

“PREPARED IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE HAGARITES”:  
ABBOT MKHITAR’S 1727 ARMENO-TURKISH GRAMMAR  
OF MODERN WESTERN ARMENIAN\*

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In 1727, the small Italian printing house owned by Antonio Bortoli in Venice issued a 149-page duodecimo book with the following title, *Durn k'erakanut'ean askharhabar lezuin hayots'* (Gate to the grammar of the vernacular language of the Armenians). The book was written by Mkhitar Sebastats'i (1675-1749), the founder of a Catholic Armenian monastic congregation that only ten years earlier had been established on the island of San Lazzaro in the Venetian lagoon. Abbot Mkhitar and the erudite members of his religious order became preeminent publishers and printers of Armenian books during the eighteenth century and played a pivotal role in launching a “renaissance” of Armenian culture during that same period. They were pioneers in compiling and publishing grammars, dictionaries, books of history, geographical treatises, and other works. Most of all, they acted as stalwart defenders of the Armenian language and particularly of the Classical variety known as *grabar*, which at least since the twelfth century had ceased to be a spoken language and had served only as the official written language of the clerical and literate class.

The *Gate to the grammar of the vernacular language of the Armenians* was the first in a long line of grammars and dictionaries the Mkhitarists published throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Unlike the better-known *K'erakanut'iwn grabari lezui haykazean seri*<sup>1</sup> (Grammar of the classical language of the Armenian nation) of 1730, the *Gate to the grammar* was not a grammar for the classical Armenian. Neither was it, strictly speaking, written in Armenian. It was rather a practical grammar for the vernacular Armenian dialect (known as *ashkharhabar*) spoken by Armenians in Istanbul and Asia Minor, a dialect that later became standard Western Armenian, one of two national languages spoken and written by Armenians today. The *Gate to grammar* was also the first printed book in the hyphenated, macaronic language known as Armeno-Turkish, which was the vernacular Turkish spoken outside the main administrative centers of the Ottoman Empire as a lingua franca but, in this case, written in the Armenian script. The paradoxical nature of a grammar manual for a national language first being written in Turkish, the language of the “civilizational other,” has not been lost on scholars, though it has not generated much critical reflection either.<sup>2</sup> The subtitle of the work informs the reader that it was “composed in the Turkish Language for the benefit of

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<sup>1</sup> Printed in Venice by Battista Albrizzi Girolamo [Girolimo according to the Armenian rendering of his name on the title page] in 1730.

<sup>2</sup> Laurant Mignon, “Lost in Translation: A few remarks on the Armeno-Turkish novel and Turkish Literary Historiography,” in *Between Religion and Language: Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-Speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Evangelia Balta and Mehmet Ölmez (Istanbul: Eren, 2011), 113.

those Armenians who only know the Turkish Language and desire to learn vernacular Armenian.”<sup>3</sup>

Abbot Mkhitar’s unusual Grammar was the first printed book of approximately 2,000 separate titles in Armeno-Turkish issued between 1727 and 1967 in fifty different cities and two hundred printing houses scattered across several continents. Covering multiple genres, including fiction and the novel, journalism and history, religious and evangelical writing, science and works on hygiene, this hybrid literary print tradition has only lately begun to attract scholarly attention from a handful of specialists. The upsurge of interest in recent years in literature written in this language is itself perhaps a telltale sign of a larger historiographic shift characterizing Ottoman and Armenian scholarship. On the one hand, as Laurent Mignon has suggested, a new generation of post-national Ottoman scholars have taken an interest in Armeno-Turkish literature as well as its cognate or auxiliary fields of literature written in *Karamanlidika* or *Karamanlıca* (Ottoman Turkish written in Greek script) and Judeo-Turkish as a means of redressing the problems bedeviling Turkish literary history, “a field of scholarship in which the contributions of non-Muslim authors and intellectuals are seldom acknowledged.”<sup>4</sup> The rediscovery of Armeno-Turkish among a small group of literary scholars working mostly in Turkey’s new private universities may, therefore, be seen as an attempt at rescuing from Turkish nationalist discourse the history of the diverse literary and cultural heritage left behind by a multicultural and hybrid society that was once the Ottoman Empire.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand and in a parallel yet noticeably much slower development, scholars of Armenian social and cultural history have also taken an interest in the phenomenon of Armeno-Turkish literature as a window into the history of Armenian and Turkish cross-cultural interactions before the genocide of 1915 brought such encounters to an abrupt and violent end. Here as well, one must recognize in the recent rise of interest in Armeno-Turkish scholarship the need to emancipate this hybrid and largely misconstrued literary history from the hegemonic hold of the nation. The renewed interest in Armeno-Turkish literature may thus be seen as an effort to explore Armenian-Turkish cross-cultural interactions in a fresh, post-nationalist context made possible in part by the creation of the Workshop for Turkish/Armenian Scholarship (WATS) on-line forum, the convening of the first

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<sup>3</sup> Շարադրեցեալ տաճկականաւ լեզուաւ առ ի յօգուտ այնց հայոց, որք գտաճկական լեզու միայն գիտեն, եւ փափաքին ուսանիլ զաշխարհաբար հայերէնն:

<sup>4</sup> Laurent Mignon, “A Pilgrim’s Progress: Armenian and Kurdish Literatures in Turkish and the Rewriting of Literary History,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 48.2 (2014): 182-200 (182).

<sup>5</sup> The pioneering works in this domain are by Johann Strauss. See his highly influential “Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th Centuries)?” *Arabic Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, 1 (2003): 39-76; idem, “Is Karamanli Literature Part of a ‘Christian-Turkish (Turco-Christian) Literature?’” in *Cries and Whispers in Karamanlidika Literature*, ed. Evangelia Balta and Matthias Kappler (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 153-200; idem., “The Millets and the Ottoman Language: The Contribution of Ottoman Greeks to Ottoman Letters (19th-20th Centuries),” *Die Welt des Islams*, n.s., 35.2 (1995): 189-249. Laurent Mignon’s work is also quite innovative. In addition to “A Pilgrim’s Progress: Armenian and Kurdish Literatures in Turkish and the Rewriting of Literary History,” see his “Lost in Translation: A few remarks on the Armeno-Turkish novel and Turkish Literary Historiography,” in *Between Religion and Language: Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-Speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Evangelia Balta and Mehmet Ölmez (Istanbul: Eren, 2011), 111-23. Also useful are Börte Sagaster, “The role of Turcophone Armenians as literary innovators and mediators of culture in the early days of Modern Turkish Literature,” in *ibid.*, 101-10; Murat Cankara, “Rethinking Ottoman Cross-Cultural Encounters: Turks and the Armenian Alphabet,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 51, 1 (2015): 1-16; and finally, Garo Arahamyan, “A Note on the Bibliographic Catalogues of Armeno-Turkish Literature,” in Balta and Mehmet Ölmez, *Between Religion and Language*, 147-52.

academic conference on the Armenian Genocide at Istanbul’s Bilgi University in 2005, the work done by the Armenian periodicals and publishing houses like *Agos* and *Aras*, the tragic assassination of the Turkish Armenian journalist and civil rights leader Hrant Dink, and the growing interaction between Turkish and Armenian scholars in recent years.

Relying on largely untapped archival material stored in the Propaganda Fide as well as the Mkhitarist Archives in Venice, this study explores the historical circumstances that led to the publication of Abbot Mkhitar’s grammar manual that has remained entirely ignored by the burgeoning scholarship in this rich “heterographic” language.<sup>6</sup> In addition to offering a short assessment of the significance of Armeno-Turkish literature as an alternative source for the writing of early modern and late Ottoman social and cultural history, the study reevaluates the place of this literature as a synecdoche for the Ottoman *millet* system and the multicultural, multi-religious, cosmopolitan, yet hierarchically segmented society Ottoman rule fostered. It concludes with an Appendix where a transcription and English translation of the “Preface” to the *Gate to the grammar* written by Mkhitar in Classical Armenian is presented in the hopes that this first translation of an important document in the history of Armeno-Turkish will provide a useful primary source unavailable in English translation.

#### A SHORT HISTORY OF ARMENO-TURKISH LITERATURE

After centuries of living and interacting with Turkic-speaking peoples following the Seljuk victory over the Byzantine army at Manzikert in 1071, Armenians began to come under the linguistic influence of numerous Turkic dialects. These included idioms spoken by the Seljuks of the Sultanate of Rum, the Turcomans in Iran, the Tatar vernaculars of the Turco-Mongols, Kipchak Turkish of the Turkic-speaking tribes in Eastern Europe and the Crimea, Anatolian Turkish spoken by a large segment of the Ottoman population, and finally Ottoman Turkish, the “written lingua franca for the governing elite of an empire whose people spoke a variety of different languages and dialects, whether other varieties of Turkish or other languages entirely.”<sup>7</sup> To this list we must also add vernacular Anatolian Turkish spoken by ordinary people in Anatolia. “The result of this long-time interaction,” with Turkic-speaking populations, writes the Soviet Armenian linguist Hrachia Acharean, “has been the influence exerted on the Armenian language by Turkish, an influence that

<sup>6</sup> I thank Bert Vaux for suggesting this term to me. The only known works that touch upon Mkhitar’s Armeno-Turkish grammar are Vardan Z. Petrosyan, “Mkhitar Sebastats’i orpes ashkharhabari k’erakanut’yan himnadir” (Mkhitar of Sebastea as the Founder of the Grammar of Vernacular Armenian), *Banber Yerevani hamalsarani* 82 (1994): 21-25, and Parsegh Sargsian, *Yerkhariwramea grakan gortsuneut’iwn Mkhitar’arean Miabanut’ean* (Bicentennial of the Literary Endeavors of the Mkhitarist Congregation) (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1905), esp. 10-12. No other studies in any language seem to have taken an interest in this seminal publication.

<sup>7</sup> Linda Darling, “Ottoman Turkish: Written Language and Scribal Practice, 13<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries,” *Literacy in the Persianate World*, ed. Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 171. I thank Michael O’Sullivan for this helpful reference. Armenian encounters with Kipchak (an extinct dialect of Turkic known as Cuman) in the Dasht-i Kipchak (the Kipchak steppe north of the Black Sea) have a history that is irreducible to the Seljuk migrations and Manzikert. However, in terms of dating, Armenians only came into regular contact with the Kipchak language sometime after Manzikert when large-scale Armenian migrations into the region of Crimea and the steppe northwest of it occurred. See Krikor Maksudian, “Armenian Communities in Eastern Europe,” in *The Armenian People from Ancient to the Modern Era: From Foreign Domination to Statehood*, vol. 1, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 52-3.

surpasses all former influences, including that of Persian, with the significant difference that earlier languages had left an impact [primarily] on the literary language, whereas Turkish influences did not enter literary usage but were confined to certain dialects.”<sup>8</sup>

As scholarship on nationalist discourse has amply demonstrated, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, language came to replace religion and “race” as the principal source of a given nation’s “soul” or its essential—that is, unchanging—identity. Given this centrality of language in defining national identity, the question of how Armenians lost touch with their “mother tongue” and gradually came to speak Turkish, the language that is associated in the Armenians’ “social imaginary” with the perpetrators of the Armenian genocide of 1915, it is not surprising that scholarship on Armeno-Turkish would be heavily compromised by nationalistic categories and assumptions that have more to do with collective memory of the Armenian genocide than a longer historical reality. In the larger scheme of post-genocide historical memory and twentieth-century nationalist discourse masquerading as scholarship, the complex history of the role of Turkic languages in the lives of ordinary Ottoman Armenians has thus become reducible to Turkish rule and “domination” over Armenians, which one scholar has described in quite a jejune fashion as a “continuous and terrible oppression of a people with a profound cultural past by a military-feudal authority inspired by the raging frenzy of religious fanaticism.”<sup>9</sup> Forgotten in this one-dimensional reading of a multilayered Armeno-Turkish past are alternative readings such as the possibility that the forgetting of one language and the acquisition of another, whether it is Armenian, Hebrew, or any other language, might be the outcome of complex social factors such as the absence of educational institutions nearby or simply a desire to speak the language spoken by the majority of people in one’s area of habitation. What seems to have been the case with most Armenians was that those living in the eastern recesses of Asia Minor or the Armenian plateau,<sup>10</sup> the core area of their ancient homeland,

<sup>8</sup> Hrachea Acharean, *Hayots' lezvi patmut'yun* (History of the Armenian language) (Yerevan: Haypethrad, 1951), 258. Of course, Acharean is here not considering the large *literary* output in Armeno-Turkish.

<sup>9</sup> Hasmik Stepanyan, *Hayatar' Turk'eren grakanut'yunē* (*aghbyuragitakan hetazotut'yun*) (Armeno-Turkish literature: a source-critical investigation) (Yerevan: Yerevani Hamalsarani Hratarakchutyun, 2001), 5.

<sup>10</sup> I have chosen to refer to the easternmost parts of Asia Minor not as “eastern Anatolia” but by its geographical moniker of the “Armenian Plateau.” For the term “Anatolia” and its variants, see the article “Anadolu” in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, especially the sections written by Franz Taeschner. Generally speaking, during the period under discussion (1500-1800), the term was “applied to the province (*eyālet*) comprising the western half of Anatolia... and embracing largely the western Anatolian Turkish principalities.... The term *Anadolu* as name of a province disappeared at the time of the reorganisation of the provinces during the *tanẓīmāt* (the middle of the nineteenth century). From then on “Anatolia,” used geographically, came to mean the whole peninsula ... which today forms the main part of the area of the Turkish republic. ‘*Anadolu*,’ as it is used today in Turkish, is the whole Asiatic part of modern Turkey, including those areas which geographically belong to upper Mesopotamia.” Franz Taeschner, “Anadolu,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Second Edition, online), [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/anadolu-SIM\\_0648?s.num=1&s.f.s2\\_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam2&s.q=anadolu](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/anadolu-SIM_0648?s.num=1&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam2&s.q=anadolu). It should be noted, however, that some Armenian clerics and writers during the early modern period who hailed from the westernmost region of the Armenian plateau and the easternmost region of “Anatolia” and regarded that region as their homeland referred to the entire area consistently using the commonly accepted Turkish designation of Անատոլի or Անատոլու, a term that is Greek in origin. Thus Grigor of Daranagh in his famous *Chronicle* written in the early seventeenth century while the Celali rebellions were breaking out across Anatolia writes: “Եւ ամենայն ջալալիք եւ ապստամբութիւնք ի նորա աւուրսն եղեն, որ խառն աւերակ արարին եւ զամենայն աշխարհն ասիական, որ Անատոլի կոչի այժմ.” “And all the Celalis and [their] revolts happened during his [Sultan Muhammad’s] days and

where the bulk of the Armenian population resided and where presumably the Armenian Church had an effective and dense network of parish schools, most Armenians continued to speak Armenian with minimal lexical borrowing from Turkish. However, those residing in central Asia Minor, the Balkans, and the region that constitutes today’s Ukraine and Poland, that is in regions further away from the core area of the church’s network and areas where large populations of Turkic-speaking peoples also lived, as Avedis Sanjian and Andreas Tietze have shown, “gradually lost their native language and became Turkic-speaking.”<sup>11</sup> Those in the Crimea (the farthest region from the core area of Armenian habitation), who during the late fifteenth century migrated to Eastern Europe and more specifically to Poland and the Ukraine, increasingly lost touch with classical Armenian or the vernaculars spoken in their pre-exilic homelands of origin and developed a rich written literature known as Armeno-Kipchak. Similarly, for many Armenians living within the Ottoman Empire, the literary language of choice was neither classical Armenian, which most ordinary people did not understand, or the vernacular of *ashkharhabar*, which would not be a standardized literary language until the second half of the nineteenth century, nor was it the highly elite-centered and difficult to comprehend Ottoman Turkish, the official administrative and literary language of the Ottoman empire; rather, it was vernacular Anatolian Turkish written in Armenian script. The result, as Sanjian and Tietze note, was “the creation of a distinct branch in Armenian literature known as ‘Armeno-Turkish,’ that is, Turkish-language works written in Armenian characters, designed to meet the needs of the Turkic-speaking Armenians in the Near East and eastern Europe.”<sup>12</sup>

In one of the first scholarly treatments of Armeno-Turkish literature, the renowned French-Armenian Armenologist Haig Berbérian noted that the vast literary output written in this language could be broken down into the following classification system: 1) poetry written and/or performed by *ashugh*s or troubadours and minstrels, 2) literary works, 3) translations, 4) the periodical press and journalism, and finally 5) funerary inscriptions.<sup>13</sup> As Berbérian states, from roughly the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries onwards, numerous Armenian authors began to compose their works in Armeno-Turkish. This included works of lyrical poetry performed by wandering *ashugh*s in the Armenian tradition and *ashiks* in Turkish. Between 1600 and 1840, an estimated 400 Armenian *ashugh*s in or around the Ottoman Empire composed their poems in Armeno-Turkish as well as exclusively in either Armenian or Turkish.<sup>14</sup>

For Berbérian, the golden age of Armeno-Turkish literature was the eighteenth and

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devastated the whole of the Asian country which is called nowadays Anatolia [Anatoli].” Grigor Daranaghts’i, *Zhamanakagrut’iwn Grigor Daranaghts’o kam Kamaghets’vo* (The chronicle of Gregory of Daranagh or Kamagh), ed. Mesrop Nishanian (Jerusalem: St. James, 1915), 14.

<sup>11</sup> Avedis K. Sanjian and Andreas Tietze, eds. *Eremya Chelebi Kômürjian’s Armeno-Turkish Poem “The Jewish Bride”* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), 9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Haig Berbérian, “La Littérature Arméno-Turque,” *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, vol. 2: *Literaturen der TurkvFunda*, ed. Jean Deny et al. (Weisbaden: Steiner, 1964), 810. Missing from this scheme are mostly works published by Christian missionaries (both Catholic but also especially Protestant) who used Armeno-Turkish works including translation of the Gospels as well as other religious works as one of their principal evangelizing weapons.

<sup>14</sup> Sanjian and Tietze, *Eremya Chelebi*, 10. There are also *cönk*-s, or the notebooks of Armenian *ashugh*s, preserved in manuscript format, containing Turkish poems/songs in Armenian letters. See Kevork Pamukciyan, “Ermeni Harfli Türkçe Elyazma Eski Bir Cönk,” *Folklor ve Etnografya Araştırmaları Yıllığı* (1984): 275-306. I thank Evrim Binbash for this valuable reference.

especially nineteenth centuries when the printing revolution that had earlier facilitated the expansion of an Armenian public sphere of letters was placed at the service of Armeno-Turkish literature. In a sense, this golden age began with the publication in 1727 of the *Gate to the grammar of the vernacular language* by Mkhitar Sebastats'i. During the remainder of the eighteenth century, many of the fifty or so individual titles published in Armeno-Turkish were religious in nature and were written by members of the Mkhitarist Congregation either in Venice or especially in Trieste, where a splinter group of Mkhitarist monks had settled in 1773 and started a printing press in 1775.<sup>15</sup> A quick glance at the useful bibliographic catalogue of Armeno-Turkish books compiled by Hasmik Stepanyan reveals an interesting pattern. The two branches of the Mkhitarist Congregation combined produced the lion's share of all Armeno-Turkish books published during the eighteenth century, with a total of thirty-four out of fifty Armeno-Turkish works from 1727 to 1800 published by these Catholic Armenian monks in either Venice or Trieste. The Trieste branch alone, whose press was set up only in 1775, clearly took the lead from the mother convent by becoming the dominant force with twenty-four Armeno-Turkish books in the short period of the last quarter of the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

This preponderant role of the Mkhitarist Congregation in the propagation of Armeno-Turkish literature tells us two important things about the Armenian reading public in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. First, the Mkhitarist interest in promoting Armeno-Turkish literary and print culture makes sense in light of Acharean's observation that Armeno-Turkish was more widespread among Catholic than Apostolic Armenians in the Ottoman Empire probably because it distinguished its users from their Apostolic counterparts.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the publication by the Trieste monks in 1783 of such religious or devotional books by Catholic authors as Roberto Francesco Belarmino's *De Arte Bene Moriendi* (1618) (translated into English as *The Art of Dying Well*) or *Էյի Էօլիիսէ հազրր օլսաքլըղըն սէշկուլ օլսաքլը իյիս* [*İyi ölume Hazır olmaklığın Meşgul olması için*] was clearly meant to provide spiritual sustenance to Armenians who, for reasons that we shall examine later, could only access the printed word through the Turkish language written in Armenian script. Interestingly, two years earlier the Trieste monks had issued another work meant to improve the same community's ability to speak in vernacular Armenian or *ashkharhabar*. In some ways a sequel to Mkhitar Sebastats'i's 1727 grammar to the vernacular, this was a primer in Western Armenian vernacular entitled *Nor aybenaran handerts' meknut'eamb tachkakan barits' haykakan ashkharabar lezuaw* (A new primer with explication of Turkish words in the Armenian vernacular language). This work as its title clarifies came with short

<sup>15</sup> On the little-studied printing endeavors of this branch of the Mkhitarists, see Sahak Djemdjemian, "T'riesti Mkhit'arean tparanē" (The Mkhitarist printing house of Trieste), *Handes Amsorea* (1981): 75-110.

<sup>16</sup> My calculations here are based on Hasmik Stepanyan, *Hayatar' T'urk'eren grk'eri ev Hayatar' T'urk'eren parberakan mamuli matenagit'ut'iwn (1727-1958)* (Bibliography of Armeno-Turkish books and periodicals [1727-1958]) (Istanbul: Turkuaz Yayınları, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Acharean notes that one of the factors that helped spread the use of Armeno-Turkish literature among some Ottoman Armenians was Catholicism. The latter was a factor in several ways. First, Catholic Armenians, especially in central Asia Minor, were more prone to distance themselves from speaking Armenian and would generally be Turcophone. Catholicism was also influential because of the Mkhitarists, who were among the most important publishers of Armeno-Turkish literature. Acharean, *Hayots' lezvi patmut'yun*, 264-65.

dialogues in Turkish and Armenian presumably to improve reading and speaking comprehension in vernacular Western Armenian.<sup>18</sup>

The Mkhitarist role as the leading purveyors of Armeno-Turkish print also sheds light on a second historical trait of Armeno-Turkish. It suggests that during the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century at least, the reading market for popular books among Armenians was not in Classical Armenian (*grabar*) or in the vernacular language of western Armenian but rather in Armeno-Turkish. That is why, for printers and publishers such as the Trieste branch of the Mkhitarists, whose early years in the Habsburg port city heavily depended on profits made from their printing, it made more sense, from a marketing angle alone, to flood the markets in Istanbul and Izmir as well as presumably further east into the countryside with Armeno-Turkish books which had a better chance of being sold than their counterparts in Classical Armenian or the vernacular.

This reading market appears to have grown dramatically during the nineteenth century as a result of an explosion of printing activity both by the Mkhitarists abroad and by local Armenian printers in Istanbul. The upshot was the printing of an astounding output of over 1160 titles covering a great variety of themes, comprising treatises on law, sciences, medicine, hygiene, history, dictionaries, as well as works of fiction either in translation from European writers or of original works comprised the literary output of the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Here it is worth mentioning that many well-known European novels were translated into Armeno-Turkish in the middle of the nineteenth century sometimes well before they appeared either in Armenian or in Ottoman Turkish. A representative sampling of such titles includes *The Fables* of Aesop, *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Voltaire’s *Micromegas*, *Candide*, and *Zadig*, and Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Man*. Some of these titles represent the first ever translation of these important literary works into Turkish. Works on history, both in translation from European authors, such as Oliver Goldsmith’s *Roman History From the Foundation of Rome till the Fall of the Western Roman Empire* (1830), as well as translations from works originally penned in *grabar*, were an important part of the literary canon in Armeno-Turkish publications.<sup>20</sup> For instance, the most well known work of Armenian history from the period, the three-volume magnum opus, *Patmut’iwn Hayots’ i skzbanē ashkharhi minch’ev ts’am tearn 1784* (History of Armenians from the beginning of the world till the year of the Lord 1784) published in Venice from 1784-1786 by the Mkhitarist monk and polymath, Mikayel Chamchian, was redacted into one volume in 1811 and subsequently issued in three separate editions in its Armeno-Turkish translation (1812, 1850, and 1862). Perhaps the most well known, prolific, and accomplished writer in Armeno-Turkish was the Catholic Armenian-Ottoman savant Hovsep

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<sup>18</sup> The full title reads thus: “Նոր Այբբենարան հանդերձ մեկնութեամբ տաճկական բարից հայկական աշխարհաբար լեզուաւ: Եւ կարճառօտ ախորժելի խօսակցութիւնք ինչ տաճկերէն եւ հայերէն: Արարեալ ի խնդրոյ ծերունազարդ բարեպաշտօն Տէվէճի օղլու մահտեսի Միմառնի որդի պարոն Գարապետին Գաղատացոյ առ ի յիշատակ տոհմին իւրոյ եւ յօգուտ մանկանց հայրենեաց իւրոց: Ի Նորին իսկ արդեամբք եւ ծախիւք տպագրութեամբ ի լոյս ածեալ Յամի Տեառն 1781: Ի Թրքեստ: Հրամանաւ Մեծաւորաց.” See Hasmik Stepanyan, *Hayatar Turk’eren grk’eri*, 32-33.

<sup>19</sup> As Berbérian, “La Littérature Arméno-Turque,” 815-816, notes, “Un très grand nombre d’ouvrages traitent de la religion, des science, de la médecine, de l’hygiène, de la morale et du droit, ainsi que des traductions de romans populaire français et de poésie en arméno-turc, pourraient être parmi les publications de cette époque.”

<sup>20</sup> Stepanyan, *Hayatar Turk’eren grk’eri*, 66.

Vartanian, better known under his pen name Vartan Pasha. Educated at the Mkhitarist school in Vienna, Vartan Pasha was a founding member of the prestigious Ottoman Academy (*Encümen-i Daniş*) and author of the first novel published in the Ottoman Empire, *Agapi Hikayesi*, published in 1851. He was also the author of a multi-volume *History of Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France* (1855), issued in both a six-volume Armenian-script version as well as an abbreviated two-volume Arabic script rendition,<sup>21</sup> in addition to a work entitled *Teleğraf Risalesi yani Elektrik Teleğrafının Sureti-i Hareket ve Istimali Beyanında Bir Şerhname* (A Booklet on the Telegraph or Brief Instructions for the Functioning and Use of the Electric Telegraph) (1857), and editor of two separate literary periodicals in Armeno-Turkish.<sup>22</sup>

Alongside the voluminous output of printed works in Armeno-Turkish, there was an equally abundant but more difficult-to-access literary production in manuscript form, much of which lies scattered across archives and in manuscript collections in half a dozen countries. The topics and genres covered by Armeno-Turkish works in manuscript form ranges from Yeremia Çelebi's seventeenth-century Armeno-Turkish translation of *The History of Armenia* by Movsēs Khorenats'i to more commonplace religious correspondence between Catholic Armenians in Ankara and the Propaganda Fide office in the Vatican during the second half of the seventeenth century. Other examples of Armeno-Turkish writing that have survived in manuscript form include a rare piece of commercial correspondence between an Armenian merchant in Smyrna/Izmir and his correspondent in London in 1667 to an even more unusual bill of exchange between Ottoman-Armenian merchants based in India during the mid-eighteenth century also stored at the British Library.<sup>23</sup> In addition, there are collections of songs in Armeno-Turkish known as *cönk* preserved in manuscripts that Kevork Pamukciyan discovered and studied in the early 1980s.<sup>24</sup> The majority of the literary output, however, appears to have been in printed works, much of it produced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In one of his pioneering studies of what he calls "Christian Turkish Literature," the German scholar Johann Strauss provides a nuanced comparison of Karamanli and Armeno-Turkish print culture and notes many parallels between the two. Strauss remarks that although the first Karamanli book (Gennadios Scholarios's *Confession*) was printed in 1710, predating Abbot Mkhitar's Armeno-Turkish Grammar by a

<sup>21</sup> Strauss, "Is Karamanli Literature," 183.

<sup>22</sup> Stepanyan, *Hayatar T'urk'eren grk'eri*, 110.

<sup>23</sup> The historical archives of the Propaganda Fide (Archivio Storico 'de Propaganda Fide', henceforth ASPF) in the Vatican have several dozen pieces of clerical correspondence between Armenian Catholic priests and parishioners in Ankiwra/Ankara and the central headquarters of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in the Vatican. For a sampling, see ASPF, Scrittura Riferite nei Congressi (SC) Armeni vol. 5, fols. 125, 153, ASPF SC Armeni vol. 7, fol. 327. An Armeno-Turkish letter from a certain Ter Sarkis and Ter Hovsep in Venice to Monsignor Sefer, the Archbishop of the Assyrians in Rome, is located in ASPF SC vol. 5, fol. 69. Dated 2 March, 1709 and accompanied by an Italian translation, this document appears to indicate that Armeno-Turkish may have been used as a kind of *lingua franca* between an Armenian priest in Venice and an Assyrian archbishop from Mardin in Rome and therefore possibly between members of two different Ottoman millets. For the business correspondence between Arutin di Georgio in Livorno and Mr. Cross (aka Paron Khachatur) in London dated Armenian Calendar 1024 (1024+551=1675) January 20, see British Library, Harleian MS 7013, fol. 31. The document that looks like a bill of exchange concerns a transaction concerns Khwaja Ghazar of Tokat living in Basra who gave, it seems, a chest of silver zolotas and Abbasis to Khwaja Tarkhan [Minasian?] of Calcutta. The document is undated but the transaction it records took place in 1745; see British Library, Lansdowne MS 1047, fol. 207.

<sup>24</sup> Pamukciyan, "Ermeni Harfli."



good seventeen years,<sup>25</sup> in terms of total literary output, Armeno-Turkish dwarfed its Greek-script counterpart by a total output of 1600 by the end of the nineteenth century compared to a mere 750 titles in Karamanli.<sup>26</sup> One reason for this disparity for Strauss was that Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were disproportionately bilingual or had greater number of Turcophones than their Greek counterparts. Given the large number of Turkish speakers among the Empire’s Armenian population along with their bilingualism, several important questions arise that need to be addressed before we resume our story in the following section as to how Abbot Mkhitar came to compile his pioneering grammar manual of vernacular Western Armenian in the “language of the Hagarites.” These questions concern the nature of the Turcophone population among the Armenians and their relationship with the flourishing field of Armeno-Turkish literature. Put differently, the questions pertain to the complicated relationship between language, script, and readership in the making of Armeno-Turkish.

#### LANGUAGE, SCRIPT, AND READERSHIP

First, why was Anatolian Turkish utilized to write Armeno-Turkish literature as opposed to, say, writing directly in vernacular Western Armenian or the classical language of *grabar*? To fathom this question fully, we need to examine briefly the state of the Armenian language during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when Armeno-Turkish print culture was experiencing its golden age. Mkhitar is our best guide here. It is important to remember that one of the goals of Mkhitar and his congregation was to reverse the process of cultural fragmentation and “dispersion” characterizing the Armenians as a “polycentric nation” during the early modern period.<sup>27</sup> The “Mkhitarist project” in this respect was essentially a restorative or reformist one that sought to return a semblance of coherence in the realm of language and history.<sup>28</sup> The language Mkhitar chose to “cleanse” and “restore” was the classical language known as *grabar*, not a popular or spoken language but the privileged preserve of a tiny elite of literate scribes most of whom, like the Mkhitarists themselves, were priests. Mkhitar and his successors until the second half of the nineteenth century resolutely chose to “reform” and standardize this written language despite being well aware that the vast majority of Armenians did not understand it. To the extent that Armenians understood the Armenian language at all, it was the vernacular or spoken Armenian that they knew. However, it was very difficult—if not nearly impossible—to impose uniformity to this language since the latter was in a state of being “disordered and corrupted” and moreover had multiple regional variations that resulted often in mutually incomprehensible dialects. In the Preface to his magisterial two-volume etymological *Dictionary of the Armenian Language*, upon which he had labored tirelessly during the last twenty years of his life, Mkhitar addresses the “disordered” and “corrupted” state of the Armenian language, both in its classical as well as vernacular variants:

<sup>25</sup> Strauss, “Is Karamanli Literature,” 162.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>27</sup> For historical background, see Sebouh Aslanian, *Dispersion History and the Polycentric Nation: The Role of Simeon Yerevantsi’s Girk’ or Koch’i Partavjar in the Armenian National Revival of the 18th Century* (Venice: San Lazzaro, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> Marc Nichanian, “Enlightenment and Historical Thought,” in *Diaspora and Enlightenment: The Jewish and Armenian Experience*, ed. Richard Hovannisian and David Myers (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 118.

And this appears evident to all that if the Lord does not grant us an orderly dictionary, our language will slowly become disordered and corrupted. On account of which, the *Dictionary* is the canon for the correct studying of literature, which guides the multitudes to use the language with which one speaks or writes in a uniform manner. Otherwise, everything would be spoiled and corrupted as is evident with the vernacular language of ours, which on account of being disordered and bereft of guidance, is as torn and multiplied as there are regions of habitation or especially as there are cities or towns. And some [dialects] are so corrupted that they do not even appear to be spoken Armenian, but rather as barbarous groans of exclaiming in the air, for instance, those who call *gayl* (wolf) *gul*, the *garn* (lamb) *gor*, *hats* (bread) *khots*, *mets* (elder) *joj*, *dzgel* (to leave) *gdzel*, *ardzaket* (to unleash) *adzkel*, and so forth.<sup>29</sup>

The disjointed condition of the vernacular Armenian was half the problem for Mkhitar. What was even more troubling to the abbot was that a very large number of Armenians, especially in the western or central provinces of the Ottoman Empire, did not even comprehend the “barbarous groans,” to use Mkhitar’s term for some of the vernacular dialects of Armenian. Rather, many if not most spoke the vernacular Anatolian Turkish that functioned as a common language across the empire. That this was indeed the case is indicated in the surviving evidence from the period. For instance, the Polish-Armenian traveler Simeon of Poland notes in his travelogue that some of the Armenians he came across during his travels across Anatolia did not speak Armenian but Turkish. In Afyon Karahisar, Simeon finds “sixty households of Armenians as well as an Armenian church built of stone, and a monastery in an Armenian village a quarter of a mile outside the city.” “However,” he quickly adds, these Armenians “do not know the Armenian language but speak in the language of the Turk and are all part of the diocese of Angora. And in Konya and other cities, the

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<sup>29</sup> Ապա յայսմ ամենայն յայտնի երեւի, զի թէ ոչ էր տիրան պարգեւել մեզ զբառգիրք օրինաւոր, մերձ ընդ մերձ լեզուն մեր խանգարեալ եղծանիս: Վ[ա]յս[ն] զի բառգիրքն է քանոն ուղղութեամբ դպրութեան պարապելոց, որ ուղղէ բազմութիւն նոյնակերպ վարել զլեզուն, յորում որ խօսի. կամ արտագրէ ինչ. ապաթէ ոչ ամեն ինչ եղծեալ խանգարի. որպէս յայտ է յաշխարհաբար լեզուն մերմէ. որ յաղագս անկանոն է անառաջնորդ լինելոյ, այնչափ է փետեկտեալ է բազմացեալ, որչափ են գաւառք բնակութեան, կամ մանաւանդ որչափ են քաղաքք, կամ գիւղօրէք: Եւ յումանս այնչափ է եղծեալ, մինչ զի ոչ երեւին հայերէն խօսիլ. այլ իբրեւ զխուժ է զգուժ ընդ օդս բարբարիլ. որպէս որք կոչեն զգայլն գուլ. զգտոն գոռ. զհացն խօց. զմեծն՝ ջօջ. զձգելն զձել. զարձակելն՝ աձկրել, Եւ այլն. Soon after this passage Mkhitar returns to his goal of purifying and making uniform the classical language: “Now, upon our seeing this calamitous peril posed to our language, we were greatly pained and we strove to create this dictionary so that this harm would not spread fully. We began in the year 1727 and reached the letter “E” until the word “Erakhayri” [i.e., first fruit, outcome]. And upon finding ourselves enormously busy, we were interrupted until the year 1742. Then, with the facilitation of the Lord, and with the growing need for the dictionary, we once again applied ourselves and with the collaboration of our students brought it to completion in the year 1745. And as to how this came to be, behold we are prepared to tell you now.” Արդ՝ տեսեալ մեր զայս աղետ վտանկի [sic] լեզուին մերոյ, մեծապէս ցաւեաք էւ զի մի իսպառ ճարակեցի վնասս այս, արկաք զանցն մեր ի ճգանս յօրինուածոյ բառգրքիս, զոր սկսեալ յամի տեարն. 1727. հասաք ի տանն՝ Ե: մինչէւ ի բառն՝ Երախայրի: Եւ ի դիպիլն մեր մեծամեծ զբաղանաց: խափանեցաք մինչէւ ցամն. 1742: Եւ ապա ըստ յաջողելոյ տեարն. Եւ ըստ զօրանալոյ պիտոյից բառարանի, վերստին բռնն հարեալ՝ հասուցաք զայն յաւարտ՝ գործակցութեամբ աշակերտաց մերոց. յորում թուական տեարն էր, 1745: Բսկ թէ զիարդ այս յաջողեցաւ, ահաւափիկ հանդերձեալ էմք ի պատմել.

[Armenians] who live inside the fort do not know Armenian, whereas those living outside do.”<sup>30</sup>

A similar conclusion may be reached by reading some of the correspondence in the Propaganda Fide Archives from the second half of the seventeenth century. Thus in March of 1667, an Armenian Catholic monk and archimandrite, Don Basilio Barsegh, who had recently graduated from the “Collegio Armeno” in Rome and a Jesuite College in Lyon<sup>31</sup> and was planning to proselytize among his countrymen in the East, petitioned the Sacred Congregation asking for copies of the most recently printed Turkish Dictionary and a grammar and conversation manual for Turkish identified in his petition as the *Syntagma Linguarum Orientalium*. The reason for this, as Basilio explains is so that “he could perfect his Turkish, which he had already acquired in good measure” in order to be able “to serve many Armenians who did not know any other language than Turkish.”<sup>32</sup> The situation had remained more or less unchanged

<sup>30</sup> Աստի եկաք Սիվրիհիսար եւ Խարաւիսար, ուստի Աֆիոս կ'ըլնէ...: Վաթսուն տուն հայ կայ, քարէ եկեղեցի մի. եւ չարէկ մի դուրսն վանք մի գեղն հայի: Բայց եւ նոքա հայնակ չի գիտեն, այլ Թրքի լեզուով խօսին. սոքա ամենեքեան անկուրու թէմն են. այլ եւ Կոնստայ եւ այլքն քաղաքն բերթացիք (Հայնակ) չի գիտեն. դրսեցիք գիտեն, Տիմօն Լեհատ'ի, *Simēon Dpri Lehats'woy ughegrut'ivn, taregrut'ivn ew hishatakarank'* (The travel diary, chronicle, and colophons of Simeon from Poland), ed. Nersēs Akinian (Vienna: Mkhitarist, 1936), 333. I have relied on the original edition in Armenian of Simeon's text published by the Mkhitarist father Akinian. For an English translation that is not always faithful to the original, see George Bournoutian's translation, *The Travel Accounts of Simeon of Poland*. (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2007). Bournoutian has sixteen families instead of the original sixty.

<sup>31</sup> The little-known *Collegio Armeno* of 1660 has not received any serious and systematic treatment. Therefore, its obscure history may be provisionally reconstructed on the basis of archival information culled from the *Propaganda Fide* records as well as on scattered information in the studies of Karapet Amatuni listed below. The founder of the *Collegio* was the famed Theatine Catholic missionary, orientalist, and scholar of Armenian known as Clemente Galano. Under his guidance and the auspices of the *Propaganda Fide*, a separate *collegio* or school was created for mature Armenian students, too old to be enrolled in the *Collegio Urbano*, adjacent to the San Sylvestrus church on the hill of Quirinale in Rome in 1660. Its two most famous graduates were Don Basilio Barsegh (also Barsech) and Hovannes Hakobian (known as Hovanes Holov to Armenians and Giovanni Agop to others), both of whom finished their studies in Rome in 1662 and were enrolled in a Jesuit College in Lyon where they continued their studies under the equally famed Monsignor Picquet; see Karapet Amatuni, “Hakob Katoghikos Jughayets'i,” *Bazmavep* (1995): 140-43, and idem., *Oskan Vrd. Erewants'i ew ir zhamanakē: lusaur ēj mē zhē daru Hay ekeghets'akan patmut'enēn* (Oskan Erevants'i and his times: a luminous page from Armenian ecclesiastical history of the 16th century) (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1975), 175-78. The *Collegio* in Rome appears to have been a two-year theological college where the schooling was in Classical Armenian and where philosophy, Latin, and theology were taught to eager Armenians, mostly from Istanbul and Aleppo, interested in pursuing their studies beyond levels offered by the Armenian church. The *Collegio* seems to have been discontinued sometime after 1662 either as a result of lack of funding or because Galano was transferred to Leopold (Lvov) in 1663 to oversee the “unification” of the Armenians in Poland with the Catholic Church, and where he also established a *Collegio Armeno* in 1665 shortly before his death. For Galano, see useful entry in Antonio Francesco Vezzosi, *I Scrittori de'cherici regolari detti teatini* (Rome, 1780), 177-183. On the establishment of the *Collegio Armeno* in Lvov, see Gregorio Petrowicz, *L'unione degli Armeni di Polonia con la Santa Sede* (Rome: Pontificio Urbano, 1950), 175-77. A useful, but archivally thin, study to Giovanni Agop is Francesca Scarpa, “Per La Storia Degli Turchi e Armeni a Venezia: Il Sacerdote Armeno Giovanni Agop,” *Annali di Ca' Foscari* 39.3 (2000): 107-30. I discuss Don Basilio's life in chapter three of my unpublished book manuscript, *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers Across the Armenian Diaspora, 1512-1800*.

<sup>32</sup> Petition of Don Basilio Barsegh, Propaganda Fide, *Miscellanea Varie*, vol. 10, fols. 432-33: “22 March, 1667. Basilio monk and archimandrite, an Armenian student in the college of the Propaganda Fide. Supplication of Basilio the Armenian Archimandrite for a Turkish Dictionary and a copy of the *Syntagma Linguarum Orientalium* in order to be able to perfect his Turkish which he has learned in good measure and therefore to later serve many Armenians who do not know any other language than Turkish” (22 Martius 1667. Basilio monaco e vartabiet Armeno studente in collegio di P.F. Basilio Vertabiet Armeno supplica di un Dizionario Turchesco, e del Sintagma Linguarum Orientalium, per poter perfettionarsi nella Lingua Turchesca, che l'a in buona parte appresa, accio possa poi servire a molti Ameni, che non sanno

in the middle of the following century; we learn from correspondence in the archives of the Mkhitarist Congregation that one of the Armenian churches in Constantinople in 1743 (Surb Bedros) had mass regularly performed in both Armenian and Turkish so that parishioners could follow.<sup>33</sup> It thus comes as no surprise to learn that in the preface of his immensely popular collection of religious works entitled *Spiritual Weapon* (*Zēn Hogevor*), the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, Hakob Nalian, explains to his readers that he had decided to write his Christian catechism in “Turkish words because, among our nation, those who are versed and experienced in that language are many.”<sup>34</sup> This seems to have been the principal reason for the adoption of this same Anatolian Turkish vernacular as the language of Armeno-Turkish literature during the eighteenth century. The choice appears to have been utilitarian. It was also the reason why the first grammar of the vernacular Armenian language based on the Armenian dialect(s) spoken in central and western Asia Minor<sup>35</sup> was also in Ottoman Turkish. Mkhitar himself explains this in his Preface written in classical Armenian where he clarifies why he found it necessary to write in Ottoman Turkish:

However, since those for whom it was necessary to use this [grammar] in order to learn the Armenian language knew only the Turkish language (*lezu tachkakan*) I was forced to transform the instructions in this book, that is the *Gate to the grammar*, into the Turkish language; and alongside the nouns that will be declined and the verbs that will be conjugated, I shall place the words in the Turkish language, as will be seen.<sup>36</sup>

Mkhitar and his disciples, in Venice at least, do not seem to have labored much on the vernacular language throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century and even for much of the following century. As Marc Nichanian has aptly put it, “Mekhitar did not intend to reform, to improve, to transform or even to ennoble the ‘vulgar’ language in order to turn it into a literary language, as happened a century later.”<sup>37</sup> The main focus and dedication of the Mkhitarists was to restore *grabar* to the standards of purity established by the fifth century and perhaps to transform it as the principal medium of communication among Armenians capable of rising above the variegated and fragmented quilt work of regional vernaculars. It bears noting here, however, that Mkhitar was writing before the age of German Romanticism and the fusion (or lethal mixing) of the holy trinity of language, identity, and nation usually

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altra lingua che la Turchesca). The *Syntagma Linguarum Orientalium* requested by Basilio was apparently a book printed in Rome in 1643 and reissued in a second edition in 1670. It looks to be a language manual for Georgian as well as Arabic and Turkish. Its author was Father Maria Maggie.

<sup>33</sup> “Letter of Father Mikayel Vardapet Sepastatsi in Istanbul to Abbot Mkhitar in Venice, November 22, 1743,” in Ghevond Tayean, *Mayr divan Mkhitar’areants’ Venetikoy i S. Ghazar 1707-1773* (Grand Archive of the Mkhitarists of Venice on San Lazzaro 1703-1773) (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1930), 116.

<sup>34</sup> Իսկ յերրորդում մասին շնորհեցան քրիստոնեական վարդապետութիւնք տաճկական բարձր. որովհետև յազգիս մերում հմուտք այնցիկ լեզուի յաճախք են, Hakob Nalian, *Girk’ Kochets’eal Zēn Hogevor/Ruhan-i Silāh kitabı* (Istanbul, 1757). This work, containing three sections (one of which is in Classical Armenian while two are in Armeno-Turkish) appears to have been well read since it was reissued in six different editions during the nineteenth century.

<sup>35</sup> In his Preface, Mkhitar describes the dialect of Western Armenian upon which he modeled his grammar as vernacular Armenian “which is spoken by Armenians who live in Asia Minor, that is, in the entire country of the Rums [Ottoman Turks] [*i bolor ho’rants’ tun*] and in Armenia Minor [*p’ok’r hayastun*].” See translation of the preface in Appendix below.

<sup>36</sup> Mkhitar Sebastats’i, *Du’rn k’erakanut’ean askharhabar’ lezuin hayots’* (Gate to the grammar of the vernacular language of the Armenians) (Venice: Antonio Bortoli, 1727), 3. See Appendix below for a full translation.

<sup>37</sup> Nichanian, “Enlightenment and Historical Thought,” 120.

associated with the works of Johann Gottfried Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and especially Johann Gottlieb Fichte. It is therefore unlikely that he or his disciples during the eighteenth century were interested in deploying a standardized and “purified” *grabar* as a vehicle for “national” self-expression. This would remain the task of the future, mostly secular, generation of elite who would work in the wake of the romantic generation and its view of language as the pivotal boundary maintenance mechanism of the nation. As with the publication of his pioneering Armeno-Turkish grammar of 1727, Mkhitar’s task in reforming the classical language appears to have been mainly motivated by his evangelizing zeal of bringing the message of Christianity and Catholicism to his Catholic-Armenian compatriots. The publication of several catechisms and multiple other works on Christian piety in the classical language are indications that language reform and the “lexicographic revolution”<sup>38</sup> evident in the two-volume *Dictionary* were in the service of religion rather than nation. At last, in 1749, only months after Mkhitar’s death, the first volume of the monumental *Dictionary of the Armenian Language*, the fruit of Mkhitar’s lifelong paean to Classical Armenian, finally saw the light of day on the same press operated by Antonio Bortoli as the *Gate to the grammar* in Armeno-Turkish. Exactly two decades later volume two of the *Dictionary* was issued by two of Mkhitar’s faithful disciples. Around the same time in 1779, the Mkhitarist monk Mikayel Chamchian published a second and more updated edition of the grammar of the classical language taking Mkhitar’s first 1732 grammar of *grabar* as his benchmark but further removing “Latinizing” accretions from it.<sup>39</sup> For most of the first half of the nineteenth century, the Mkhitarist monks continued championing *grabar* as the sole literary language for Armenians; they churned out one grammar for *grabar* after another while, as we have seen above, they also continued to flood the market of readers in the Ottoman Empire with books, religious and secular alike, in Armeno-Turkish.

As early as the middle of the nineteenth century, however, it was evident to most observers that the climate was shifting against the Mkhitarists. As a result of a conjuncture of multiple factors beginning with the influence of the German Romantic view that “language was the soul of a nation and [...] increasingly the crucial criterion of nationality”<sup>40</sup> to the rising tide of cultural and political nationalism, a new western-educated elite of the Armenian intelligentsia among both Western as well as Eastern Armenians, began to launch what Acharean called the “literary struggle.” From both Istanbul/Constantinople and Tiflis, the twin literary and cultural centers of Western and Eastern Armenians alike, loud voices were

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<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to note that the “lexicographic revolution” spearheaded by “vernacularizing lexicographers, grammarians, philologists, and litterateurs” that Benedict Anderson sees as “central to the shaping of nineteenth century European nationalism” began during the conclusion of the eighteenth century and spread throughout the nineteenth century in Europe and was often the brainchild of states and their cultural institutions. In the case of Mkhitar, the impetus to “cleanse” classical Armenian took place a good half century before similar movements in Europe and was the work of a diasporic intellectual/religious elite as opposed to a state. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed., (London: Verso, 1992), 71-72.

<sup>39</sup> *K'erakanut' iwn Haykazean Lezui yorineal ęst nakhni ughghakhosut'ean, i Hayr Mik 'ayęl vardapetę Ch'amch'eants' Kostantinopolsetswoy yashakertę amenapativ t[ęar]n Mkhit'aray metsi abbayi* [Grammar of the Armenian language according to the former correct speech, by the archimandrite Father Mikayel Chamchians', from Constantinople and disciple of the most honorable lord, the Great Abbot Mkhitar] (Venice, 1779).

<sup>40</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 95.

clamoring for the elevation of the vernacular(s) to the position of literary language. The struggle would last until the end of the nineteenth century and even spill over into the early twentieth century. When the dust had settled, the parties fighting for the legitimacy of the vernaculars had clearly won, and two distinct new literary languages, Standard Eastern and Western Armenian, had emerged as the two official national languages of the modern Armenian nation. The first of these (Eastern Armenian) became the official language of the soon to be Soviet Republic of Armenia and subsequently of the present Republic of Armenia with a large number of speakers in the Armenian diaspora of Iran, while the second (Western Armenian) serving as the official literary vernacular of Western Armenians who for the most part resided in the Ottoman territories and considered Istanbul as their literary and cultural capital. After the Armenian genocide of 1915, this literary language spread with the survivors to the four corners of the world and nestled in the new literary centers of the diaspora including Beirut, Paris, and later Los Angeles.

In the mid-nineteenth century, however, the victory of *ashkharhabar* over *grabar* was far from clear. At any rate, though the number of published works in the new vernaculars was significantly on the rise and in the hundreds compared to the mere ten titles throughout the whole of the eighteenth century, no agreed-upon grammar or conventions for literary style had emerged.<sup>41</sup> The literary climate was characterized by ambiguity, a symptom of being caught in the twilight between the slow death of one entity (*grabar*) and the uncertain birth of a new one (*ashkharhabar*). In this moment of incertitude marking the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Armeno-Turkish literature was able to thrive; it filled a gap left open by the great transition from the ancien régime of *grabar* to the time of literary “emancipation” under *ashkharhabar*. Perhaps nothing better illustrates this transitional moment than the following passage from the Armeno-Turkish two-volume history of *Napoleon Bonaparte* written by Vartan Pasha. In the Preface of his history, Vartan Pasha directly broaches the question as to why he chose to write his magnum opus in Ottoman Turkish rather than in Armenian. His response was almost identical to that given by Mkhitar in his Armeno-Turkish Grammar more than a century earlier:

Before we conclude, a reservation comes to mind: there will also be people who ask “in any event, wouldn’t our mother tongue, the Armenian language be preferable for writing such a history.” Our humble answer to them [is this]: Turkish or Armenian, whatever the language is, in order to be able to benefit from reading such a history one should have studied thoroughly either of these languages. As a matter of fact, the number of those members of our *millet* who are familiar with *grabar* is quite limited and *askharhabar*’s general rules have not been established as yet, so writing a book in this language necessitates using words from *grabar* in every line, and in order to understand a book written in *ashkharhabar* one needs to take on the burden of learning *grabar*.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> The number of ten titles is from Acharean, *Hayots’ Lezvi Patmut’yun*, 452.

<sup>42</sup> Vartan Pasha, *Tarihi Napoleon Bonaparte imperatoru ahali Fransası* (History of Napoleon emperor of the people of France), 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1855-56): “Hitamı kelamımızda bir başka ihtiraz da hatıra gelir; her ne surette ise de, böyle bir tevarih te’lifine lisanı maderzadımız olan ibare-i Ermeniyan mürecceh deyil miyidi deyenler de bulunacaktır. Bunlara acizane cevabımız, Ermeni ve Türki, her hangı lisanıde olur ise olsun, böyle bir tarihin mütalaası ile kesb-i istifade itmek, bu iki lisanıdan birinin layığı ile tahsiline muhtac bir keyfiet dir. Hatda Milletimizde Ermeni krapar lisanına aşna olanların adedi gayet mahdud olub aşharhapar lisanı dahi henüz bir kanun ve kayideyi umumiye tahtında olmadıđından bu lisanıde kitab te’lif itmek her satırda krapardan lugetca müracaat itmeye muhtac olduđundan böyle aşharhapar lisanında yazılan te’lifatu da ađnamak yine krapar lisanı tahsili tekellüfüne mühtac olaca[ktır].” 1:3-4. I thank Murat Cankara for supplying me with this passage, which I have modified slightly. It is interesting to note that

All this, of course, still leaves the question of why the script in Armeno-Turkish was Armenian as opposed to Arabic, the script with which Ottoman Turkish as a literary and administrative language was written. The question may be posed in a simple fashion: If one is going to go to the trouble of writing in Anatolian Turkish, why go to great lengths of having it recorded in the Armenian script? Why not, for instance, stick to the already established procedures of writing Anatolian Turkish in the script in which it had been written since the thirteenth century, namely Arabic?<sup>43</sup> Was the deliberate choice of rendering Anatolian Turkish into Armenian script motivated by pragmatic and utilitarian factors or was there something specific or symbolic to the Armenian script itself as far as both readers and writers of Armeno-Turkish were concerned?

No one appears to have written a coherent symbolic account for the use of the Armenian script in Armeno-Turkish, but if one were to be proffered it would probably look like this. The symbolic account would focus on the intrinsic attributes of the Armenian script and see it not only as a utilitarian medium of communication but also as a sacral boundary marker of collective identity. Accordingly, the argument would concentrate on the sacrosanct status of a number of scripts that appear in “heterographic” or macaronic languages such as Armeno-Turkish, Judeo-Arabic, Aljamiado (Medieval and Early Modern Spanish or Portuguese written in Arabic script), Ladino (Spanish written in Hebrew script), Yiddish (German in Hebrew script) and Karamanlı Turkish (Ottoman Turkish written in Greek script). A symbolic account would argue that all these scripts were imbued with sacral meaning and symbolism by their users in part because of the given script’s association with the conversion to Christianity, Judaism, or Islam of the ethno-religious communities involved. In short, the symbolic explanation for why the script was chosen from a specific community of readers but written in the “language of the other” would highlight the script’s role as a “boundary maintenance mechanism.” John Armstrong, it would seem, makes such a case in his classic essay on “Mobilized versus Proletarian Diasporas”:

However little this diaspora actually uses the linguistic vehicle of its religion, the sacral language constitutes a vital element of the myth. Moreover, while adopting alien languages for the vast majority of communications, the archetypal diaspora usually maintains two important restrictions. First, the written word, with its exceptionally strong sacral implications, remains in the group’s original alphabet, which is often very different from those of surrounding ethnic groups. For example, while employing Arabic, Persian, Romance, or Germanic dialects, Jews have continued to write in the Hebrew alphabet; one Armenian script is used for two very different dialects. Moreover, borrowed linguistic elements, which offend the central religious elements of the myth are avoided. Thus medieval Spanish Jews were more receptive to Arabic than to Latin, regarded as a specifically ecclesiastical vehicle of a hostile church; and they

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this two-volume *History of Napoleon Bonaparte* was published in both Armeno-Turkish and in Arabic script Ottoman; see, Johann Strauss, “The Millets and the Ottoman Language,” 211.

<sup>43</sup> For helpful studies of Ottoman Turkish as a language, see Fahir İz, “Ottoman and Turkish,” in *Essays on Islamic Civilization: Presented to Niyazi Berkes*, ed. Niyazi Berkes, Donald Presgrave Little (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 118-39; Claudia Römer, “Script and Language,” in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 322-23; and Mecdud Mensuroğlu, “The Development of Turkish in Anatolia,” *Oriens* 7 (1954): 250-64.

purged the dialects they did accept (Yiddish and Ladino) of words with specific Christian connotations.<sup>44</sup>

Armstrong's views here appear at first as providing a sensible and even compelling explanation for the tenacity of the script in a number of these heterographic languages particularly when one considers the views of two prominent Ottomanists that before the age of nation-states Ottoman ethno-religious communities known as *millet*s defined their identity not through the language they *spoke* but principally through their scripts. In their influential Introduction to the two-volume *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, Bernard Lewis and Benjamin Braude make the following cryptic comment that seems at first to be helpful:

Whatever sacral quality there was to be ascribed to language was found in its script, not its sound. Thus the Greek Orthodox, the Jews, the Armenians, and many Syrian Christians wrote a large variety of different languages in their respective liturgical scripts. Spoken language was a means of communicating among peoples, not a means of distinguishing among them. In the nineteenth century language started to acquire the second role, but in the Ottoman Empire it never assumed the same importance it was to gain in Europe. Religion was more important than language in determining identity.<sup>45</sup>

This symbolic explanation or account for the use of the Armenian script in writing Armeno-Turkish seems intuitive and has a number of advantages that work in its favor. For one, the Armenian script like that of Greek and Hebrew has sacrosanct qualities; it was, after all, invented in the early years of the fifth century C.E. by the Armenian monk Mashtots' in great measure to facilitate the spread of Armenia's Christianization and, therefore, described in the classical hagiographies of the script's inventor as sacred.<sup>46</sup> Second, the symbolic account that emphasizes the role of the script as opposed to the language as crucial to defining Ottoman *millet*s also appears intuitive and, in theory, would be an interesting corrective to the Eurocentric narratives of the formation of national identity that rely on views of German Romantic writers on language as opposed to script as fundamental and symbolic to collective identity. In addition, the symbolic account would certainly go a long way in explaining why it is paradoxical and disconcerting for us in the age of the nation-state even to think that the first grammar of a *national* language (modern Western Armenian) could have been written in the language of the "other" or the "civilizational other" in this case. With the intrinsic symbolism of group identity removed from the spoken language and invested on the script instead, it would seem that a national grammar being written in a different language would no longer be a contradiction at the time because, before the influence of German Romanticism, language was not seen as the "soul" of the nation. The script was what mattered.

However, there are problems with this theory, the most important of which seems to be that it lacks any empirical basis in history. No surviving documentation known to me ever indicates that a conscious decision was made by scribes in the early stages

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<sup>44</sup> John Armstrong, "Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas," *The American Political Science Review* 70.2 (1976): 393-408 (396).

<sup>45</sup> Bernard Lewis and Benjamin Braude, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: Volume 1. The Central Lands* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 28.

<sup>46</sup> For a reliable account, see James Russell, "On the Origin and Invention of the Armenian Script," *Le Muséon* 107.3-4 (1994): 317-33, and idem., "Alphabets" in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. Glen Bowersock, Peter Brown, Oleg Grabar (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 288-90.



of the history of Armeno-Turkish literature to write Ottoman Turkish in Armenian script rather than say in Arabic because of the divine or sacred attributes given to the script of Mashtots'. In fact, though some scribes such as Koriwn (disciple and hagiographer of Mashtots') consciously made the God-given nature of the Armenian script the centerpiece of his account of its invention/“revelation,” there is no evidence that ordinary people held the script with the same awe as some members of the educated clerisy. The adulation of the script by ordinary people as opposed to a select group of highly educated scribes seems like an “invented tradition,” more reflective of some twentieth-century diasporic communities than of the peasantry in Anatolia or Asia Minor. Of course, this is not to say that some early modern Armenians could not have regarded the script as a boundary marker of identity; for the majority of the reading public of Armeno-Turkish, who were *unlikely* to be learned scribes, another explanation must therefore be sought for why the chosen script consisted of the thirty-six letters of the Mesropian Alphabet.

A non-symbolic account for the choice of the Armenian script would begin by arguing that the choice of script cannot and should not be reducible to sacrality or any other single factor. Rather it would emphasize the more utilitarian and pragmatic considerations that could have influenced the decision to write the Ottoman Turkish language in the Armenian alphabet. Not least among the factors, a utilitarian account would emphasize access to educational institutions for the bulk of the reading public of Armeno-Turkish literary culture. As Ottoman historians have long noted, education in the Ottoman Empire was largely circumscribed by the boundaries of the millet system. However porous such boundaries may have been, education appears to have been one of those areas given to the millet leadership as part of each millet's internal and administrative autonomy. The upshot of this was that until the proclamation of the Armenian National Constitution in 1860-1863 and arguably even later, the Armenian Patriarch who governed over his *millet* in a system of indirect rule on behalf of the sultan, “enjoyed complete jurisdiction over the Armenian millet, that is over its religious, charitable, and educational institutions.” In fact, the patriarch “had total control over religious and secular education in his millet as well as over publications.”<sup>47</sup> Bruce Masters explains how this ethno-religious autonomy accorded to each *millet* translated into what was an essentially segregated educational regime: “The children of the communities were educated separately from Muslims and primarily in the language of their community. They were also taught the separate history of their community and its culture. It is this separate education that many believe inspired these groups to see themselves as separate peoples.”<sup>48</sup>

To the extent that ordinary people had the rudiments of literacy in nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire where literacy rates as elsewhere were minuscule, they would have had access to it mostly if not exclusively through their elementary schooling which was for the most part largely segmented along religious or millet cleavages. Armenians went to Armenian schools (religious or secular) and did not attend *Qur'ānic* primary schools and later *madrāsas* with their fellow Muslims. This means that they would have been educated in reading the Armenian script and would have probably learned it through reading the Psalms or one of the commentaries on

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<sup>47</sup> Hagop Barsoumian, “The Eastern Question and the Tanzimat Era,” in *The Armenian People from Ancient to the Modern Era: From Foreign Domination to Statehood*, vol. 2, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 185.

<sup>48</sup> Bruce Masters, “Millet,” in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 384.

the Gospels as children. Arabic script would have been unknown to them since it was either taught in an Islamic elementary school (or later *madrassa*) for reading the *Qur'ān*, “which at the time served as the first initiation into reading for a large part of the population,”<sup>49</sup> or, in Aron Rodrigue’s words, “as a mandarin language of a bureaucratic class.”<sup>50</sup> In any case, few Ottoman subjects (regardless of religion) would have understood the highly complicated nature of Ottoman Turkish as a literary and administrative language. As one scholar has put it, “Ottoman was a hybrid language, composed of Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, sharing the vocabulary and grammatical rules of these three languages” and at least until the simplifying language reforms of the *Tanzimat* era, “could only be handled by a highly trained elite and was a ‘Chinese puzzle’ for the rest of the people.”<sup>51</sup> One way of gauging these questions is to ask who or what constituted the reading publics or markets of printed Armeno-Turkish texts.

The reading market for Armeno-Turkish books still remains a puzzle. It seems undeniable that during the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, the bulk of the readership consisted of Catholic Armenians residing predominantly in urban centers such as Istanbul (home to the largest concentration of urban Armenians in the world), Izmir, and to a lesser extent Ankara and other cities and towns surrounding it. Ankara-based Catholic Armenians were, after all, the ones who commissioned and patronized Abbot Mkhitar to compile and publish his grammar for Western Armenian (see below). During the nineteenth century, protestant missionaries many of whom were American and operating from their printing center of Malta, expanded the market with religious publications to win over Armenians to their mission. However, in addition to the urban markets, one cannot help but wonder how many Armeno-Turkish printed texts ended up in the countryside where no doubt literacy levels were remarkably lower than in urban centers. A black box of cultural history, the countryside in the East where many books probably disappeared without a trace is an important frontier that remains to be explored by Armenian cultural and social historians. In a classic essay, written almost forty years ago, Natalie Zemon Davis first asked: “Could printing have mattered so much to *the people* in a period when literacy was still so low? How can one detect its influence? And what do I mean anyway by ‘popular’ and ‘the people.’”<sup>52</sup>

Even though, unlike early modern Europe, our archival evidence is at best threadbare, there are good reasons to believe that as in the sixteenth-century France of Zemon Davis, the countryside of eastern Anatolia had villages with at least one literate person among a majority of unlettered peasants who could read a book to the others. That this, in fact, did happen is difficult to prove but not impossible. The evidence is often oblique and needs to be reconstructed through absence as much as presence. Occasionally, one is fortunate to come across clues such as Mikayel Chamchian writing in the preface to his Armeno-Turkish *Gülzari T'ēvarikh* that probably reached more readers during the nineteenth century than its Classical Armenian version “that he has written Turkish words as they were pronounced by common people so that not only those who would read but also those who would

<sup>49</sup> Strauss, “Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire,” 40.

<sup>50</sup> Nancy Reynolds and Aron Rodrigue, “Interview with Aron Rodrigue: Difference and Tolerance in the Ottoman Empire,” *Stanford Humanities Review* 5.1 (1996): 1-8 (5)

<sup>51</sup> İz, “Ottoman and Turkish,” 118-19.

<sup>52</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Printing and the People,” in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 190.

‘listen’ could understand better.”<sup>53</sup> Although Chamchian’s statement is from the nineteenth century, one can be almost certain that similar practices of reading aloud or the “oralizing” of texts for a public of listeners existed in the early modern Ottoman countryside as well.<sup>54</sup> One has only to recall the famous scene of communal reading in the village of Jinis (Cinis) in Eastern Anatolia where the British-educated Armenian adventurer Joseph Emin, facing illiterate and incredulous Armenian villagers, notes in his memoirs that, “taking out of his pocket the Geographical History of Moses Khorinensis, he sent for a priest that could read a little.”<sup>55</sup> In this specific instance, the historical work Emin was carrying with him in pocket-size edition was printed in Classical Armenian and not Armeno-Turkish, but his act of asking the one literate person in the remote village to read for the benefit of the others would probably have been easier for the villagers in Jinis to follow had Movsēs Khorenats’i’s work been rendered into Armeno-Turkish as opposed to *grabar*.<sup>56</sup> More empirical evidence of this sort for Armeno-Turkish texts is likely to be out there, but it needs to be carefully combed and harvested. For now, however, some of these larger, more theoretical questions about the nature of Armeno-Turkish and the question of script and language may be better understood by taking a micro-scale look at the specific conditions leading up to the first printed Armeno-Turkish book in 1727, Abbot Mkhitar’s *Armeno-Turkish Gate to the grammar of the vernacular language of the Armenians*.

#### ABBOT MKHITAR’S ARMENO-TURKISH GRAMMAR

According to Sahak Djemdjemian, plans to prepare an Armeno-Turkish grammar were already in the works as early as 1720, when Catholic Armenian residents of Galatia (in central Anatolia or Asia Minor) donated money for that purpose to a Mkhitarist monk, Philipos the Archimandrite, serving there. The money was to be used for renovations of the church in San Lazzaro and was given to the Congregation with the hope that Abbot Mkhitar would deliver on his earlier promise to members of the community to prepare an Armeno-Turkish grammar for use by their children. In a missive written to Mkhitar from Galatia on 5 December 1720, the Archimandrite, Father Philipos, writes the following:

<sup>53</sup> Cited in Murat Cankara, “Rethinking Ottoman Cross-Cultural Encounters: Turks and the Armenian Alphabet,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 51.1 (2015):13, n.23. *Gülzari T’ēvarikh* was the Armeno-Turkish redaction of the abridged one-volume edition of Chamchian’s masterpiece, the first national history of Armenia, *Hayots’ Patmut’iwn* (Venice, 1784-1786), written in *grabar* and condensed also in *grabar* in one volume as *Khrakhjan Hayots’ Patmut’ean* (published in Venice in 1811). The Armeno-Turkish edition was published in three separate editions in 1812, 1850, and 1862. See Stepanyan, *Hayatar’ Turk’eren grk’eri*, 46.

<sup>54</sup> For the oral consumption of printed texts, see Roger Chartier, “The Practical Impact of Writing,” in *A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance*, ed. Roger Chartier (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1989), 3:125. For “oralization” of texts in the early modern period, see idem, “Reading Matter and ‘Popular’ Reading: From the Renaissance to the Seventeenth Century,” in Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia Conchrane (Amherst-Boston: University of Massachusetts, 2003), 276-77. See also Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (New York: Viking, 1996), 41-55.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph Emin, *The Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin an Armenian Written in English by Himself* (London, 1792), 159-60; see also, Sebouh D. Aslanian, “A Reader Responds to Joseph Emin’s *Life and Adventures*: Notes towards a History of Reading in Late Eighteenth Century Madras,” *Handes Amsorja* 126 (2012):363-418.

<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Khorenats’i had been rendered into Armeno-Turkish in the last quarter of the seventeenth century by Yeremia Chelebi Kōmürjyan, but this work was never published and remained confined to manuscript form. The manuscript is partly in Venice, San Lazzaro, Ms. 411. See Gayane Ayyazyan, “Eremia Ch’elebi K’yomurjyani tseragrakan zharangut’yunē,” *Banber Matenadaran* 20 (2014):356.

A certain commissioner from Galatia, a noble brother whose name is Grigor Chelebi, asks for...the Grammar in Armenian and Turkish promised by you, and says that he is prepared to pay whatever amount of money it takes to whomever and whenever for the preparation and printing of 300 [copies of such work]. And they plead, as do I, to carry this out, if it is possible, since they *very much desire to speak in the Armenian language*.<sup>57</sup>

In response, Mkhitar expressed his gratitude for the financial support provided by the Galatians and added the following regarding the much-desired grammar:

I heard that you long to study the Armenian language and desire to have a book with which you may be able to study. On account of which I shall strive to find the time to prepare for you a small booklet and send it to you after having it printed, so you shall study [with it]. Because, I too very much desire that the Armenian language shall spread among you and am therefore prepared with all my students to serve all your needs for the glory of Christ, so long as your love of God shall have the unity of love and the peace of Christ.<sup>58</sup>

Here, Mkhitar alludes to an important motivation in wanting to have the Armenian language “spread among you,” that is, his compatriots. The principal reason for his zeal and his labors in devising a grammar for the vernacular, he indicates to his readers, was not for the “nation” in the modern sense of the term but for the “glory of Christ.” In other words, in writing a grammar of vernacular Armenian as in “purifying,” standardizing, and codifying the classical language, Mkhitar is not acting as a “linguistic nationalist” but as a Catholic missionary interested in saving souls. We shall return to this point later.

According to Djemdjemian as well as the collection of Mkhitar’s early correspondence, Mkhitar was subsequently in touch with another Armenian benefactor from Galatia, a certain Tirats’u Sahak who had paid 100 *Kurush* for 300 advanced copies of the Grammar.<sup>59</sup> In an undated letter probably written in 1721 or 1722 and addressed to Tirats’u Sahak in Ankiwra (Ankara in Central Asia Minor), Mkhitar thanks his addressee for his letter of December 21, 1720, makes a furtive reference to Father Philipos’s successful missionary activities in the region of Ankara, and writes the following regarding the much desired Armeno-Turkish grammar:

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Sahak Djemdjemian, *Mkhitar Abbahōr hratarakch’akan arak’elut’iwnē* (The publishing mission of Abbot Mkhitar) (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1984), 81: գաղատացի առաջակայ ոմն եղբայր ազնուագարս, որ կոչի Գրիգոր չէլէպի, խնդրէ ... զՔերականութիւնս, գոր խոստացեալ է ձեր, հայկէվար եւ տաճկեաւր. որքան եւ փող գնայ պատրաստ ենք, վճարել ում եւ հրամայիցէ տալ եւ յորժամ, այսպէս ասեն շինել եւ ստամբան տալ 300ի չափ: Կարի աղաչեն, նաեւ եւ աղաչեմ, եթէ հնար է, զի խիստ բաղձան հայերէն խօսիլ.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. This letter is reproduced in full in *Namakani Tsarayin Astutsoy Tearn Mkhitaray Abbayi eranashnorh himnadri Mkhitarayan Miabanut’ean* (The correspondence of the Master Mkhitar Abbot, the servant of the God, the blessed founder of the Mkhitarist Congregation) (Venice: San Lazzaro, 1961), 1:235 (letter 127): Լուայ թէ կարօտիք ուսման հայկէվար լեզուի, եւ բաղձաք ունել զգիրք ինչ, որով կարիցէք ուսանիլ. վասն որոյ ջանամ գտանել զժամանակ, զի շինեցից վասն ձեր զգրքուկ մի եւ տպել տուեալ յղեցից առ ձեզ, զի ուսանիցիք: Քանզի նաեւ եւ յույժ բաղձամ զի հայ լեզուն տարածեսցի ի միջի ձերում, եւ զի պատրաստ են, հանդերձ բնաւիւք աշակերտօք իմովք ծառայել ձեզ ի համայնս պիտոյութիւնս ձեր ի փառս Քրիստոսի, միայն թէ ձերն աստուածասիրութիւն ունիցի զմիութիւն սիրոյ եւ խաղաղութիւն Քրիստոսի.

<sup>59</sup> It is unclear whether this Sahak is a different person from the Grigor Chelebi mentioned above, who had also reserved 300 advanced copies.

And regarding your request [for help] in learning Armenian, I am also trying to carry that out. However, since you are also requesting that it be printed, it is important that it be a complete book, at least the size of a Psalter, and that all the necessities of the language be found in it. But the difficulty with this is that I must find the time to prepare [it]. Once I write and compile it, printing it will be easy because I can oblige Mister Serkis to have it printed with his money on the condition that you purchase three hundred copies at one kurush each [*mek mek tught?*]. Finally, no matter how perfect the book may be, you shall spend no more than one kurush on each copy when you buy three hundred. And behold, this is the way and the means of accomplishing this request of yours. If only I shall have the time to compose [it]. I will wish and strive very hard to have at least one month of time to set aside for this work so that I shall carry out your request. And since you had written me that I should have it printed even if it costs up to a hundred kurush, I shall give my word to Mister Sargis [sic] that if he has it printed, you will purchase three hundred copies at the above-mentioned price and I am hopeful that he will be pleased with this. Therefore, if the Lord shall grant it that I prepare the book, I shall write to you upon the commencement of the printing so you shall get the money ready and send it. And in the book, I am going to insert three to four thousand words in Armenian and along with them in Turkish. I will also include numerous conversation [exercises] in the vernacular in both Armenian and Turkish accompanied by a grammar for the vernacular. I hope that with this book people in other cities apart from yours will also find great benefit.<sup>60</sup>

The absence of adequate time to complete this undertaking that he had promised is a common refrain to which Mkhitar returns on numerous occasions. When the work was finally completed and submitted for printing in 1727, Mkhitar returned to this matter in the short “Preface” to the work. “And not having time,” he writes immediately after mentioning the many pleas he had received from patrons in Asia Minor, “I postponed doing this for many years, until finally being compelled by the supplications [of the many], I undertook to reconstruct, according to my ability, all the rules of the declension of nouns and the conjugation of verbs of our vernacular language.”<sup>61</sup>

Mkhitar was extremely preoccupied with many responsibilities throughout the early 1720s. He was, after all, only recently settled on San Lazzaro and needed to do

<sup>60</sup> Mkhitar Sebastats'i, “Letter to Tirats'u Sahak, 1721/1722?,” in *Namakanı Tsarayin*, 1:290 (letter 153): Իսկ վասն հայերէն ուսանելոյ գոր ինչ խնդրեալ էիք զայն եւս ջանամ կատարել. բայց մինչ պատմայ լինիլ եւս խնդրեք, պիտոյ է զի կատարեալ գիրք ինչ լիցի, գոնեայ մի Սաղմոսի չափ, զի ամենայն պիտանաւորութիւնք լեզուին ի նմա գտանիցին: Եւ դժուարութիւն սորին էայս զի գտանիցեմ զժամանակ եւ շինիցեմ. եւ յետ գրելոյս եւ շինելոյս՝ պատմայ լինիլն դիրին է: Քանզի կարեմ հաճեցուցանել զՊ. Սերգիսն որ պատմայ զարնել տայ իւր փողովն, այսու թելութեամբ զի դուք երեք հարիւր հատ գնիցեք. մէկ մէկ թուղթ: Վարջապէս որքան եւ կատարեալ լիցի գիրքն, ի ձեռն անելի քան դուռուշն խարճ չի գնար, յորժամ երեք հարիւր հատն գնիցեք: Ահա ձեր այս խնդրոյս ճանապարհն եւ կարելութիւնն այս է: Միայն թէ եւ ունիցիմ զժամանակ եւ չարադրիցեմ. եւ զի յոյժ ջանամ եւ կամիմ, զի գենայ մի ամայ չափ ժամանակ բացորոշիցեմ վասն այսր իրի եւ կատարիցեմ զխնդիր ձեր: Եւ յուսամ կատարել: Եւ որպէս դուք որ ինձ գրեալ էք թէ մինչեւ հարիւր դուռուշ եւս գնայցէ՝ պատմայ անել տուր, եւ եւս ի վերայ այսմ բանի ի կողմանէ ձերմէ խօսք տամ Պ. Սարգսին, զի եթէ տպել տայցէ, դուք երեք հարիւր հատ գնեք, վերոյիշեցեալ գնովն, եւ յուսամ զի եւ նա հաճիցի առ այս: Ուստի եթէ Տէր տայցէ եւ շինիցեմ զգիրքն, ընդ սկսանիլն պատմային գրեմ առ ձեզ, զի զփողն պատրաստիցեք եւ յղիցեք: Եւ ի մէջ գրքին երեք չորս հազար բառս դնելոյ եմ հայեվար եւ հանդէպ նորա տաճկեվար: Նաեւ զբազումս աշխարհաբար գրոյցս հայեվար եւ տաճկեվար. եւ ընդ սոցա աշխարհաբար քերականութիւնն. եւ յուսամ թէ այսու գրքով բաց ի ձեռն նաեւ այլոց քաղաքաց մարդկանց բազում օգտութիւն լինիցի.

<sup>61</sup> Mkhitar Sabastats'i, *Duirn*, 1. See the Appendix to this essay for the original text.

much work on the island to renovate the few buildings in place such as the church with its steeple, as well as to construct a dwelling place for his students and a seminary where he could properly train them. In addition, Mkhitar was also busy preparing several works of his own for publication such as a *Christian Catechism* (1726) written in the vernacular language. The promised grammar in Armeno-Turkish would thus have to wait until the Abbot could find enough time to compose it.

Finally, writing to his small group of benefactors including Tirats‘u Sahak and others on May 20, 1727, Mkhitar returns to the question of the Armeno-Turkish grammar and informs his benefactors from Asia Minor that the long sought-after work had finally been printed and that he was sending three hundred copies of it to them as well as a hundred and fifty copies of a Christian catechism written in the vernacular Armenian. “Behold,” he writes,

the long-desired booklet of yours has been completed, and I have given it for binding and am dispatching it to you with this letter. And the number of books is three hundred Grammars and a hundred and fifty Catechisms. Of the Catechism, one hundred and seventeen have been bound with the grammar and thirty-three separately. Your eminencies had given us three hundred kurush in advance for the printing of the Grammar and the dispatching of three hundred copies to you. Behold I have dispatched three hundred copies to you as well as a hundred and fifty catechism with which you may do as you wish.<sup>62</sup>

Soon after writing this note, Mkhitar turns to more practical advice on how his readers may benefit from the grammar and how learning grammar of the vernacular language and reading the book of Catechism written in the same vernacular are intimately related. Given the exceptionally interesting nature of his advice and the light it sheds on some of the larger points we raised in the previous section, this passage is worthy of being quoted at length:

And I have composed this Christian Catechism in the vernacular so that it may become easy for everyone to understand and especially to your greater benefit so that when you commence to study the language [*ashkharhabar*], you shall further develop your conversation [skills] in the vernacular by reading the Catechism. May the Lord let it happen that you shall take good care and strive to teach all your youth the Armenian language, in order for our labor not to be in vain; for I labored on this excessively and printing it was also accomplished with great difficulties since the work of the compositor was multiplied on account of the language of composition being Turkish. And you must strive first to study the declension of nouns and the conjugation of verbs, and while you study well this and other parts of what is written you will be able to retain and study, according to your abilities, how to decline and conjugate all the nouns and verbs by consulting the dictionary, and you must especially strive to teach your sons and daughters [all of this]. For they being young are able to retain and learn with little studying. Endeavor to get them to speak to each other habitually. But you must know this much; it is not necessary for you to be interested in and

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<sup>62</sup> Mkhitar Sebastats‘i, “Letter to Tirats‘u Grigor, Sahak, and Minas in Ankara, May 20, 1727” in *Namakani Tsarayin*, 1:530-31 (letter 287): զի ահա երկարաժամանակեայ բաղձացեալ գրգուկն ձեր եզերեցաւ եւ, ետու կազմել, եւ յղեմ առ ձեզ ընդ այսմիկ գրոյ: Եւ թիւ գրեանցն է երեքհարիւր Քերականութիւն եւ հարիւր եօթնեւտասն հասն Քերականութեան հետ միատեղ կազմեցեալ է, եւ երեսունեւերեք հասն զատարար կազմեցեալ: Եւ ձեր հրամանքն հարիւր դռուշ տուեալք էիք մեզ յառաջագոյն վասն տպագրելոյ զՔերականութիւն, եւ երեք հարիւր հաս յղելոյ առ ձեզ. ահա յղեցի երեք հարիւր Քերականութիւն, նաեւ հարիւր յիսուն Քրիստոնէական, որպէս հաճիք՝ այնպէս արարեք.

to search for what may be the indicative or the genitive or active and other such things. Because studying in this fashion is difficult and requires a special teacher and a lengthy period of time. It suffices for you to know, that when we say “the bread’s” this is in the genitive, and when we say “I conduct” the latter is in the indicative case, is present tense, and is transitive. But as to how they say the transitive or indicative is not necessary for you to know; for to learn such things, other lessons and teachings are necessary which we did not place in this book on account of the fact that these things are not required in learning a language and also because it is only necessary for you to learn a language and not to be perfectly informed about grammar. On account of this, pay attention and study as it has been proposed to you so that you may be able to learn how to speak Armenian.<sup>63</sup>

Here again, the binding together of the Catechism and Grammar is a telltale sign of Mkhitar’s motivation in the realm of language reforms. In Mkhitar’s mind, as in the minds of his disciples in San Lazzaro, since the bulk of his Catholic Armenian flock in Galatia and beyond in other parts of the “lands of Rum” (to use Mkhitar’s own term for the geographic area where many Turcophone Armenians resided) did not know any Armenian but spoke only Ottoman Turkish, they needed a grammar for *ashkharhabar* written in the Turkish language they grew up with. In other words, Armeno-Turkish would provide the key to opening the “gates” of the vernacular language; it would also open the gates to their souls. This new medium of communication was seen by Mkhitar himself as well as by the Propaganda Fide missionaries before him and their Protestant counterparts during the nineteenth century as the key means for the conversion of the Ottoman Empire’s many Armenians.

When the final manuscript of what ended up as a small 149-page book was taken to the business establishment of the Congregation’s official printer, Antonio Bortoli, on the mainland of Venice sometime probably late in the year 1726, it must have

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. Եւ զայս Քրիստոնէական վարդապետութիւնս վասն այնորիկ աշխարհաբար շարադրեալ եմ, զի ամենայն մարդկանց դիւրին լիցի հասկանալն, եւ մանաւանդ մեծագոյն օգուտ վասն ձեր, որպէս երբ սկսանիցիք ուսանիլ զլեզու, գնոյն քրիստոնէականն կարդալով՝ առաւել զարգանայցէք խօսիլ զաշխարհաբար լեզուն: Արասցէ Տէր, զի բարութք հոգ տանիցէք. եւ ամենից պատանեաց ձերոց ուսուցանել տալ ջանայցէք զհայերէն լեզուն, որպէս զի աշխատանքն մեր ոչ լինիցի ի գուր, վասն զի կարի յոյժ աշխատեցայ. եւ տպագրելն եւս մեծաւ դժուարութեամբ եղեւ, զի շարադրութիւնն տաճկերէն գոյով՝ բազմացաւ աշխատանքն շարողին զգիրս տպագրութեան: Եւ զի ջանալ պարտիք նախ սովորիլ զհոլովն անուանց եւ զձորդութիւն բայից, եւ մինչ զայստսիկ եւ զայլս մասունս ըստ որում գրեցեալ է՝ լաւ ուսանիք, եւ ի միտ առնուք, յայնժամ ի բառգիրքն հայերով՝ զամենայն անուն եւ բայ, կարեք հոլովել եւ լծորդել, եւ ըստ կարողութեան ձերոց ի միտ առնուլ եւ ուսանիլ. եւ մանաւանդ որդւոց եւ դստերաց ձերոց ջանացէք ուսուցանել, զի նոքա մատողաշք գոյով՝ դիւրաւ կարեն պահել զբառսն ի մտի եւ ուսանիլ եւ յորժամ փոքր ինչ ուսանին, ջանացէք զի խօսիլ սկսանիցին ընդ միւեանց, զի ունակացի խօսիլն: Բայց զայս զհտել պարտիք, ի ձեզ ոչ է պիտոյ հետաքրքիր լինիլ՝ եւ որոնել թէ զի՛նչ իցէ Սահմանական կամ թաարիֆին, զի՛նչ իցէ Սեռական կամ ապիլ, զի՛նչ իցէ Ներգործական կամ ֆարլի, եւ այլք նմանք. վասն զի զայսպիսիս ուսանիլն դժուարին է, եւ յատուկ ուսուցիչ պիտոյ է, եւ երկար ժամանակ. այլ բաւական է ձեզ գիտելն, թէ երբ ասենք հացի, տոյնս սեռական է. եւ երբ ասենք՝ կու վառեմ, տոյնս սահմանական է. եւ ներկայ է, եւ ներգործական: Բայց թէ ընդ՛ր ներգործականք ապին, կամ սահմանականք՝ ոչ է հարկ ձեզ գիտել. զի վասն սովորելոյ զայսպիսիս՝ այլք իւրատք եւ վարդապետութիւն պիտոյք են, գորս ոչ եղաք ի սին գրգռջ. վասն զի առ ի ուսանիլ զլեզու այնպիսիքն ոչ են պիտոյ: Եւ ձեզ միայն լեզու ուսանիլ պիտոյ է, եւ ոչ թէ կատարեալ քերականութեան վերահասու լինիլ: Վասն որոյ զգոյժ լետուք, եւ որք առաջադրին ձեզ, զայնս ուսարուք, որպէս զի կարիցէք զհայերէն խօսիլն ուսանիլ.

signaled a landmark event for the fledgling congregation still known under the name of their patron saint, Saint Anthony. In the last entry cataloging the most important events of the year 1726, the island's official chronicler, Father Matthew of Tokat [Matt'ēos Evtokiats'i], noted the completion of this long-awaited work in his *Chronicle*:

In this year of 1727, our Abbot submitted for printing a Grammar for the vernacular language of ours, which he had prepared in the language of the Hagarites [Turkish] where he placed face-to-face words in our language and their translations in the language of the Hagarites. He did this on account of the Galatians—who, having abandoned speaking in the Armenian language from early on had forgotten it and only spoke the Turkish language—so the latter would train their children with this book and once again would rebuild and establish among them [the ability] to speak in the Armenian language. Along with this book, he prepared a *Christian Catechism* in the popular language for use by the lay people, and that too he submitted for printing so that the education of the children of our nation would spread in the east to Ankara [Ankiriya], for the glory of Christ [emphasis added].<sup>64</sup>

Early in 1727, Mkhitar stayed true to his word and dispatched 300 copies of the grammar along with the Catechisms to his patrons in Galatia. Again, Matthew of Tokat chronicles how the books were placed in a crate and entrusted to a youth from Ankara who had been sent to be educated in San Lazzaro but whom Mkhitar turned back on account of his not being fit for the priesthood: “Three hundred grammars written in the vernacular language of ours were dispatched with them for the use of the Armenians found in Ankara. The reasons for the printing of the latter we have narrated above.”<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> This passage is reproduced by Djemdjemian, *Mkhitar Abbahōr*, 84. The original is in a rare manuscript preserved in San Lazzaro and to date unpublished. It was written by Mathew of Tokat beginning in 1741 and entitled, *Ժամանակագրութիւն սրբազան կարգի միաձանցն Հայոց ի կարգէ սրբոյն աբբայ անտոնի ՚ի զերայարգոյ միսիթարայ առաջնոյ աբբայէ նորոզելոյ յորում պատմի ամենայն ինչ սրբազան կարգիս այտրիկ սկսանելով յամէ առաջնոյ կառուցման տրոս եւ առ յապս, արարեալ ի պատուական հորէ Մատթէոսէ աստուածաբանութեան վարդապետէ* (Chronicle of the Sacred Congregation of Armenians belonging to the Sacred Order of Saint Anthony reformed by his Eminence and first Abbot, Abbot Mkhitar, wherein is told all things pertaining to this Holy Order beginning from the first year of the creation of the Order and onward, done by Esteemed Father, Matteo of Evtokia, archimandrite of theology), 345: Յամի յայսմիկ (1727) Աբբահայր ՄԵր, զաշխարհաբար Քերականութիւն ինչ հայկական բարբառոյս մերոյ, զոր արար, ի հազարացոց բարբառն հեղեալ եւ զգումար բառից բարբառոյս մերոյ, եւ բառիցն հազարացոց բարբառն թարգմանաբար հանդէպ միմեանց կարգեալ, ի տպագրութիւն ետ, յաղագս զաղատացոց, որք ի կանուխ ժամանակաց զխօսիլն ի հայ բարբառ ի բաց թողեալ մոռացեալ էին եւ միայն ի հազարացոց բարբառն խօսէին, որպէսզի վարժութեամբ մանկանց նոցա ի գիրս յայս, վերստին նորոզեցի եւ հաստատեցի առ նոսա ի հայ բարբառ խօսիլն: Ընդ գրոյս այսմիկ արար զ«Քրիստոնեական վարդապետութիւն» ինչ ի ռամկական բարբառ յաղագս աշխարհականաց, եւ զայն եւս ետ տպագրել, որպէսզի յարելու ի յԱնկիւրիա եւ յայլ տեղիս առաքեալ սփռեցի ի յուսումն մանկանց ազգիս մերոյ, ի փառս Քրիստոսի:

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 347. The entire passage in the original reads: Չհետ տրա զկնի եռամսեայ աւուրց եւ զաղատացի յովաննէս պատանին յետս դարձուցաւ երթալ յերկիր իւր: Քանզի փորձիս յայտնի եղել տկարութիւն նորա առ ուսումն յաղագս մելամաղձ հիւրոյն առատութեան, որ զներքին զգայարանն խռովելով, մտաթափ առնել զնա սպառնայր: Եւ նմին ժամանակի՝ յորժամ առաքումն առաքումն նորա հանդերձիւր, դէպ եղել զի ակնեցի հայր զազարն յարելու երթալոց էր. նմա յանցն եւս պատանեակն տանիլ մինչեւ ի կոստանդնուպոլիս եւ անդէն զնան ի ձեռս ծանօթիցն առնողէ: Ընդ սոցա առաքեցան երեք հարիւր քերականութիւնք աշխարհորէն բարբառոյ փի հազարացոց բառբարն թարգմանութեամբ կարգեալ ի պէտս



ARMENO-TURKISH LITERATURE: A “WEAPON OF SELF-PRESERVATION” OR A REFLECTION OF A CONNECTED HISTORY OF ARMENIANS AND TURKS?

In his classic essay on the “reading publics”<sup>66</sup> of the Ottoman Empire, Johann Strauss observes that Muslim Turks were by no means the only cultural producers or consumers active in the literary field in Istanbul and that large numbers of authors and readers in Turkish also existed among the Empire’s Greek, Armenian, and Jewish communities. Strauss comments on how national(ist) categories projected backwards into the nineteenth century and earlier and applied to a cosmopolitan empire predicated on the production of cultural difference have produced skewed and distorted readings of the past. Referring to Ottoman Greeks, Armenians, Turks, and Jews, he astutely writes:

Modern historians have tended to create a separate literary identity for each of them according to the Western European concept of “national” literature. Literature is restricted to the production of one “nation” in one single language.[...] In particular, literatures which do not fit the nationalist paradigm, such as that of the Turkish speaking Greek-Orthodox (Karamanli) or the Turcophone Armenians, fall between two stools. Generally, they are not regarded either by Turkish or by Greek and Armenian scholars as part of their literary heritage, and have been studied only by specialists.<sup>67</sup>

If the close to two thousand printed works in Armeno-Turkish do not belong to either Turkish national (literary) history or to its Armenian counterpart, to what history then do they belong? In other words, if as Strauss notes, the works in this canon fall in the cultural space between “two stools,” what is the nature of *that* space and what can an attempt to delineate its contours tell us about the producers and consumers of Armeno-Turkish? We can broach these questions by first looking at how some modern-day historians have conceptualized the place of Armeno-Turkish in the Armenian tradition.

For reasons that are understandable yet unfortunate, Armenian historiography on the Ottoman Empire in general and on Armeno-Turkish cross-cultural relations in that empire in particular has developed under the long and debilitating shadow of the Armenian genocide of 1915 and especially in response to the hundred years of silence and denial of this great crime by the Republic of Turkey and, until recently, probably a very large numbers of Turks. The upshot has been the growth, among certain Armenian historians, of what Salo Baron, historian of the Jewish diaspora, in a different context has called the “lachrymose” conception of history along with its attendant insular narrative.<sup>68</sup> On the whole, the trend has been to emphasize the

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յանկիրիա եղեալ հայոց: գորոյ զտագութիւն, եւ զպատճառսն փի վեր անդր յայտ արարաք: Ընդ սոցա առաքեցան երեքհարիւր քերականութիւնք աշխարօրէն բարբառոյս մերոյ ՚ի պէտս յանկիրիա եղեալ հայոց: գորոյ զտպագրութեան, եւ զպատճառսն ՚ի վեր անդր յայտ արարաք.

<sup>66</sup> Johann, Strauss, “Who read what in the Ottoman Empire,” 40.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> I have elaborated on this issue in my forthcoming essay, “From Autonomous to Interactive Histories: World History’s Challenge to Armenian Studies,” in *Words and Worlds in Motion: Armenians of the Mediterranean and Beyond*, eds. Kathryn Babayan and Michael Pifer, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). The reference here is to the work of the great historian of the Jewish diaspora Salo Baron, who criticized what he called the “lachrymose conception of Jewish history” for its disposition to “view...the destinies of the Jews in the Diaspora as a sheer succession of miseries and persecutions.” Writing as early as the 1930s, Baron noted that “Jewish historiography has not been able to free itself [from its grasp] to this day,” quoted in David Engel, “Crisis and Lachrymosity: On Salo Baron, Neobaronianism, and the Study of Modern European Jewish History,” *Jewish History* 20.3/4 (2006):247. A similar critique of the

miseries, hardships, and persecutions of diasporic life for the Armenians, especially those living in the various domains of the Ottoman Empire long before specific military, diplomatic, ideological, and other conjunctures in the last decades of the nineteenth century forever transformed Armenian life. This lachrymosity has resulted in sketches of Ottoman Armenian life that downplay creative cross-cultural interactions between Armenians and members of other *millets* of the Empire and has produced a simplistic image of Ottoman Armenians who are, as it were, left undisturbed in their national essence. The latter are either in the position of perennially “resisting” the corrupting Turkic and Muslim influences and thus remaining purely Armenian, or alternately, they are seen to be behind some of the greatest achievements of the Empire. In either case, what is often downplayed in Armenian scholarship is not only how Armenians creatively interacted with Turks and other members in what was, after all, a large multi-ethnic, multilingual and religiously diverse yet hierarchically segmented empire, but also how they were *embedded* in Ottoman society and culture and as such shared many of its norms and values and even actively participated in creating them. As discussed earlier, Vartan Pasha’s writing of the first Ottoman novel, *Akabi Hikayesi* (1851), in Armeno-Turkish is a good case in point.

Hasmik Stepanyan’s useful but extremely problematic history of Armeno-Turkish literature is a textbook case of how the lachrymose conception of Armeno-Turkish history distorts and caricaturizes a complex history such as that created by Armeno-Turkish literature.<sup>69</sup> Widely regarded as the leading Armenian authority on Armeno-Turkish, Stepanyan has done much excellent work preparing bibliographic catalogues of published periodicals and other works in Turkish written in Armenian characters.<sup>70</sup> However, her methodological orientation and uncritical adoption of a lachrymose conception of Armeno-Turkish history has led to unfortunate conclusions. Thus in the Preface to this work, the author has this to say about her topic:

Armeno-Turkish literature is an inseparable part of Armenian culture.[...] For more than 500 years, Armenians lived under Turkish rule. This was not the usual sort of submission; rather, it was the continuous and terrible oppression of a people with a profound cultural past by a military-feudal authority inspired by the raging frenzy of religious fanaticism. The Turkish rulers not only took from them the beneficial material goods created by the Armenian people, the results of its physical labor, but also in every possible way, they strove to destroy or appropriate for themselves the fruits of their intellectual creations, to assimilate and Islamize the subject peoples. Armeno-Turkish literature was born as a means of self-preservation and a weapon in the struggle against estrangement.<sup>71</sup>

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“lachrymose” nature of much of Armenian (diasporan) history has yet to be made. I thank David Myers for bringing Baron’s work to my attention. For an application of Baron’s views to post-1967 Jewish revisionist historiography emphasizing Jewish life in the lands of Islam as a series of miseries and persecutions, see Mark R. Cohen, “The *Neo-Lachrymose* Conception of Jewish-Arab History,” *Tikkun* 6.3 (1991):55-60, and Idem., *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages (revised edition)*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). See also Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 14.

<sup>69</sup> Stepanyan, *Hayataṛ T’urk’eren grakanut’yunē*.

<sup>70</sup> Eadem, *Hayataṛ T’urk’eren grk’eri*.

<sup>71</sup> Հայաստան թուրքերին գրականությունը հայ մշակույթի անբակտելի մասն է կազմում:» «Ավելի քան 500 տարի հայերն ապրել են թուրքական տիրապետության տակ: Սա սովորական հպատակություն չի եղել, այլ կրոնական մոլերանդության մոլուցքով տարված ռազմա-ֆեոդալական իշխանության տեսական ու անհավոր ճնշում մշակութային խոր անցյալ

Leaving aside the cultural chauvinism of this passage contrasting predatory nomads with a people with a “profound cultural past,” this excerpt is noteworthy for laying out Stepanyan’s main argument in the book. Armeno-Turkish literature was, for the author, a “weapon” and a “means of self preservation” by a weak and defenseless population subjected to “continuous and terrible oppression.” The views outlined here correspond to what Rodrigue describes as the “nationalist historiography of the ‘Ottoman yoke.’”<sup>72</sup> Such a view *ahistorically* and anachronistically confuses Empire with Nation-state, the premodern with the modern. Instead of conceptualizing empire as a “coercive” and “large political unit” that is predicated on the hierarchical maintenance and even perpetuation of difference,<sup>73</sup> she mistakes it for a nation-state whose logic is to homogenize as opposed to perpetuate difference. Here is Stepanyan once again:

The western Armenian segment of the Armenian people, continuing to survive for centuries under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, ceaselessly found itself facing a forced policy of estrangement/assimilation, which even if not crowned with success was not without consequence. The greatest calamity facing all the Christian peoples of the Ottoman Empire, including the Armenians, was the *devshirme*. This was the mandatory levy of male children, who were basically set aside for service in the Janissary corps.<sup>74</sup>

Repeatedly, Stepanyan emphasizes the taxing and punitive nature of the Ottoman “yoke” and the role of Armeno-Turkish as a boundary marker and “weapon” for the preservation of national identity against Ottoman rule. She invokes threats of physical annihilation and homogenization asserting a “one state, one people, one religion,” rationale for Ottoman rule. The author makes it abundantly clear that her lachrymose account of the history of Armeno-Turkish is essentially projecting genocide trauma born of nationalism and the modern logic of the nation-state backward to the pre-national age of empire as a politics of difference:

From the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the Western Armenians of the Ottoman Empire were subjected to unspeakable persecutions and violent alienation.... The threat of physical annihilation hung like a sword of Democles on the heads of the Christian peoples subject to Turkish and Persian rule. Striving to realize its ‘one state, one people, one

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ունեցող մի ժողովրդի վրա: Թուրք տիրապետողները ոչ միայն վերցրել են հայ ժողովրդի ստեղծած նյութական բարիքները, նրա ֆիզիքական աշխատանքի արդյունքը, այլ ամեն կերպ աշխատել են ոչնչացնել կամ յուրացնել նրա մտավոր ստեղծագործության արքասիքները, ձուլել ու մահմետականացնել հպատակ ժողովուրդներին: հայատառ թուրքերեն գրականությունը ծնունդ է առել որպես ինքնապահպանման ու ուժացման դեմ պայքարի միջոց, *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>72</sup> Reynolds, “Interview with Aron Rodrigue,” 1.

<sup>73</sup> For a useful discussion of the meaning and nature of Empire, see Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, “Imperial Trajectories,” *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 8-11. See also the lucid discussion in Ronald Grigor Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else’: A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), chapter 1.

<sup>74</sup> Հայ ժողովրդի արեւմտահայ հատվածը դարեր շարունակ գոյատևելով Օսմանյան կայսրության տիրապետության տակ, անընդհատ գտնվել է բռնի ուժացման քաղաքականության դեմ հանդիման, որը էթն լիակատար հաջողությամբ չի պակվել, բայց եւ անհետեւանք չի անցել:... Օսմանյան կայսրության քրիստոնյա բոլոր ժողովրդների, այդ թվում նաեւ հայերի համար մեծաքույն արհավիրք էր «դեւչիրմե»-ն: Այն քրիստոնյա արու երեխաների պարտադիր մանկահավաք էր, որը հիմնականում նախատեսուած էր ենիչերական զորայնքների համար, Stepanyan, *Hayatai T’urk’eren grakanut’yunē*, 7.

religion' ideal, it [the Ottoman Empire] was even prepared to annihilate the Empire's Christians.<sup>75</sup>

Perhaps most egregious and probably most telling is the author's explanation of why very large number of Armenians spoke Anatolian Turkish and not any variants of their "mother tongue." According to Stepanyan, there are "numerous proofs" and unmistakable "evidence that in many provinces Armenians and Greeks spoke only in the Turkish language under threat of having their tongues cut off."<sup>76</sup> Among the numerous "proofs" she cites is a *hushamatean* publication from Aleppo dating to 1929, a mere fifteen years after the genocide. For instance, one such source similar to the work Stepanyan alludes is the *Sis Matean*, a collection of writings memorializing the towns, cities and regions in Sis, whence the refugee-survivors hailed. One of the writers in this volume accounts for the widespread usage of Turkish as a primary language among Armenian genocide survivors as follows: "The persecution against the Armenian language was so ferocious that the tongues of those who spoke the forbidden language of the infidels [*giavur*] were cut off."<sup>77</sup> Similarly, in an essay originally published in 1925, Babken Gülesserian (Coadjutor Catholicos of the house of Cilicia, 1931-1936) describes the reasons for the loss of Armenian as a mother tongue among the Armenians of the Aintap region in the following lachrymose terms:

The exactions and persecutions by the Turks were so fierce that Armenophone Aintap became Turcophone, like other Turcophone cities in Asia Minor. The last and final blow to Armenophone population was dealt by the Janissaries who [had the habit of] cutting off the tongues of those who spoke Armenian.<sup>78</sup>

According to Vahe Tachjian, a leading specialist of the *hushamatean* genre, the tongue-cutting hysteria was a reflection of post-genocide language politics in small communities of refugee-survivors that had begun to spring up in Aleppo, Beirut, and other cities in the former Ottoman landscape of the Levant. Many of these survivors were exclusively Turcophone and had come under the scrutiny of what might be called the diasporan "language police," who wanted to patrol the ethnic boundaries of the fledgling communities by insisting that survivors speak Armenian, thereby

<sup>75</sup> 15-18րդ դարերում Օսմանյան կայսրությունում արևմտահայությունը սոցիալական ու ֆիզիկական անասելի հետապնդումների եւ բռնի ուժացման է ենթարկվել:... Թուրքիայի, Պարսկաստանի հպատակության տակ գտնվող քրիստոնյա ժողովուրդների գլխին դամոկլյան սրի նման միշտ էլ կախուած է եղել ֆիզիկական ոջնջացման վտանքը:... Ջանալով իրականացնել իր մեկ պետություն, մեկ ժողովուրդ, մեկ կրոն» գաղափարը նա պատրաստվել էր բնաջնջել նաեւ կայսրության քրիստոնյաներին, *ibid.*, 21.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>77</sup> *Sis-Matean: Patmakan, Banasirakan, Teghagrakan, Azgagrakan ew haragits' paraganer* (Sis-Book: Historical, Philological, Topographical, Ethnographic, and Adjacent Issues), ed. Misak Keleshian, (Beirut: Hay Chemaran, 1949), 448. I thank Hagop Gulludjian for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>78</sup> Babken Gülesserian, "Noter Hay Aintabi Patmut'ean hamar," in Krikor Sarafian, ed. *Patmut'awn Aintabi Hayots'* (History of the Armenians of Aintab), vol. 1 (Los Angeles: 1953), 5. The original reads: Թիւրքերուն հարստահարութիւնն (զուում) ու հալածանքն այնքան խիստ եղաւ, որ հայախօս Անթէպ եղաւ թիւրքախօս, Փոքր-Ասիոյ ուրիշ հայաբնակ գլխաւոր քաղաքներուն պէս: Եւ վերջին կտրուկ ու սաստիկ հարուածը Անթէպի Հայախօսութեան Ենիշէրիներն են որ տուին, ծայրատէրով հայերէն խօսողներուն լեզուները. This passage is also quoted in Vahé Tachjian, "L'usage du turc et le renouveau identitaire chez les Arméniens du Liban et de Syrie dans les années 1920-1930," forthcoming in *Les Arméniens, Cent ans de présence au Liban*, ed. Christine Babikian Assaf, Carla Eddé, Levon Nordiguan, and Vahé Tachjian (Beirut: Presses de l'Université Saint-Joseph, 2017).

regenerating a new Armenian nation from those who were “infected by the vice of turcophonism.”<sup>79</sup> According to Tachjian, it was then probably, that these tales of tongue cutting began to proliferate and populate the political and cultural imaginary of diasporic Armenians.<sup>80</sup> Stepanyan and others draw uncritically from such problematic sources of collective memory to substantiate their historical claims.

Lest we think Stepanyan’s views here are isolated, marginal, and therefore not reflective of any larger historiographic reality, let us consider what the authors of a widely used academic textbook write about this issue. Without a shred of evidence, Hachikyan et al. resuscitate the theory that Ottoman authorities “imposed restrictions” on the use of the “mother tongue” by Armenians to explain the emergence of Armeno-Turkish:

During centuries of Ottoman domination, the authorities imposed restrictions on Armenians, forcing them to use Turkish instead of their mother tongue. At the same time, persecutions inflicted upon the Armenian populations of certain provinces by Ottoman and local authorities led the people to gradually stop speaking Armenian.<sup>81</sup>

Against the all-too-powerful urge to project backwards into Ottoman history assumptions and realities associated with the genocide and especially post-genocide history of Armenians and Turks, we must stand steadfast as historians and acknowledge areas and times in the Ottoman past where both Armenians and Turks, as well as others, partook of cross-cultural interactions and encounters with relative freedom from violence and destruction. Armeno-Turkish literary culture and the

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<sup>79</sup> Commenting on the Turcophone Armenian population of Sis and how this population lost touch with its mother tongue, the author states that “they too would have [eventually] become infected by the vice of speaking in the Turkish language” (Թրքախօսութեան ախտէն վարակուած պիտի ըլլային), *Sis-Matean*, 449. For similar views ontologically reducing the speaking of Turkish by Armenians to the status of contagion or vice, see S. Mehnouni, “Hay Lezui derē ev trkakhosut‘ean akhdē” (The role of the Armenian language and the vice of Turcophonism), *P’iwnik* 24, (1924), and the editorial of one of Aleppo’s first Armenian newspapers, titled “Turk Lezun hay Berannerun Mēj” (The Turkish language in Armenian mouths), *Taragir* (Exile), June 28 and 29, 1919. I thank Vahe Tachjian for sharing these sources with me.

<sup>80</sup> See Tachjian, “L’usage du turc,” and idem, “Déconstruire le passé ottoman au sein des arméniens du proche-orient,” in *Patrimoines culturels en Méditerranée orientale: Recherche scientifique et enjeux identitaires*, ed. Jean-Claude David and Sylvie Müller Celka (Lyon, 2009) accessed online at <http://www.mom.fr/3eme-atelier.html>, 7-10. The only case mentioning tongue cutting as a possible explanation of turcophonism among Armenians before the 1920s is a passing reference in Acharean’s 1911 book on Armenian dialects where the great linguist cautiously writes, “Although the Ottoman government in the past resorted to violent methods to eradicate Armenian as a spoken language and to turn Turkish as the ruling language, (as is reported that in Anatolia, the pashas have cut the tongues of Armenians who spoke Armenian) but in the present it [the Ottoman state] has neither the intention nor the means to do so” (Օսմանեան կառավարութիւնը թէև ժամանակին բռնի միջոցներ գործադրեր է հայերէնը ջնջելու եւ թուրքերէնը տիրող լեզու դարձնելու համար [ինչպէս օրինակ կըրտի թէ Անատոլի մէջ հայերէն խօսող հայոց լեզուն կտրել տուած են փաշաները], բայց ներկայապէս այդ տեսակ միջոցներու դիմելու ոչ մտադրութիւն եւ ոչ կարողութիւն ունի). See Hrachea Acharean, *Hay Barbaragitut’iwnē* (Armenian dialectology) (Moscow, 1911), 31. I thank Daniel Ohanian for bringing this passage to my attention. To be sure, there may have been, in fact, isolated incidents of tongue-cutting during the nineteenth century in the Ottoman wild east, though these would not explain the wide-scale presence of Turcophonism among Armenians as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, nor would these incidents be in any way a reflection of Ottoman imperial policy with respect to Armenians or other “minorities.”

<sup>81</sup> Agop J. Hacikyan, Gabriel Basmajian, Edward Franchuk, Nourhan Ouzounian, eds., *The Heritage of Armenian Literature: From the Eighteenth century to the Modern Times* (Detroit: Wayne State, 2005), 58. The section on “Armeno-Turkish Literature” appears to be the work of Basmajian.

complex factors that led to its emergence provides us an opportunity to probe such cross-cultural interactions without falling prey to the two myths regarding the multicultural dimension of the *millet* system as either a “yoke” of Muslim or Turkish domination or an “interfaith, interracial utopia in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews worked together in equality and harmony in a golden age of free intellectual endeavor.”<sup>82</sup>

It may be instructive to look at how historians have recently examined an earlier heterographic language, namely Judeo-Arabic. Used extensively by Maghrebi Jews in Egypt, Aden, and the Indian Ocean world during the medieval period, Judeo-Arabic was vernacular Arabic written almost exclusively in Hebrew characters. It has been passed down to us in the form of tens of thousands of documents largely of a commercial nature that have survived in the “geniza” chamber of a synagogue in Fustat Cairo. Although written by Jews in Hebrew, the geniza documents like their counterparts in early modern and nineteenth-century Armeno-Turkish documents should not be seen as exclusively reflective of and useful to Jewish history. Rather, as Mark Cohen and following him Roxani Margariti have argued, the large corpus of Judeo-Arabic documentation is a “mirror” for the social and cultural history of the Islamicate world of the medieval period in which they were embedded.

Embeddedness meant much more than toleration; it also engendered shared language, shared culture, and shared history. The Geniza documents’ Judeo-Arabic, a medieval Arabic vernacular spoken by the Jews of the Arab world and written primarily in Hebrew script, perfectly mirrors the common cultural ground. In addition to the common language, Jewish and Muslim communities shared the practice of geniza, the preservation and ritual disposal of written material....In terms of economic life, moreover, Jews and Muslims had similar and in several instances interchangeable business and even legal practices.<sup>83</sup>

In other words, as Margariti notes, Jewish merchants’ identities in the medieval period were “Islamicate,” to use Marshal Hodgson’s influential term. For these reasons, as Margariti correctly points out, “the geniza is not just for Judaicists.” It is equally useful for the study of Muslim societies, including that of Aden, even if they may not “perfectly” mirror the common cultural ground between Jews and Muslims not to mention others in the India trade of the medieval period.

In conclusion, the rich legacy of Armeno-Turkish preserved in two thousand printed titles from Abbot Mkhitar’s 1727 Armeno-Turkish Grammar for the vernacular language of Western Armenian to the publication of 1967 in Buenos Aires, not only serves as an important source for the history of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire but may equally serve as a source for Ottoman social and cultural history.

#### APPENDIX:

#### TEXT AND TRANSLATION OF THE “PREFACE” OF THE *GATE TO THE GRAMMAR OF THE VERNACULAR LANGUAGE OF THE ARMENIANS* (1727)

«ԲԱՆ ԱՌ ԸՆԹԵՆՅՅՕՂՍ»՝ Բազմիցս մեծաւ աղաչանօք խնդրեցաւ յոմանց բարեպաշտից, զի շարադրիցեմ զհոլովից, եւ զձորդութե[ան]ց. բայից եւ

<sup>82</sup> Lewis and Braude, “Introduction,” *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 2.

<sup>83</sup> Roxani Eleni Margariti, *Aden and the Indian Ocean World: 150 Years in the Life of a Medieval Arabian Port* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2007), 13.

գորպիսութե[ան]ց այլոց մասանց քերականութե[ան] այնպիսեալ աշխարհաբառի ոճիւ, ըստ որում խօսին այնոքիկ հայք, որք բնակեալք են ի փոքրն ասիա, այսինքն ի բոլոր հռոմաց տուն, եւ փոքր հայաստուն [sic]: Եւ եւ ոչ ունելով զԺամանակ արարի զվաղարկութիւն զամս բազումս. եւ վերջապէս ստիպեցեալ ի թախանձանաց՝ ձեռն արկի ըստ դոյնոյ կարի իմոյ վերագտանել զբանաւորեցեալս կանոնաւորմունս զհոլովմանց անուանց, եւ զլծորդութեանց բայից աշխարհաբառի լեզուին մերոյ: Եւ բովանդակեցի զայնս յերկուս գրգուկս [sic], որոց մինն է այս, որ անուանի դրոն քերականութե[ան]. եւ տպագրի. եւ միւսն է զվարդապետութե[ն]է մասանց բանի, եւ զշարայարութե[ն]է նոցին, որ այժմոյս ոչ տպագրի: Արդ՝ սոյնս որ տպագրի պիտոյանոյ նոցին, որք ոչ գիտեն զհայկական լեզու, եւ կամին ուսանիլ, իսկ միւսն հանդերձ սոքօք պիտոյանայ այնոցիկ, որք արդէն գիտեն զհայկական լեզու, եւ կամին վարժիլ այնու առ այս, զի կարիցեն աշխարհաբառի լեզուաւ առնել զշարադրութի[ւն]ս, եւ կամ նախապէս ուսանելով զայն, տրամադրիլ առ ուսումն քերականութե[ան] գրաբառի լեզուի մերոյ: Բայց մինչ նոքին, որոց պիտոյ էր կիրառումն սորին՝ առ ի ուսանիլ զհայկական լեզու, գիտէին միայն զլեզու տաճկական, ստիպեցայ զի զխրատն այսորիկ առաջնոյ գրգկան, այսինքն դրան քերականութեան, դարձուցանեմ ի լեզու տաճկական եւ հանդէպ անուանց հոլովեցելոց, եւ բայից լծորդեցելոց դնիցեմ զբառս տաճկականս՝ ո[ր]պ[է]ս եւ տեսանի: Եւ առ առաւել դիւրութի[ւն] ուսանողացն յարմարեցի ընդ սմին եւ եղի նաեւ զփոքրիկ բառարանիկ, յորում նախ՝ հայերէնն եղաւ, եւ հանդէպ այնմ տաճկերէն եւ համանշանեցան ի նմին ստորեւ անուանց վերջաւորութի[ւն]ք եղանակաց սեռականաց, եւ յօգնականաց ուղղականաց. իսկ ստորեւ բայից՝ վերջաւորութի[ւն]ք առաջնոյ դիմի սահմանականի կատարեցելոյ, եւ վերջաւորութի[ւն]ք երկրորդի դիմի հրամայականի ներկայի, ի ձեռն որոց դիւրապէս ճանաչին այլք մնացեալք հոլովք անուանց, եւ վերացմունք բայից: Բայց գիտելի է, զի բազմաց բայից սահմանականի ներկայի երրորդ դէմն, եւ հրամայականի երկրորդ դէմն եզական ի աշխարհաբառի լեզուի մերում այնպիսեալ ձայնիւ եզերի, որպէս յայտէ յուշադրողաց, որ ոչ զհնչումն էի ունի, եւ ոչ զհնչումն եթի. այլ զմիջական հնչումն ինչ ի մէջ հնչմանց երկուց ասացելոց տառիցս: Արդ մեք, մինչ այլապէս ոչ էր կարելի, առ նշանակումն այնորիկ հնչման եղաք զտառն՝ է, եւ այնու եզերեցաք, ո[ր]պ[է]ս եւ իսկ տեսանի: Վ[ա]յ[ն] որոյ յայնպիսիս տեղիս՝ են ոչ պարտի արտաբերիլ երկարձայնի, որպէս արտաբերի եւ գրաբառի լեզուոջ, այլ զցածուցեալ կերպիւ, եւ իբր առ հնչումն եթի հակեցեալ, ըստ որում սովոր է արտաբերիլ ի խօսիլն աշխարհօրէն: Իսկ վասն ոմանց սակաւուց արապականաց բառից զօրս աստէն յսկզբան գրգկանս եղաք, գիտելի է. զի մինչ դարձուցաք զխրատն այսորիկ գրգկան ի տաճկական լեզու, պիտոյացան քերականականք բառք, որոց բնաւքն ոչ գոյին ի տաճկականի լեզուոջ, եւ մեք եթէ հայերէն դնիցեաք զայնպիսիս բառս՝ ոչ կարէին բարեպէս յարմարիլ այնք ընդ տաճկականի լեզուի, վասն որոյ արտահանեցաք ի արապականաց բառարանաց ոմանց՝ զայնս

բառկունս քերականականս, եւ այնու եզերեցաք զգործն մեր, եւ աստէն գրեցաք զնոյսն՝ դնելով հանդէպ ինքեանց զհայերէնն որպէս զի որ անձանօթք են այնց բառից՝ իսկոյն հայելով աստէն՝ ծանօթանայցեն: Արդ՝ վերջաւորեալ զբանս՝ խնդրեմ սիրով ընդունիլ զդուզնաքեայ աշխատանս մեր, զոր մեծաւ սիրով նուիրեմ սիրելեացդ. ողջ լերուք ի Տէր:

Some pious individuals have pleaded with me on numerous occasions to compose the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, and the state of other parts of the grammar of the vernacular language which is spoken by Armenians who live in Asia Minor, that is, in the entire country of the Rums [Ottoman Turks] [ի բոլոր հռոմաց տուն] and in Armenia Minor [փոքր հայաստուն]. And not having time, I postponed doing this for many years, until finally being compelled by the supplications [of the many], I undertook to reconstruct, according to my ability, all the rules of the declension of nouns and the conjugation of verbs of our vernacular language. And I gathered all this in two books, of which this volume, entitled *Gate to the grammar* is one and is printed. The other is the *Instruction on the parts of speech* and their syntax, which is not printed yet. Now, this one which is printed is useful to those who do not know the Armenian language and wish to learn it; and the other will be useful to those who already know the Armenian language and want to become well versed in it through this book in order to be able to make compositions in the vernacular language or by first learning it, to be disposed toward the learning of the grammar of the classical language of ours [*grabari lezui meroy*]. However, since those for whom it was necessary to use this [grammar] in order to learn the Armenian language knew only the Turkish language [*zlezu tachkakan*] I was forced to transform the instructions in this book, that is the *Gate to the grammar*, into the Turkish language; and alongside the nouns that will be declined and the verbs that will be conjugated, I shall place the words in the Turkish language, as will be seen. And for additional ease for the learners, I also adapted and appended to it [i.e., this grammar] a small dictionary where the Armenian word is first given followed by the meaning in Turkish. Corresponding to and underneath each noun is affixed the suffixes in the singular genitive and plural accusative cases. And underneath each verb will be placed endings of the first person indicative past tense and the ending for the second person present imperative tense through which the rest of the endings will be easily recognized as will the setting up of verbs [վերացմունք բայից]. However, I have not indicated the pronunciation of the third person of the present indicative tense and the singular second person of the imperative since these are [already] evident to those who pay attention. Rather I placed the intermediate [Mijakan??] pronunciation of the pronunciation of the two elements [? meaning unclear here]. Now, whenever it was not possible for us to designate the pronunciation, we placed the letter “Ē” and concluded the matter in such a way. Such is the case in instances where it was not necessary to pronounce with a long sound, as it is pronounced in the classical language, but rather with a low voice. And for those few words in Arabic that we placed in the first part of the book it is known that as we were transforming the instructions of this book into the Turkish language grammatical terms became necessary not all of which were present in the Turkish language; and if we were to have put those words in Armenian, they would not have become suitable with the Turkish language. Therefore, we took out those grammatical words from some Arabic dictionaries and in that fashion we completed



our book, and we placed the Armenian word next to the Arabic term so that those unfamiliar with those terms would instantly look it up there and become familiarized. Now, in concluding these words I beg [the reader] to receive this little labor of ours that we offer with great love to our dear ones. Be safe in the Lord.

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