

Affinities Between Armenian and Persian Linguistic and Literary Forms in the Early Modern Period A Case Study of Two Poems by Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i

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Abstract This paper analyses the poetic form and language of two poems by Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i, a prominent Armenian poet from the early modern period, in the multilingual and multireligious environment of Anatolia and Armenian highlands. Through an analysis of the forms, expressions and symbolism found in the poems *Tał Astuacatur Xat'ayec'un i Grigoris kat'olikosē Ałt'amarc'oy* and *Du es aregak*, as well as the linguistic data collected from them, this paper explores the stylistic kinship between early modern Armenian and new Persian poetry. It discusses the ways in which Ałt'amarc'i navigates the predominantly Persian and partly Turkish languages in the Islamicised milieu, and composed poems with an Armenian affiliation.

Keywords Armenian. Poetry. Persian. Literature. Genre. Language. Mulamma'.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Biographical Account of Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i. – 3 The Language and Literary Form of Grigoris' Poems Nos. 3 and 21. – 4 Conclusions.



Peer review

Submitted 2023-02-27
Accepted 2023-05-12
Published 2023-11-22

Open access

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Citation Kirakosyan, H. (2023). "Affinities Between Armenian and Persian Linguistic and Literary Forms in the Early Modern Period". *Armeniaca. International Journal of Armenian Studies*, 2, 99-118.

DOI 10.30687/arm/9372-8175/2023/01/005

1 Introduction

In the late medieval and early modern periods, Armenian literature from the Van-Vaspuurakan region (situated in what is now southeastern Turkey and northwestern Iran), was in close contact with the literary traditions of Asia Minor. That literature was part of “a shaped literary landscape binding together Muslim and Christian poets in analogous modes of composing poetry and policing the confessional boundaries of their audiences” (Pifer 2021, 4). Persian language and literature played a significant role¹ in this multireligious, multilingual and homogenous literary milieu in which Armenian poetry was involved (Abelyan 1970, 19; Kozmoyan 1987, 153-60). The language and literary forms of the poetry of some medieval Armenian poets such as Frik (thirteenth-fourteenth centuries),² Kostandin Erznkac’i (thirteenth-fourteenth centuries),³ Mkrtič’ Nalaš (fifteenth century),⁴ Nahapet K’uč’ak (fifteenth-sixteenth centuries),⁵ Grigoris Ałt’amac’i (sixteenth century), Yovhannēs T’lkuranc’i (fifteenth century),⁶ Nalaš Hovnat’an (seventeenth century)⁷ and others,⁸ show a widespread use of the Persian vocabulary, together with familiar Persianate tropes, themes and literary forms.⁹ These usag-

This work was supported by the Armenian Scientific Committee Funding under Grant number 21T-6B125.

1 From the eleventh century onwards, early New Persian language and literacy proceeded from Khorasan to Asia Minor. The golden age of Persian historiography began during the Mongol period, and Persian was predestined to be the language of not only Iranian, but also Indian and (for a time) Ottoman historians (Boyle 1974, 639). The advent of Persian mystic poetry in Anatolia in the thirteenth century, as well as the familiarity of Armenians and Sufis with this poetry, opened up another path for the spread of the Persian language among Armenians living in that territory. Rūmī, who died in Konya in 1273, had many Christian recipients and close contacts with Armenians (Cowe 2005, 391; 2015b, 88-90). Written Persian from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries “became standard throughout the world of the Persianate, which included Asia Minor, as well as many Central Asian courts and Mughal courts of the Indian subcontinent [...] and remained quite uniform and relatively stable over many centuries and across a very broad area of the Middle East and Central and South Asia” (Hanaway 2012, 95, 131). The striking usage of Persian continued until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and remained a “widely acknowledged *lingua franca* of poesis” (Rastegar 2019, 301).

2 Mkryan et al. 1941.

3 Srapyan 1962; Poturean 1905.

4 Xondkaryan 1965.

5 Č’ōpanean 1902.

6 Pivazyan 1960; Russell 1987.

7 Mnac’akanyan 1983.

8 On the corpus of the other late medieval Armenian poets and poetry, see Sahakyan 1986; 1987.

9 The Persian passages are transliterated according to the “System of Transliteration of Arabic and Persian Characters” used by the *Encyclopaedia Islamica*; cf. <http://>

es were due to the prestige of Persian literature and the familiarity of Armenians with Persian. Usually, when languages are connected and borrowing occurs from one to the other, “it tends to be largely lexical”.¹⁰ The Armenian colloquial language of the early modern period included large amounts of Persian vocabulary, which was the result of the interaction of Armenians with the Persianate world in their social lives. In multilingual environments (namely in the Safavid or Ottoman Empires), the vernacular language of Armenians shifted towards locally dominant languages or spoken *lingua franca* such as Persian and Turkish. This language shift was sometimes due to lower social capital of a particular language (such as Middle Armenian); however, Armenians used vernacular Armenian and the dominant language in different ways.

Armenian literary culture had a dynamic interaction with Persian literacy and literary culture, and freely borrowed Persian linguistic forms and literary styles from Persian poems or from the common storehouse of literary metaphors, forms and themes of the early modern Islamic poetry.

The presence of Persian lexemes in medieval Armenian poetry is conditioned by the Classical Persian poetic tradition, which, as writes Hanaway, “developed and maintained its prestige through the authority of Persian language” (2012, 132). The insertion of Persian vocabulary into the verses of Armenian poets living in Anatolia and the Armenian plateau had a powerful effect, bestowing upon them literary authority.

It is likely that Armenian poets quoted Persian poetry in their compositions, admitted the poetics of others into the Armenian milieu, and, as Pifer demonstrates, for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, directed their audiences to interpret these verses “in a Christian light”, in order to create certain forms of knowledge out of cultural difference (Pifer 2021, 28). But they also shaped a basis for Armenian Christian audiences to live in unity with others, navigating and crossing the boundaries of their own Armenian literary culture. Furthermore, they strengthened their flock’s confessional and cultural boundaries and did not ignore the coexisting linguistic, religious and literary diversity within their communities.

This might be considered as the background to the development of the literary and linguistic diversity of Armenian poetry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹¹

dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-9831_isla_SIM_052837.

10 On Iranian borrowings in Armenian, see Bailey 1986, 445-65.

11 On the other hand, we learn from the 110-line poem *Govasanut’iwn Surb Yovanisi* (Eulogy for Saint John), inserted next to seven Persian lines (ll. 85-91) by the fifteenth century Armenian poet K’uč’ak Vanec’i, that “it’s enough to praise in the *ajam*

The insertion of Persian vocabulary and verse into medieval Armenian poetry, which was accustomed to the influence of the widespread and dominant Persian literacy and poetic tradition in the Islamic world, is apparent in Grigoris Ałt'amar'ci's poems, two of which are the subjects of this paper. The poems under discussion are composed in the Persian literary form of *mulamma'*.¹²

2 Biographical Account of Grigoris Ałt'amar'ci

Grigoris Ałt'amar'ci, a poet, a miniaturist and the Catholicos of the Holy See of Ałt'amar (r. 1512-44),¹³ composed poems on both religious and personal themes, together with several works on the Persian motif of the rose and nightingale.¹⁴ It is known that Grigoris Ałt'amar'ci copied the Alexander Romance and translated the *Tale of the City of Copper* from Turkish into Armenian, enriching it with *kafa*¹⁵ verses and artistic elements. According to Peter Cowe, Grigoris appears in these as a unique exponent of medieval Armenian lyric in the high style, introducing a number of innovations of metre, rhythm, and structure (2015a, 599). Grigoris Ałt'amar'ci was also the author of an Armenian *Calendar of Feasts* comprising 107 verses (Abrahamyan 1976, 199-208).

Grigoris I Catholicos of Ałt'amar descended from the Armenian Arcruni dynasty, who ruled over Vaspurakan in the tenth century. His

[i.e. Persian] language, which is not understood by everyone, and to eulogize him [i.e. Saint John] in Armenian – a language understood by everyone" (Sahakyan 1986, 67-8.) It informs us that the Persian language had fallen out of common use in the region and period under discussion and was only used for poetry. Most of the poetry written in Armenian that used Persian terminology or even entire verses was difficult for an ordinary Armenian reader to fully understand.

12 The term comes from the Arabic *mulamma'*, which literally means 'multicoloured, motley', and is used in literature to define "poems containing a verse, word, or word group written in another language" (Harb 2019, 3-6; Gibb 1900, 124).

13 On Grigoris Ałt'amar'ci and his poems, see Kostaneanc' 1898; Lewonean 1914, 493-5; Akinean 1915, 18-69; 1958; Yovsēp'eanc' 1919, 11-14; 1930, 41-60; K'iwrtēan 1967, 424-5; Avdalbegyan 1963; Abeyan 1970, 491-8; Cowe 2015a, 599-607; 2019, 61-83; Č'ugaszyan 1960, 201-22; Grigoryan 2021, 3-14; Abrahamyan 2021, 50-5.

Ałt'amar is an island of the southern shore of Lake Van, where in the tenth-nineteenth centuries a Catholicos of the Armenian Church resided. On the history of the Holy See of Ałt'amar, see Vardanyan 2017. It eventually became part of the Eyalet of Van that was formed immediately after the Ottoman conquest of Van in 1548, and lay on the Persian frontier. The Eyalet of Van included mainly the former lands of the region of Vaspurakan (see Badalyan 2018, 96-114).

14 For the evolving and indigenisation of the rose and nightingale motif in Armenian verse, see Nersisyan 2008, 72-91; Cowe 1997, 315-16; and in the Ałt'amar'ci's poetry, see Cowe 2005, 393-4; 2019, 69-79.

15 The term comes from the Arabic *qāfiya* 'rhyme'. Entered in Armenian literature from the eleventh century, it meant a rhyming poem. On the Armenian medieval *ka-fas*, see Simonyan 1975.

principal mentor was Grigor Rabuni (*Rabunapet*), the patriarch and founder of the renowned Armenian medieval school of Arčeš (Avdalbegyan 1963, 18-19). Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i was familiar with Persian language and literature, as well as Ottoman Turkish. His manuscripts were written in a variety of Armenian monastic complexes, including Ałt'amar, Mecop', Arčeš, Urnkar and Varag, where he copied books and illuminated manuscripts. It is important to note that the time of Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i's *floruit* was a turbulent period for the Armenians, involving Ottoman and Safavid warfare and Kurdish raids.

3 The Language and Literary Form of Grigoris' Poems Nos. 3 and 21

The Persian language, which gained prestige and circulation in part through Seljuq patronage of the stream of fugitives, poets and literary traditions from the East, was inserted into the Armenian literature of that region in the thirteenth-sixteenth centuries. This was accompanied by the imitation and adaptation of Persian literary motifs and forms, as well as language. The poems of Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i contained a measure of linguistic and literary diversity. Several of his religious works were written in Classical Armenian, while his works on nature, beauty, the spring, the nightingale and the rose were mainly in Middle Armenian, utilising various colloquial and poetic flourishes.¹⁶ In his poems nos. 3 and 21¹⁷ we find the use of Persian literary motifs and vocabulary accompanied by the literary form, as well as *mulamma'*.¹⁸ The *mulamma'* (*talmi'*) poems are evidenced in Persian literature from the tenth century, in the Samanid period. As observed by Browne, the first three or four are described as *Dhu'l-lisanayn* ('possessor of two tongues') (Algar 1996, 570-1) or bilingual poets, who composed verses both in Arabic and Persian: of these are Shaykh Abu'l Ḥasan Shahīd of Balkh (Humāyī 1996, 48-9), Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. 'Alī Khusrawī of Sarakhs, Abū 'Abdi'llāh Muḥammad b. 'Abdu'llāh Junaydī (Browne 1908, 454), and

¹⁶ Cowe 2019, 63, 67-8; for the object of Ałt'amarc'i's poems, see also Cowe 2013, 36-46.

¹⁷ The numbering of poems is given according to Avdalbegyan 1963, 103-254.

¹⁸ According to Akinean, when Grigoris was writing his compositions, "*sahmanakic' ašxarhin meġ der' lseli ěin anmah Rūmineru, Hafizneru [...] k' narergut' iwnk' ew ĵami*" (in adjoining regions you could still hear the immortal lyric poetry of Rūmī, Ḥāfīz and Ĵāmī), which were "*əndhanur hiac' man ararkay ěin bovandak parsakan tirapetut' ean tak gtnvoġ erkirneru*" (amazing works for all of the regions within the Persian dominion) (Akinean 1915). Č'ugaszyan, writing later (1960, 207-8), emphasises Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i's knowledge of Islamic literature and compares many of the expressions used in his compositions to the language of Ḥāfīz, such as "*land u šak'ar*", Pers. *qand o shakar*; "*api hayat*", Pers. *āb-e hayāt*; "*nafayi t'at'ar*", Pers. *nāfe-ye tātār*.

Abū Muḥammad al-Badī' of Balkh, who composed verses in praise of the Chighanī Amīr Abū Yaḥya Ṭahūr b. Faḍl, in a kind of *mulamma'* or 'patch-work', that is, half Persian and half Arabic (Browne 1908, 467). In Persian *mulamma'*, authors alternated between Persian and Arabic whole *bayts*,¹⁹ *half-bayts* or quarters, but the main language was Persian. In some cases, the whole poem was in Persian and only the last *bayt* was in the other language, which still followed the principles of Persian prosody (Aḥmadī 2011, 168-80).

From the thirteenth century, literature in Iranian local dialects began a new phase in the development of *mulamma'* poems. The first literary works were in *Ṭabarī*, and these were attempts to raise the local dialects of northwestern Iran to the level of a written language (Rypka 1968, 74). Local Iranian dialectal quoted texts also appeared in the *mulamma'* genre (Rasūlī, Arāzī 2017, 48; Algar 1996, 570). Khāqānī Shērvānī, Sa'ādī-ye Shīrāzī, Hāfez, 'Abd ar-Rahmān Jāmī, Ḥomam Tabrīzī, Mojīreddīn Beylaqānī, etc., wrote *mulamma'* poems, alternating Persian with Arabic or Iranian local languages.²⁰ The main insertions of Arabic text in Persian poetry were Quranic quotations (Harb 2019, 5). The example of the bilingual poetic tradition in modern Iranian poetry are some poems of Muḥammad-Ḥosein Shahrīār (d. 1938) (Algar 1996, 570).

Rūmī composed a number of *mulamma'* verses that 'mixed' together Persian and Turkish verses – and a handful of short ghazals in Greek (Pifer 2021, 238). The work of Rūmī's son, Sūltān Veled (1226-1312), contained a considerable number of couplets in Turkish (Johanson 1993, 27). These and other contemporary mixed verse help to mark a shift in the multilingualism of *mulamma'* poetry, which flourished in Anatolia and beyond it.²¹

In fact, the literary *mulamma'* form expressed the multilingual medium of poets and audiences, likely showing linguistic diversity when languages are in contact and alternated with each other. It interacts on a wide range of subjects between nations that share a common framework of culture, as well as mutual history and geography. In an Islamicate and Persianised milieu of Anatolia and the Armenian highlands, the *mulamma'* of Armenian poets were inserted in Persian and Turkish. It is important to distinguish, in these bilin-

19 *Bayt* is a metrical unit in poetry that corresponds to a line, though sometimes improperly rendered as 'couplet' since each *bayt* is divided into two hemistiches of equal length.

20 On the reverse employing of Persian in Arabic poetry (*fārisiyyāt*), see Harb 2019, 1-21.

21 Meanwhile, in Algar's opinion, "the rise of Ottoman Turkish brought such bilingualism to an end; although many Ottoman poets wrote verse in Persian, they did so more as a type of literary exercise, comparable to Persian poets composing Arabic verse" (1996, 570), which requires more detailed analysis.

gual or trilingual poems, the language alternation and the borrowing, as well as the relation of inserted language to the theme and form of the poem. Alt'amarci's preference for writing in the *mulamma'* form and using Persian as a second language demonstrates that in the sixteenth century, Persian, Persian literature and the *mulamma'* form continued to be regarded as prestigious in the region. And if we draw a parallel with the poem *Hayr ararič', Tēr kendani* (Father Creator, Living Lord)²² by the early seventeenth-century Armenian poet Davit' Salajorc'i (Orbik),²³ written not long after Alt'amarci, which is again in the form of *mulamma'* (that is, one line in Armenian, one line in Turkish, consisting of 210 lines in total), we can see an ongoing aspect of popularity and respectability of this form among Armenian poets.²⁴ Furthermore, Alt'amarci was an educated, high-ranking clergyman, whose use of Persian in the *mulamma'* demonstrates his knowledge of the prestigious literature of the time. On the other hand, Salajorc'i, a poet who by all accounts only became an instructor at the end of his life (Akinean 1936, 497), was unfamiliar with contemporary trends in literature, and wrote *mulamma'* using only Turkish as a second language.²⁵

In Grigoris Alt'amarci's *mulamma'* poems, the basic language is Armenian, while there are Persian and, in some cases, Turkish alternations: stanza to stanza, from line to line, from half-line to half-line. In poem no. 21 (see below), we see a very close integration of two languages: even a sentence may consist of phrases from Armenian and Persian. The basic language in major sections of poem no. 3 (see below) is Armenian, but in cases where Persian is predominant, Armenian is inserted into the Persian lines. The main point, however, is that, even if it was feasible to create bilingual verses, it had to serve a purpose.

The Armenian scholar Babken Č'ugaszyan (1960, 204) considered five Armenian-Persian-Turkish poems by Grigoris Alt'amarci: no. 5, *Taš vardin ew plpuln i Grigoris kat'olikosē Alt'amarci'oy asac'eal* (The Song of the Nightingale and the Rose, as Told by Catholicos Grigoris of Alt'amar); no. 20, *Du draxt es Edemay* (You Are the Paradise of Eden); no. 21, *Du es aregak* (You Are the Sun); no. 22, *Mak'ur patkerov* (With the Pure Portrait); no. 25, *Yet gənaloy vardin ek plpuln yaygin* (The Nightingale Came Back to the Rose Garden). Č'ugaszyan ana-

²² For the poem, see Sahakyan 1987, 372-82.

²³ Davit' Salajorc'i (Orbik) was born in the village Salajor in Karin province. For his biography, see Akinean 1936, 495-7.

²⁴ See also the seventeenth-century bilingual Armenian-Turkish poems of Simeon Kafaci (Sahakyan 1987, 202-4); Eremia K'eōmiwrčean (459); Andreas Arckeci (527-9).

²⁵ Concerning the classification of poets who lived between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Sahakyan 1975, 17-18. On the bilingual poem of Salajorc'i, see 28-31.

lysed the subject of these poems and their Persian and Turkish vocabularies, evaluated their literary value, wordplay and uniqueness, and singled out and appropriately translated the expressions containing Persian (as well as general Islamic) literary symbolism (1960, 204-28).

Nersēs Akinean also analysed and translated the Persian and Turkish verses of Alt'amarci' to Armenian, choosing poems nos. 5, 20, 21, 22, 25 for his study (1958, *čpb-čxə*). On translating these poems, Kostaneanc' stated: "It is possible to consider them transmissions or translations from Islamic literature" (1898, 71). However, Č'ugaszyan and Akinean did not discuss the detailed use of *mulamma'* form in the poetry of Alt'amarci', the aesthetic and thematic aspects of the function of Persian in his poems, as well as engaging Armenian and Persian poetical equivalents in the same line. Below I will focus on these issues and show the relation of Persian to the theme of the poems.

The linguistic analysis of the literary forms and Persian vocabulary of two *tat's* (nos. 3 and 21), namely poems by Grigoris Alt'amarci', leads us to ask why he chose the *mulamma'* literary form. The poet showed a remarkable degree of linguistic creativity in forming a new instrument for expressing spiritual ideas, the speech of others in their own languages, and the capacity to navigate the different languages in one literary form and work. The coexistence of two languages in the same poem indicates that linguistic identities did not have strict boundaries and that the language alternation was a literary trope. The language of *mulamma'* no. 3 by Grigoris Alt'amarci' uses everyday vocabulary, refers to Muslim-Christian interreligious issues and can hardly be regarded as an attempt at proselytising. This *mulamma'* was simply written with the object of spreading ideas of Christian martyrdom among bilingual, but not necessarily educated, Armenian people. The coexistence of languages also reveals religious competition and the reason for the proliferation of such macaronic was the desire to reach a wider audience. The *mulamma'* no. 21 solidified the esoteric aspect: the author's knowledge of more than one language. The combination of languages (Armenian, Persian) is functional in the sense that it reflects the actual multilingual situation that existed in Grigoris Alt'amarci's community. In these verses, Persian expresses a high emotional value in the shadow of the culturally dominant one. Persian was a popular, active literary language with the prestige of domination and the Armenian poet adapted Persian literary topics, styles, metres and vocabulary to the requirements of the Armenians. In this poem, the Armenian lines are provided by Persian synonyms, which show the poetic ability of Armenian as a marker of identity.

3.1 **Poem No. 3: *Tať Astuacatur Xat'ayec'un i Grigoris kat'olikosē Alt'amarc'oy* (Poem on Astuacatur Xat'ayec'i by Catholicos Grigoris Alt'amarc'i)**

Among the works of Grigoris Alt'amarc'i, the "Poem on Astuacatur Xat'ayec'i by Catholicos Grigoris Alt'amarc'i", or "Martyrology of Asatur Xat'ayec'i"²⁶ stands out for its Persian verses. This poem can be found in Akinean (1958, 46-51, no. 15), Kostaneanc' (1898, 88-91, no. 12),²⁷ and Avdalbegyan (1963, 121-7, no. 3). For this study I refer to the text edited by Avdalbegyan. As a martyrology, this poem also found its place in the *Armenian New Martyrs* collection edited by Ačarean and Manandean in 1903.²⁸

This is a story in verse containing a message for future generations to remember the martyr. Astuacatur Xat'ayec'i was martyred in the city of Bit'lis in 1519 (Ačarean, Manandean 1903, 769). In this poem, which is composed of 11 syllables in 120 stanzaic mono-rhyme lines and 30 four-line stanzas, Grigoris Alt'amarc'i weaves the tale of the martyrdom of Astuacatur Xat'ayec'i (Cowe 2015a, 601-5). Astuacatur (his Christian name, lit. 'God-given') was a Kalmyk child who had been taken captive by cavalrymen of Qitai (now in China's Xinjiang province). He was later acquired by Mxit'ar of Bit'lis, during his journey to Qitai from India. Mxit'ar adopted and baptised him, giving him the name Astuacatur. When Astuacatur turned eighteen, the Turks pursued the intelligent and handsome youth, since for them, "*Zawak ē t'urk'i*" (He is son of the Turk) and a Muslim.²⁹ They demanded that he apostatise, but he refused, replying: "*Es oč' p'oxem zloyš and xawarin [...] Ew kam hənazandel jer p'etamparin*" (I will not

²⁶ For the melody of this martyrology or homily (*Let Us Praise the Brave Martyrs*), see Akinean 1958, 44-5. 'Asatur' is short for 'Astuacatur'.

²⁷ The text edited by Kostaneanc' is not complete – the Persian sections are missing. As Kostaneanc' notes, the text published by Ališan in *Sisakan* also omits these sections (cf. Ališan 1893, 531).

²⁸ In reality, the poem expresses Christian-Muslim polemics and martyrdom in the early modern period. The conversion and martyrdom narratives in the Christian-Muslim context appeared from the seventh century through the rise of Islam and came from nearly every corner of the medieval Middle East, where Christians and Muslims, including Armenians, lived side by side. These narratives are attested in the written accounts, hagiographic texts, chronicles, and legal sources. See Ačarean, Manandean 1903. On the latter poem, see 353-7.

²⁹ We should consider that in the poem Grigoris Alt'amarc'i notes that the people of *Qitai* are Muslims and that Mxit'ar of Bit'lis purchased the Muslim boy and raised him as a Christian. In the poem we see two points in this chain of changing faiths. First, the Muslim boy preferred Christianity, then he showed his faith in Christianity when resisting the efforts of the Muslim clergymen to convert him back to Islam. Of course, we have to take into account the fact that Grigoris Alt'amarc'i was the Catholicos of the Armenian Church. The poem is also interesting as it shows some of the methods of forced conversion from Christianity to Islam, utilising physical torture followed by preaching.

change light for darkness [...] Or submit to your prophet³⁰). Receiving this rejection, the Turks began to torture him,³¹ but after this failed to work, they called a *mullah* to preach and persuade Astuacatur to renounce his faith. In the poem, Grigoris Alt‘amarc‘i composes the dialogue between the Muslim clergyman and the Christian boy in Persian, as well as ll. 1, 2, 4 of the four-line stanza below (no. 24), with l. 3 in Armenian:³²

Մօլլա գֆթ թա փսար. «Ա սէիտզատայ,
Մա քուն գումըռահի, բա ման պիայ»:
Ասաց թէ՛ Իմ աստուածն ըստոյգ է՛ Յիսայ,
Չի չար ու չի թատպիր քի շաւամ ճուղայ»:

*Mōlla gft' ba p'sar: "A sēitzatay,
Ma k'un gumərahi, ba man' piay".
Asac' t'ē: "Im astuacn əstoyg ē: Yisay
Č'i č'ar u č'i t'atpir k'i šawam čuday".*

The *mullah* said to the boy: "Oh, son of Sayyad, Don't mislead, come with me." [The boy] said: "My God is certain and [he] is Jesus, What reason and what wisdom to disperse."

i Avdalbegyan (1963) has *bamian* 'to middle', which we correct to *bā man* 'with me'.

The next four-line stanza (no. 25) follows with the same order: ll. 1, 2, 4 in Persian; l. 3 in Armenian:

Մօլլա գֆթ քի. «Պիայ, պըշաւ մուսուլման,
Պըխաւան թու փէշի մա քըթապ ու դուռան»:
Ասաց թե՛ Սընտոի է քոյդ եւ ունայն,
Պէ մաստի մա քուն ճըիել ու նատան»:

*Mōlla gft' k'i. "Piay, pəšaw musulman,
Pə xawan t'u p'ēši ma k'ət'ap u tuṛan".
Asac' t'e: "Sanoti ē k'oyd ew unayn,
Pē masti ma k'un čəhel u natan".*

The *mullah* said thus: "Come, become Muslim, Learn beside us literacy and the Quran". [The boy] said: "Yours [religion] is vain and frail, The unwise don't do simplicity and unawareness".

The next stanza (no. 26) is trilingual: ll. 1, 2 are in Turkish; l. 3 is half in Armenian and half Turkish; l. 4 is in Persian:

Մօլլա տէտի. «Օլ կիլ փեղամպարայ եար
Կավուրլարուն տինի կօնկուլտան չըխար»:
Ի քեզ սաստ[եսց]է Յիսուա մէնտան իսրա[ի] վար
Սալիպ մէ փարըստամ մաճնուն պէխապար»:

*Mōlla tēti. "Ōl kil p'etamparay ear
Kavurlarun tini kōnkultan č'əxar".
"I k'ez sastē Yisus mēntan isral[r] var
Salip mē p'arəstam mačnun pəxapar".*

The *mullah* said: "Become the friend [constant lover] of the Prophet, Take the faith of the unbelievers out of your heart". [The boy said]: "Jesus chides you, I'm assured. I worship the cross, [you are] crazy and ignorant".

The poem concludes with yet another scene of torture, followed by the martyrdom of Astuacatur.

30 Cf. Pers. *peyghāmbār*, Arm. *margarē* 'prophet'.

31 On the execution of Christian martyrs, the social functions of punishment, and the examination of the lives of the martyrs as a literary genre, see Sahner 2018, 160-241.

32 We should also note that the speech of the Muslim clergyman is in Persian, while the response of the boy is in Armenian.

Also worthy of our attention is the fact that, aside from the above-mentioned lines, Persian is found only very sparingly in the rest of the composition – only three words which had not entered to Armenian lexicon at all: *nafay* (cf. Pers. *nāfa* ‘a bag or bladder of musk’); *ra-vand* (cf. Pers. *rāvand/rīvand* ‘rhubarb’); *p’etampar* (cf. Pers. *peyghambar* ‘prophet’).

This poem, for the most part in Armenian, linguistically highlights the bilingualism and sometimes trilingualism of the Armenians living in Anatolia and Armenian highlands. Persian and Turkish are inserted into the Armenian poem due to their importance in the cultural milieu of the time. In the sixteenth century, Ottoman Turkish had established itself as the official court language in the Ottoman Empire and was used much in prose works and chancery records, then in Divan poetry (Darling 2012, 171-6). Therefore, the compositions of Alt’amarc’i show that Persian continued to retain its primary role in the literary cultural discourse. Armenian men of letters made ample use of Persian *belles-lettres*, while continuing to add enormous amounts of Persian vocabulary to Armenian, along with stylistic elements. Armenian literacy was also intertwined with a knowledge of Persian, and both intellectuals and ordinary readers were familiar with Persian. This phenomenon is obvious when we consider that Grigoris Alt’amarc’i did not provide translations of the Persian lines; nor did he include a glossary. That was the dialogic use of Persian language between an Armenian and Persian-speaking audience, who were presumably Christian. The use of Persian verses and relation of Persian to the interreligious theme of the poem highlight the language and religious dimensions of that historical context in which it took place.

3.2 Poem No. 21: *Du es aregak* (You Are the Sun)

This poem is noticeable for its large number of Persian lines and words, included in the context of the student's feelings towards and praise of beauty, Christ, and the teacher.³³

Du es aregak (You Are the Sun)³⁴ is an example of an Armenian-Persian *mulamma'* poem and has 20 four-line stanzas – 80 lines total, of which 11 are in Persian.³⁵ Each line consists of 10 syllables with a rhyme-scheme *aaaa*.³⁶

The Persian lines of the poem are:

Stanza 1, ll. 3-4

Պաշաթքի շափի Իսուֆի Քանհան, Է նոտասիդայ կուլի բա պօստան:	<i>Pašat' k'i šawi lwsufi K'anhan Ē nōrasiday kuli ba pōstan.</i>	Perhaps you are Joseph the Canaanite, Oh, you newly opened flower of the garden.
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Stanza 2, l. 4

Չըրա դէր ամատի բէմարամ բէ թո:	<i>Č'əra dēr amati bēmaram bē t'u.</i>	Why are you late? I'm sick without you.
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Stanza 3, l. 1ⁱ

Սախտեալ ⁱⁱ գեղեցիկ, ոսկի մէտրասայ: ⁱⁱⁱ	<i>Saxteal getec'ik, oski mētrasay.</i>	Invented as a beautiful, golden <i>medrassa</i> .
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ⁱ In this line, two words are in Persian and two in Armenian.

ⁱⁱ In the manuscripts, the word has also been read as *siwfat't*, cf. Pers. *sifatat* 'your form, your manner'. A better translation of this line would possibly be: "Your form as a beautiful, golden *medrassa*".

ⁱⁱⁱ The 'golden school' (or *medrassa*) is linked to Mecca. See Cowe 2019, 72.

Stanza 4, ll. 1, 3

Թու բեթըլմամուր եւ մաքաթուլլահ: [...]	<i>T'u bet'əlmamur ew mak'at'ullah. [...]</i>	You are Bayt-l-Ma'mūr and Makat-ullāh. [...]
Պըստանամ թազպեի բիուշամ խրղայ:	<i>Pəstanam t'azpeh bp'ušam xrtay.</i>	I will take a rosary and wear the cloak.

³³ Avdalbegyan 1963, 75-8. According to Akinean, the author of this poem is speaking about male beauty (1958, 54). Akinean thinks that "the stanza [...] is addressed to one of the brothers of the Catholicos, Amir Gurgen or Smbat, although it seems to be addressed to someone more distinguished, who resembles Mecca and a 'golden *medrassa*'" (Cowe 2013, 39). James R. Russell also notes the notions of male beauty in this poem (1992-3, 99-105). If we follow these theories, we can conclude that Grigoris Alt'amarc'i's work belongs to the *shehengiz* genre, which was popular in Ottoman literature during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. On the genre, see Kuru 2016, 163-73. We believe that the Armenian Catholicos and poet was able to write in this genre, while staying true to the literary trends of the day. This, too, is an issue into which we are looking further.

³⁴ For this poem, see Avdalbegyan 1963, 199-205; Akinean 1958, 90-5.

³⁵ On the reading and translation of the Persian lines, see Č'ugaszyan 1960, 215-19; Akinean 1958, չքե-չքե. For the English translation of the poem, see Russell 1992-3, 101-5.

³⁶ Nersisyan 2008, 162-5.

In poem no. 21, alternation of the languages is more integrated: the Armenian line is provided by Persian words and synonyms, which show that Armenian poets deliberately illustrated the literary ability of Armenian. Some examples follow:

1. Մէհրապ (*mēhrap*), cf. Pers. *mēhrāb* – The principal place in a mosque, where the priest prays to the people with his face turned toward Mecca. The *mēhrāb* is in an arched form and the poet refers to this:

Stanza 3, l. 2

Մէհրապ է քաշած զուներդ ի նըմա:	<i>Mēhrap ē k'ašac zunerd i nəma.</i>	Your eyebrows are drawn like a <i>mēhrāb</i> .
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2. Քալամուլլահ (*k'alamullah*), cf. Pers. *kalimatu 'l-lāh* ‘the word of God’.
3. Շաքար ու դանտ (*šak'ar u tant*), cf. Pers. *shakar va qand* ‘granulated sugar and sugar’. These synonyms are also used in Persian poetic speech. Grigoris Ałt'amarci writes:

Stanza 7, l. 1

Շրթունքդ է շաքար, ¹ խօսանքդ դանտ է:	<i>Šrt'un'k'd ē šak'ar, xōsank'ad tant ē.</i>	Your lips are [granulated] sugar and your speech is sugar.
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¹ Pers. *shakar* > Arm. *šak'ar* ‘sugar’, cf. *šak'aravaz* ‘granulated sugar’; *šak'arajur* ‘water with sugar’; *šak'araman* ‘sugar bowl’.

4. Ծօհար (*čōhar*), cf. Pers. *gouhar* ‘jewel’.
5. Քաման (*k'aman*), cf. Pers. *kamān* ‘bow’.
6. Թիր (*t'ir*), cf. Pers. *tīr* ‘sword’.
7. Ապի հայաթ (*api hayat*), cf. Pers. *āb-i ḥayāt* ‘water of life’. In the verse below, we see the usage of synonymous symbolic expressions that were typical of Armenian and Persian literature, such as “*berkrut'yan bažak*” and “*api hayat*”, both with the meaning ‘immortality, divine love’:

Stanza 9, l. 1

Բերկրության բաժակ եւ ապի հայաթ:	<i>Berkrut'yan bažak ew api hayat.</i>	The cup of gladness and divine love.
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8. Լաթիֆ ու թառ (*lat'if u t'ar*), cf. Pers. *latīf o tar* ‘elegant and soft’.
9. Մըրդի սահար (*mərṭi sahar*), cf. Pers. *murgh-i sahar* ‘the morning-bird’, which in Persian poetry refers to the nightingale, that is, a songbird. In the line below, we see the use of a synonymous Armenian expression (*k'atc'rajayn kak'aw* ‘a singer partridge’) with the same meaning, ‘songbird’:

Stanza 12, l. 4

Քաղցրածայն կաքաւ մըրդի սահար ես: *K'atc'rajayn kak'aw mærti sahares.*

A singer partridge: you are the morning-bird.

10. Սուրաթ (*surat'*), cf. Pers. *šūrat* 'face'.
11. Սադաֆ (*sadaf*), cf. Pers. *šadaf* 'a shell, the mother-o'-pearl'.
12. Փուստայ տրիան (*p'ustay tēhan*), cf. Pers. *pestadahān* 'with a mouth or lips sweet as a pistachio'.
13. Սահրայ (*sahray*), cf. Pers. *saḥrā* 'desert'.
14. ՍԷՅՐԱՆ (*sēyran*), cf. Pers. *seyrān* 'a walk, drive'.
15. ՍիՆՈՒԼԲԱՐ (*sinubar*), cf. Pers. *šanoubar* 'any cone-bearing tree'.
16. ՇՄՇԱՍ (*šmšat*), cf. Pers. *shamshād* 'any tall and upright tree, box-tree'.
17. ՏՈՒԲԻ (*tubi*), cf. Pers. *ṭūbā* 'name of tree in paradise'.
18. ԴՈՒՍԱՅ (*tusay*), cf. Pers. *ghuṣṣa* 'strangulation, grief'.
19. ԾՈՒՍԱ (*čuta*), cf. Pers. *judā* 'separate'.
20. ԾԱՅԱՅ (*čazay*), cf. Pers. *jazā* 'reward'.
21. ՆՕ ԿՈՒԼ ՈՒ ՍԱՄՍՊՈՒԼ (*nō kul u sampul*), cf. Pers. *now gul o sumbul* 'the new flower and the hyacinth'.

The composition *Du es aregak* of Grigoris Ałt'amarci, discussed above, reveals the presence of the Persian literary *mulamma'* or macaronic form in the common literary landscape of Anatolia and the Armenian highlands. Grigoris Ałt'amarci also used the effectiveness of this literary form to promote the equality of Armenian literary symbolic expressions with those of the Persians that had active literary prestige in the period.

4 Conclusions

The analysis of two *mulamma'* or bilingual, macaronic poems of Grigoris Ałt'amarci shows the capacity of the author to theorise multilingualism by addressing the audience in different poetic languages within a single literary form. The poetic languages of the *mulamma'* accommodated and incorporated the linguistic diversity of the milieu of Anatolia and the Armenian highlands. Furthermore, Armenian poets developed a harmonious literary environment for multilingual Armenian audiences by adapting the Persian poetical form of *mulamma'*. There was a religious competition like the one in the poem *Tał Astuacatur Xat'ayec'un i Grigoris kat'otikosē Ałt'amarci'oy* (Poem on Astuacatur Xat'ayec'i by Catholicos Grigoris Ałt'amarci), in which we witness the enforced conversion from Christianity to Islam and 'martyrdom propaganda'. The poems of Grigoris Ałt'amarci plainly show that the Armenians living in Anatolia and on the Arme-

nian plateau in the sixteenth century were bilingual and sometimes trilingual, using Armenian as their native tongue, Turkish for everyday life, and Persian in the cultural context. The Armenian poet, who knew Persian and was well acquainted with Persian literature, used Persian expressions and symbols as a means of increasing the value of his literary compositions, although the Armenian language was more dominant than Persian or Turkish. The poet was open to embracing the words and forms of others in his literary production; the ordinary Armenian reader generally understood entire lines and references in Persian, but retained the hierarchical position of Armenian. We notice a recommendation of useful Armenian equivalents for Persian literary terminology in Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i's poem *Du es aregak*. The poet's method of using Armenian versions of Persian literary symbols is exemplified by his efforts to equalise Armenian with Persian, which was regarded as a prestigious language in the literature of the time.

Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i adopted the literary form of *mulamma'* with the thematic aspects of interreligious relations and the praise of beauty and love, in order to increase the literary popularity and prestige of Armenian in the cultural reality of Anatolia and the Armenian highlands in early modern period. The presence of these two macaronic, bilingual poems in his literary legacy demonstrates not only his understanding of contemporary literary developments and forms, but also his capacity to work with them in an innovative way. In addition, there is evidence that despite signs of a decline, Persian continued to exist as a literary language in the Anatolian and Armenian highlands during the sixteenth century.

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