as “a friend of ours who has long been in those parts”, “an honourable letter-writer”,<sup>14</sup> suggesting that the author was a member of the community in Manchester, or at least one of the cities with an Armenian population in Britain. In the series of articles, under the general title “A few words on the Armenian colony in Manchester” (Մանչեսթրի հայ գաղթականութեան վրայ քանի մը խօսք) and the subheadings “Mixed Marriages” (Խառն ամուսնութիւն), “Fashion” (Նորածեղութիւն), “Piety” (Բարեպաշտութիւն *Barepaštut' iwn*), “Merchantry” (Վաճառականութիւն), “Love of Reading” (Ընթերցասիրութիւն), “Language” (Լեզու), the so-called ‘vicious’ practices of the community are discussed and criticised. The first of

<sup>14</sup> *Ararat* 1875, 9: 357-8: “այն կողմերը երկար առնեն ի վեր գտնուող մեր մէկ բարեկամ”, “պատուարժան նամակագիր”.

these was the problem of mixed marriages. Armenians were said to be marrying English women, thus alienating both themselves and their children from Armenian traditions and the Church. The author of the article urged them to follow the example of the Greeks living in Manchester, among whom mixed marriages were rare. According to him, the Greeks were more zealous, almost fanatical about their religion, and did not allow the children born of mixed marriages to “get lost in the Protestant mixture” (10: 397). Unlike the Armenians, they made every effort to raise these children as Greeks. The author criticises the Manchester Armenians for being fashionable and innovative, and the question was about church rites, the vestments of the clergy, the ceremony of the Holy Mass, church utensils and decorations. For instance, it is said that some members of the community suggested that there should be no candlesticks on the Holy Table, or that the officiating priest should not wear slippers, and should dress in a more European style, in general. It was even suggested that the “Greeting” part<sup>15</sup> of the Holy Mass should be omitted, because “the English laughed at this kind of ceremonies” (399). The anonymous author has high praise for Armenian merchants, describing them as “talented, loyal, decent, thrifty and hardworking” (440). He sees the Armenians’ “evil envy” of each other as the main obstacle to progress in this field. It is also said that when Armenians go to England, as soon as they learn a little English, they start mixing English words while speaking Armenian. In particular, the author criticizes the Armenians living in London, who were mostly wealthy merchants from India, for not knowing their mother tongue. And he asks a question: could they not hire an Armenian teacher to educate their children? He notes that, since the Armenians of London had no church and no priest, they celebrated Christmas and Holy Easter with the English; therefore, the priest of Manchester had to take care of the spiritual needs of the Armenian community in London as well. The author of the article does not mention P'irtalémean by name, but he criticises him indirectly as well:

The pastor of Manchester should be patriotic and active, a learned man and not a careless clergyman; he should be able to travel to London and frequently visit his misled flock as a sacred duty, to supervise, and exhort them.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> This refers to the ‘Kiss of Peace’, when believers greet each other during Holy Mass with a kiss on the cheek, saying: “Christ is revealed among us”.

<sup>16</sup> Ararat 1875, 12: 470: Մանչեսթրի հոգևոր հովիւը պետք է որ ազգասէր, գործունէայ և լեզուազէտ անձ մը ըլլայ և ոչ անփոյթ հոգևորական մը, և կարող ըլլայ Լոնտոն երթնելէ և իրեն իբրև սուրբ պարտաւորութիւն զարտուղեալ հօտին ստեպ-ստեպ այցելութեան երթալ, հսկել, յորդորել զանոնք.



The anonymous author even suggests that the Mother See of Holy Ējmiacin should pay for the transport so as not to place an additional burden on the community. In this regard, the editorial of *Ararat* has the following comment as a footnote:

We draw this paragraph to the attention of the Armenians of Manchester, our dear brothers and Rev[erend] Shepherd, and hope that they will hasten to report to His Patriarchal Holiness whatever is worthy and necessary in this matter.<sup>17</sup>

Levond Vardapet, published a reply article in the December issue of *Ararat*, signed “Pastor of the Armenians in Britain, S[upreme] Vardapet Levond of Tosp”,<sup>18</sup> which also proves that his pastoral activity was not limited to Manchester, but included other cities where Armenians lived. P'irtalēmean expressed his regret that the editorial board of *Ararat* had reprinted the material published in Constantinople, perhaps believing it to be true. As he put it, the anonymous author had generalised a private flaw by criticising everyone.

The parish priest affirms the devotion of the Armenians of Manchester to the national values and the Armenian people, referring to their generous donation for the “Famine in Asia” (cf. *Ararat* 1875, 12: 466; see also, Ēhiazaryan 2013, 133), thanks to which hundreds of people were saved from death. Without going into details, it is worth mentioning that in 1874-75, at the request of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Famine Committee, the Armenian community of Manchester donated 1,000 gold coins to help their compatriots in Western Armenia, particularly Van and Muş, who were in dire straits. In addition, the Armenians of Manchester discussed the importance of developing educational and cultural programs for the self-development of the Armenian people, raising the standard of living and providing sustainable support. The members of the community planned to form a Union of Armenians in Manchester whose aim would be

to help poor schools in Armenia, to protect Armenian rights, to contribute morally and materially as much as possible to useful national affairs, and to obtain valuable publications. (Serobean 1911, 57)

At a meeting on 11 February 1876, one of the active members of the community, G. Kivmiwškērtā, spoke about the oppressed condition of

<sup>17</sup> *Ararat* 1875, 12: 470: Այս պարբերութիւնը Մանչեսթըրի Հայոց, մեր սիրելի եղբայր և Աթօ. Հովուին ուշադրութեան յանձնելով, կյուսամբ որ կփութան տեղեկագրել առ Վեհ. Հայրապետ ինչ որ յայսմ մասին արժան և անհրաժեշտ է.

<sup>18</sup> *Ararat* 1875, 12: 466: Հովիւ Բրիտանիոյ Հայոց, Ղեւոնդ Ծ[այրագոյն] Վարդապետ Տոսպեցի.



the people in Armenia, the need for education and enlightenment. For this purpose, it was proposed to collect 8-10 gold coins per year from each member of the Armenian community in Manchester. Ľevond Vardapet, was enthusiastic about the idea and confirmed that with 10-15 gold coins it would be possible to open schools in the villages of Armenia. He was ready to donate his fortune to the schools of Armenia if a foundation was set up in Manchester for this purpose, and he was given control of the schools to be opened (60). Unfortunately, this promising plan never came to fruition.

Returning to Ľevond Vardapet's reply published in *Ararat*, he sees the reason for mixed marriages in the scarcity of Armenian families, which forced Armenians to marry English women. However, he considered it important that they were married according to the rites of the Armenian Church. Finally, he sees the construction of the Holy Trinity Church as a proof of devotion to the Armenian Church and national values. According to P'irtalēmean: "They need encouragement and incentives, not gossip, and they expect exhortation and inspiration from the editorial of *Ararat*".<sup>19</sup> P'irtalēmean's reply was immediately followed by a statement from the editorial board, saying that they did not want to upset their compatriots, but that by publishing the article they wanted to draw attention to the problems in the community and at the same time encourage them to stick to Armenian rituals and traditions (cf. *Ararat* 1875, 12: 466-7).

Vahan Vardapet Bastameanc', a monk of Holy Ęjmiacin and a famous lawyer, who travelled to various European cities from October 1876 to August 1878 in order to master French and German, and also to study ecclesiastical law, provides relevant information about the Armenian community of Manchester and Ľevond Vardapet.

In his article "The Armenians living in Manchester", published in the December 1877 issue of the *Ararat* journal, he praised the Armenians of Manchester, whom he described as mainly engaged in trade, having offices, speaking fluent English and enjoying great sympathy from the locals (Bastameanc' 1877, 464-8; reprinted in *Tēr-Vardanean* 2018, 399-402). Speaking of their national feelings, Bastameanc' writes: "Blessed would be the Armenian nation, if the Armenians abroad were as fervent and patriotic as they are" (1877, 465). He gives a detailed description of the Armenian church in Manchester, and the three-storey building next to it. According to the author, the community had only one Vardapet,<sup>20</sup> assisted by the believers, who wore a surplice during the divine services, especially those from the Armenian-populated areas of the Ottoman Empire, who

<sup>19</sup> *Ararat* 1875, 12: 466: Սոքա բաջալերութեան և խրախուսանաց պէտք ունին քան թէ բամբասանաց և յՎրարատայ խմբագրութենէն յորդոր և քաջալերութիւն սպասեն.

<sup>20</sup> Naturally, the information for this period refers to Ľevond Vardapet.

were skilled in church singing. As Bastameanc' reports: "The Vardapet gets a free apartment, fuel and light (gas) and a servant, ten gold coins (70 rubles) a month and clothes if necessary" (466). He was required to administer all the sacraments free of charge. Although there was no treasury in the church, many people still rewarded their priest. According to his assessment, "The honourable Łevond Vardapet P'irġalġmean is, indeed, a beloved and respectable person for his sweet character, gentle and decent morals. A native of the Ottoman Empire (Van, I think), he is a man of considerable worldly experience, well versed in the written language and has many handwritten works on national history and chronology" (467).<sup>21</sup> Bastameanc' emphasizes that the local Armenians preserve their mother tongue and speak Armenian beautifully. In addition to these virtues, he also addresses the problems of life within the community. The first of these was the disagreement over Łevond Vardapet, which divided this small community into two parts: the majority loved and respected their pastor, and the smaller part was made up of the younger people,

who wanted to have a European-like scholar and an enlightened clergyman, either to shine more brightly among the foreigners, or to establish various scholarly enterprises, such as a printing house, a magazine, etc. (467)

In fact, this disagreement over P'irġalġmean's personality arose a year before Bastameanc''s visit to Manchester. At the general meeting of 28 January 1876, Yovhannġs Andrġasean, one of the active members of the community, while expressing his satisfaction with P'irġalġmean's work, suggested that he be replaced by someone more competent as a pastor, who spoke fluent English and would, if necessary, correct "the wrong ideas about our religion and nation" (Serobeian 1911, 59). Finally, the question of replacing the parish priest was raised, and the community was divided with 20 votes in favour and 12 against P'irġalġmean.

After some time, however, Łevond Vardapet resigned, and asked to be allowed to go to Constantinople in order to publish his works. His resignation was accepted at the community meeting on 2 August 1876, but for some reason P'irġalġmean reconsidered his decision and stayed on for another two years, until 1878 (61-2). At this point, it is difficult to say what caused him to change his mind. On the other hand, since the Armenian community of Manchester and England took an active part in the political and national issues and

---

<sup>21</sup> It should be added that in June 1877 P'irġalġmean and Bastameanc' officiated the funeral of T'ġodor vardapet Kiwroyean in Paris, see Serobeian 1911, 44.

especially in the events on the eve of the Berlin Congress of 1878,<sup>22</sup> and probably due to external problems, the intra-community issues were temporarily suspended.<sup>23</sup> However, after the Congress of Berlin, P'irialēmean, seeing the unfavourable attitude towards him and considering his tenure no longer useful, sent his resignation to the Patriarchate. At the meeting on 18 September 1878, the Manchester Armenians accepted P'irialēmean's resignation. Patriarch Nersēs II Varžapetean also accepted his resignation and appointed Priest Yovhannēs Mkrean as parish priest (118). But the Armenians of Manchester rejected Mkrean's appointment. In the end, Esayi Vardapet Astuacaturean, of the Congregation of the Mother See of Holy Ējmiacin, was chosen and appointed in October:

As the Pastor of the Armenians living in the city of Manchester in England, Reverend Łevond Vardapet P'irialēmean resigned from his position, Reverend Esayi Vardapet was appointed as the Pastor according to the choice and request of the Armenian people of the place.<sup>24</sup>

Esayi Vardapet arrived in Manchester at the end of November<sup>25</sup> after which P'irialēmean left Manchester (he was still there on 26 November, as we learn from a colophon in M6273, f. 302v). He described the new parish priest, as "good-natured" and "eager to learn" clergyman (cf. Serobean 1911, 141-2).

**22** Discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this article. On the involvement of the Armenian community of Great Britain in the preparations for the Congress, cf. Serobean 1911, 66-108. For more about the Armenian question at the Congress of Berlin, cf. Kostandyan; Hovhannisyan 2010, 436-47.

**23** According to Serobean (1911, 115), the lack of records means that there were no community meetings between December 1876 and September 1878.

**24** Ararat 1878, 10: 399: Անգղիոյ Սանչեսթէր բաղաթում բնակեալ Յայոց հոգեւոր հովիւ արժ[անապատիւ] Ղեւոնդ Վարդապետ Փիրղալէմեանց հրաժարուելով իւր պաշտօնէն, ըստ ընտրութեան եւ իննդրանաց Յայկազն ժողովրդեան տեղւոյն՝ արժ[անապատիւ] Եսայի Վարդապետ Աստուածատրեանց հոգեւոր հովիւ կարգեցաւ.

**25** For this information Serobean refers to P'irialēmean's Chronology mentioned above, see note 12.

#### 4 **Łevond Vardapet P'irġalġmean's Scholarly Activities in Manchester**

In 1875, a Reading Room was established next to the Armenian Church of Manchester, and P'irġalġmean was elected Chairman of the Council. The Reading Room was designed for the acquisition and reading of newspapers and magazines, published mainly in the Ottoman Empire, Russia and elsewhere. The Council, under the leadership of P'irġalġmean, was to organise the purchase of new volumes and publications (selection of content and fundraising) (57-8). As we learn from Łevond Vardapet's letter of 1875 to priest Giwt Aġaneanc', a prominent historian, translator, editor and publisher of the time, P'irġalġmean had proposed that Giwt join him in Manchester with the aim of organising book publishing and establishing an Armenian school.<sup>26</sup> Despite the internal problems and external political challenges, the years of P'irġalġmean's activity in Manchester were a relatively quiet period, after constant travelling and holding various spiritual and organisational positions. In Manchester, therefore, the prolific clergyman managed to organise, process and chronologically arrange the various materials and sources he had collected over the years. In this respect, his dictionary entitled *Collection Dictionary of Provincial Words* (Ժողովածու բառաստեղծ գաղափարական բառից) is of great interest.<sup>27</sup> In the preface to one of his travelogues (Journey to the Mother See and thence to Constantinople), among thousands of colophons, epigraphic inscriptions and epitaphs, P'irġalġmean also mentions over 2,500 provincial words, which he collected, "with their original sound and meaning".<sup>28</sup> He collected these words during his travels, often noting in the margins of the Dictionary the place where a particular word was used. In the margins of some pages of the Dictionary, usually after the group of words of each alphabetical letter, P'irġalġmean left a short note indicating the place, year, month and day of the completion of his work, such as: "1874 Jan[uary] 14 Monday in Manchester".<sup>29</sup> It is clear from the colophons that the Provincial Dictionary was compiled and almost entirely classified in

<sup>26</sup> The letter is kept in the fonds of Giwt Aġaneanc' from the collection of the RA Museum of Literature and Art. For the publication, cf. Melk'onean 2022, 354.

<sup>27</sup> I found the Dictionary, which was thought lost until now, in the fonds of the priest Giwt Aġaneanc' at the RA National Archives. Most probably, P'irġalġmean left his unpublished works in Constantinople before leaving for Jerusalem. Giwt Aġaneanc' reports that in 1898 he brought P'irġalġmean's works, collected in three sealed bundles, from Constantinople to Ējmiacin and handed them over to the Catholics of All Armenians Mkrtiġ' Xrimean Vanec'i; cf. Aġaneanc' 1912, 54 (ԾԴ).

<sup>28</sup> P'irġalġmeanc' 1871, 4 (Դ): Իրենց բուն հնչմամբ և նշանակութեամբ.

<sup>29</sup> National Archives of Armenia, fonds 332, catalogue 1, doc. 780, f. 2r: 1874 յունսկ[ար] 14 երկուշաբթի ի Մանչեստր.

Manchester between January 1874 and May 1877. He left his main colophon on folio 22v:

I have copied here with the laborious work of arranging in alphabetical order the disordered notebook of this provincial dictionary, written on 25 June 1872, for the richness of the Armenian language. The sixth of February 1874, Carnival Wednesday, in the English city of Manchester. Compiler of this work Łevond Supreme Vardapet P'irġalġmean of Tosp.<sup>30</sup>

According to another note on the same page, he added 311 words to various sections of the Dictionary in May 1877. The final colophon on f. 33r indicates that P'irġalġmean completed his Dictionary much later, on 13 December 1888, when he was in Constantinople, serving at the Surb Nikolġyos Sk'anġ'elagorc (St. Nicholas Thaumaturgus) Armenian Church in Topkapi.<sup>31</sup>

In Manchester, he compiled another important work, the *Seal Collection* (Վնքազիր, lit. 'Book of Seals'), which contains a total of 468 seals (including those in Arabic letters) of nineteenth-century Armenian personalities, Catholicos, ecclesiastical figures, educational institutions and national associations, literary and educational centres, and churches. Next to each seal, P'irġalġmean presented biographical information, significant events related to the owners of the seal, and also mentions the purpose of the seal's use. He wrote an extensive autobiography for his own seal (M10013, 32r-37r). The scribe-compiler left his colophon in the lower margin of the last page of the manuscript:

This Book of Seals was completed by Łevond Vardapet of Tosp in the city of Manchester in England on 14 June 1875, the day of Saturday, the feast of (Gregory the Illuminator's) deliverance from Xor Virap.<sup>32</sup>

During the months from August to November 1874 in Manchester, as noted in the short colophons (61v, 73v, 85v, 97v, 109v, 114v), he compiled an extensive chronology covering the events of the years

**30** National Archives of Armenia, fonds 332, catalogue 1, doc. 780, f. 22v: 1872 յունիս 25-ին գրեալ խառն տետրակն զաւառական բառարանիս մեծատաժան աշխատութեամբ ըստ այբբենական կարգադրութեան վերածելով աստ օրինակեցի ի պէտս ճոխութեան լեզուիս Հայոց: 1874, փետ. 6 Բարեկենդանի չորեքշաբթին ի Մանչեստր քաղաքն Անգղիացոց: Հաւաքող գործոյս Ղևոնդ Ճ[այրագոյն] Վարդապետ Փիրղալեմեան Տոսպեցի.

**31** National Archives of Armenia, fonds 332, catalogue 1, doc. 780, f. 33r.

**32** M10013, 57r: Աւարտեցաւ կնքազիրս ի 1875 ամի յամսեան յունիսի 14 յաւուր շաբաթու ի տօնի Ելն վիրապէն, ձեռամբ Ղևոնդ վարդապետի Տոսպեցու ի Մանչեստր քաղաքն Անգղիոյ. I am preparing the Provincial Dictionary and the Seal Collection for publication.

35-1871, based on a variety of sources: historical sources, colophons, inscriptions, epitaphs, seals, letters, and eyewitness accounts.

P'irialēmean arranged the 23 precious volumes of Armenian colophons he had collected, under the title “Colophons or Relics of Armenian History”<sup>33</sup> in 1878 – the fifth and last year of his pastorate in Manchester. On the title page of the collection, he mentions the names not only of the Catholicos of all Armenians (Gevorg the Fourth), the Patriarchs of Jerusalem (Archbishop Esayi) and Constantinople (Archbishop Nersēs), but also of the Queen of England, Victoria:

Taking refuge in God, I have begun to write this in the commercial city of Manchester in Great Britain, under the auspices of our Holy Trinity Church, in the fifth year of our pastorate here, and in the forty-eighth year of my life, during the days of Her Majesty Queen Victoria of England, who has been on the throne of Great Britain for 42 years.<sup>34</sup>

The title pages of each volume of the colophon<sup>35</sup> indicate that he began his work on 10 February and completed it on 26 November 1878, just before his return from Manchester.

During his stay in Great Britain, Levond Vardapet also travelled to London and studied the Armenian manuscripts in the British Museum, as we learn from the notes next to some of the colophons included in the *Nōtark' Hayoc'* collection, such as the note after the colophon of a Hymnarium from 1435:<sup>36</sup>

On 25 November 1877, in England, in the capital city of London, in the great museum of the place, which is called the British Museum.<sup>37</sup>

It is noteworthy that P'irialēmean, in his aforementioned letter to the priest Giwt Ałaneanc', expresses his fascination with the museums, factories, and antiquities of England, which he says are “sadly

**33** M6273, 2r-302v: Յիշատակարանք կամ նշխարք պատմութեան Յայոց.

**34** M6273, 2r: ՅԱստուածն ապաստանեալ սկիզբն արարի գրութեան սորին ի Մանչեստըր վաճառչահ բաղքն Բրիտանիոյ, ընդ հովանեաւ Սրբոյ Երրորդութեան եկեղեցւոյն մերոյ ի հինգերորդ ամի հովուութեանս որ աստ և ի բառասուն եւ ութ ամի կենաց իմոց: Յաւուրս Վիքտորիայ վեհափառ թագուհւոյն Անգլիոյ որ բառասուն և երկու ամաց հետէ նստեալ կայ ի գահն մեծին Բրիտանիոյ.

**35** M6273, 2r, 13r, 27r, 41r, 55r and elsewhere.

**36** For a detailed description of this manuscript, cf. Conybeare 1913, 96-104.

**37** P'irialēmean 1888, 113: Ի 1877 ի նոյ. 25. յԱնգլիա ի մայրաքաղաք նորին ի Լոնտրայ. ի մեծ թանգարան տեղւոյն որ կոչի Փրիթիշ Միւզում. Cf. pp. 52, 161, 165 for similar notes.

lacking today in Taġkastan<sup>38</sup> and our sweet motherland" (Melk'onean 2022, 354).

## 5 Concluding Remarks

Łevond Vardapet P'irġalġmean, a monk from Vaspurakan, from the Varag Monastery, a famous philologist, poet and traveller, was the parish priest of the Armenian community of Manchester from September 1873 to November 1878. According to the testimony of Vahan Vardapet Bastameanc', a monk of St. Ęjmiacin who travelled to Europe at that time, the community paid all the expenses of the priest's stay, including free accommodation, fuel, light, and a servant, ten gold coins a month, and clothing. The priest, on the other hand, was obliged to administer all the sacraments free of charge. P'irġalġmean was a much loved and respected priest because of his sweet character and gentleness, and certain disagreements about his personality were mainly due to his lack of knowledge of English and, perhaps, the circumstance that he neglected his duties of more vigorous social and political activities, expected outside the community. However, it is certain that P'irġalġmean was devoted to his small flock; it was he who responded to the accusations against the community published in 1875 in the official journal *Ararat* of the Mother See of St. Ęjmiacin, in which the anonymous author accused the Manchester Armenians of marrying the English, not following the national and church traditions, and not properly protecting the mother tongue. In his reply, the parish priest reaffirmed the devotion of the Manchester Armenians to the national values and the Armenian people, citing their generous donation to the "Famine in Asia", thanks to which hundreds of people were saved from death. He also noted that although Armenian men married English women because of the scarcity of Armenian families, they followed the rites of the Armenian Church. Finally, the spiritual leader considered the construction of the Holy Trinity Church (in 1870) as a proof of their devotion to the Armenian Church. It is noteworthy that Łevond Vardapet dedicated his *Nġtark' Hayoc'*, published in Constantinople in 1888, "In memory of the noble Armenians of Manchester".<sup>39</sup>

During his stay in Manchester Łevond Vardapet systematised the various sources he had accumulated over the years, as evidenced by the colophons he left on the pages of the manuscripts housed in the Matenadaran and the National Archives of Armenia. Thus, the *Dictionary of Provincial Words*, consisting of more than 2,500 words,

<sup>38</sup> The Ottoman Empire.

<sup>39</sup> P'irġalġmeanc' 1888, 3 [Գ]: Ի յիշատակ ազնիւ ազգայնոց Մանչեսթրի.



was almost entirely classified in Manchester between January 1874 and May 1877. During the months of August and November 1874, he compiled an extensive Chronology of the events of the years 35-1871, based on a wide variety of sources. On 14 June 1875, he completed another important work, the Seal Collection (M10013), which contains a total of 468 seals (including those in Arabic letters) of nineteenth-century Armenian personalities, Catholicoi, ecclesiastical figures, educational institutions and national associations, literary and educational centres, and churches. P'irtalēmean compiled his Collection of Armenian Colophons (M6273) during the fifth and last year of his pastorate in Manchester from 10 February to 26 November 1878. Taking advantage of his stay in Great Britain, the industrious monk travelled to London and studied the Armenian manuscripts in the British Museum, copying some of the manuscript colophons and adding them to his collection. P'irtalēmean was the head of the council of the Reading Room established next to the Armenian Holy Trinity Church in 1875 and even intended to found an Armenian school and publishing house.

## Bibliography

- Aławnuni, M. (1929). *Miabanġ' ew ayc'eluk' hay Erusałēmi* (Monks and Visitors in Armenian Jerusalem). Erusałēm: Tparan Srboc' Yakobeanc'.
- Ałaneanc', G. (ed.) (1912). *Diwan Hayoc' Patmut'ean* (The Archives of Armenian History), vol. 10. T'iflis: Elek'tražarž Tparan Or. N. Ałaneanc'i Pōlic'. 7.
- Ararat* (Anonymous) (1875). "Manġ'est'ri hay galt'akanut'ean vray k'ani mē xōsk'" (A Few Words about the Armenian Colony in Manchester). *Ararat*, 9, 357-8; 10, 397-9; 11, 438-40; 12, 466-70.
- Awetean, K. (2018). "Łevond Vardapet P'irtalēmeanē ew ir yišatakaranneri hawak'acon" (Łevond Vardapet P'irtalēmean and His Collection of Colophons). Safrastyan et al. (eds), *The Countries and Peoples of the Near and Middle East*, vol. 31. Erevan: HH GAA Gitut'yun hratarakġ'ut'yun, 239-45.
- Bastameanc', V. (1877). "Manġ'est'rabnak Hayk'" (The Armenians Living in Manchester). *Ararat*, 12, 464-8.
- Conybeare, F. (1913). *A Catalogue of the Armenian Manuscripts in the British Museum*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Eliazarean, Ŗ. (1996). "Uruagcer hay-angliakan kaperi patmut'ean (7-18-rd dd.)" (Outlines of the History of Armenian-English Relations). Barxudarean, V.; Ekawean, Z. (eds), *Ėjer hay galt'avayreru patmut'ean*. Erevan: Hayastani gitut'yunneri azgay-in academia, 43-59.
- Eliazaryan, Ŗ. (2013). "Anglia" (England). Barxudaryan, V. et al. (eds), *Haygalt'ašxarhi patmut'yun (mijnadaric' minġ'ev 1920-akan t't')*. (History of the Armenian Diaspora (from the Middle Ages to the 1920s). Vol. 3, *Evropayi ev Amerikayi haykan gatut'nerē* (Armenian Colonies in Europe and America). Erevan: HH GAA Patmut'yan institut, 111-39.
- George, J. (2002). *Merchants in Exile. The Armenians in Manchester, England, 1835-1935*. London: Taderon Press (Gomidas Institute).

- Gouligian, V. (2020). *From Armenia to Manchester, The Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Manchester and its Community*. London: Heritage Fund.
- Harut'yunyan, A.; Melk'onyan, A. (2021). "S. Ĕjmiacni tapanagreri Łevond Vardapet P'irtalemyani norahayt ųolovacun" (Newly Discovered Collection of Epitaphs of Holy Ĕjmiacin by Łevond Vardapet P'irtalemyan). *Ĕjmiacin*, 78(6), 141-61.
- Kostandyan, Ĕ.; Hovhannisyan, R. (2010). "Beřlini vebaųolovė ev haykakan harc'ė" (The Congress of Berlin and the Armenian Question). Melk'onyan, A. et al. (eds), *Hayoc' Patmut'yun* (History of Armenia), vol. 3, book 1. Erevan: HH GAA Patmut'yan institut, 436-47.
- Kostanean, K. (1910). *Karapet Vardapet ųahnazareanc' (kensagrakan aknark)*. Tiflis: tparan N. Ałaneani. Matenadaran-Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, MSS 6273, 9027, 10013.
- Melk'onean, A. (2022). "Manč'ėstri hay hamaynk'ė Łevond Vardapet P'irtalėmeani hogewor ařajnordut'ean tarinerin" (The Armenian Community of Manchester during the Years of Pastoral Leadership of Łevond Vardapet P'irtalėmean). *Sion*, 94(8-12), 345-54.
- Melk'onyan, A. (2020). "Łevond Vardapet P'irtalemyani gorcuneut'yunė ev grakan ųařangut'yan xndirė (norahayt ink'nakensagrakanı ařt'iv)" (Łevond Vardapet P'irtalemyan's Activity and the Issue of his Literary Heritage (on the Occasion of a Newly Discovered Autobiography)). *Banber Matenadaranı*, 30, 408-20.
- Mrmrean, Y. (1908). *T'urk'ahayoc' hin vačarakanut'iwnn ew vačarakank': 1740-1890* (The Ancient Trade of the Turkish Armenians and Merchants.). K. Polis: Tpagrut'iwnn Sagayean.
- Murč (editorial, signed with the Initial U-M) (1903). "Łevond Vardapet P'irtalėmean (kensagrakan aknark)" (Łevond Vardapet P'irtalėmean. A Biographical Remark). *Murč*, 11, 73-87. National Archives of Armenia, collection 332, catalogue 1, documents 653, 780, 781.
- P'irtalėmeanč, Ł. (1871). *Čanaparhordut'iwnn i Mayr At'orn Araratean ew anti i K.Pōlis* (Journey to the Mother See and thence to Constantinople). K.Pōlis: Gorcaran Zardarean.
- P'irtalėmeanč, Ł. (1882). *Č'ors ənkerk' or Ĕ čanaparhordut'iwnn Vanay minč'ev Kostandnupōlis* (Four Friends. A Journey from Van to Constantinople). T'iflis: Yovhannėš Martiroseanc'.
- P'irtalėmean, Ł. (1888). *Nōtark' Hayoc'* (Armenian Notaries). K.Pōlis: Tpagr. Nšan K. Pėpėrean.
- Sawalaneanc', T. (1931). *Patmut'iwnn Erusaťemi* (History of Jerusalem), vol. 2. Erusaťem: Tparan Srboc' Yakobeanc'.
- Serobean, M. (1911). *Manč'esdri hay galut'ė* (The Armenian Colony in Manchester). Boston: Tpagrut'iwnn "Azg"-i.
- Sirinian, A. (2003). "Le nuove accessioni manoscritte armene del Pontificio Collegio Armeno di Roma. Un primo report". *Le Musėon, Revue d'ėtude Orientales*, 116(1-2), 71-90.
- Sirinian, A. (2005). "Hřomi Levonyan varųarani norahayt haykakan jeřagrėrė" (The Newly Discovered Armenian Manuscripts of the Levonyan College of Rome). *Lraber hasarakakan gitut'yunneri*, 614(3), 234-8.
- Sirinian, A. (2022). "Per la storia di un manoscritto armeno in Inghilterra (London, Wellcome Library, ms. 16586)". Alpi, F. et al. (eds), *Armenia through the Lens of Time. Multidisciplinary Studies in Honour of Theo Maarten van Lint*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 234-44. Armenian Texts and Studies 6.

- Tajaryan, Y. (ed.) (2023a). *Lusankarneri əntrani Maštoc'i anvan Matenadaranı havak'acunerı' (A Compilation of Photographs from the Maštoc' Matenadaran Collections)*. Erevan: Matenadaran.
- Tajaryan, Y. (2023b). "Abdullah ełbayrnerı bac'aıık derə Osmanyān kaysrut'yan lusankarč'akan arvestum" (The Unique Role of Abdullah Frères in the Art of Photography in the Ottoman Empire). *From the Baltic to the Black Sea: Armenians in Cultural, Economic and Political Processes = International Conference* (Yerevan, 15-18 October 2018). Moscow: ID "Ark Media", 390-9.
- Tēr-Mkrtič'ean, E. (1996). "Łevond P'irtalēmean". *Ganjer Vaspurakani* (Treasures of Vaspurakan), vol. 1. Boston, 249-61.
- Tēr-Vardanean, G. (ed.) (2015). *Eteınə ew mer jeragreri korustnern u p'rkut'yunnerə* (The Genocide and the Losses and Rescues of Our Manuscripts). Ĕjmiacin: Mayr at'or Surb Ĕjmiacni hratarakč'ut'yun.
- Tēr-Vardanean, G. (ed.) (2018). *Vahan Cayragoyn vardapet Bastameanc', Taregrut'iwn, S. Ĕjmiacin (1872-1880 t't')* (Vahan Supreme Vardapet Bastameanc', Annals, St. Ĕjmiacin in the years 1872-80). Ĕjmiacin: Mayr At'or Surb Ĕjmiacin.