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Editors-in-chief

Aldo Ferrari

Alessandro Orengo

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Anna Sirinian

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ա	a	յ	y
բ	b	ն	n
գ	g	շ	š
դ	d	ո	o
ե	e	չ	* č'
զ	z	պ	p
է	ē	յ	j
ը	ə	ր	r
թ	* t'	ս	s
ժ	ž	վ	v
ի	i	տ	t
լ	l	ր	r
խ	x	գ	* c'
ծ	c	ւ	w
կ	k	փ	* p'
հ	h	ք	* k'
ձ	j	օ	ō
ղ	t	ֆ	f
ն	č	ու	u
մ	m		

* Please always use **left single quotation mark** ' (U+2018; ALT+3) to render aspirated consonants.

Russian romanization table

а	а	р	ř
б	b	с	s
в	v	т	t
г	g	у	u
д	d	ф	f
е	e	х	x
ё	ě	ц	c
ж	ž	ч	č
з	z	ш	š
и	i	щ	šč
й	j	ъ	* ”
к	k	ы	y
л	l	ь	* ’
м	m	э	è
н	n	ю	ju
о	o	я	ja
п	p		

* Please always use right double quotation mark ” (U + 201D; ALT + ⬆ Shift + 2) to render the ‘hard sign’ and right single quotation mark ’ (U + 2019; ALT + ⬆ Shift + 3) to render the ‘soft sign’.

Archaeology

Old Data and New Investigations The Urartian and Orontid Fortress of Körzüt in Muradiye Plain, Turkey

Roberto Dan

ISMEO Associazione Internazionale di Studi sul Mediterraneo e l'Oriente, Roma

Abstract This article presents an important archaeological site located on the north-eastern shore of Lake Van, Turkey. The site was one of the first to be associated with the kingdom of Urartu, thanks to the grandeur of its characteristic architecture and the pottery visible on the surface. Körzüt is composed of a vast fortified complex, within which there were certainly a temple, palatine structures, storage rooms, a settlement, and a necropolis. Presumably contemporary hydraulic works have been documented near the site. Körzüt has been the subject of numerous illegal excavations in past and present times, which over the years have brought to light a considerable amount of epigraphic material. This has allowed us to attribute the construction of the complex to King Minua, between the end of the ninth and the beginning of the eighth century BCE. Numerous recent illegal excavations on the site have led to emergency excavations. These investigations have led to the discovery of important remains, which are discussed and contextualised in this paper, together with what was already known in terms of epigraphic and architectural evidence. Furthermore, Körzüt can be added to the list of settlements that were also used in the post-Urartian era in the years in which the Armenian Highlands was dominated by the Orontid dynasty.

Keywords Körzüt fortress. Cuneiform Inscriptions. Urartu. Orontid. Turkey.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 History of Studies and Investigations. – 3 Inscriptions of Minua in the Muradiye Area. – 4 The Architectural Structures. – 5 The Hydraulic Works for the Supply of the Muradiye Plain. – 6 Recent Archaeological Investigations in Körzüt Fortress: A New Building and an Old Temple. – 7 Conclusions.



Peer review

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1 Introduction

This article discusses an important archaeological site already known in the literature, whose architectural, epigraphic and pottery evidence has allowed it to be reliably dated to the era of the kingdom of Urartu. It is located on the north-eastern shore of Lake Van in Turkey and is locally known as Körzüt Kalesi,¹ literally the Körzüt fortress.² The site is one of the first to have been identified as Urartian thanks to the spectacular nature of its military architecture and the finds collected on the surface. The site is located at the southern end of the Muradiye/Berkri plain, approximately 3 km north of the village of Uluşar, in the Muradiye district of Van province in eastern Turkey [fig. 1]. The Muradiye plain is a fertile area of approximately 9100 hectares, irrigated by the River Bendimahı (Sinclair 1987, 264). In ancient times the plain must have been much more extensive than it currently appears. This is due to the rise in the water levels of the lake which has occurred in recent centuries and which has had considerable effects on the north-eastern area of the current lake, especially that which corresponds to the Muradiye plain.³ The toponym Körzüt represents an alteration of the original Armenian name of the village of Uluşar, namely Gortsot, which over time changed to Kortsod/Kordzot/Körzkürt until it became the currently employed toponym. Recently it has been proposed that the name of the site in Kurdish was Pértak (Işık, Genç 2021, 4). In all eras this has been an important transit area that connected the eastern shore of Lake Van with the northern shore and was located on the road that gave access to the Ararat depression.⁴ This contribution was made possible by the recent advancement of knowledge of the site resulting from new emergency excavations, which have confirmed certain theses proposed in the past and brought to light completely new aspects of the site.

The author would like to express his gratitude to Mirjo Salvini, with whom he had the honour of visiting the site and the Van region on multiple occasions. He also extends his thanks to Bülent Genç and Kenan Işık, with whom he engaged in extensive discussions about the site and Urartological matters related to Van during his visits. Additionally, he is grateful to Marie-Claude Trémouille for her valuable suggestions and countless conversations on the topics addressed in this text. For an introduction to the remains of the site, cf. Dan, Vitolo 2016a, parts of which are summarized here, along with a review and update of the information and sources, primarily based on recent excavations at the site. Unless otherwise noted, all images are by the author.

- 1 Coordinates: 38°54'48.82"N 43°44'40.94"E; altitude: 1759 metres a.s.l.
- 2 Other local variants of the site's name are Arapzengi/Arab-ı Zengi and Zengibar Kalesi (Burney 1957, 47; Tarhan, Sevin 1976-7, 276).
- 3 On the changes of the water level in Lake Van, cf. Trémouille, Dan 2022.
- 4 For a preliminary study of travel routes in this area during the Urartian period, cf. Gökçe, Kuvanc, Genç 2021.



Figure 1 Map of the Muradiye district in Van region, with the sites and inscriptions referred to in the text (satellite picture from Google Earth)

2 History of Studies and Investigations

The oldest mention of the discovery of Urartian inscriptions connected to the Körzüt site and surrounding area date to 1892, and refer to the scientific mission conducted by Müller-Simonis and Hyvernats between 1888 and 1889 (1892). In fact, the volume contains a catalogue of cuneiform inscriptions (541-66) divided in two sections, the first devoted to the inscriptions already known (I-LXVIII) and the second to unpublished specimens (I-XXX), for a total of 98 epigraphs. Among these, Hyvernats reports some inscriptions from Khorzot/Kordzot (Körzüt: XVIII, XX) and Guzek (Güşak: XIX) (564), some of which were not seen directly by the scholar. In the same period Belck reported the discovery of four inscriptions from Güsack (Güşak), two from the village church (one of 32 lines and one of ten),⁵ and another two from other churches, not seen directly by him (Belck, Lehmann 1892a, 125). Belck mentioned the Körzüt fortress in 1891, associating it with Urartu (1892b, 480), but it was only in 1956 that it entered the scientific literature thanks to Burney, who visited it during his pioneering reconnaissance around Lake Van, when a first schematic plan of the site was created [fig. 2A].⁶ The site was described by Burney in these words: “this is the most impressive of the fortresses visited, because part of the wall still stands 8 metres high on the outside” (1957, 37,

⁵ Probably is CTU A 5-36.

⁶ This plan has an incorrect orientation, being rotated by approximately 90°.

47-8, fig. 6, pls 5b-c.; cf. Burney, Lawson 1960, 177; Burney 1998, 143, 146, 149-50, fig. 14.1).⁷ During these surveys, approximately 3,000 potsherds were collected, of which 71 came from Körzüt itself and were studied and published a few years later by Russell (1980, 50, pl. 6). The site was later reinvestigated by Tarhan and Sevin, who produced a more accurate plan of it [fig. 2B],⁸ as part of the reconnaissance activities directed by Afif Erzen in eastern Turkey, which took place in 1969 and 1972-3 (Tarhan, Sevin 1976-7, 277, pl. 1). Also, part of the expedition was philologist Dinçol, who published some cuneiform inscriptions from the site and its surroundings (1976). The site was subsequently listed as number 19 in the catalogue of Urartian sites published by Kleiss and Hauptmann (1976, 11). Other inscriptions were published by Başgelen and Payne in 1985 and 2009 (Başgelen 1985, 17, fig. 6; Başgelen, Payne 2009). In 2008, Körzüt was visited again as part of research activities conducted in the region by Özfırat (2010, 227-8).⁹ The author of this contribution visited the site twice, on 7 August 2008 and 1 August 2010, as part of the research activities concerning Urartian inscriptions in eastern Turkey, directed by Salvini on behalf of the Institute for the Studies of the Aegean and Near Eastern Civilisations of the National Research Council (ICEVO-CNR). In 2008, and subsequently in 2018, Salvini (2008; 2018) republished all the epigraphs known from the site and its surroundings up to that point, which formed the *Corpus dei Testi Urartei* – henceforth CTU. In 2016 the first overall study of the site was published (Dan, Vitolo 2016a), followed a few years later by a second short descriptive contribution by Danışmaz (2020, 84-6). The continuation of illegal excavations on the site finally led to rescue excavations being carried out in 2016 under the supervision of the Directorate of the Van Museum.¹⁰ Illegal excavations had in fact exposed the remains of the tower temple of Minua many years ago, which led to the reuse of the temple stones, including the inscribed ones found in numerous surrounding villages. Furthermore, these illegal excavations brought to light the remains of a palace building with multiple rabbits on the facade and a large storage room. These new investigations are discussed in a specific section of this contribution. In 2017, during a survey in these territories a new inscription of Minua was discovered in the village of Gusak/Topuzarpa/Anguzek.¹¹ This inscription too originally came from the Körzüt

⁷ Site no. 212 among those registered by Burney.

⁸ This plan also has an incorrect orientation: the fortress is rotated by almost 90° compared to its correct position.

⁹ Site inventory number N71/13.

¹⁰ On the results of these excavations, cf. Kuvanç, Işık, Genç 2020 and Uslu 2021.

¹¹ On the field activities in general, cf. Gökçe, Kuvanç, Genç 2021; on the new inscription, cf. Işık, Genç 2021.

fortress. In 2023, new emergency excavations were conducted by the Directorate of the Van Museum, uncovering the tower-temple from which the epigraphs dispersed around the site came, and leading to the discovery of three new inscribed blocks still *in situ*.

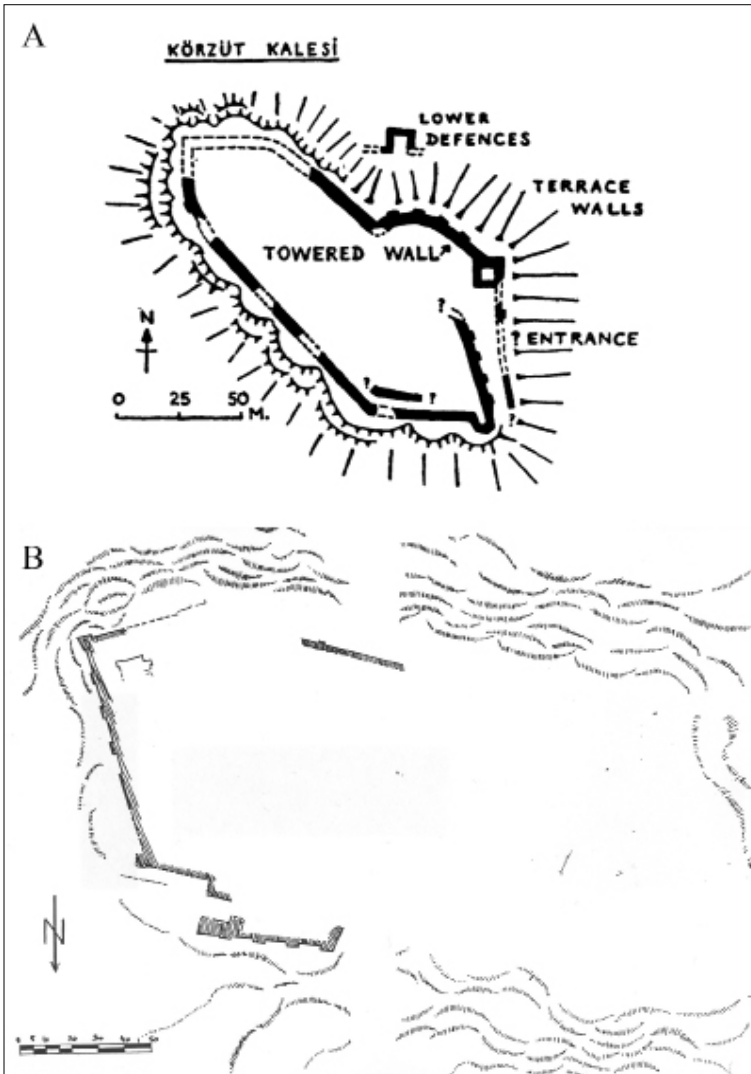


Figure 2 Plans of the Körzüt site (A: from Burney 1957: fig. 6; B: from Tarhan, Sevin 1976-7, pl. 1).

3 Inscriptions of Minua in the Muradiye Area

Over the years, numerous fragments of Urartian cuneiform inscriptions have been identified in the area of the Muradiye plain, in particular in the surroundings of the Körzüt site [figs 1, 3]. All the inscriptions date to the reign of Minua, son of Išpuini (r. 810-785/0 BCE),¹² i.e. the end of the ninth and the beginning of the eighth century BCE. At the current state of research, the reign of Minua is the period in which the greatest number of inscriptions on stone and rock were produced. Overall, 26 inscriptions pertaining to building blocks or stelae come from Körzüt area, excluding the Karahan stelae from this count. The greatest number of epigraphs – ten – were found in the village of Körzüt/Uluşar, which is the closest to the site. Seven inscriptions come from the village of Güşak/Anguzek/Topuzarpa. Six equally distributed epigraphs come from the villages of Berkri/Muradiye and Köşk [fig. 3], while one comes from the village of Tharr. The only three inscriptions from the Körzüt site were discovered in 2023 following emergency excavations conducted on the site. The excavations and epigraphs discovered on this occasion are discussed in a specific section of this paper. Most of these inscriptions probably came from the Körzüt fortress, although some almost certainly came from other known Urartian sites in the area, i.e. epigraphs not directly associated with the tower-temple of Körzüt, but pertinent to a second structure which perhaps was located at the site known as Muradiye fortress (Burney 1957, 48; Burney, Lawson 1960, 183-5; Burney, Lang 1971, 139). The most conspicuous group of epigraphs (CTU A 5-2 A-E), which contained most of what can be reconstructed from the annalistic texts of King Minua, must originally have been located on the facades of some temple structures, one of which was certainly built inside the Körzüt fortress.¹³

¹² The chronological references of the kings of Urartu are taken from Salvini 2008, 23; 2018, 18.

¹³ The reconstruction of the original positioning of the stones was published for the first time by Dinçol (1976); subsequently, Salvini presented a new version of the layout of the blocks (1980), recently revised (2008, 184-5). The updated graphic rendering of the temple façade proposed in this article, contained in the third volume of the CTU, is the work of the present author.



Figure 3 Uartian inscriptions and stones from the tower-temple of Körzüt, reused in the corners of modern houses in the Köşk village

Table 1 Uartian inscription of king Minua, son of Išpuini, from the area of Muradiye plain.¹⁴ In the following table the inscriptions are ordered on the basis of their codes in the CTU. For the reconstruction of the position of the texts on the façade of the Körzüt temple-tower, cf. [fig. 16]

CTU Code	Concordance	Findspot and context	Place of conservation	Original location	Bibliography
A 5-2A Stone-1	/	Körzüt village	Van Museum	Körzüt left side tower-temple	Dinçol 1976 (Stone-1)
A 5-2A Stone-2	/	Körzüt village	Walled in a house	Körzüt left side tower-temple	Dinçol 1976 (Stone-2)
A 5-2A Stone-3	/	Körzüt village	Walled in a house	Körzüt left side tower-temple	Dinçol 1976 (Stone-3)
A 5-2A Stone-4	/	Körzüt village	Walled in a house	Körzüt left side tower-temple	Dinçol 1976 (Stone-4)
A 5-2A Stone-5	/	Körzüt village	Walled in a house	Körzüt left side tower-temple	Dinçol 1976 (Stone-5)
A 5-2A Stone-6	/	Körzüt village?	VANTAM Research Center	Körzüt left side tower-temple	/
A 5-2A Stone-7	/	Körzüt village	Van Museum	Körzüt left side tower-temple	Dinçol 1976 (Stone-6)

¹⁴ The many stelae from Karahan are not included in this list because they come from an open-air sanctuary that is not directly connected to the site discussed in the text.

CTU Code	Concordance	Findspot and context	Place of conservation	Original location	Bibliography
A 5-2B Stone-1	CICH 25, UKN 34, Hchl 18b, KUKN 51	Berkri altar in church	Istanbul Archaeological Museum	Körzüt right side tower-temple	/
A 5-2B Stone-2	/	Köşk village	Walled in a house	Körzüt right side tower-temple	Dinçol 1976 (Stone-7)
A 5-2B Stone-3	/	Köşk village	Walled in a house	Körzüt right side tower-temple	Dinçol 1976 (Stone-8)
A 5-2B Stone-4	/	Köşk village	Walled in a house	Körzüt right side tower-temple	Dinçol 1976 (Stone-9)
A 5-2C Stone	CICH 30, UKN 38, Hchl 20, KUKN 55	Tharr village	Istanbul Archaeological Museum	Körzüt right side tower-temple	/
A 5-2C Stone	/	Körzüt village	Walled in a house	tower-temple	/
A 5-2D Stone	CICH 23, UKN 32, Hchl 19a, KUKN 49	Güşak altar in new church	Van Museum	tower-temple	/
A 5-2D Stone	CICH 24, UKN 33, Hchl 19b, KUKN 50	Güşak altar in old church	Unknown	tower-temple	/
A 5-2E Stone	CICH 26, UKN 35, Hchl 18a, KUKN 52	Berkri (Dzorovank)	Unknown	Körzüt right side tower-temple	Dinçol, Kavaklı 1978 (Muradiye-1)
A 5-16 Stele	CICH 47, UKN 57, Hchl 32, KUKN 74	Berkri	Unknown	Körzüt?	/
A 5-33 Stele	CICH 56, UKN 65, Hchl 41, KUKN 82	Güşak church	Van Museum	Körzüt?	/
A 5-35 Stone	CICH 58, UKN 67, Hchl 42, KUKN 84	Körzüt in a mill	Unknown	Körzüt?	/
A 5-36 Stone	CICH 70, UKN 66, Hchl 58, KUKN 83	Güşak in new church	Unknown	Körzüt?	/
A 5-36 Stone	/	Körzüt	Unknown	Körzüt?	Başgelen 1985, 17; Başgelen, Payne 2009
A 5-100 Stone	/	Körzüt village	Unknown	Körzüt?	Başgelen, Payne 2009
/	/	Güşak in church	Van Museum	Körzüt?	Işık, Genç 2021
/	CICH 173 a-b, Hchl Inc. 6	Güşak	Berlin	/	Unpublished
/	CICH 173 a-b, Hchl Inc. 6	Güşak	Berlin	/	Unpublished

CTU Code	Concordance	Findspot and context	Place of conservation	Original location	Bibliography
/	/	Körzüt	In situ	Körzüt tower-temple	Unpublished (discovered in 2023)
/	/	Körzüt	In situ	Körzüt tower-temple	Unpublished (discovered in 2023)
/	/	Körzüt	In situ	Körzüt tower-temple	Unpublished (discovered in 2023)

The main text reported information about an expedition of the Urartian army north of the River Araxes:

[Through the protection of the god Իմուա, son of Իժուանի, says: when I lay [lit. gathered/compiled] the foundation of the gate of the god Իմուա, when I built the gate of the god Իմուա, I prost[rated] before the god Իմուա. I pr[ay]ed to the god Իմուա. I ca[me] to the [la]nd [of the Erkuahı]; I went to war [against the tribe Erkuahı, I conquered the city Luḫıuni of the land of the [Er]kuahi, I devastated the land Etiuni. Minua, [son of] of Իժուանի, says: the city Lu[ḫı]uni, ci[ty] of the royalty of the Erk[ua]hi, [which nobody had (ever) besieged (before)], the god Իմուա gave it to Minua, son of Իժուանի. He took Luḫıuni [and] pu[t] the land Etiuni under tri[bu]te. 50 myr[iad + x thousand and x hundreds of men and women, peo]ple [per year]; some I killed, some I deported alive. 1,733 horses, 7,616 oxen, 15,320 sheep arrived from there to the ki[ng], save for what the soldiers [plundered when I occupied? the land]. Through the protection [of the god Իմուա, son of Իժուանի, says: the harem(?) of the city Դոսթա [where] no king before[?] had brought so many women, inde[ed] Minua], son of Իժուանի, [from] the city Luḫıuni [did it]. [A group(?) of women and men] from the city Դոսթա [are *gurdari* of the women in the city Aelia of the land Diruni; *gurdari* city 'Altuquia of the land Զիադի. Through the greatness of the god Իմ[ու]ա I am Minua, son of [Իժ]ուանի, strong king, [great king, king of the Bia lands, lord] of Դոսթա-City. (CTU A 5-2 A-F)¹⁵

Of particular interest is the beginning of the text, in which King Minua speaks of the construction of the temple structure dedicated to the god Իմուա, the greatest divinity of the vast Urartian pantheon, which was located right inside the site of Körzüt and which is discussed below. Another erratic inscription by King Minua might refer to the same temple structure, i.e. a stele found walled up in a private

¹⁵ The English translation of CTU A 5-33, which has some parts that are difficult to interpret, especially in the final lines, is taken from <http://oracc.org/ecut/Q006900/>.

building in the village of Güşak (CTU A 5-33), once disappeared but recently rediscovered (Işık, Genç 2021, 4-5), which provides the possible name of the fortress, not present in the previous texts:

For the god Țaldi, the [or, resp., his] Lord, Minua, son of Işpuini, erected this stele. When he built a gate of the god Țaldi he built [also] a fortress to perfection. He gave it the name ‘City of the god Țaldi’ [dȚal-di-i pa-a-ta-ri]. He planted this vineyard, [and] he planted an orchard. ‘Vineyard of Minua’ is [its] name. Through the greatness of the god Țaldi,

[I am] Minua, son of Işpuini, strong king, great king, king of the Bia lands, lord of Țuşpa-City. Minua says: when they harvest the vineyard, they shall sacrifice one ox and 3 sheep for the god Țaldi, they shall offer the fruit[s] both at the gate of the god Țaldi and in front of the stele. When they gather the new grapes, a libation[?] shall be offered for the god Țaldi and the gate of the god Țaldi, a [li]bation[?] for the goddess ‘Arubani, and a libation[?] for the god Țaldi in front of the stele. (CTU A 5-33)¹⁶

Although this is yet to be verified, it could be hypothesized that the ‘city of Țaldi’¹⁷ was the Körzüt fortress itself, certainly the most important site in the area currently known (Dan 2012, 174), as indeed already tentatively proposed by Salvini.¹⁸ Of three other inscriptions of similar content discovered in the villages of Uluşar (CTU A 5-35; IV A 5-100) and Köşk (A 5-36), again attributable to King Minua, the former may be considered inscriptions of the foundation of the fortress, probably located on the main entrance door of the fortress, while the last one adorned some prestigious building and is important because it also mentions the ‘city of Țaldi’:

For the god Țaldi, the [or, resp., his] Lord, Minua, son of Işpuini, built this building to perfection. He also built a fortress, and he gave it the name ‘City of the god Țaldi’. Through the greatness

¹⁶ English translation of CTU A 5-33 available at <http://oracc.org/ecut/Q006931/>.

¹⁷ It is interesting to note that a text by Işpuini (c. 830-20 BCE), son of Sarduri (CTU A 2-9A), father of Minua, is known in which the construction of a ‘city of Țaldi’ is mentioned; it comes from Karahan area, not far from the Muradiye plain. This circumstance suggests that it could have been the same city, perhaps founded by both sovereigns in the period of coregency (Salvini pers. comm., 2008), which is believed to have occurred between 820 and 810 BCE.

¹⁸ Salvini, analysing the possible localization of some toponymies mentioned in the inscriptions of Körzüt and Karahan, advanced a preliminary hypothesis of association between the toponymies of Țaldiei URU and Arşuniuni, and the fortresses of Körzüt and Muradiye, without proposing exact identifications (Salvini 1995, 123), although he later identified Arşuniuni with the site of Kevenli (2008, 70). On the different proposals related to the ancient name of Körzüt, cf. Dan 2020, 183.

of the god 𐎶𐎠𐎺 [I am] Minua, strong king, king of the Bia lands, lord of 𐎲𐎶𐎶𐎠𐎺-City. (A 5-36)¹⁹

All the inscriptions from the Muradiye plain area date to the time of Minua; there is evidently no doubt as to who built the fortress. Recently Salvini presented an interesting analysis of the palaeography of the cuneiform inscriptions from the time of Minua, which are the largest in number among all those of the kings of Urartu that have come down to us. All the texts from Körzüt and surrounding areas are characterized by a homogeneous ductus attributable to what Salvini calls canonical texts, with a ductus that anticipates that of the time of his son Arğišti (I) and grandson Sarduri (II) (Salvini 2012, 318-20). This circumstance allows us to hypothesize that the construction of Körzüt and the organization of the Muradiye plain occurred in a mature/late phase of his reign, probably in the early years of the eighth century BCE.²⁰

4 The Architectural Structures

The site is characterized by the presence of a large fortress, a settlement and a necropolis [fig. 4]. The fortress was built on a large natural basalt hill, 50 m high, which dominates the surrounding plain known as Arapkale Tepe (Tarhan, Sevin 1976-7, 276). The dimensions of this rock outcrop are approximately 310 m from north to south and approximately 100 m from east to west at the widest points²¹ [fig. 5]. Currently, important remains of the fortification walls are visible on the eastern side of the hill, the most easily accessible, while on the western side there are visible remains of walls and foundations dug into the rock, which skilfully exploit the natural conformation of the land, according to the traditional canons of Urartian architecture. On the southern side, a natural ditch defends the access to the Arapkale hill. The most impressive fortifications are located on the south-eastern side of the hill [figs 6-11], where a stretch of walls approximately 60 m long still has a height of approximately 7 m, with

¹⁹ English translation of CTU A 5-36 available at <http://oracc.org/ecut/Q006934/>.

²⁰ There is a problem relating to the ductus of Upper Anzaf, where inscribed stones of Minua with different ductus appear to coexist in the same building. Compare the images of the inscriptions CTU A 5-42 with more recent ductus and fuller wedges and CTU A 5-43 with archaic ductus. CTU A 5-43 is included in the arrangement made by Salvini of the inscriptions (2012, 318), while the blocks under the code of CTU A 5-42 are not reported in this systematization.

²¹ Tarhan and Sevin reported measurements of 250 metres east-west and 100 metres north-south (1976-7, 277, tab. 1), the orientation of the plan being incorrect. Uslu reports measurements of 325 × 110 metres (2021, 126).

nine courses of blocks. The drystone masonry is composed of large, well-squared blocks of basalt rock.²² It may be said that the fortifications of Körzüt are among the most impressive built in the Kingdom of Urartu. The dimensions of the blocks are similar only to those in the so-called ‘Sardursburg’, the monumental propylaeum leading to the capital Դušpa built by King Sarduri (I) in the mid-ninth century BCE.²³ The walls, 4 m thick, were built using a technique that involved the construction of external facings with large squared stones, with an internal fill of loose material. The walls are reinforced by the presence of four large bastions/butresses between 5.35 and 5.15 m wide, projecting 1 m from the wall and spaced between 7.15 and 7.65 m apart [fig. 7]. Successive courses of blocks are placed up to 5-6 cm (Tarhan, Sevin 1976-7, 279) further inwards than those immediately below to ensure greater stability. This technical measure was necessary not only because of the wall’s notable height, but also because this was a retaining wall for the hillside. It is not possible to know if this was the original height of the stone wall or if it was surmounted by a mud brick upper wall, in accordance with a characteristic practice in Urartian architecture. The largest stone blocks are 2.10 m wide and 1.20 m high, with a depth of approximately 1.10 m. On some blocks [fig. 11], the unremoved lifting tenons are still visible.²⁴ These were protrusions in the stone left by the stonemasons to which the ropes were attached for the transport and installation of the blocks, a technique used by the Urartians throughout their history. In fact, the lifting tenons are also visible in the walls of Karmirblur in Armenia, a fortress built in the seventh century BCE (Dan, La Farina 2012, 257, figs 7, 11). On the south-eastern side of the hill, at the end of the visible part of the large fortification wall, after the last buttress, a section of wall 10 m long with a different orientation from the main one constitutes part of the main access door to the fortress. This 5.80 m-wide wall constitutes the eastern side of a quadrangular area of approximately 9 by 10 m, probably a sort of

22 For a study of the building stones laid in several fortresses in the region, including Körzüt, cf. Karabaşoğlu, Karaoğlu, Kuvanç 2021, 208, 210, fig. 4e-f, pl. 1.

23 This is the oldest Urartian building currently known and was located at the western end of the Van cliff (Bilgiç 1959, 44-7; Naumann 1968, 53-7, fig. 4; Tarhan 1985, 305-6, dis. 10, fig. 11-13; Dan 2010, 51, 53, fig. 3). It has been interpreted differently on several occasions: as the base of a temple, a monumental propylaeum giving access to the fortress, or a mooring pier for boats (Naumann 1968, 53-7; Salvini 1995, 141; 2001, 302-4; 2002, 71-5), on which King Sarduri (I) engraved six duplicates of a text in the Assyrian language (CTU A 1-1A-F).

24 Burney 1998, 150, fig. 14.1; these tenons were mistakenly interpreted by Tarhan and Sevin as one of the earliest examples of Urartian ashlar (1976-7, 281). The possible use of ashlar, even if it is probably a condition of incompleteness in the processing of the blocks, can be limited exclusively to the seventh century BCE. On the Urartian ashlar masonry, cf. Dan 2015a; 2015b, 49-52.

courtyard in front of the actual entry door.²⁵ On the western side, which is not fully comprehensible, there are remains of walls, currently preserved for three courses of blocks (Burney 1957, 48, fig. 6; Tarhan, Sevin 1976-7, 281-2; Dan, Vitolo 2016a, 133, figs 11-12). Despite the uncertainty relating to the exact definition of the structural system of the door, it may be hypothesized that it was an entrance in which one section of the surrounding wall passed parallel in front of another, so the doorway passed between the two surrounding walls.²⁶ Examples in Urartu of this type of ‘chicane’ gate are present at Armavir-blur in Armenia and Qal’eh Aladagh, in Iranian Azerbaijan (Hejebri-Nobari 1997, 76). Another well-preserved stretch of wall is located on the south side of the rocky spur. This too, approximately 35 m long, is reinforced by the presence of three buttresses jutting out 1 m from the wall. The buttresses are between 3.50 and 5 m wide and spaced between 9 and 8.40 m apart. On the western side, as mentioned previously, which is most protected by the natural conformation of the hill, there are remains of rock foundations and stretches of low walls. The foundations have the characteristic stepped shape [fig. 12], which is identifiable in most Urartian fortresses, in particular in the capital Դւշփա, near Van. These drystone walls would probably have been surmounted by mud brick standing walls. Among the rock foundations on the western side of the site, a channel for rainwater drainage is clearly distinguishable. The blocks in these foundations, clearly smaller in size than those of the eastern fortifications, have been progressively removed and reused in the construction of houses in the nearby villages. Remains of buildings made of mud bricks are visible in many parts of the site, exposed by the washing away of the hill caused by weathering or as a result of the illegal excavations identifiable in many points of the site. In particular, a large room made of mud-bricks was unearthed; it was probably a rectangular storeroom used for storing food. On the surface, in fact, remains of characteristic Urartian *pithoi* have been found.²⁷ In the southern part of the hill, in correspondence with a large illegal excavation, remains of well-squared basalt blocks emerge.²⁸ This

²⁵ 8 × 10 metres according to Tarhan and Sevin (1976-7, 282).

²⁶ It was not possible to find the remains of two bastions at the sides of the gate reported by Sinclair (1987, 267).

²⁷ On Urartian *pithoi*, cf. Dan 2016, 597-8. An almost entire Urartian *pithos*, probably discovered in Körzüt, is kept in the warehouse of the Van Museum (Genç, İşik pers. comm., 2010). It might have come from this illegally excavated room. On this storeroom and the *pithoi* fragments on the surface of the site, cf. Dan, Vitolo 2016a, 134, figs 16-17.

²⁸ According to Tarhan and Sevin, this would have been the cella of the temple and a part of its facade, of which the side of a corner measuring 2.03 metres long was recognizable (1976-7, 283). Today the situation, due to the abandonment and degradation of the site, is extremely difficult to interpret. The Urartian temple was called *susi*

is the actual location of the Urartian tower-temple, as hypothesized already in 2016 (Dan, Vitolo 2016a, 134-5, fig. 18), and subsequently confirmed by excavations carried out in 2023 in this area, which led to the discovery of the remains of the structure and three epigraphs still *in situ*. The blocks with the cuneiform inscriptions of King Minua dispersed in the villages of Uluşar, Köşk and Tharr undoubtedly came from here. The quality of the workmanship of these blocks clearly marks an improvement in the construction techniques used for these structures. This circumstance suggests the hypothesis that the Körzüt temple was built after that of the Upper Anzaf fortress, the blocks of which were much less refined (Belli 1999, 24-8, figs 14-16). Near this building, the presence of bumps created by the accumulation of rubble indicates the presence of another rectangular construction, the plan of which can be partially traced on the ground. Near the temple area, at the precipice on the southern side of the hill, remains of the foundations of stepped rock walls are visible. Scattered across the surface of the site, Burney recognized remains of medieval-era structures (1998, 150). On the east/south-east side of the hill that houses the fortress, the remains of a vast unfortified settlement were found, which seemed to extend over an area of around 8 or 9 hectares, with the remains of large houses rather distant from each other (1957, 47-8; Tarhan, Sevin 1976-7, 285-6). In the south-west area, the remains of another non-fortified settlement area develop, with an area of approximately 1 hectare. Remains of stone-built buildings are visible on the ground. The structures appear highly irregular and rather close together, with walls approximately 1 m thick on average (285-6). Currently these residential areas cannot be dated, although occupation in the Urartian period is probable. The surface pottery was studied by Özfirat, who identified the typical Middle Iron Age pottery of the region and Urartian palace pottery with red slip (2010, 228). During the exploration of the site conducted by the author, two characteristic Urartian ‘T-shaped niches’ carved into the basalt rock were seen on the southern side of the spur on which the site stands; these can be added to the list of these rock structures known in numerous Urartian sites, especially in the Van area²⁹ [fig. 13].

in antiquity, which means tower. On the *susi/itsu* equivalence based on a back-translation from Assyrian to Urartian of an inscription from the fortress of Aşağı Kevenli (CTU A 5-44), cf. Salvini 1979, 581-2. The Urartian temple was a single-celled rectangular structure with sides measuring between 10 and 15 metres overall, of considerable height. For further information on Urartian tower-temples, cf. Dan 2015b, 39-41.

²⁹ On these niches, cf. Işık 1995, 16, figs 60-1.



Figure 4 Map showing the features of the Körzüt fortress discussed in the text (satellite picture from Google Earth)



Figure 5 General view of the site from southwest



Figure 6 Aerial view of the eastern fortifications (picture available online at <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/kultur/korzut-kalesi-kalintisinda-urartu-krali-menuanin-insa-ettirdigi-ikinci-tapinak-bulundu/2766699>)

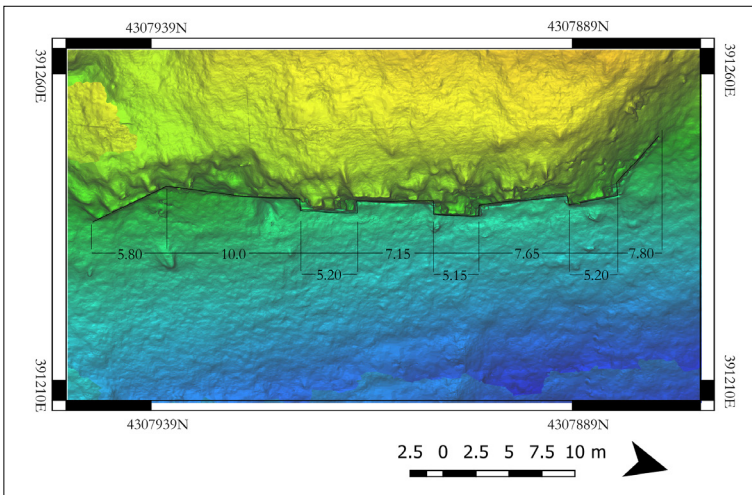


Figure 7 Digital Elevation Model and measurements of the eastern wall (© O. Gasparro)

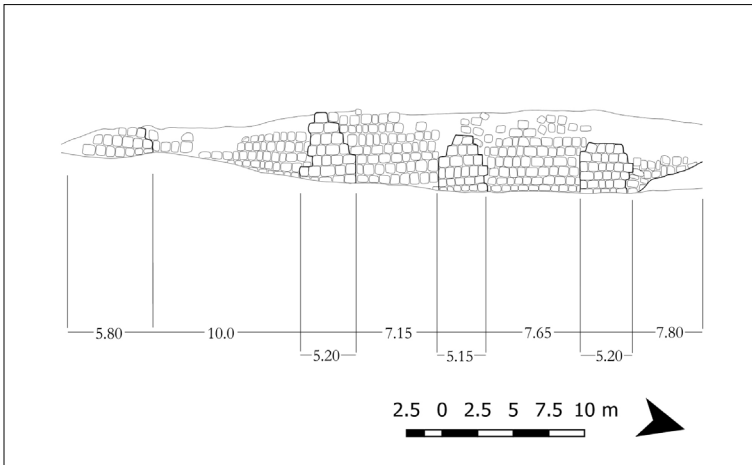


Figure 8 Drawing and measurements of the eastern wall (© O. Gasparro)

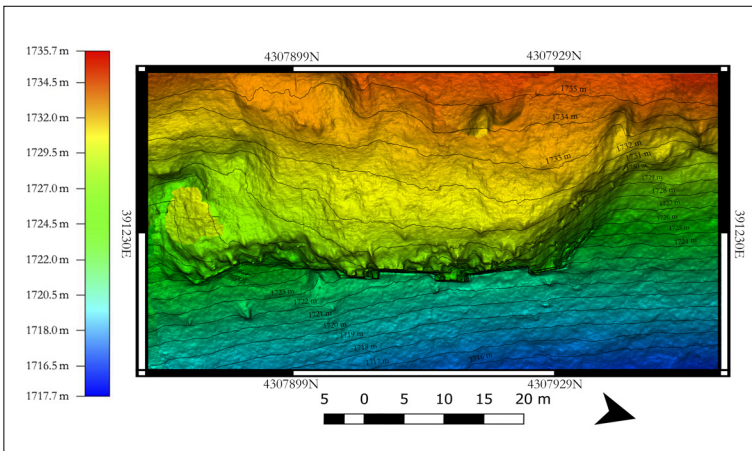


Figure 9 Digital Elevation Model of the eastern wall (© O. Gasparro)



Figure 10 View of the eastern fortification walls



Figure 11 Detailed view of one of the buttresses. Note the lifting tenon on the left side of the buttress



Figure 12 Rock-cut foundation steps in the south-western side of the site and the Muradiye plain in the background

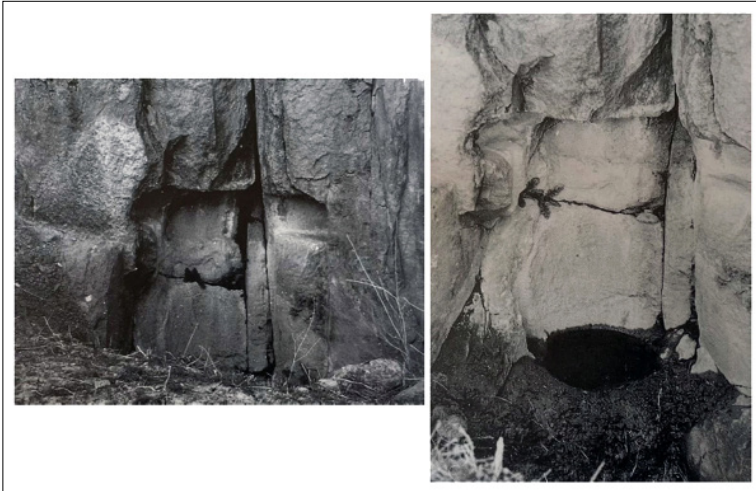


Figure 13 T-shaped rock-cut niches in the southern part of the site (adapted from Işık 1995, figs 60-1)

5 The Hydraulic Works for the Supply of the Muradiye Plain

The efforts made by Minua for the water supply of the Körzüt fortress and the Muradiye plain were notable [fig. 14]. We are informed of these construction activities by some ancient inscriptions. In this regard, an inscription found near Muradiye (CTU A 5-16) refers to the construction of a canal and to another found near Karahan (A 5-24), and the construction of a second canal near the city Minuaḫinili. The main work was undoubtedly the Süphan Gölü, from whose southern side a canal branches off on which some dams perhaps dating back to the Urartian era have been identified.³⁰ The canal reaches the plain where it branches into several sections. Part of this dense network of canalisation is still partially visible today. Another hydraulic work attributed to the Urartians is the Süs Barajı, now completely dried up, which is located in the western foothill area of the Köseveli Dağı, about 1.30 km south-east of the Körzüt fortress. The remains of the previously described ancient settlement extended between the basin and the southern slopes of the Körzüt fortress (Belli 1997a, 115-17). Two other works are located on the eastern flank of the İsabey Dağı; these are the Kızkapan Göleti (2000, 93) and the Kelle Barajı (92), both dated on an architectural basis to the seventh century BCE; these works were used for the water supply of the Körzüt fortress. In fact, the waters of the River Mezarlık, on which they were built, were channelled into an artificial canal that still runs around the northern slopes of the hill that houses the fort. Only further investigations will provide more detailed information on the dating of these works, but it seems probable that some can reasonably be attributed to the Urartian era.

30 Belli 1991, 114-15; 1992, 481; 1994a, 80, 82; 1994b, 9-10; 1995, 27; 1997b, 645.

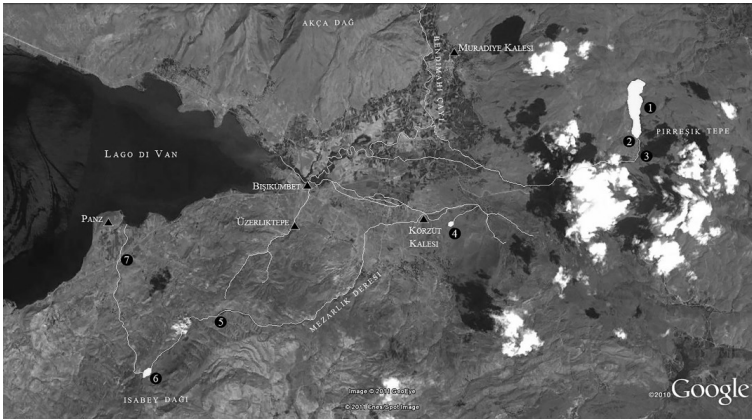


Figure 14 The hydraulic works in the Muradiye plain (after Dan 2012, fig. IV.10.3)

6 Recent Archaeological Investigations in Körzüt Fortress: A New Building and an Old Temple

As already mentioned, the site had never been subjected to archaeological excavation until 2016 as a consequence of the systematic lootings, also documented in scientific contributions (Dan, Vitolo 2016a). The most evident result of these illegal activities is the partial destruction of the tower-temple: over the years, the inscriptions that adorned its façade have been scattered and found mounted in the walls of private houses in the villages of Berkır, Güşak, Köşk and Tharr, located not far from Körzüt. In around 2010, a huge excavation (about 15 × 7 m) in the northern portion of the site exposed a large rectangular room with stone-based brick standing walls in which the remains of Urartian *pithoi* were found.³¹ Other illegal excavations not far from this area were conducted in 2015, uncovering the remains of a stone wall with the northern part of a gate characterised by multiple rabbets. To avoid the complete destruction of the building, the Van Museum Directorate performed a salvage excavation to expose the structure.³² The excavation area measured about 12 × 8 m (approximately 100 square m). The excavation revealed the presence of a single rectangular room measuring 8.10 × 6.91 m [fig. 15]. The single entrance has a width of about 1.3 m and a depth of about 2 m. The gate is flanked by multiple recesses with sides

³¹ I would like to thank Bülent Genç who told me of the transfer of an almost entire Urartian *pithos* from the Körzüt site to the old museum in Van.

³² On these excavations, cf. Kuvancı, Işık, Genç 2020; Dan 2021, 26-8; Uslu 2021.

measuring about 0.25 m. Part of the south side of the gate is broken and only one of the three original rabbeted stones is still *in situ*. In the short corridor there is a beautiful rectangular basalt step (1.30 × 1.57 m), partly broken by the illegal excavations. The lower parts of the walls consist of four courses of worked stones, with a mud-brick upper portion. In the eastern wall, in correspondence to the gate, three courses of stones are visible, while in the back wall four may be seen. The best-preserved parts of the wall, especially in correspondence to the gate on the east side, are about 2 m high, but the original bricks have largely been washed away over the millennia and what remains of the walls is little more than debris. Flat stones were used to divide the stone foundation from the upper mud-brick portion, as is usual in Urartian architecture.³³ The walls were built using regular medium-sized stones, well worked on the outer faces, with rather coarsely finished horizontal surfaces and interstices filled with small stones. The drystone walls are double-faced, with medium-sized stones in the outer parts and an internal fill of soil and stones. The average thickness of the eastern wall, the only one completely exposed on both sides, is about 2 m. It is clear that this was an important Urartian era building whose dating is indicated by the presence of multiple rabbets. Unfortunately, the fact that the excavations were limited to the interior of the room – plus a small rectangular area in front of the doorway, pertaining to another room – means that we lack information about the structure’s external characteristics (the possible presence of external and corner buttresses, for example). Only in the western part of the building was it possible to determine the width of the wall, which was 3.80 m. It is in any case clear that this was not an isolated building, but that this room was part of a complex. Due to the destruction of the area by illegal excavations, very few finds were collected. The most interesting include a fragment of blue painted plaster, typical of many Urartian sites, and pottery that can be attributed to the Middle Iron Age/Urartian period, but also Late Iron Age/Orontid and Medieval glazed pottery. In addition, a Byzantine coin was identified (Kuvañç, Işık, Genç 2020, 118, figs 13-14). The excavators defined the structure in question as an Urartian temple, which would make Körzüt the oldest Urartian site currently known to feature the coexistence of two temple structures. This interpretation assumes that rabbeted passages or niches are always associated with temples in Urartian architecture.³⁴ It is

33 Cf. this detail in Kuvañç, Işık, Genç 2020, fig. 7.

34 We must consider that the interpretation of these multiple rabbets, which is a cultural element resulting from a progressive and constant Assyrianizing process of the territories beyond the Taurus and the Zagros, is far from being fully explored. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to remember what Roaf has written on the use of the multiple-rabbets: “Elaborate niches and façades with multiple rabbets are also

clear that this proposal is difficult to sustain, on one hand because of our imperfect knowledge of Urartian palace structures. On the other hand, one of the comparisons used to support this interpretation, that is the building of Girik Tepe, features multiple rabbets on doors and niches and certainly cannot be defined as a temple, but rather as a small palace (Dan, Vitolo 2016b, figs 4-5, 7-8). In addition, further comparisons between the Körzüt structure and other buildings of difficult interpretation, such as the so-called temple of Haldi at Arin-berd/Erebuni (Kuvañç, Işık, Genç 2020, 119), do not seem to be decisive for this attribution. The Körzüt building is only partially excavated, devoid of inscriptions, and its overall characteristics are not known due to the incompleteness of the excavations and the absence of relevant finds inside. At the same time, the parallels for the Körzüt building suggested by the authors, taking up old hypotheses of Ussishkin and Forbes concerning the possible influence of the Levant and northern Syria on Urartu (124), have little substance, as likewise the chronological speculation based on these. At Körzüt there was certainly a temple dedicated to Haldi, as evidenced by the various inscribed stones illegally excavated from the site, which adorned the façade of the temple itself. There is currently no epigraphic or architectural evidence of the existence of a second temple at this site. The excavated structure was part of a palatine context of some importance, as evidenced by certain architectural details, such as the multiple rabbets and the stone threshold. However, the data are too scarce to postulate the existence of other types of temple buildings in Urartian architecture in addition to the classical tower-temple, whose development independently of other architectural traditions has recently been shown.³⁵ Recurring attempts to demonstrate the existence of other types of temple structure in Urartian architecture have been made; we recall the type of double temple suggested by Tarhan, near Çavuştepe and Tuşpa, the capital of Urartu (2007), a hypothesis which is interesting but far from certain. The most important aspect of these excavations, more than the interpretative remarks on the function or chronology of individual buildings, is undoubtedly the clear evidence of the continued use of the Urartian sites, in the period defined as post-Urartian, and later at various times during the Middle Ages. The continuation of illegal excavations in the area of what had already been indicated in 2016 as the tower-temple from which came the inscriptions that today are

characteristic of religious buildings in Mesopotamia from the Ubaid period on, but they also occur in secular buildings (e.g. the Throne Room of the Southern Citadel in Babylon). Doubly recessed niches are often represented on fortification walls depicted on the Assyrian and Urartian reliefs" (1998, 65).

35 On the origin and evolution of the Urartian tower-temple, cf. Dan 2017.

scattered in the villages around the site, made new excavation interventions necessary to save what remained of the structure. The excavations, which took place in 2023 and are currently unpublished, documented the existence of a temple largely destroyed by illegal excavations, but of which the first Urartian inscriptions ever found on the site were still preserved *in situ*. The inscriptions belong to the left side of the façade³⁶ of the tower-temple of Minua and constitute duplicates of the known epigraphs that ran on the right side of the temple façade (CTU A 5-2 B) [fig. 16]. One of the blocks of which images are circulating is an exact copy of one of the epigraphs published by Dinçol and said to come from Muradiye (Muradiye-1) (Dinçol, Kavaklı 1978, pl. XV), which therefore also came from the right side of the same temple.³⁷ Excavations have documented the existence of fragments of blue paint within the cella, a phenomenon seen extensively in Urartian temples, of both the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. The temple of Körzüt appears, due to its architectural characteristics and the nature of the epigraphs, to be more recent than the other known temple of Minua, namely that of Upper Anzaf.³⁸ The blocks of which the latter is made are roughly worked; the only well-finished ones were those bearing the inscription, whose surface emerged from the block to then be plastered in such a way as to cover the rough unscribed parts and the other blocks. The position of the inscriptions at the corners of the temple (and on a block inscribed on two faces), rather than on the facade and in the corridor as in Körzüt, testifies to the greater age of the Anzaf temple. The epigraphs on the facade and in the corridor, although variable elements in Urartian architecture, became a constant feature of subsequent tower-temples. Furthermore, investigations were also conducted in the necropolis area of the site, where looted chamber tombs were discovered (Kuvanç, Işık, Genç 2020, fig. 5).

36 It concerns the first three missing blocks in the reconstruction presented by the author of this contribution in Salvini 2008, III: 110.

37 On these new inscriptions, cf. Trémouille, Bonfanti, Dan, forthcoming.

38 On this temple, cf. Belli 1999, 24-8, figs 14-16.



Figure 15 Aerial photo and a view of the gate of the building excavated in 2016
(adapted from Uslu 2021, 124, 133, fig. 8)

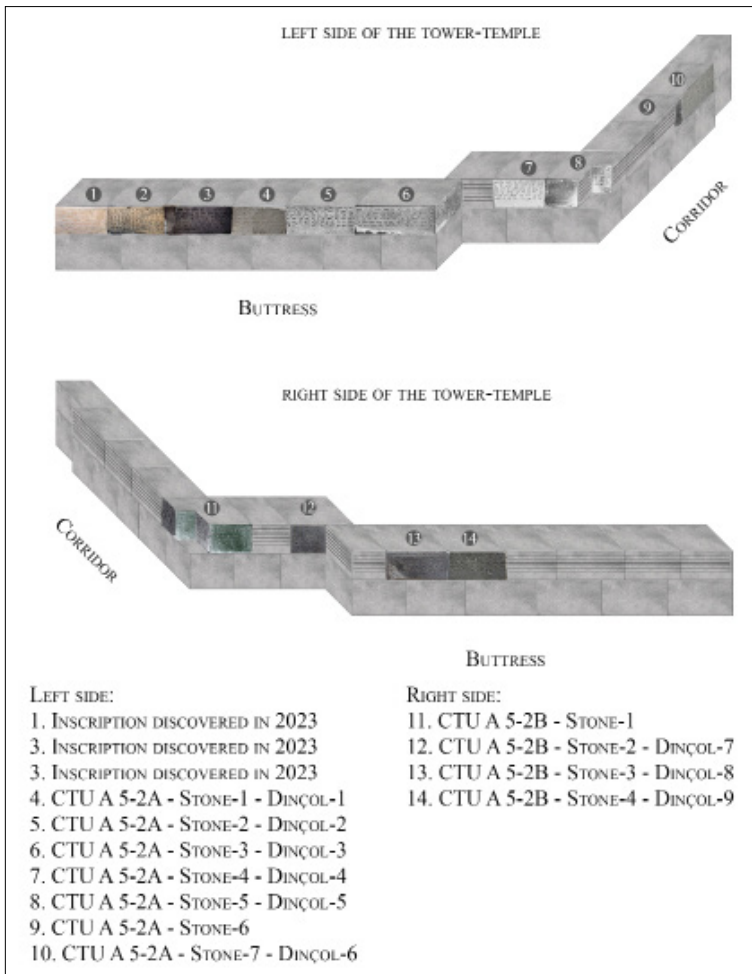


Figure 16 Reconstruction of the façades of the Urartian tower-temple with the old inscriptions and new ones discovered in 2023

7 Conclusions

The Muradiye region was an area of great importance in Urartu. The vast, fertile plain was among the territories that can be considered as part of the original core of Urartu, together with the eastern and northern shores of Lake Van more generally. It is therefore not surprising that such a central, important area - also for subsequent developments in Urartian politics - was equipped with a large economic-administrative centre. In this regard, the Körzüt fortress must have had considerable importance in the Urartian era. It was clearly built with a dual function: to protect the road that ran from the north towards the capital, and to exploit the fertile Muradiye plain [fig. 1] (Burney, Lang 1971, 139). It must be taken into consideration that the plain in the Urartian era was certainly wider, given that the water level of Lake Van was certainly lower and the ancient road that led towards Van did not run directly alongside the lake in Urartian times. Körzüt also constituted an important bridgehead for the expeditions of Minua and his successors towards the Ararat Valley. It may have been built by Išpuini and finished by his son Minua, as has been speculated in the past (Tarhan, Sevin 1976-7, 284-5), or during the period of coregency, or by Minua alone. In any case, while the attribution to Išpuini is based only on architectural comparisons of tenuous foundation, the epigraphic evidence indicates Minua as the probable commissioner of the fortress. Furthermore, as we have seen, the epigraphic data allow us to associate the construction of the fortress with the later reign of Minua and therefore probably date it to the beginning of the eighth century BCE. This might perhaps be identified with the 'city of ̄aldı' which, as we have seen, is mentioned in several texts by Minua himself. Körzüt was certainly one of the most important fortresses, as well as being one of the oldest currently known built by the Urartian rulers. Archaeological excavations could now provide important information on the conformation and use of the site over time, not only with the continuation of the Urartian era, but also in subsequent epochs. Recent excavations have finally allowed us to architecturally define some of the buildings on the site, namely a probable palace building (excavated in 2016) and the remnants of the tower-temple (excavated in 2023) already known from the inscriptions scattered in the territory of the Muradiye plain. The discovery of these new remains finally *in situ* provides confirmation of what has been known for some time, namely the existence of a tower-temple built by King Minua in this place. Particularly important is the discovery of late Iron Age pottery, attributable to a chronological horizon that can be defined as Orontid/Achaemenid. This is further confirmation that most of the large Urartian centres, including Körzüt, were reused in the post-Urartian era by the first indigenous

dynasty of the Armenian Highlands.³⁹ It is to be hoped that, in addition to these emergency excavations, which are certainly very important, we will proceed in the future with excavations in undamaged areas so as to be able to have a clear architectural picture of the site – and above all to document uncompromised stratigraphy which sheds light on the multiple phases of the site’s occupation.

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³⁹ On the continuity of use of Urartian sites in the post-Urartian, Orontid/Achaemenid era in the Van region, cf. Dan 2023, 157-204.

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Linguistics and Philology

The *Vita Silvestri* and Its Armenian Versions in the Context of the Apostolic Foundation of the Patriarchates and Papacy

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Abstract The article is focused on issues connected with the spread of the Greek and Armenian versions of the *Vita beati Silvestri*, which so far seems to be underestimated. These versions are worthy to research, since they are also closely intermingled with many interesting topics, one of which is a question on apostolic foundation of the papacy and the patriarchates. The *Vita* also served as a source for the later forgeries made on a lore of its content (e.g. the *Donatio Constantini*, the *Letter of Love and Concord*). The research of the tradition and texts connected with Sylvester is *quaestio vexata* and it can be solved by involving all existing versions.

Keywords Vita beati Silvestri. Apostolic foundation. Patriarchates. Papacy. Forgeries. Armenian tradition. Letter of Love and Concord.

Summary 1 Research Topic. – 2 The Apostolic Foundation of the Papacy and Other Patriarchates. – 3 The Journey of the Armenian King Trdat and St. Gregory the Illuminator to Rome. – 4 Some Conclusions.



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1 Research Topic

This article sets to analyse the development of traditions associated with the Greek and Armenian versions of the so-called *Vita beati Silvestri*, without, however, going into the details concerning the editions and the history of research of the texts. Rather, I argue that the *Vita*, conventionally known as a forgery, and its different versions, had a strong bearing on questions related to the Apostolic foundation of the papacy and its relationship to other patriarchates. In this light, it is important to reveal the possible motivations for translating the *Vita Silvestri* from the Greek to Armenian. The information about the context of the emergence of the Greek *Vita* is sparse and one can only hypothesize that it was composed in the sixth century. Yet, questions of why, by whom and where - remain unanswered.

The Roman Pope Sylvester I (*sedes* 314-35) was known in Armenian sources (e.g. Agat'angelos, Ehišē, Movsēs Xorenac'i, *Book of Canons*, cf. Hakobyan 1964; Sebeos 1999) since the very beginning of the development of Christian literature in that language. Moreover, the Greek version of the legend of Sylvester was translated into Armenian quite early. Thanks to the preserved colophons,¹ the name of the translator and the exact date of the translation are known: in 678 by Grigor Jorap'orec'i. Later on this text was abridged and transmitted in manuscripts in combination with the adaptation of Socrates Scholasticus' *Ecclesiastical History*. The latter came to be commonly known as *Shorter Socrates* (cf. Shirinian 2003-4).

The fact that such a pro-Roman work as the Greek *Vita Silvestri* was selected for translation into Armenian is surprising. The Armenian translators usually chose works that were in concord with the Armenian confessional point of view or at least did not contradict it. Chalcedonian Armenians too produced their own writings, which never became popular (at least in Armenia) and, unfortunately, mostly disappeared except for two or three units (e.g. the *Narratio de rebus Armeniae* or *On the Difference of Nature and Hypostasis* by Eutychius of Constantinople, an interesting but little-studied work, which is extant only in an Armenian translation).² It is therefore

1 Concerning these colophons cf. Tēr-Movsēsian 1897, XVII-XIX, LXXXIII-XCIV; in more detail cf. Shirinian 1994, 156-63; Thomson 2005, 59-62.

2 There is an interesting passage in this writing which witnesses that in Armenia at that time there were tolerant clergymen, open-minded towards the disputes about one or two natures of Christ, like bishop Vrt'anes who said that he had learned from his predecessors that God is Ἅγιος and that he does not want to omit or add anything to it: λέγων ὅτι Ὅι μακαριώτατοι ἐπίσκοποι οἱ πρὸ ἐμοῦ ὁ τε Πέτρος καὶ Γρηγόριος οὕτως ἔλεγον τὸ Ἅγιος ὁ Θεός, ἐγὼ δὲ οὐτε προσθήσω οὐτε ὑφέλω' ("saying that: 'The blessed bishops, which were before me - Peter and Gregorios - said 'Holy God', and I won't add or subtract anything"; Garitte 1952, 38).

important to uncover the reasons why the translator(s) and the person who commissioned the translation were interested in the Greek *Life of Sylvester*, which, in fact, reflected the Chalcedonian doctrine. This, in turn leads to the conclusion that the *Vita* was thought to express shared interests of non-Chalcedonian, as well as Chalcedonian Armenians.

First among these reasons was the Armenians' interest expressed from time to time to reveal the historical relationship between Armenia and Rome, something discussed also below. Secondly, this work includes two episodes of great importance for the entire Christianity: the *Visio* of the Cross by Constantine and the *Inventio* of the Holy Cross by Helena.³ Indeed, the passages relating Constantine's miraculous apparition and the finding of the Holy Cross were later expanded in the Revision of the Armenian translation of the *Vita Silvestri*. In addition, for the Armenians Sylvester was connected with the Council of Nicaea (325), which had a special significance for them, since they were intent on establishing the preeminence of this Council over the other ecumenical ones. This was also one of the reasons why Emperors Constantine and Theodosius the Great were praised in the Armenian sources (Nève 1857).⁴ Besides, during the period of their rule Armenia did not have any major dogmatic differences with the rest of Christendom.

Last but not least, the text was of importance not only for Armenians but for all Christians due to pope Sylvester's relevance for the development of the liturgy, including his renaming or official acceptance of the days of the week by numerical instead of pagan names, and especially the designation of fasting and feast days.

It should be noted that the contribution of Armenian sources to the study of the above-mentioned topics (e.g. problems related to the legend of Sylvester, as well as the bearing of these legends on understanding the hierarchical structure of the ecclesiastical seats within the ancient Church), has been entirely neglected. In recent studies on Sylvester, even scholars pointing out the "lack of sources" (Canella 2018) do not even refer to the Armenian translation and its redaction.⁵ Yet, the Armenian versions of the *Vita Silvestri*, as well as oth-

3 About the Armenian versions, cf. data given by Sanspeur 1974, 307-9.

4 There are numerous passages dedicated to the praise of these emperors, and even special writings, e.g. the Armenian sacred chants, especially the so-called *ganjer* - highly embellished feast chants (cf., for example, the *ganjer* by Mxit'ar Ayrivanec'i [1230/1235-1297/1300]; Mxit'ar Ayrivanec'i 2005, 94-5). Constantine the Great was praised also for ending the Great Persecution of martyrs during his reign.

5 Cf., for example, Tessa Canella's quite a large number of publications (2006; 2013; 2018), which have raised the study of issues related to the Sylvester legend to an unprecedentedly high level but are surprisingly silent on the Armenian tradition. The same could be said concerning research by Starostin. Among laudable exceptions is a PhD dissertation by Di Rienzo (2018-19).

er sources that provide data on this Roman pope, appear to be rather crucial for elucidating many questions.

2 **The Apostolic Foundation of the Papacy and Other Patriarchates**

The *Vita Silvestri* is one of the rare sources where, instead of Pentarchy, the concept of Tetrarchy (τετραρχία – if it is possible to refer to it in this way)⁶ of the church is developed. This makes the *Vita Silvestri* and all of its versions important witnesses to the development of the tradition on the Apostolic foundation of the papacy and other patriarchates.

This subject of the Apostolic foundation of the papacy and the patriarchates seems to be a preeminent question of concern in all the versions of the *Vita*. Yet, the topic did not attract much attention in the Middle Ages (especially after the fall of the Byzantine Empire) and was not discussed. The situation was different for the Eastern churches, who refused to accept Byzantine claims to ecclesiastical supremacy based on the premise that the see of Constantinople was founded by St Andrew, the First Called of the apostles (as expressed in the treatise *Ad eos qui dicunt Romam esse Primam sedem* attributed to Photius).⁷

The issues and data associated with the apostolic sees in the early Church and its hierarchy, particularly the special attitude towards the Eastern churches, require a more thorough investigation than has been accorded thus far. One may well suppose that it was the first cornerstone for the development of schisms between churches. The argument of the apostolicity was one of the key issues that shaped the relationship between Rome and Constantinople (especially at the time of patriarch Photius), and persisted in the period of the Iconoclasm, affected Armeno-Georgian relations, etc. Further research of these problems is imperative given that some Armenian, Ethiopian and other sources preserve unexplored information on this question, viz. on the adaptation of the ecclesiastical organization to the administrative divisions of the empire. One can suppose that this data was eventually eliminated or even purposely destroyed in Greek or Latin, although, significantly, its traces are still visible in some sources, among them the *Vita Silvestri*.

⁶ Even though the technical term ‘Tetrarchy’ usually refers to a political system of governance based on four rulers, here it is used to designate the administration of the church by four patriarchal sees. For further research on this topic, cf. Shirinian 2009, 84-97; 2010, 90-9.

⁷ For a circumstantial survey on the history of the research in question, cf. Dvornik 1958; Starostin 2017.

Firstly, according to these sources, in the initial stages of the establishment of Christian churches they were administered by four sees, i.e. there was a time when universal Christendom was governed by the four patriarchal sees – a Tetrarchy, rather than a Pentarchy. Interestingly, the order of apostolic sees provided by the concepts of Tetrarchy and Pentarchy has not been the same throughout the centuries. The idea of a ‘classical’ Tetrarchy is visible in the *Adversus haereses* by Irenaeus, and the theory of the Tetrarchy presented in Armenian sources perhaps goes back to this older tradition. According to it, the four sees of the Tetrarchy were founded: by Matthew (because he preached in Hebrew) in Jerusalem, by Peter and Paul in Rome, by Mark in Alexandria, by Luke perhaps in Antioch, and by John in Ephesus.⁸ It is commonly accepted that the theory of Pentarchy was formulated in the legislation of the Emperor Justinian I (527-65), especially in his novella 131. This novella received a formal ecclesiastical sanction at the Council in Trullo (692), which ranked the five sees as Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem (cf. Canon XXVI).

Armenian sources present the most plentiful and earliest data on this topic. Astonishingly, these testimonies that give us unique information concerning the history of the early Church are rarely examined.⁹ In numerous Armenian sources, which will be discussed in more detail below, not only the information concerning the Tetrarchy

⁸ Cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* in Harvey 1857, III, 1, 1-13 and I, 1, 6, 26; I, 1, 13, 53; I, 1, 17-18; I, 13, 2, 1 etc., especially III, 1, 1: ‘Ὁ μὲν δὴ Ματθαῖος ἐν τοῖς Ἑβραίοις τῆ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ αὐτῶν, καὶ γραφὴν ἐξήνεγκεν εὐαγγελίου, τοῦ Πέτρου καὶ τοῦ Παύλου ἐν Ῥώμῃ εὐαγγελιζομένων, καὶ θεμελιούντων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. Μετὰ δὲ τὴν τούτων ἔξοδον, Μάρκος ὁ μαθητὴς καὶ ἑρμηνευτὴς Πέτρου, καὶ αὐτὸς τὰ ὑπὸ Πέτρου κηρυσσόμενα ἐγγράφως ἡμῖν παραδέδωκε. Καὶ Λουκᾶς δὲ ὁ ἀκόλουθος Παύλου, τὸ ὑπ’ ἐκείνου κηρυσσόμενον εὐαγγέλιον ἐν βίβλῳ κατέθετο. Ἐπειτα Ἰωάννης ὁ μαθητὴς τοῦ Κυρίου, ὁ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ ἀναπεσὼν, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξέδωκε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, ἐν Ἑφέσῳ τῆς Ἀσίας διατριβῶν (Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book3.html>).

⁹ From rare research dedicated to this subject, one may mention Dvornik 1958, who relied on the evidence of Armenian sources among others. Yet, his access to them was limited due to the language barrier and he used the Armenian sources thanks to the help of Der-Nersessian, who was a fine expert in Armenian miniature, but not necessarily of the Armenian tradition on apostolic sees. However, it appears that Dvornik, or scholars who wrote reviews on this book (e.g. Runciman 1959), did not consider that ‘apostolicity’ played any role in the organization of the church. The most recent study on this topic is an impressive essay by van Esbroeck, which deals with all these questions and examines different traditions (e.g. Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian) and for the first time draws on the data of the Armenian sources (1991). It is important to stress that van Esbroeck was convinced of the existence of the theory of governing the universal

and Pentarchy is presented, but also some points connected with them are elucidated. For example, the rank of the patriarchates at different times is explicated: it is explained why in the beginning it was decided that there should be four apostolic sees. The main question, concerning the transferring of the patriarchal see from Ephesus to Constantinople (including the time when it was done and the persons who did it), is clarified too. The issues connected with what led to this action among the Eastern churches and those of China and India are discussed as well.

Obviously, the Tetrarchy presented in Armenian sources goes back to older Christian traditions, for example, to Irenaeus quoted above, who associates the four apostolic thrones with the main symbols of the Tetrarchy – the four evangelists (and with the four rivers of Eden). According to some Armenian sources, we have Matthew (because he preached in Hebrew) in Jerusalem; Mark in Alexandria; Luke in Antioch; and John in Ephesus. This listing is somewhat rare in the Armenian sources, and a more ‘classical’ ranking seems to be a vision of the Tetrarchy according to which Peter and Paul were linked to Rome; Mark to Alexandria; Luke to Antioch; and John to Ephesus. Jerusalem was mentioned as an honorary see.¹⁰

Information present in the Greek text of the *Vita Silvestri* and its Armenian versions, i.e. the literal translation and its reworking in *Shorter Socrates* (Shirinian 2003-4), which starts with the *Vita* (1997), is an important source regarding the question of the Tetrarchy. The same could be said concerning Socrates Scholasticus’ *Ecclasiastical History* – the Greek original and its Armenian versions.

Scholarly opinion on the question of when the patriarchates were established is divided. There is a general agreement that the metropolitan sees were instituted at the Council of Nicaea and that the patriarchates were established at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381).¹¹ Such a consensus seems justified for several reasons. Firstly, the word *πατριαρχία* (as well as the concept of the ‘patriarchate’) had possibly not been mentioned before the Council of Constantinople. Two canons of this council are worthy of discussion here: Canon II deals with the administration of Church affairs in the dioceses, stressing “let no bishops go beyond their dioceses” and Canon III says that “The bishop of Constantinople is to be honored

Christendom by the four patriarchal sees and he considered that this goes back to the fourth-fifth century (cf. especially 505, 509-10, 518).

10 This is too large a problem to treat here at length; the issue and the Armenian data (with almost all sources) on this topic are discussed in Shirinian 2009; 2010; 2016. More details on the question will appear in the *Introduction* to the forthcoming edition of the *Vita Silvestri*.

11 Erickson 1991, 94; Anastos 2001; Pheidias 2005, 65-75; Kauffman 2016, 10-12; cf. also Adontz, Garsoian 1970, 278 ff; Castellano 2006.

next after the bishop of Rome; because Constantinople is the New Rome".¹² In fact, the word πατριάρχια is not attested in the canons of this synod either. The most interesting fact is that πατριάρχια is attested in Socrates Scholasticus' *Ecclesiastical History*: the first testimony could be doubtful for a very critical reader, since it is reconstructed in accordance with the Armenian translation and with the context of the Greek original; but in the case of the second one everything is clear. The first evidence is found where Socrates speaks of the affairs of the Second Universal Council. In particular, concerning the administration of the Church, he says the following:

ἔβεβαίωσάν τε αὐθις τὴν ἐν Νικαίᾳ πίστιν, καὶ πατριάρχας κατέστησαν διανεμῆμενοι τὰς ἐπαρχίας, ὥστε τοὺς ὑπὲρ διοίκησιν ἐπισκόπους ταῖς ὑπερόριος ἐκκλησίαις μὴ ἐπιβαίνειν. (Hansen 1995, 280, lines 20-22)

They also again confirmed the Nicene Creed, and constituted the **patriarchs** and the provinces, so that bishops do not transgress any jurisdiction over other churches out of his own diocese. (Author's transl.; bold added)

In this place, the Armenian translation of Socrates' *Ecclesiastical History* has հայրապետութիւն (patriarchate).¹³ This means that in the

12 Labbe 1671, II: 945. Interestingly, in the Armenian *Book of Canons*, the canons of the Council of Constantinople contained only three chapters (Hakobyan 1964, 273-6); in the second chapter, Canons II and III of the Council of Constantinople are combined (i.e. in the Armenian translation only the first four canons are reflected). It is known that the number of canons accepted by this council is doubtful. Scholars enumerate seven (in accordance with the preserved Greek manuscripts and the twelfth century commentaries by Balsamon and Zonaras) or, following the old Latin translations, they accept only the first four canons of the Greek text (cf. more details in Héfélé 1869, II: 351). The fact, however, that the old Latin translations were made from much older Greek codices (than the ones that reached us) seems to prove that the other canons were not in the old version of the Greek text. As a result, one might think that these last three canons did not really belong to the Second Ecumenical Council, but were later interpolations. To this, one must add the Armenian translation of these canons (fifth century), which was also made from much older Greek manuscripts than the extant ones, and which does not contain the fifth, sixth, and seventh Canons either. Moreover, as another proof that there were only four canons, one can bring forward the testimonies or the description of matters at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople provided by Socrates Scholasticus (Hansen 1995, 280, lines 20-22), which includes the content of these four canons. It is worthy of note that the work of Socrates Scholasticus, which was of great interest to Armenians, had a connection to the Armenian *Book of Canons* too, since the latter includes passages from this work, viz. *Ecclesiastical History* (cf. Hakobyan 1964, 131-2; 1971, 290-2).

13 Tēr-Movsēsean 1897, 419. Let us stress that this text as well the *Vita Silvestri* are translated in the Hellenizing style, i.e. they are very literal translations (Shirinian 1996; 1997). It should be noted here that the words հայրապետ and հայրապետութիւն are exact calques of the corresponding Greek terms; հայրապետ and պատրիարք (which is just a

Greek text (that the Armenian translator had in his hands) instead of πατριάρχας there was πατριαρχίας (so, the translation should be “the **patriarchates** and the provinces”; bold added). This reading was accepted by the editor of the new critical edition of the *Ecclesiastical History*, Günther Christian Hansen,¹⁴ who brought forward grammatical, prosorythmical, and other proofs that the context here seems to back to the reading πατριαρχίας. Indeed, the context itself speaks in favour of this reading because the passage following it says:

Καὶ κληροῦται Νεκτάριος μὲν τὴν μεγαλόπολιν καὶ τὴν Θράκην· τῆς δὲ Ποντικῆς διοικήσεως Ἑλλάδιος ὁ μετὰ Βασίλειον Καισαρείας τῆς Καππαδοκῶν ἐπίσκοπος, Γρηγόριος ὁ Νύσσης ὁ Βασιλείου ἀδελφός, (Καππαδοκίας δὲ καὶ ἴδε πόλις,) καὶ Ὀτρήτιος ὁ τῆς ἐν Ἀρμενίᾳ Μελιτηνῆς τὴν πατριαρχίαν ἐκληρώσαντο. (Hansen 1995, 281, lines 1-6)¹⁵

To Nectarius therefore was allotted the great city and Thrace. Helladius, the successor of Basil in the bishopric of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, obtained the patriarchate of the diocese of Pontus in conjunction with Gregory, Basil’s brother, bishop of Nyssa in Cappadocia, and Otreius bishop of Melitina in Armenia. To Amphilocheus of Iconium and Optimus of Antioch in Pisidia, was the Asiatic diocese assigned.¹⁶

transliteration from the Greek) are used in Armenian sources to designate the ‘patriarch’. As is obvious from the previous footnote, this rendering was used in the Hellenizing translation of Socrates *History* (Têr-Movsêsean 1897, 419, 420, 651). Somehow van Esbroeck considers that the word ‘patriarch’ was transliterated from the Greek into the Armenian but did not recognize it as an equivalent of հայրապետ (1991, 515). Even if հայրապետ has a much broader semantic spectrum than պատրիարք, such an opinion seems unambiguous, since it needs further research and it is closely connected with the topic in question. In any case, there are attestations that these words have the same meaning; cf. the phrase by Maštoc’ Eġivardec’i from the *Letter to Catholicos Georg*: նոյնպէս եւ ի ներքին խորանի զահաւորեցան պատրիարք, որ են հայրապետք (likewise, patriarchs, which are *hayrapets*, were enthroned in the inner *xoran* [altar]) (Xač’atryan, K’oseyan 2003, 295). Cf. also almost the same usage by Anania Sanahneč’i: պատրիարք որ է հայրապետն (a patriarch, which is a *hayrapet*); and Mxit’ar Goš: պատրարքք, որք թարգմանին է հայրապետք, որք ունին զաթոռ չորից անտարանչացն (patriarchs, which are translated as *hayrapets*, which hold the Sees of the four Evangelists) (Awetik’ean, Siwrmêlean, Awgerean 1836, 624).

¹⁴ Perhaps, such a statement on my part is somewhat inappropriate, since Hansen is no longer with us to support my words. But I was told that he discussed this question with his colleagues. As far as I know, the discussion happened online after the new critical edition appeared among scholars who joined in an Internet group called ‘Eusebia’ or ‘Eusebeia’ (cf. Shirinian 2003, 89-90 fn. 73).

¹⁵ Cf. this excerpt with the one in *Shorter Socrates*, where it is quite expanded (Têr-Movsêsean 1897, 420-1); for English translation cf. Thomson 2001b, 146-7.

¹⁶ Transl. on <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/26015.htm>.

As we see from this passage, the word πατριαρχία is used for the second time in the same context, explaining the same matter of things. Hence, it could mean that already in the beginning of the fifth century the term πατριαρχία was in use to designate patriarchal sees. Consequently, one can suppose that patriarchates were established at the end of the fourth century. At least in the beginning of the fifth century the words ‘patriarch’ and ‘patriarchates’ seem to have specific ecclesiastical meanings because Theodosius II used in his letter the word ‘patriarch’ as a Christian title of honour for Pope Leo I (Mansi 1960-1, 6: 68) and the word ‘patriarchate’ is testified by Socrates Scholasticus in his *Ecclesiastical History*. The citation above is noteworthy because it reflects Canon II of the Second Council of Constantinople, which proves, together with Canons IV and VI of the Council of Nicaea that formerly all the Metropolitans of the dioceses (e. g. Pontus, Asia, and Thrace) were autocephalous in their provinces and were ordained by their own synods. The situation was changed by Canon XXVIII of the Council of Chalcedon (451) and the dioceses of Pontica, Asiana and Thrace lost their autonomy forever:

As a consequence of this canon the patriarchal prerogatives of the see of Ephesus and Caesarea were lost and they lost their importance forever. The negative attitude of Armenians toward the Council of Chalcedon derives from this fact. The schism came about on a basis of hierarchy and not over the dogma, as implied by later sources. (Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 280)

These words by Adontz express the real picture of the events, which were later on explained via disagreements on confessional grounds. Interestingly, the honour of being autocephalous was transmitted to the other churches: the Church of Cyprus received it at the Third Ecumenical Council (Canon VIII), and the Church of Iberia (Georgia) at the Sixth (Canon XXXIX).

As to the information concerning the apostolic sees, the *Vita Silvestri* testifies in the very beginning of the text that¹⁷

τούτων δὲ τῶν πόλεων καὶ ἀποστολικῶν θρόνων τὴν ἀρχιερωσύνην ἐπεσπάσατο, τούτέστιν τῆς μεγάλης τῶν πόλεων Ῥώμης, Ἀλεξανδρείας τε καὶ Ἀντιοχείας, τῆς κοινῆς ἕνεκεν ὠφελείας. (Combefis 1660, 258-9)

and of these cities and apostolic thrones, that is, of the great cities of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, the high priesthood was seized of the common benefit. (Author’s transl.)

17 The fact that this question is discussed in the very beginning of the writing speaks of its importance for the matter at hand.

This is the reading of the manuscripts used by Combefis in *Illustrium Christi martyrum* for his edition, but the text here is corrupt because it speaks only about three apostolic sees. Indeed, there are *variae lectiones* as in the Greek text, as well in the Armenian versions. For this place, some Greek manuscripts belonging to the B recension¹⁸ have an addition - 'Εφέσου καὶ Ἱεροσολύμη (or vice versa). The Armenian translation here differs from the original. It is in accordance with the mentioned Greek manuscripts and renders the same information literally, where Ephesus and Jerusalem are indicated as well:

Այսոցիկ յայտ է քաղաքաց որչափ ըստ առաքելականն աթոռոց զքաււապետութիւնն առ ընդունողաց՝ այս է մեծին քաղաքի բոլոր քաղաքաց Հռովմայ, Աղէքսանդրացւոց, [Անտիոքայ],¹⁹ Եփեսոսի եւ Երուսաղէմի: (Tēr-Movsēsean 1897, 692)

And it is obvious from these cities, that is, of the greatest city (*sic*) of all cities - Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, and Jerusalem, how the high priesthood was accepted according to the apostolic throne.

Thus, the Greek text of the *Vita Silvestri* and its literal Armenian translation delineate the following order of dignities in a Tetrarchical arrangement: Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus and Jerusalem.²⁰ Note that there is no mention of Constantinople since this pro-Roman composition claims to reflect the situation and the time when Constantinople was not yet founded by Constantine on the site of Byzantium. Interestingly, in the adaptation of the Armenian Hellenizing translation this passage has some divergences and Constantinople is already present. Rome stands in the beginning of the first sentence as superior in honour compared to all others, separated from them as the “see of the patriarchate of Peter and Paul” (Tēr-Movsēsean 1897,

¹⁸ Cf., for example, the following manuscripts from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France: C (= Grec 1449, eleventh c.), 37v; D (= Grec 501, twelfth-thirteenth c.), 164r; K (= Grec 808, sixteenth c.), 279r; G (= Grec 1508, twelfth-thirteenth c.), 17v. Concerning these Greek manuscripts it should be noted that Starostin, who has published three articles on the topic, brings forward a testimony about the Greek manuscript Messanensis 87 discovered at the end of nineteenth-beginning of twentieth century by Krashenikov, which contains this redaction (Starostin 2008, 128; 2012, 126; 2017, 123). My comparison of the Armenian Hellenizing translation with some Greek manuscripts held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France has shown that this version in general is part of the tradition of the manuscript group CDK, and is especially close to D (= Grec 501, twelfth-thirteenth c.), 164r-188r, with which the Armenian translation coincides word for word (except in rare cases). If Starostin had used the Armenian versions, they would have been helpful for his conclusions.

¹⁹ This word is added from the Jerusalem manuscript; cf. Xapaeen 1898, 89.

²⁰ Let us not forget that Jerusalem was considered as an honorary see: it was mentioned but not accounted for in the case of the Tetrarchy, nor of the Pentarchy.

692). Then, the other important centres are listed and Constantino-
ple is added in the end:

որ կոչեցաւ յատոռ հայրապետութեան Պետրոսի եւ Պաւղոսի մեծ
բաղաբին Յռովմայ, որ յոլովս ունի պատմութիւնս, որ եւ զառաքելոցն
վերագրեաց զվկայութեանց նահատակութիւնս եւ զհայրապետաց, եւ
զվկայից, եւ զիոստովանողաց, զարանց եւ զկանանց, որք արիացան
ընդդէմ հալածչացն յաղագս ի Քրիստոս հաւատոցն, որ եւ յայլ բաղաբս
եւ յականաւորս յայտնի է՝ յԱղէքսանդր, եւ յԱնտիոք, եւ յԵփեսոս, եւ
յԵրուսաղէմ, եւ ի Կոստանդնուպօլիս: (Tēr-Movsēsean 1897, 692-3)²¹

The order of precedence of the Apostolic sees in these quotations
is quite similar, except for Constantinople, which, according to the
Canon III of the Council of Constantinople, was placed in the second
place according to dignity as the New Rome (after the Old Rome).

Intriguingly, the see of Constantinople does not appear in the sec-
ond place also in a very interesting and important document writ-
ten by the Georgian Catholicos Kiurion, where there is a reference
to the Pentarchy. In his second letter to the Catholicos of Armenia
Abraham (late sixth century) the Catholicos Kiurion, speaking about
the concordance between Armenians and Georgians at the time of
Gregory the Illuminator when they “were unanimous with each oth-
er sharing the faith of Jerusalem”, concludes:

Իսկ այժմ ո՞ստի եղեն. Յռովմայ հայրապետն ի սրբոյն Պետրոսի
ատոռն նստի, եւ Աղէքսանդրացին՝ ի սրբոյն Մարկոսի
աւետարանչի, եւ յԱնտիոքցին՝ ի սրբոյն Դուկասու աւետարանչի,
եւ Կոստանդնուպալսեցին՝ ի սրբոյն Յովհաննու աւետարանչի, եւ
Երուսաղէմացին՝ ի սրբոյ Յակովբայ՝ եղբարն Տեառն: (*Girk' t'it'oc'*
1994, 337)

And now where are they? The patriarch of Rome sits on the throne
of Peter, and of Alexandria on [the seat of] St. Mark the Evange-
list, and of Antioch – on [the seat of] St. Luke the Evangelist, and of
Constantinople – [on that] of St. John the Evangelist, and of Jerusa-
lem [on that] of St. Jacob, the brother of the Lord. (Author’s transl.)

This is quite an interesting excerpt because of the unusual order of
the five apostolic sees – Rome (the seat of apostle Peter), Alexandria
(St. Mark the Evangelist), Antioch (St. Luke the Evangelist), Constan-
tinople (St. John the Evangelist), and Jerusalem (St. Jacob = St. James,
the brother of the Lord). It is noteworthy that the see of Constantino-
ple is presented by the Evangelist St. John and not by St. Andrew.

²¹ For an English translation cf. Thomson 2005, 68.

It should be stressed that these testimonies (except the reworking of the Armenian translation of the *Vita Silvestri*) coincide with the traditions outside of Armenia: one is pro-Roman, and the other is Georgian. In the meantime, in the Armenian tradition of the sixth-seventh centuries there are texts, mainly translations, where the theory of the Pentarchy is transmitted according to the Canon XXXVI of the Council in Trullo. For example, in the Armenian translation of a text attributed to Epiphanius of Salamis entitled Ἐπιφανίου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κύπρου Ἐκθεσις πρωτοκλησιῶν πατριαρχῶν τε καὶ μητροπολιτῶν,²² the canonical order of the Pentarchy appears as: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. It is noteworthy that in this work there are passages, that have reached us only in the Armenian translation (Fink 1902, 16, 52).

As to the question of why the theory of the Tetrarchy in the hierarchical organization of the Church has survived in the Armenian *milieu*, one can add the following considerations. Firstly, we can hardly suppose that the Armenian sources were the only ones to transmit this idea. Numerous Armenian authors testified that this concept derived from the Greek tradition. In fact, this theory is implied in the Canons VI and VII of the Council of Nicaea. The Canon VI deals with the exclusive authority exercised by three of the most important cities at the time – Alexandria, Rome and Antioch.²³ According to the Canon VII special honour was granted to Jerusalem. The Council of Nicaea dealt with only four sees that were significant at the time. Perhaps that is why according to Eastern ecclesiology, the established order of the apostolic sees was Rome, followed by Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. Interestingly, the canons of the Council of Nicaea do not mention the patriarchal see of Ephesus at all, while, as it was noted above, it is referred to in the *Adversus haereses* of Irenaeus and is present always in the versions recorded by Armenian sources.²⁴ It seems that the existence and then the transfer of this patriarchal see to Constantinople, as well the replacement of the Evangelist St. John by St. Andrew, was a rather controversial topic for Armenian Church officials too.

Secondly, Armenians were interested in the version of the Tetrarchy where the Roman see was included since there existed an historical tradition related to an alliance between Armenia and Rome. According to this tradition the Armenian king Trdat (Tiridates) visited Rome with St.

22 The editor of this work displayed on the cover of this small book the Greek title: Ἐκθεσις πρωτοκλησιῶν [...]. The Armenian title reads as follows: Եպիփանու եպիսկոպոսի Կիպրացոց վասն նախապատիւ եկեղեցեաց իւրաքանչիւր աթոռոց մայրաքաղաք (Fink 1902, 4).

23 Note that Alexandria comes first.

24 These sources are too many to be listed here. Some of them, including the *Book of Canons*, Solomon Mak'ēnac'ī, Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'ī, Vardan Aygekc'ī, and Kirakos Gandzakec'ī, will be dealt with in another study.

Gregory the Illuminator to meet the Emperor Constantine after his conversion. In Rome, the Bishop of the city Sylvester I took an active part during this visit. Scholars who reject the authenticity of this tradition suggest that it was an adaptation of the visit of Trdat I to the court of Nero in Rome in the first century AD (e.g. Hovhannisyan 1957; Thomson 1997). Taking into account all the historical circumstances,²⁵ this tradition does not seem to be entirely spurious. At any rate, it is well attested in numerous Armenian sources since the fifth century.²⁶

Moreover, judging from some Armenian sources, it is even possible to think that there was an agreement that should also be a patriarchate in Armenia and that Nersēs the Great was the one who was elected to be a patriarch (Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc’i 1987, 84; 1996, 48). But then, he was sent with the delegation to Byzantium to confirm the treaty of peace and unity between Armenia and the emperor. The negotiations with Valens were not successful because he was an Arian (and many Armenian writers do not even consider him as a Christian), so Nersēs was exiled.

In reality, after the failure of expectations concerning the patriarchal see, Armenia was in political excommunication, because, as it is rightly noted by Adontz, “the schism came about on a basis of hierarchy and not over the dogma, as implied by later sources” (Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 280). Perhaps, by supporting the Pope’s claims of their supremacy, the Armenians hoped that they could also restore the historical tradition dating to back to the early fourth century, when Armenia was more powerful and, due to its alliance with Rome, had experienced a more peaceful and flourishing period:

In Armenia, the reign of Trdat, a contemporary of Constantine, was a time of glorious national revival. The Roman government then, and for some time after, supported the Armenian kingdom against the Persians, and the country had a breathing spell before its final political dismemberment (Coleman 1914, 157).

25 Firstly, Armenia, as a country that officially accepted Christianity in the beginning of the fourth century, should have had quite close relations with Rome until confessional disagreements, which were in fact political ones. Indeed, both Gregory the Illuminator, a ‘living martyr’ of Armenia, and king Trdat were installed on their thrones with the help of Rome. Furthermore, after a successful battle in 297, when the Roman and Armenian armies together defeated the Persians, they signed an alliance of peace in Nisibis in 298/299, which lasted for 40 years (cf. Adontz, Garsoïan 1970, 349). For the Romans, from a political perspective, it was vital to turn Armenia to an ally during the heated wars with Sassanian Iran. On the other hand, Armenia too needed Rome not only as an ally in the wars against Iran, but also against incursions of ‘Barbarian’ tribes from east and northeast.

26 Armenian sources on this pact are cited in the translation of Agat’angelos by Thomson (Agat’angelos 1976) and in Thomson 1997 (cf. also Elishē 1982, 123 fn. 6). Let us recall that Movsēs Xorenac’i mentions in mere two phrases that “Trdat went to Rome to Saint Constantine” (Moses Khorenats’i 1978, 235), and that there was a “sworn covenant” between Trdat and Constantine (257).

3 The Journey of the Armenian King Trdat and St. Gregory the Illuminator to Rome

If we accept the authenticity of the visit of king Trdat and Gregory the Illuminator to Constantine, a few words should be said about when it could have happened. Judging from Greek and Armenian sources as well as taking into account the historical context, the most probable date would be 313 or 314. This date is based on the testimony of Eusebius of Caesarea, who tells that “the Armenians [...] had been from ancient times friends and allies of the Romans” (*Hist. Eccl.* 9.8.2, in Schwartz 1903). This quote could serve as a *terminus ante quem* for dating the friendship and alliance between Armenians and Romans to before 324, when this work was composed. A dating between 313-14 and 324 is then justified by another piece of evidence. According to Eusebius, Maximinus “the tyrant [...] was compelled to go to war with the Armenians, who had been from ancient times friends and allies of the Romans” (*Hist. Eccl.* 9.8.2-4, in Schwartz 1903) and this caused problems for Armenians to travel safely to the West. It should be also noted that Maximus was defeated by Licinius after 313-14.

In any case, this alleged or real journey was reworked to compose a ‘document’ of a completely legendary character titled *Dašanc’ t’utt’* (Letter of Love and Concord), whose authenticity has rightly been criticized.²⁷ Based on historical and legendary elements, this forged document declares a number of times that Sylvester recognized Gregory’s see to be “equal in dignity to his own and those of Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria” (Šahnazareanc’ 1862, 24-5, 28, 30). These lines prove that the question of apostolic succession was of crucial importance. It was imperative to emphasize this within a pact of ‘love and concord’ between Armenia and Rome and that is why this tradition was sealed in shape of such a forgery.

The *Letter* was based not only on the historical tradition but also on the Armenian translation of the Greek *Vita Silvestri*, as we already noted. For example, forged additions such as the *Donatio Constantini* were also taken into account.²⁸ Perhaps, one can even say that the *Letter of Love and Concord* is sort of an Armenian version of the *Donatio Constantini*.²⁹ The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia at the time of the Crusaders hoped to find support in this forgery by demonstrating the

²⁷ Or ‘peace’: Latin *concordia* also means ‘peace’. For more information about the *Letter* cf. Thomson 1997; 2001a; Uluhogian 2003; Shirinian 2003; 2005, 84-100; 2006a; Bart’ikyan 2004; Pogossian 2010.

²⁸ A large literature exists on the subject; among the most recent studies, the following articles can be referred to: Levine 1973; Raspanti 2004; Leppin 2006; Fried 2007; Gandino 2009; Goodson, Nelson 2010; Cadili 2013.

²⁹ It would be interesting if someone would carry a comparative analysis on these two forgeries.

ancient connection between the Catholic and the Armenian Churches and the close ties between them and their secular leaders at the time of the formation of their churches.

As to the date of the *Letter*, scholars have expressed different opinions, but all agree that this was a forgery composed in Cilician Armenia, between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.³⁰ Moreover, a close re-reading of an excerpt by Kirakos Ganjakec'i concerning the *Letter*, suggests quite convincingly that this author provides a clear date of the journey of Trdat and Gregory, as well as the name of its initiator:

Իսկ սբանչելի հայրապետն Գրիգորիս օր ըստ օրէ յաւելոյր ի բարեգործութիւն ի պայծառութիւն եկեղեցւոյ: Եւ Էր սիրեցեալ նա յամենայն ազգաց: Եղև նմա գնալ ի սուրբ քաղաքն Երուսաղէմ, զի երկրպագեսցէ նա սուրբ տեղեացն տնօրինականաց: Իբրև եհաս նա ի քաղաքն Անտիոք, ել ամենայն քաղաքն ընդ առաջ նորա ջահիւք եւ յապտերօք եւ մեծաւ պատուով տարեալ նստուցին գնա յաթոռն Պետրոսի առաքելոյն: Եւ իբրև եհաս նա յԵրուսաղէմ, ազգն ֆռանկաց, որ իշխողք էին քաղաքին, եւ պատրիարք նոցա առաւել սէր հաստատեցին ընդ ազգիս մերում վասն նորա, զի Էր նա բարի տեսլեամբ եւ զհտուութեամբ սուրբ գրոց զարդարեալ. **զիին դաշինսն Տրդատայ եւ սրբոյն Գրիգորի եւ Կոստանդիանոսի կայսեր եւ Սեղբեստրոսի հայրապետին վերստին նորոգեցին առ սովա:** (Melik'-Ōhanjanean 1961, 157-8; bold added)

The marvellous patriarch Grigoris daily increased his good works for the glorification of the Church. He was loved by all people. It happened that he went to the holy city of Jerusalem to revere the sites of the Incarnation of [108] the Lord. As soon as he reached the city of Antioch, the entire population came out before him bearing torches and lamps. With great honour they took him and seated him on the throne of the Apostle Peter. As soon as he reached Jerusalem, the Frank people (who were ruling the city) and their patriarch more deeply established love between our peoples [g117], on account of Grigoris. For he was pleasing in appearance and adorned with knowledge of the holy Scriptures. According to tradition, **the old agreement of Trdat and Saint Gregory, of Emperor Constantine and the patriarch Sylvester, was restored.** (Kirakos Ganjakets'i 1986, 117-18; bold added)

It seems that this passage explicitly stresses that Grigor III Pahlavuni (1093-1166) renewed the old alliance that existed between Trdat and Saint Gregory from one side, and Emperor Constantine and the

30 E.g. cf. Shirinian 2003; 2006a, 68-9; Pogossian 2010, 119-25.

patriarch Sylvester from the other, but this time instead of Sylvester it was Pope Innocent II, and Grigor III Pahlavuni instead of Gregory the Illuminator. Since Grigor III died in 1166, this date could be taken as a *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the *Letter* in question (Shirinian 2021, 186; 2006b, 449; cf. Pogossian 2010, 119-20). Moreover, another more certain *terminus ante quem* could be brought forward. It is known that Catholicos Grigor Pahlavuni enjoyed great respect among the Latins: he was twice invited to the Councils convened by them - in 1141 to Antioch and in 1145 to Jerusalem. Besides, there is evidence that he corresponded with Pope Innocent II. Taking into account that Innocent II died in 1143, the *terminus ante quem* should be this date. It is curious that in both in the first union and in this one were involved Catholicos with the same name Gregory (Gregory the Illuminator and Gregory III), and both were Pahlavuni (since Gregory III was also considered to be of the Pahlavuni family). The eponymity of the Catholicos may also have had a symbolic meaning. Interestingly, a century earlier, another Catholicos with the same name, Grigor II Vkasaser Pahlavuni, also had correspondence with Pope Gregory VII. As for the initiative for composing such a forged document, some investigators agree that it could be even understood as mutual attempts from both sides on several different occasions, especially during the Crusades (cf. Hovhannisyan 1957, 76; Shirinian 2003, 89, 97-8; 2006a, 71).

It is noteworthy that the *Letter of Love and Concord* provides a partial explanation for the appearance of the Greek *Vita Silvestri*. In fact, we are dealing with the same story adapted to the Armenian *milieu* of different periods. All these sources, then, can be seen as a part of the same interconnected web of texts. They all originated in a non-Armenian but a pro-Roman tradition, based on the Latin *Vita beati Silvestri*, which in the beginning of the sixth century served as a basis for various improvisations and forgeries, the first and foremost of which was the Greek *Vita Silvestri*.

4 Some Conclusions

Let us summarize the information given above. The first issue to address is why *Vita Silvestri* and Sylvester himself were so popular in the Armenian *milieu*, and what motives caused the Armenians to translate this particular text from a large corpus of pro-Roman sources. I argued above that the significance of this writing for the Armenians lay with its reference to patriarchal sees. Greek and Armenian sources indicate that various controversies among the Armenian and Byzantine churches were due to the disagreements on the meaning and ranking of patriarchal sees.

When translating the Greek *Vita Silvestri*, the Armenians may have

found it significant also because the story of Constantine's conversion was very similar to that of the conversion of the Armenian King Trdat, as van Esbroeck has persuasively shown (1982, 94-5).³¹

Given that all conclusions regarding such a complex text as the *Vita Silvestri* must be tentative, we should also ask why the Armenian sources are important for its comprehension. The answer to this question must also be held in abeyance. There are too many obscure and contentious issues relating not only to Armenian, but also to early Byzantine historiography. For example, some scholars have expressed doubts about the authenticity of such a well-studied work as the *Vita Constantini* of Eusebius.³² Testable hypotheses are often met with a sceptical or hypercritical attitude. Such suggestions may sometimes make the paradigm more complex, but at the same time they contribute to the development and advancement of scholarship, even though they are hypothetical.³³

Two main points about the Armenian translation of the *Vita Silvestri* should be emphasised. Firstly, the Armenian translation confirms that the legend of Sylvester was widespread in the seventh century. Furthermore, there are numerous references to Sylvester in the Armenian historiography before and after the appearance of the Armenian translation of the *Vita Silvestri*. So, his memory was quite vivid in Armenia, while in the West "Sylvester's relics did not gain much attention until the middle of the eighth century" (Manarini 2021, 76). The second important point is the relevance of this text for our understanding of the development of theories on apostolic sees. The concept of Tetrarchy, which must have been the dominant paradigm in the early church, was almost completely consigned to oblivion after the sixth century and Justinian. In fact, by developing the theory of the Pentarchy, Emperor Justinian caused a significant change both in the state and ecclesiastical policies. Even if the memory of the administration of the universal Church by four patriarchal sees lingered on in different traditions (cf. Van Esbroeck 1991), it is best preserved in the Armenian sources. Thanks to these we can today form an idea about this ancient tradition, something preserved also in the *Vita Silvestri*.

To conclude, one can say that the information brought forward in these documents can be valuable not only when researching the ties between Roman and Armenian Churches but also for elucidating many political problems that existed in Christendom starting from

31 But this is not to imply that the Armenians developed this topic in the Armenian translation (although this is partly true for the shorter version), because what they did was an exact translation of the Greek spurious - if not forged - writing.

32 From the beginning of the 1930s, a number of such articles were written by Grégoire (cf. 1938).

33 E.g. in the case of *Vita Constantini* an interesting dispute arose between Grégoire and Baynes (Baynes 1972, IV-VI).

the early centuries until the time of the Crusades.

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Anania Širakac'i's *k'nnikon* Reconsidered

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Abstract Armenian medieval sources record that the seventh-century mathematician Anania Širakac'i was commissioned with the creation of a perpetual calendar for the Armenians. These include Step'anos Tarōnec'i (eleventh century), who uses the term *k'nnikon* in reference to Širakac'i's work, the exact meaning of which has been matter of debate. Scholars have suggested that it was a synonym of 'chronicle', and that it may have been used to indicate Širakac'i's perpetual calendar. The present article explores this idea further, comparing evidence in Armenian, Syriac and Georgian that had not been taken into account before in this context, showing that *k'nnikon* was used to refer to an era based on an Easter cycle, a *computus*, and its use in Tarōnec'i's History may indicate Easter tables attributed to Anania Širakac'i.

Keywords Anania Širakac'i. *K'nnikon*. Classical Armenian. Seventh century. Calendar-making. Time-reckoning. Armenian Era. Roman Era. Paschal cycle. Easter cycle. *Computus*.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Anania's Calendar in Medieval Sources. – 2.1 Presentation of the Sources: A Lost Calendar? – 2.2 A New *Computus*? – 2.3 *K'nnikon* in *Letter 21* and *Letter 25* of Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros. – 2.4 *K'nnikon* and *K'ronikon* in Armenian Sources. – 2.5 The *Chronicon* and Paschal Cycles. – 2.6 Where Does *K'nnikon* Come From? – 2.7 A New Era. – 3 Concluding Remarks.

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1 Introduction

Anania Širakac'ı is amongst the most-highly celebrated figures in the history of Armenian scientific tradition; however, the achievements and contribution of this seventh-century mathematician remain hard to grasp; this article proposes a re-assessment of Anania Širakac'ı's activity and production. In particular, it presents a fresh analysis of medieval sources and shows that the word *k'nnikon*, associated with a commission he was responsible for at the time of the Armenian Catholicos Anastas, refers to a calendar, or, most likely, to an Easter cycle, a *computus*.

A key passage that needs re-examination in this discussion is the testimony of the eleventh-century historiographer Step'anos Tarōnec'ı, where, to our knowledge, the earliest attestation of the term *k'nnikon* is found. As this article demonstrates, strong elements point at the identification of this term with an Easter cycle. Supporting evidence shall be provided by means of a comparison with time-reckoning terminology employed in Armenian, Syriac and Georgian sources, to show that the piece of work that may most probably be ascribed to Anania Širakac'ı from testimonies is a festivity calendar. This might be seen in relation to the emergence of a new dating practice in the seventh century, that is the reckoning of years in an 'Armenian Era', whose starting point is the year 552-553 AD.

Our argument inherently challenges a view that identifies Anania's *k'nnikon* with a textbook for the teaching of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, as described in Grigor Magistros' *Letter 21*, implying that what the mathematician had presented to the Catholicos and the bishops in the seventh century was a collection of books for the teaching of the seven *artes*. This interpretation is methodologically problematic and, in the light of our analysis of the meaning of *k'nnikon*, evidence in Grigor Magistros' letters invite for reconsideration, and may reveal new information in regard to both Anania Širakac'ı's and Grigor Magistros' textual tradition and legacy.

2 Anania's Calendar in Medieval Sources

2.1 Presentation of the Sources: A Lost Calendar?

The primary source of information about Anania Širakac'i is the so-called *Autobiography*,¹ which, whilst certainly providing some information on the author's life, contains very little on his origins and none about his scholarly production. No other contemporary sources with such information survive other than internal references found in texts attributed to the same Širakac'i. Although no reference to a calendar is found here, we hence acquire information about Širakac'i's teacher Tychicos, who visited the major centres of learning of the time, including Alexandria, offering an explicit connection between Širakac'i and the computational tradition of the Roman-Byzantines.²

Medieval historians record information in regard to his career and production: the first mention of Anania 'Anec'i' (lit. 'from near Ani', referring to Širakac'i) is preserved by the Catholicos and historiographer Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i (ninth-tenth century)³ in a brief account of when the Armenian Catholicos Anastas (661-7) requested Anania to produce an "immovable calendar" (*anšarž tōmar*).

From this passage, it appears that what is meant by this expression is most likely a calendar in which the months would always fall in the same season, and so would the non-mobile feasts such as Christmas.⁴ Such calendar, Drasxanakertc'i records, has never been ap-

1 *Ink'nakensagrut'iw*n (Autobiography) is preserved in two recensions, which are generally referred to as short and long (Abrahamyan 1944, 32; Berbērian 1964, 189-91). For the editions, cf. Patkanean 1877a, 1-4 (short); Abrahamyan 1944, 206-9 (long), both reprinted in *Matenagir'k' Hayoc'* (henceforth MH) 2003 ff., 4: 591-7, apparently without further editing. The text was translated into Russian (Patkanean 1877b, preface); English (Conybeare 1897; Greenwood 2011); German (Bauer, Markwart 1929); French (Berbērian 1964); and Modern Eastern Armenian (Abrahamyan, Petrosyan 1979, 25-9).

2 Anania's desire to study mathematics, the *Autobiography* reads, took him on a journey out of Armenia to find an instructor, first in Theodosiopolis and then in Trebizond. Here he was accepted as a student by Tychicos, and the text further tells of Tychicos' own journey and scholarly formation. The account ends with Anania's return to the motherland and his dissatisfaction as a teacher there. Cf. Greenwood 2011, 138-42; Berbērian 1964, 191-4.

3 Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i was a Catholicos of Armenia between the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth. He wrote a *History of the Armenians* from the Deluge to his days, including the Arab invasions and the rise of the Bagratuni family (Hairapetian 1995, 224; Thomson 1997, 228).

4 The Julian and the Gregorian calendars, for example, obtain this result to different degrees of precision by means of leap years (a solar year lasts 365.24219 days, and the Julian calendar approximates it to 365.25 days). Such calendars may be seen as the repetition of cycles, and for this reason they are also called 'perpetual'. The approximation of the year of the Julian calendar eventually causes a disparity, too, as it runs ahead of the actual solar year. The Gregorian reform was an attempt to bring the approximation

proved of by the Church council during Anastas' lifetime nor adopted by later Catholicoi. He writes:

Իսկ Անաստասայ հայրապետին հոգացեալ վասն Հայկական տօմարի, զի թերեւս անշարժ գնա ըստ այլոց ազգաց մարթասցէ յօրինել. զի միշտ անշարժք լինիցին տօնք տարեկանաց կամ յեղափոխյ յեղանակք ժամանակաց: Վասն որոյ եւ առ ինքն զԱնանիայ Անեցի կոչեալ որ բանիբուն այնմ արուեստի էր հմուտ, հրամայէ նմա ստեղծագործել զինդրելին իւր: Իսկ նորա ջան ի վերայ եղեալ եւ ըստ բոլոր ազգաց պայմանի անշուշտ յօրինեալ զկարգ Հայկական տօմարի. զի բարեծեւագունից ոմանց եւ զմերս կշռադատեալ մի կարօտասցուք զալ ի զուգաւորութիւն Հռովմայեցւոց: Եւ մինչդեռ խորհէր մեծն Անաստաս ժողովօք եպիսկոպոսաց զեղեալն հաստատել վախճան կենաց նմա ժամանէր, կացեալ յաթոռ հայրապետութեան ամս վեց: Անփոյթ զվնի եկելոցն պսամիկ արարեալ եւ զառաջին մշտախաղաց շրջագայեալ կարգ կալեալ: (Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i 1912, 92)

Patriarch Anastas took measures, moreover, concerning the Armenian calendar, intending to make it immovable on the example of other nations, so that the feast days and the times of the seasons' changes may always be fixed.⁵ For this reason he summoned to himself Anania of Ani, who was well versed and an expert in that art, and ordered him to create what he wished for. And he [i.e. Anania] worked hard on this and adjusted the order of the Armenian calendar according to the manner of all other nations, so that, making our [calendar] concord with other, better designed [ones], we would not need to run in union with the Romans.⁶ And

to a higher degree of precision, so that by means of skipping some leap years it obtains a solar year of 365.2425 days.

⁵ It appears that the Armenian Calendar in use at that time was based on a year of 12 months of 30 days each with the addition of 5 epagomenal, or intercalary days, which amount to a total 365 days ($12 \times 30 + 5$), and the start of its adoption in Armenia may have dated to the Achaemenid rule (Stern 2012, 179-81). Because the duration of a solar year is of 365 days and approximately 6 hours (365.24219 days), without a leap year the calendar would eventually cause months to shift from a season to another.

⁶ 'Romans' here most probably refers to the Byzantines. The opening of this passage suggests that the purpose of Anania's calculations was that of allowing Armenians to harmonise their movable calendar to those of other nations, therefore it seems to us that this remark on the Romans is out of place. In the *Discourse on Easter* attributed to Anania Širakac'i, the author speaks highly of the computation techniques of Alexandria, that is Roman too. It is possible that Drasxanakertc'i misinterprets the work carried out by Anania, or that, in his time of political instability, he manifests a bias in favour of a national (uniquely Armenian) calendar against the necessity to rely on a Roman one. According to the information presented by the same Drasxanakertc'i immediately above, however, Anania Širakac'i was asked to make the Armenian calendar perpetual (immovable), which would have resulted in allowing the Armenians to use the Roman *computus* for the dating of festivities, and arrange their calendar into perpetual

while Anastas was thinking of establishing those great changes through a council of bishops, the end of his life came about, after he had been on the patriarchal see for six years. Those who came after [him] neglected this [matter] and kept the former, ever-wandering system. (Author's transl.)⁷

It appears to describe a failed calendar reform: no traces are left of it. The old Armenian calendar based on the Persian model, that is 12 months of 30 days with 5 additional days, persisted into the modern times. Another attempt to reform the calendar was later made in the twelfth century, and it was likewise unsuccessful.⁸ It is possible that a reform was attempted and the details of its design were lost, and Draxanakertc'i's *History* seems to have served as a source for later historiographers who record these events as well, without introducing significant variations, for example the thirteenth-century historian Kirakos Ganjakec'i.⁹

There is, however, one source which may reveal different information on this matter, suggesting that this new calendar might have been a calculation for the dating of Easter.

2.2 A New *Computus*?

Of particular significance is the witnessing preserved in the *Universal History* by Step'anos Tarōnec'i Asolik,¹⁰ dating to the start of the

cycles. We also note that such a negative reference to the Romans' *computus* is absent from other accounts of these events, for example Ganjakec'i's and Tarōnec'i's histories.

⁷ Cf. French translation by Mahé 1987, 199-200.

⁸ Step'anos had designed a new Armenian calendar with a leap year, but it was not adopted; cf. Orengo 2008, 209-10 fn. 19.

⁹ His *History of the Armenians* narrates events from the Armenians' conversion to Christianity to the middle of the thirteenth century; cf. Hairapetian 1995, 234. In regard to the immovable calendar he writes: Եւ յետ Ներսէսի առ զկաթողիկոսութիւնն տէր Անաստաս ամս վեց: Սա կոչեաց առ ինքն զմեծ վարդապետն Անանիա՝ ի Շիրակ գաւառէ, այր բանիբուն ի հանճարեղ, զհտող յոյժ ամենայն տոմարական արուեստին, զի կարգիսցեն անշարժ տոմար հայոց, որպէս այլոց ազգաց: Չոր արարեալ մեծաւ ջանիւ, եւ մինչ կամէին ժողովով հաստատել, վախճանի սուրբն Անաստաս: Անփոյժ եղեալ իրն զկնի եկեղոցն, այլ առաջին կարգաւն վարէին: Kirakos Ganjakec'i 1961, 62, 8-16. (After Nerses, lord Anastas occupied the Catholicosate for six years [661-7]. Anastas summoned to himself the great *vardapet* Anania from the district of Shirak [a learned and brilliant man, and very knowledgeable in all the calendrical systems] to establish an immovable Armenian calendar, as other peoples had. Anania worked on this with great effort, until they were ready to adopt it through an assembly. But just then, the holy Anastas died. Those succeeding him as *kat'oghikos* neglected the matter and so they continued according to the former systems; translated by Bedrosian [1986]. Cf. also Orengo 2008, 209.)

¹⁰ Historian active in the early eleventh century, his *Universal History* presents an account of human history from Creation to AD 1004-05. Cf. Greenwood 2017, 32.

eleventh century, who devotes part of book II to the sequence of patriarchs who succeeded one another on the Holy See. It offers notes as brief as their provenance and length of catholicosate, or as extensive as to record their activities and any contemporary people or events of relevance. From Tarōnec'i's *History*:

Իսկ Անաստաս խորհեալ Յայաստանայցս կարգել տոմար անշարժ ըստ այլոց ազգաց՝ եւ հրամայէ Անանիայի Շիրակացւոյ¹¹ կարգել զքննիկոնն¹² հրաշագան, յորում զտոմարս մեր կարգեաց անշարժ: Եւ Անաստասայ խորեալ ժողովով եւ եպիսկոպոսաւք հաստատել զքննիկոնն¹³ եւ վախճանի կացեալ յաթոռն ամս 2 (6): (MH 15: 702, 159-60)

Anastas intended moreover to establish an immovable calendar for us Armenians, on the example of those of other nations: and he commanded Anania Širakac'i to establish the wonderful *k'nnikon*, through which he made our calendar immovable. And Anastas intended to ratify the *k'nnikon* through a council and the bishops, and he died after holding the throne for six years. (Author's transl.)

In contrast with Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i's account quoted above, Step'anos Tarōnec'i introduces the term *k'nnikon* to describe what was being commissioned by the Catholicos. This has been interpreted in different ways in modern scholarship. One understanding of this term is that it refers to a chronicle or a calendar, which would be in line with Yovhannēs' testimony.

Our suggestion is that *k'nnikon* means something more specific, and that Step'anos Tarōnec'i's account ascribes to Anania some tool for the calculation of festivities that would determine the date of Easter.

Tables of a feast calendar attributed to Anania Širakac'i have been preserved by manuscript tradition; in particular we refer to the *532-Year Cycle*,¹⁴ which reflects a technique elaborated in Alex-

11 *Širakec'woc'* in two witnesses.

12 *Zk'nnikonn*. The editors change it to *zk'rawnikonn* զբրաւնիկոնն (*zk'rōnikonn*), we restore reading from all manuscripts reported in the apparatus of the printed edition (A = M2865, thirteenth century; B = M3502; C = M4584; D = M3070; E = M1482; O = V869 from the second half of the seventeenth century). The editors justify their correction by referring to the *Nor Baḡgirk' Haykazean Lezui* (henceforth NHBL) 2: 1009.

13 See note above.

14 *532 bolorak*; cf. Anasyan 1959, 744. Hewsens (1968, 41; 1992, 279) associated the title *Cycle 532 and the Calendar* to the Armenian *Tiezeragitut'iwñ ew T'omar*. This might generate confusion because *Tiezeragitut'iwñ ew T'omar* is the title of Abrahamyan's 1940 edition of the long recension of the *Cosmology* (10 chapters) and of 72 chapters on various calendrical matters (*Voprosy i resheniya* 'Problems and Solutions' in Orbeli's Russian translation from 1918), where no tables are included. Hewsens himself

andria to calculate the date of Easter.¹⁵ This cycle is a computation of Easter that would cover the years 552-553 to 1084-85 AD, starting from where the charts made by Andreas, brother of Magnus (fourth century) ended.¹⁶ Parts of them have been preserved in manuscripts and they are attributed to Anania Širakac'i. Four folios of this *computus* are preserved in manuscript M2679,¹⁷ and another copy of it was transcribed by Ēynatyan from M1999.¹⁸ Ēynatyan (2002b, 14) reports that most scholars do not believe Anania Širakac'i's tables have survived, and, in presenting the tables attributed to him from M1999 (twelfth century), the scholar comments that they must be the product of later interventions by Yovhannēs Imastasēr in the eleventh century (19-21). While proving the authenticity of these tables is, at least for the moment, beyond us, it is worth pointing out that such eventual re-elaboration, re-editing or even a falsification of such tables would have occurred around the same time as Step'anos Tarōnec'i's *Universal History*, opening the question of the reception, understanding and representation of Anania Širakac'i's figure in this period.

In any case, a noticeable piece of innovation does take place at the time of Širakac'i, and it may be the result of his response to the Catholicos' request: Armenian sources show a new dating system, called 'the Armenian Era', appearing from the seventh century. Its starting point corresponds to the beginning of a new Easter cycle's in AD 552-553, and its duration, 532 years, would be the same as the cycle. We explore the possibility that this may be related to the Anania Širakac'i's activity, and to an Easter *computus* that was also referred to as *k'nnikon* at least from the eleventh century.

translates the title *Tiezeragitut'iwn ew T'omar* as *Cosmography and Chronology* elsewhere in the same article (1968, 33 fn. 9).

15 This is a computing technique based on a 19-year long cycle. Cf. Warntjes 2007, 55 fn. 75. A 532-year table contains 28×19-year cycles, and its implementation is associated with Annianus (Mosshammer 2008, 199).

16 Andreas, brother of Magnus, wrote Easter tables covering a 200-year period from 353 to 552 AD; cf. Mosshammer 2008, 93.

17 *Non vidi*; after Abrahamyan 1944, 262. The abbreviation M indicates mss from the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan, Armenia. We refer to the same abbreviation system throughout the article; cf. Coulie 2020. M2679 is dated to AD 981; cf. Tēr-Vardanean 2013. From the surviving fragments, Abrahamyan (1944, 262-82) published a reconstruction of the rest of the chart, reprinted in MH 4: 635-68. This was translated into Modern Armenian by Abrahamyan and Petrosyan (1979, 174-249).

18 M1999 is composed of three manuscripts, the first two dating to the twelfth century, and the third to the thirteenth. The texts discussed and edited by Ēynatyan (2002a; 2002b, the latter presenting an English translation by Muradyan and Topchyan) are found in the first manuscript. According to Ēynatyan, the tables found in M1999 had been discarded by Abrahamyan as too jumbled to be of any use, but the data contained in the tables was sufficient to set the page-order right (21).

2.3 *K'nnikon* in Letter 21 and Letter 25 of Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros

Because of its occurrence in relation to *Letter 21* of Grigor Magistros's epistles, the word *k'nnikon* has also been attributed a meaning that would be similar to the Latin *summa*; an organic collection of works conceived with a didactic purpose. This is currently the most widely accepted interpretation of this term within scholarship, but, in our view, not the best one.

The epistolary collection of the erudite and statesman Grigor Pahlawuni Magistros (eleventh century) does in fact record information about Anania Širakac'i's production. Relevant passages are found in two letters sent to the contemporary Catholicos of the Armenians, Petros Getadarj: the first (*Letter 21*, cf. especially Muradyan 2012; MH 16: 270-1 sentences 33-7) describing a book for the teaching of several subjects, explicitly attributed to Anania Širakac'i, which Grigor Pahlawuni claims to be kept at the Catholicosate. The second relevant document is *Letter 25* (cf. especially Muradyan 2012; MH 16: 284 sentences 3-4) which Muradyan suggests to have been written in thanksgiving for the book, which Magistros confirms to have received (Muradyan 2012, 105-6), although it contains no further information on the book's content and no mention of Anania Širakac'i's name.

These letters call for a careful examination, as they may allow us to trace new connections in the history of ideas and of education in this period, which, for matters of space, shall await for a different occasion. What suffices to point out in this context is that very little is known about the history of Magistros' epistolary collection, and scholarship is silent in regards to who was responsible for its compilation and for assigning titles to the letters. The problem of editing is in fact a fundamental one when it comes to the question of Anania's *Great K'nnikon*, because this term was not used by Grigor Pahlawuni himself, but it is only found in the title of *Letter 21*. It is possible that it is found here due to an existing association between *k'nnikon*, i.e. Anania's computational endeavour as we argue, and Anania's name mentioned overtly in the body of *Letter 21*. Its presence here may therefore be of secondary importance, if not an accident altogether.

We further observe that the said title, mentioning the *Great K'nnikon*, brings additional support to our hypothesis that associates *k'nnikon* to a computational era. We suggest this inasmuch as the period covered by the following 532 years starting from AD 1085 designed by Yovhannēs Imastasēr in the eleventh century, that would be a second paschal cycle following the one starting in AD 552, is addressed as the 'New' or the 'Small' Armenian Era in the sources (cf. for example Kirakos of Ganjak and Mxitar Goš, quoted in Dulaurier 1859, 114), which distinguishes the second cycle from the preceding one, the 'Great'

Era, a distinction that could only occur after the eleventh century.¹⁹

Whoever gave titles to Grigor Magistros' letters must have therefore made an association between Anania Širakac'i, named in the letter, and what he was known to have created, namely the *Great K'nnikon*. The description of this collection of books ascribed to Širakac'i as found in Magistros' *Letter 21* and its possible follow-up, number 25, leave several open questions, and the extent to which they may add to our understanding of Anania Širakac'i's production, Grigor Pahlawuni's agenda and a wider context of the history of ideas, is yet to be investigated further.

2.4 *K'nnikon* and *K'ronikon* in Armenian Sources

Let us now come back to Tarōnec'i's testimony and to our suggestion that the term *k'nnikon* belonged to the semantic sphere of time-reckoning. We shall presently discuss attested uses of *k'nnikon* as a synonym or an alternative spelling or indicating something similar to *k'ronikon* (chronicle), and show how this, taking into consideration the complexity of both terms, may have referred to a calendar.

The term *k'nnikon* has been identified as an alternative spelling for *k'ronikon* (chronicle),²⁰ and this is evident in the discussed passage from Step'anos Tarōnec'i's *History* as pointed out in the notes to the Armenian text. Tarōnec'i's passage shows the reading *k'nnikon*, and the editors changed it to *k'rōnikon*,²¹ which usually translates as 'chronicle'. This choice is explained with reference to the NHBL, where *k'nnikon* is given as an alternative spelling for *k'ronikon*, and one may presume that the editors took these terms as synonyms and may have thus decided to present the readers with a simpler, straightforward term, although we do not dare to speculate on their reasons for this intervention.

What we shall note, however, is that previous manuscript tradition also attests a number of cases where the opposite happens, and compilers use *k'nnikon* where *k'ronikon* could be expected: Abgaryan has collected instances where copyists or list compilers used one term in place of the other, and further argues that alternative spellings that appear to be 'in between' these two words (see point 6 below) would demonstrate that *k'nnikon* and *k'ronikon* were used as synonyms (Abgaryan 1986, 26-33; cf. also Mahé 1987, 168-70).

¹⁹ The twelfth-century manuscript M1999 reports definitions of the two Armenian Eras, the Great and Small (Ėynatyan 2002b, 18).

²⁰ Cf. especially Abgaryan 1986; Mat'evosyan 1974. The NHBL dictionary indicates that *k'nnikon* is an alternative form for *k'ronikon* (chronicle), *žamanakagrut' iwn* (chronography, chronicle) but also *tomar* (calendar), and *tomaragir'k'* (calendar-book) (NHBL 2: 1009 col. 1).

²¹ An alternative spelling for *k'ronikon* (NHBL 2: 1019 col. 2).

We shall give a brief account of Abgaryan's list of supporting evidence that identify *k'nnikon* with *k'ronikon*:

1. In two manuscript copies of the eighteenth-century list *Patmagirk' Hayoc'*, a scribe refers to Samuël Anec'i's *Chronicle*²² as *k'nnikon gawazanagirk'*: "Samuël the Priest [i.e. Anec'i], who made the *k'nnikon gawazanagirk'*".²³ *Gawazanagirk'* is a compound word from *gawazan* (rule), and *girk'* (book), which may translate as 'chronicle' or 'book of chronicles'. Anec'i's work is indeed a chronicle, modelled on the example of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Chronicon*, leaving no doubt that this instance of *k'nnikon gawazanagirk'* indicates a chronicle.
2. In copies of Vanakan Vardapet's *Book of Questions*, originally composed in the thirteenth century, Eusebius of Caesarea's *Chronicon* is referred to as *k'nnikon*: "And he [i.e. Eusebius] made the *Ecclesiastical History* and the *K'nnikon*".²⁴ Abgaryan only cites two witnesses here, the earliest of these dating to the fifteenth century, but states that there are more (which we presume later than the copies he cites).
3. In at least two manuscript copies of Vardan Arewelc'i's *Universal History*, which dates to the thirteenth century, Samuël Anec'i's *Chronicle* is referred to with the term *gawazan* in the accusative plural, i.e. 'the lines', 'the rules', 'the canons', and it is thought that Anec'i had followed the model of the *k'ronikon*, most likely referring to Eusebius' *Chronicle* or some later work of a similar kind: "Samuël the Priest Anec'i, who modelled the *gawazans* on the example of the *k'ronikon*".²⁵ Whilst in point 1 the *gawazanagirk'* is associated with *k'nnikon*, here the *gawazans* are said to be modelled on a *k'ronikon*, allowing us to infer that, if not synonyms, *k'nnikon* and *k'ronikon* do at least have a feature in common; something related to ruling or canons. The observation is further reinforced by Abgaryan's note concerning the 1861 edition of Arewelc'i's *Universal History*, indicating that both witnesses read "Samuël the Priest of the land, who modelled the

²² Samuël Anec'i was an Armenian historian active in the twelfth century. His *Universal Chronicle* begins with the story of Adam and reaches the events of the year 1178-80 (Boyadjian 2016). Cowe describes Anec'i's *Chronicle* as an example of a "chronographic approach" (1997, 305).

²³ Սամուէլ երէց, որ արար զքնիկոնն գաւազանագիրքն (M2220, f. 292; M2271, f. 214; after Abgaryan 1986, 32). M2220 dates to AD 1789-90 and M2271 to AD 1724.

²⁴ Չեկեղեցական պատմութիւնն եւ զքնիկոնն նա արար (M3074, f. 98r; M1254, f. 40v, "and other mss"; after Abgaryan 1986, 32). M3074 dates to the fifteenth century and M1254 to the seventeenth century.

²⁵ Սամուէլ երէց Անեցին, որ զգաւազանսն յօրինեաց Քրոնիկոնին (Vardan Arewelc'i's *Universal History*, ed. Emin 1861, 159).

gawazans on the example of Anec'i's *K'nnikon*"²⁶ showing that the two words appear to have been used interchangeably in this instance.

4. Another occurrence comes from a manuscript copy of a commentary by Esayi Nč'ec'i.²⁷ In M5254 (AD 1280) Nč'ec'i cites a passage where Cyril of Alexandria refers to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius using the term *k'nnikon*: "But I searched in the first [book of] the *K'nnikon* and found..." (Author's transl.)²⁸ The same work is referred to as *k'ronikon* in another passage where Nč'ec'i cites Cyril of Alexandria, preserved in M5566 (fourteenth century). The citation, in reference to the Eusebian *Chronicon*, reads: "Many times I searched in the *K'ronikon*".²⁹
5. Abgaryan then cites two occurrences found in a manuscript list kept at the library of the Monastery of St John's, known as Amrdolu, compiled by Vardan of Baļēš (Baļiřec'i) in the seventeenth century. An edition of this list, based on a manuscript referred to as 639 of the Holy See collection (Ējmiacin), was published in 1903,³⁰ and it reports: "105r. Book, a dictionary"³¹

26 Սամուէլ երէց աշխարհի, որ զգաւազանսն յօրինեաց Քննիկոնին անեցին (Emin 1861, 159 fn. 2). The copies used in this edition are one printed, unnumbered copy from Moscow and a manuscript from Tiflis dating to 1814, made from a fifteenth century manuscript and presented to the Rumyantsev Museum of St Petersburg (Emin 1861, VII). We point out that this citation appears to present a logical impossibility in stating that Samuēl the Priest, who is otherwise known as Samuēl Anec'i, modelled his work on Anec'i's. This is either the result of confusion or some transmission errors, or perhaps an indication that there was another chronicle by someone called Anec'i. Anania Širakac'i, as seen above, is referred to as 'Anec'i' in Yovhannēs Drasxanakerc'i's *History* (1912, 92), and this work could either be identified with a calendar or with a chronicle. For the contention that Širakac'i wrote a chronicle, cf. Abrahamyan 1944; Abgaryan 1986. Abrahamyan suggested that this might coincide with an existing anonymous chronicle, which he published in his anthology of works by Anania Širakac'i (1944, 357-99). This text was previously edited by Sargisean in 1904 as Anonymous, and it had also been suggested that the author responsible for it, or at least for part of it, is an otherwise unknown Pilon Tirakac'i/Širakac'i (Greenwood 2008, 249).

27 Active in the thirteenth century, associated with the Glajor Monastery and teaching institution.

28 Իսկ եւ յառաջին քննիկոնն խնդրել զտի... (f. 59r; after Abgaryan 1986, 33 fn. 64).

29 Պազում անզամ յուսեցի ի Քրոնիկոնն (f. 8r; after Abgaryan 1986, 33). He invites comparison with M1241 (AD 1612), f. 7v (Abgaryan 1986, 33 fn. 63). It is unclear why Abgaryan did not compare the same sentence from the two sources.

30 Ter-Hakobian 1903. These examples are discussed in Mat'evosyan 1974, 73-4.

31 This reference to a *baragirk'* (dictionary) seems unusual for a collection of scientific or philosophical texts. It was probably used to indicate that it contained information on several topics, similar to the modern encyclopaedia. On this, we invite a comparison with Pseudo-Zeno's *On Nature*, a treatise translated into Armenian (probably in the seventh century) which includes discussion on cosmology, anatomy, medicine, morals, logic and grammar, but it is primarily a list of philosophical definitions (Stone, Shirinian 2000); cf. witnesses M529 (AD 1614) and M4669 (AD 1675) of Yovhannēs Erznkac'i's *On the Movements of the Celestial Bodies*, both recorded as 'dictionary' (Stepanyan, Topchyan 2001, 12).

in gold from Surb Hovhannēs,³² which is Anania Širakac'i's, which is a³³ *k'nnikon*".³⁴ Below, on the same list: "182r. Book, Anania's *k'nnikon* and many sayings of doctors and unknown commentaries".³⁵ Abgaryan, however, does not cite copies of the same list where *k'ronikon* is found in place of *k'nnikon*. He produces instead a reference from a second list, reported in a catalogue of unedited manuscripts³⁶ where he found this note: "Now, he wrote this *k'ronikon*, which Anania Širakac'i made".³⁷ The relevance of this comparison is that this note refers to a book kept at the Monastery of Balēš (Mat'evosyan 1974, 73-4; cf. also Mahé 1987, 177); one may therefore consider the possibility that this final citation describes one or parts of the two items on Vardan Bašišec'i's list, and that this is another example where *k'ronikon* and *k'nnikon* may be used as synonyms or as alternative spellings.

We remain however uncertain over what type of works these titles referred to, and what either of these words would actually describe: given that point 5 refers to texts or tables attributed to Anania Širakac'i, their inclusion in our argument becomes somewhat tautological. A scribe's note dating to the seventeenth century in absence of the item being described does not necessarily reveal to us the exact nature of that *k'nnikon* mentioned by Step'anos Tarōnec'i, but merely demonstrates that *k'nnikon* and *k'ronikon* came to be used as synonyms at least by then.

6. The last items on Abgaryan's list are examples of different spellings, seemingly the result of miscopying, which, the scholar argues, might demonstrate that the scribes confused the words *k'nnikon* and *k'ronikon* because they were synonyms. For example, in the title of *Letter 21* of Grigor

32 *Hovhannēs* (Abgaryan 1986, 33). Ter-Hakobian (1903, 183) reads *Yovsin*, which might be an abbreviated form for *Hovhannēs*.

33 Որ է բնիկն does not present any articles, and translates as "which is a *k'nnikon*", possibly indicating that this term described a specific type of work (like a 'commentary' or a 'hymnal'). However, one may also suppose that a determinative article is implicitly understood, "which is the *k'nnikon*", and interpret it as the name of one particular, and potentially well-known, text or collection of texts.

34 105a Գիրք ոսկով բազմիրքն է սուրբ Յովսին, որ է Անանիա Շիրակացւոյն, որ է բնիկն (Ter-Hakobian 1903, 183; cf. also Abgaryan 1986, 33).

35 182r Գիրք Անանիայի բնիկնն եւ բազում ասացուածք վարդապետաց եւ մեկնութիւնք անծանաւթք (Ter-Hakobian 1903, 188).

36 Մատենադարանք անտիպ ծեռագրացուցակներ (Catalogue of Unedited Manuscripts after Mat'evosyan 1974b, 74; cf. also Abgaryan 1986, 33).

37 Արդ գրեցաւ Կրոնիկոնս, զոր արարեալ Անանիայի Շիրակուոյն (Catalogue of Unedited Manuscripts, 133, *non vidi*; after Mat'evosyan 1974, 74).

Magistros' epistles, *k'nnikon* is spelled *k'nnokon*³⁸ in a manuscript and *k'nokon* in another witness held in Vienna.³⁹

It is most prudent to focus first on instances referring to works which can be identified with certainty. Conclusions which may be drawn from the examples above, points 1 to 4, are that the words *k'nnikon* and *k'ronikon* have been occasionally used interchangeably in reference to the *Chronicon* of Eusebius or to works of a similar kind and which emulate it, as, for example, the *Chronicle* of Samuël Anec'i. We also conclude that the earliest attested instances of such use of the two terms in reference to chronicles based on the Eusebian model date from after the thirteenth century. Abgaryan might therefore be correct in concluding that *k'nnikon*, being the same as *k'ronikon*, refers to a chronicle (1986). However, it seems to us that the meaning of both terms may hide a much wider complexity, and that the prominence of computations in relation to them has thus far not been given enough consideration in the study of Armenian literature.

2.5 The *Chronicon* and Paschal Cycles

Eusebius of Caesarea's *Chronicon* was no chronicle in the sense of a narration of historical events, but rather the combination of a Χρονογραφία (Chronography), an unrefined annalistic compilation (book I), and Χρονικοί Κανόνες (Chronological Canons) presenting historical events in tables that compared different year counts (book II). This is a clear warning that the line between chronicles and tables is hard to draw. Moreover, in relation to Eusebius of Caesarea's works, the term *krōnīqōn* in Syriac was also used to refer explanations of the computation of Easter (Debié 2015, 221-2), and not to the sole *Chronicon*.⁴⁰

In Armenian, although as we have seen both *k'ronikon* and *k'nnikon* found in relation to chronicles, including cases where they are used as synonyms (the NHBL lexicon, too, records this), *k'ronikon* does not appear to indicate paschal tables, whereas there are several instances where this meaning is conveyed by the term *k'nnikon*.

This use of *k'nnikon* is attested in medieval *miscellanea*, as we shall analyse shortly below, reinforcing a suggestion put forth by Mat'evosyan in his extensive studies on Anania's tradition: "*K'nnikon* is a calendar, a new era, regularity and a canon, law, order and confines" (Author's transl. 1974, 78).

38 Langlois 1869, 37; after Abgaryan 1986, 33.

39 Abgaryan 1986, 33.

40 Cf. Mosshammer (2008, 145-8) on a traditional attribution of a 19-year cycle to Eusebius, which does not appear to be grounded on his works.

The occurrences we present come from two medieval *miscellanea* (M1999, twelfth-thirteenth century, and M5975, AD 1467), transcribed and published by Ėynatyan,⁴¹ and they clearly refer to the *computus* and to paschal tables.

The first extract (henceforth Misc1) is from M1999:

Թուական Յոռոնոց այսպէս արա՛.
Կա՛լ գՅայ Մեծ թուականն, ՅԴ (304) ի վերայ թեր՛⁴² Մեծ թուական է
Յոռոնայցւոց: ՇԼԲ (532). ի բաց գնա՛⁴³ Փոքր թուական է Յոռոնի, որ
կոչի Քննիկոն:՝⁴⁴

For the Roman Era do this way:

take the year of the Great Armenian Era [AD 552-3] and add [subtract] 304; this is the year of the Great Roman Era [AD 248-9]. Subtract [add] 532; this is the Small Roman Era [AD 780-1], which is called *k'nnikon*. (Author's transl.)

This excerpt suggests that *k'nnikon* is a name for the Small Roman Era, that is a second 532-year cycle after the completion of the Great Roman Era, starting in the year AD 248-249, and is attested in Armenian, Byzantine and Georgian sources. Based on such information we suggest that the operations in the extract are inverted, as noted in the text and its English translation.⁴⁵ The same Misc1 continues: Վերադիր այսպէս արա՛. Կա՛լ գՔննիկոնն եւ երթ ժԹ (19)⁴⁶ (For

⁴¹ For a partial diplomatic edition of manuscript M1999, cf. Ėynatyan 2002a, 140-247; 2002b, 27-319 for the edition with facing English translation. For manuscript M5975, cf. a partial diplomatic edition by Ėynatyan 2002a, 251-88; for the edition with facing English translation cf. Ėynatyan 2002b, 320-451.

⁴² Ի վերայ թեր (add). It should say 'subtract', for example ի բաց գնա.

⁴³ Ի բաց գնա (subtract). The text should say ի վերայ թեր (add).

⁴⁴ Ėynatyan 2002a, 183; 2002b, 146 drawing from M1999, f. 205v. Part of this quoted in Mat'evosyan 1974, 77.

⁴⁵ Cf. Mosshammer 2008, 266-70 on the calculations of the Roman Era's starting date. On the existence of two Roman Eras, one starting in 248-249 and the second starting 532 years later (a whole paschal cycle) in 780-781, cf. Mosshammer's discussion on the Georgian dating system (269). Cf. The English translation of the same extract in Ėynatyan 2002b, 151: "Calculate the Year of the Roman Era in the following way: take the year of the Great Armenian Era and add 304; this is the year of the Great Roman Era. Subtract 532; this is the Small Roman Era, which is called *k'nnikon*". The Roman Era is also mentioned in the *Chronicon Paschale*, a Byzantine calendrical text also known as *Chronicon Alexandrinum*, which included a chronicle from Adam to Emperor Heraclius, Easter tables and explanations on the *computus* (Mosshammer 2008, 266-8). On the *Chronicon Paschale* cf. 286-311. Georgian sources, however, do not seem to distinguish between a 'Great' and a 'Small' Era, and our corrections presume that the Great Roman Era precedes the Small in consistency with the use of 'great' and 'small' to indicate respectively the first and second cycles of the Armenian Era (one starting in AD 553, the second in AD 1085, both lasting 532-year; cf. Dulaurier 1859).

⁴⁶ M1999, f. 205v; after Ėynatyan 2002a, 183; 2002b, 146.

the epact, do it this way: take the *k'nnikon* and divide by 19; author's transl.). 19 is the minimal unit of a paschal cycle, and this citation confirms that *k'nnikon* refers to something that may be divided by 19: in this case we suppose that it is a 532-year-long cycle (that is 19×28), based on the quotation above.

We find information similar to Misc1 in Misc2, MS M5975:

Թուական այսպէս արա՛ւ.

Կա՛լ զՅայոց թուականն, ՅԴ (304) ի վերայ քեր՛ր⁴⁷ եւ այն է: Եւ զըրջանսն ՇԼԲ (532), ի բաց⁴⁸ երթ, որ մնայ Փոքր թուական է, որ կոչի Բննիկոն: Դարձեալ՝ կա՛լ զՅայոց Փոքր թուականն, ՄԻԸ (228) ի բաց երթ Բննիկոն է:⁴⁹

Calculate the year in the following way:

take the year of the Armenian Era and add 304, this is it. And subtract the 532[year] cycle; the result is the year of the Small Era,⁵⁰ which is called *k'nnikon*. Again, take the year of the Small Armenian Era and subtract 228; it is the year of the *k'nnikon*. (Author's transl.)⁵¹

These occurrences in medieval *miscellanea* allow us to theorise that, at least by the twelfth century, *k'nnikon* had become a way to indicate an era or a cycle, more specifically to the Small Roman Era. This is evidently anachronistic if applied to what Tarōnec'i records about Anania Širakac'i's work, as the starting point of this Roman Era is at the end of the eighth century, long after the departure of Catholicos Anastas and Širakac'i's activity, but one may nonetheless assume that its meaning might have also been used to indicate a term for an era or table more in general, and even one with a fixed duration of 532 years. In the case of Tarōnec'i it undoubtedly referred to something 'immovable', perpetual, which is a characteristic of such cycles. Širakac'i's *computus* would have also covered 532 years, like the Roman Era mentioned in the miscellanies.⁵²

⁴⁷ Ի վերայ քեր (add). It should say 'subtract', for example ի բաց գնս.

⁴⁸ Ի բաց (subtract). This does not make sense, and the text should say ի վերայ քեր (add).

⁴⁹ F. 15v; after Ėynatyan 2002a, 264; 2002b, 360.

⁵⁰ AD 780-781, that is the Roman Era in Georgian sources; cf. Mosshammer 2008, 268-70.

⁵¹ As in the previous excerpt, adding 304 would not be the correct operation here, one would need to subtract: the Great Armenian Era starts in 552-3, and one needs to subtract 304 in order to obtain 248-9, the start of the Roman Era. Similarly to the previous passage, the next operation should be adding 532 rather than subtracting. Finally, to obtain "the year of the *k'nnikon*" the number of years to be subtracted should be 304 years, and not 228. Cf. Ėynatyan's 2002b, 371.

⁵² This use of the word *k'nnikon* in Misc1 (M1999) had already been cited by Mat'evosyan in an article on the *k'nnikon* question (1974), where he suggests that the

The picture may become clearer thanks to parallels found in studies on Syriac and Georgian sources, where there are attestations of the terms *krōnīqōn* (Syriac) and *kronik'oni* ქრონიკონი (Georgian) found in relation to the *computus*. Debié has shown that, rather than strictly referring to chronicles alone, *krōnīqōn* was used in Syriac sources to describe the *computus*, treatises on the calendar, and explanations on the computation of Easter (Debié 2015, 229). This shift, or rather, this expansion of the possible meanings of the term might derive from the *Chronicon* par excellence, the above-mentioned fundamental work of Eusebius of Caesarea. Debié points out that, in Syriac, *krōnīqōn* was also used to refer to Eusebius' *computus* (221) and not just to his chronicle in the sense of 'history', or, rather, 'chronography'.⁵³ The breadth of the Eusebian production and the fortune of its legacy might be at the heart of the variety of meanings attributed to *krōnīqōn* through the Middle Ages. Debié further shows that the term continued to be used in Syriac for both the *computus* and for treatises around the *computus* (229), potentially generating confusion.

As mentioned in relation to Misc1 and Misc2, the Roman Era is not only attested in Armenian sources, but was used by Georgians, too. In Georgian the term *kronik'oni* ქრონიკონი or *kronik'oni* ქრონიკონი identifies a 532-year long cycle.⁵⁴ In Armenian sources, still in clear association to a 532-year-long computational era, we find the word *k'nnikon*.

2.6 Where Does *K'nnikon* Come From?

The emergence of the term *k'nnikon* remains an unresolved linguistic issue; we discuss here possible explanations for its formation.

As we have seen, Abgaryan proposed that *k'nnikon* was derived from *k'ronikon*, on the basis that scribal mistakes might have occurred through tradition and generated a variation. To show this, he includes evidence of 'hybrid' readings (*infra* point 6; cf. Abgaryan 1986, 27-33).

word might have indicated a calendar, and, in particular, something in the form of a table; cf. especially 77-8. However, Mat'evosyan does not state that this *k'nnikon* corresponded to the *532-Year Cycle* attributed to Anania, nor to other specific texts.

53 On the erroneous attribution of paschal tables based on the 19-year cycle to Eusebius cf. *infra* fn. 41.

54 Cf. Abuladze 2008, s.v. "ქრონიკონი, ქრონიკონი". Mosshammer (2008, 269) calculates a starting date of AD 780-781 for a Georgian *k'ronikon* based on archaeological evidence, which allows us to calculate that the previous cycle would have begun in 248-9 (that is AD 780-781 - 532 years = AD 248-249). That is the same starting date as the Roman Era in Armenian sources, including Misc1 and Misc2 seen above. Cf. also Debié 2015, 212 fn. 38. According to the Dictionary of Classical Georgian (Abuladze 2008), the year 780-781 AD corresponds to the thirteenth reiteration of the cycle.

Markwart's suggestion was that it derived from the same root of the Armenian verb *k'nnel* բնութի (to examine) with the addition of the adjectival ending *-ikon* as found in Greek, forming some sort of an Armenian-Greek hybrid term to parallel the Greek *kritikon* κριτικόν⁵⁵ (capable of discernment, capable of judgement),⁵⁶ meant as the final result of a thought process: 'examination'. This hypothesis aligns with an interpretation of the *k'nnikon* on the basis of Magistros' *Letter 21*, i.e. as a collection of books on the different sciences, and with no special association with time-reckoning or chronology. Mahé objects that there appears to be no reason to form such a term with the Greek ending *-ikon* rather than the Armenian *-akan* (*k'nnakan*) (Mahé 1987, 168). In agreement with Mahé, we suggest that the Greek ending in *-ikon* would most likely point at the whole word being derived from Greek.

Mat'evosyan's hypothesis is that the etymology of *k'nnikon* is to be found in the Greek *kanonikon* κανονικόν, pointing at ruled tables related to the calendar. This connections to the 'ruling' is indeed very relevant: as an alternative to *k'ronikon*, one of Abgaryan's cited sources showed *k'nnikon gawazanagirk'* (point 1 above) and *gawazank'* (point 3 above) which point at the technical feature of tables, i.e. the ruling. Ruling is also a prominent feature of the Eusebian legacy, whose *Chronological Canons* were, in fact, partly tabular.

Classical Armenian presents orthographical variations for its loan from the Greek κανών: ԼԿԱՆՈՆ, ԼԿԱՆՈՆԻ, ԲԱՆՈՆ, ԲԱՆՈՆԻ.⁵⁷ Alongside offering the Greek equivalent κανών, the Latin translation in the NBHL show 'canon', 'regula', 'forma'. The adjectives բաննիկն and բաննալիկն are then translated as κανονικός, -κη, -κόν in Greek and 'regularis' in Latin.⁵⁸

Starting from Mat'evosyan's proposal, we suggest that *k'nnikon* could be the result of an abbreviation, typical of copyists, where some vowels are omitted:

բաննիկն > ԲՄՆՆԻԿՆ > ԲՆՆԻԿՆ

One may in fact suppose that the *ի* and *ո* of the last syllables would not be easily left out as they are reminders of a Greek suffix, atypical for Armenian (which would present *-ալիկն* for the most common formation of adjectives from a noun), so that their omission might have caused confusion. This might be how this term originated.

One further suggestion we would like to advance is that *k'nnikon* might be the result of a crasis of *k'ronikon* and *k'anonikon*. A similar

⁵⁵ Bauer, Markwart 1929, 429, after Mahé 1987, 168.

⁵⁶ Cf. Liddell, Scott 1940.

⁵⁷ NBHL 1: 1051 coll. 1-2; 2: 980 col. 2.

⁵⁸ NBHL 1: 1051 coll. 1-2; 2: 980 col. 2.

compound is attested in Syriac: *krwnnqnwn* (chrono-canon),⁵⁹ which is explicitly associated to a 532-year cycle⁶⁰ and to a “comput des années, des mois, de jeûnes et des fêtes”.⁶¹ As we have already pointed out, the Eusebian legacy is especially meaningful, not last because of the graphic arrangement of the canons, characterised by ruling, which provided a model to arrange chronologies and computational tables, such as the 532-year cycle. The second part of Eusebius' *Chronicon*, called Χρονικοί Κανόνες (Chronological Canons), could be at the origin of both the Syriac *krwnnqnwn* and of the Armenian բնիկն կ'nnikon.

Another element in favour of this reconstruction is the starting letter of *k'nnikon*. Although, as we show above, Greek *kanōn* finds an Armenian translation both beginning with կ and with ք, the first would be more likely to transliterate a κ, while the latter, being aspirated, a Greek χ. The ք at the start of *k'nnikon* in Armenian might reflect a Greek χ, as in *chronos* (time). It is however to be noted that Armenian *k'nnikon* does not present a ր as we find in Greek *chronos* and the Syriac compound *krwnnqnwn*.

2.7 A New Era

Armenian medieval sources mention two Armenian Eras, a Great and a Small one, both 532-year long. The latter, dating to the eleventh century and attributed to Yovhannēs Imastasēr, starts in AD 1084-85 (Dulaurier 1859), coinciding with the completion of a previous 532-year cycle starting in AD 552-553.

This Armenian Era appears in Armenian sources from as early as the seventh century, corroborating the notion that computational tables may have served as a chronological reference in the reckoning of years, and allowing us to conjecture about an innovation occurring at this time, perhaps in relation to Širakac'i's activity.

The earliest attestation of this dating practice is in the seventh-century *Anonymous Chronicle*⁶² where the year “134 of the Armenian Era” is given as the date of a military defeat.⁶³ This era is further

59 The starting letter in the Syriac transcription, *k*, is used for Greek χ, while *q* corresponds to Greek κ.

60 From a manuscript copied by Moise of Mardin (Debié 2015, 211). He was active in the sixteenth century.

61 From the undated MS Paris, BNF, syriaque 13 (Debié 2015, 213).

62 Tentatively ascribed to Anania himself by Abrahamyan 1944, 357-99. On its attribution to P'ilon Tirakac'i/Širakac'i, cf. Greenwood 2008, 249. We maintain this text as anonymous.

63 Cf. Abrahamyan 1944, 399; MH 5: 969; after Orengo 2008, 207.

referred to in an eight-century *Treatise on Councils*, where a sinod is dated to the year 175 of the Armenian Era, preserved in the *Girk' T'it'oc'* (Book of Letters),⁶⁴ and in an inscription dated to the second half of the eighth century, which dates the erection of a fountain to the year 232 of the Armenian Era (Greenwood 2004, 87).

The emergence of this dating system may help our understanding of Step'anos Tarōnec'i's passage: this attestation of newly designed *k'nnikon* could be a witness to a new *computus*, and its starting date came to be used as a year-reckoning tool from the seventh century onwards. In the light of all the elements converging to read Tarōnec'i's account as the witness of a new Easter cycle, it is inevitable to ask whether Draxanaketc'i's passage may be narrating the same event, too, although using the term *tōmar* (calendar), still referring to a paschal cycle, rather than a substantial reform of the Armenian calendar, as one may interpret it. All accounts of the matter, however, refer that the mathematician's work was rejected, opening questions on the actual extent of its rejection and, on the other hand, on the possible means of its dissemination.

3 Concluding Remarks

This article presents a re-examination of medieval sources on Anania Širakac'i's activity; it shows that the term *k'nnikon*, associated with the mathematician's production, was used to refer to time-reckoning, and more precisely to a computational era or paschal cycle. The eleventh-century historiographer Step'anos Tarōnec'i records the request advanced by Catholicos Anastas to Širakac'i to reform the Armenian calendar to make it "immovable", and in this instance he refers to Anania's work as *k'nnikon*. Expanding on a suggestion advanced by Mat'evosyan, namely that *k'nnikon* was a way to refer to the calendar, we argue that the most probable meaning of this term is that of a *computus*, i.e. tables for the calculation of the Easter dates year after year until cycle's completion.

In support of this hypothesis, we propose a comparison with analogous terminology in Georgian and Syriac as well as making use of previously underexplored Armenian sources. In particular, we highlight the emergence of a new dating system, the Armenian Era, attested from the seventh century, which has the same duration as a 532-year paschal cycle and which begins right where previous Easter tables ended, in AD 552-553.

Our contention challenges a widely-accepted hypothesis that sees the *k'nnikon* as a structured collection of writings that was intended

⁶⁴ Cf. Polarean 1994, 479; after Orenko 2008, 207.

as companions to the *curricula* of *trivium* and *quadrivium*. This interpretation is based on *Letter 21* of Grigor Pahlawuni, also called Magistros (eleventh century), which is the only existing description of such a *summa* explicitly associated with Anania Širakac'i, referred to by the name *k'nnikon* in the letter title. Given that the origin of the letter titles in this collection is unknown, it seems to us that taking this association between *k'nnikon* and the textbook as core evidence of Širakac'i's activity and to read all other records in this light raises serious problems of methodology. While Magistros' letters deserve to be examined afresh, as they open a number of questions related to Anania's legacy and works allegedly compiled by him and lost, we here demonstrate that medieval records present *k'nnikon* consistently in association with computational eras. Whether this was the case in the seventh century, is not possible to establish from known evidence, but it appears that later records, such as Taronec'i's *History*, used it to refer to Easter tables attributed to Anania Širakac'i.

Abbreviations:

BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
NHBL	Nor Baġgirk' Haykazean Lezui
M	Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts
MH	Matenagirk' Hayoc'

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The King's Mellifluous Tongue Study, Social Bonding, and the Making of Middle Armenian as a Language of the Elite in Medieval Cilicia

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Abstract This article on social history examines the study of Middle Armenian manuscripts at the Cilician court, placing the language's development within a Mediterranean context that includes Outremer French and Byzantine Greek. In particular, it argues that King Het'um I (d. 1270) bolstered his status as educated king through the commission of two works from theologian Vardan Arewelc'i (d. 1271): an encyclopedic compendium and commentary on grammar, which aided vernacular study in different ways. By balancing the microhistory of these manuscripts against the macro-history of Cilician Middle Armenian's configuration in writing, this article shows how vernacular Armenian became an object of elite study, seemingly capable of representing all the knowledge in the world.

Keywords Middle Armenian. Medieval Cilicia. Social history. Vernacular. Old French. Byzantine Greek. Het'um. Vardan Arewelc'i. Žłłank'. Educated king. Compendium. Grammar.

Summary 1 Introduction: A Rupture. – 2 The Written Cultivation of Cilician Middle Armenian Among Court and Church. – 3 A Pleasant Conversation Between Grammarian and King. – 4 Grammaticality and Armenian Kingship. – 5 Conclusion: Docile Speech, Pleasing Labour, and Ties that Bind.



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1 Introduction: A Rupture

This story about language - which is also a story about power - begins with a murder. In 1225, the Cilician Armenian nobility arrested Philip of Antioch, poisoned him, and killed him in prison. This may not have been of great historical significance had Philip, though a Frank, not also been the king of the Kingdom of Armenia in medieval Cilicia, a territory perched on the northeastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. In fact, Philip had become king only three years prior by marrying Zabel (d. 1252), who was heir of the Rubēnid dynasty that had ruled since Cilicia had become a kingdom in 1198.¹ However, a powerful Armenian noble named Kostandin (d. 1263), who was also Zabel's regent, had other plans. After disposing of Philip, he promptly marched his army to Silifke Castle, captured Queen Zabel, and then married her off to his son Het'um I (d. 1270). Thus, in the year 1226, the Het'umid dynasty began their reign over Armenian Cilicia with an unsettling marriage that was also the primary legal source of their legitimacy (Kirakos Ganjake'ci 1961, 188-9; cf. Vardan Arewelc'i 1991, 141). Zabel was perhaps only eleven years old when she was wed for the second time; Het'um would have been around thirteen. The couple would not produce a child for another ten years (Tēr-Petrosyan 2005-07, 2: 257).

Smbat Sparapet (d. 1276), military commander and older brother to King Het'um, barely mentions this episode in the chronicle attributed to him (1956, 225).² He chooses instead to portray the event as the somewhat natural restoration of Cilician power to Armenian

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1 Zabel is another form of the name Elizabeth, as is the name Isabella, and was spelled many ways in the premodern period, including as Zapel, Zapêl, Zabêl, and, in Vardan Arewelc'i's historical compilation, even as Zapol, reflecting the pronunciation of the "Franks" (1991, 141). In this article, I follow its traditional spelling, which also reflects its probable Cilician pronunciation in transliteration. Cf. also Ačaryan 1944, 2: 159-62.

2 On the attribution of the *Chronicle's* variants to Smbat, cf. especially La Porta 2020.

stewardship, additionally blaming the flight of Zabel, a child and a widow, to Silifke Castle on a “diabolic fury” within her (226).³ Still, it could hardly have escaped Het’um that his claim to legitimacy in Cilicia was on a different footing than it had been for the Rubēnids, whose rule was legitimized in part by a crown they received directly from the Holy Roman Empire. Het’um, on the other hand, drew legitimacy from his marriage to Queen Zabel.⁴ It therefore should not come as a surprise that Het’um sought to bolster his own rule, both implicitly and explicitly, even in ways that previous kings in Cilicia had not. Most famously, he disguised himself as a commoner, snuck out of his kingdom, and made the long journey eastward to Qaraqorum to forge a new alliance with the Mongols, subtly rebalancing political power in Anatolia in the process.⁵

In counterpoint, this article sheds needed light on a less dramatic cultivation of authority and royal identity pursued by Het’um and his successors; one which arguably long outlasted his alliance with the Ilkhanate, yet also one that has received relatively little scholarly attention aside from its treatment by a handful of linguists and historians in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As opposed to the sweeping historical drama of Het’um’s clandestine journey to Qaraqorum, this strategy was far more understated: for the most part, it revolved around the study, commission, composition, translation, and discussion of ‘vernacular’ or Middle Armenian texts at court. These activities were generally not seen by the people whom the nobility ruled, but rather were undertaken for the court’s own benefit and to showcase royal erudition to other Armenian nobles and visitors. Still, taken in sum, these acts played a role in marrying the medieval Armenian vernacular to elite audiences in Sis, and especially to Het’um’s cultivation of his image as ‘educated king’. This *topos* was commonplace at medieval courts around the Mediterranean world, found in sovereigns such as the learned Byzantine ruler Theodore II Laskaris (d. 1258); the polyglot king of Sicily and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (d. 1250); and Alfonso X of Castile (d. 1284), who promoted use of vernacular Castilian in knowledge production at court.

In the Armenian iteration of this *topos*, reports of Het’um’s erudition likewise circulated far beyond the court. In the words of

3 Դիւական արկուքին. Despite the lack of discomfort over this union in the Armenian chronicles, its profound ambivalence was well represented by the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century painter Vardges Surenyanc’ (d. 1921), whose 1909 painting Չարել թագուհու վերադարձը (The Return of Queen Zabel) depicts the despondent queen, surrounded by the trappings of court, searingly resigned to her fate.

4 Bohemond VI of Antioch, in a letter from 1237 to the pope, thus challenged the legality and legitimacy of Het’um’s rule on the grounds of a “third degree of kinship” between the king and Zabel. Cf. the quoted passage and discussion in Neagu 2021, 217.

5 For an English translation of this account, cf. Boyle 1964.

the thirteenth-century clergyman and historian Kirakos Ganjakec'i, who hailed from the eastern region of Greater Armenia, Het'um was known as an "amiable man and wise and erudite in scripture [and/or books]".⁶ Similar depictions also grace less prestigious historiographic genres. Thus, in the colophon to a hippiatry, the scribe reports that Het'um commissioned three translations while abroad in 1258, when he joined the Mongol conquest of Baghdad. During this campaign, the scribe tells us, Het'um encountered a deacon at the caliph's court named Step'anos, a man educated in many scripts and languages who "became beloved to the King of Armenians on account of [his] robust knowledge".⁷ The king took advantage of this meeting, and asked the scholar to translate a treatise on the care of horses, another on the art of fashioning sabres, and yet another on the study of the sun and moon, all from Persian originals.⁸

Het'um's family also commissioned, composed, and read works in 'vulgar' Armenian at home in Sis, the capital of the Kingdom of Armenia in Cilicia. Not only did such acts buttress Het'um's authority as cultivated and educated king, but, as I will argue, they helped to further the correlation of 'vernacular' Armenian with statecraft, science, and learning more broadly. Just as importantly, the production of texts in this language helped to bring different elite actors together at court and in the church, whose Holy See was located some two hundred kilometres east of Sis (near Kozan in modern day Turkey) across a mountainous terrain, into a shared project of knowledge production that benefited these figures in different ways. Its usage moreover helped to provide opportunities for different forms of social and kinship bonding at court, including between the king and his wife, mediated by the teachings or actual presence of clergy from the Armenian Apostolic church.

⁶ Այր բարցր էր և իմաստուն և զիտնաւոր զրովք (Kirakos Ganjakec'i 1961, 370).

⁷ Սիրեցեալ եղև ի Յայոց թագաւորէն վասն հզօր զիտութեանն (Mat'evosyan 1984, 299).

⁸ More generally, foreigners also remarked positively on the kings of Cilicia; Het'um was king when Niccolò and Maffeo (Matteo) Polo travelled through the major Cilician port of Ayas on their return journey from China; in 1271, just shortly after Het'um's death and the beginning of the reign of his son, Marco Polo likewise travelled with his father and uncle through the port of Ayas, asserting that the king of Lesser Armenia (Cilicia) ruled his territory well and "with justice" (*en justice*) (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, fr. 1116). The rest of the Armenian nobles did not much impress a young Marco Polo, he says, as they were good for nothing but heavy drinking. Somewhat analogously, the chronicler Michael the Syrian, whose work was translated from Syriac into Armenian by the theologian Vardan Arewelc'i (d. 1271) with the help of a Syrian named Iṣōx (fl. thirteenth century), praises Het'um as զեղեցիկ հասակաւ և բարի խորհրդով, մեծահոգի և երկայնամիտ, հեզ և հանդարտ ('comely in stature and right in thought, magnanimous and patient, tranquil and calm'; Michael the Syrian 1871, 506), the very image of a wise ruler fit for the throne. Similarly, in his own history, Vardan lauds the young Het'um as 'wise' and 'right-minded' (հանճարեղ) (1991, 141).

Of course, as we shall see, the development of Middle Armenian had begun before Het'um's rise to power; it also continued in an intensified form after his death. Hence, while one should not claim a special causality between Het'um and the accelerated development of Cilician Middle Armenian as a written language, it is possible to observe a turning point in the history of the Armenian vernacular that overlaps roughly with his rule. In the history of a language, call this period the hastening of the tempo of life. It was a time when Middle Armenian writing began to flourish in a widespread manner in Cilicia, and moreover it was a time when Middle Armenian, for complex reasons, provisionally became an object of study in more than one manner. The Het'umids played a role in this process as it unfolded specifically in Cilicia, at their court in Sis, though far from the only role. Still, the ways in which the king and his circle used the Armenian vernacular at this pivotal moment provide us with a useful window into this broader linguistic realignment of power, culture, and knowledge production among Armenians in the Mediterranean.

This article consequently seeks to balance a macro-history of the medieval Armenian vernacular during this period against the micro-history of textual production for Het'um's court. It is divided into three parts, each of which advances an interlocking argument about the complex life of Cilician Middle Armenian in relation to courtly study. My overall contention is that what made Cilician Middle Armenian a language of the elite was not only that the nobility spoke a form of dialectal Armenian by situation of birth, or necessarily because they employed this language in the administration of their kingdom for pragmatic reasons. Rather, it was because these Cilician nobles and clergy often made an effort to use the language as a written vehicle for knowledge production in ways that sometimes supplemented, and sometimes supplanted, the other available languages at the court and in the church. Plainly said, they used Middle Armenian often as a conscious choice in their writing (and reading) during this period because of what it could do for them. Within this context, the early Cilician Middle Armenian textual corpus demonstrates that vernacular had become a medium through which the nobility, in partnership with the church, could fashion expressions of their own authority and royal erudition in an abundance of ways.

In the first part of this article, I offer an expansive look at Middle Armenian before and after Het'um was crowned, charting the development of the Cilician vernacular against the backdrop of other classical and vernacular languages that circulated in the medieval Mediterranean world, with a selective comparative focus on Vulgar Latin, Outremer French, and Byzantine Greek. Although many specialists have fruitfully explored the grammatical and lexical formation of the medieval Armenian vernacular more broadly, this section seeks to break different ground by focusing on the relatively neglected social

and epistemic functions of the vernacular Armenian language, especially as they are presented in the linguistic behaviours of elite figures at the Cilician court in Sis and at the seat of the Armenian church in Hromklay. Hence, although Middle Armenian is generally termed the 'official language'⁹ or the 'state language'¹⁰ of Cilicia in secondary literature, the first section of this article seeks to distinguish the vernacular's social and epistemic history at court beyond the chancellery, shedding light on what it meant for the nobility to employ the vulgar tongue in writing among themselves. By tracing the gradually changing attitudes and social practices that coalesced around Cilician Middle Armenian at court, I show that the Armenian vernacular made certain forms of knowledge and power available to a wide array of actors, even while it was appreciated for its perceived familiar and 'mellifluous' qualities.

Upon this stage, I center two unpublished and relatively neglected manuscripts composed in Middle Armenian, in part to demonstrate what these broader linguistic transformations looked like on the ground. Each manuscript is connected to King Het'um in different ways. The first is the *Žhank'* (Middle Armenian for 'Pleasant Labour', with additional connotations of conversation and dialogue; Ališan 1885, III; Ant'abyan 1987, 1: 156-7; Łazaryan, Avetisyan 2009, 258), an encyclopedic compendium that focuses on the interpretation of scripture, with entries that touch adjacently on theology, grammar, animals, astronomy, music, the natural world, and many other subjects; among other things, it also includes a primer for the study of other Armenian manuscripts.¹¹ King Het'um commissioned this monumental work from the renowned theologian Vardan Arewelc'i (Vardan 'the Easterner', meaning Vardan from Greater Armenia) for his own personal study; Vardan completed it in 'vulgar' Armenian by 1246.¹² As I argue, the *Žhank'* did many things for King Het'um, helping him to cultivate his image as 'educated king' at court, in addition

9 Պաշտոնական լեզու. (Ačařyan 1951, 235).

10 Պետական լեզու. (Łazaryan 1954, 331-6).

11 The Middle Armenian word *žhank'* would seem to be derived from the Middle Armenian word *žull* (today *žul* in colloquial Eastern Armenian), meaning 'speech', 'dialogue', or 'conversation' according to the compilers of the *Middle Armenian Dictionary* (Łazaryan, Avetisyan 2009, 259); in modern colloquial Armenian *žul* denotes an amusing pastime, diversion, or pleasant occupation, and in this sense has a secondary meaning of 'conversation' (Malxaseanc' 1944, 2: 144). Both *žull* and *žul* are derived from the Arabic word *shughl*, meaning "occupancy, filling, taking up; detention, prevention, distraction"; in the plural (*ashghāl*) meaning "occupation, activity, work, job; business, concern" (Wehr 1979, 556). Usages of *shughl* can connote both physical labour as well as the occupation or preoccupation of the mind.

12 For the most detailed assessment of the *Žhank'*, its contents, and its many recensions, cf. Ant'abyan 1967; 1987, 2: 110-26. E. Prud'homme has also translated various excerpts from the *Žhank'* in French (Vardan Arewelc'i 1871).

to providing a medium to bring him and his wife together, at times under the supervision of a priest, in the intimate study of many subjects. Similarly, it established a model, based on the pedagogy of a monastic education, that was intended to serve the king's children in developing their own *bona fides* as educated rulers, in the mold of their father, in the future. Finally and most subtly, it served as implicit proof-of-concept that Middle Armenian could house within itself the knowledge of the world, and therefore become a suitable medium to impart a royal education. Works like the *Žhank'* helped to prompt an era of 'vulgar' learning among the nobility more broadly at this time, rooted in a vernacular pedagogy that drew on the teachings of the church, and further correlated Middle Armenian usage with elite study in medieval Cilicia.

The second manuscript I briefly examine here is among the oldest grammars to be composed in Middle Armenian, straddling a world both in and out of court. It is a loose translation of a Classical Armenian grammar that King Het'um also commissioned, again from Vardan Arewelc'i, who came west to reside in Cilicia around 1242. Vardan's grammar continues a long tradition in Classical Armenian of commenting on the *Tékhne grammatikē* (Art of Grammar) by the foundational Greek grammarian Dionysius Thrax (d. 90 BCE). In this sense, Vardan's *Meknut'iw n k'erakani* (Commentary on Grammar) is not a language textbook as one might expect of modern grammars, but rather contains something like a theory of language, or a different kind of proof-of-concept: a demonstration that the Classical Armenian language was capable of auto-theorization, and that the student of Armenian was capable of taking on any subject that language can express.¹³ Quite clearly, this grammar was a part of Het'um's correlation of his own power with erudition and study.

It is therefore significant that the *Commentary on Grammar* was adapted into Middle Armenian, though for unknown purposes. The oldest extant copy of this work preserves a colophon dated 29 June 1335, but it may also have been translated prior to this year. As this third section shows, the unpublished Middle Armenian grammar likewise demonstrates Middle Armenian was capable of theorizing language, and therefore was capable of serving as the gateway to "wisdom" and "knowledge" (M2283, 4r) as it states, through a diglossic relationship with the Classical language. Crucially, such works indicate that the clergy experimented with the Armenian vernacular as an intermediary link that might aid in the study of Classical Armenian, suggesting that the vernacular might provide a cornerstone in the study of grammar, the first of the arts in the medieval *trivium*

¹³ The title of this work is also sometimes translated as *Commentary on the Grammarian*.

and hence the basis of a Christian education. This relatively neglected Middle Armenian adaptation of Vardan Arewelc'i's *Commentary* matters, then, precisely because it marks a moment when the Armenian vernacular gradually became an object of study in its own right, and moreover, an object to be contemplated by elite figures who were perhaps beyond the court.

In sum, these dual metamorphoses – Middle Armenian's capability of totalizing seemingly all knowledge, on the one hand, and its partial transformation into an object of study, on the other – occurred against the backdrop of the broader Mediterranean world, and more locally against a shared multilingualism with the Crusader states. Hence, the production of such works during this period reflects another step in the evolution of Middle Armenian into a primary language by which knowledge was produced for the multilingual court, rivaling even other vernaculars in their presence in medieval Cilicia. However, at least in these examples, Middle Armenian does not seem to have especially rivaled its Classical sibling during this early stage at court. As Łazaryan has observed, the vernacular emerged out of a delicate partnership with the Classical Armenian language, drawing heavily on Classical grammar and syntax, even as it began to weave new grammatical forms, a new lexicon, and a new pronunciation of Classical words into its warp and weft, setting off a process of gradually increasing differentiation (1954, 331-2). In some sense, one might thus consider Cilician Middle Armenian to have developed out of an ongoing dialogue between the spoken Armenian dialects from Greater Armenia that had migrated to the Mediterranean coast, on the one hand, and the other languages of the Mediterranean world, including now also Classical Armenian, that grounded these dialects in preestablished styles and genres of writing, on the other.

At the same time, Cilician Middle Armenian also developed as a written language out of a series of conversations between the court in Sis, the Armenian church, and other actors with varying degrees of closeness between the two, including from Greater Armenia. These relationships were both of an intimate nature and incredibly generative for Middle Armenian as a language of science and statecraft. The cultivation of Middle Armenian as a courtly language of study may thus be seen as part of a broader project, explored in recent years by scholars such as Abkarian, Grigoryan Savary, Rapti, and Vardanyan, in which the Het'umid court sought to bolster Armenian authority over their corner of the northeastern Mediterranean in many ways.¹⁴ Of course, in retrospect, this larger project would be

¹⁴ There has been a renewed interest of late regarding the Armenian nobility's articulation of their authority in Sis, particularly in art history (Grigoryan Savary 2022; Rapti 2022; Vardanyan 2022), and also in the study of how these figures constructed

short-lived; the Cilician state fell to the Mamluks in 1375, ending the last Armenian kingdom. Yet this outcome was hardly inevitable in the early thirteenth century. After all, this was a world in which one could murder the king of Armenia, who was the son of the ruler of Antioch, an ally and a Christian neighbor, and in many respects get away with it. It is all the more remarkable, then, that one aspect of the Het'umid project of consolidating authority among the other elites in Sis in fact succeeded wildly, long outlasting Het'um's alliance with the Ilkhanate and even Armenian statehood in Cilicia altogether. This was the selective transformation of dialects from Greater Armenia, rarely preserved in extant writing before their migration to the Mediterranean coast, into a chosen courtly language of the last Armenian kings and an enduring medium of knowledge production.

2 **The Written Cultivation of Cilician Middle Armenian Among Court and Church**

Before turning to the intellectual partnership between King Het'um and Vardan Arewelc'i, it is illustrative to sketch a broader arc for the development of Middle Armenian during the Cilician period here. Middle Armenian is often termed a 'vernacular' language, and the language that medieval Armenians actually spoke (when they spoke Armenian), but these descriptions generally conceal as much as they reveal. Notably, Middle Armenian does not entirely conform to Pollock's classic formulation of a vernacular language as one that looks to a separate and classical antecedent (such the relationship of Kannada to Sanskrit), from which it derives its literary and rhetorical models. Thus, for Pollock, the choice to write in the vernacular is a choice to write in a language that does not travel in the same way as the cosmopolitan or classical language (1998a, 8; 1998b; 2006). In contrast, Middle Armenian does not fit this mold quite so well (Pifer 2023, 317-18). For one, the relationship between Middle and Classical Armenian is closer to the relationship between Byzantine and Classical Greek than it is to the relationship between Old French and Latin. Though Middle Armenian and Classical Armenian have their own

their genealogies across disparate historical and literary sources, as in the work of Abkarian (unpublished), whose treatment of the Cilician representations of authority in the Mediterranean world is the subject of a forthcoming dissertation. My interest here is not on authority per se, but rather in how the nobility, in partnership with the church, specifically used the vernacular to further specific aims at court even beyond the chancellery, both socially among themselves and also in concert with the leaders and major intellectuals of the Armenian Church. For historical background on Armenian Cilicia more generally, cf. also the rich studies by Der Nersessian 1962 and Mutafian 1988; 1993; 2012.

distinctive grammatical and lexical forms, they exist along a linguistic continuum rather than as entirely independent and separate languages, and different points on this spectrum interface with neighbouring literary and linguistic forms in divergent ways.¹⁵ Of course, the same is true to a degree of the modern Eastern and Western Armenian ‘vernaculars’, which likewise take a sizable amount of their lexicons and grammatical forms from Classical, Middle, Early Modern (Civil), and dialectical Armenian(s). It is perhaps more accurate to envision the Armenian language as a large and unruly family with many siblings, cousins, and parents who each vied for prominence in different ways, and as the result of different language ideologies, than as incommensurate tongues. Put differently, the Armenian language is one that houses vernaculars in the *plural*, even as it sometimes unsettles contemporary models for what those ‘vernaculars’ might do in relation to each other or to their classical language.

That said, even at the early period under consideration in this article, Cilician Armenian authors were often sharply aware that they were not writing in a classicizing mode. In the words of Mxit’ar Herac’i (d. c. 1200), the celebrated Armenian physician who composed an early Middle Armenian book called *Ĵermanc’ mxit’arut’iwn* (The Consolation of Fevers) in late twelfth-century Cilicia, he made his book in a “rustic [*gel’juk*] and unrestricted tongue” that would be easy for his readership to understand (1832, viii).¹⁶ Implicit in his words is the assumption that Classical Armenian (known as *grabar*, or the written language) was apparently not accessible for Mxit’ar’s desired audiences. Tellingly, glimpses of this same rhetoric also reflect moments of vernacularization elsewhere in the medieval Mediterranean. For instance, Roman Catholic officials at the third Council of Tours in 813 instructed clergy to no longer deliver sermons only in Latin, which was apparently difficult for some audiences to comprehend, but rather to preach in the *rusticam Romanam linguam*, or the ‘rustic’ romance language, meaning Vulgar Latin,

15 I have borrowed the notion of a ‘linguistic continuum’ from Mavroudi (2022, 265), who uses it to distinguish the cases of different medieval registers of Greek and Arabic from their classical languages, as opposed to the European model of the classical and vernacular languages, which are separate from each other.

16 Գեղջուկ և անօրինակ բարբառով. Here I employ Cowe’s insightful translation of անօրինակ as ‘unrestricted’ instead of ‘prose’ as it is sometimes understood, which he reads as the language being freed from the “various rules set out in textbooks and taught in schools” on Classical Armenian (2020b, 109). It is also worth observing that Mxit’ar’s other epithet, *gel’juk* or ‘rustic’, predates him by several centuries. For instance, the historian Yovhannēs Draxanakertc’i, who was Catholicos of the Armenian Church from 897-925, reports that Šapuh Bagratuni wrote a history in the ninth century in a *gel’juk* register, though this work is now lost to us. So too did the ninth-century grammarian Hamam Arewelc’i term a form of Armenian as *grehik* or ‘vulgar’. Cf. the discussion by Ačaryan 1951, 229-31.

which encompassed what might be termed the 'proto-Romance dialects' or the 'Latin of the illiterate' (Werminghoff 1906, 288, l. 28; Gravel 2021, 561-2). But what did using the 'rustic' language really mean for these diverse figures, straddling opposite shores of the Mediterranean world?

In some ways, it may have meant something relatively similar. Akn to Latin, which predated the development of the 'proto-Romance dialects' for many centuries, Classical Armenian (*grabar*) gained admission to writing in the fifth century CE, following the invention of the Armenian script. By the thirteenth century, Classical Armenian was an archaic language, and moreover one that required diligent study to read and to write in any capacity – it was therefore not spoken by the nobility or the Armenian populace at large. Instead, when these figures spoke Armenian, they spoke dialectal forms of the language that had developed over many centuries and were used across broad swaths of Armenian society in Cilicia, as is suggested by the manuscript record and which I will discuss shortly.¹⁷ This language is known today under the rubric of 'Cilician' Middle Armenian, even while other varieties of the premodern Armenian vernacular developed in writing in a decentralized manner both simultaneously and over the following centuries.

At least in its written forms, early Cilician Middle Armenian drew a great deal of its lexicon and grammar from Classical Armenian, while it also introduced new vocabulary and simplified or subtly altered many of those grammatical forms. Perhaps most famously, Cilician Middle Armenian interfaced with the major cosmopolitan and vernacular languages of the Mediterranean world in its adoption of new loanwords, which sprung from the floodgates of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Outremer French, Greek, and Latin.¹⁸ The textual corpus of

¹⁷ In fact, many premodern dialectal strands of Armenian developed centuries before the configuration of Cilician Middle Armenian as a written language, sometimes seemingly as early as the fifth and sixth centuries; not all of these were necessarily antecedents to the Cilician vernacular, however (Winter 1966; Weitenberg 1983).

¹⁸ On the development and forms of 'Middle' Armenian, cf. the foundational studies by Hovnanian (1897) and by Karst (1901), as well as the discussion in the overview of grammar in the modern vernacular by Aytənean (1866). Aytənean does not always take an appreciative view of the premodern vernacular variants and forerunners of modern Armenian, calling their use of foreign loanwords and lack of uniformity a kind of "ugliness" (սղգղնութիւն) (142), even while scaffolding aspects of Middle Armenian history into his construction of a modern vernacular ideology. On Middle Armenian's grammatical and historical development, cf. also *Aknarkner mijin grakan hayereni patmut'yan* (Alayan, Jahukyan 1972-75), and the studies by Jahukyan (1969), Łazaryan (1960), and Avetisyan (2016). Avetisyan does not consider 'Middle' Armenian, in his usage, to be a literary language on account of its internal heterogeneity and non-standardized character; instead, he chooses to bifurcate 'literary' Armenian into two more general and overarching periods, that of Classical and that of the 'vernacular', which underwent standardization in the modern era; Middle Armenian, in this light, served as a kind of

Middle Armenian reflects the cross-cultural and multilingual environments in which it emerged, remaining internally diverse throughout its long life. Even in Armenian-ruled Cilicia, which represents the most centralized phase in the configuration of the medieval Armenian vernacular, a wide and heterogeneous array of Middle Armenian forms appear. Mxit'ar Herac'i, for example, had migrated to Cilicia from Khoy, today in northwestern Iran, and he likely brought a different dialectal strand of the Armenian vernacular with him. Hence, he pluralizes some nouns in a different manner than do the vernacular writers in Cilicia who immediately follow him (Ačaryan 1951, 253).

This does not necessarily mean, of course, that the variety of medieval dialects and literary registers housed under the rubric of 'Middle' Armenian were restricted to the speech of non-elite Armenian actors. No one would argue that Mxit'ar's decision to write in his 'rustic' tongue was for the benefit of 'peasants' or 'villagers', which is another meaning of *geḥjuk* (Bedrossian 1875, 115).¹⁹ His was a medical treatise which served in the training of other physicians, both in and beyond Cilicia itself. The foundational nineteenth- and early twentieth-century studies on Middle Armenian were well aware of its relationship to royal power and knowledge production during the Cilician period; it is no coincidence that Cilician Armenian is by far the most studied form of the Middle Armenian vernacular, in part for this reason. Still, it is somewhat common to encounter the assertion that the Armenian vernacular was spoken by the 'people', while Classical Armenian remained a language of the church and the elite,²⁰ with-

holding place for the 'literary' Armenian vernaculars that exist today. However, it is worth observing, at least in passing, that many premodern vernacular languages likewise displayed a wide degree of variation and non-standardization even in literary texts. In my opinion, it is more productive to consider how and to what degree a premodern language interfaces with particular styles, aesthetics, and genres, and moreover how and to what degree it does so in particular times and places, than it is to try and categorize what is explicitly 'literary' or not 'literary' about its products according to modern benchmarks. For broad investigations into the development of the Armenian language, including its 'Middle' period, cf. also Ačaryan (1951, 226-54) and Nichanian (1989). Finally, for an introduction to the evolution and development of the premodern Armenian dialects, which began long before Middle Armenian was introduced to writing in Cilicia and also continued long after, cf. the detailed linguistic studies by Pisowicz (1995), Weitenberg (1983; 1984; 1996; 1999-2000; 2002), and Winter 1966. On Middle Armenian textual study and readership in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, cf. Budak, Pifer 2024 and Pifer 2023.

19 Likewise, as Ačaryan observes, although Mxit'ar Goš (d. c. 1200) wrote his law code in a simple Classical Armenian register, he did so for the benefit of other specialists and officials in the Cilician legal system, and not for the public at large (1951, 232).

20 For example, as the editors of the three volume *Heritage of Armenian Literature* observe in passing, "Part of the movement toward secularization, especially from the twelfth century on, was the emergence of a new literary idiom: Middle Armenian, a diction that could be comprehended by the masses. *Grabar* (Classical Armenian) continued to exist alongside the various spoken dialects, however, and gradually became

out always a great deal of effort to place these two very broad poles along a more graded spectrum.²¹

Here, too, comparison within a broader Mediterranean framework is instructive. Take, again for example, the famous (and often misunderstood) injunction at the third Council of Tours: the command to preach in the *rusticam Romanam linguam* was not directed toward the general Christian populace, but rather seems to have been intended as an instruction for use in the training of *clergy*, as Gravel (2021) has argued. This 'rustic' tongue was, in this context, also a language of priests, albeit those who seem to have had difficulty receiving a complete education in Latin grammar, and yet those who still possessed some education in relation to a generally illiterate and unlettered populace.²² In the case of Middle Armenian, it is certainly true that many poems were composed in part for relatively uneducated (by monastic standards) audiences in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, both in Cilicia and in Greater Armenia; these poems were often composed by Armenian clergy, in part to inculcate knowledge of Christianity among their scattered flocks. However, beyond the form of poetry, there is another strand of Middle Armenian's history that deserves to be teased out here: namely, its connections to knowledge

the language of the church, just as in western Europe Latin was gradually confined to the church and related areas of scholarship" (Hacikyan et al. 2002, 201). It is important to acknowledge the validity of this observation, even while one might speculate where we should place the interpretive communities of groups such as the nobility, physicians, scribes in the chancellery or at the customs-house in Ayas, and certain vernacular poets from the period, such as Kostandin Erzncac'ı and Frik, each with different commands of the language and each with slightly differing audiences, in-between these very broad poles of the clerics and the 'people'. The same can be said of different uses and registers of language within the Armenian Church itself.

21 Of course, this over-identification of the 'vernacular' with 'the people' also has an old genealogy. As Mavroudi has aptly observed, "The romantic conceptualization of the 'vernacular' as the 'language of the people' owes much to Herder's eighteenth-century identification of language as the fundamental characteristic of a nation and its deployment in nineteenth-century German cultural and political life - in part, a reaction to French cultural dominance in the German lands and elsewhere in Europe during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries"; therefore, she notes, the identification of a 'vernacular' simply with the 'people' is also anachronistic in the premodern world (2022, 264). In this case study, the corpus of Middle Armenian - even in its early period in the thirteenth century - is simply too diverse, and to an extent too decentralized, to ascribe a single kind of audience or function to, and one should be skeptical of any attempt to do just that. For instance, during this century, Middle Armenian was used at times by theologian-poets in Greater Armenia such as Yovhannēs Erzncac'ı who explicitly state that their (sometimes) lay audiences could not read scripture and therefore they composed poetry (1958, 208); it was also used at the court in Sis by nobility who actively studied Classical Armenian, although did not seem as comfortable in the Classical language as they did in the Middle register, as this article will show.

22 Similarly, as Agapitos observes of Byzantine Greek, "there can be no question of class distinction in the use of the learned and the vernacular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, given that both idioms belonged to the educated elite" (2022, 264).

production and to royal power, even before the establishment of the Kingdom of Armenia in Cilicia, and even apart from the chancellery at court.²³ Middle Armenian was likewise a language developed in its written forms first and foremost by elite Armenian figures, including by the heads of church and court. In this context, the various branches of Middle Armenian were 'rustic' primarily in relation to the archaic, learned language of Classical Armenian; this epithet is thus not necessarily reflection upon those who used the vernacular, as this was a capacious group that included kings and queens.

In fact, elite usage of the Armenian vernacular dates to its earliest appearances in the manuscript record. For example, one of the oldest extant Armenian language manuscripts, an Armenian-Latin glossary produced in late ninth- or early tenth-century France, features many dialectal forms and may have been dictated by an Armenian physician to a Frankish monk (Weitenberg 1983; Redgate 2007). This work is known as the Autun Glossary; it is contained within a Carolingian manuscript that includes a copy of the letters of Jerome (d. 420). Slightly later in time, but further to the east in Greater Armenia, a physician near Diyarbakır named Busayid wrote the oldest known Middle Armenian prose text that is still extant today: a prescription for the treatment of the liver, which he recorded in 1037.²⁴ Tellingly, Busayid's patient Grigor was the son of Vahram Pahlawuni (d. 1045), who bore the hereditary title of the *sparapet* (military commander-in-chief) of the Bagratuni kingdom. As these early examples suggest, Middle Armenian has long been a language of knowledge production, and in particular of medical knowledge, even as it was also correlated with elite figures, including physicians (who may or may not have been Armenian) and the Armenian nobility.²⁵

Remarkably, this relationship only deepened after the collapse of Bagratuni rule in the mid-eleventh century. It was during this period when migrating waves of Armenian nobles began to settle in Cilicia, bringing with them many dialectal forms of medieval Armenian, which took on new lives in exile from their native lands and in partnership with Classical Armenian (Łazaryan 1954, 332). While the admission of Middle Armenian to writing seems to have happened first in Greater Armenia, it is in Cilicia where its literarization, or the

23 The connection of Middle Armenian to Cilician statecraft has been observed at least since the foundational study on the documents of the chancellery by Langlois 1863.

24 For the text, cf. Ačařyan 1951, 233-4. Cf. also the discussion in Hovnanian 1897, 414-20.

25 Łazaryan considers the development of Middle Armenian to have taken place during Bagratuni rule (and hence to have developed already before its period of flourishing in Cilicia), beginning in the tenth century, and contextualizes its early development against other social and economic shifts during this period (1960, 67-114).

cultivation of language within a literary context, appears to have begun.²⁶ One of the earliest known authors of this new literature is another elite figure of Pahlawuni descent: Nersēs Šnorhali (d. 1173), the Armenian Catholicos, who rewrote the Bible as a series of versified Middle Armenian riddles in Hromklay, the new see of the Church.²⁷ He did so, according to one thirteenth-century Armenian historian, so that Armenians might recite these scriptural enigmas at wine-bibings and weddings in the place of more worldly forms of entertainment (Kirakos Ganjakec'i 1961, 147). Somewhat like the command to preach in the *rusticam Romanam linguam*, these riddles remained popular in monastic settings, where they were largely copied numerous times throughout the medieval period, even while they reportedly had currency in other social contexts. Right from the start, the church's use of the vernacular was invested in a particular pedagogical program, in other words, and that pedagogy seemingly had currency beyond the walls of the monastery.

Nersēs seems to be at the vanguard of a trend. As noted earlier, one decade after Nersēs's death, the erudite Cilician physician Mxit'ar Herac'i composed his famous medical treatise in Middle Armenian so that his work might be "easily understood" (դիւրաւաս լիցի) by readers (1832, viii). Mxit'ar's choice of linguistic register was likely not coincidental: he worked in both Sis, the capital of Armenian Cilicia, and also at the see in Hromklay; moreover, he received patronage from Nersēs and Grigor Tlay, the next head of the Armenian Church, and was associated especially with Nersēs. Though the exact audiences of both figures remain somewhat shrouded by time, Nersēs and Mxit'ar were part of overlapping circles - ordained clergymen and lay Cilician physicians - who incrementally tilted modes of knowledge production toward this new 'rustic' idiom, which now assumed a role in shaping the interpretation of holy scripture (in the poetic riddles of Nersēs) and in collating medical science culled from Greek, Arabic, Syriac, and Persian (in the prose work of Mxit'ar). These were no small tasks.

By the turn of the thirteenth century, there was a quantitative and qualitative shift in Middle Armenian textual production that was driven by another elite coterie, tipping the language's gravitational center toward the royal court in Sis. This new phase of the language's history coincided roughly with the takeover of Cilician Armenia by the Het'umid dynasty in 1226, when the regent of Queen

26 For the terms and definitions of literization (the admission of a language to writing) and literarization (the admission of language to a literary standard), cf. Pollock 1998b; 2006.

27 For the text of the riddles attributed to Nersēs, and for information on their reproduction in manuscripts, cf. Mnac'akanyan 1980, 40-191.

Zabel conspired to wed her to his son Het'um I. Somewhat akin to the vernacular riddles of Nersēs, which contain within themselves the sweeping range of biblical texts, this phase in the Armenian vernacular's development had its own encyclopedic bent, serving as performative proof-of-concept that the vernacular was capable of housing within it all the knowledge of the world (and, simultaneously, that the king enjoyed command over this diverse material). For instance, it was around this period when an anonymous translator rendered into Middle Armenian the Arabic version of the *Geoponica*, a treasure trove of information on weather, agriculture, and animal husbandry, originally compiled in Greek for Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos in the tenth century (Ališan 1877; Greppin 1987). As I will examine shortly, it was likewise during this period when King Het'um commissioned Vardan Arewelc'i to compose the encyclopedic *Žhank'* for his own study, a work that shares affinities with other 'encyclopedic' projects in Outremer French.

Such activity may not have been limited to Armenians alone. Syrian physicians in Cilicia, such as Išōx and Faraĵ, likewise composed books that appeared in Middle Armenian during the mid to late thirteenth century; their works collectively touch on anatomy, the natural world, cosmology, and horses (Vardanyan 2008, 276; cf. Cowe 2010).²⁸ The court in Sis sometimes played a role in the production of such works. King Smbat (r. 1296-98) commissioned the hippiatry by Faraĵ, for instance (Cowe 2010, 101). The production of these works in Cilician Middle Armenian suggests a broader shift in the vernacular's efficacy, which was gradually becoming a regional language of knowledge production, buttressed by royal patronage and the activities of a variety of physicians and translators who benefited from that patronage. Moreover, the appearance of 'rustic' scientific and medical works in Cilicia is also suggestive of courtly activity in other ways. To give one prominent example, Queen Zabel established a hospital in 1241-2 (Ališan 1885, 554); it is not difficult to envision how these same 'rustic' texts would have been used at this institution, which depended on the patronage of the court. The nobility not only commissioned works in Middle Armenian directly, in other words, but just as crucially developed institutional spaces within which the vernacular could find purchase. They provided much of the language's needed infrastructure, albeit sometimes language cultivation would not seem to be their primary objective.

Parallel to this story, as Middle Armenian's status as a language of learning among the rulers of Armenian Cilicia continued to grow, so too did the court practice certain forms of institutionalized study.

28 On Syrian-Armenian intellectual and cultural exchange from this period, cf. also Tēr-Petrosian 1989.

Near the end of the thirteenth century, the Dominican traveller Burchard of Mount Sion spent ten weeks with King Lewon II (d. 1289), the son of Het'um.²⁹ He was particularly impressed by the piety of the king and his family, noting a specific form of study that the king and nobility exercised daily:

Reges et principes et omnes nobiles audiunt libentissime uerbum Dei. Vnde cotidie ad horam tertiam uerthapate siue monachi curiam regis uel principis adeunt alicuius ad quos statim accedunt principes ipsi uel domini cum filiis suis et potentibus de curia sua, et apponitur liber aliquis de sacra scriptura, et legitur coram eis in uulgari, quia linguam aliam nesciunt sed linguis et literis propriis utuntur, et exponitur eis textus a monachis illis, et ubicumque dubitant seculares et questiones mouent, a monachis instruuntur et questiones soluuntur secundum dicta sanctorum. Ego quesui ab ipso catholicos, quos doctores maxime sequerentur in scripture sacre expositione et dixit, quod inter precipuos sunt isti: Iohannes Chrysostomus, Gregorius Nazancenus, Cyrillus Alexandrinus quem Kyrillum uocant quia C litteram non habent, et Effrem.

The kings, the princes, and all the nobles hear the word of God most willingly. For this reason daily at the third hour the verthabite [vardapet] or monks visit the court of king or a prince; the princes themselves or the lords with their children and officials of their court come to them at once. Some book of sacred scripture is brought and read before them in the common tongue, because they know no other, but use their own languages and script. The text is expounded to them by the monks, and whenever the lay people have doubts and raise questions, they are taught by the monks and questions answered in accordance with the sayings of the saints. I enquired from the catholicus [Catholicos] himself which doctors of the church they followed in particular in expounding sacred scripture. He said that among the important ones were these: John Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzus, and Cyril of Alexandria, whom they call Kyril, because they have no letter C, and Ephraem. (Burchard of Mount Sion, O.P. 2019, 206-9)

Three details are especially worth unpacking here. First, clergy would come and read books about scripture to the nobility and their families “in the common tongue [*in uulgari*]”, or form of vulgar

²⁹ Lewon II is also called Lewon III in scholarship, due to the fact that there was a Rubēnid ruler named Lewon prior to the crowning of Lewon I (d. 1219) (when he became ‘the first’ as king, and no longer only ‘the second’ as prince), who was the first king of the Kingdom of Armenia in Cilicia.

Armenian, because their audience apparently did not know other languages. Perhaps the scriptural books at court were read aloud in Classical Armenian, following a discussion in a more colloquial and contemporary register of Armenian, as happens even today in Armenian churches around the world. It may also be that the clergy actually read aloud from a vernacular Armenian text, as Ant'abyan has suggested (1967, 157-8).³⁰ At the least, Burchard's observation marks a clear partnership between the nobility and the church, which facilitated learning and piety among the highest echelons of Cilician society. Second, and just as important, study at court was reportedly a social affair, bringing the nobility, their wives, their children, and even servitors and officials together. As it would seem, this study inculcated a kind of familial intimacy based on a shared commitment to learning at court - an intimacy which, of course, was also shaped by the priest or monk who was present. And finally, study in the 'common' tongue was a dialogic affair, as it apparently included not only a form of instruction, delivered by the priest, but also made room for different responses and questions from the nobles and their children. These aspects of Burchard's report are significant, as we will see in the following section, in part because many of these threads reappear in Vardan Arewelc'i's vernacular pedagogy of instruction of Het'um and his immediate family, which predated this account by a generation.³¹

Nonetheless, Burchard's latter claim about the monolingualism of the Armenian nobility, as if they were merely forced to use the vernacular out of lack of other options, was probably overstated. At least some of the nobility were well-versed in Outremer French, a

30 There is also reason to suggest that Dominicans in the region, who had been dispatched partly to proselytize to the Mongols but turned their attention to Armenian Christians, whom they converted instead, employed Middle Armenian in part because they could not acquire monastic training in the Classical language. Cf. the discussion by Cowe 2020b, 109-10. Cowe posits that Dominicans in Cilicia and Greater Armenia "did not have access to Armenian Apostolic monastic academies and therefore, when they wrote their own works, would do so in a form of Middle Armenian, so much so that in his letter to them from the 1320s Esayi Nč'ec'i goes out of his way to write in that idiom, though the remainder of his correspondence is penned in Classical Armenian, and it is against this backdrop that we should interpret Grigor Tat'ewac'i's remarks in his renowned *Girk' Harc'manc'* (Book of Questions) to the effect that it is written in the Classical form for *banibun* (i.e. highly educated) vardapets, perhaps disparaging the Dominicans' lack of control of that idiom". On Armeno-Latin intellectual exchange, cf. also Cowe 2013 and La Porta 2015.

31 Ant'abyan (1967, 157-8) quotes part of this passage in Armenian translation in his indispensable study of the *Žllank'*, largely to argue that the nobility may have also studied non-scriptural texts read by clergy, as some entries of the *Žllank'* would seem to suggest. Elsewhere, he also posits that Vardan's *Žllank'* may have been responsible for establishing this tradition (Ant'apyan 1987, 1: 157). My interest in this report lies more in the social component in the courtly act of study, and in particular the rather direct mediation of a priest in this process.

vernacular tied to statecraft on the eastern fringes of the Mediterranean world. The Armenian nobility seems to have considered these two vernaculars as somewhat related; so extensive was the exchange of vocabulary from Outremer French to Middle Armenian, that even today the word in the modern Eastern and Western Armenian dialects for ‘mister’ or ‘sir’ is the French *baron* (Aslanov 2021, 181). So too did the Cilician nobility translate texts from Outremer French into their native vernacular. Smbat Sparapet, the older brother of King Het‘um, thus translated the *Assises d’Antioche* (‘Statutes of Antioch’, or *Ansiz Antiok‘ay* in Armenian), a legal treatise from the Crusader state of Antioch, from Outremer French into Middle Armenian in 1253; this work survives today only in Middle Armenian, though many other legal codes in Old French have come down from this period.³² Remarkably, upon completion of this Middle Armenian translation, Smbat states that he sent his version back to the court in Antioch to be compared against the originals in Outremer French and verified as accurate (Smbat Sparapet 1876, 3). In other words, as he implies, it was not enough simply to render the text as comprehensible or accessible in Armenian. Rather, his Middle Armenian translation had to be technically exact in accordance with the Outremer French originals, and even acknowledged as such by his relatives and allies in Antioch, who likewise apparently knew both Middle Armenian and Outremer French. Smbat’s claim thus does some nimble argumentative work, buttressing both his skill as translator and Middle Armenian’s capacity to convey the same juridical discourses as Outremer French. The salient idea here is that justice demands exactitude, and Middle Armenian could now plausibly deliver both within the context of the Cilician courts, in a manner legible to other vernacular legal systems found in nearby states.

Crucially, as I contend, these vernacular texts activated and made available certain forms of power at court. Such works were clearly products of the court’s significant and deliberate investment in producing Middle Armenian codices in particular. Sargis Picak, one of the most renowned Armenian artists of his time, helps to bring these points into relief: in 1331, he skillfully illuminated the frontispiece of a copy of Smbat’s *Assises d’Antioche*. Sargis Picak depicts King Lewon IV (d. 1341) in a seated position, dispensing “correct judgment” to other men at court, who are positioned hierarchically below him.³³ A divine hand lingers above the king, in the left-hand corner of the image, from which King Lewon receives his authority, and, more important, which transforms

32 For a linguistic analysis of the Middle Armenian *Assises d’Antioche*, cf. Ouzounian 2014.

33 Middle Armenian: ՈՒՂԵՂ ԴԱՏԱՍԱՆ. For a detailed and comparative study of the depiction of Lewon IV, cf. Grigoryan 2023.

King Lewon into the conduit through which divine judgment is meted out on earth [fig. 1]. The implication, in this case, is that such judgment is also mediated through the ‘vulgar’ text of Smbat’s translation, which is also constitutive of the court’s adjudicating power. The image, like the translation from one ‘vulgar’ tongue to another, underscores a form of divinely-appointed Armenian authority claimed and exercised by the royalty through the production of vernacular texts.



Figure 1 The frontispiece of Smbat Sparapet's Middle Armenian translation of Assises d'Antioche. V107, 1v-2r. Mekhitarist Order, San Lazzaro, Venice. Courtesy of the Librarian Rev. Father Vahan Ohanian

In short, it is clear that texts in Middle Armenian held a significant relationship to their readers and commissioners at court, who were willing to patronize the illumination of even non-Biblical texts. This investment also helps to distinguish Middle Armenian texts from certain other vernaculars that likewise existed along a linguistic continuum with their classical languages, such as Byzantine Greek. For instance, Agapitos has observed that unlike “some Western medieval vernacular works, no single Byzantine vernacular text survives in a luxury book with illustrations, though we have a few remnants of rather crude ink drawings in some manuscripts” (2022, 226). The Armenian court in Sis seems to have felt differently about their own vernacular, perhaps in part because their exposure to rival vernaculars came not only from

the Byzantine Empire, but more immediately from the Crusader states and Outremer French, as well as from other cultural contexts. Moreover, this exposure to 'vernacularity' included both proper vernaculars that were separate from their classical languages and languages that existed along a continuum with their classical counterparts.³⁴

The Armenian nobility's use of Outremer French even extended to at least one notable composition. In 1307, Het'um the Historian (d. c. 1310-20), the nephew of Het'um I and Smbat, composed his widely popular history *La Flor des estoires de la terre d'Orient*, concerning the Mongol invasions, in Outremer French at the request of Pope Clement V. This work was richly illuminated and even translated into Latin, then back again into French, with additional translations in Spanish later in the century and in English in 1521 (Jackson 2016).³⁵ Its frontispiece was illuminated with an image of Het'um, who had joined the Premonstratensian Order in Cyprus, delivering his vernacular codex to the Pope. Unlike Sargis Picak's miniature of King Lewon, here the hierarchy of power is quite different, with the Armenian submitting to Rome in humility. So, too, is a crimson crowned lion, the coat of arms of the ruling family of Cilicia, nestled within a large illuminated letter, which likewise assumes a lower hierarchical position on the folio in relation to the figure of the Pope [fig. 2]. In each of these cases, however, such power differentials were negotiated and affirmed by a vernacular codex. Quite clearly, Outremer French gave the Cilician nobility access to different forms of power (whether in the northern Mediterranean or more locally, in relation to the Crusader States in the eastern Mediterranean), as well as ideas about how to articulate certain forms of authority and law in their own territory. It is therefore worth noting, even at this early stage, how cross-culturally entangled Cilician Middle Armenian was, drawing its models especially from Greek, Arabic, Syriac, and Persian (in the transference of medical and scientific knowledge)

34 Similarly, though in less lavish detail, a notable Cilician manuscript from 1292, which contains the majority of the *Zhank'* alongside several other texts, features a simple illuminated frontispiece that depicts Moses as the author of the Pentateuch (Church of the Forty Martyrs, Armenian Church, Diocese of Aleppo, ALQ155). In some cases, the illumination of 'vulgar' Armenian texts that were originally composed during the Cilician period even continued after the kingdom's downfall. The most notable, and indeed one of the most beautifully illuminated Armenian manuscripts extant today, is from a copy of the Alexander Romance that was made on vellum, in Constantinople, for the patriarch of the Armenian church in 1544. The renowned manuscript features both the original prose translation of the Alexander Romance in Classical Armenian, alongside the medieval Middle Armenian poetry that adapts and occasionally updates the same story for later audiences. The scribe reports that he copied this manuscript at the request of his 'learned' (*banibun*) patron, who apparently had an appreciation of both the Classical and vernacular tongue, which were jointly mediated by abundant miniatures throughout the manuscript (Manchester, The University of Manchester Library, Armenian MCR3, 182r).

35 For a recent linguistic analysis of the Cilician Armenian absorption of Outremer French, cf. Aslanov 2021.

and from Outremer French (in the transference of juridical knowledge), reaching both eastward and westward in the entwined labour of producing knowledge, cultivating language, and pursuing the aims of the kingdom. These early authors of Cilician Middle Armenian straddled multiple cultural and linguistic worlds, and these experiences shaped the early corpus of vernacular Armenian texts in a profound way.



Figure 2 Het'um the Historian's presentation of *La Flor des estoires de la terre d'Orient* to the Pope. BnF NAF 1255, 1r

Equally important during this period is a discourse of familiarity, and even of agreeability, that ran alongside courtly endeavours in the vernacular. For example, in 1265, Smbat composed another law code in Middle Armenian based in part on the simple Classical Armenian work by Mxit'ar Gosh. Smbat Sparapet carefully explains, in the introduction to his Cilician Middle Armenian *Datastanagirk'* (Lawcode), that he chose to adapt this work both because the original Classical Armenian was difficult, and also because he seems to have had a fondness for Middle Armenian itself:

Եւ այլ շատ ի վերայ իրաւանցս կու պնդէ մարգարէն. Առ որս ես Սմբատս անարժան եւ մեղաւոր ծառայս Աստուծոյ, որդի Կոստանդեայ Թագաւորահօրն եւ եղբայր բարեպաշտ թագաւորին Յայոց Յեթմոյ բազումն աշխատեցայ ի սա ծերացեալ մտօք ի հին եւ յանհասկանալի բառից: Եւ ես բազում աշխատութեամբ փոխեցի զսա ի մեր հեշտալուր բառս, ի թուականութեանս Յայոց ՉԺԴ, ի հայրապետութեան Տեանն Կոստանդեայ, եւ ի թագաւորութեանն Յեթմոյ եւ որդւոյ սորա ԼԷՆՈՒԻ: (Mat'evosyan 1984, 328; Hovnanean 1897, 201; cf. Karst 1905, 1: XV-XVI; cf. Nichanian 1989, 220-2)

And the prophet asserts many other [clarifications] upon these laws. Concerning these, I, Smbat, an unworthy and sinful servant of God, son of the King's father Kostandin and brother to Het'um, the pious king of Armenians, laboured greatly over this, with an intellect grown old in years, [due to the language's] ancient and incomprehensible words/expressions. And with great labour I modified this [book] in our mellifluous words/expressions, in 714 [= 1265] of the Armenian Era, during the patriarchy of Kostandin and the reign of Het'um and his son Lewon.

This illuminating passage has long drawn the attention of scholars, not least because it has come down in two quite different manuscript recensions; the variant quoted is housed in Venice (V107),³⁶ and an alternate passage was discovered in Ējmiacin. In the Ējmiacin recension, a second commenter inserts himself in the passage, and claims that Smbat had given him the book to 'alter' (փոխել), apparently after it was completed, begging the reader to remember Smbat, his 'baron', in their prayers (Karst 1905, 1: XV-XVI). As Hovnanean observed over a century ago, this second manuscript recension re-classicized Smbat's vernacular register throughout the book, minimizing its Middle Armenian forms (1897, 201-32). Nichanian has further remarked that these changes raise questions about what degree of vernacularization was considered acceptable at this time in the written language,

36 V107 contains both the Lawcode and Assises d'Antioche.

though we know little about the classicizing scribe in this case, who was possibly a member of the clergy (1989, 220-2).

What I wish to draw attention to in the case of Smbat, however, are two related and overlooked points. The first is that Smbat essentially admits to having difficulty reading Classical Armenian texts; yet, despite this, he still made the effort. He wrestled with the literary language of Classical Armenian, which required much study to read and to write in any capacity. Even more, it would seem that Smbat prevailed to a degree. Second, and most crucially, he does not seem to have taken a great degree of satisfaction from this struggle; to paraphrase Roland Barthes, there was little pleasure in the text for him. On the contrary, Smbat implies that it is the 'rustic' tongue which brings him relief. Hence he terms his register *heštatur*, a compound which means many things: 'tractable, docile', 'mild' (Bedrosian 1875, 401), easy to understand, and pleasing and 'mellifluous' or easy to hear (Awetik'ean et al. 1836-37, 2: 86). The term *heštatur* would thus seem to include a vernacular orality with its connotation of audition, encompassing more than a simple declaration of Middle Armenian's intelligibility. At the least, Smbat's ear is very close to this language, which is amenable to his thoughts: it is a language grown docile by his hand. He therefore labels Middle Armenian speech or words 'ours', as opposed quite strikingly to Classical Armenian, whose ownership is left dangling and unclaimed.

In this sense, Smbat offers a counterpoint to the learned physician Mxit'ar Herac'i, who labelled his own vernacular Armenian 'rustic' and 'unrestricted'. Mxit'ar, in his direct proximity to two Catholicos of the Armenian church and therefore also to the study of Classical Armenian, seems to have considered Middle Armenian as freeing but perhaps also uncultivated – or, at least, as having less to do with the circles of higher learning that he moved within than did the Classical register. By Smbat's time, and in the courtly setting of Sis, that picture has evolved: now the Middle language is 'docile' and even 'delightful', still a sigh of relief from the anachronisms of the Classical register, yet also an established medium for knowledge production. The court and its affiliated institutions have rubbed off on it, and vice-versa.³⁷

It therefore seems that Het'um's family found the written vernacular not only useful but also familiar, even agreeable. This matters, as we shall see, because not all clergy in the church would react to the 'mellifluous' Armenian tongue in the same manner as did

³⁷ In this sense, Smbat's characterization of Middle Armenian loosely corresponds to how contemporary authors had begun to speak of Old French. To give one notable example, in the thirteenth-century *Les Estoires de Venise*, Martin de Canal describes Old French as the 'most delightful' (*la plus delitable*) language to read and to write (Zinelli 2018, 238).

Smbat's classicizing scribe; other priests were perfectly ready to employ aspects of the vernacular to strengthen the personal and ideological bonds between the court and church. Smbat's remarks also matter because they index an ongoing and diglossic relationship between Classical and Middle Armenian at court, one in which each written branch of the Armenian language held a different proximity to the hearts (and ears) of the noble families. The court made various uses of each language; though some readers like Smbat sometimes found the Classical tongue vexing, they did not entirely relinquish their study of texts in an archaic register, either. Case in point, Smbat also commissioned a poetic inscription in mono-rhymed Classical Armenian, which names him as its author, to adorn the castle walls in Babaron (Çandır Castle), today in the province of Mersin (Ališan 1885, 73). More privately, so too did he commission a magnificently illuminated copy of the Gospels for his personal study.³⁸ This manuscript bears Smbat's name in his own hand in its margins, alongside the pristine Classical Armenian translation of the Bible, informing the reader in red ink that Smbat sought "to amend this [text] with grammar", likely referring to the addition of stresses and unstressed pauses, also in red ink, over the black text [fig. 3].³⁹ It is clear that Smbat laboured over the Classical Armenian Bible even as he composed marginalia, in this same manuscript, in a decidedly more 'vulgar' register. In ways both intimate and publicly facing, Classical Armenian still held many uses for the elite in Sis, however contingent on genre, medium, and function those uses sometimes were. Middle and Classical Armenian registers of the language thus often coexisted alongside one another at court, as both made available different forms of knowledge production for the nobility.

38 Yerevan, Matenadaran (Mesrop Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts), M7644.

39 Քերականաւ ուղել ըզսաւ. Smbat also alludes to these stresses, and their aid in reading or chanting the Bible, in his colophon on 124r in this manuscript, lamenting that his people have grown estranged from such knowledge.

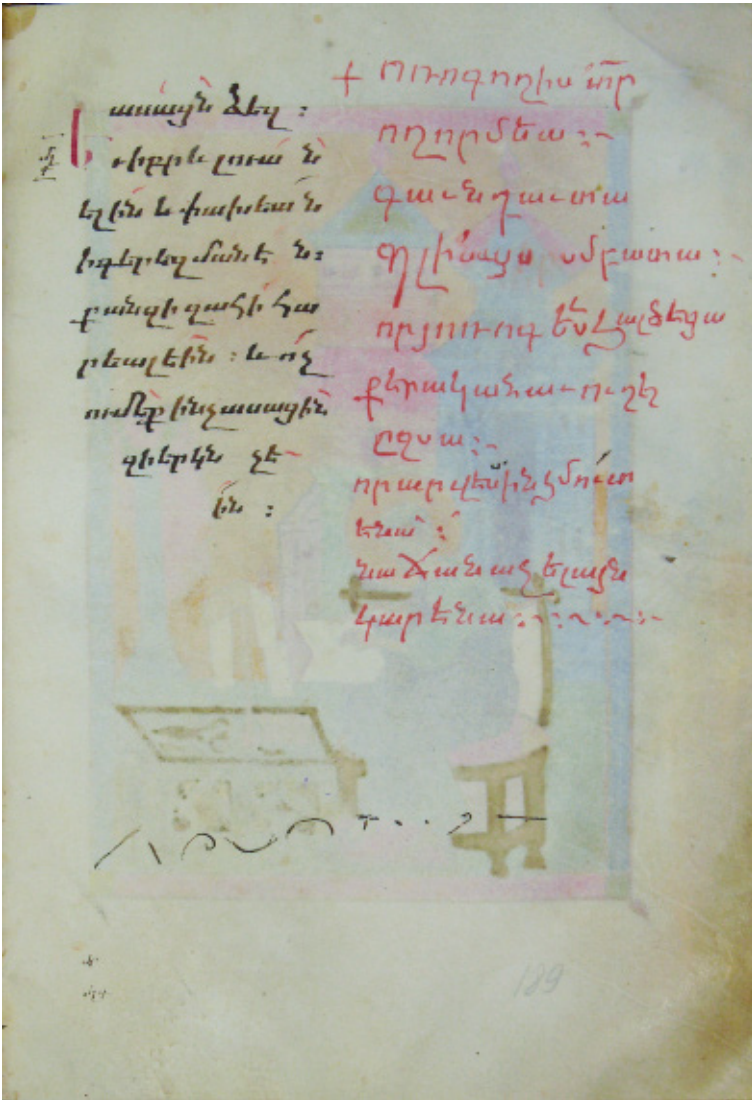


Figure 3 Smbat Sparapet's marginal note in his personal copy of the Gospels. M7644, 189r. Courtesy of the Matenadaran (Mesrop Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts)

Finally, it is important to note that the nobility's use of the 'mellifluous' language was never limited to the court itself, as we have seen in the context of the Cilician medical school and beginnings of its legal system(s). In a complementary vein, the court made the correlation between Middle Armenian and royal power explicit for actors even

beyond Cilicia, issuing several proclamations from the chancellery in the vernacular.⁴⁰ Some of these documents, such as the privilege issued by the Latinophile king Lewon I to the Genoese in 1201, were originally issued in Middle Armenian and Latin simultaneously, though today only the Latin translation survives (Bais 2014, 235-6). Still, other Cilician Middle Armenian privileges have reached us today, as when Lewon II (d. 1289) proffered his *sigel* (Latin: *sigillum*) to the Genoese, renewing trading rights in 1288 (Langlois 1863, 154-8). Other proclamations, such as the privilege of King Ōšin (d. 1320) to merchants in Montpellier in 1314, followed by a later privilege to the same merchants by Lewon V (d. 1393) in 1321, soon appeared in Middle Armenian, as did another privilege to the Silicians in 1331 (178-9; 185-90). The marginal notation on these documents moreover addresses a wide array of different officials in the kingdom, including those who held offices at the customs house and the harbour master in Ayas, even directly by proper name in the former case. As I have noted elsewhere with Budak, these forms of address point to the widespread efficacy of the Armenian vernacular in the administration of the kingdom (Budak, Pifer 2024). Not surprisingly, then, such efficacy took many forms. More generally, throughout this period, even when notable clergymen wrote to the Cilician nobility, they began to do so in Middle Armenian, despite being in full command of Classical Armenian, implicitly acknowledging the Middle tongue of their audiences was in fact the language correlated with royal power (Ačařyan 1951, 235).⁴¹

Taken in sum, it thus appears that Middle Armenian's ascendancy at court arrived through a cooperative (though unequal) relationship between the Cilician nobility, the Armenian church, a wide array of Cilician institutions, such as the customs house and chancellery, and the activity of lay scholars and physicians such as Mxit'ar Herac'i, in addition to the circulation of more peripheral figures, such as Dominican priests who spoke with Armenians in this region, or the vernacular poets who composed in Middle Armenian both in and beyond the domain of Cilicia proper. Moreover, its earliest written documents at court were generally diglossic, as its authors sought to blend, rather synthetically, Classical and 'vulgar' grammatical forms and lexicons in the construction of their authority, let alone the authority of the court itself, for the benefit of other elite audiences, including one another.

⁴⁰ The chancellery also made use of Latin and Old French, as Langlois notes (1863, 12-13). The chancellery of the neighbouring Lusignan court of Cyprus exercised a similar notarial practice, issuing documents in Latin, Old French, and Greek (Beihammer 2011).

⁴¹ For instance, in the early fourteenth century, the Catholicos Grigor Anawarzec'i (d. 1307) composed an epistle counselling King Het'um II (d. 1307), his 'baron', on spiritual matters using a mixture of Middle and Classical Armenian forms (Hovnanean 1897, 249-52).

3 A Pleasant Conversation Between Grammarian and King

In many ways, the Cilician program of language cultivation for Middle Armenian follows a broader pattern that extends even beyond the Mediterranean. During the years 1000-1500 CE, part of what Pollock calls the “vernacular millennium”, courts played a pivotal role in creating new cosmopolises, or territorial spaces in which language and power were ultimately conjoined (1998b). In these broader Mediterranean and Eurasian contexts, it is unsurprising that the court of the last Armenian kingdom, which took its cues from the various states in which it had contact, likewise cultivated something akin to a ‘vernacular’ during this era. To whatever degree this undertaking was by design or more a byproduct of Cilician pragmatism (in concert with many other historical factors), their choice to write in the ‘rustic’ language helped to differentiate their rule from nearly all extant Armenian writing that came before them, much as Cilicia itself was distinguished geographically from previous Kingdoms of Armenia.

Within this context, there is perhaps no figure as important to the establishment of vernacular study at Het’um’s court than Vardan Arewelc’i. Vardan Arewelc’i (Vardan ‘the Easterner’, or from Greater Armenia) entered monastic study and eventually attained the station of *vardapet* (teacher) in the Armenian church. He first came to Cilicia in 1239/40, just over a decade after Het’um’s coronation, on a return journey from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The Catholicos invited him to reside in Cilicia for a time; so, too, did the young king make a warm welcome for the theologian. We know that Vardan remained in Cilicia until 1246 before returning to Greater Armenia, and then travelled again to Cilicia at least by 1248, this time staying roughly three years. Like King Het’um himself, Vardan also made the journey on a diplomatic mission to the seat of the Ilkhanate’s power in 1246, meeting with Hulagu Khan alongside his king (Vardan Arewelc’i 1991, 155-9). As I will discuss here and in the following section, Vardan also composed at least two major works at King Het’um’s request: the *Žhank’* and the *Commentary on Grammar*, both of which contributed to the bolstering of Het’um’s image as ‘educated king’ and to supporting Middle Armenian as a language of knowledge production, in complementary though different ways. Both works, moreover, contributed to a vernacular pedagogy at court and potentially beyond it, establishing a model for Het’um’s descendants to become educated rulers in their own right.

In fact, Vardan subtly supported Het’um’s rule through multiple avenues, even beyond the production of these two important works. We should recall that Het’um partially displaced the Rūbēnid dynasty as the king of Cilicia when he married Zabel; his right to the crown was somewhat more ambiguous in terms of succession than it was for his

predecessors on the throne. Like the Rubēnids, however, he continued to style himself as the King of Armenians, and pursued many ways of supporting his claim to the crown. Vardan was indirectly useful in this regard, even when working independent of Sis, as he composed the only known medieval Armenian geography during this period. In this work, Vardan asserted a truly expansive Armenia (Hayastan) stretching from Cilicia to the Caucasus, even though the 'King of Armenians' did not directly control much of this territory (1960, 9-50). Likewise, Vardan also composed a new universal history around 1267, after he had departed Cilicia for the second time, which attempted to place Armenia into a more global frame of reference that included the births of Christ and the Prophet Muhammad, as well as the activities of the Byzantine Empire and the Mongol expansions. Perhaps not coincidentally, this work praises Het'um for providing aid to the surviving forces of Kitbuqa Noyan, a Christian general who served the Ilkhanate. These soldiers "came to the king of Armenia, from whom they found great compassion; [he provided] clothing, horses, and money, so they returned gratefully to their lord, Tatars and Christians", Vardan writes. "Thereby the name of Christ was greatly glorified for King Het'um at home and abroad".⁴² Both implicitly and explicitly, Vardan provides us with something like an aspirational sketch of what Armenian rule over Cilicia might become, rooted in the broadly recognizable authority among both "Tatars and Christians" of its wise king.

Vardan's writings thus may be understood as pursuing overlapping aims in a differential manner: they do this by bolstering Het'um's standing at court, rooted in the *topos* of the educated king (in matters scientific and grammatical, which in this case are the same); by envisioning a geographically massive Armenia, implicitly under Het'um's rule as 'king of the Armenians', whether or not that territory was actually under the control of the court at Sis; by centering Armenia within the scope of recorded human history, stretching back to the Tower of Babel in the Hebrew Bible; and finally by correlating knowledge production and kingly authority with Middle Armenian directly. This is not to say, of course, that Vardan necessarily had all of these aims at the forefront of his mind, or even as the primary reason, for undertaking labour both within and beyond Cilicia in each of these disparate genres. Still, it does suggest that Vardan sought to support the king through a spectrum of writings in both Classical and Middle Armenian, which collectively construct a portrait of Het'um as a wise and educated king, devoted to both his church and his queen.

42 Եկին առ թագաւորն Յայոց. և 'ի սմանէ յոյով գտեալ մարդասիրութիւն, հանդերն և երիվարս և ռոճիկս, եկին գոհութեամբ առ տէրն իւրեանց, Տաթարք և քրիստոնէայք: Եւ յայնմանէ յոյով փառաւորեցաւ անունն Քրիստոսի յարքայն Յեղոսմ, յօտարաց և յընտանեաց (Vardan Arewelc'i 1991, 152; Vardan Arewelc'i 1989, 218). Perhaps tellingly, other Armenian sources do not seem to recount this episode; cf. Vardan Arewelc'i 1989, 218.

These threads converge most clearly in his encyclopedic compendium known popularly by its Middle Armenian name, the *Žllank'*, a term Vardan uses in the colophon to his work. However, he titled this compendium somewhat differently in Classical Armenian as Լուծունևք ի սուրբ գրոց Վարդանայ Վարդապետի ի խնդրոյ բարեպաշտ Թագաւորին հայոց Յեթմոյ (Explanations from the Holy Bible, [by] Vardan Vardapet, at the request of Het'um, the devout King of Armenians) [figs 4-5]. As mentioned, the work is a compendium of knowledge, with many entries on the Bible that also make diversions into other fields. Many of its entries are provocative: the *Žllank'* contains, for instance, a slightly alternate telling of the discovery of the Armenian alphabet in the fifth century CE.⁴³ Another entry, composed by the Catholicos, directly counsels Het'um on how to defend the confession of the Armenian church against the Roman church, maintaining a boundary between the Armenian faithful and the Pope.⁴⁴ Woven alongside and even into its biblical and creedal entries, the *Žllank'* also contains scientific information on many subjects, such as the celestial bodies, botany, and animals, interspersed with other sections on the fine arts, considering music and its role in the church. In stark contrast, Vardan speaks rather disdainfully of poetry, a literary form which had begun to flourish during his day especially in Middle Armenian and borrowed heavily from Persianate styles and Islamicate themes.⁴⁵ Given his status as a staunch defender of Armenian Christianity, it is probably not for nothing that Vardan declares “for the wise person it is nothing to craft versified words [...] but the Muslims honour [such things]”.⁴⁶

⁴³ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, MS Arménien 42, 125r-128v; cf. Ant'abyan 1967, 174-7.

⁴⁴ MS Arménien 42, 139v-149r.

⁴⁵ The Middle Armenian retellings of the Alexander Romance are a prime example of this. These short poems, known as *kafas* after the Arabic word for ‘rhyme’, accompanied the original Classical Armenian translation of the Greek romance. However, they wove the romance itself partly into a Persianate sensibility, using the Middle Armenian vernacular as their language. Xaç'atur Keč'arec'i (d. 1331), writing in Greater Armenia, was the first author to do this poetic rewriting of the romance, choosing to render the speech and descriptions of Alexander – the paradigmatic philosopher king – into dialectal and ‘rustic’ forms of Armenian not so different from those spoken by the elites in Sis. On the selective use of Middle Armenian in the formal aspects of this poetry, cf. MacFarlane (2022); on the adaptability of this genre in the Armenian vernacular more generally, cf. also the important work of MacFarlane (2023a; 2023b). On the illumination of the Armenian Alexander Romance, cf. Maranci 2003-04.

⁴⁶ Իմաստնոյ չէ փոյթ տաղական բան առնել: [...] բայց խմայելացիքն պատուեն. Diocese of Aleppo, Church of the Forty Martyrs, Armenian Church, ALQ155, 340; cf. Ant'abyan 1967, 179.



Figures 4-5 The opening folio of Vardan Arewelci's compendium, with marginal note on the left hand side. BnF MS Arménien 42, 1r

Significantly, Vardan seems to have intended the *Žłank'* to aid the king in the study of other manuscripts at the royal library.⁴⁷ The *Žłank'* includes, for instance, an extensive set of pictographs that stand for common terms one encounters in Armenian manuscripts, ranging from patriarchs in the Hebrew Bible such as Abraham to a variety of Armenian names, as well frequently used words like 'musician', 'heaven', 'Egypt', 'world' and 'money'.⁴⁸ Many of these abundant pictographs function in the Armenian manuscript record essentially as commonplace

⁴⁷ There is no doubt that the Cilician court collected many books in Sis, though we presently possess relatively little information about the royal library itself. Still, some revealing clues remain, particularly from the colophon record. For example, a bishop named Step'annos from Sebastia reported, in the colophon of a copy of the Gospels from 1320, that he had traveled to Cilicia where he was warmly received by King Ōsin, who gave him permission to enter into the *yarkels* (coffers) of the palace and examine its books. Step'annos reports encountering many diverse copies of the Gospels (which is what he was primarily seeking), and finding one in particular that was beautifully yet incompletely illuminated. He then reports commissioning the renowned illuminator Sargis Picak, who also illuminated a copy of Smbat's *Assises d'Antioche*, and paying him a sum of 1,300 dram to complete the work (Xaç'ikyan 1950, 162-3).

⁴⁸ MS Arménien 42, 136r-139r.

abbreviations; others in the compendium seem to have been invented by Vardan and are not well attested elsewhere (Abrahamyan 1973, 210). In any case, their inclusion suggests that Vardan intended the *Žllank'* to serve as a basis for the king's education, opening the way for his continued study of other manuscripts in either Classical or Middle Armenian [figs 6-7]. Hence, we should probably not consider the use of the vernacular or Classical language to be mutually exclusive, either for Vardan or for his audience, in the case of the *Žllank'*. Just as important, Vardan also provides ample opportunities for one to practice deciphering these pictographs throughout the *Žllank'* itself, offering the reader a kind of training ground for future study in other contexts.

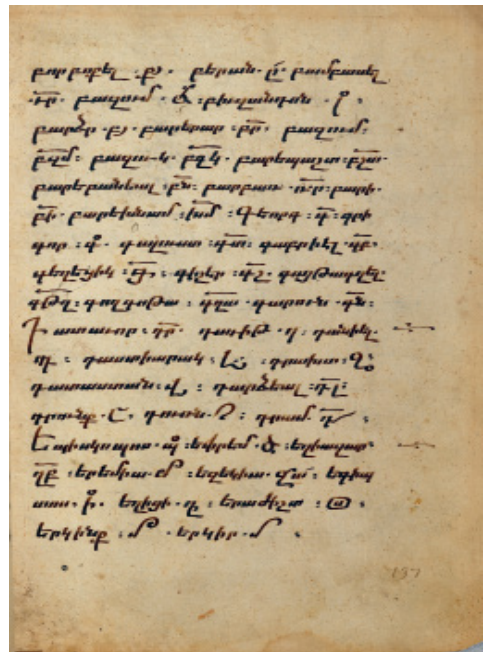
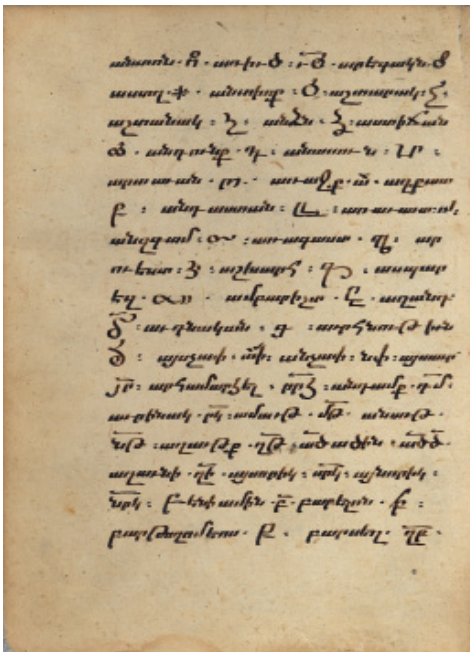


Figure 6-7 Pictographs to aid in the study of reading and writing Armenian texts. BnF MS Arménien 42, 136v-137r

There are additional indications that the *Žllank'* served as a foundation for Het'um's education at court. In another entry, Vardan provides an explanation for basic grammatical parts of speech, offering definitions of nouns, verbs, participles, articles, pronouns, prepositions, adverbs, and conjunctions (Xač'ikyan 2012). After each definition, which are coded numerically in the margins for easy reference, Vardan supplies a simple sentence in Armenian to illustrate his point. Grammar was widely considered to form another cornerstone

of a medieval education in Armenian monasteries; elsewhere, Vardan calls the study of grammar the entry point into acquiring wisdom, since one needs grammar to properly decipher any kind of text or discourse. For this reason, Het'um had also commissioned a Classical Armenian grammar from Vardan, known as the *Commentary on Grammar*, which I will return to in the following section. However, whereas the *Commentary* seeks to dazzle the reader with its explications of the Greek grammarian Dionysius Thrax, the *Žhank'*'s entry on grammar is downright workmanlike, covering essentials in a succinct and efficient manner. The composition of a simplified explanation of basic grammatical forms, stripped of lofty attempts to theorize language, speaks to the continuing importance of grammatical learning in Vardan's pedagogical program. Though one can only speculate, perhaps it also suggests that the king also had use of a less theoretical grammar, delivered in a different linguistic register, than the *Commentary* that Vardan additionally delivered.⁴⁹

This brings us to the question of language itself. Vardan composed the *Žhank'* in grammatically mixed and diglossic registers of Armenian. At times, his language is nearly indistinguishable from a literary register of Classical Armenian, such as briefly near the end of a colophon in dedication to King Het'um, which is also mixed lightly with Middle Armenian grammatical forms. At other times, his register is decidedly more serviceable, such as his entry on grammar, which, not coincidentally, requires very little knowledge of Armenian grammar to understand. In 1862, the Mekhitarist historian Ališan simply noted that Vardan wrote the *Žhank'* in a simple and 'vulgar' (նամլալաւն) style (Vardan Arewelc'i 1862, III); the nineteenth-century French Armenologist Prud'homme likewise termed it "la langue vulgaire" (1871, 7). Other scholars have observed that Vardan made explicit use of Middle Armenian forms throughout the compendium and throughout his many other works, which sometimes come to the fore and sometimes recede into the background of a simplified Classical register (Ant'abyan 1967, 179-80; 1987, 294-9; Łazaryan 1960, 86, 105, 121-4; Xaç'ikyan 2012, 258).⁵⁰ Generally speaking, its language does not seem intended to be demanding, but rather to be accessible and perhaps familiar, ushering the reader into a broad pedagogical program that begins, but does not end, with the *Žhank'* itself.⁵¹

49 Vardan originally wrote this entry on grammar in the *Žhank'* for the brother of the Catholicos, who apparently also had use of a simplified Armenian register (Xaç'ikyan 2012). Still, he clearly thought it would impart useful information to other vernacular learners such as Het'um and his family.

50 Hovnanean (1897, 254) has noted that Vardan incorporated dialectal features seemingly from Greater Armenia within his Cilician Middle Armenian writings.

51 As Łazaryan has observed, Vardan additionally appears to have defended the use of 'vulgar' Armenian in his *Commentary on Grammar*, also composed for King Het'um,

Why, then, might the 'devout King of the Armenians' have desired such a work? We have but a few clues. As we have seen, around this time, an anonymous translator rendered the *Geoponica*, another compendium, into Middle Armenian from Arabic; the original was composed in Greek for the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos. Compendia were both popular in many languages adjacent to Cilicia, and moreover were also correlated with the erudition of the sovereign. Similarly, other compendiums were beginning to flourish in Old French at roughly the same time Vardan composed the *Žhank'*; such works include Brunetto Latini's *Li livres dou trésor* (Book of Treasure) dating from the mid to late thirteenth-century, and the *Livre de la fontaine de toutes sciences* (better known in English as the 'Book of Sydrac the Philosopher') from the late thirteenth century.⁵² We also have at least one encyclopedic example from Outremer in the *Image du monde*, copied at the scriptorium of Acre in the thirteenth century (Minervini 1999, 92-3). The original of this work was composed by the Catholic priest Gautier de Metz, and gifted to the brother of the French king Louis IX in 1246; this was likely the same year that the Armenian Apostolic priest Vardan made an analogous encyclopedic gift to his king in Sis.

Vardan's own compendium would appear to be riding an early wave of this broader vernacular trend, coinciding with or even predating many of these other works. He therefore helps us to observe a moment in time in which elites around the Mediterranean coast found use in vernacular collections of knowledge on seemingly every subject. The scriptorium in Acre, where the court of the Kingdom of Jerusalem was located, along with other courts where vernaculars flourished, such as the Byzantine court in Constantinople and Nicaea, the court of King Louis IX, and the Armenian court in Sis, were all part of an epistemically entangled Mediterranean world, although scaffolded within it in different ways. The implication of composing an Armenian vernacular compendium against this backdrop would perhaps be twofold in this case: first, that Middle Armenian could do what these other languages could do; and second, that the Cilician nobility were capable of undertaking the same forms of study as did other elite audiences at neighbouring vernacular courts.

Although this is somewhat speculative, we can at least say that Vardan requires the reader to reflect on Het'um's erudition repeatedly throughout the *Žhank'*. In no subtle terms does he correlate an

such as when he states: և չէ՛ պակասութիւն, զի որ չգիտէ ասել երկոտասան՝ ի՞նչ պակաս է յասելն տասններկու. (And [this] is not a deficiency, since [for] he who does not know [how] to say twelve [in Classical Armenian], what loss is it in saying ten and two?"; Vardan Arewelc'i 1972, 133; Łazaryan 1960, 86).

52 For general background, cf. Prince 1993 and Steiner 2021, 177-209.


image of the 'educated king' and the study of his vulgar compendium. In fact, Vardan addresses Het'um directly in multiple entries (Ant'abyan 1967, 166), many of which take the dialogic form of questions and answers; Vardan makes so many asides that one gets the impression of reading over the king's shoulder at times. At one point, he explicitly states that his aim is to instruct the king in an accessible and pleasing manner: "It is our desire to give you the substance of [each] thing, and not to compose a systematic exegesis", he writes, "thus to gain for you whatever seems novel to us, for the delight of [your] heart".⁵³ Simply put, Het'um is as much a character in this work as Vardan. This dialogic nature of the compendium is also suggested by its title, *Žhank'*, whose root has an additional connotation of 'conversation'. In this sense, as Ant'abyan has observed, the entire work takes the structural and rhetorical form of a dialogue between Vardan and his king (1987, 1: 157); a pleasing labour that instructs the mind by delighting it.

Nowhere is this more explicit, and nowhere is Het'um's kingship configured so precisely in relation to his vernacular erudition, as when Vardan describes why he wrote the *Žhank'* in a lengthy colophon, which appears in slight variation across the manuscript record. For instance, in a severely damaged recension of the colophon in Matenadaran M750,⁵⁴ Vardan addresses Het'um in Middle Armenian as իմ ւարոն (my baron), as Ant'abyan has observed (1967, 158). In another variant, found in Matenadaran M341, Vardan at times addresses Het'um intimately as 'you', in the familiar second person singular;⁵⁵ at other times, he addresses the king more formally as his proper superior. This fluctuation between formal and informal may thus suggest a twining of Vardan's dual aims: first, to forge bonds of closeness with the king that befit the relationship between a teacher and student; and second, to offset this intimacy by establishing reverence for the higher station of his student. In a measured way, Vardan thus seemingly uses this balancing act to remind the king of his shared humanity and of his exalted responsibility to rule. Moreover, throughout these oscillations, he largely writes in a simple Classical Armenian register with slight vernacularisms and irregularities sprinkled in. His linguistic register therefore actualizes this interpersonal dance between formality and familiarity, subtly basing the king's piety in no small part on the study of this very manuscript:

⁵³ Կան՛ն է մեր բեզ նիւթ բանի տայ, և ոչ կարգաւ մեկնութիւն գրել, ապա և գոր ինչ նոր թուի մեզ, գտանել բեզ, ի բացումն սրտի (MS Arménien 42, 63r); cf. Prud'homme's French translation of this line (Verdan 1867, 26).

⁵⁴ Yerevan, Matenadaran (Mesrop Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts), M750.

⁵⁵ Yerevan, Matenadaran (Mesrop Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts), M341.

Այսպես արա՛ւ և դու. սակաւ մի աշխատեա՛ւ. քո սակաւ աշխատիւն զայլոց շատն արժէ: Չի որպէս լուաք ի քրիստոսէ ամեն մարդոց  [pictograph for հրեշտակ] կա պահապան, և ձեզ որ ազգի գլուխ և թագաւոր էք, ինքն գլուխն քրիստոս է պահապան և անմեկնելի: Մի՛ պաշտեր զնա որպէս հեռաւոր. այլ որպէս առ քեզ, ի սրտիդ, և յոգևոջդ: ուր կամիս զգլուխտ և զերեստ դնել ի պատիւ նմա, ի գիրկն դնես, և յաստուած միանաս: և զոգի իմ տառապեալ և տկար յիշեսցէ՛ս և որ գբեզ սիրէ, առաւել բան գասել: Վասն որոյ զայս աշխատութիւն տկար մարմնով. կատարեցի սիրով ձեր զաւրացեալ. և աւժանդակեալ: և յիշեա՛ գոր ի ձեռն Թորոսի հրամանեցիք. վասն եղաբերից կանանցն գրել ձեզ և ի խորհուրդ պատարագին, և ապա երեսուք յանդուլն հրամանեցիք որ գրեաք ձեզ ժղլանք. ի մեկնութենէն քերականին: և ես այլ յաւելի սիրով գրել ձեզ ձեռամբ լուծմունս. յաւետարանէ՛ն: և յարարածոցն. ուստի տեսէք թէ շա՛տ էիք հարցանել. և սիրէք սրտի: Է՛ որ հանգուցանե՛ զձեր միտքդ: և իմանաս որ պատճառ ինի ձեզ բանաւորութեան: զայս հարցանելոյ. և զստոյզն գտանել: [...] Եւ ես զիտե՛մ որ այս չէ թագ[աւոր]ական իրք. այլ ոսկեգիր պիտեր. և ճարտար գրչի: և ես շա՛տ պատճառ ունեի, որ խափանէր զիս յայս ձեռնարկութենէս: տկարութիւն և մութն խրճիթ: և հողով պարխարո՛ւ, փոշիխառն փշելով ընդ պատուհանս, և պաղ աւղոյս, բայց սիրովն հրաշագործիւ յաղթահարեալ եղեն պատճառքն: և որպէս տեսանէք եղեւ. (M341, 103r-104r; cf. Ant'abyan 1967, 157; Hovnanean 1897, 234-6)⁵⁶

Conduct yourself thusly: labour moderately; your moderate labouring is worth the abundant [labour] of others. For as we heard from Christ, every man has an angel as protector; as for you, who are the head of the nation and are King, it is He, Christ, who is the head protector and inseparable. Do not worship him as though distantly, but as near to you, within your heart and your soul. When you wish to cast [down] your head and face in honour of him, you cast them upon [His] bosom and are united with God. Remember my miserable and feeble soul, which loves you more than is possible to say. For this reason, I, weak in the flesh, completed this labour strengthened and sustained by your love. Recall that you commanded, through the aid of T'oros, to compose [works] concerning the Oil-bearing Virgins and the mystery of Holy Mass; afterwards you

⁵⁶ In this passage and the one cited below, I have not attempted to ‘correct’ any irregularities in punctuation or spelling that the scribe did not correct himself (at least, these textual features may be irregular from the perspective of a more formal Classical Armenian register), as does Ant'abyan at times. Instead I simply present this text as it appears in the manuscript, with the exception of common abbreviations, which are spelled out in full here. For readability in English, however, my translation does not always preserve the punctuation, but instead occasionally follows Ant'abyan's interpretation in his edited transcription.

personally ordered me to compose for you, in Andul [monastery], a pleasant occupation for the mind [ձիլանկ՝] out of the *Commentary on Grammar*. And then, with greater love, [I undertook] to write for you by [my] hand Explanations [լուցմունս] of the Gospels and Genesis. Hence, recall that you had posed many questions [to me]; you [now] delight in heart. It is [this book] which sets your thoughts at ease; you apprehend that this [book] shall help you to gain understanding and interrogate these [matters] to discover what is true. [...] And I know that [this book] is not a regal object, for it should have been [written in] gilded letters and a dexterous hand. I had many reasons that impeded me from this undertaking: weakness, the dark in this cell, and the wind of Barkhar blowing, mixed with dust, through this window and this frigid air. Yet with miraculous love these reasons were overcome. And, as you see, it was so.

Vardan performs a rhetorical sleight of hand here. He freely admits that his scriptural entries, which lacked a finer hand and gilded letters, are not ‘regal’ or ‘kingly’. Certainly, this may be true to an extent; aside from the presumed material condition of his original manuscript, now lost to us,⁵⁷ Vardan is moreover not concerned with statecraft or diplomatic relations exactly here. Yet he does make the case that the king is the beloved of Christ, and commands Het’um to embrace Christ within his own heart and soul.⁵⁸ Christ, the head of the Church, and Het’um, the head of the kingdom, are to become one under Vardan’s tutelage. This process coincided with Het’um’s request for another text: an explication of the commentary on the grammar of Dionysius Thrax, which I will return to in the following section. For now, it suffices to say that grammatical learning is a cornerstone of the king’s education, as it would also be for monastic students. The very next stone in the king’s education, likewise, is

57 As Vardan continues in his colophon, he notes that Het’um may ask the scribe Grigorēs to improve the hand and presentation of the manuscript, should this be the king’s desire.

58 Vardan’s colophon is also reminiscent of the words he reports speaking to the Ilkhan ruler Hulagu (Hulawu), whose wife was a Nestorian Christian. As Vardan reports, Hulagu told him personally that his mother was likewise a Christian; the Armenian priest was moved to give his own reply in turn: Եւ ընծեալ էր զիմ ձեռքս, և մեք ասացաք զինչ Աստուած երեստ ասել բանս. թէ Ռքչափ 'ի վեր ես դու բան զայլ մարդիկ, մտն էս յԱստուած (Vardan Arewelc’i 1991, 157). “He had seized my hands, and we said what words God gave us to speak: ‘The more superior you are to other men, the closer you are to God’” (Vardan Arewelc’i 1989, 220). Interestingly, as Thomson notes in the footnotes to his translation, Vardan introduces colloquial forms when recounting the meeting between himself, King Het’um, Hulagu and others in this scene; in this passage, when Vardan says that God “gave” him the words to say, he uses the Middle Armenian third person singular form *eret* (1989, 220, fnn. 4, 2). Compare also with Vardan’s earlier colophon on the Mongols, which depicts their claim to rule in a far less favourable light (Pogossian 2014).

a commentary on the Bible, interspersed with a performative sampling of seemingly all the knowledge in the world.

There are other layers to peel back as well. Vardan's colophon, seemingly for the king's eyes only, was also read by many audiences over the centuries. In fact, this manuscript was quite popular; it was copied in near completion at least seven times by the early fifteenth century (Ant'abyan 1967, 163). We do not know, of course, to what degree Het'um whiled away the hours in study over the *Žhank'*. Still, under the guise of providing an explanation for his compendium, Vardan crafts something far more wily: a discursive model of an Armenian educated king, to be read by other Armenian nobles and elites. Moreover, by recasting his monastic pedagogy to serve another social context, Vardan fashions an intellectual genealogy for his erudite king, beginning with the study of grammar and continuing with the interpretation of the Bible, which clears the way for the study of the celestial bodies and the natural world, in addition to subjects such as the fine arts of music and poetry, which are present in the compendium. Finally, as Vardan makes apparent, the *Žhank'* did not represent learning for learning's sake, but rather, again following a monastic pedagogical model, served as an attempt to bring the king closer to Christ. The salient difference, of course, is that unlike a student embarking on a monastic education, the king is head of the Armenian people; his closeness to Christ, as with his closeness to Vardan, is to help him better rule. In other words, the composition and study of this work enacts the labour of making a social and theological hierarchy: the king is over his people, mirroring Christ's rule over the dominion of the earth. Correspondingly, the *Žhank'* speaks to Het'um intimately, at times both in the second person singular and in the king's 'mellifluous' tongue, which was gradually also becoming a language of royal power.

As if this could not be any more clear, Vardan steps in again and instructs the king on *how* to study the *Žhank'*. First and foremost, he is not to study alone. As Vardan counsels, the queen is also to take on a role in this labour, supplementing the king's learning through her own study:

Թող թագուհի՛ն պահե, և ի պիտոյ ժամն առնոյք ի նմանէ. և նմա հրամաէ պաւղոս հարցանել զձեզ: և զպատշաճն ծանուցանել: և պարտական են ասէ: ապրեցուցանելոյ զիրեարս, առն և կնոջ: և զերկոսինդ ապրեցուցէ տէր յիսուս կենդանութիւն ձեր: ի խնամս հաւր, և ի գութ հոգւոյն սրբոյ: յոռոգումն սննդեան դալար արծա՛կ, տնկաբողոքո՛ջ շառաւեղեալ ոստոցո, ծիրանածին տղայոցդ ի զիրկս սիոն սրբոյ: ի կատարումն պսակման հայակոյտ ազնւական ազգաց, և ազանց, տոհմից ազատաց, ազատեցուցի՛չք արեանառու զարմից: լծադի՛րք, և բեռնաբարձաւոյք կորացուցի՛չք աւտարաց ազգաց, ի փառս փառաւոր և պաշտեցեալ աստուածութեան որ է աւրինեալ

յաւիտեանս ամէն. (M341, 104v; cf. Ant'abyan 1967, 158; Hovnanian 1897, 234-6)

Let the queen keep [this book], and at a suitable hour you [may] take it from her. St. Paul commands her to question you and to reveal what is suitable, and, he says, man and wife are obligated to save one another. And may Lord Jesus, [who is] your life, deliver the two of you, in the care of the Father and the mercy of the Holy Spirit, for the sprinkling of instruction [over] your verdant, thrusting, sprouting, budding branches, your sons, born in the purple, in the embrace of holy Zion, for the perfection of the crowning of the people and nation of the noble Armenian flock, of highborn lineage, liberators of kindred houses; [those] who subjugate, who burden with heavy loads, who destroy foreign peoples, for the glory of the glorious and adored God, who is blessed forever, amen.

The colophon and the entire *Žłank'* rest on this ending, which is directed not to a broad public but rather to the king and queen directly, who are at the center of a dense social and kinship network that encompasses all Armenians. Het'um is to draw near to Christ through the vernacular compendium; Zabel is to draw near to Het'um through the same compendium. In other words, here, too, is Het'um's legitimacy as both educated king and leader of his people is bound to Zabel, from whom he originally derived his power, though he is also positioned as *her* teacher in all things. Implicit in this is that 'docile' or 'mellifluous' Armenian, intertwined with Classical, is a language that brings king and queen together, that sets the kingdom in order with Christ as protector of its head. It is not merely a language that is bound up with Het'um's legitimacy as king; to some degree, it is also a language that is supportive of that legitimacy, insofar as it shapes him into the very 'educated king', both discursively and performatively, as he sought to present himself. Moreover, it is also a language whose offshoots continue in the lives of Het'um's sons, who are described as ծիրանածին (the Armenian calque of the Greek *porphyrogénētos*), literally 'born in the purple', as they bring together the Rubēnid bloodline of Zabel with the bloodline of the Het'umid dynasty, cementing Het'um's claim to the throne.⁵⁹ The *Žłank'* serves Het'um because it is for his sons; the compendium itself is therefore future oriented, presenting a pedagogy meant to bind the royal family, going forward, within the teachings of the church and to one another.

It is equally revealing that these unsettling hierarchical relationships (Christ over Het'um; Het'um over Zabel; Het'um and Zabel over

⁵⁹ On Cilician genealogies as technologies of authority in other contexts, cf. Abkarian unpublished.

their offspring; Armenians over 'foreign peoples') are preserved genealogically, through the same compendium that activates them, for other readers. Arguably, these relationships are also somewhat different from other attempts by Het'um to correlate his legitimacy with Zabel. Famously, for example, Het'um also minted a silver coin that declared him ՅԵԹՈՒՄ ԹԱԳԱԻՈՐ ՅԱՅ (HET'UM KING OF ARMENIANS) on one side, and the inscription ԿԱՐՈՂՈՒ - ԹԻՆ ԱՅ Է (IT IS THE AUTHORITY OF GOD) on the other (Bedoukian 1958; Pavlou 2017, 390-1). This latter inscription encircles an image of Het'um and Zabel, who stand together, holding aloft a large cross. Quite obviously, these coins served as visual reminders, for anyone engaged in Cilician commerce, that the authority of king and queen were bound together in their shared proximity to Christ. The *Žlank'* stakes a similar claim for a more selective audience: namely, for the other Armenian nobility who descended from Het'um or who studied the compendium for themselves. In fact, we know that subsequent nobles followed Het'um's model for vernacular study between husband and wife. One of the oldest extant copies of the *Žlank'*, dating to 1274, thus includes multiple marginal notes throughout its many entries which ask the reader to remember Queen Keṙan (d. 1285), the commissioner of the manuscript.⁶⁰ Keṙan was married to Het'um's son Lewon II, who had become king only four years prior. Like Zabel, she seems to have assumed the role of caretaker for the *Žlank'*, presumably studying it with her husband, Het'um's son, another 'educated king' whom Vardan also prays for in his colophon (Ant'abyan 1967, 164).

What the *Žlank'* helps to bring into relief, then, are many gradual transformations at court: the ascendancy of 'vulgar' Armenian as a language of courtly erudition; the implicit correlation of the educated king, and indeed even the royal marriage, with the vernacular compendium and the teachings of Vardan; the tacit acknowledgement of Vardan that the nobility desired to be instructed in this 'mellifluous' register, even while he potentially left the door open for the future study of manuscripts in Classical Armenian; and finally the capability of the vulgar tongue to successfully impart knowledge of scripture and of the natural world.

More broadly, the *Žlank'* gestures toward a moment of vernacular flourishing on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, which witnessed the spread of analogous genres in Outremer French, as well as the competition of other emergent vernaculars, such as the Mamluk translations of Persian literary works into Turkish. As Vardan sat to compose the *Žlank'*, these processes were still ongoing, as was perhaps his own embrace of 'vulgar' Armenian, which he mixed with an abundance of Classical forms. The future of written Middle

60 MS Arménien 42, 29v, 38v, 132r.

Armenian, like the future of the Kingdom of Armenia in Cilicia, was far from settled, but one thing had grown clear: Cilician Middle Armenian was gradually becoming an instrument through which the nobility articulated their authority and performed their erudition to *one another*. At the same time, it served additional purposes for a different set of elite figures – the clergy of the Armenian church – who, after all, had a vested interest of their own in cultivating Het'um as a pious defender of church teachings, and moreover were implicitly willing to employ this 'rustic' Armenian in part to realize those aims.

4 Grammaticality and Armenian Kingship

The *Žłank'* helps us to see how the broader ascendancy of Middle Armenian in Cilicia looked on the ground, configured in tandem with the image of Het'um as educated king. Still, this granular look at Middle Armenian as a language of royal erudition during this period would be too provisional without briefly addressing the preeminent form of medieval language cultivation – the patronage and production of grammars – which was also a significant feature of the commission and study of manuscripts in Sis. Moreover, the court's interest in grammar also helps to shed light on study in 'mellifluous' Armenian in contexts removed from the court, yet still related to its program of knowledge production.

The art of grammar and forms of royal and clerical power have long been close companions, even in widely disparate times and places. In the case of the Sanskrit cosmopolis in South Asia, Pollock has posited that kingship and grammaticality were to an extent mutually constitutive. He argues that this was demonstrated by

the celebration of grammatical learning especially in kings, the royal patronage of such learning, and the competitive zeal among rulers everywhere to encourage grammatical creativity and adorn their courts with scholars who could exemplify it. (2006, 165)

For Pollock, this "assertion of grammaticality, and with it literary skill" was therefore an absolute necessity "for the fully realized form of kingliness" in part because grammar was a precondition for knowledge of literature, and therefore was a precondition for the formation of the cosmopolis in the first place (166). We might expand this frame somewhat further. Elsewhere in medieval Europe, grammatica, or the institution of grammar and the first of the arts in the trivium, also held an intimate relationship with power. Irvine argues that for

the dominant social and political institutions of medieval Europe, grammatica functioned to perpetuate and reproduce the most

fundamental conditions for textual culture, providing the discursive rules and interpretive strategies that constructed certain texts as repositories of authority and value. (1994, 2)

Grammatica, for Irvine, thus consisted of “technologies of authority” which produced both literacy and normative Latinity (306).

Though Pollock and Irvine attend to widely different contexts, they help to index a general relationship between the premodern study of grammar and power, if not the authority of the king (or church) in particular. In this light, it is not surprising that the first Classical Armenian grammars likewise bore a complex relationship with power. Until the seventh century CE, these works were largely produced by a professional and lay elite who were in active dialogue with the Hellenic world, whose massive geographic footprint was established with the conquests of Alexander the Great. As this world began to gradually wane in Armenia, Armenian grammarians slowly replaced Hellenic literary references, such as the work of Homer, with citations and figures from the Bible (Cowe 2020a). So, too, did Armenian clergymen displace their lay grammarian counterparts, even as they continued to produce and collate commentaries on the *Tékhne grammatikē* (Art of Grammar) by the foundational Greek grammarian Dionysius Thrax (d. 90 BCE). Such commentaries proliferated in Classical Armenian throughout the medieval period and continued to be read and produced by the educated classes of the Armenian church. Yet given the close relationship between grammar, literary culture, and power, the question necessarily arises: aside from a brief entry in the *Žhank'*, where then are the Cilician Middle Armenian grammars?

The answer is complicated. In fact, King Het'um did commission a grammar in his lifetime. He made this request again of Vardan Arewelc'i, who completed his *Meknut'iwn k'erakani* (Commentary on Grammar) “at the request of Het'um King of the Armenians”, as the heading to his commentary tells us, sometime between 1244-46.⁶¹ Unlike the terse grammatical entry in the *Žhank'*, this work is a commentary on the seminal grammatical work of Dionysius Thrax. Hence, the aim of Vardan's *Commentary* is not to teach readers the Armenian language as would a modern language textbook, though it does contain ample linguistic information on the conjugation of verbs and declensions of nouns. Rather, like the tradition it belongs to, this work proposes a much broader philosophy and theory of language

61 Ի խնդրոյ թագաւորին Յայոց Յեթմոյ (Vardan Arewelc'i 1972, 73). Here, too, Vardan would seem to speak with Het'um, albeit in a more oblique manner than in the *Žhank'*. For example, in an entry that explains the meaning of being *erkanun* (binomial), or having two names, he gives the name and title of the king's brother, 'Smbat' and 'Sparapet', respectively, as examples (1972, 117).

(Xaç'ikyan 2012, 257). Vardan therefore defends his work as more than mere տեղեկութիւն (information). Grammar is հմտութիւն ('wisdom' or 'understanding'); it is գիտութիւն ('science' and 'reason'), and it is concerned with the proper interpretation of the essence of written texts, whether they be in verse or prose (1972, 73-4).⁶² The wisdom of grammar allows one to distinguish whether a text is orthodox or not, or even to discern whether a text is medical or astrological in nature (75). Thus, for Vardan, the study of grammar is the most necessary and foundational art for those who wish to be wise. In this context and for the many other Armenian commenters in this tradition, grammar is part of the branch of literature (գրականութիւն); in fact, it is the cornerstone of literature, poetry and prose, unlike the modern relegation of grammar to the branch of linguistics.⁶³ This, too, is a repository of authority and value, to paraphrase Irvine.

Where power and wisdom are correlated, the production of Vardan's *Commentary* is clear. Still, things become more complex where language enters the picture. The critical edition of the *Commentary*, compiled by the erudite scholar Xaç'eryan, presents a relatively seamless Classical Armenian text, though slight vernacularisms appear throughout.⁶⁴ In fact, the vast majority of premodern recensions of this text are in Classical Armenian. The scribes who copied Vardan's *Commentary*, following the collapse of Cilicia in 1375, clearly considered the Classical Armenian original to be the authoritative version. However, the ever-resourceful Middle Armenian still found its way into this work, as is made clear by Matenadaran M2283.⁶⁵ Unlike other recensions, this unpublished variant of Vardan's *Commentary* presents an explicit adaptation in Middle Armenian. Moreover, although M2283 was copied in a later century, it preserves a colophon composed by a scribe named Yakobak, who reports finishing the labour of copying the contents of

⁶² Cf. also Xaç'eryan's discussion in the introduction to the critical edition of Vardan's *Commentary* (Vardan Arewelc'i 1972, 8-9).

⁶³ Cf. Xaç'eryan's detailed introduction to the *Commentary* (Vardan Arewelc'i 1972, 10); cf. also Ant'abyan's shorter overview of Vardan's grammatical work (1987, 1:123-33; 2: 147-51). On Vardan's grammatical works, including a discussion on popular or 'vulgar' elements, cf. also the grammatical study by Ĵahukyan (1954, esp. 243-59).

⁶⁴ For instance, Vardan is the first grammarian to describe the differences in the thirteenth-century pronunciation shift between the letters *aw* and *o*, as the former had a palatal pronunciation and the latter a nasal one (1972, 86). The *ku* particle, which marks the present and imperfect indicative in Middle Armenian verbal conjugations, also appears in the Classical Armenian text, as if out of nowhere, perhaps giving some of Vardan's erudite explanations a more 'mellifluous' feel (86). Most prominently, Vardan (or a scribe after him) offers an explanation of the Middle Armenian form *grenk'* - i.e. 'let us write' or 'we shall write' - as belonging to the future tense (123; Xaç'eryan 1992, 157). In contrast, the text reports that the Classical Armenian form *gremk'* (we write) is used for the present tense. In general, however, whereas the *Žilank'* leans into a 'vulgar' register of Armenian, the *Commentary* skews more toward a formal register of the classical language.

⁶⁵ Yerevan, Matenadaran (Mesrop Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts), M2283.

this miscellany on 29 June 1335 (126r-126v). It is uncertain whether Yakobak's Middle Armenian recension was copied from a manuscript that was produced before 1335.

The two linguistic variants of the *Commentary* do not diverge by an order of magnitude, just as Middle and Classical do not diverge from one another by an order of magnitude during this period. However, unlike the Classical Armenian recension, the vernacular *Commentary* regularly conjugates verbs in Middle Armenian forms, as well as opting at times for a slightly different vocabulary in its use of nouns. It also replaces aspects of the Classical text, such as declensions that may have required a different kind of grammatical knowledge, with a simpler register of Middle Armenian, at times using a light form of circumlocution to make its point. Its use of Middle Armenian forms were both deliberate and pervasive, in other words, unlike its Classical counterpart.

Still, 'vulgar' Armenian also had defined limits in this work. Xač'eryan demonstrates that the manuscript simplifies (and in some cases slightly confuses) the Classical Armenian version of the text, which he believes is the only version that sprung from Vardan's pen (Vardan Arewelc'i 1972, 50-61).⁶⁶ Even more, it is worth observing that the Middle Armenian adaptation generally preserves the Classical Armenian text in discussions on specific grammatical forms, such as conjugations and declensions, perhaps so as not to confuse the reader with two competing registers or grammatical systems.⁶⁷ In contrast, it employs a Middle Armenian lexicon and grammar especially in more theoretical passages on language itself. In other words, its aim is not to teach the reader Middle Armenian grammar using a model culled from a Classical text, but rather, akin to the *Žlank*'s entry on pictographs and abbreviations, to aid the reader in future study, leaving the door open to acquire a nuanced understanding of the Classical language. This adaptation might therefore be thought of as an intermediary text, and an intermediary link, between the 'vulgar' and Classical language, as it uses the former in part to facilitate study of the latter.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ It is worth observing that the Middle Armenian recension also omits mention of Vardan's authorship or Het'um's patronage in the title.

⁶⁷ Compare, for instance, Vardan's discussion on the Middle Armenian form *grenk'*, which is basically identical in both the Middle Armenian variant and in the Classical Armenian text. So, too, are the conjugations of verbs left according to their Classical forms here (Vardan Arewelc'i 1972, 123; Matenadaran M2283, 29r).

⁶⁸ Currently, we know of no such intermediary grammatical text in the case of Byzantine and Ancient Greek, another vernacular and classical language set within the same linguistic continuum. A somewhat closer analogue, again, might be found in the case of Old French and Latin. For example, the Parisian scholar Alexander Neckam compiled his *De nominibus utensilium* (On the Names of Useful Things) in the late twelfth century, a widely popular word-list of Latin and vernacular English, which also included

And yet, its functional purpose is the same: to theorize the various parts of language itself, using Dionysius Thrax as its departure point. Although the aim of the vernacular rendition of the *Commentary* is not to teach the reader Middle Armenian, it does often allow the reader to learn to theorize language *through* Middle Armenian, which is also what the Classical Armenian original does. Hence, in every entry, Vardan opens by quoting Dionysius Thrax, in Armenian translation, and then glosses his words in different ways. For example, in one heading, Dionysius Thrax likens writing to the elements. Vardan explains this statement in a slow and methodical manner, gradually fleshing out the implications of a correspondence between the physical, elemental world and the Armenian alphabet in particular:

Որպէս տարերբ որ ունին հակառակութիւն և հաշտութիւն այնինքն միաւորութիւն. և այնի՛ւ կու գոյացնեն զամենայն, նոյնպէս և զիրն ի ձայնաւորաց և յանձայն իրաց իւրեանց. գոյացնէ զբանն. ի լերկից և ի թաւից ի բթիցն և յայլոցն որպէս յառաջ ունիս ուսանել. և որպէս վերոյ՛ ասացաք. Մարդո՛ւ է նրման բերականութիւնս. տառն ի հոգի և զիրն ի մարմին և այս եւթն ձայնաւոր գրերս. յեւթն զգայարականքն ի մարդոյն որով կու յարդարի մարդութիւն և որպէս ի զաւղուածքն՝ մինն պատուականագոյն՝ Է՛, քան զմին այլն. Նոյնպէս և ի գրերոյ՛ս է որ պատուականագոյն է մինն քան զմին այլնսն:⁶⁹

additional glosses in Old French (Copeland 2010). So, too, did Walter de Bibbesworth compose a glossary of Old French in verse in thirteenth-century England. Hunt (1991, 1:13) has noted that the presence of Old French in such works may have served both English speakers who needed to learn Old French, as well as those Old French speakers, such as the aristocratic class in England, whose Latin would have benefited from Old French explanations. I am grateful to Panagiotis Agapitos for his observation that no comparable Byzantine Greek grammatical text from the period exists.

69 The original Classical Armenian is only slightly more detailed, and reads as follows: Որպէս տարերբ, որ ունին հակառակութիւն և հաշտութիւն, որ է միաւորութիւն, և իւրեանց միաբանութեամբն ծնանին զամենայն, նոյնպէս և զիրն ի ձայնաւորաց և յանձայնից միացեալք գոյացուցանեն զբանն ի լերկից և ի թաւաց, ի բթից և յայլոցն, որպէս յառաջ ունիս ուսանել կամ իբր վերոյ՛ ասացաք: Կրո՛ղ զի՛նչ նմանի բերականութիւնս. – մարդոյ. տառն ի հոգի և զիրն ի մարմին: Եւ այս եւթն ձայնաւոր գրերս յեւթն զգայարանքս մարդոյս, որով յարդարի մարդութիւնս: Եւ ո՛ր են եւթն զգայարանքս. – աչքն, ականջքն, բիթն, բերանն, շաւափականն, հոգին և մարմին: Եւ որպէս ի յանդամսն ոմն քան զոմն պատուականագոյնք են, նոյնպէս և ի գրերոյ՛ս Է՛, որ պատուականագոյն է մինն քան զմիւսն, և առաւել զարդարէ զբանն: (Vardan Arewelc՛i 1972, 85). Note here that the Classical text actually names the ‘seven’ sensory organs: the eye, the ear, the nose, the mouth, the sense of touch or feeling, the soul, and the body.

As with the elements [*tarerk'*], which possess contrariety and conciliation, that is to say, conjunction, and through which they bring everything into being, so it is with letter[s] [*gir*], which, from their substance out of vowels and consonants, create the word [*ban*], and [moreover] out of soft consonants, and heavy consonants, and blunt consonants,⁷⁰ and out of other [such things], which you have [in hand] to study prior [to this], as we said above. Grammar is akin to mankind; the letter [*tar*] [which is pronounced] is like the soul, and the letter [*gir*] [which is written] is like the body; and these seven letters, which are vowels, are like the seven senses in man, by which human nature is fashioned. And as with members [of the body], one is all the more venerated over another, so it is among these letters, that one [set] is more venerated over others (Matenadaran M2283, 8v-9r).

It is common to find such discourse in Armenian grammars, and here the translator makes a fine metaphysical meal of it [fig. 8]. The material of the world is formed out of a tension that brings synthesis: air, fire, water, and earth do not go together, and yet through their combination, everything is formed. In the grammarian's eyes, the same is true of the dissimilar sounds that the Armenian consonants produce. He also gives the seven letters of the vowels prominence, as they correspond to 'seven' human senses, which, in Aristotelian terms, serve as the gateways that connect the material world to the rational mind, and therefore are more honoured than other parts of the body (like vowels, which render articulate speech possible). In fact, Vardan continues to elaborate on this theme, and in the following entries declares the vowels *ē* and *ō* to be the 'divine' letters, as they have a long pronunciation, he says, indicating the boundless existence of God within verbalized speech (Matenadaran M2283, 8v-9r).⁷¹ In short, Vardan weaves his commentaries on the Armenian alphabet into a Christian sphere of meaning-making, even while retaining his original ancient Greek source material, including references at times to Homer and the *Illiad*.

⁷⁰ *But'* denotes both an unstressed pause, and, in the case of pronunciation, "blunt" consonants that follow a vowel. Cf. Petrosyan et al. 1975, 69.

⁷¹ The Classical Armenian text conversely gives the 'long' vowel in its original written form, as *aw* (Vardan Arewelc'i 1972, 86); Middle Armenian adopted the letter *ō* during this period, and the translation uses this new letter in the Armenian script. It is additionally worth observing that the letter *ē* numerically means seven, corresponding again to the 'seven' senses, as well as serves as the auxiliary third person singular verb for 'he/she/it is'. In the Armenian church, the letter *ē* is also explicitly connected with God, the one who 'is', and hence also holy.

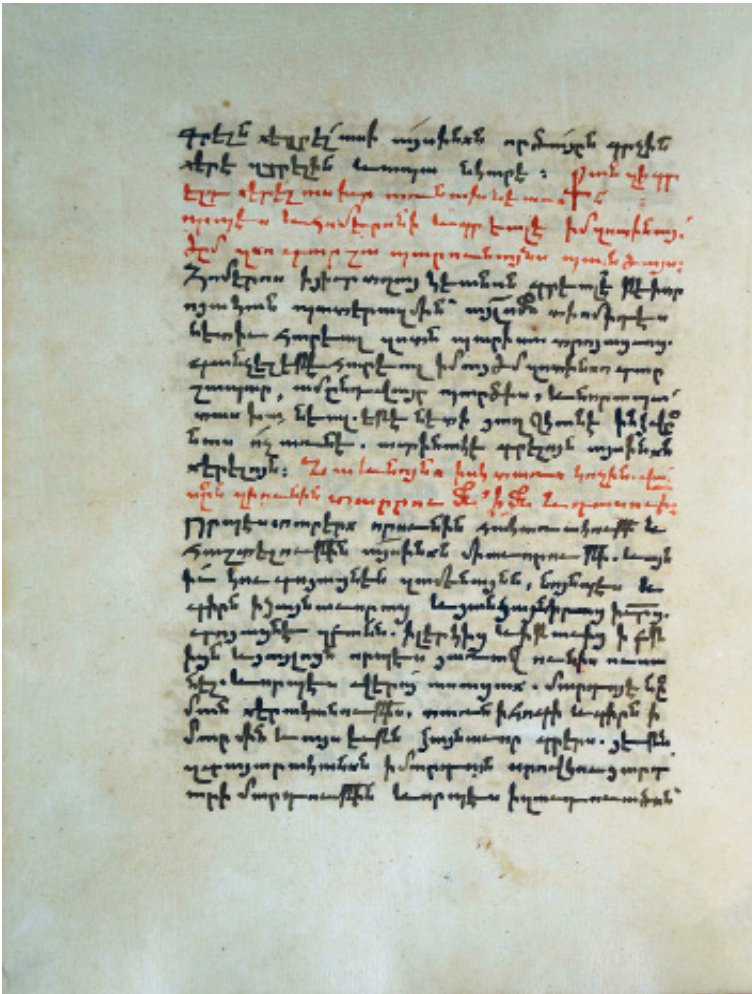


Figure 8 Discourse on letters in the Middle Armenian adaptation of Vardan Arewel'ci's Commentary on Grammar. M2283, 8v. Courtesy of the Matenadaran (Mesrop Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts)

Quite obviously, his grammar teaches much more, and much less, than only the paradigms of grammar as might a modern language textbook. Rather, it serves to guide the reader to reflect on language within a broader symbolic order, which is to say, to contemplate the ways that language metaphysically interfaces with its analogues in the physical world and with the Christian theology of the Armenian church. When one reads this text in its Middle Armenian adaptation, one also is invited to consider these same correspondences through Middle Armenian as a medium of thought. Arguably, in this

light, the Middle Armenian *Commentary* is not only a simplified, and sometimes corrupted, version of Vardan's (largely) Classical Armenian original, as Xaç'eryan would imply. Instead, it is an invitation to do this labour in the 'mellifluous' tongue, just as one might do it in Classical - which, after all, still shares the same basic constitutive elements of language, including aspirated and unaspirated consonants and seven vowels. By implication, this vulgar adaptation is also a subtle indication that Middle Armenian might be capable of providing part of the cornerstone in any medieval Armenian education - the study of 'grammar' - and hence serve as a basis for all future learning, presumably in both Middle and Classical Armenian.

What the Classical and Middle Armenian recensions of Vardan's *Commentary* collectively demonstrate, at the least, are three important points. First, in his self-presentation as an 'educated king' at court, King Het'um took an active role in commissioning a new Armenian grammar; grammaticality was therefore also tied to his kingship in Cilicia, much as it was at other courts during the 'vernacular millennium'. Second, the movement to use Middle Armenian as a language of knowledge production, which was also correlated at this time with the education and even authority of the nobility, was robust enough to support both the translation of works from other languages *and* the adaptation of Classical Armenian texts into the vernacular, even in cases where the originals were still available. In this case, the Middle Armenian adaptation of Vardan's *Commentary* arguably served to aid readers who had difficulty studying the same work in Classical Armenian, or who preferred the 'mellifluous' register over the Classical standard. Third, and perhaps most important, the Middle Armenian *Commentary* served as a similar linguistic proof-of-concept as did the Classical Armenian recension. That is, it implicitly demonstrated that Middle Armenian was a language capable of auto-theorization, just as it was a language capable of producing legal, encyclopedic, medical, and theological works, even as Vardan's Middle Armenian *Commentary* still gave primacy to the classical language.

The relationship between grammaticality and kingship has received relatively little attention in the history of the Armenian language. Indeed, the Middle Armenian *Commentary* has never been published, even as an appendix to Xaç'eryan's critical edition, in part because of practical limitations due to space, and in part because he did not place as much value in a Middle Armenian recension that seemed less sure of its subject than did its Classical Armenian counterpart. Yet this relationship between grammar and power seemed quite clear to our premodern subjects, even in the expression of Middle Armenian 'grammaticality'.

It is telling, then, that the Middle Armenian adaptation of Vardan's *Commentary* did not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, its composition (or at least its copying) roughly coincides with the activities of

Yovhannēs K'ṛnec'ī (d. 1347), an Armenian priest who was a member of the *Fratres Unitores*, which advocated for the reunification of the Armenian and Roman churches – a position which Vardan Arewelc'ī staunchly opposed – and eventually became a branch of the Dominican Order. Unlike nearly all the Armenian grammarians who preceded him, Yovhannēs actually provides and explains many of Middle Armenian's grammatical paradigms in a clear manner, and with abundant examples (Yovhannēs K'ṛnec'ī 1977; cf. Cowe 2020b, 109-12), though he wrote generally in a simple Classical register.⁷² He also broke with the long tradition of commenting on Dionysius Thrax, aiming to impart less a theory of language than its finer points of syntax, which he accomplished by melding Armenian with Latinate syntax in particular.

Yovhannēs perhaps did not undertake this task to elevate Middle Armenian to the level of other more standardized 'vernaculars', but rather to assist his fellow Dominicans and students who could not study Classical Armenian at the Apostolic monasteries of the Armenian church, as Cowe has proposed (2020b, 110). It is also worth noting that, in some respects, the Middle Armenian adaptation of Vardan's *Commentary* presents an inversion of Yovhannēs's grammar: the former uses Middle Armenian especially in prose sections that theorize language, but instructs its audience using the grammatical paradigms of Classical Armenian; the latter generally uses a simple Classical Armenian in its prose, yet instructs readers in many 'vulgar' grammatical forms. In other words, both make use of the 'mellifluous' tongue, yet for different reasons, and presumably to serve the needs of different audiences. It is unknown whether Yovhannēs grasped, to whatever degree, that Middle Armenian had become both a language of erudition and a hallmark of knowledge production at the court at Sis, in addition to serving as a written language for an increasing number of clergy in the Armenian church. Still, at the least, he exhibits the importance of folding both Middle and Classical Armenian into his Latinophile sphere, aligning the language of the court with the language of the church he desired to unite with his own, whether this was his explicit intention or not.

Through its close relationship with the Classical standard, then, Middle Armenian gradually became an object of study, both for the

72 To give but one illustration of this, in the following sentence, Yovhannēs (1977, 177) sets up his explanation in a simple Classical register, but conjugates verbs in the present tense using the Middle Armenian particle *ku*: “Արդ ցուցականքն են, որ ցուցանեն զժամանակ, զդէմ, և զթիւ՝ եզական և բազմաւորական: Եւ են այսպէս. ներկա ցուցական, եզական կու սիրեն, կու սիրես, կո[ւ] սիրէ...” (Now the indicatives, which indicate the tense, person, and number, [i.e.,] singular and plural, are as such: in present indicative, singular, ‘I love’, ‘you love’, ‘he/she/it loves’...). His use of Middle Armenian in present and imperfect indicative is generally pervasive throughout his *Grammar*, though he also often uses Classical forms for the other tenses.

(unnamed) audiences of Vardan's 'vulgar' *Commentary* and also for Dominican and/or Armenian readers of Yovhannēs's *Grammar*, although in different ways. Again, this was not only learning for learning's sake, but rather, in the case of Yovhannēs's *Grammar*, represented a subtle effort to exert a kind of cultural, theological, and political leverage, assisting his fellow Dominicans in nudging other Armenians toward the Catholic church and the Latinate world, but through a 'mellifluous' tongue. Of course, the writings of partisans of the Armenian church, such as Vardan Arewelc'i, continued to be copied, to circulate, and most of all to be studied at the court in Sis. Middle Armenian had become a language of the elite in Cilicia not only by default, as a language that kings spoke simply because it was also their mother tongue, but also for its epistemic, and pedagogical, and authoritative currency in multiple social contexts: it was a language fit to instruct the Armenian nobility; it was a language the nobility and the church used to articulate their conjoined legitimacy; and finally it was a language that erudite Apostolic and Dominican figures undertook to study and to reproduce in different degrees, as through the production of diglossic Classical and Middle Armenian grammars, even beyond the court. Middle Armenian's moment as a companion of elite power, and thus as a new front line in the battle over the cultural and religious orientations of Cilicia, would therefore seem to have fully arrived.

5 Conclusion: Docile Speech, Pleasing Labour, and Ties that Bind

A language is a dialect with an army and a navy - or, at least, so goes the maxim widely attributed to Max Weinreich. It is not hard to see the implications of the Weinreich witticism, as it is sometimes called: what rises to the upper branches of the linguistic taxonomic tree, and hence what becomes the subject of academic study and even cultivation, is often underpinned by a form of state power. In the case of Middle Armenian's gradual ascendancy as a court language in Sis, the Weinreich witticism is doubly true: to some degree, the court and church's proximity to Middle Armenian also helped nudge it to become an object of study in premodern Cilicia. Likewise, this proximity is what initially drew the attention of linguists in the late nineteenth century, who reinvigorated the study of Middle Armenian in the modern age, even as Armenians lacked their own form of modern statehood.

Given the fact that elite proximity or 'closeness' is what made it possible to study Middle Armenian today, it would therefore behoove us to consider its relation to power not merely in the abstract, as though somehow coequal with Cilician statehood writ large, or

in the administrative context of specific branches of the court, such as the chancellery or legal system's use of the language. Rather, as I have outlined briefly here, the use of 'rustic' and 'mellifluous' Armenian in Cilicia often took place in discrete social contexts, both in and out of court, for the benefit of elite audiences who in this case study were largely other Armenian nobility. Of course, this is but a small moment in the early life of Cilician Middle Armenian, as seen here from the perspective of the king, a member of the clergy, and their extended networks in the church and at court. Even during the height of Het'um's rule, the medieval vernacular was used in more decentralized ways than the ones I have briefly sketched, just as it had a broader life at court beyond the texts composed by or adapted from Vardan Arewelc'i.

There were also clear limits to the reach of Middle Armenian in Cilicia. As the *Žlank'* and the *Commentary on Grammar* show, the 'vulgar' Armenian tongue did not exactly angle to displace its Classical sibling in its slow rise to power: after all, Het'um commissioned works in both Middle and Classical Armenian; even more, his Middle Armenian compendium drew heavily from Classical Armenian grammatical forms, albeit in a relatively simple manner. Both Classical and Middle Armenian were also employed to articulate different sorts of royal self-fashioning and authority by the court, depending on the context, from this period onward in the history of Armenian Cilicia. For instance, Het'um's son Lewon II commissioned a versified history about his family, known as Vahram's *Chronicle*, in a mono-rhymed Classical Armenian; this history was explicitly modelled upon the former Catholicos Nersēs Šnorhali's own versified history, which narrates the genealogy of his family. Vahram's *Chronicle* thus had to be composed in Classical Armenian, in part because Nersēs also composed his poetic history in Classical Armenian, as Abkarian has observed (unpublished). However, akin to Nersēs, who additionally penned biblical riddles in versified Middle Armenian, Lewon II also employed the vernacular for other ends, notably issuing a Middle Armenian privilege to the merchants of Genoa in 1288. Of course, the audiences and functions of these works were also different: one explicitly aimed to adapt a poem by the head of the church, while the other addressed tax collectors at the customs house in the port of Ayas (and, at least in theory, also the Genoese directly). The salient point is that the Het'umid line had many ways of exercising their power, and those articulations fell across a spectrum of literary and dialectal registers, depending on their particular need.

In these senses, although part of a 'linguistic continuum' with its classical language, Cilician Middle Armenian enjoyed a very different life at the Armenian court in Sis than did vernacular Greek, which likewise existed along a spectrum of language, at the Byzantine court. Chiefly, as this article has shown, the Armenian court and

church tasked Cilician Middle Armenian with producing knowledge across multiple genres (compendia, exegesis, pharmacopoeia, jurisprudence, grammars, etc.), unlike Byzantine Greek, which was never used for these purposes during this period. Cilician Middle Armenian's life at court thus more closely paralleled the uses of Old French in Outremer, even though the latter's classical antecedent was Latin and hence a different language, which, again, is quite different from the case of the Armenian vernacular and Classical Armenian. It would seem in part that Cilician Middle Armenian's many deviations from its adjacent vernacular neighbours were due to its development out of multiple intersecting and multilingual environments, even as it engaged in a diglossic dance with its classical counterpart. In the case of the court at Sis, the nobility demonstrated different degrees of fluency in Classical Armenian, Middle Armenian, and Old French in Het'um's time. Other servitors, visitors, and clergy at court added languages into this mix (such as Latin, Arabic, Syriac, and Greek in particular; Burchard of Mount Sion also observed a few Mongols at court during his visit). Additional languages, such as Georgian, New Persian, and Anatolian Turkish, further interfaced with the Armenian dialects in Greater Armenia and Anatolia. Arguably, Cilician Middle Armenian developed at court as a written language out of its uneven interface with many of these tongues.

It is difficult to consider this language as especially 'rustic' within the courtly setting of Sis, as Nichanian has aptly observed, stressing instead the vernacular's configuration in writing at the crossroads of many languages and genres (1989, 234). Here, we can add that courtly Middle Armenian was 'rustic' to the extent that Vulgar Latin, which became a language for the training of Catholic clergy in the ninth century, could also be accurately described as a 'rustic' tongue at the Council of Tours: both vernacular registers extended a bridge to forms of knowledge production in the classical language, even while both were implicitly and explicitly contrasted against the rigorous forms of learning that use of the classical language necessitated.

Most crucially, as I have posited here, Cilician Middle Armenian likewise developed in writing out of its interface between different elite figures and institutions across and beyond this space. In particular, the 'mellifluous' tongue served an important role in bringing together a grammarian from Greater Armenia and his king in Cilicia, who grew closer in a mutually beneficial relationship forged in part through their interest in and use of language. As we have seen, Vardan often addressed Het'um directly, at times even in the second person singular 'you' instead of by a formal title more appropriate to the king's station. He also employed a vernacularized Armenian, mixed with Classical forms, to converse with his sovereign in an accessible and perhaps familiar manner. In other words, by braiding a rhetoric of intimacy into a blend of classical and vernacular forms of the

Armenian tongue, Vardan sought to produce a specific form of authority: one founded upon this very dialogue, which produces closeness between the Armenian church and the royal court, just as it produces closeness between the Het'umid and Rubēnid dynastic lines and closeness between 'vulgar' and Classical Armenian.⁷³ In this light, his pedagogy aimed not only to establish a program for the king and his immediate family members, but rather for the future of courtly study in Sis under the auspices of the Armenian church more broadly.

It would seem that Vardan, along with his colleagues in the church, were rather successful in this endeavour at least in the short term. When Burchard of Mount Sion visited the court in the late thirteenth century, he was impressed not only by the austerity of the Catholicos, who chose to don a shirt of hair despite his personal wealth, but also by the closeness between the clergy and the king's family in the social act of study:

Regem Armenie et Cilicie uidi cum omnibus optimatibus suis sedentem ualde humiliter et cum magna reuerentia ante pedes eius pluries cum filio suo primogenito, et cum magna deuotione audientem ab eo uerbum Dei. Iste cum omnibus suis prelati archiepiscopi et episcopi et ceteris per totam quadregesimam in pane et aqua abstinebant, et rex idem similiter et omnes optimates sui, nisi in festo annunciationis, et tunc me presente idem Catholicus cum ipso dispensauit, ut pisces comederet et biberet unum. Illo die interfui misse coram eodem Catholico et rege et regina. Et habent officium deuotum ualde.

I saw the king of Armenia and Cilicia with all his nobles sitting very humbly and with great reverence before the feet of the Catholicos, frequently with his first-born son, listening with great devotion to the word of God from him. The Catholicos with all his prelates, archbishops, bishops, and others, fasted the whole forty days of Lent with bread and water, and the same king and all his nobles similarly, apart from the Feast of Annunciation, and then in my presence the same Catholicos gave himself a dispensation that he might eat fish and drink wine. That day I attended mass before the same Catholicos and the king and queen. They take their liturgical duty very seriously (Burchard of Mount Sion, O.P. 2019, 204-5).

Here, as in Vardan's *Žłlank'*, an intellectual genealogy (and with it, a social hierarchy) is on display: the king and his first-born son,

73 The familiarity of this tongue was also outwardly facing, toward audiences not at court. For example, in the Middle Armenian privilege to the merchants of Montpellier from 1314, King Ōšin addresses the tax collectors at the port of Ayas in the same familiar, singular 'you' that Vardan uses to speak with the king, just as he employs a lexicon that contains loanwords of Greek and Arabic origin.

surrounded by the nobility, sit at the feet of the Catholicos, from whom they receive their instruction directly in the spoken Armenian vernacular. Burchard furnishes a tableau in which the uses of Cilician Middle Armenian obviously intersected with many other pedagogical, theological, and political, and social developments at court. The activity of manuscript study at court, both in Middle and Classical Armenian linguistic contexts, thus provided a kind of infrastructure that produced social propinquity between disparate and sometimes distant actors. At times the configuration of Middle Armenian as a written language of elite study may have been a byproduct of the complex and shifting interpersonal and inter-institutional relationships among elite actors in Cilicia. At other times, this configuration in turn seems to have subtly informed those other interpersonal and inter-institutional relationships, as when it opened a channel for dialogue between the king and his grammarian, or when it served as an implicit medium for Het'um's legitimacy to be buttressed by the "budding branches" of his sons, who were joined to his program of vernacular study.

As I have argued previously, we might therefore ask more from the modern epithet of 'Middle' Armenian, which need not only describe a mere chronology of language (Pifer 2023; Budak, Pifer 2024). Rather, the 'mediality' of this language might be used to characterize a quality of both the language and the people who used it. In this case, Middle Armenian was successfully configured into a language fit for the king - in that it served as a medium for the king to conduct study on seemingly any topic in the world - in part because it served as an acceptable go-between for the church, which entered into the lives of Het'um, Zabel, and their sons 'born in the purple', in an intimate manner through the production of works like the *Žlank* and the *Commentary*. Moreover, it was a language through which the king aimed to bridge the gap between himself and his wife, between his erudition and her inherited right to the throne, even as it folded them into a patriarchal hierarchy with Christ over all. So too did it serve as a synthetic bridge between truly 'rustic' and dialectal speech, exhibited across Cilicia and Greater Armenia, and the Classical literary standard, even while simultaneously interfacing with other languages of the court in Sis. Finally, it was a language whose life in the Mediterranean, the sea in the middle, distantly mirrored the development of other 'vernacular' tongues, such as the Vulgar Latin in France, the use of Outremer French in the neighbouring Crusader states, the Mamluk patronage of translations into Old Turkish at court, and the development of Byzantine Greek within a linguistic continuum alongside its own Classical language. This was the broader milieu in which it became beneficial to employ 'classical' languages, such as literary Arabic and Latin, in addition to developing seemingly more localized 'rustic' tongues, often at the same courts. Of

course, as we have seen here, this grand drama of Mediterranean multilingualism could also play out on a small and intimate stage: in this case, through the courtly study of a handful of manuscripts between one's kin and an erudite priest.

Tellingly, in this era of linguistic hyperpluralism at court, Middle Armenian even drew the attention of elite actors beyond Cilicia or Greater Armenia. In fact, slightly before the Armenian Kingdom in Cilicia fell to the Mamluks, another court was attempting to study Armenian in a different and more limited fashion. We know this from the Rasulid Hexaglot, a multilingual dictionary composed for the sixth Rasulid king of Yemen (r. 1363-77), which contains entries in Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Mongol, Byzantine Greek, and Armenian (Golden 2000). Notably, the Rasulid Hexaglot also features a list of Middle Armenian imperative forms, supplied by either Armenian slaves or servitors in Yemen. It is unclear whether these Armenians at the Rasulid court only knew the Armenian vernacular or whether they provided this language because it would have been useful in dealing with actors or merchants from the Cilician state. What we can say is that the Cilician court in Sis helped to fashion Middle Armenian into a language that had different sorts of currency at court; in the case of the Rasulids, it just so happens that the elites who took a brief interest in 'Middle' were not always Armenian, but other figures who employed the Armenian tongue, to whatever degree, in part to perform and articulate their own status as educated rulers even beyond the Mediterranean world. At both of these courts, and to different degrees, written Middle Armenian was a language of interest primarily to the educated elite. The same is true, slightly later in time, of attempts to study Middle Armenian at the Ottoman court of Mehmed II (d. 1481), which likewise produced a detailed grammar of the language in the Arabo-Persian script, and moreover seems to have done so to bolster the universalist, imperial ideology of their own 'educated king' (Budak, Pifer 2024).

This broader social history of Middle Armenian emerges from the mouths and the pens of many actors, in relation to one another, across distances great and small. The Armenian vernacular thus helped to bridge chasms of many kinds, just as it also helped to bring various and perhaps even unwilling historical actors together. Most of all, Middle Armenian was a language of opportunity: a medium to assert overlapping, and occasionally competing, claims to power on behalf of the church and the nobility, even as it sometimes disguised those tensions with a rhetoric of intimacy, if not a pedagogy that produced certain forms of social and dynastic bonding at court. And yet, the development of Middle Armenian as a language of writing, which also was beginning to live a decentralized life beyond Sis, obviously cannot be reduced to a single set of innovations by a particular king or even a specific generation or two among the clergy or nobility, either.

This is partly because Middle Armenian is also an actor in this story, one whose presence at court implicitly proffered new possibilities for the social articulation of power to many others in its midst, as though angling, through its own increasing proximity to both church and king, to secure an elite position even for itself.

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Literature

“Da natural vaghezza mosso”: Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri’s Travels Through Armenia (1694)

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Abstract Travel Literature is a goldmine of information for the study of Armenian art and culture. Nevertheless, it is a largely unexplored field of investigation, especially accounts written in Italian. Among the understudied works, *Giro del mondo* (1699-1700) by Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri (1651-1724) stands out. Travelling to Ispahan across Historical Armenia in 1694, Gemelli described populations, settlements, and monuments. The analysis retraces the traveller’s path examining the information on the presence and conditions of the Armenian artistic heritage in the Eastern Ottoman districts and the Safavid provinces of Erevan and Naxijevan.

Keywords Armenian art. Travel literature. Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri. Ottoman Empire. Safavid Empire. Erzurum. Kars. T’alin. Ĕjmiacin. Erevan. Geġard. Naxijevan. Ĵutay.

Summary 1 European Travel Literature: A Source for Armenian Art History. – 2 An Unexplored Case: Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri and His Chronicle *Around the* (Armenian) *World*. – 3 Conclusions.



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1 European Travel Literature: A Source for Armenian Art History

Since the dawn of civilisation, travels have been part of the human experience in response to dangers, necessity, or even the pure desire for knowledge. They constitute a fertile soil for humanistic studies thanks to the accounts of those who entrusted their memory to posterity through writing. Despite the long-standing fascination with travel literature and the extensive studies devoted to it, the field is still far from being fully explored. This is due to the vast quantity of material to be examined and the inevitable language barriers associated with it.¹

A promising line of research combines art history and odepotic, i.e. the use of travel literature as a source for the study of artistic heritage. This approach is highly significant for Armenian art, whose numerous samples only represent the remnants of a much more glorious past.² Considering natural disasters, neglect and deliberate destructions, the voices of wayfarers from the past can help to understand (and sometimes to reconstruct) what was once the ancient consistency of a cultural heritage sadly heavily threatened to this day (Ferrari 2019, 11-32; Dorfmann-Lazarev, Khatchadourian 2023).

However, this is still a relatively unexplored area of research, apart from the monographs dedicated to the most famous sites (e.g. Grigoryan 2015; Kéfélian 2021), works conceived with an avowedly Armenian focus (Lynch 1901) or dedicated to Near Eastern antiquities, in which the description of Armenian monuments is relegated to the background compared to other contexts.³ To this day, there is no comprehensive and critically updated documentation on

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1 From the purely historical perspective, the period most extensively studied to date continues to be the Middle Ages; in contrast, studies of the Modern and Contemporary Ages tend to adopt either a monographic or anthological approach, cf. Guglielminetti 1967; Searight 1979; Berchet 1985; Reichert 1992; Menestò 1993; Invernizzi 2001; Surdich 2017. However, recent progress in the field of mobilities turn research can provide new insights and methodological tools to the disciplines of humanistic sciences, cf. Urry 2007; Adey et al. 2014; Merriman, Pearce 2017; Biasiori, Mazzini, Rabbiosi 2023; Nelles, Salzberg 2023; Holmberg 2024.

2 If only a tiny percentage of the art of medieval Byzantium remains today, the situation of Armenian art is far worse, cf. Demus 2008, 5.

3 E.g. Chardin 1711; Ker Porter 1821; Layard 1853; cf. Invernizzi 2005, VII-XIII.

Armenia and its artistic production, even less so related to European travel literature.⁴

This paper aims to fill the gaps of a mosaic that is as complex as it is essential to the understanding of Armenian culture and its perception, possibly expanding the still ill-defined boundaries of its frame. To this purpose a travel report scarcely known in Armenian studies will be analysed, of which exists no critical edition (not even in Italian, the language it was written in). The author of the account is Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri (1651-1724), one of the first Italians to undertake an around-the-world voyage for sheer pleasure.⁵

2 An Unexplored Case: Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri and His Chronicle *Around the (Armenian) World*

When the first volume of his *Giro del Mondo* went to press in 1699, Gemelli was 48 years old, which means he was born in 1651 (Gemelli 1: 2) [fig. 1].⁶ Born in Radicena (Calabria), he was educated in Naples at the Jesuit Fathers College. Having obtained a degree in *utroque iure*, he was allowed to hold positions in the administration of the vicerealty of Naples between 1671 and 1685. Being allegedly prevented from exercising his duties by serious disagreements with shady personalities,⁷ he left his post to undertake a journey through

⁴ Previous studies have predominantly referenced renowned travel accounts, from Marco Polo to Henry Lynch, in a more descriptive than analytical perspective, e.g. Karagezjan 2019. It is beyond doubt that the French jeweller and traveller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605-89) is among the most frequently cited authors in Armenia studies. Like the younger Jean Chardin (1643-1713), Tavernier undertook business voyages through its regions, and his account provides useful insights into the commercial mobility of the period; however, it lacks references to artistic and historical matters, and is full of inaccuracies and far-fetched anecdotes, which have been disproved or ridiculed by subsequent writers, e.g. Gemelli 2: 17. Among the Italian travel-writers of the seventeenth century, Ambrogio Bembo (1652-1705) and Nicolò Manucci (1638-1717) are worthy of note. For further information, cf. Pedrini 2011, Invernizzi 2012 and the related bibliography.

⁵ Gemelli 1699, vols 1 and 2. There are only a few studies on this author and his works, and the most specific ones concerning mostly travels to the Far East and the Americas, which are beyond the scope of the present discussion. This is a selected and updated list of such studies: Du Halde 1722, XIV-XVIII; Prevost 1753, 465; Grossi 1820; Ciampi 1859; De Gubernatis 1875, 57-8; Amat di S. Filippo, 467-70; Ghirlanda 1899; Magnaghi 1900; Nunnari 1901; Zeri 1904; Vece 1906; Croce 1929, 106; Magnaghi 1932; Barthold 1947, 139; de Vargas 1955; Guglielminetti 1967, 683-4; Zoli 1972, 409-16; Perocco 1985, 144-65; Fatica 1998; Galeota 1994; Buccini 1996; Ballo Alagna 1997; Maccarone-Amuso 2000; Doria 2000; Negro Spina 2001; Invernizzi 2005, 387-91; Hester 2008, 155 ff.; Sarzi Amade 2012.

⁶ In fact, some claim that Gemini was born in 1648, cf. Fatica 1998, 66.

⁷ In explaining his motivations for travelling, the author speaks about “unfair persecutions and undue outrages”, Gemelli 1: 2-3. Translations from Italian are by the author of this article.

Europe (from 1685 to 1687), during which he participated in the Hungarian campaigns against the Ottoman Empire, both being wounded (Battle of Buda, 2 September 1686) and receiving commendations for military prowess (Battle of Mohács, 12 August 1687). These awards guaranteed him reinstatement in the viceroyalty administration, but only for four years. Between 1689 and 1693, he worked as *auditor* at the magistracies of Lecce and L’Aquila. In those years, he published two travel reports, *Relazione delle campagne d’Ungheria* (1689) and *Viaggi per l’Europa* (1693) (Doria 2000, 43).



Figure 1
Portrait of Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, 1699, *Giro del mondo*, 1, frontispiece

Once again victim of alleged harassment by his detractors, he decided to leave Naples and, notebook in hand, set off on a new, longer journey. The original plan to visit the Chinese Empire underwent a gradual expansion that in five and a half years (13 June 1693-4 December 1698) took him from Egypt to the Indies, then from China to the Philippines, where he sailed for Mexico and from there came back to Europe. After his return, he gained international fame by publishing the six-volume detailed account of his wanderings, entitled *Giro del Mondo* (Around the World, 1699-1700). The work was

reprinted at least seven times between 1699 and 1728, and was translated into French (1719), and English (1732), while excerpts from it were included in foreign compilations, including German and Russians works (Doria 2000, 44; Invernizzi 2005, 387). After his return to his homeland, perhaps due in part to his literary success, Gemelli was appointed vicar judge and auditor of the navy. He died in Naples on 25 July 1724.

Apart from the editorial history and the critical success of the *Giro*, what is important to us is its relevance as a source for the study of Armenian art and culture in a period characterised by constant clashes between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. Thus, an annotated reconstruction of the traveller's path through historical Armenia is proposed here. At the same time, the Mediterranean area is excluded, not for lack of evidence of Armenian presence – significant in the districts of Edirne,⁸ Smirne⁹ and Jerusalem¹⁰ –, but because it would deserve a separate discussion. The itinerary analysed and reconstructed is that from Trebizond to Ĵulay [fig. 2], described in the first two volumes of his monumental report, dedicated respectively to *Giro del Mondo del Dottor D. Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri contenente le cose più ragguardevoli vedute nella Turchia/Persia* (The Most Remarkable Things Seen in Turkey and Persia) (Gemelli 1: 395-450, 2: 1-22).

8 Between 22 December 1693 and 4 January 1694, Gemelli stayed in Adrianople, "inhabited by Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Turks, Wallachians, and other nations" (Gemelli 1: 242-89, in particular 244). The author also mentions the existence of an Armenian community in *Malgarà* (i.e. Malkara), cf. Gemelli 1: 240.

9 Gemelli stayed twice in Izmir: from 27 November to 12 December 1693 and from 17 February to 9 March 1694 (cf. Gemelli 1: 213-24, 342-50). He also reports that, on the latter occasion, he lodged at the Armenian caravanserai because, in his opinion, the Armenians "though schismatics, have no such aversion; on the contrary, they lovingly procure to render every possible service to Catholics on occasion, as I have experienced many times" (Gemelli 1: 343). The Greeks, on the other hand, are thought by Gemelli to be fraudulent and unfriendly to Catholics.

10 During his stay in Jerusalem (29 August-8 September 1693), Gemelli described the St. James complex, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the tomb of the Virgin, a small Armenian church on Mount Zion and other places of worship attended (also) by Armenians (cf. Gemelli 1: 111-78).

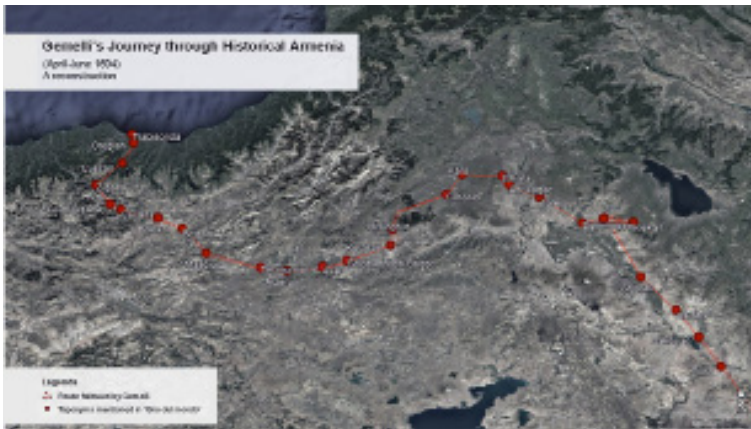


Figure 2 Reconstruction of Gemelli Careri’s travel through Armenia (1694). Author’s elaboration

Having left Naples on 13 June 1693, Gemelli stopped in *Redicina* to bid farewell to his brother, Abbot Giovanni Battista. He left for Messina on 7 July¹¹ and, within six months, he visited Malta,¹² Egypt,¹³ the Holy Land, then, via the Aegean islands,¹⁴ Izmir, Gallipoli,¹⁵ and Edirne, where he also saw Sultan Ahmed II (Gemelli 1: 6-402). He then reached Constantinople on 10 January 1694, where he remained until 11 April.¹⁶ During these three months, a series of worrisome accidents occurred, including Gemelli’s arrest by the Ottoman authorities, just before his planned departure for Trebizond, on suspicion of being a spy (Gemelli 1: 292-336, 369-402).¹⁷ The traveller had previous misadventures with Ottoman guards and janissaries, which contributed to eliciting antipathy towards the Turks that, with rare

¹¹ He arrived in Radicina on 27 June and left from Palmi on 7 July 1693.

¹² The Italian traveller stopped in Malta from 15 to 21 July.

¹³ Gemelli was in Egypt from 1 to 23 August 1693, then from 2 to 10 October, mainly in Alexandria and Cairo.

¹⁴ Specifically, he called at Rhodes (24 October-11 November 1693), *Stanchio* (Coo, 13-14 November 1693), *Scio* (Chios, 17 November 1693) and, after passing Smyrna (cf. fn. 9), *Mitylene* (Lesvos port, 13-15 December 1693) and *Tenedos* (today’s Bozcaada, 15-17 December 1693).

¹⁵ He stayed in Gallipoli for just two days (17-19 December 1693).

¹⁶ Gemelli also stayed twice in the Ottoman capital: from 10 to 28 January, then from 29 March to 11 April 1694.

¹⁷ Gemelli was detained from 2 to 6 April 1694.

exceptions,¹⁸ made his stay within their domains rather unpleasant.¹⁹

In the former Byzantine imperial capital on the Black Sea, Gemelli enjoyed the hospitality of the local Jesuit mission, consolidating a practice already experimented during his Mediterranean pilgrimages (Gemelli 1: 117, 408).²⁰ For his safety, he decided to undertake the journey to Ispahan together with a small group of missionaries: Fr. Villotte, Superior of the mission of Erzurum by decree of the Sultan; Fr. Dalmatius of Auvergne, destined for the province of Şamaxı; Fr. Martin of Guyenne, directed to Ispahan; and Dominic of Bologna, a Dominican Friar directed to Aparaner (Gemelli 1: 413-14).²¹ Gemelli later reported that Fr. Villotte "had well learned the Armenian language" for obvious missionary purposes, using games he invented to bring the faithful closer to Catholic doctrine (Gemelli 1: 419). This is important because it helps to explain the acquisition of so much knowledge about Armenian customs and traditions by the curious writer, who assiduously reported the names of places and settlements, rendering a pronunciation that was as close as possible to the language he heard. By doing so, he attested a fair number of Armenian toponymies along the way.

Gemelli's Trabzon was "a province between Asia Minor and Great-er Armenia", and a city in decay, of which

due to the many vicissitudes it had undergone, it must be believed that nothing has remained of its ancient splendour, as it now looks more like a village than an imperial city; indeed it looks like an inhabited forest, as there is no house that does not have its own large garden, with olive trees and other fruits, as well as the fields that are interspersed with it. (Gemelli 1: 408-9)²²

The day after his landing, Gemelli was able to observe the two citadels, emphasising how both were "poorly provided with garrison

18 The Turks with whom he travelled from Constantinople to Trebizond, for example, turned out to be "costumed people" (Gemelli 1: 405-6).

19 The traveller describes the Ottomans as: "utterly barbarous, uncivil, proud above all other nations, liars, much given to idleness, greedy for money, ignorant, and enemies of the Christian name. Nor is the government any better than the customs, because the trials are very short, and exposed to the falsehood of the witnesses; the cases being determined for the benefit of those who give more, not those who are more right" (Gemelli 1: 386-7).

20 When he arrived in Jaffa, a few months earlier, he had to take lodging with a Jew, "neither Friars nor French being in such a small country" (Gemelli 1: 117). In Trebizond he stayed with the missionaries from 21 to 27 April 1694. The traveller was received by Fathers "dressed in Armenian fashion" (Gemelli 1: 407).

21 A fifth missionary, Fr Lau from the province of Lyons, remained in Trebizond.

22 Gemelli also mentions a violent sacking of the city by the Russians in 1617, asserting that the same fate befell Sinope and Caffa.

and artillery" (Gemelli 1: 409-10). In a later visit to the lower citadel, "situated on a rock, with two orders of walls and a deep moat", he judged it to be the oldest one (Gemelli 1: 412). On 23 April, he visited the urban suburbs where, he says, "for the most part live Armenians, and Greeks, with their bishops for the exercise of their Religion" (Gemelli 1: 410). Unfortunately, the traveller does not describe Armenian churches and places of worship, showing more interest in practical aspects such as the lax customs controls. Above all, he notices that both Armenians and Greeks live in uncomfortable socio-economic conditions caused by the many taxes combined with the burden of supporting the visiting *paša's* family during Ramadan (Gemelli 1: 412).

Gemelli's small company joined a caravan to Erzurum on 27 April, finding refuge in the ruined caravanserai of *Oreglan*, after four hours of "mountainous and muddy" travel (Gemelli 1: 414). The journey was no less difficult in the following days, as the caravan had to cross the Zigana pass relying on small and unprotected shelters (Gemelli 1: 414-16).²³ On 30 April, the caravan reached the village of *Giumis-Xane*, near the silver mines which gave it its name, probably corresponding to present-day Gümüşhane, about 120 km south of Trebizond (Gemelli 1: 416-17; cf. Barsel'yan, Hakobyan, Melik'-Baxš'yan 1986, 1: 913). On 1 May the caravan passed through the village of *Cuvans* (Gemelli 1: 417),²⁴ reaching after 20 miles the village of *Balaxor*, where it stopped at the dwelling of one of the *Catergì* (coachman) of the group. The *Catergì* was perhaps an Armenian, as Gemelli notes the hamlet was "almost all inhabited by Armenians", and the place's toponym seemed to be Armenian (Gemelli 1: 417-20; cf. Barsel'yan, Hakobyan, Melik'-Baxš'yan 1986, 1: 551).²⁵ The author was struck by the architecture of the dwellings in Balaxor, described as

caves or stables [...] hollowed out in the ground, that serves as a wall, with large beams placed across the top to support the roof, which is also made of earth, over which (being at the same level of the road) one can walk. In the middle they leave a very large opening to receive the light, not caring that one can then observe what is done in the house, and do more harm if one wishes [...]. Beasts and men are housed in it at the same time. (Gemelli 1: 417-18)

²³ Gemelli mentions the *Cuscan* caravanserai (24 miles past *Oreglan*, possibly located in the area between the present centres of *Kozağaç* and *Coşandere*) and a second one at the foot of Mount Zigana, from which it took its name, where the caravan stopped after another 24 miles.

²⁴ Based on the distances reported by the author, it was around the present-day village of *Tekke*.

²⁵ Gemelli's *Balaxor* probably corresponds to the present *Akşar* or its vicinity.

This is one of the rare descriptions of the traditional architecture of the *glxatun* type, of ancient memory, which the traveller found in other villages along the route to the Persian border, such as *Avirac* and *Carvor* (Gemelli 1: 422-3; cf. Donabédian 2008, 50 fn. 121, fig. 92) [fig. 3]. Although Gemelli considered the accommodation inelegant and referred to it henceforth as a “stable”, he also stated its functionality.

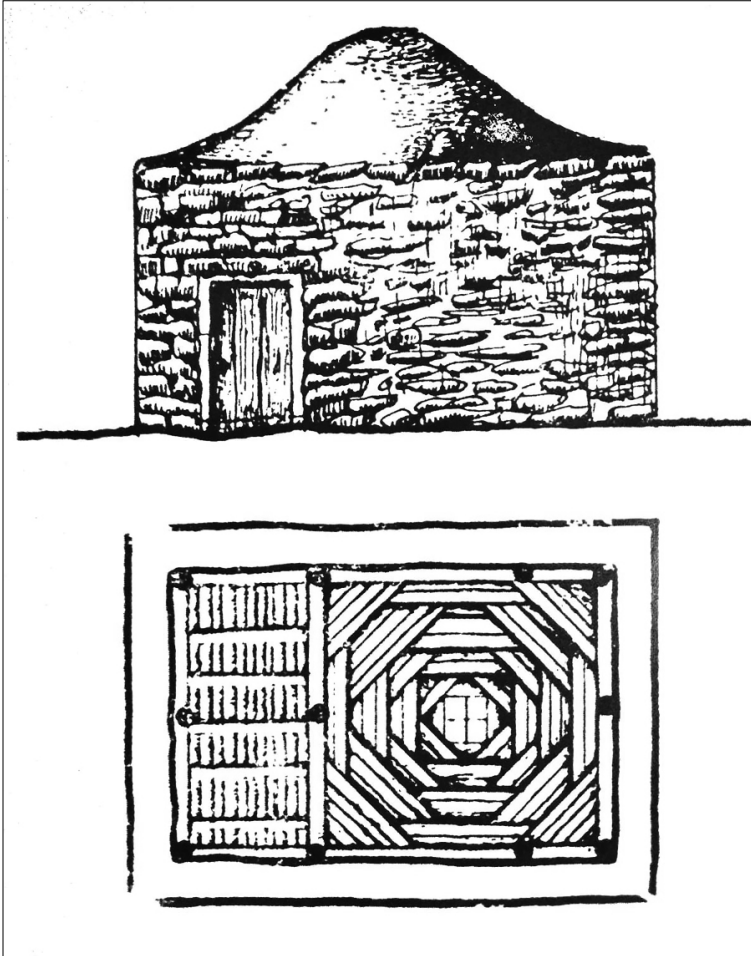


Figure 3 Relief and plan of a *glxatun* type dwelling, from © Donabédian 2008, 50, fig. 92

The caravan drove 12 miles later to the city of *Beiburt* (Bayburt), which Gemelli reports as a centre of manufacturing and trade of

"good woollen carpets" (Gemelli 1: 414), perched on a rock, surrounded by walls, but with weaponry lacking. After another six miles along the Ć'orox river, the caravans were camped at a place called *Maaciur* (perhaps the Armenian village of Mahajur) (Gemelli 1: 421; cf. Barseġyan, Hakobyan, Melik'-Baxġyan 1986, 1: 652).²⁶ After stopping "in the house, or, to put it better, the stable of an Armenian" (Barseġyan, Hakobyan, Melik'-Baxġyan 1986, 1: 364), near Avirak, and then in another "stable" in *Carvor*,²⁷ the caravan ended up, on 6 May, in the village of *Teurischiuġ* (Tebrizcik, arm. T'aruġuk), arriving the next morning in the city of Erzurum (Gemelli 1: 422-4; cf. Barseġyan, Hakobyan, Melik'-Baxġyan 1988, 2: 422).

Gemelli describes its plateau as fertile, well cultivated and populated by various hamlets, almost scenically "crowned with snow-covered mountains". He reports that Erzurum resembled Constantinople for its walls "defended by a middle ditch and by several towers placed at a suitable distance and equipped with small pieces of artillery called falconets". Next to the Janissaries' Castle, Gemelli remarked the presence of "the Archiepiscopal Church of the Armenians, much of it ruined, except for two towers that are made of brick" and low houses made of wood and mud "mostly inhabited by Armenians", flanking narrow streets without cobblestones which lead to ordinary bazaars, as well as 22 caravanserais. According to Gemelli, as well as many authors, one of the most remarkable features of Erzurum was its cold climate, as well as its proximity to the Euphrates. The stay in Erzurum ended abruptly after ten days because of the Armenian Apostolic Church's aversion to Catholic missionaries. The local authorities, who pandered to the Church, acted so hostile that Gemelli and his companions fled the city at night, in secret (Gemelli 1: 424-38).²⁸

The group stayed overnight in the village of Axa, four miles from the fortified centre of *Hassan-kale* (near the present day Pasinler, Gemelli 1: 439).²⁹ On 19 May they passed the *Talisci* customs post, the bridge of *Scio.ban.nupri* (*sic*) (probably Yeniġobandede), reaching after 28 miles *Korason*, a village on the left bank of the Arax, with houses "like those of Balaxor", and where women "cover their faces, almost Egyptian-style, with certain small silver plates, [as large] as a Neapolitan carlin, which with the movement of their heads also make

²⁶ An approximate calculation of distances suggests a location near the modern Medan.

²⁷ It is conceivable that *Carvor* was located near the present Kġgġkeġeġit, 5 km east of Ashkale, and a village called Avirak is reported in the same province.

²⁸ Two years earlier, the Jesuits were forced to leave the city, and the same happened in Trebizond. The phenomenon can be interpreted in terms of harmony between the local Ottoman government and the Armenian ecclesiastical hierarchy.

²⁹ Cf. Barseġyan, Hakobyan, Melik'-Baxġyan 1991, 3: 368-9; Chiesa 2011, 506-7.

a graceful sound; and on each side of the robe there are two orders of large buttons, with other small silver plates”. This was probably the Armenian village of Korasan (modern Akkiran) and the women’s clothes described were Armenian as well (Gemelli 1: 428, 440-1).³⁰

From this point on, Gemelli’s narrative becomes more confused, probably reflecting the roughness of a mountainous route and the threat of bandits. The caravan reached a place named *Misinghirt*; contrary to his custom, Gemelli does not specify the distance from the previous halting place, which, however, must have been at least 15 km.³¹ From this fortified centre populated by “many Christians” and some Kurdish settlements, the group reached a rural hamlet inhabited by Armenians called *Cotanlò*, 12 miles from Kars (Gemelli 1: 442-3).³²

The company arrived in the border city of Kars, the last before entering Safavid territory, on Sunday 23 May and left after two days. Despite the short time, Gemelli managed to sketch out a minimal description of civil and military structures rather than the religious ones [fig. 4].³³ Kars was a large but sparsely populated city, which, being on the frontier between enemy empires, was too often victim of ravages from both Turkish and Persian armies. The destruction wrecked on the region by wars was visible for “eight, nine, days of march” (Gemelli 1: 445-8). The only exception to this desolation seemed to him to be the Bagratid capital, *Ani-kagaë* (Ani), with its still-standing walls and monastic ruins (Gemelli 1: 448-9) [fig. 5].³⁴ After passing through the Ottoman fort of Arpaçay and crossing the Axyryan river, the caravan entered the Safavid territory, to the relief of Gemelli, who, as soon as he reached the opposite bank, dismounted from his horse and kissed the long-awaited land, now out of the reach of any “Turkish slyness” (Gemelli 1: 449-50).

30 Cf. Barseġyan, Hakobyan, Melik’-Baxġyan 1988, 2: 794; *Nisanyan Envanteri*. Gemelli was careful in reporting women’s clothing, which was also the case in Erzurum, where women dressed in “boots, and a black cloth in front of the forehead, to hide their faces” (Gemelli 1: 428), and a knee-length cloth on their heads.

31 This place could be identified with the Armenian Mġznkert already mentioned in the thirteenth century by William of Rubruk and probably located in the vicinity of today’s Bulgurlu. Cf. Guglielmo di Rubruk 2011, 310; Barseġyan, Hakobyan, Melik’-Baxġyan 1991, 3: 814-15; Harut’yunyan 2007, 87; Boschis 2023, 148 fn. 32.

32 This could be the Armenian village of Kotanlu, cf. Barseġyan, Hakobyan, Melik’-Baxġyan 1991, 3: 225.

33 Gemelli mentions neither the church of St. Aġrak’loc’ (tenth century), nor the nearby Beġik kilise, both of which are clearly visible, centrally located in the lower township, on the opposite bank of the river from the upper citadel. Cf. Cuneo 1988, 686-7, 689; Ferrari 2019, 124-43.

34 Cf. Ferrari 2019, 90-123. The caravan reached Ani after stopping in the unidentified village of *Chialà*, 30 miles away from Kars.



Figure 4 Kars, church of St. Arak'eloc', tenth-thirteenth centuries. Photograph by Łukasyan, 1941. Courtesy of the © History Museum of Armenia, inv. no. 468



Figure 5 Ani, northern wall, tenth century. Courtesy of © History Museum of Armenia, inv. no. 270

By the evening of the same day, 26 May 1694, the company stopped in *Talen*, “the first village of Persians”. Gemelli wrote:

There was already an excellent church here, for the use of the Armenian Christians, who make up the majority of the inhabitants; the figures of the Holy Apostles can be seen painted on the high altar; however, it has now fallen into disrepair, like another adjacent one. (Gemelli 2: 2-3)

This is the first known description of the monumental complex of T’alin, its cathedral and its St. Astvacacin church (seventh century) [figs 6-8].³⁵ Gemelli was attracted by the fading apsidal paintings, among which he recognised the figures of the Apostles in the second register, today barely visible [fig. 9].

The next day the company reached Ējmiacin, where Fr. Villotte acted as Gemelli’s guide, instructing him on the history of the Armenian Church and on legendary and etymological anecdotes.³⁶ An important description of the cathedral is provided by Gemelli: domed, cruciform, accessible through three entrances and floors covered with carpets, three altars and a patriarchal seat, as well as a series of service buildings including a convent, the patriarchal residence, gardens with fountains and the guesthouse where Gemelli himself with his companions passed the night (Gemelli 2: 4-5).³⁷

The next morning, after the office celebrated in the cathedral by 70 monks (Gemelli 2: 6-8), the group reached *Erivan*, where Gemelli lodged at the only caravanserai in the city, rather than in the city’s Jesuit residence. The description he supplies of the administrative centre of Safavid Armenia is critical of defence devices and building techniques, but he is fascinated by the organisation of activities, from the bazaars to the palace of the Sardar (governor), from the method of making coins at the Mint to the origin of the main source of water, the Hrazdan river and its beautiful bridge. Walking through hamlets and gardens Gemelli did not record any information about the religious architecture, then represented at least by the churches of St. Astvacacin, St. Połos-Petros and the chapel of Gethsemane.³⁸

³⁵ Donabédian 2008, 118-22, 146-7.

³⁶ This good-natured missionary is the same Jacobus Villotte (1656-1743), the author of a Latin-Armenian dictionary printed under the patronage of Propaganda Fide in 1714, as well as of a mission report to the East published in Paris in 1730, cf. Villotte 1714; Villotte, Frizon 1730; Tadevosyan 2001-02.

³⁷ Gemelli also briefly described the *martyria* of St. Gayanē and St. Hrip’simē, but did not mention St. Sołakat’, the construction of which began in 1694, cf. Cuneo 1988, 88-101; Donabédian 2008, 83-7, 105-7.

³⁸ St. Astvacacin is the only medieval church in Erevan, while the other two mentioned were destroyed in the 1930s in the implementation of the new urban plan

What he dwells on instead is the damage caused to the city by the Ottoman wars, neglecting to mention the disastrous earthquake of June 1679, whose effects were probably still evident at the time (Gemelli 2: 8-10).³⁹

On 1 June, Gemelli made an excursion to the monastery of Gełard, “cut into the rock, of which are also made the pillars that support the church”, an aspect as impressive in his eyes as the presence of the Holy Lance relic in the treasury. The author also mentions the presence of five other monastic centres in the surroundings.⁴⁰ On his return to Erevan, Gemelli dined at the Jesuit residence, but provides no information about its location.

On Saturday 5 June he left for Naxiĵevan with Fr. Dominic, joining a Georgian caravan (Gemelli 2: 11-17). Heavy rain forced the group to make frequent stops, first in *Gavuri-ciny*, then in *Satarach* (Sədərək, AZ; Barsəlyan, Hakobyan, Melik’-Baxšyan 1998, 4: 459). Passed the guard post on the Arp’a River, the caravan reached the caravanserai of *Karaba* (nowadays Qarabaqlar, AZ; Barsəlyan, Hakobyan, Melik’-Baxšyan 1988, 2: 937), whose square factory was, according to Gemelli, one “of the most spacious and beautiful I have ever seen” (Gemelli 2: 17). Nearby there was a spring by Armenian legends said to have been created by Sem, Noah’s son.

On 8 June 1694, the group arrived in Naxiĵevan (Gemelli 2: 17-20), where Fr. Dominic directly left for the monastery of Aparaner, leaving Gemelli as the sole target of robbery by the city guards. The situation became so dire to remind him the misadventures suffered in Erzurum, and he considered *Nak Civan* to be its Persian equivalent. Gemelli dedicates to it a succinct description, recalling the legend of its foundation by Noah,⁴¹ and remarking how its buildings, “reduced to nothing by constant wars” (Gemelli 2: 18), were relics of the glorious past. The modern village was small, with only one narrow street, a good bazaar and four large caravanserais. Its houses were made like caves. What impressed Gemelli the most was the exotic building visible just outside the city, made of bricks “more than 70 palms high, octagonal in shape, ending spire-like”, with “two tall towers on either side, without any communication with the spire” (Gemelli 2:

approved by the Soviet authorities in 1924. The church, also called *kat’otike*, was among the few city structures to withstand the 1679 earthquake, following which St. Ananias Zoravar (1694) had to be rebuilt. The old churches of Avan, St. Astvacacin and St. Hovhannēs were at the time quite isolated from the city centre. Cf. Cuneo 1988, 110-13; Shahaziz 2003.

39 Regrettably, unlike Chardin (in 1672), Gemini published few engravings of his trip to the Near East, none of which concern Armenia; it would have been extremely useful to compare engravings from just before and just after the 1679 earthquake.

40 Cf. Cuneo 1988, 136-9; Sahinian, Monoukian, Aslanian 1972.

41 Abaraner (or Aparaner) corresponds to today’s Bənəniyar in Azerbaijani territory.

19), which he assumes to be of Timurid age, but truly the mausoleum of Momine Xat’un (1186). Gemelli does not mention Armenian churches. Most of them were razed to the ground in the thirteenth century, so that of the original eighty churches only two remained, probably St. Errordut’yun (seventh-eighth century, destroyed in 1975) and St. Gevorg (rebuilt on older structures in 1869, now disappeared).⁴² Because of the guards’ abuses, Gemelli decided to leave the same night, taking advantage of the company of a Persian envoy on his way to Ispahan (Gemelli 2: 20-1).

The next morning, on a poorly crafted and very badly steered boat, he crossed the Araxes in the vicinity of the ancient Ĵulay, according to him an uninhabited “heap of mud and caves built underground” with “two caravanserais, built at great expense by the Armenian *Coggia* [arm. *xoĵa*] Nazar on either side of the river, [...] also ruined”. The description depicts the desolation into which the city, once a small but flourishing centre on the so-called Silk Road before the Persian deportation, had fallen at the time. Gemelli’s annotations on his contemporary Ĵulay, disdainful of its buildings, are the result of an increasingly confident European mentality of superiority, from which even the jurist could not escape. The passage reveals a certain hastiness in writing: Gemelli does not mention the presence of churches, chapels and cemeteries reported by other travellers, probably because he did not even have the time to notice them while fleeing early in the morning.⁴³ Quite a pity, because it would have been interesting to know whether the underground caverns he mentioned were of the same type as those he had already encountered in the provinces of Ottoman Armenia, and whether they were only inside or also outside the walls, made of raw brick rather than mud. What is certain is that with the crossing of Arax, the Italian traveller’s experience in the lands of Historical Armenia came to an end.

⁴² Cf. Guglielmo di Rubruk 2011, 302-6; Ayvazyan 1986; Cuneo 1988, 466; Barseĵyan, Hakobyan, Melik’-Baxĵyan 1991, 951-5; Karapetyan 2012, 25.

⁴³ Gemelli does not mention any of the at least five ancient churches that should have been in the city at the time: St. Amenap’rkiĉ’ Pomblozi (Hovvi), St. Astvacacin, St. Hovhannes e St. Gevorg, cf. Cuneo 1988, 476; Barseĵyan, Hakobyan, Melik’-Baxĵyan 1998, 426-8; Karapetyan 2012, 25.



Figure 6 T'alin, cathedral (seen from the west), late seventh century. Photo by the Author, June 2022 (before restoration currently underway)



Figure 7
T'alin, church
of St. Astvacin, late
seventh century. Photo
by T. T'oramanyan,
beginning of the
twentieth century.
Courtesy of © History
Museum of Armenia,
inv. no. 640



Figure 8 T'alin, church of St. Astvacacin, after the latest restoration. Photo by the Author, June 2022



Figure 9 T'alin, cathedral, wall paintings in the apse, late seventh century. Photo by the Author, June 2022

3 Conclusions

Despite his having received little attention in historical studies, Gemelli’s *Giro del mondo* constitutes a valuable source of knowledge of Armenian history and culture in many respects. The author, well disposed towards the Armenians, who according to him were schismatics but still devoted and good-hearted Christians, often sought refuge and support in case of need or simply out of preference among the Armenians, both in the Ottoman and Persian Empires, from Smyrna to Ispahan (Gemelli 1: 21, 2: 35). Considered to be the first tourist in history and, by his own admission, a traveller “moved by natural wanderlust” (Gemelli 1: 2), he was an attentive observer, rigorous in distinguishing data from unverifiable hearsay, sometimes quick to judge cultural attitudes different from his own, yet demonstrating great intelligence in going beyond the preconceptions consolidated in his mind by education and experience (Gemelli 1: 413, 429-3, 2: 3).⁴⁴

This reconstruction of Gemelli’s journey through the provinces of Historical Armenia highlights the relevance of his account for investigating the spread of Armenian communities in lands that today belong to Turkey and Azerbaijan, as well as studying Armenian toponymy. From an art historical perspective, Gemelli’s contribution cannot be considered more precise or detailed than other works, but it remains important. Neither the references to the popular architecture of the hypogeal Armenian houses, nor the description of the jewellery and traditional clothing are trivial. Through the pages of the *Giro*, one seems to be able to relive the ancient atmosphere breathed in villages now lost, such as Balaxor, Avirak, *Carvor* and *Korason*.

The same can be said for urban realities such as Trebizond, Erzurum, Kars and Erevan, although the descriptions of places and monuments are not as exhaustive as a modern scholar might wish, focusing mainly on aspects of the military, economic and administrative organisation rather than on the appearance of churches and monasteries, usually briefly mentioned in relation to the presence of religious communities. An important and physiological exception is the Patriarchal See of Ējmiacin, which greatly fascinated Gemelli: much remains to be said about the evolution of its churches, particularly the cathedral, which was much altered over the centuries.

Reports on caravanserais and ancient bridges (especially in the Naxiĵevan area, sadly notorious for the physical and cultural

⁴⁴ This is true in both positive and negative terms, for despite Gemelli’s esteem for the Armenian people, he is also sharply critical of the Armenian clergy. In some cases, Gemelli’s negative attitude was influenced by the Armenian clergy’s blatant rivalry with Catholic missionaries, as in Erzurum, in other occurrences it was linked with simpler, everyday contexts, such as his encounter with the superstitious *Vardabietto* (Vardapet) of T’alin.

obliteration of Armenia’s artistic heritage) would also need to be discussed separately. In this sense, Gemelli’s thin descriptions, which are the results of short stints more than thoughtful sojourns, are very useful and interesting, as seen in the case of Jułay and its muddy houses. Certainly, it would have been useful to know more about the Armenian churches in ruins in the Ottoman domains, as well as about the appearance, name, and location of the “many hermitages inhabited by Christian Religious” (Gemelli 2: 14) scattered at the foot of Ararat. Gemelli, on the other hand, without omitting linguistic information such as the mountain’s Armenian and Persian names (*Masesusar* and *Agri* respectively), takes care to point out how its summit was always visible in the morning and always obstructed from view by a crown of dense clouds “from vespers onwards” (Gemelli 2: 14). To appreciate fully the importance of the testimony of this eclectic wayfarer-writer, it must be contextualised within the cultural framework of which it was a brilliant product.

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History

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

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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.



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In memory of Gĕorg Tĕr-Vardanean, with gratitude for his encouragement and valuable advice in studying Ľevond 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.¹ In 1862, Karapet Vardapet Šahnazarean (1862-66), a well-known clergyman and scholar of the time,² 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 Xorĕn Vardapet Kiwroyean (1866-70; 1872-3), Sargis Vardapet T'ĕodorean (1870) and priest Nersĕs Palapanean (1870-72).³ 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 Xorĕn 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 Mkrtiĉ' Xrimean) on the issue of electing a new leader. Ľevond Vardapet P'irĭalĕmean, a famous clergyman, philologist, poet, and traveller, was chosen from the list of candidates and submitted by the Patriarchate.⁴

In his study on the Armenian community of Manchester, Bishop Mušĕl Serobean provides some valuable details about the years of Ľevond 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 Colophons⁵ compiled by P'irĭalĕmean in Manchester.⁶ Subsequently, it came to my attention that the Collection of Colophons (M6273) and the Collection of Seals (M10013) of P'irĭalĕmean, housed in the Matenadaran-Maštoc' Institute of Ancient

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ For the periods of their activities, cf. Serobean 1911, 26-54.

⁴ According to the Charter, the community had the right to choose the parish priest.

⁵ This volume contains colophons from the 1510-30s.

⁶ National Archives of Armenia, collection 332, catalogue 1, documents 653, 780, 781.

Manuscripts,⁷ 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'irĽalĽemean⁸ (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.⁹ 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

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

⁸ In George 2002, 25, Ľevond Vardapet is mentioned as "Vartabed Perghalenian".

⁹ 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, Ľevond Vardapet compiled the collection of epitaphs of the St. Ėjmiacin 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'irġalġmeanġ 1871; 1882). In December 1890, accompanying Archbishop Mkrġtiġġ Xrimean, P'irġalġmean left for Jerusalem, where he died in 1891 (at the age of 61), and was buried in the local Armenian cemetery.¹⁰ 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",¹¹ which was probably the last note written by Ľevond Vardapet.



Figure 1 Ľevond Vardapet P'irġalġmean. Matenadaran-Maġtoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, "Personal archival fund", file 187, doc. 39/9

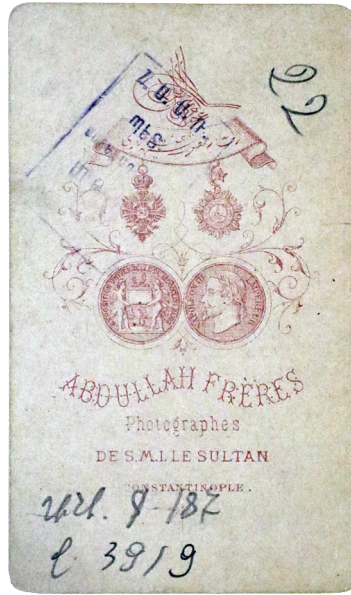


Figure 2 The verso of the picture with the seal of the photographers. Matenadaran-Maġtoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, "Personal archival fund", file 187, doc. 39/9

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

11 M9027, 101v: 1891 ապրիլ 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'irĽalĽemean 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.¹²

From the extensive autobiography included in his Collection of Seals [fig. 3], we learn that before coming to Manchester, P'irĽalĽemean 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, he¹³ 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)

¹² Serobeian 1911, 54-5: Ստորագրեալս խոնարհ ղէտ Մանչէստըրի 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, յԱստուած 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'irĽalĽemean wrote a Chronology.

¹³ The autobiography is written in the third person next to his private seal.

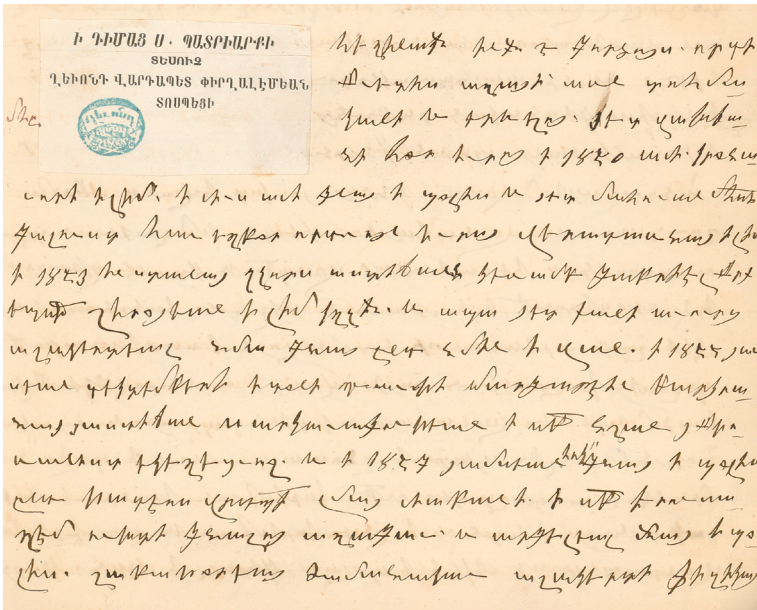


Figure 3 A fragment of P'irtalēmean's autobiography and his seal from Matenadaran-Maštoc' Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, M10013, fol. 32r

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”,¹⁴ 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

¹⁴ *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” part¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

¹⁵ 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”.

¹⁶ 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 երթնելէլ 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.¹⁷

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”,¹⁸ 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

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

¹⁸ *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*".¹⁹ 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 Ējmiacin 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,²⁰ assisted by the believers, who wore a surplice during the divine services, especially those from the Armenian-populated areas of the Ottoman Empire, who

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

²⁰ 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).²¹ 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

²¹ 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 1878,²² and probably due to external problems, the intra-community issues were temporarily suspended.²³ 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 Ĕjmiacin, 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.²⁴

Esayi Vardapet arrived in Manchester at the end of November²⁵ 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. Serobeian 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. Serobeian 1911, 66-108. For more about the Armenian question at the Congress of Berlin, cf. Kostandyan; Hovhannisyan 2010, 436-47.

23 According to Serobeian (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 Serobeian 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.²⁶ 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.²⁷ 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".²⁸ 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".²⁹ It is clear from the colophons that the Provincial Dictionary was compiled and almost entirely classified in

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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).

²⁸ P'irġalġmean 1871, 4 (Դ): Իրենց բուն հնչմամբ և նշանակութեամբ.

²⁹ 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.³⁰

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.³¹

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.³²

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'irġalġmean arranged the 23 precious volumes of Armenian colophons he had collected, under the title "Colophons or Relics of Armenian History"³³ 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 Nersġs), 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.³⁴

The title pages of each volume of the colophon³⁵ 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 *Nġtark' Hayoc'* collection, such as the note after the colophon of a Hymnarium from 1435:³⁶

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.³⁷

It is noteworthy that P'irġalġmean, in his aforementioned letter to the priest Giwt Aġaneanc', 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'irġalġmean 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 Taġkastan³⁸ 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".³⁹

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,

³⁸ The Ottoman Empire.

³⁹ 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.

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Reports

The Armenian-Italian Joint Expedition to Dvin Report of 2023 Activities

Hamlet Petrosyan, Michele Nucciotti, Elisa Pruno, Tatyana Vardanesova, Francesca Cheli, Leonardo Squilloni, Hamazasp Abrahamyan, Lyuba Kirakosyan, Miriam Leonetti, Lisa dall'Olio

Abstract This report aims to show the results of the third excavation campaign at Dvin/Dabil (Armenia), conducted by the Italian-Armenian research group in Autumn 2023. The excavations involved three areas in distinct sectors of the city: the southern portion of the Lower Fortress, where the 2021 square was deepened and enlarged; the so-called 'Market' area, where the 2021 excavations were expanded and a micro-stratigraphic trench was opened; and the excavations of the Area of the Future Building of the Dvin Museum. Additionally, there is a starting research about the analysis of pottery carried out between 2022 and the last year excavation. We presented also the first results concerning faunal remains research.

Keywords Dvin/Dabil. Stratigraphic methodology. Eurasia. Excavation. Light archaeology. Medieval archaeology.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Excavation at the Dvin Market. – 2.1 Archaeological Description. – 2.2 Findings. – 2.3 Conclusions. – 3 Area 2000. – 3.1 Introduction. – 3.2 Stratigraphic Description. – 3.3 Conclusions. – 4 Light Archaeology Survey of the Dvin Market. – 5 Area 1000 and the Stratification of the Lower Fortress: A Peek through the Peephole. – 5.1 Introduction. – 5.1.1 Cons and Pros of a Micro-Stratigraphic Approach. – 5.1.2 Harris Matrix Segmentation and New Macro-Periodization for Areas 1000 and 2000. – 5.2 Area 1000: Stratigraphic Description. – 5.3 The Wall SU 1090: Technical and Chronological Discussion. – 5.4 A Stratigraphy of Transformations in the Lower Fortress of Dvin: Area 1000 at the End of the 2023 Season. – 6 Material and Artefacts from Area 1000 and Area 2000. – 6.1 Artefacts. – 6.2 Area 1000: Materials and Artefacts. – 6.3 Area 1000: Faunal Remains. – 6.4 Area 2000: Materials and Artefacts. – 6.5 History Museum of Yerevan Survey and Documentation. – 7 Excavations of the Area of the Future Building of the Dvin Museum. – 7.1 Archaeological Description. – 7.2 Finds. – 8 Conclusions.



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1 Introduction

The joint Armenian-Italian archaeological expedition to Dvin was carried out in 2023 by the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia (IAE NAS RA) and the University of Florence, with the financial support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ERC Project ArmEn (Armenia Entangled), conducted archaeological research at the site of Dvin. During the spring, excavation activities were performed in the area of the future building of the Dvin Museum, where a trench was opened in 2022. In the same period, pottery recording and classification were carried out. During the fall season (29 September-4 November), excavations were concentrated in three sites: the Dvin Market (§§ 2-4), the southern area of the 'Lower Fortress' (§ 5), and the site of the future building of the Dvin Museum (§ 6), 120 m south-east of the central quarter [fig. 1].

The Staff of the Expedition

- Armenian side. Director: Hamlet Petrosyan. Archaeologists: Tatyana Vardanesova, Hamazasp Abrahamyan. Architect: Lyuba Kirakosyan.
- Italian side. Director: Michele Nucciotti. ArmEn P.I.: Zaroui Pogossian. Archaeologists: Elisa Pruno (Codirector), Lapo Somigli, Francesca Cheli, Leonardo Squilloni, Miriam Leonetti, Hasmik Hovhannisyan. Students: Lisa dall'Olio, Tommaso Montecchi, Leonardo Quercioli.

2 Excavation at the Dvin Market

Hamlet Petrosyan, Tatyana Vardanesova,
Hamazasp Abrahamyan, Lyuba Kirakosyan

In the fall of 2023, excavation and cleaning works were conducted at the Dvin ancient site, located southeast of Hnaberd village in the Artashat community of the Ararat region, with basic funding from NAS RA. The excavations covered an area of approximately 170 m² and focused on the Lower Fortress and the 'Market' (Shuka) area.

In the market area, the cleaning and excavation efforts continued in the southeastern part of the site.



Figure 1 Dvin's 2023 excavation sites

2.1 Archaeological Description

A horseshoe-shaped mound extending from the western, southern, and eastern sides of the 'Market' area was one of the study's primary issues. The slab floor is located near the centre of the excavation site. On its western and eastern flanks, there are foundation remnants and column fragments that show signs of secondary stone processing.

During the 2021-2 excavations in different parts of the mound bordering the Market (A1, B1, C1, D1, D5, D6 sq.), various situations mentioned in the survey summarizing the previous excavations, and previously left out, were observed (Ghafadaryan 1982, 106). In the southern part of the mound, along the continuation of the semi-circular tower, the remains of the brick walls of two rooms and the second semicircular tower were discovered. This second tower was located at a distance of 15.5 m from the first one and was marked in the 1959 measurement (History Museum of Armenia, Archive, N 1214: Petrosyan et al. 2023, 203, fig. 15).

In the fall season of 2023, continuing the previously studied southern height of the mound, the excavations were moved to the eastern part. Judging by the 1959 layout of the Market, this part of the excavation site had not been excavated at all. As it turned out in 2023, the soil waste from all the previous excavations had accumulated in this area. Moreover, the wasteland was piled up, and the space between them was later filled with the household waste of the village.

The 2023 fall excavations in the Market area were dedicated to cleaning the excavation waste from 1955-61 and separating archaeological artefacts from it. As a result of the cleaning works, the level of excavation depth in squares A10, B10, and C10 was brought up to the level of the second semicircular tower. Hopefully, the actual archaeological layers will begin to be dug further down this year.



Figure 2 Market's measurements and 2023 area of work

2.2 Findings

During the excavations, the most archaeological material was found in the A10 and B10 squares [fig. 2]. It is mainly represented by pottery and remarkable fragments of architectural decoration. All the material can be categorized into the following groups:

- Glazed pottery.
- Faience.
- Simple pottery.
- Fragments of architectural decoration.

The main part of the glazed pottery consists of green and greenish-yellow glazed pottery typical of Dvin from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries [fig. 3]. Out of the entire mass of fragments, only three fragments belong to the ninth century. Fragments of green glazed plates match hemispherical vessels. The manufacturing technology is also characteristic: reddish-yellow shell, white slipware, engraving (graffito), and transparent glaze.

As a result, thin, scratch-like, and restrained geometric patterns are visible as black lines on a green background. Pottery with a combination of green and yellow glazes is also quite common [fig. 4]. In this case, the floral and geometric patterns were obtained by a

combination of removing the slipware in large layers and thin drilling. This type of pottery dates from the end of the twelfth to the early thirteenth century, representing the early mass production of Dvin. Examples of similar pottery are also found in Vayots Dzor, Etchmiadzin, and other medieval contexts (Kalantarian 2009, pl. XXIX).

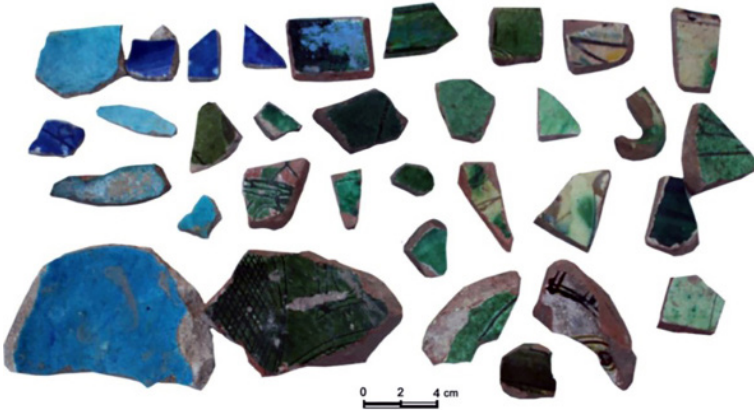


Figure 3 Glazed fragments recovered from the Market area

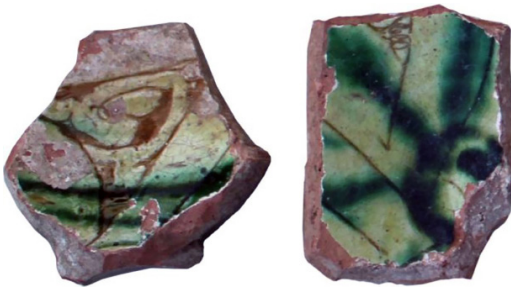


Figure 4
Fragments of glazed pottery

The next group consists of terracotta vessels. The archaeological material includes several fragments of turquoise and dark blue transparent glazed faience vessels [fig. 5a] and one fragment of glazed faience imported from Iran with dark blue and black ornaments. Describing the 1956 excavations, K. Ghafadaryan notes that a small faience bowl with a dark blue transparent glaze, embedded in mortar, was found in site 4, indicating luxury items reused in some market structures (1982, 40). The researcher dated the vessel from the end of the twelfth century to the beginning of the thirteenth century. It should be noted that the previous excavations at the Lower Fortress, (unfortunately never completed), provided magnificent examples of such a design [fig. 5b].



Figure 5 On the left, turquoise terracotta from the excavation site; on the right, blue bowl, Dvin Archaeological Site, Lower Fortress

Plain (unglazed) pottery is also highly fragmentary, consisting of bottoms, handles, and various vessel bodies. Two fragments of large flat lids attract attention. One fragment of a lid is painted with slipware circles, in the middle of which there are large dots, while the second one is decorated with stamped rosettes. This pottery dates back to the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century [fig. 6]. Among the archaeological material are several clay cylinders that were used in the pottery production process.

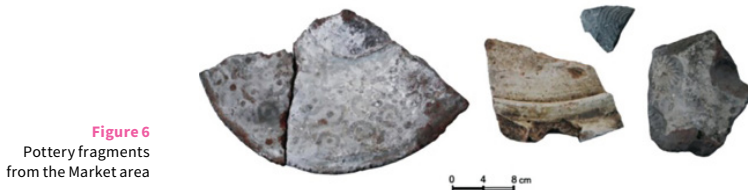
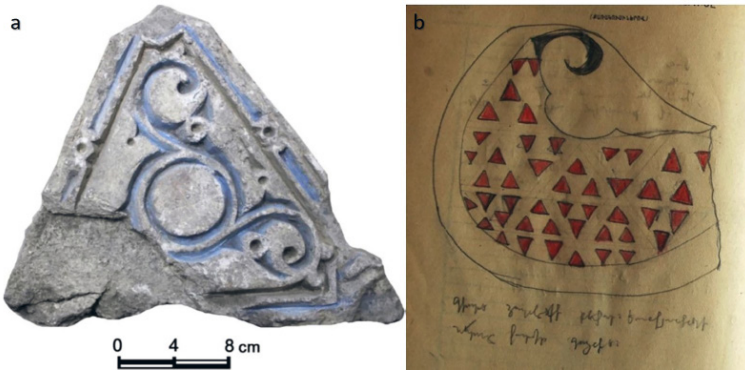


Figure 6
Pottery fragments
from the Market area

Although the shreds of architectural decoration are highly fragmented, they are remarkable for their amazing variety. In one case, they are shaped fragments of bricks embedded in mortar [fig. 7a]. In the second case, they are specially prepared shaped bricks intended for wall decoration. A fragment of wall cladding in the form of a triangular ornament made of three bricks was also found [fig. 7b]. Blue paint can be seen on the fragment of one of the cut and plastered bricks found during the excavations. In addition to the brick, a raised rosette of concrete mortar was also found, made from a concrete mixture with the addition of gypsum [fig. 7b]. K. Ghafadaryan describes architectural decorative details made with a similar technique, which were coloured blue, red, and yellow (Ghafadaryan 1982, fig. 78) [fig. 8a]. One of the wall panels found in Site 4 was cast from plaster. The vegetable ivy-type carved composition by a master is painted in blue colour (143). It is noteworthy that in the diary of E. Musheghyan, a member of the expedition, there is also an image of

a similar fragment, but with red decoration [fig. 8b]. It is well known that in Middle Eastern architecture, tinted plaster, shaped brick, marble, and plaster were used as decorative materials for exterior and interior wall decoration.



Its first stage (starting from about the eighth century) is plaster carving in the interior of the buildings, followed by pictorial cladding with burnt bricks (ninth century, mainly on the outer walls of the buildings). Since the twelfth century, decorative carvings on terracotta have been used, and from the thirteenth century these carved panels began to be covered with blue glaze, etc. We believe that Dvin's magnificent collection of wall decorations has great research potential in this regard. And more importantly, the findings of the 'market' may shed new light on the function and artistic decoration of this extensive architectural structure.

2.3 Conclusions

The 2023 fall excavations in the area of the Market at Dvin mainly focused on a cleaning aspect. The soil excavated, dating back to the 1950-60s, once filled the unexcavated part of the monument, and the expedition had to re-excavate these wastes and separate the archaeological findings from them. Micro-stratigraphic assessment carried out in the western part (Area 2000) of the market revealed the complex structure of that area, ranging from the stone bases of the columns to traces of reconstructions from different periods. These results indicate the necessity of placing similar sondages in other parts of the structure to obtain an even more detailed picture of the changes over time.

3 Area 2000

Francesca Cheli

3.1 Introduction

During the 2023 excavation in order to better understand the extent of the cobblestone wall SU (Stratigraphic Unit) 2018 and the structure of cobblestone SU 2038, uncovered in 2022, it was decided to enlarge the excavation sondage 1 m towards north and 1 m towards east (current dimensions 4 × 4 m) [fig. 17].¹

The archaeological excavation strategy was to remove the surface layers already identified until reaching the wall SU 2018, the cobblestones layer SU 2038 (where present) or layers not intercepted last year.

3.2 Stratigraphic Description

On the northern side, between SU 2018 and SU 2038 under the topsoil and the surface layers identified in 2022 (SUs 2016, 2025 and 2030), the layer made with crushed dark tuff stones placed quite horizontally (SU 2031) on the cobblestones of SU 2038, already found last excavation year, was reached [fig. 9]. In agreement with Prof.

¹ Initially, the excavation was only widened at the north-east corner by approximately 1 m and involved the area where layer SU 2038 and the wall SU 2018 were located (1.50 m on the northern side and 2 m on the E side from the stake to the north-east). At a later stage, based on the findings, it was decided to extend the entire north and east sides by 1 m. The extension is therefore L-shaped.

Petrosyan, it was decided to leave them *in situ*, together with the cobblestones of SU 2038, as evidence of the construction technique. Below this layer, SU 2038 continues beyond the northern section, while they seem to stop towards east.



Figure 9 Dark tuff stones of SU 2031 found in the 2023 north extension

Towards the west, SU 2031 is confirmed leaning on the wall SU 2018 which, in its extension towards the north, reduces its width from 85 to 30 cm ca. In addition, near the new limit of the northern section, some cobbles of SU 2018 seem to be covered by what appears to be an alignment of mud brick, in a very poor state of preservation (SU 2052). The layer, rather than corresponding to a mud brick elevation of the structure SU 2018 as hypothesized in 2022 (Petrosyan et al. 2023, 213), seems to be a reconstruction or extension of it on the northern side. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that, after approximately 2 m, the cobbles of SU 2018, at least on the eastern side, seem to be interrupted and mud bricks are visible in the same alignment. Currently, this interpretation remains a hypothesis as the two structures (SU 2018 and SU 2052) are partially covered by the stones of SU 2031.

On the western side of SU 2018 during the 2023 extension a new stratigraphic deposit came to light. At the north-western corner, approximately 5 cm below the floor level, a mud brick wall with a NE-SW orientation was uncovered: SU 2051, made of mud bricks measuring 30 × 30 × 6 cm; this structure extends beneath both the western

and northern limits of the sondage.² It was partially covered by small compact clay layers with pieces of mud bricks (SUs 2050, 2053 and 2064).³ Below these, the small portion of 2023 extension between the wall SU 20218 and the mud brick wall SU 2051 showed distinct characteristics: on the western side there were flat and 'smoothed', rather compact and fine-grained layers, while the eastern one showed evidence of collapsed mud bricks. The two portions alternated with each other, overlapping in small portions. This stratigraphic sequence was identified in 2022 with the SU 2034 mud bricks collapse. In 2023, the discovery of the SU 2051 mud brick wall and the lack of direct physical relationships between it and the SU 2018 cobblestone wall, has led to greater attention being paid to the sequence of collapses which could therefore be referred to different structures, trying to understand their origin although, due to the small size of the portion, it was not possible to certainly identify the directions.⁴ The first of this collapse was SU 2065=2034, a silty, brown, fine-grained layer characterized by the high quantity of pieces of mud bricks. They are quite pure, light brown in colour and very compact with small holes due to the air; they are 5-6 cm high. Near the wall SU 2018, the collapse SU 2065=2034 contains some mortar lumps of medium dimensions, grey and with some black pieces of charcoal like the mortar of SU 2018, but stronger. These mortar lumps are mixed with the pieces of mud bricks.

On the western side, SU 2065=2034 leaned on a silty, greyish-brown, fine-grained layer (SU 2068). It had a quite horizontal and compact interface with small dimension stone chippings inside. This one, partially covered another collapse of mud bricks with both N-S and E-W direction (SU 2066). SU 2066 is a silty, quite soft, light brown layer with occasional small pieces of charcoal, fragments of tuff e and stone chippings. The layer has a descending trend towards the E where it has the greatest depth (ca 50 cm). Mud bricks are very compact, light brown, with negative traces of the vegetable inclusions used in the mixture. The presence of small holes, perhaps due to the decomposition of vegetable fibres or air bubbles during manufacture, can be seen; inside there are very small stone chippings, mortar lumps and fragments of orange tuff. The height of the bricks is between 5.5 and 6.5 cm [fig. 10].

2 In particular, SU 2051 appears to be at the same level as the ground floor on the western side where the latter is lower, while toward the northern side it is covered by about 5 cm of topsoil.

3 SU 2050 is a compact, light brown-whitish layer with mud bricks; SU 2053 is a crumbly, light brown-greyish layer and SU 2064 is a compact, grey, horizontal layer. All the layers are located in the N-W corner of the excavation.

4 In 2023, in order to reconstruct the stratigraphic sequence, it was decided to identify SU 2034, dug last year, with the first of these collapses, SU 2065.

On the western side, SU 2066 leaned on another with horizontal interface (SU 2069). SU 2069 is a sandy-clay, fine-grained, yellowish layer descending towards east. Inside there are rare stone chippings and tuff of small dimension and rare charcoal.

SU 2069 is still partially *in situ* and covers a clayish, compact brown layer with pieces of mud bricks (SU 2082) which is partially covered by another collapse of brown mud bricks (SU 2070) which leans on the wall SU 2018. At the end of the excavation the mud brick wall SU 2051 is visible for 7 courses (overall height of about 42 cm) and shows an alternation of courses consisting of lighter-coloured bricks to darker-coloured ones [fig. 11]. It seems to cover SU 2082, a clayey, fine-grain, compact layer with mud bricks, still *in situ*.



Figure 10 North-western corner: example of flat and 'smoothed' layer on the western side (SU 2068) and the collapse of mud bricks on the eastern side (SU 2066)



Figure 11 The mud bricks wall SU 2051 at the end of the excavation

The Eastern side of the trench extension (1 × 4 m) had, from the beginning, a small higher portion (triangular in shape with sides of approximately 1 × 1 m) near the south-east corner and a depression, around 15 cm, immediately north of this. The rest of the eastern side (3 m) was rather horizontal.

Due to the stratigraphic sequence excavated in 2022, the archaeological excavation strategy was to remove the surface layers already identified until reaching the cobblestones layer SU 2038. The topsoil removed was a grey medium-size grain layer with stone chippings, rare stones and frequent pieces of orange and yellow fired bricks, mostly on the bottom part. Inside it was found also modern metal.

On the eastern side, under the topsoil, a small stockpile of yellow and orange fired bricks (variable height between 4 and 4.7 cm) with a clayey-sandy matrix, quite compact, coarse-grained and dark brown/grey in colour (SU 2054) was unearthed. The layer appears to be the result of accumulated material following a depression (SU 2084) visible in the ground even before the excavation and possibly due to recent activities [fig. 12].



Figura 12 The stockpile SU 2054

On the higher south-eastern corner, under this topsoil, a small portion of the layer with fragments of orange tuff (SU 2002, dug last year in the excavation area) was brought to light. SU 2002 covered a friable layer, with a sandy silt matrix, light brown in colour with occasional lumps of white mortar (SU 2049). Under this, SU 2015 (dug last year in the excavation area) covered a very friable sandy silt layer, greyish brown in colour, with small lumps of mortar, charcoal, fragments of yellowish clay and rare fragments of tuff (SU 2055). This latter covered a light brown-whitish layer with fragments of orange tuff, rare lumps of mortar and pieces of mud bricks (SU 2056). It has a compact interface where mud bricks are more concentrated and friable towards south. For the compositional features and the discovery elevation, it has been identified as SU 2032 excavated last year (2056=2032).

Under SU 2056=2032 an articulate situation was brought to light in the S/E corner. It covered a compact grey layer with small stones

(SU 2059) and a coarse-grained layer with pieces of mud bricks (SU 2060, for compositional features identified as SU 2042 dug last year); near the river stones SU 2038, SU 2056=2032 was leaned on a layer of breaking up of mortar (SU 2058, destruction of 2062) made up of mortar, debris and stones [fig. 13].



Figure 13 Situation under SU 2056=2032

The archaeological deposit brought to light in the eastern extension, although still under study, proved to be quite interesting. Two rather tenacious mortar conglomerates (SU 2062 and SU 2063) were found close to the SU 2038 cobblestones, not in contact with each other. SU 2063, located further north than the other, has a rather rectangular shape, with, perhaps, remains of plaster on the south side [fig. 14].

SU 2062, although it maintains a rather regular shape, is slightly rotated with respect to the alignment of the cobblestones. The two conglomerates are covered by the highest cobblestones level of SU 2038 but appear to rest on/cover the underlying levels of the same. At this stage of the research therefore, cobblestones layer SU 2038 and mortar layers SU 2062 and SU 2063 have been considered linked, although their function has yet to be understood.⁵

The removal of SU 2059 and SU 2060 exposed a small, crumbly, light-brown layer rich in basalt and tuff stones and stone chippings on the southern side of SU 2062 (SU 2067) and a very strong,

⁵ Between SU 2062 and 2063 a brown, crumbly, fine-grained layer with lumps of mortar and stone chippings (SU 2073) was unearthed under topsoil.

light brown-yellowish clayey layer, near the S/E corner of the area (SU 2061). Inside SU 2061 there were frequent stone chippings and fragments of pressed mud bricks.



Figure 14 On the left, mortar layer SU 2062 and 2063 on the eastern side of the cobblestones of 2038 during the excavation; on the right, detail of plaster on SU 2063

After the removal of SU 2061, the final level of 2022 was reached. SU 2044, a light brown, coarse-grained, sandy-clay layer with stone chippings in the central south portion, and, under this, SU 2043 and SU 2045 compact, clayey, light-brown layers were removed.⁶

SU 2043 leaned on a very compact, grey layer characterized by the frequent presence of stones and stone chippings (also tuff) and small lumps of white mortar (SU 2057). SU 2057 was quite thick and extended throughout the eastern extension below the topsoil.⁷ Inside the layer SU 2057 a broken cobblestone and a sherd of pottery with incised linear decoration were found [fig. 15].



Figure 15 SU 2057 during the excavation. On the left side, the broken cobblestone; on the right side, a sherd of pottery with incised decoration

6 It must be noted that SU 2043, which extended from the central area to the eastern extension, showed, in this easternmost portion, some areas of friable grey mortar. This year, compared to last year's final plan, it was decided to consider as SU 2045, due to the features described and verified, only the southernmost portion characterized by the greater presence of pieces of mud bricks. Inside SU 2045 a fragment of an interlocking tile was found.

7 Near the N/E corner it was partially covered by a brown, crumbly, coarse-grained layer with stones and stone chippings (SU 2071). This layer seems to be covered by the 'first' level of the cobblestones SU 2038 and covers the 'second' one.

SU 2043 covered, on the southern side of the area, a collapse of mud bricks, SU 2072. It is a brown, quite crumbly layer with occasional tuff stone chippings and medium size pieces of mortar inside. It is more compact and lighter in colour near the mud bricks. Mud bricks height is around 6-8 cm (only one preserved the thickness) and they have variable colour and compactness: some of them are dark brown, crumbly and with frequent traces of vegetable fibres and stones chippings inside; others are light brown, homogeneous mixture and compact. It is probably the collapse of the mud bricks' structure still *in situ* SU 2080. Inside one of the mud bricks of SU 2072 a small coin (around 20 × 20 mm ca and very thin, around 1 mm) was found [fig. 16]. The find was handed over to the History Museum of Armenia. After cleaning it was possible to identify the coin. It is an Abbasid Caliphate *fals*, possibly minted in Barda'a at the time of Yazid ibn Usayd (or Asid), governor (*ostikan*) of Arminiya (ca 750-80).⁸

Placed inside a mud brick in collapse, this coin cannot be used to obtain a precise dating of the layer, but it provides us an important *terminus post quem*.⁹

8 We extend our thanks to Hasmik Hovhannisyan and Armine Zohrabyan for identifying the coin. Yazid ibn Usayd (or Asid) ibn Zafir al-Sulami was a governor of Arminiya serving the early Abbasid Caliphate. The settlement of Arab contingents in Armenia had a military as well as a political purpose for the pursuit of the war against Byzantium and the Khazars. As a member of Sulaym tribe, which participated decisively in Arab-Byzantine wars, Yazid was settled in the western Armenian borderlands with the Byzantine Empire (Ter-Ghevondyan 1976, 29-30). According to al-Baladhuri and Al-Tabari, his mother was the daughter of the Christian patrician of Siwnik' (Kennedy 1990, 70; Al-Baladhuri 2022, 214) so "Yazid inherited a prominent position in the Qaysi army of the last Umayyad caliph and among the semi-autonomous princes of Armenia", and his father had been a companion in arms of Marwan ibn Muhammad ibn Marwan in the Caucasus area, before he became caliph (Kennedy 2016, 57-8). Yazid took back the city of Karin which had been captured by Constantine V. He was appointed three times to the governorship of Arminiya (752-4, 759-70, and 775-80) and played a central role during the conflict with the Khazar Khaganate (Ter-Ghevondyan 1976, 30). Moreover, Yazid joined the ranks of the counsellors of the Abbasid caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur becoming a trusted advisor (Kennedy 2016, 57-8). Around 758-60, Al-Mansur ordered Yazid, the Arab governor of Armenia, to attempt to marry one of the Khazar kagan's daughters. The goal was to establish long-lasting peace with the kagan and the Khazar soldiers, thus helping Armenia to survive against the Khazaria's strength. Baghatur, the Khazar kagan, accepted Yazid's offer, and the bride was escorted south to the Muslim town of Bardha'a (Partaw) by ten thousand elite Khazars. After only two years and four months of marriage, the khatun died. The Khazars interpreted her death as a result of a deliberate plot hatched by the Muslim and took revenge. The Khazars launched devastating raids in South of Caucasus in 762-4: in 762 passed Derbent and headed south killing Muslims in Armenia; in 764 occupied Albanian territories, principalities in eastern Georgia, Tiflis and destroyed parts of Armenia (Brook 2006, 114-15; Czeglédy 1960, 75-81).

9 We can hypothesize that the coin was in the clay used to make the mud brick or that the brick came from reused material. The practice of reusing previous construction materials is already attested in Dvin, for example in the central district (Kalanataryan 1996, 42, 49, 83).



Figure 16 SU 2072 and a detail of the coin found

Coin description (by Armine Zohrabyan and Hasmik Hovannisyan)

Abbasid Caliphate Yazid ibn Usayd (or Asid) (ca 750-80), governor (ստրիկան) of Arminiya Fals, Æ , 1.30 g, 20.0 mm, h 4 Mint of Barda'a (?), AH ??6/AD 77?

After restoration:



At the end of the excavation the stratigraphic situation is the following [figs 17-18]:

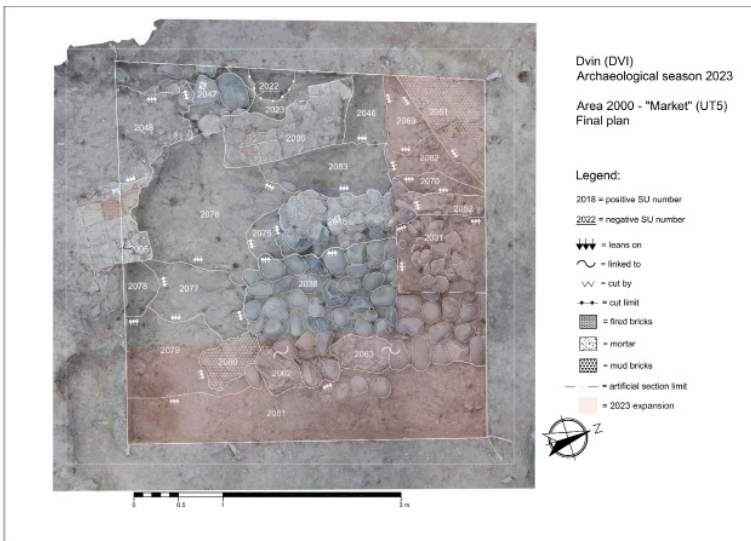


Figure 17 Area 2000. Final plan at the end of the 2023 expedition

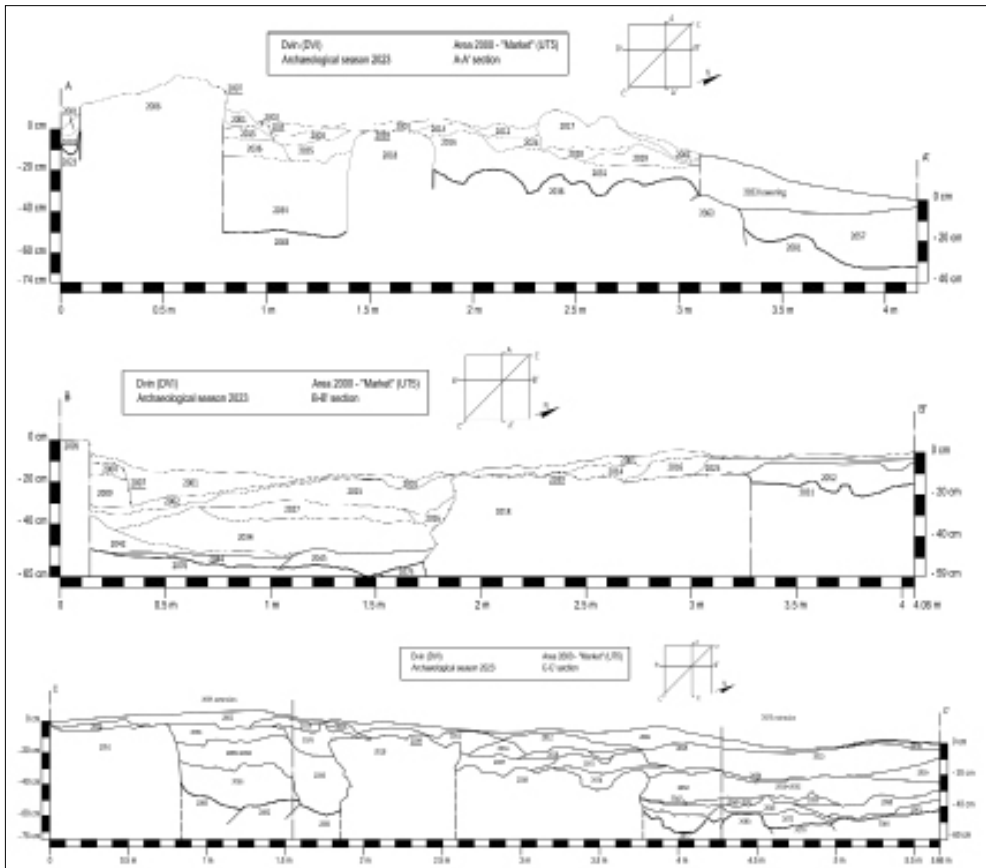


Figure 18 Area 2000. Cumulative sections after 2023 archaeological activities

3.3 Conclusions

At this stage of the micro-stratigraphic assessment excavation of area 2000 [fig. 19], 7 activities¹⁰ could be hypothesized:

- A2093: it is the oldest one to which belongs the wall SU 1818, the cobblestones layer SU 2038 and the conglomerate SUs 2062-2063.
- A2094: to this activity belong the mud bricks constructions: SU 2051, the reconstruction of the wall SU 1818 (SU 2052)

¹⁰ See § 5.1.2 for the definition of “Activity”.

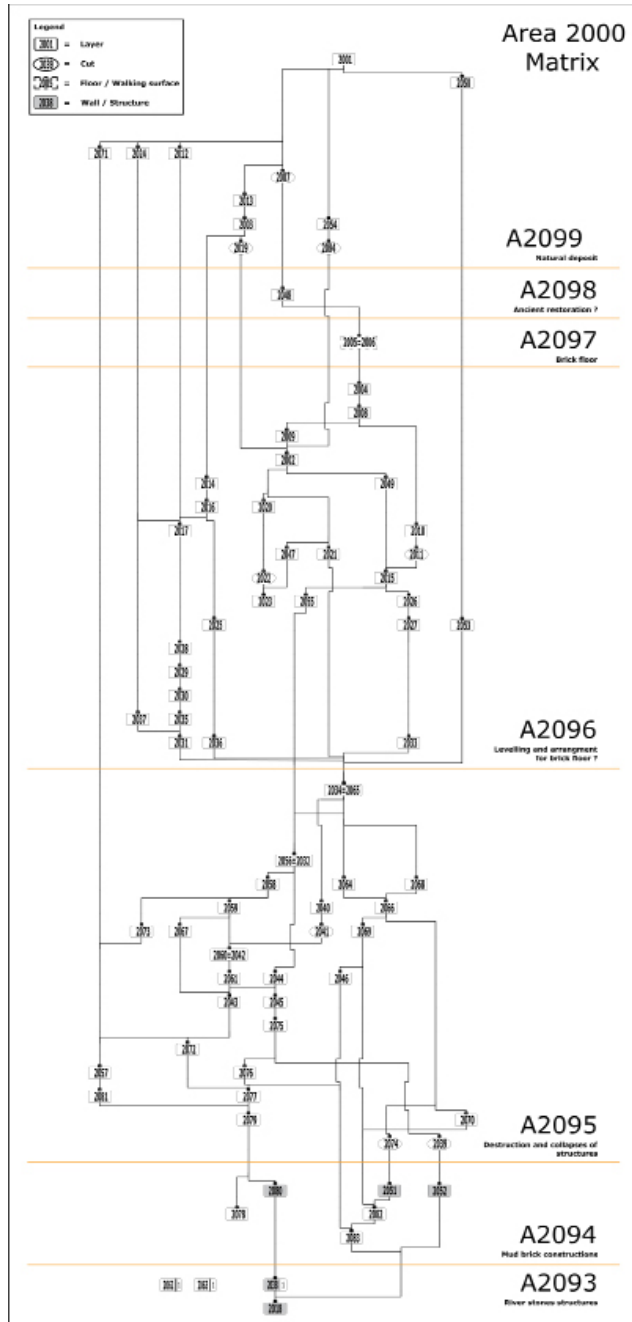


Figure 19 Area 2000. Matrix after 2023 archaeological activities

and the remains of the mud bricks wall on the southern side (SU 2080).

- A2095: this activity refers to the destruction of the structure SU 2018 (SU 2039) and all the collapse found during the excavation (e.g. SUs 2072, 2066, 2065, 2034, etc.). It is not possible at this moment to identify sub-phases.
- A2096: to this activity belongs the layers after the collapses that were used to create an horizontal level for the creation of the fired bricks floor (e.g. SUs 2004, 2009, 2008, 2015, etc.).
- A2097: this activity refers to the construction of the fired bricks floor (SU 2005 and 2006).
- A2098: this activity refers to a probable ancient restoration of the fired bricks floor (SU 2048).
- A2099: this activity refers to recent layers and topsoil.

4 Light Archaeology Survey of the Dvin Market

Francesca Cheli

In 2023 a light archaeology survey on the structures preserved in the 'Market' area was started [fig. 20]. The aim was to describe these structures and, where possible, the used tools. Particular attention, in this sense, was given to the large slab tuff flooring present in the south-eastern portion of the area. The work is ongoing.

A - Refers to the large slab flooring on the south-eastern side in the 'Market' area. It is made up of, squared and smoothed dark tuff ashlar. Rare presence of orange tuff ashlar. The central portion is missing, and, at a lower level of the floor, there is a layer of white mortar mixed with stones and brick fragments.

On the ashlar of the south side, the floor has a continuous groove about 14 cm wide, while on the north side only two ashlar are grooved, and the adjacent one is only roughly outlined. The groove has a rectangular section. Around it there are ashlar not in place with traces of grooves (at least 5), one of which has a T-shaped groove. On the north side, traces of two bases (possibly columns) are noticeable, but they are slightly misaligned.

A.1 - dark tuff ashlar on the north side of the slab flooring (67.5 × 100 cm) [fig. 21]. It has a groove approximately 15 cm wide and approximately 2-3 cm deep. It continues on the ashlar A.2, but is interrupted to the west due to the presence of a quadrangular base.

The groove is made with a flat blade (chisel): ↔ 1.3-2 cm; √ 1-4 mm. The cut on the northern side shows two dimensions (↔ 1.3-2.16 cm) and it is not clear if it is another tool or two overlapping traces.



Figure 20 Photo of the Market area taken by drone. Letters indicate the structure analysed, numbers the ashlars of the large floor studied

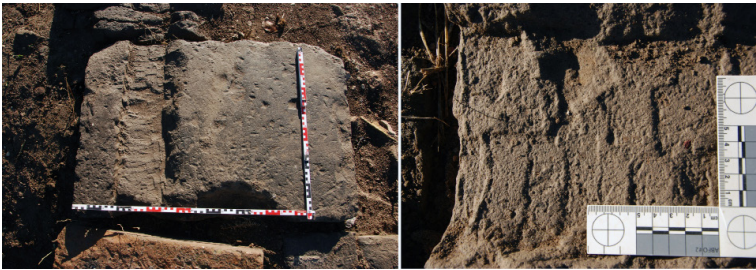


Figure 21 On the left side, the tuff ashlar A.1; on the right side, a detailed of the flat chisel marks

A.2 - dark tuff ashlar on the north side of the slab flooring, on the eastern side of A.1 (111 × 70 cm). It has a groove approximately 14-15 cm wide and approximately 2-3 cm deep. It is shallower on the E side (< 1 cm). The groove is made with a flat blade (chisel) and tool marks are more clearly readable on the north side: ↔ 1.2-1.3 cm; √ about 5 mm.

A.3 - dark tuff ashlar on the north side of the slab flooring, on the eastern side of A.2. The groove is roughly outlined (length 10 cm, width 15 cm). The groove is made with a flat blade (chisel) and tool mark is not clearly visible: ↔ 1-1.1 cm.

A.4 - dark tuff ashlar on the north side of the slab flooring, on the eastern side of A.3 [fig. 22]. It does not show traces of grooves but has a non-through, polygonal hole (22 × 17 cm). Hole depth: 5-5.5 cm. The walls of the cut show marks of a point tool: ↔ 5mm.

A.5 - dark tuff ashlar (63 × 72 cm) on the western side, not in place, with two perpendicular grooves (width 14-15 cm, depth 3-4 cm) [fig. 23]. At the intersection point, there is a square (14 × 15 cm) through hole. Tool mark is not clearly readable,

but on one side of the groove linear marks given at 45° are visible. It could be a point tool: ↔ 2 mm.
The distance between the traces is about 1 cm.



Figure 22 On the left side, the tuff ashlar A.4; on the right side, a detailed photo of the point tool marks



Figure 23 On the left side, the tuff ashlar A.5; on the right side, a detailed photo of the tool marks

A.6 - orange tuff ashlar on the southern side (64 × 74 cm) [fig. 24]. It has a groove approximately 14-14.5 cm wide and approximately 3.5-4 cm deep.

The groove seems to be made with a flat blade (chisel): ↔ 8-10 mm; only a tool mark on the bottom is ↔ 1.74 cm. Tool marks are parallel to the long side.

A.7 - dark tuff ashlar on the southern side (68 × 122 cm). It has a groove approximately 13.5-14 cm wide and approximately 4-5 cm deep.

The groove is made with a flat blade (chisel): ↔ 0.9-1 cm.

Traces of a pointed tool can also be seen: ↔ 2 mm; √ 5 mm.

B - Refers to the fired orange bricks floor on the western side of the 'Market' area (Petrosyan et al. 2023, 211, fig. 26).

Bricks dimensions: 23 × 23 × 4-4.5 cm.

Remains of the same floor are found within excavation area 2000 (SUs 2005-2006).



Figure 24 On the left side, the tuff ashlar A.6; on the right side, a detailed photo of the tool marks

C - Refers to the mud bricks wall on the western side of the 'Market' area, within excavation area 2000 (SU 2051) [fig. 11].

The wall is visible for at least 2 courses in width and 7 in height. Its orientation is East-West. Mud bricks dimensions: 30 × 30 × 6 cm.

5 Area 1000 and the Stratification of the Lower Fortress: A Peek through the Peephole

Michele Nucciotti, Leonardo Squilloni, Miriam Leonetti

5.1 Introduction

The micro-stratigraphic study conducted by the University of Florence team within the framework of the Armenian-Italian expedition to Dvin is enabling a detailed assessment of the formation processes of archaeological stratification in two sectors of the site, the Market area (cf. area 2000) and the Lower Fortress (area 1000). It is certainly worth questioning how two excavations of such limited extent can contribute to the historical-archaeological reconstruction of the events of an urban site the size of Dvin, or what their level of representativeness and 'capacity for innovation' might be in the broader context of studies on medieval Armenia. For obvious reasons, a comprehensive response must be deferred until the end of the investigation, at least for this first phase of the project expected in 2026. However, in light of the findings thus far, I would like to attempt a preliminary assessment at the conclusion of the third campaign of investigation (2023), as some results and many perspectives now appear, at least to the author, sufficiently delineated.

5.1.1 Cons and Pros of a Micro-Stratigraphic Approach

First, the limitations. Both quantitatively and topographically, the limits of area 1000 are evident. It represents about 0.001% of the entire archaeological site (based on current knowledge) and within it, no building is observable in its entirety in plan. Hence, it is necessary to exercise particular caution in generalizing any results of the excavation because, ultimately, the perspective offered by area 1000 resembles that of a peephole: quantitatively limited and optically distorted, highlighting and almost absolutizing what is in the foreground, thereby altering the proportions relative to the general context. However, what can be observed is extremely detailed. High resolution. And this is perhaps the greatest asset of the adopted sampling strategy. This point should not be underestimated and, indeed, should be highlighted. In what sense and how? First and foremost, by assigning value to the stratigraphic method itself, based on the principles of the “site formation process” outlined by Edward Harris in 1973 (1979)¹¹ and practically implemented primarily by Philip Barker (1977). Generally, it has not been adopted at Dvin in previous decades of archaeological research on the site, and when it has been, it was never at this level of detail. A stratigraphic approach which, despite the difficulties posed by the characteristics of the architectures present on the site (largely made of perishable materials and observable in highly degraded situations within the ‘historicized’ excavation areas), has been moreover extended to the non-destructive archaeological study of structural-architectural evidence, with an approach of architectural archaeology and light archaeology (Brogiolo, Cagnana 2012; Nucciotti, Vannini 2019), previously used for Armenian-Italian research in Vayots Dzor (Nucciotti et al. 2015), and which has allowed, from this year, the creation of an atlas of building techniques used between the fifth and thirteenth centuries in the entire archaeological area of Dvin (Leonetti 2024). From a methodological point of view, then, the intersection between the stratigraphic analysis of the deposit in areas 1000 and 2000, integrated with the atlas of building techniques, allows for greater contextualization of the structures uncovered in the excavation and helps providing a reference absolute chronological framework (see § 5.3), initiating a strategy to correct the ‘peephole effect’. In a similar perspective, the contextual study of all artefacts associated with the micro-stratigraphy (without selection) will allow for a deeper understanding and seriation of the

11 This method has had a significant impact on the Italian archaeological scientific community, as evidenced by the first non-English edition of Harris’s work in 1983, and was particularly welcomed by Historical Archaeologists working on the Medieval Period.

lesser-known ceramic productions, primarily those unglazed items related to kitchen and storage functions. A result that, although obtained from a limited ‘peephole’, will provide knowledge that can be reflected on the scale of the entire site and beyond it, with the final elaboration expected in 2026.

5.1.2 Harris Matrix Segmentation and New Macro-Periodization for Areas 1000 and 2000

Based on the findings from the 2022 excavation season proposed in the previous report (Petrosyan et al. 2023), primarily concerning the relative chronological framework, it was decided, starting from this report, to modify the notation system of the macro-periodization of the Harris Matrix. Until last year, the Harris Matrix had been segmented into “phases” (Petrosyan et al. 2023, figs 41-2), progressing from the most recent (Phase 1) to the oldest (Phase 6, for area 1000). Reflecting on the implications of this nomenclature, three critical points emerged, which prompted the adoption of a new nomenclature based on “Activities”, starting from 2023 and replacing the previous ‘phases’ [fig. 33].

The first critical point observed relates to the ambiguity of the term ‘phase’, which generally refers to an overall phasing of the site, not yet available, and which could create confusion between the macro-periodization of the different excavation areas, simply because ‘Phase 2’ or ‘Phase 3’ of areas 1000 and 2000 would not necessarily refer to the same absolute chronology. The second critical point, partly related to the first, is that since the micro-stratigraphic excavation samples are of limited extent, using the term ‘phase’ risked implying too broad a generalization of the research results. Finally, as a corollary to both critical points, the inverse numbering of a ‘Phase 1’ more recent than a ‘Phase 2’ (or 3 or 4) was counterintuitive, as it is usually expected that ‘Phase 1’ is the oldest in a series of site transformations. For all these reasons, a more low-key segmentation of the Harris Matrix into “Activities” has been adopted, grouping coeval and/or coexisting SUs, numbered in reverse order starting, for area 1000 from A1099 (the most recent), and from A2099 for area 2000. This way, an intuitive sequence is maintained in the chronological progression of stratified horizons (e.g. A1080 predates A1090) while avoiding nomenclature that might imply an overall phasing of the archaeological site.

M.N.

5.2 Area 1000: Stratigraphic Description

The 2023 excavation season started with the removal of the geotextile, and deep cleaning of the section and the layers already uncovered in 2022. Because of the presence of three walls (SUs 1074,¹² 1090, 1115), the area has been investigated in three different sub-areas [fig. 31]:

- The southern portion: south of walls SUs 1090 and 1115.
- The northwestern portion: between walls SUs 1115 and 1074 and the W and N sections.
- The northeastern portion: between walls SUs 1090 and 1074 and the E and N sections.

While the walls SUs 1074 and 1090 were already identified in 2022, SU 1115 and its destruction cut SU 1114 were recognized after the removal of SU 1080 (collapse layer in the northern corner of the area, later than SU 1074) and SU 1109 (small accumulation of clay soil on SU 1115). SU 1014 is made of rammed earth, and it has roughly the same SW-NE orientation as SU 1090, slightly more W-E.

In the southern portion, the first layer to be removed was SU 1095, the filling of the SW-NE oriented cut SU 1099. The cut had a concave profile, more vertical on the northern side. No clear clues on its function have been uncovered. It divided a compact and slightly N-S inclined surface clay layer (SUs 1071-1100). This could be a walking surface arranged on the below destruction layers.

Under SU 1071=1100, the remains of a mud-bricks floor (SU 1104 and SU 1129) have been uncovered. Its state of conservation was bad both due to ancient destruction (SU 1120 and SU 1108) and due to the degradation of the bricks (SU 1105 and SU 1121). Some of them, placed horizontally, were still partially visible, but none of them preserved the entire limits. The bricks' mixture contained straw. The floor was laid on a level compact clay preparation (SU 1106) with a slight N-S inclination.

Below this situation, the destruction (SUs 1133 and 1135) of a mud-bricks structure and the structure itself have been uncovered in the southwestern portion of the area. The preserved structure was formed by a sub-rectangular-shaped arrangement of mudbricks (SU 1136) with a semicircular end (SU 1137) on the eastern side [fig. 25]. The latter framed a small, shallow oval-shaped cut (SU 1148), in which nothing was found except a pebble, taking on a form that suggests its possible use as a tool for smoothing. The mudbricks of

¹² The mud bricks wall SU 1074 has been maintained in situ even if it is later than other excavated layers (SU 1128 and SU 1110) to preserve it and to facilitate its continuation in the northern section once we open that area.

the ring around this pit were horizontally placed, while SU 1136 was made of half-bricks arranged vertically in parallel rows. The upper S-N profile of the structure showed a depression in the central part, possibly the remains of a channel to allow the flow of fluids or liquids toward the pit. The bricks, with a hard and refined mixture, were bound together with hardened clay. So far, the interpretation of the structure remains uncertain. The main idea is that it could be a structure consisting of a rectangular portion with an attached small pit surrounded by bricks, used for some type of production, although no traces (raw materials or production waste) of it have been recovered. In this case, it might seem unusual that, despite the structure being of modest size, the bricks were placed directly on the underlying layers of ashes (SUs 1107 and 1124) without any preparation. Conversely, it has to be noted that structures formed by vertically placed mudbricks have been noted and reported on top of the fired-bricks floor of what Ghafadaryan identified as a mosque, in the central quarter.¹³ The other hypothesis, which anyway shows a number of criticalities and is less probable, suggests that it could be a collapsed brick wall in a single block (SU 1136), partially broken apart (SUs 1133 and 1135).¹⁴

13 Maybe, Ghafadaryan refers to these walls when he says that small rooms with mud-brick walls were built on the floor of the mosque in the twelfth or thirteenth century (1952, 46). Archive pictures of the walls are published online (cf. the repository at <https://treasury.am/hy>, picture no. 1499 and 1599). Also fired bricks were usually vertically displayed, as in the not-identifiable structure of picture no. 2284 in the same repository.

14 According to the orientation of the bricks, the eventual wall should be located to the south of the collapse, perhaps beyond the excavated section where no traces have been found within the excavation area. In this case, it remains difficult to explain why the potential wall would be composed of bricks arranged with their headers facing towards the external side (a construction type not present in the works published on Dvin), and the presence of the pit with bricks arranged in a ring around it (is it a coincidence or the result of an excavation beneath the overlying cut 1095?).



Figure 25 Mud bricks structure (SUs 1136 and 1137) in the southern part of the area

As already mentioned, this evidence lay on ash layers, most likely to be interpreted as destruction layers of a phase related to a period subsequent to the primary use of the walls SUs 1090 and 1114 (?), partially excavated at the end of the 2022 season.¹⁵ The upper ones showed a formation from south to north with a slightly horizontal upper surface (SUs 1124, 1150, 1159, and 1169), and an extension limited to a narrow strip along the southern section of the excavation. This is due to the conformation of the underlying layers, which instead show a noticeable inclination from north (walls 1094 and 1115) to south. The situation is particularly interesting starting from SU 1091=1149, a layer composed of grey to white ash mixed with a soft and incoherent light brown soil. This layer abutted against the southern face of the walls SUs 1090 and 1115. Many materials – fragments of pottery, including small glazed or luster fragments and cooking pots, metal, and animal bones – have been recovered. The high fragmentation of the pieces, which persists even in the underlying layers, is indicative of the fact that these layers refer to post-use and destruction deposition. Indeed, no clear traces of fire, but only ash, have been detected. The only exception is SU 1176, a quadrangular-shaped accumulation of fire traces (with grey ash framed by a dark brown/black ash

¹⁵ Petrosyan et al. 2023, 226; during the 2023 excavation, it was decided to investigate the destruction layers south of the walls in more detail. Thus SU 1091, excavated in a small section close to wall SU 1090 last year, was divided into many more layers during the 2023 excavation.

line). Conversely to other ash accumulation (SUs 1174 and 1177-1178), in SU 1176 – and SU 1179 – there were no materials. The high concentration of ash in the soil seems to suggest that a fire was lit. All the ash concentrations laid on a soft, light brown, and very incoherent soil (SU 1175), that seems to be a layer over which they have been deposited. It was characterized by the presence of small mortar lumps and fragments of charcoal, and the pottery found inside was abundant. Two other ash layers were noteworthy: SUs 1174 (later than SU 1175) and SU 1181 (earlier than 1175). They were composed of grey and compact ash and had a maximum thickness of about 10 cm, while all the other ash layers were very shallow.

Coming to the end of the southern portion, it is possible to say that all the excavated layers of 2023 are later than the destructions of the walls SUs 1090 and 1115. These are represented by the N-S inclined layers (SUs 1180, 1175, 1091=1149) below or above which there are concentrations of ash, often the result of intentional deposition.

In the northern portion of the area, as already mentioned, the excavation was carried out in two different sub-areas, due to the presence of the wall SU 1074, uncovered in 2022. The excavation of the deposit in the northeastern portion of the square allowed to clarify the technology of the wall SU 1090 and its relation with the wall SU 1074. Indeed, while in 2022 such relation was still unclear, because of the pit SU 1072 cut on their intersection, the stratigraphic analysis of the archaeological deposit allowed in 2023 to understand that the wall SU 1074 is later than SU 1090. Moreover, since the excavation activities in this portion of the square reached the foundation of SU 1090, this latter can now be better described (see further § 5.3).¹⁶

Four stratigraphic units, referred to the construction process, can be distinguished in the wall SU 1090: MSU 1090, the wall elevation made by rammed earth, which lay on MSU 1146 (accumulation of fragments of mud bricks on the eastern portion of the wall), MSU 1184 (very compact grey clay masonry portion) and MSU 1185, the basement (still not completely visible) composed of 7 broken stones. These have a rectangular shape and are arranged horizontally. All the layers excavated are later than the basement of the wall MSU 1185 (see § 5.3).

The first layers to be removed in this portion, covered by the walking surface SUs 1085-1086, were SUs 1097 and 1087, both

16 During the excavation, the upper part of the wall SU 1090 was excavated as part of the layers abutting it. In fact, as visible from the eastern section and the excavation photos, the top of the preserved wall was higher and already visible at the level of layer SU 1066. Having noticed this, it was possible to revise the interpretation and relative chronology of some layers: SU 1066 is a collapse layer, similar and coeval to SU 1080 on the other side of the wall SU 1074; SUs 1085-1086 were reinterpreted as walking surfaces from the room bordered by walls SUs 1074 and 1090.

accumulation deposits rich in fragments of fired and mud bricks, lumps of mortar, fragments of gypsum, and charcoal. A small post hole was identified in SU 1087, close to the wall SU 1074.

In turn, these layers covered a horizontal walking surface (SU 1119 and his levelling SU 1117), where a small structure was installed. The latter (formed by SU 1010=1116) was a kind of platform that rose from the ground of about 15 cm [fig. 36]. It was made of hard and compact clay and displayed a horizontal upper surface. In the middle of it, there was a concave N-S oriented cut (SU 1113). Straw remains arranged in a linear pattern from north to south have been found both in the filling (SU 1111) of this cut and over the remains of the platform/structure. Furthermore, in SU 1116 a mother-of-pearl waste was recovered. The presence of the straws and the mother-of-pearl fragment, even if only one, may suggest a productive function of the structure, a hypothesis that needs to be verified with additional data.

The wall SU 1074 was founded on the above mentioned structure, without any foundation cut. It preserves only one line of mud bricks and a soil preparation under them. On the western side of the wall, at the same height of SU 1110=1116, the layer SU 1128 was also covered by SU 1074. The construction of SU 1074 is therefore later than SUs 1110=1116 and 1128. A detailed analysis of the materials will provide data for a clearer absolute chronology of this sequence. In any case the available data, indirectly, also allow to state that wall 1074 is later than walls SUs 1090 and 1115. Furthermore, it means also that the inner division of the space to the north of SUs 1090 and 1115 was not in place before the making of SU 1074.

Going deeper, SU 1119 (clayish layer with small stones) covered a previous walking surface (SU 1141) on which three structures made of raw mud bricks were placed [fig. 26]:

- SU 1142: two perpendicular lines of gray mud bricks forming a rectangular structure with SU 1090. The structure is empty in the middle and the western portion is covered by SU 1074, so is not visible. At the first sight, it seemed to be a structure with a containing function.¹⁷
- SU 1143: alignment of mud bricks with a slightly north-south orientation, perpendicular to SU 1090. The bricks are aligned but do not form a straight line. The structure is about 1 m long, between the wall SU 1090 and the northern section.
- SU 1145: remains of a mud brick structure abutting on the northern face of SU 1090. It preserves only two rows of two mudbricks each, one over the other.

¹⁷ Similar structures can be identified in the rooms of the twelfth-thirteenth century of the southern part of the lower fortress (cf. Kalantaryan 1996, pl. 19.1 and pl. 47) and on the western slope of the citadel (cf. the 1950 plan edited in Ghafadaryan 1982, 73).

The scarce visibility due to the limited size of the area between SU 1090 and the north section does not allow to have a clear idea of the situation. At least, it is possible to state that at a certain point, the space was reorganized, with the creation of a horizontal floor and the construction of modest structures, whose function has to be clarified.



Figure 26 Mud bricks structures (SUs 1142, 1143, and 1145), north of SU 1090

Before this reorganization, there was one other walking surface (SU 1152), covered by SU 1141. SU 1152 was a clayish layer, very compact on the upper surface and softer in its thickness, where crushed stones and tuff dust were present. On its surface, in the corner between the northern section and SU 1074, a fireplace/hearth (SU 1151) was preserved [fig. 27]. It had a defined semicircular shape where grey and black ashes were mixed. SU 1152 covered two collapsed mud bricks' layers (SUs 1157-1158) and, over them, four mud bricks horizontally well-arranged as a sort of floor remains (SU 1156). The collapses displayed two different orientations: from west to east SU 1157 (the later one), and from east to west SU 1158. Beyond orientation, the distinguishing feature between the two layers is the greater presence of plaster in SU 1157.



Figure 27 Walking surface SU 1152 and the hearth SU 1151

In this portion of the excavation, SU 1158 was the last one removed. The collapses covered a probable floor (SU 1171) and a deposit layer over it (SU 1166) featured by the presence of orange and white soil patches. The remains of a mud bricks wall (SU 1186) were uncovered under layer SU 1158. SU 1186 is perpendicular to SU 1090 and is made of two rows, which preserve respectively four (the eastern one) and one (the western one) bricks. These layers will be investigated in 2024, to clarify if SU 1171 can be a floor related to the first phase of use of the wall SU 1090.

L.S.

In the northwestern portion of the area, the excavation started with the removal of the collapse layer SU 1080, which covered SU 1074 and its disruption SU 1083. This layer covered SU 1122, which is probably a rise in the terrain, made by mud and fired bricks fragments, mortar, crushed stone, and particularly straw with an orientation from north to south (very similar to the straw found east of SU 1122, in SU 1110=1116).

SU 1122 covered a large pit (SU 1126) filled with fired and mud bricks in fragments mixed to a light-colour friable matrix with faunal remains, which extends westwards continuing beyond the excavation limit (SU 1127=1130). This pit cuts through SU 1123, a horizontal, very compact clay surface, partially visible along the western

section, composed of gray and brown soil with lumps of mortar, pebbles, and decaying mud bricks [fig. 28].



Figure 28 Floor SU 1123, cut 1126, and its filling SU 1127=1130

All these SUs mark up a precise stratigraphic horizon, that is related to the last phase of use of the 1074 wall, after the construction of the wall itself. Indeed, below this situation, another phase was uncovered.

This latter consists of the walking surface SU 1128, over which the wall SU 1074 and the structure SU 1131, which abuts on SU 1074, are founded [fig. 29]. SU 1131 was formed by compact clay soil and fragments of mud bricks and showed a broken pattern with an E-W oriented section and a NE-SW oriented one. The structure was found not intact, but in disrepair, and in the eastern portion it has been partially cut by the pit SU 1072. No hypotheses about its function have been elaborated for now.



Figure 29 Structure SU 1131 on the walking surface SU 1128 and the wall SU 1074

SU 1128 covered another walking surface (SU 1132), a 5-6 cm thick layer made up of clay soil, with a horizontal orientation (it resulted visible only in some portions of the area because it was partially removed by the cut SU 1147). SU 1032 laid on two layers, SUs 1140 and 1153.

SU 1140 is a sandy-claysh layer very thin, featured by white soil patches, most likely melted plaster, and charcoal. It covered SU 1153, a layer composed of medium-large building material (fired and raw bricks), arranged in a fairly regular manner, which can be interpreted as a crawl space for the SU 1132 floor.

Evaluating the heights and what has been observed in the field, limited to the position and the remains of the deposits in the NW corner of the area, partially destroyed by the cut SU 1126, it is conceivable that the use of the floor SU 1132 was related to a second phase of use of the *tonir* (SU 1189) discovered there.

Indeed, in the western section, close to the northwestern corner of the area, a *tonir* has been found [fig. 30]. The *tonir* was positioned by cutting (SU 1164) the layer SU 1155, which was therefore the first plane of use of the *tonir*. The space between the *tonir* and its cut (10 cm ca) was filled by a fine ash layer featured by the presence of very small pebbles (SU 1188). Three quadrangular broken fired bricks (SU 1163) framed the cut. Over these bricks, there was an accumulation of fine ash (SU 1162), resulting from the use of the *tonir*. The ash was also spread on the layer SU 1155. In the end, one other layer composed of black charcoal and quadrangular fired bricks (SU 1160), most likely to be connected with the intentional defunctionalization of the *tonir*,

has been uncovered. To summarize, the *tonir* was used at least in two different phases: the first one in connection to the walking surface SU 1155, and the second one to be confirmed with a larger excavation around the *tonir*, in connection to the floor SU 1132.



Figure 30 Tonir SU 1189 and stratigraphic column

The last layer excavated was SU 1155, which covered SU 1161, to be excavated in 2024. SU 1161 covers a structure (SU 1154) located in the southern area, north of the wall SU 1115, which precedes the entire stratigraphic column described so far and is covered by some layers of disruption (SUs 1167-1168, 1165).

M.L.

5.3 The Wall SU 1090: Technical and Chronological Discussion

The architecture of Dvin is characterized by a variety of construction materials and significant aesthetic heterogeneity. Consequently, an in-depth investigation of the site's masonry walls was necessary, encompassing findings from the excavations conducted by Ghafadaryan (1952; 1982) and Ghafadaryan (1996; 2008), as well as from the new excavations initiated in 2021. This analysis focuses on the identification of the Building Technique (BT) of each wall and the discernible Masonry Types (MT), as defined in Mannoni 2005.

The term 'Building Technique' refers to the composition of the masonry wall in terms of the materials used, including the presence or absence of a foundation and binding agent.

MT, on the other hand, has been identified for each building technique based on the material, the method of construction, the treatment of stones or the composition of bricks, and their dimensions.

The MSU 1090 wall, featured in the Dvin wall atlas, constitutes a wall segment running in a northeast-southwest direction and is situated in the northern section of Area 1000.

Among the seven building techniques identified at Dvin (Leonetti 2024), wall MSU 1090 falls under building technique BT 4, characterized by a stone foundation and a superstructure made of rammed earth (*pisé*).¹⁸

The foundation of the structure (SU 1185), uncovered during the 2023 excavation campaign, is composed of stone bonded with clay mortar, while the elevation is made of rammed earth pressed within formworks, although no traces of their dimensions are currently visible.

While it was not possible to assign a wall type to the elevation as it lacks traces and therefore measurements of the formwork, the stone foundation has been classified as MT B, based on the materials used, with subtype 4 designation (MT B4).

It comprises split sandstone and limestone blocks, typically rectangular in shape, arranged in horizontal courses (of which only one is visible), ranging in length from 24 cm to 35 cm.

The joints of the foundation exhibit considerable width and irregularity, measuring between 1.8 cm and 4.8 cm, filled with a clay-sandy binder recessed within the joints.

Through stratigraphic revision (see § 5.2), it has been determined that the elevation is visible to a height of 60 cm in the portion of Area 1000 currently under excavation, whereas in the eastern section of the excavation, it is visible at a greater height.

The wall SU 1090 represents the only observable example of this construction technique at Dvin.

Other examples of this construction technique are no longer visible, but they have been reported by Kalantarian in his excavation reports and in the published accounts of the structures in the southwest portion of the Central District of Dvin (2008).

Currently, only scant remains of the foundations of these structures are visible, while there is no trace of the elevated portion.

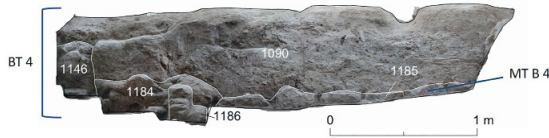
The identification of a building technique and a MT has allowed for a better chronological framework, which, combined with the stratigraphic analysis, has facilitated the dating of the wall MSU 1090.

¹⁸ For a definition of *pisé*, cf. Hermann 1999, 48-9.

From the archaeological evidence, the Building Technique type is present in Dvin between the eighth (structures in the southwest part of the central district) and the twelfth (structures of the Lower Fortress) centuries, while the MT of the foundation dates between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

According to data from micro-stratigraphy, the construction of MSU 1090 may have taken place in the eleventh century (± 50 years; see § 5.4) with a continuity of use of the wall evidenced by various floor levels, identified during excavation, leaning against the wall, until the twelfth-thirteenth centuries.

Table 1 Building technique 4: Stone (Base) and Rammed Earth (Elevation)



DESCRIPTION:

The foundation (SU 1185) is made of stone with clay binder, and the upper structure is constructed using rammed earth pressed into formwork (*pisé*). Apart from wall SU 1090 in Area 1000, only the stone foundations of this masonry technique are currently visible, while the earth structures can only be inferred from excavation photographs or descriptions in excavation reports.

FOUNDATION: Present	
Core technique: Not visible	Composition of foundation: Lithic and clay
Masonry types: MT B3, B3.1, B4, B5, B6, B8	
ELEVATION: Present	
Core technique: In layers between formwork	Composition of elevation: Clay-sandy matrix
Masonry type: Not attributable because the dimensions of the layers are not discernible.	

Sample Origin: Area 1000 SU 1090

Presence of building technique: Area 1000, SU 1090; AC 1, B 1, FU 5; B 2; AC 2, B 3, FU 2, E South and FU 5, E North; AC 5 (southwest portion); B 6, B 9, B 10.

Dating of masonry technique: Between the eighth and twelfth centuries AD.

Bibliographical references: Dvin Report 2023; Kalantarian 1996, 80-1; 2008, 96; Ghafadaryan 1982, 57-8 and 103-5.

M.L.

5.4 A Stratigraphy of Transformations in the Lower Fortress of Dvin: Area 1000 at the End of the 2023 Season

The 2023 excavation season in Area 1000 revealed a complex sequence of use, reuse, abandonment, transformation, and repurposing of the spaces within the site's area. A comparison between the Harris Matrix [fig. 33], the end-of-excavation plan [fig. 31], and the cumulative section of the deposits investigated so far [fig. 32] further illustrates how the formation times of the deposits do not coincide with horizontal planes. Consequently, at the same level, stratifications related to chronologies that are significantly distant from each other, at least from the perspective of relative chronology, can coexist (as indeed they do). This demonstrates how adopting a micro-stratigraphic strategy can assist the Armenian-Italian team in advancing their understanding of the site, highlighting aspects of its material history (as well as its productive, social, and political history) that have not been analysed at this level of detail until now.

The aim of this concluding paragraph of the 2023 excavation report for Area 1000 is to illustrate how the stratigraphic data collected so far can be used to describe the sequence of transformations that occurred in the Lower Fortress sector of Dvin. It also aims to anticipate the logical-chronological reference system into which the results of ceramic, production-archaeology, and zooarchaeological studies will be integrated. Collectively, these studies will form the interpretive backbone concerning material sources.

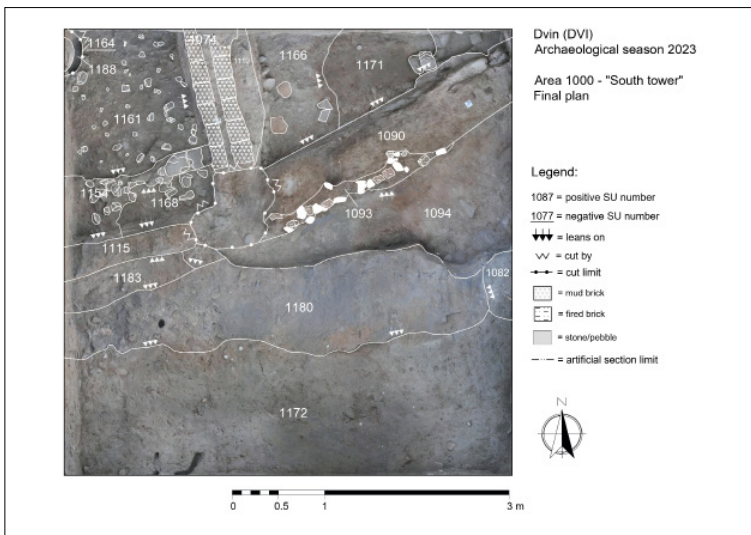


Figure 31 Area 1000 2023 end-of-excavation plan

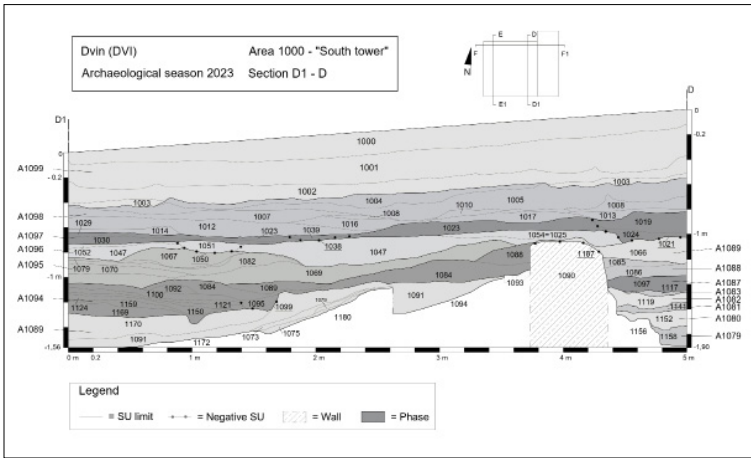


Figure 32 Area 1000 D-D1 cumulative section after 2023 archaeological activities

Contrary to the illustration of the excavation, in this paragraph, I will invert the order of presentation of the evidence, proceeding from stratigraphic horizon A1080 to the most recently investigated activity this year, A1092.

A1080 [fig. 34] shows one of the oldest configurations identified in Area 1000. It is characterized by a use floor abutting walls SUs 1090-1115, which were already present for some time. It is not yet possible to establish exactly when they were constructed, although, based on the technological analyses of 1090 (see § 5.3), I would currently hypothesize a construction date around the eleventh century (± 50 years). Following events that will be further clarified by the excavation of the SU of A1079 and A1078 in 2024, A1080 presents a *facies* associated with a domestic setting, with an earthen use floor (SU 1155 and SU 1152) featuring a hearth (SU 1151) and a *tonir* (SU 1189, inserted with cut SU 1164). This suggests a likely residential function.

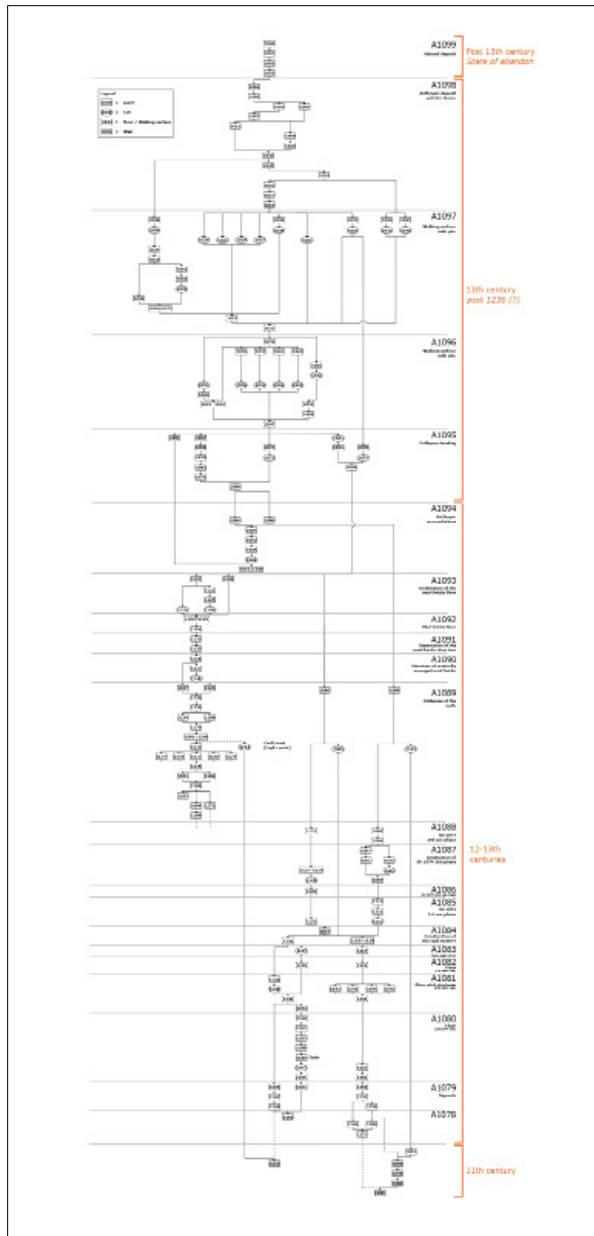


Figure 33 Area 1000 matrix after 2023 archaeological activities

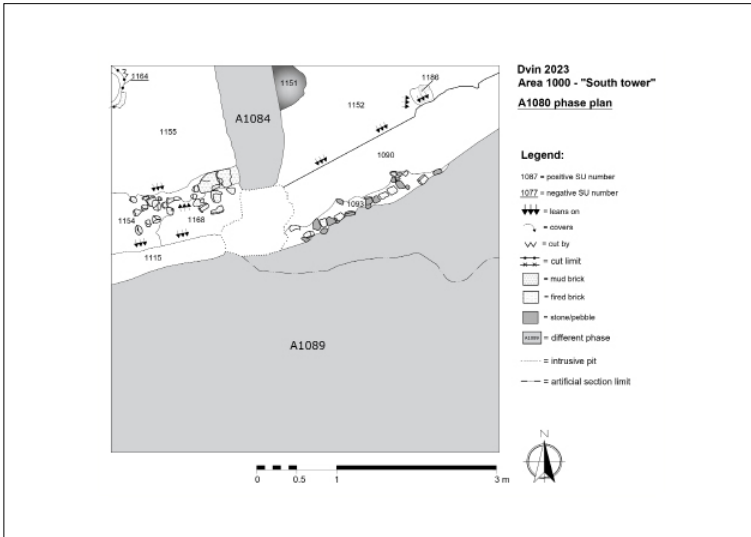


Figure 34 Area 1000, Activity A1080

The use of *tonir* SU 1189 continues for some time and appears still in use during A1082, before its deactivation and destruction in A1083. A1081 [fig. 35] shows a reorganization of the area north of walls SUs 1090-1115. As mentioned, the *tonir* is still present; however, modifications to the previous configuration are also evident. A new carefully constructed earthen use floor (SU 1140) is created over a preparation layer (SU 1153) composed of residual fragments of construction elements arranged to form a horizontal level. The presence of construction waste materials likely indicates the use of debris from ruined buildings for supply purposes. To the east, small rectangular basins or silos with walls made of fragmented mud bricks are built against the northern side of wall SU 1090. The previously open 'domestic' space becomes congested with other structures and probably additional functions. Whether this space served as a storage area, a stable, or, partially transformed, a section of the domestic area of A1080 for productive purposes cannot be determined at this time. However, the transformation of the space and its use, with the elimination of the hearth, is evident.

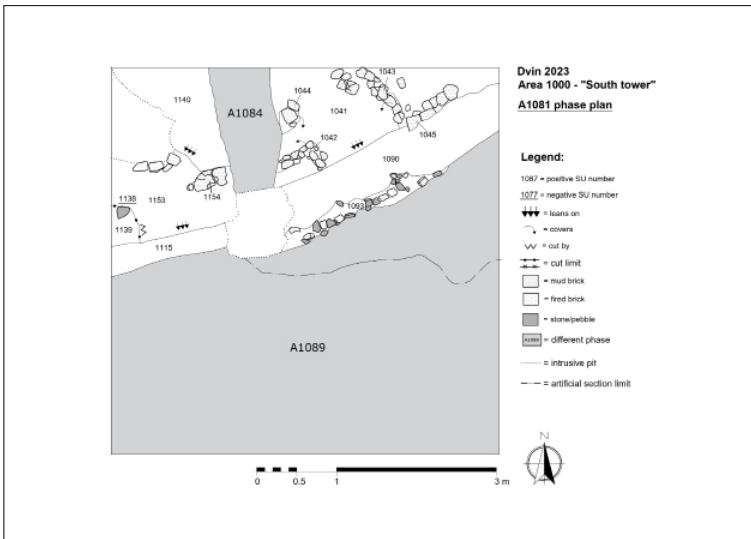


Figure 35 Area 1000, Activity A1081

Following this horizon, the main transformation occurs during A1084 [fig. 36], when the area north of walls SUs 1115-1090 (at this point surely considered ancient by those using them) is divided into two portions by the perpendicular wall SU 1074. This wall is constructed over the walking surface constituted by SUs 1128-1110 and SU 1117, which previously (A1083) levelled the structures exposed in A1081 and ended the use of *tonir* SU 1189. Moreover, the construction of wall SU 1074, made of new and unbroken bricks, could be linked to the transformation of the area for productive purposes. Throughout activities A1083 and A1084, an oblong basin cut into the floor (SU 1113) is created, from which strong concentrations of straw or vegetal fibres, also found on the surface of SU 1110, were recovered. This might be the remains of some type of mats made of plant fibres, suggesting, in association with mother-of-pearl fragments found in SU 1116, the possible installation of a manufacturing workshop. Without overemphasizing the specialization of this activity, which is also compatible with a domestic setting, it is evidence of productive activity indicating a further transformation of use in this part of Area 1000 during A1084 (possibly related, to the west of wall SU 1074, to the remains of a small structure evidenced by SU 1131).

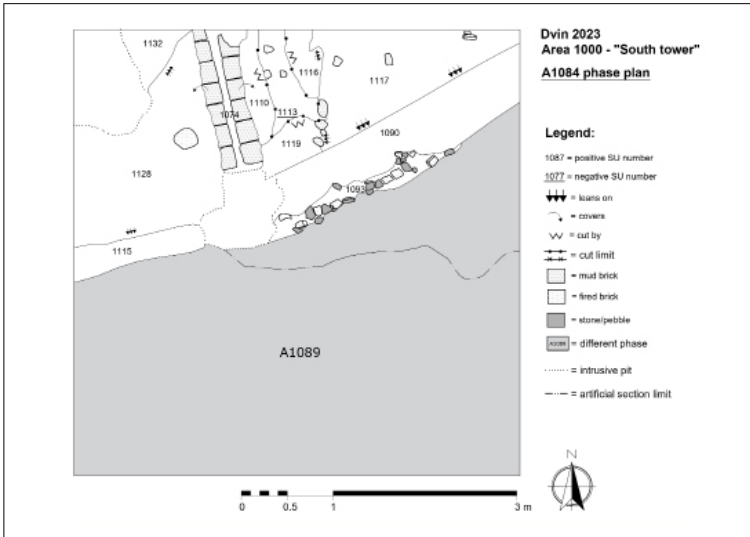


Figure 36 Area 1000, Activity A1084

The wall SU 1074 continued to exist until Activity A1089, as evidenced by the accumulations and walking surfaces abutting the structure until that period. However, it is unclear if the wall had suffered deterioration starting from Activity A1086. During that period, a new floor (SU 1123) was laid west of the wall, characterized by the presence of reused materials from a ruin (mortar lumps and fragmentary mud bricks), covering the structures of SU 1131, which were evidently no longer in use. Notably, a cobalt blue glass rod, indicative of glass production, was found in SU 1123, although it is not possible to directly relate this to SU 1131, despite the topography suggesting a potential connection. East of the wall SU 1074, the deposit SU 1111 appears to form, marking the end of the use of the small manufacturing facility chronologically linked to Activity A1084 (see § 5.2). The change in usage patterns is clear from the subsequent Activity A1087 [fig. 37], when a pit (SU 1126) was opened in the walking surface SU 1123, whose fill (SU 1127=1130) contained faunal remains but no ceramic materials. This possibly indicates a further moment of restoration or re-purposing, likely a restoration building-yard, resulting in a raised walking surface. On the east side of wall SU 1074, accumulations SU 1087 and SU 1097, a dumping of residual materials including gypsum and charcoal, are noted, precluding the new re-organization evident in Activity A1088, where new walking surfaces are established both west and east of SU 1074 [fig. 38].

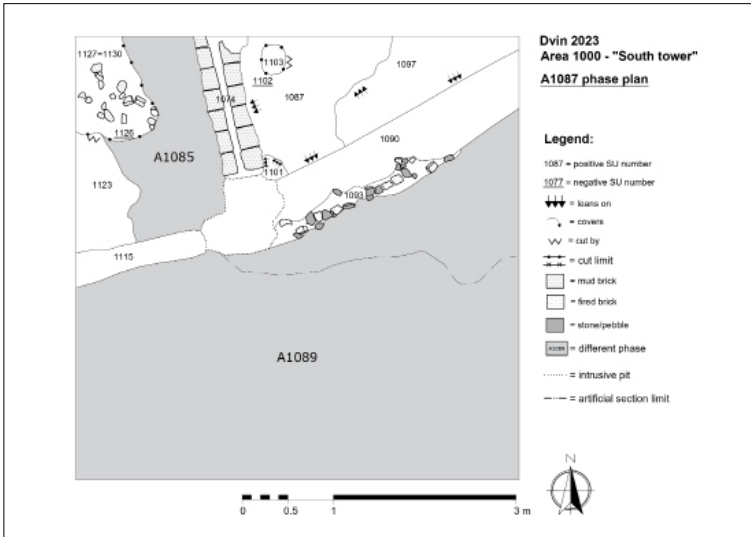


Figure 37 Area 1000, Activity A1087

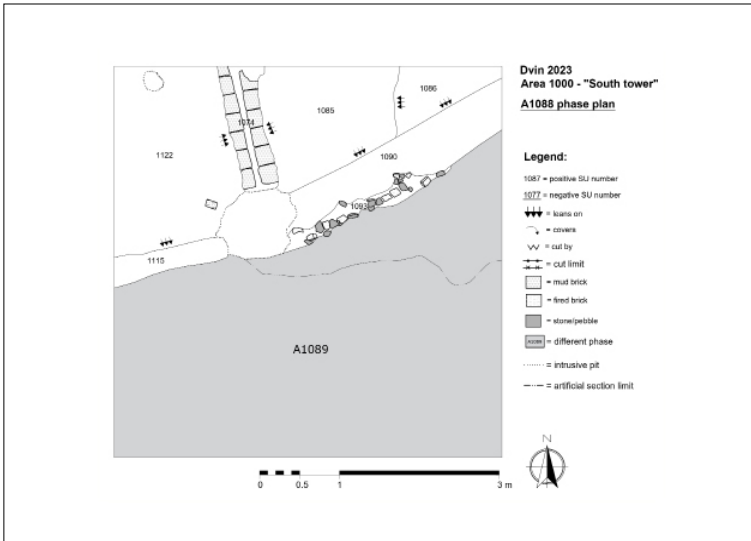


Figure 38 Area 1000, Activity A1088

All activities described so far are visible only in the northern portion of Area 1000, that is, north of the ancient structure delimited by walls SUs 1115-1090. The moment, crystallized in the subsequent Activity

A1089, completely changes the scenario of this (small) part of the Lower Fortress [fig. 39]. A series of collapses affecting all structures (SUs 1083, 1114, 1187) indicate a dramatic event, either natural (earthquake?) or anthropogenic (destruction by or with fire), which literally disintegrated the urban environment that was never re-established in this area.

However, over the ruins of the ancient structures, the oldest of which might have been constructed as early as the eleventh century, stable forms of settlement reappear, as evidenced by the establishment during Activity A1090 [fig. 40] of a production facility, featuring a flooring and channelling made of vertically set mud bricks, connected to an oval basin (SUs 1136-1137, 1148).

It is certain that from these two moments onwards (A1089 and A1090), Area 1000 retains the material memory of an 'open-air' portion of the city. It is important to remember that this re-configuration took place considerably earlier (in relative chronology) than the re-purposing of this area as a seasonal encampment site in the Mongol period (cf. Petrosyan et al. 2023, 232, phase 3/A1096). This indicates that the transformation and de-structuring of the urban environment of the Lower Fortress of Dvin, at least in Area 1000, was mainly caused by the collapses during the A1089 period which, despite in need of being precisely placed in absolute chronology, pre-dates by several decades the Mongol destructions of post-1236.

M.N.

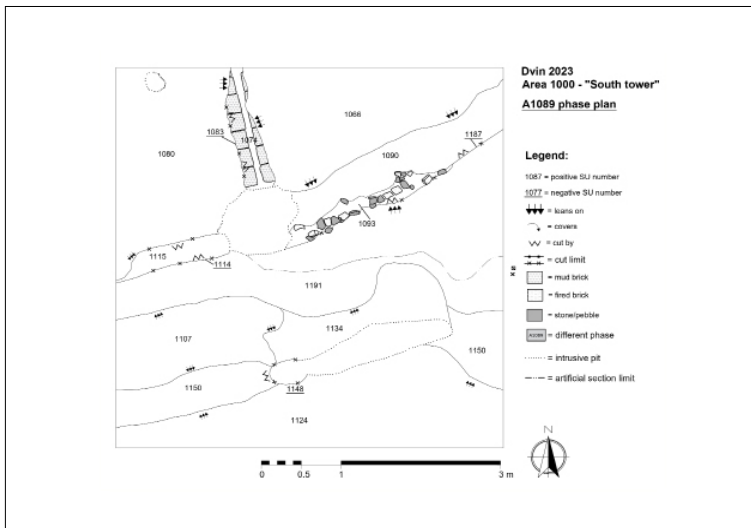


Figure 39 Area 1000, Activity A1089

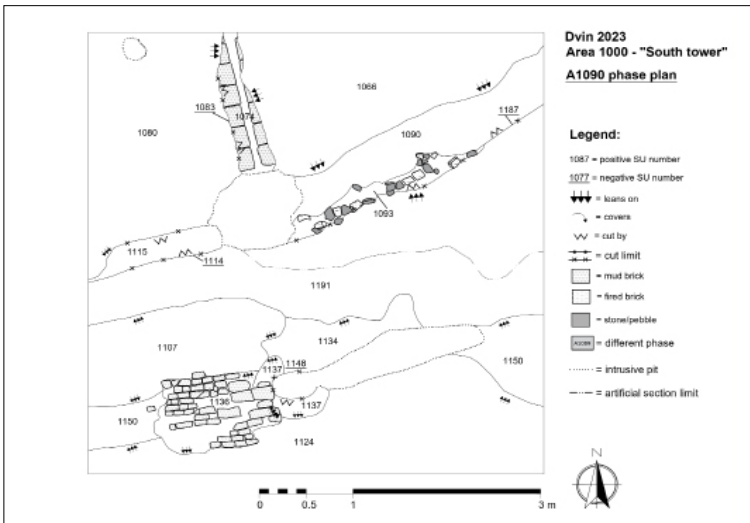


Figure 40 Area 1000, Activity A1090

6 Material and Artefacts from Area 1000 and Area 2000

Elisa Pruno, Lisa dall'Olio

Regarding the 2023 campaign, the work presented here involves the first qualitative analysis of the main stratigraphic units, analyzed by phases of activity, for both Area 1000 and Area 2000. Additionally, it includes the initial presentation of an ongoing study on animal bones, specifically aiming to identify the main species present in the excavated contexts and attempting to provide insights into livestock farming and diet.

6.1 Artefacts

As for the study on materials, the following operations were carried out during the 2023 campaign:

- Processing of the 2023 data, referring to the materials from the 2022 excavation campaign.
- Preliminary inventory of September-October 2023 excavation campaign materials.
- First photographic documentation campaign of imported artefacts found in Dvin excavation campaigns, now stored at the History Museum of Armenia in Yerevan.

The processing of data concerning artefacts from the stratigraphic units excavated in both Area 1000 and Area 2000 during the 2022 season aims to tackle several issues, the primary one being the chronological contextualization of the activities identified through stratigraphic excavation. The primary challenge in addressing the requirement for chronological contextualization stems from the absence of prior studies conducted under similar micro-stratigraphical parameters. Typically, in the available literature for Dvin, chronological references are encountered primarily for painted, glazed, or enamelled ceramics, often spanning broad periods. Comprehensive studies on unglazed ceramics, which constitute the majority of findings and fulfilled a variety of functions, have not been recently updated.¹⁹ The ongoing work entails systematic seriation of all stratigraphic units, preserving chronologies established with glazed ceramics while also integrating all unglazed ones. This process involves analysing the initial appearances, presences, and subsequent disappearances of different types on a seriation or semi-seriation basis. At the conclusion of these operations, we might be able to propose contextual chronological elements and even suggest chronologies for at least some of the unglazed pottery. The workflow for the study of each context begins with the quantification of pottery using and combining three methods: sherd count, Minimum Number of Individuals (MNI) and sherd weight.²⁰ If the meaning of the counting of fragments and the weight of the different ceramic classes is clear, it is necessary to explain how the MNI count is obtained. MNI of each pottery typology is worked out from the number of different rims and bases. The higher of the two totals is added to the number of complete profiles with the addition of 1, to count all the body sherds of the same type (compensation by 1; Verdan 2011). The main objective of the MNI counting is to identify how many individual

19 The main objective of our work on materials is to carry out a comprehensive study on all the analysed contexts, encompassing all classes of ceramics and taking into account all the collected fragments. The most recent interventions on the excavations conducted in Dvin before 2021 are those of A. Zhamkochyan (2015; 2018). For a comprehensive view of the materials excavated at Dvin, it must be mentioned the French volume of Kalantaryan (1996). For imported ceramics in Armenia in the ninth century, cf. Pormohammadi 2015. Essential for studying medieval ceramics in Armenia are the many works of A. Babajanyan (among which 2015a; 2015b; 2018).

20 From a general point of view the quantification allows an overall comparison between different types of archaeological contexts, in the same site and in different sites, even if excavated at different times or by different research groups (but in this case, the criteria used for quantification must be made explicit): “Statistical exploitation of the counts is successful when the sampling is representative from both a qualitative (considering all categories and forms homogeneously) and a quantitative point of view. For instance, an assemblage that is too small might not necessarily lead to a general overview of each defined pottery production. Primarily, quantification of material is applied to facilitate comparison which supports the larger historical picture; hence the use of the same counting method for each assemblage is crucial” (David, Saskia Buechner 2022, 65).

forms are at least represented by all the fragments in each single stratigraphic unit. By then converting the obtained data into percentages, it allows for the verification, both diachronically and synchronically, of the presence of the different types and classes of ceramics across all the investigated areas.

This process will enable the identification, among other things, of the primary functions associated to the stratigraphic units. For instance, a substantial percentage of kitchen ceramics may indicate areas of domestic activity, while a significant presence of storage ceramics might suggest locations associated with the storage of food commodities, and so forth [fig. 41].

This is the only way to meaningfully compare the various technological-functional classes present in the studied contexts. After obtaining the quantification of the MNI for each class and type within each stratigraphic unit, it becomes possible to start defining the percentages present. This process will facilitate identifying, among other things, the primary functions carried out in the discovery areas of the stratigraphic units. For instance, a significant proportion of kitchen ceramics may indicate domestic activity areas, while a substantial presence of storage ceramics might suggest locations associated with the storage of food commodities, and so forth. Based on the results of these analyses, the preparation of an article is underway, which will also benefit from the ongoing processing of data concerning artefacts from the 2023 campaign.

E.P.

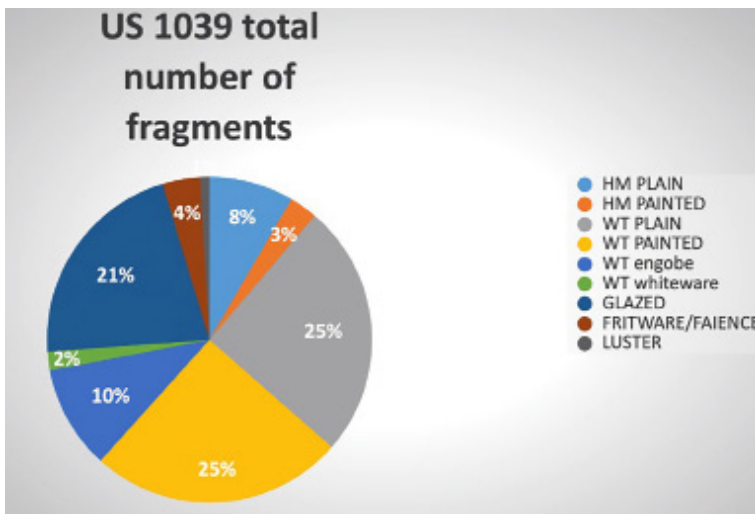


Figure 41 The example of SU 1039

6.2 Area 1000: Materials and Artefacts

Extensive amount of pottery and animal bones were excavated during the 2023 fieldwork, along with smaller quantities of glass and metal artefacts. Qualitative analysis of the pottery was conducted during this campaign to establish technological classes and typologies, while quantitative analyses are currently ongoing. Initially, as was done for previous campaigns, a categorization was established based on technological classes, including handmade, moulded, and wheel-thrown pottery, distinguished further by glazed or unglazed, as well as by the composition of the body, whether siliceous or clay (the latter categorized as rough, semi-coarse, or coarse), for each pertinent stratigraphic unit. This classification excluded units associated with cleaning phases or those of non-anthropogenic origin, which will be examined in a subsequent phase of the research, such as for verifying residuality indices.

Nineteen stratigraphic units were examined in Area 1000, but here eight are presented. They are related to some different Activities identified (see § 5.4): the construction of the wall SU 1074 (SU 1128, 1116, A1084), its first and second use phases (SUs 1111-1112, 1123, A1085-A1086), its destruction (SU 1097, A1087) and the collapses of the wall (SUs 1080, 1091, A1089). Since the quantitative analysis is still underway, which is essential for addressing chronological and functional inquiries systematically, it is crucial to highlight that the overall horizon facilitates contextual framing in chronologically compatible phases (as far as presently understood) extending to the twelfth-thirteenth century.

Starting from Activity A1089, concerning the S Area, it's interesting to analyse, even if only at a preliminary qualitative level, which doesn't yet include the final phase of quantification, the SU 1091, which represents a layer interpretable as a context of post-use and destruction deposition of the walls SUs 1090 and 1115. It is a very rich SU, with a high quantity of pottery sherds, and a relevant index of fragmentation (that will be precisely measured during the inventory drafting process in the upcoming season).²¹ Generally speaking, SU 1091 comprises both glazed and unglazed artefacts. Among the unglazed ones, there are both types for cooking use and for storage, with many diagnostic fragments [fig. 42].

21 The fragmentation index is closely related to how contexts are formed and to their post-depositional events, as well as to the specific characteristics of different ceramic productions: for example, fragile vessels with thin walls can break into a greater number of fragments than vessels with thick walls. A fairly simple way to calculate it is to divide the weight of the ceramic fragments found by the total number of fragments (Ceci, Santangeli Valenzani 2016, 21).



Figure 42 Cooking pottery sherds from SU 1091

Among the glazed artefacts, there are also 4 Mina'i fragments and one stonepaste sherd [fig. 43a]. The discovery of Mina'i ware fragments in SU 1091 is significant. Mina'i ware is an Iranian pottery, notably developed in Kashan prior to the Mongol invasion of Persia in 1219, after which its production is generally believed to have ceased. Mina'i ware likely represented one of the most luxurious ceramic wares produced in Islamic lands during the medieval period.

In SU 1149, equivalent to 1091, qualitatively, a notable quantity of stonepaste pieces is observed, still regarded as significant materials pending further verification through archaeometric analyses.

In the Northwest Area, to define A1089, SU 1080 has been taken into account. It also presents a good number of fragments, and regarding ceramic classes, both glazed and unglazed are present. Among the glazed ones, there are no stonepaste ceramics, while among the unglazed we have cooking and storage vessels (possibly also transport artefacts) [fig. 43b].

A1087 is here presented through the SU 1097 materials. Both classes are present, glazed and unglazed ones. There are fragments of green sgraffito, yellow and green sgraffito, two small fragments of stonepaste ware and, maybe, just one small piece of luster. As for the unglazed ceramics, it is mainly represented by storage materials, while there don't seem to be many fragments of kitchenware ceramics. The A1086 is represented only by SU 1097, a very small context with only five pottery fragments (one is stonepaste ware) and glass rod [fig. 43c].

The A1185 is presented through the materials from the SU 1112 and 1111. Both are small, containing not a lot of fragments. There are both glazed and unglazed sherds and it should be emphasized the presence of mother-of-pearl in SU 1111 [fig. 43d].

The presence of glass rod and mother-of-pearl fragments in A1086 and A1085 leads us to reflect on the possibility that in the vicinity of Area 1000 or nearby it, there could have been production facilities, especially related to glass or ceramic production. Moreover, excavations conducted in past years have suggested the presence of artisan workshops precisely on the western slope of the citadel and near the southern tower (Kalantarian 1996, 50-2; Ghafadaryan, Kalantaryan 2002, 51-2; Zhamkochian 2015; 2018).

Both SU 1116 and SU 1128 are connected to the construction of SU 1074 (A1084). SU 1128 is quite interesting, with glazed and unglazed pottery, two fragments of stonepaste ware, some glazed pottery sherds and a group of very dark (and burnt?) fragments of unglazed pottery. Instead, SU 1116 is quite poor in ceramic fragments, and all of them, except one, are unglazed.

E.P.



Figure 43
a) Mina'i sherds from SU 1091; b) Unglazed pottery from SU 1080; c) Glass rod from SU 1123; d) mother-of-pearl fragment from SU 1111

6.3 Area 1000: Faunal Remains

During the 2023 archaeological mission, animal bones found in Area 1000 in 2022 were catalogued. The materials date back to the late thirteenth (possibly also early fourteenth) century (A1097, A1096, and A 1095) and were uncovered in rubbish pits (SUs 1032, 1039, 1041, 1043, 1048, 1051), walking surfaces (SUs 1029-1030, 1044, 1047, 1052, 1054, 1069) and accumulations layers (SUs 1053, 1064-1065, 1068, 1081, 1082).

For species identification, several comparative anatomy manuals (Pales, Lambert 1971; Schmidt 1972; Barone 1976) and specific articles were used to distinguish between sheep and goat (Payne 1985; Halstead et al. 2002; Zeder, Lapham 2010). The data from the mandibular wear stage, useful for the determination of the age of death, were recorded according to the criteria of Payne (1973) for domestic caprines and Hambleton (2001) for cattle.

Generic age class information derived from the analysis of long bone epiphyseal fusion were collected according to the work of Bullcock and Rackham (1982) for domestic caprines and Silver (1969) for cattle. For osteometric data, the method proposed by von den Driesch (1976) was used as a reference, integrating it with the indications of Salvagno and Albarella (2017) for domestic caprines. In addition, taphonomic processes (slaughter, processing, burning, gnawing marks) and pathological evidence were recorded.

There were a total of 570 catalogued remains, of which 179 (31.4%) were determined at a taxonomic and anatomical level, 254 (44.6%) at an anatomical level and 137 (24%) for which the determination at any level was not possible due to fragmentation which does not allow for certain identification in the absence of a comparative collection.

Taxa	A1095	A1096	A1097
<i>Ovis aries</i> L. (sheep)	7	5	8
<i>Capra hircus</i> L. (goat)	6	2	3
<i>Ovis</i> vel <i>Capra</i> (sheep/goat)	33	28	28
<i>Bos taurus</i> L. (cattle)	25	13	15
<i>Equus</i> sp. (horse/donkey/hybrids)	-	1	-
<i>Sus</i> sp. (pig/wild boar)	-	1	-
<i>Canis</i> sp. (dog/wolf)	-	1	-
<i>Felis</i> sp. (domestic cat/wild cat)	-	1	-
<i>Coturnix coturnix</i> L. (common quail)	-	2	-
Total identified bones	71	54	54
Aves	-	1	-
Small vertebra	13	13	17
Small rib	23	34	29

Taxa	A1095	A1096	A1097
Large vertebra	7	8	6
Large rib	11	16	13
Not identified	68	61	71
Total unidentified bones	122	133	136

The faunal assemblage is represented almost exclusively by goats, sheep and oxen; only in A1096 there are other species present with few remains.

The frequency of species in the investigated phases shows a decrease in the presence of the ox in favour of domestic goats, and in particular sheep, between A1095 and A1096 with a distribution that remains substantially stable in A1097.

The anatomical elements of domestic caprines are all attested in the three phases, whereas for cattle this occurs only in A1095; in A1096 and A1097 the species is represented almost exclusively by terminal parts of limbs.

For A1096, the carpal bone of an equid, the scapula of a young pig, the phalanx of a canid belonging to a large dog or a wolf, the humerus of a young cat and two tarsometatarsi of common quail are also present.

The data on the age of death obtained from the mandibular wear stage for A1095 and A1097 and from the analysis of long bone epiphyseal fusion, indicate that goats and sheep were culled not before they reached six months in sub-adult and adult/senile age, while for the cattle, a veal aged less than eight months in A1097 and sub-adult/adult specimens are attested.

The traces associated with the slaughter of animals refer not only to the skinning and removal of meat, but also to the partitioning of bones to obtain smaller pieces suitable for cooking, and the division of carcasses into half-carcasses. Traces of which remain in the vertebrae, generally divided in half at all the phases investigated.

Evidence of gnawing marks by medium and large carnivores is more frequent in A1095, while evidence of burning is more frequent in later phases.

Traces of working activity have been identified on a sheep/goat astragalus from A1095 that has smoothed surface on the medial and lateral sides [fig. 44].

Pathologies were found on the bones of domestic caprines and cattle. For domestic caprines, evidence is limited to a A1095 sheep mandible showing abnormal bone growth on the mandibular branch (buccal face) possibly caused by trauma in the process of healing and to an abscess related to the loss of the second premolar on a A1097 goat mandible.

For the cattle pathologies were found on a metatarsus in A1095 and on two proximal phalanges in A1097. The metatarsus shows

degeneration of the inner tissue in the proximal-medial part of the bone [fig. 44a]. One phalanx is affected by an extensive abnormal bone growth on the palmar, axial and abaxial sides that partially reaches the proximal articular surface [fig. 44b]. The other phalanx presents a roundish bone outgrowth approximately 0.5 cm in diameter on the dorsal face [fig. 44c].

The prevalence of domestic caprines in the sample suggests an economy based mainly on goats and sheep breeding. The absence of slaughtered animals under the age of six months indicates a breeding strategy focused on the production of meat, wool and hides. However, the absence of very young animals could be linked to the consumption of these specimens in other not-investigated areas of the city.

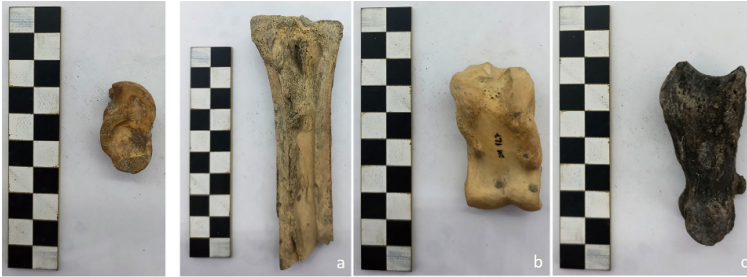


Figure 44 On the left, the worked sheep/goat astragalus from A1095 (lateral view); on the right, cattle's pathological bones: a) metatarsus from SU 1068; b) proximal phalanx from SU 1047; c) burnt proximal phalanx from SU 1047

Cattle seem to play a more prominent role during A1095. The quantitative decrease of remains and, above all, the clear prevalence of anatomical elements with low food interest from A1096 onwards seem to indicate a change in the dietary habits of the occupants of the area that continued into the next phase. The pathological evidence identified does not show features that can be definitely associated with work activities and could also depend on the advanced age of the specimens, but the data on the age of death indicate that cattle were generally kept alive until adulthood or senility, so it is likely that they were used as labour force. The presence of a mandibular fragment associated with a veal less than eight months old indicates that the species was probably bred at the site or in its immediate vicinity at least in A1097.

A change between A1095 and A1096 seems confirmed by the appearance of species other than domestic caprines and cattle. The small number of fragments attesting to the presence of these species is not compatible with a change in eating habits that remained centred on the consumption of domestic caprines and cattle but could

indicate a temporary abandonment of the area. Of these species, perhaps only common quail could be traced back to hunting activities because they have already been determined in earlier studies in rubbish pits dated between the seventh and twelfth century AD in other areas of Dvin (Dal' 1952). However, the remains of Area 1000 pertain to accumulation layers (SUs 1047, 1053) and not to rubbish pits that can be associated with meal remains. Their presence may not be due to human activity also because the Armenian territory falls within the reproductive area of the species, which is abandoned in winter (Svensson, Mullarney, Zetterstöm 2017, 56).

Possible indicators of activity in the area include an astragalus that has its medial and lateral sides abraded and smoothed. The presence of talus in archaeological sites is usually linked to ritual or playful practices that lead to the discovery of discrete quantities of these bone remains (Gilmour 1997; Minniti, Peyronel 2005; De Grossi Mazzorin, Minniti 2012). In prehistoric times, and particularly in Eastern Europe, astragali were sometimes interpreted as functional artefacts for the finishing of handmade pottery (Märgärit 2017).

L.d.O.

6.4 Area 2000: Materials and Artefacts

Unlike the findings observed last year, the 2023 campaign in Area 2000 has yielded a bigger quantity of artefacts, although it is evident that the presence of finds in this sector of the site is much smaller in absolute terms and also when compared to the quantities of materials in Area 1000. As mentioned above (see § 3.2), the discovery of a coin (SU 2072), currently undergoing restoration, is notable. Among the 13 SUs analysed, there is a clear absence of glazed pottery, while there is a significant presence, at least in this initial phase of analysis, of storage and/or transport ceramics. Additionally, several interesting glass fragments have been uncovered [fig. 45a].

Dividing the stratigraphic column by Activities, the most recent (A2096) is represented by SU 2055, with only two fragments of cooking pottery [fig. 45b], one fragment of animal bone, and one fragment of material that, although very damaged, could be plaster.

The SUs 2043-2045, 2057, 2072 and 2073 are part of A2095 (area SE) and SU 2060 was in the same Activity in the East corner. The totality of the sherds are unglazed. Concerning their functionality, most of the sherds are for storage, only few pieces are cooking ware. Of particular interest is the discovery in SU 2057 of one fragment of mat-impressed kitchen pottery (a 'stuoia') [fig. 45c], a type that has been identified in locations far from Armenia, including in Sicily, Italy (cf. Arcifa 2010).

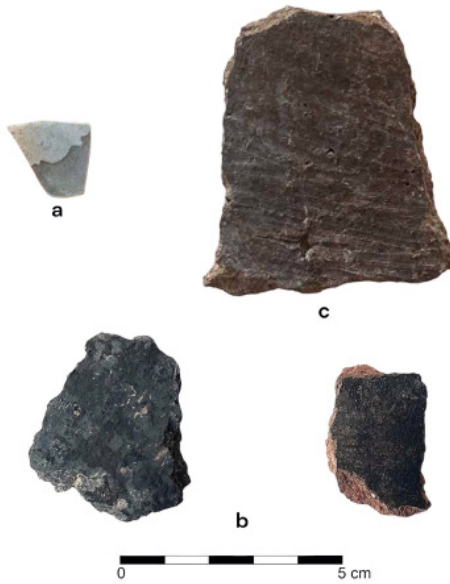


Figure 45
Glass sherd from SU 2068;
b) cooking pot fragments from
SU 2055; c) "A stuoia" sherd from
SU 2057

At this point of the research, regarding Area 2000, it is possible to indicate a certain presence of storage materials and, perhaps, transport materials (difficult to distinguish given the lack of a significant number of fragments and, especially, the lack of diagnostic pieces). The glass fragments, although not large in size, are very interesting (also because some were found among last year's materials as well) and their function will need to be studied carefully.

E.P.

6.5 History Museum of Yerevan Survey and Documentation

Throughout the 2023 campaign, a significant effort was made to photographically document and study artefacts housed in the Museum of Armenian History in Yerevan. Our primary focus was on imported artefacts from major sites, notably Dvin, as well as Ani and others [fig. 46]. This ongoing activity, intended to be completed in future missions, primarily aims to elucidate the primary and most significant channels of commercial contact between major Armenian cities and renowned ceramic production sites, particularly those within the Islamic world. This data will assist us in assessing, by the conclusion of our excavation campaigns, whether our understanding of imported

materials has broadened or if the channels and types remain consistent. Moreover, the substantial presence of intact pieces at the museum enables a considerable enhancement of our understanding of morphologies, which are often challenging to comprehend solely through the analysis of excavation fragments.

E.P.



Figure 46
Luster pottery from
Dvin at the HMA
in Yerevan

7 Excavations of the Area of the Future Building of the Dvin Museum

Hamlet Petrosyan, Tatyana Vardanesova, Hamazasp Abrahamyan, Lyuba Kirakosyan

In the spring of 2023, excavation and cleaning activities were carried out on the site of Dvin future museum and archaeological camp with funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Armenia.

7.1 Archaeological Description

In 2022, in this area, which is located to southwest of the citadel, on the right side of the Hnaberd-Verin Artashat intercommunal road [fig. 1], preliminary excavations were conducted (Petrosyan et al. 2022). The expedition chose this area believing that during the Middle Ages the two main moats protecting the city converged here,

making the presence of cultural layers less likely. In the fall of 2022, a 10 m long and 2 m wide exploration trench was dug in the central part of the future construction area. These works reached a depth of 220 cm, revealing three main layers [fig. 47]. These works continued into 2023, expanding to cover an area of 275 m² (Area A).

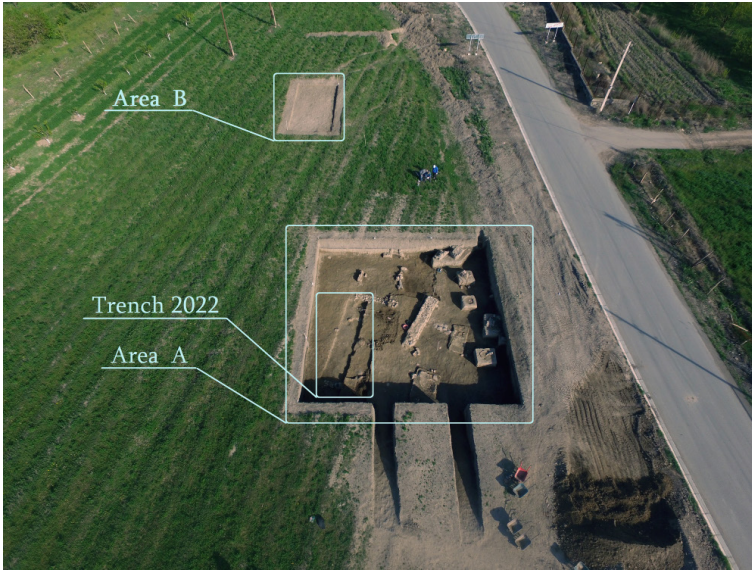


Figure 47 The total areas of excavations in 2022-23

The uppermost layer, with a thickness of 90-130 cm, consisted of a mixed layer devoid of significant archaeological contexts.

Below this, starting at a depth of 90 cm and extending 7 m across the excavation site, was a layer up to 35 cm thick, identified as a deposit of a water-bearing ditch.

The third layer, containing the main archaeological features, began at a depth of 90-130 cm and was dated to the eighth-ninth centuries. This layer was characterized by simple pottery, as well as fragments of glazed pottery from the ninth century, glass, bricks, metal objects, slag, mortar, and more. Unlike the upper layers, the third layer revealed distinct features such as brick walls, floors, sections of raw brick, poured mortar, trampled floors with ash deposits, and intact objects.

In the spring of 2023, archaeological work continued in the same site, now conducted in Area A and Area B [fig. 2]. The main section selected for further excavation in Area A, measuring 15 × 15 m, including the ditch from November 2022 (west section) [fig. 2]. This section was conventionally named Area A and was subdivided into nine

squares [fig. 48]. The second excavation site – Area B, located 11.5 m west of Area A – was divided into two squares.



Figure 48 A and B excavation areas by squares

In excavation Area A, the situation observed in 2022, particularly in the exploratory trench, was generally repeated, but the expanded dimensions of the excavation site now allow for a better understanding of the situation. The excavation has reached a depth of up to 250 cm. As a result of archaeological works, both in the exploratory trench and in excavation Area A, we have identified three main layers that correspond to each other in their main features [figs 49-50].

The first layer is in a mixed state and lacks significant archaeological contexts. It contains pottery from different periods as well as modern materials. This layer is characterized by its dark grey, sandy composition with gravel, shell fragments, and stones. The thickness of the first layer varies across different parts of the excavation site, generally ranging from 50 to 130 cm. Specifically, it is 50 to 70 cm thick on the north side, 70 to 90 cm on the south side, 50 cm on the east side, and 120 to 130 cm on the west side. This layer shares similar characteristics with the first layer observed in the exploratory trench.

The second layer is situated on the southern side of excavation site A (A 3, A 4, A 5, A 8, A 9). It extends 4.4 m in width on the eastern side and 10 m on the western side. This layer appears black with abundant gravel and sand. It contains a large quantity of pottery from various

Another layer is identified in the trench. The cuts of the platforms entering the trench provide insight into the total width of this layer, which averages 12.5 m. This stratum is notably a water deposit and, based on initial observations, likely represents the bed of the water ditch surrounding the citadel. The thickness of this sediment gradually decreases toward the edges, while in the central area, the layer reaches up to 60 cm in thickness [fig. 51].



Figure 51 A section of water sediment black layer at a site of excavation

The third main layer is evident at various depths across different parts of the excavation site, a result partly influenced by the damage to the layer in the southern part of excavation site A, possibly due to the water supply ditch (the second layer). In the northern part of excavation site A (A 1, A 2, A 4, A 5 squares), the layer becomes visible starting from a depth of 60 cm, revealing preserved remnants of buildings. These sections feature remnants of one or two-row, single-layer dry-laid river stone walls. The first wall measures 195 cm in length, and the second measures 120 cm. There are also single-layer brick walls and, in two instances, a double course of river stone is placed atop a single course of brickwork. These walls measure 120 and 195 cm in length, and the bricks, like in other cases, are sized at $23 \times 23 \times 5$ and $24 \times 24 \times 5$ cm. Throughout the layer, at various depths, parts of river stone and brick walls, a *tonir*, pots, hearth, etc., were discovered with lime mortar and dry layering. A considerable amount of almost complete and fragmentary glazed and plain pottery was found in this layer. Glazed pottery dates back to the ninth

century and gradually decreases in quantity with depth. Plain pottery is similar to those found in the exploration trench from 2022. Additionally, numerous new types of pottery, all dating back to the eighth-ninth centuries, were discovered. The layer also contains a substantial amount of glass, iron fragments, coins, bones, and the upper arm of an early medieval winged cross, among other items [fig. 52].



Figure 52 On the left, vessels from Area A; on the right, cross arm of an early medieval winged cross from excavation Area A

Several archaeological situations and remains of structures have been documented. In the central part of square A 5, at a depth of 130 cm, a mixed situation with a length of 360 cm and a width of 180 cm was preserved [fig. 53]. This area contains pottery fragments mixed with river stones and brick waste, forming a solid layer without ash. At the same depth, but in the edge area of squares A 6 and A 7, an ash layer up to 5 cm thick can be observed. In square A 4, at a depth of 180 cm, a lime mortar platform was uncovered, measuring 150 × 140 cm [fig. 54]. The mortar sits on a brick base, and two semi-preserved urns were found to the south of the platform. Moving north of the lime mortar platform, in the central part of the excavation site, a stone platform for the raw brick wall was uncovered at a depth of 170 cm in square A 5, measuring 500 cm long and 90 cm wide. From this stony platform to the east, towards the edge of the excavation site (squares A 2, A 3, A 4, and A 5), an area covered with large river stones and lime mortar was opened [fig. 49]. Next to the central high part of this area, two wells with river stones were found, each with pursed lips. Another similar well was discovered on the southern edge of the adjacent river stone platform. Two additional underground wells were found to the north of the section covered with river rocks. From one of these pits (A 1), fragments of pottery and bones were recovered, while the

other (A 2) contained only various fragments of the same glass vessel. In square A 7, a 140 cm deep section of a 55 cm long brick wall with one row and 7 layers was preserved [fig. 55]. In the same square, on the western edge of the brick wall, a two-row river stone wall measuring 230 cm in length and 50 cm in width was found at a depth of 195 cm.



Figure 53 The archaeological situation in the center of Area A



Figure 54 The lime mortar platform



Figure 55 A section of brick wall

Excavations also revealed the continuation of the brick floor uncovered during the previous year's work (in square A 8). The floor is damaged, with only a section measuring 60 × 60 cm preserved. To the north of the floor, there is a two-row river stone wall, measuring 360 cm in length and 50-60 cm in width. Considering the direction of the wall, it would intersect with the wall in square A 7 if it continued. Adjacent to this wall in square A 6, from the north, is a hearth [fig. 56]. The hearth, located at a depth of 200 cm, consists of 7 bricks. It has an average width of 50 cm and is filled with ash. Fragments of pottery were found on the hearth. Additionally, there are numerous earthen sections in the layer.

Sections constructed with raw brick or clay mortar filling-plastering technology are found across the entire surface of excavation site A and at various depths. One such section is located in the area of squares A 2 and A 3, adjacent to the river stone-lined section and 150 cm deep. This fragment has a preserved height of up to 80 cm, a length of 290 cm, and a thickness of 85 cm. In square A 3, at a depth of 210 cm, another part of the earthen wall is found, measuring 310 cm in length and 50 cm in thickness. 170 cm west of the aforementioned walls, on the opposite side of the river stone section (in square A 5), another wall section is preserved. This section is 85 cm thick, 60 cm high, and 70 cm long, with its continuation extending under the stone platform. A small portion of the earthwork is preserved in the central part of the long wall in square A 9, at a depth of 160 cm. This section is about 50 cm wide and 80 cm long.

Another small fragment is found in square A 7 at a depth of 215 cm. It is attached to a fired brick arrangement in square A 7 and measures up to 30 cm wide and 20 cm high. The walls opened in the lower part of squares A 6 and A 7 are relatively well preserved. The first wall (in A 6) is located under the presented hearth, with a depth of 200 cm. It is 330 cm long, 60 cm wide, and up to 50 cm high. The second wall (in A 6 and A 7) is situated at a depth of 240 cm and opened at a height of 20 cm. It measures 200 cm in length and 60 cm in width.

Various remnants of rammed clay floors were also documented in the excavation site area, the primary one being the continuation of the floor uncovered in last year's exploration trench, measuring about 300 × 300 cm. It is located at a depth of 220 cm. Remnants of brickwork and tiled floors are also present. A similar floor was discovered in square A 7 at a depth of 210 cm, beneath the wall. This section measures about 150 cm long and 90 cm wide, consisting of 24 × 24 × 5 cm bricks and debris. Another part of the floor was preserved in square A 6 at a depth of 230 cm. This floor measures 130 × 120 cm and consists of 6 polished slabs.



Figure 56 The hearth

Excavation site B measures 10 m long and 5 m wide [fig. 48], with a depth of 150 cm. In excavation site B, the situation is similar to that of excavation site A, except for the second layer, as the sediment from the trench was not documented here. The upper layer corresponds to the first layer of excavation site A and shares the same characteristics. The thickness of this layer is 90-100 cm. Notably, a bronze

medal related to the Patriotic War was found at a depth of 90 cm. The lower layer corresponds to the main third layer of excavation site A and has an excavated thickness of 50-60 cm [fig. 57]. The main situations are located in square B 2 of the excavation site (southern part). Here, we have debris from a river stone wall, a river stone wall section measuring 140 cm in length and 45 cm in thickness at a depth of 110 cm, and a raw brick wall platform section measuring 80 × 70 cm at a depth of 140 cm.



Figure 57 The general view of excavation Area B

The other preserved part of the wall is constructed using tuff pieces and fired bricks (23 × 23 × 5 cm, 24 × 24 × 5 cm). This double-layered wall is 120 cm deep, 235 cm long, and 40 cm wide. Parallel to this wall is another wall constructed with the same dimensions of fired bricks and reused red and black full chevron tufas (two full tufas, one black, and each measuring 60 × 45 cm). This second wall is 180 cm long and 45 cm thick. Additionally, another reused tufa slab, sized 50 × 50 cm, and is located in square B 1. An interesting find is a red tuff fragment of a window sill, discovered at a depth of 120 cm [fig. 58]. It measures 60 cm in length, 30 cm in width, and 20 cm in thickness (B 2).

The layer contains fragments of both plain and glazed pottery, bones, metal objects, glass fragments, and other artefacts, all dating to the ninth century.



Figure 58 B2 square

7.2 Finds

During the archaeological works, a large number of mainly eighth-ninth century dated plain and glazed pottery sherds were found. Complete objects form a smaller group. In addition, fragments dating from the early and twelfth-thirteenth centuries were also discovered in the upper mixed layer of the excavations and in the sediment of the water-carrying ditch.

The glazed pottery present in the main layer dates back to the ninth century [fig. 59] and gradually decreases in quantity with depth. Plain pottery is identical to complete examples found in the exploration trench from 2022. Additionally, there are a large number of new types, all dating from the eighth-ninth centuries [fig. 52]. Furthermore, there is a substantial amount of glass, iron fragments, coins, bones, etc. in the layer. Research on the objects found in the excavation is currently ongoing.

In both A and B excavations dating to the eighth-ninth centuries, reused early medieval architectural details were discovered in the dated layers. These include the stylized tuff parapet of a window in square B 2 [fig. 16] and two hewn stones reused from black tuff, which belong to this series. Single-hewn tuff masonry stones were also recorded in various parts of the excavations. Additionally, in the

eastern part of excavation site A, the upper wing of an early medieval winged cross was found [fig. 52].



Figure 59
Glazed pottery
sherds from Site A

8 Conclusions

Thus, the main approach of the expedition regarding the selection of the area, which suggested that the waters flooding the citadel and the central district mixed and passed through this place, was confirmed by archaeological excavations. However, beneath the sediment layer of the canal, a rich archaeological layer dating back to the eighth-ninth century was found. Based on this discovery, the expedition proposed to introduce a new component into the project, which involves a complete excavation of the area of the future building and its incorporation (or partial presentation of parts) into the future museum as an underground glass-enclosed exhibition. The setting and material are rich, and the expectations are high. We believe that the implementation of such a project will be unique in the practice of restoring archaeological monuments in Armenia and will significantly contribute to increasing the tourist attraction of Dvin.

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