Introduction
Armenia(n) Through the Ages

Robin Meyer
Université de Lausanne, Suisse

Irene Tinti
Università di Pisa, Italia

Summary   1 Background. – 2 Philology and Ethnography. – 3 Linguistics. – 4 Archaeology.

1   Background

The peer-reviewed articles collected in this first, thematic issue of *Armeniaca. International Journal of Armenian Studies* all concern to some extent the Armenian language, its varieties and/or individual manifestations in textual form, and together span nearly the entire length of Armenian written culture, from the 5th-6th centuries to the present time.[1]

   This collection owes its unifying theme and draws its original inspiration from a scholarly conversation between the authors and numerous other colleagues that began on the occasion of the international conference *Armenian Through the Ages: Linguistic and Philological Perspectives*, jointly organised by the guest editors of the present issue.[2] Those preliminary considerations, as well as the reflections, re-

---

[2]   The conference, originally scheduled for 2020 and set to take place at Wolfson College, University of Oxford, was moved online due to the pandemic and eventually held on 22 January 2021. Beside Robin Meyer and Irene Tinti, the scientific committee included Valentina Calzolari, James Clackson, Theo Maarten van Lint, Alessandro Oren-

actions and counter-reactions that followed, have informed and enriched the papers and helped them reach their present form.

2 Philology and Ethnography

Of the ten articles collected here, three adopt a philological perspective and focus on one or more literary works, their linguistic and/or textual features, and the witnesses that have concretely preserved them. All three also highlight one characteristic feature of Armenian texts, namely the interactions and cross-fertilisations with other linguistic and cultural traditions.

Clara Sanvito's paper, "Շքակոխիմ զմեր զփրկութիւնն, hapax nella traduzione armena dell'*Epideixis* di Sant'Ireneo di Lione: 'gettare sopra come ombra la nostra salvezza'" combines the methodologies of philology and theology to focus on a theological term that to date is only attested twice in the Armenian version of the otherwise lost *Epideixis* by St Irenaeus of Lyons. In both cases, the compound verb շքակոխիմ has a variation on զփրկութիւնս 'our salvation' as its object. Working on the assumption that the term in question is most likely modelled on Greek, which is not uncommon for technical terms in Hellenising translations, Sanvito sets out to identify its most likely antecedent. On the basis of the attested bilingual correspondences between Greek and Armenian components, she argues that շքակոխիմ is likely a semicalque on a Greek transitive verb. Having identified three possible candidates, she then conducts a detailed study of the usage of each in the Greek Scriptures, and concludes that շքակոխիմ was likely used to render ἐπισκιάζω ('throw [our salvation] as a shade upon…'); her hypothesis is corroborated by a comparison with similar texts by Irenaeus and other Christian authors.

In "The Anonymous Saint in the Armenian Tradition: Alexi(an)os the Voluntary Pauper or the Anonymous 'Man of God'?", Anna Rogozhina deals with a story that is attested at least from the 6th century in Syriac sources and circulated widely in Byzantium and throughout the Christian East, but whose Armenian incarnation has received comparatively little attention from scholars. After outlining the basics of the legend and summarising its main variants and alterations (such as the Anonymous Saint's acquisition of a name in 9th-century Byzantium), Rogozhina focuses on Armenia, where the commemoration of the Saint was incorporated into the annual liturgical calendar by the 14th century at the latest. The Armenian legend has been preserved in two main versions, a short synaxaric text (Arm I) and a

---

fuller Life (Arm II), preserved in fewer manuscripts. After briefly discussing the documentary situation, including the available editions, Rogozhina addresses some specific features of Arm II in particular, such as its style and the conspicuous absence of personal names and other details. Finally, she draws some preliminary conclusions as to the Armenian versions' relations to the other incarnations of the legend, suggesting that Arm II likely reflects the Syriac layer of the legend, while Arm I is most likely based on the Greek one.

In the third paper in this section, "The Poetic Middle Armenian of *Kafas* in the *Alexander Romance*", Alex MacFarlane focuses on short monorhymed poems that are associated, in the manuscript tradition, with the Armenian version of the legendary history of Alexander III of Macedon (and later were also transmitted independently). These poetic texts, known as *kafa*s, function as both captions to images and commentaries or additions to the main text (which is in prose); they repeat events, provide new details, and help the reader navigate exotic elements, heighten the impact of the relevant scenes, and/or reflect morally on the actions of the characters. While the *Alexander Romance* is written in Classical Armenian, the *kafas*, composed in the 13th-16th centuries, are written in the vernacular language and contain both Classical and Middle Armenian features (including loanwords from Persian, Arabic, and Turkish). The paper examines the interplay between the poetic requirements of meter and rhyme and the linguistic features of Middle Armenian, and points to cases where the choice between competing words or forms (e.g. alternative nominative plural endings; present and imperfect indicatives both with and without the particle կու) is dictated by the poetry. It also reflects on the attitudes and/or reactions of poets, traditors, and audiences towards poetry that crossed and incorporated several registers of language.

While the papers discussed so far all apply a philological approach to the study of ancient texts, the fourth article in the collection, authored by Carla Kekejian, adopts an ethnographic perspective to offer "A Brief Introduction to *Harsnerēn*" ('Language of the Bride'). This was a gesture-based form of communication used by married women in Armenia, meant to provide some means of conveying necessary information in families where the practice of *č'xōskanut'iwn* ('not-speaking') was otherwise enforced on brides. The extent of a woman's silence as well as her use of *Harsnerēn* varied depending on household dynamics and relationships, but permission to speak was (almost always) eventually granted, often by the dominant in-law, or implicitly when that in-law died or when the bride's first child was born. While also referring to pre-existing scholarly literature, the paper chiefly describes the fieldwork the author personally conducted in 2016 and 2018 in six villages in rural Armenia, filming and documenting interviews with former users of *Harsnerēn* or other people involved (e.g. the family members of former users). Interestingly, her

data show that the practice of silent-keeping, while mostly a tradition of the past, was (is?) still in use as recently as the 21st century in rare cases. Kekejian has documented signs that partly overlap, partly differ from those attested in previous studies. Her working hypothesis is that some uniformity of *Harsnerēn* existed, as women in different villages demonstrated similar gestures not only to refer to actions such as 'eat' or 'drink', but also for more complex yet highly relevant referents such as 'mother-in-law'. She argues that the study of such practices allows for an examination of the relationship between language and power dynamics in intimate, familial, and social relationships, and thus deserves further research.

3 Linguistics

The transition to the more linguistically-oriented part of this collection is conceptually not as abrupt as the diversity of methodologies involved might suggest at first. The approaches in question complement one another and collectively illustrate, once again, that without a thorough understanding of the language(s) associated with a particular culture and the textual history of its primary sources, any deeper understanding of more complex aspects of said culture is inevitably hampered.

In the first paper of this section, "From Manuscript to Tagged Corpora. An Automated Process for Ancient Armenian or Other Under Resourced Languages of the Christian East", Chahan Vidal-Gorène and Bastien Kindt bridge the gap between linguistics and philology by delineating the processes behind the journey from written documents to digital corpora. On the example of a 17th-century gospel manuscript, they describe in detail the creation of an annotated Armenian corpus by means of a semi-supervised process, using tools developed by and pre-trained as part of the Calfa and GRE*g*ORI projects, beginning with layout analysis, text and line recognition, and line extraction and leading to lemmatisation and morphosyntactic analysis by form matching and through mediation by a trained Recurrent Neural Network. This strategy, using a generic model which is gradually specialised on the task at hand, yields lemmatisation and part-of-speech analysis accuracies above 90% and thus illustrates clearly the potential and crucial importance of such strategies for the digitisation of documents in understudied languages such as Armenian and the generation of corpora on their basis for use by linguists and philologists.

The other five linguistics papers gathered here share one important commonality with the first: their reliance on and use of corpus data to inform their method and conclusions. In terms of time periods, they span the whole gamut of the linguistic history of Armenian, from its pre-literary form to modern varieties, and are presented in what follows in approximate chronological order.

In his paper "A New Look at Old Armenisms in Kartvelian", Rasmus Thorsø considers seven Armenian etyma (*poni* ფონი 'ford', cp. Arm. հուն; OGe. *ruy* რუჲ 'small stream, channel', cp. Arm. առու; Ge. ɣ*vino* ღვინო 'wine', cp. Arm. գինի; OGe. ɣ*w(v)ay* ღჳ(ვ)აჲ 'juniper', cp. Arm. գի; OGe. *tirḳumel-ni* თირკუმელნი 'kidney', cp. Arm. երիկամն; Ge. *soḳo* სოკო 'mushroom', cp. Arm. սունկ(ն); Ge. *çero* წერო 'crane', cp. Arm. կռունկ) which are supposed to have been borrowed into Kartvelian at an early date. Based on established Armenian sound changes and comparative evidence from other loanwords, Thorsø is able to establish a tentative relative chronology of borrowing. The Armenian words listed above must have been borrowed into Proto-Georgian-Zan at a time when certain Kartvelian sound changes had not yet come to completion (e.g. loss of final syllables; *ɣʷ > g; etc.) and before the first Greek and Iranian loans, which do no longer undergo these changes. Taking into consideration further loan data from Armenian, he suggests that the period of contact between Proto-Armenian and Proto-Georgian-Zan therefore ought to fall in the latter half of the 2nd millennium BCE.

Moving on to the earliest literary texts, Hana Aghababian's paper "Classical Armenian Deixis: Issues of Translation" deals with the problems arising in translating deictic references from a two-way to a three-way system. While Biblical Greek only differentiates two localities (proximal οὗτος and distal ἐκεῖνος), Classical Armenian knows proximal, medial, and distal forms, expressed by clitics, adjectives or pronouns using the morphs *(-)s(-)*, *(-)d(-)*, and *(-)n(-)*, respectively. Using the Gospel of Matthew as her test corpus, Aghababian explores how Armenian medial deixis is used, and to what extent the Armenian usage can be compared to the Latin translation of the same text, given that Latin also has a three-way differentiation (*hic*, *iste*, and *ille*). While Armenian and Latin share in only translating the Greek proximal deixis as medial, they do not agree in all instances when such a translation is warranted. This prompts Aghababian to suggest that the decision of the translator, whilst systematic in each language, is rooted in the individual idiom and represents a stylistic choice or, at times, even an interpretation of the passage translated.

Combining elements of the two previous contributions, Katherine Hodgson approaches the "Grammaticalization of the Definite Article in Armenian" in her article. The three-way system already mentioned marks definiteness through suffixation, which is not typical of Indo-European languages, but finds parallels in Kartvelian, so Hodgson. This marker in Kartvelian has grammaticalised over time and has become first a marker of argument status and then a part of the case system. In this paper, using a corpus of Eastern Armenian texts as well as insights from typological research, she argues (a) that the enclitic article in Classical Armenian arose through contact with Kartvelian; (b) that over the course of time, this article lost its deic-

tic function in favour of marking definiteness; and (c) that in Modern Armenian, the same enclitic article has further followed a grammaticalization path leading to its marking (core) argument status rather than definiteness or specificity.

Exchanging definite for indefinite, Hasmik Sargsyan traces the development of "The Forms of the Indefinite Article in Eastern Armenian", taking into account pre-modern, early modern and modern colloquial sources. Comparing the actual use of the forms մի and մեկ, traditionally interpreted as the indefinite article and the number 'one' respectively, in three texts (Xačʻatur Abovean's *Wounds of Armenia*, Abraham Erewancʻi's *History of Wars*, and Petros di Sargis Gilanēncʻ's *Chronicle*) as well as in the Eastern Armenian National Corpus, Sargsyan shows that no clear-cut definition between the two functions of indefinite article and numeral can be made since neither form is used entirely consistently. She notes that մի is not used as a bare numeral, but co-occurs with numeral classifiers for quantification. By contrast, մեկ largely occurs in the modern standard language, but rarely in colloquial or early modern texts; its preponderance in Abovyan's text is attributed to influences from Western Armenian. She ends with an outlook on what further corpus-based studies may bring to light.

Finally, staying in the present, Victoria Khurshudyan and Anaïd Donabedian present their research on "Cleft Constructions in Modern Armenian". While cleft constructions are commonly associated with languages exhibiting strict constituent order, varieties of Modern Armenian show both more variable constituent order and these constructions, consisting of a fronted phrase and copula connected to the matrix clause by a pseudo-relative (type: ես է որ ասաց, 'It is I who said'). This strategy serves focalisation and represents the strongest expression available of this process in Armenian. The diachronic stability of (pseudo-)clefts in Armenian and its varieties across time leads them to argue in favour of a grammaticalization pathway from such cleft constructions to another focalisation strategy, namely copula movement (cp. unmarked ես գնում եմ, 'I am going', and focalised ես եմ գնում, 'I̲ am going'). The latter process exists to differing extents and with different specific functions in the modern varieties, suggesting a later and independent development as compared to the cleft construction. They emphasise, however, that other dimensions such as areal and contact phenomena cannot be ignored in explaining this development.

The articles included in this volume confirm, if need be, that the process of understanding is cyclical. Not only can insights from Modern Armenian linguistics inform research in the Classical language, and vice versa; the knowledge and insight gleaned from linguistic and philological studies provide information for literary and historical research, which in turn – together with details from other disciplines – can provide an input for further, more in-depth linguistic and philological research, and so on.

4 Archaeology

The final piece in this issue, "The Armenian-Italian Joint Expedition at Dvin. Report of 2021 Activities", is an excavation report, the first of a series that is set to appear annually in subsequent issues of *Armeniaca*. Although strictly archaeological in content, it originates from a research project that provides a concrete example of interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation, namely, the ERC Consolidator Grant Project *Armenia Entangled: Connectivity and Cultural Encounters in Medieval Eurasia 9th-14th centuries* (ArmEn), led by Prof. Zaroui Pogossian at the University of Florence.[3]

Co-authored by Hamlet Petrosyan, Michele Nucciotti, Elisa Pruno, Leonardo Squilloni, Tatyana Vardanesova and Lyuba Kirakosyan, the piece details the excavations conducted in 2021 at Dvin, one of the largest medieval urban centres in Armenia, by a joint Armenian-Italian expedition. This season has marked the beginning of a new phase of excavations at the site. Activities concentrated on three areas: Dvin Market; the south-eastern part of the Lower Fortress; and an area 200 meters south of the market in a residential-economic complex. The architectural structures and materials uncovered are datable to the 5th-13th centuries overall, but most material findings date to the 12th-13th centuries. Beside presenting the results of the excavations, the report gives a concise history of previous investigations on the site and sets out perspectives for further research.

Note on Transliteration Criteria and Manuscripts

All articles adopt the Armenian script and/or transliterate Armenian according to the system developed by Hübschmann, Meillet, and Benveniste (HMB). Individual authors have chosen to transliterate the Armenian digraph <ու> differently, some using <u>, others <ow>. The names of classical and modern authors and individual literary works are given either in HMB transliteration or in the form most commonly used in the literature as per the author's choice.

All relevant entries in the final bibliographies are transliterated with the HMB system in the form employed by the *Revue des Études Arméniennes* (with <ու> rendered as <u>).

When referring to Armenian manuscripts, the acronyms developed by B. Coulie (see e.g. Coulie, B. (2020). *Armenian Manuscripts. Catalogues, Collections, Libraries*. 2nd revised edition. Turnhout: Brepols) are always given (at least in brackets at the first occurrence if the authors have decided to use a different nomenclature in their articles).

---

[3] See https://www.armen.unifi.it/.