CELEBRATING 500 Years OF ARMENIAN PRINTING
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No one is ever going to confuse the Madenataran with the local neighborhood bookstore. It sits on a hill in downtown Yerevan, a massive, 122-thousand-square-foot block of marble and basalt, its entrance shielded by statues of Armenian mathematicians, historians, theologians, and the creator of the Armenian alphabet, Saint Mesrob Mashdots. As many readers of this newspaper know, it’s impressive and regal and—unlike a lot of mid-20th-century Soviet architectural behemoths—imposing and welcoming at once.

And yet the Madenataran is filled with nothing but books. It’s Armenia’s Institute for Ancient Manuscripts, a museum of very—and I mean very—old books. When I was in Armenia in May, it was the second place I visited. (The first was the Armenian Genocide Memorial, where, beside the eternal flame, I laid flowers in remembrance of our ancestors who were killed in the genocide.) I don’t read Armenian and I’m certainly no scholar when it comes to illuminated manuscripts, but even now, well into the digital age, I am still drawn to the paper book. Consequently, I spent an afternoon at the Madenataran peering through glass at manuscripts and Bibles and books, some made of parchment and some made of paper, some copied by hand, and some printed by presses. I was dazzled.

The books in the Madenataran and on display at the Library of Congress are eye candy for a reader. This is true whether you prefer books made of pulp and ink or glue, or you’ve chosen instead an eReader. The reality is that anyone who loves books understands that we have a profound, totemic relationship with paper: to the book as an artifact. In the library in my house in which I write, there are two walls of books. There could easily be four, but the room is a corner that once was a living room, and so there are also two walls of windows. I can swivel in my chair and glance at the dust jacket of most of the books on those shelves and tell you where I was when I first cracked the book’s spine. Ian McEwan’s Atonement is the grass beneath a maple tree outside a health and fitness club in Middlebury, Vt., the leaves unfurling in the April sun; inside, my young daughter is in the midst of one of her dance classes. Henry Roth’s Call it Sleep is the snack bar at Smith College, where my wife went to school when we were merely boyfriend and girlfriend, and the smell of the onions the cooks there placed on the hamburgers. And Franz Werfel’s magisterial epic The Forty Days of Musa Dagh is the wood-paneled living room of my childhood home in Stamford, Conn., and my dawning awareness that there was more to my Armenian grandparents’ lives as children and young adults than they ever were likely to share. Knowing of my profound love for The Forty Days of Musa Dagh and of books made of paper, the Christmas before last, my wife found me a beautiful first edition of the novel.

The truth is, a book’s dust jacket or spine can instantly catapult us back in time. We don’t merely recall the novel’s plot or a snippet of dialogue: We remember who we were, where we were, and, perhaps, the state of our lives when we first met Atticus Finch or Daisy Buchanan or Gabriel Bagradian. A book is like music in that regard: It can resurrect memories for us.

My new novel, The Sandcastle Girls, is set mostly in Turkey and Syria in the midst of the Armenian Genocide in the First World War, but there are a few moments in Yerevan. The novel is a love story, but it is also the story of our diaspora—why of the 10 million Armenians in this world, only 3 million live in Armenia today.

And the physical book itself—the paper and the ink and the cloth—is beautiful. I’m not referring to the text or a single word I wrote. I’m talking about the design. The type. The feel. Doubleday designed and produced a physically alluring book. Raised lettering on the cover and the spine. An elegant juxtaposition of gold and black. Deckle edge pages. A cover image that is wistful and epic and, in my opinion, captures perfectly the sensibility of the novel. This is my 15th book, so I can be pretty jaded when my editor sends me a new one hot off the presses. Been there, done that.

Nope. Not this time.

When a copy of The Sandcastle Girls first arrived at my house in Vermont, I found myself holding it in my hands and recalling the day I had written the book’s first sentence. And I thought of my recent visit to the Madenataran, and the spectacular care that someone had put into the production of each and every book and manuscript there. No one planned to coincide the publication of The Sandcastle Girls with the 500th anniversary of Armenian printing or the UNESCO selection of Yerevan as the 2012 World Book Capital.

But this novel is the most personal and the most important book I’ve written. Its arrival this year is a great, great gift.
There are people more qualified than I to write on the momentous occasion of the 500th anniversary of Armenian printing. Nonetheless, I’ve been given the honor of adding my two dram to the conversation. (As you know, they don’t even make one dram coins, so take it for what it’s worth.)

Until a month or two before I left for Armenia, I had been slated for Albania. The Albanian language uses the Latin alphabet, which makes it more accessible than, say, Armenian. At least for the ignorant lass that I was at the time, and quite possibly still am. As such, I’d learned useful words like mirupafshim (goodbye) in Albanian, which, incidentally, is the only word I can recall from my self-study.

The Peace Corps called one day, though, to say that I would not be going to Albania after all, due to instability in
the country. So much for the chest thumping I’d done in front of my father: “I will go until they tell me I cannot” Well, they told me I cannot.

I’d lost my verve for advance preparation, having done so in vain once already. Also, I was terrified of the Armenian language. The Armenian-English/English-Armenian dictionary I special-ordered through a bookstore in Fargo, N.D. did nothing to ease my mind. The words appeared to be constructed entirely from letters that resembled m, n, and u. How in God’s name would I learn this?

My dad advised me to first learn the phrase “I’m much funnier in my own language.” Instead, I learned the word for bathroom. I’m still not sure if I made the right choice.

In high school, I’d taken two years of Spanish. In college, I took another semester of Spanish, and a semester of, you guessed it, Norwegian. Neither one spoke to me in a meaningful way at the time. There was no urgency for me to learn either, though I certainly could have created some of my own.

My entrée to Armenian was something altogether different. My host family spoke nary a word of English, save for a lullaby that is useful only in very specific, and obvious, settings. And, I lived in a village. Classes were four hours a day and four days a week, and that was a good start. The real work came when I got back home, where my host family had infinite patience to talk with and at me.

If it weren’t for my young host brothers, I’d still be differentiating consonants in the Armenian alphabet. If it weren’t for a Peace Corps colleague, I’d still be learning the alphabet. This is the colleague who taught me the beauty of mnemonic devices. Thanks to him, I saw the letter “m” (մ) as a “mud” shovel and the letter “n” (ն) as capable of holding a “nut” to the left.

This wasn’t high level linguistics; this was survival.

REWIND 15 YEARS

Five hundred years is a lot to celebrate. I’m just celebrating what 15 years of progress can provide.

When I arrived, e-mail was still in its infancy stage. I had an e-mail address in college, and my second was with the American University of Armenia. At that time, there were no cell phones, let alone Skype, which even my taxi driver from today uses on a regular basis.

In fact, when I lived in the Lori province in the north of the country, I walked down the mountain village road about a mile to make $1 per minute calls to the U.S. from a call center, where everyone listened (or tried to listen) to every word spoken. More often than not, once I’d reach the building, I’d be told, “Gits chka” (There are no lines).

Today, I don’t need to tell you—you who are quite likely to be reading this online—that the world is a different place. I send PDF documents in Armenian to my Kindle, which holds hundreds upon hundreds of books without changing in weight. I learned recently that a new Armenian font was created for official documents. I read Facebook status messages and comments in Armenian to keep up with people’s views on the latest topics of conversation. And, when in a pinch, I use Google translate to decipher a complicated sentence. Mashdots would not believe his eyes.

MODERN-DAY WORD ADVICE

People ask me how I learned Armenian, and occasionally they ask for advice. My stock advice is: 1) make a decision to learn it, 2) get a tutor, and 3) forget about shame. These three things, if sincerely attempted, will get you where you want to go. In the meantime, tuck these bits of unsolicited advice in your back pocket.

Amot and absos—the words for “shame” and “it’s a pity”—will take you a long way in this country. As with most things, timing is important, but usage is more important. Both, as it happens, can be used in serious situations, or as jokes. I’ll leave it to you to find the appropriate tone for each.

Lav eli is a phrase unique to Armenians who live in the present-day boundaries of Armenia. It’s as if to say, “C’mon, man!” or “Alright already!” If someone is piling food on your plate, you might try this. If they are talking your ear off and you want them to stop, shout it out and walk away. If someone hedges in front of you in line, mutter it with intention.

The word esa is tricky to translate. When you’re waiting for something to happen or someone to arrive, you will often hear “Esa klini” or “Esa kga.” The implication is that “it will happen soon” or “s/he will come soon,” but the reality is that it is not time-bound in any way. If someone says this to you, treat it with a healthy dose of suspicion before you find yourself waiting for a bus under the direct sun for two hours. Sure, it might come soon, but you also might be better off catching a cab.

It’s useful to have a line of poetry on the tip of your tongue. One such useful line comes from the great Armenian poet Paruyr Sevak: “Menkkich enk, hayts mez hay en asum” (We are few, but we are Armenians). Not sure what to say in a toast? Unsure of the direction the conversation is taking? Try this line. You won’t be sorry.

LANGUAGE IN ITS ENTIRETY

I began by stating the fact that there are others who can speak to the noble aspects of the printing that has given us the Bible, the works of Sevak and Naregatsi, and the books that provide witness to the Armenian Genocide.

What is within my scope of knowledge and ability, though, is something more modest. My abilities lie in words, written and spoken, that help a person understand and enjoy exactly where they are. And, if you should find yourself here, Armenia is a wonderful place to be.

Lav eli, yegek! □
From its origins in Venice in 1512, the history of early modern (1500–1800) Armenian print culture was closely entangled with that of port cities, initially in Europe and subsequently in Asia. In fact, virtually every Armenian printing press before 1800 was established either in or close to port cities, and the few that were not owed their existence to on-going relations with port locations. Yet, despite the obvious relationship between ports and printers, their synergetic relationship has thus far largely eluded scholarly attention. As Armenians across the world celebrate the quincentenary of Hakob Meghapart’s printing of the first Armenian book in Venice, it will be useful for us to pause and reflect on the intimate relationship between port cities and printers in the rich history of Armenian print culture and the history of the early modern Armenian book referred to in Armenian scholarship as hnatib girk’ê.

In the process, it will also be important to meditate on the connecting link or hinge between ports and printers, namely what I will call, following the tradition of scholars of Sephardic Jewish history, the figure of the “port Armenian.”

An Aquacentric View of Early Modern Armenian History

Armenian historiography and especially Armenian “historical memory” seem to be fixated on the figure of the Armenian as rooted in his or her ancestral homeland. Land, for good or for ill, has been taken as the ideal and often only matrix for Armenian history. While there are good reasons for this unexamined assumption in Armenian historical writing (Armenia’s mostly landlocked geographical terrain and the historical bond between statehood and territorial sovereignty not being the least of which) this “terracentric” view of Armenian history does not correspond to some basic realities of the Armenian past, especially during the crucial years between 1500 and 1800 C.E., that I have come to label as the “early modern” period in Armenian history. During this period, arguably the most momentous changes in Armenian history, including but not limited to Armenians’ early openness to and adoption of print technology, did not take place on the rugged terrain of the Armenian plateau, where perpetual wars between the two gunpowder empires of the Ottomans and Safavids had destroyed much of the region’s populations and local economies. Rather they unfolded across the slippery...
surface of the world’s major bodies of water and through the port cities dotting their shorelines. More particularly, the pulsating center of Armenian history during the early modern period and beyond seems to have shifted almost entirely to the port cities of the Indian Ocean rim and, to a lesser degree, the Mediterranean basin. Consider for instance the location of the first Armenian printing press in Venice in 1512 followed by a string of presses operating from the Most Serene republic (La Serenissima) for several centuries and the establishment of the Mkhitarist Congregation of erudite Catholic Armenian monks, a little over two centuries after Hakob Meghapart’s press, in San Lazzaro in the Venetian lagoon. It would be almost impossible for us today to imagine what is often called the “Armenian renaissance” without the erudite monks who followed in the footsteps of the Congregation’s founder, Abbot Mkhitar, not to mention the printing press that enabled these monks to preserve, classify, and in fact give form to the canon of Armenian literature. The same can be said of the Indian Ocean basin and its archipelago of port cities such as Surat, Madras, and Calcutta, to name a few, where the bulk of and certainly the wealthiest among port Armenians lived. What would the history of Armenian journalism be without Azdarar, published for two consecutive years by Harout’iwn Shmavonian in Madras from the 1794 to 1796? What of Armenian political thought and modern constitutional thinking without Shahamir Shahamirian’s Girk’ anuaneal vorogayt parats [Book called Snare of Glory], the first republican constitution of a future state of Armenia that saw the light of day not in Armenia but Madras around 1787? The same may be said of the first printed Armenian play in the world (“The Physiognomist of Duplicity,” Calcutta, 1823) and arguably the first novel in vernacular Armenian (Mesrob Taghiatiants’ Vep Varsenkan, 1847). All of these achievements shared three things in common. First, their existence was made possible by the modern technology of the printing press and its mechanical (re)production of books through movable metal type. True, we should withstand the temptation to exaggerate the “revolutionary” nature of the shift from manuscript to print and the latter’s impact on Armenian societies across the world as has sometimes been done by those who see print technology as causing a “communications revolution.” However, the recent push back to represent the appearance of the printed codex as a “blip” or “hiccup” of continuity in the longue durée of the history of the book should also be avoided. Second, they all occurred either in or near port cities or were facilitated by maritime connections to such cities. The third commonality among these accomplishments is that their very existence was predicated on the support, both intellectual and financial, of “port Armenians.” Who or what were these port Armenians and how did they differ from the run-of-the-mill Armenians who did not live in or near port cities? Are there any attributes that distinguished them, and if so what are they?

First, unlike their agrarian counterparts, who for the most part lived far away from the great shorelines of the world and eked out a living by tilling the land as peasants or as small-time local merchants and artisans, port Armenians were predominantly if not almost exclusively long-distance merchants whose livelihood and identity were largely shaped by their relationship to the sea. They made a living as long-distance merchants involved in the global trade of silk, spices, South Asian textiles, and precious stones. Constantly in motion across bodies of water to conduct what world historians call “cross-cultural trade,” port Armenians, as their name implies, resided for the most part in great port cities of their age such as Amsterdam, Venice, Marseille, Saint Petersburg, Astrakhan, Madras, and Calcutta—all locations for Armenian printing presses.
association with port cities and long-distance commerce, was a quintessential “border-crooser” who moved swiftly through and across diverse cultural zones and was no less swift, adventurous, and cosmopolitan in the flights of his imagination and thoughts. The relationship with commerce on the seas for the port Jew and, as we shall see, for the port Armenian is therefore an integral part of his identity as a “social type.” Generally speaking, individuals whose location and vocation are in ports are more likely to be open to the world around them, probably more likely to experiment with the cultural practices they encounter among the peoples with whom they come into contact, and thus are likely to have cultural identities that are hybrid and enriched through sustained contact and intermingling with others from across the oceans. Also, largely as a function of their location in port cities, themselves some of the greatest hubs of information in the globally connected world that came to take shape during the early modern period, port Armenians were exposed to a greater volume and more diverse varieties of information than their land-locked counterparts. This meant that new technologies such as the printing press or inventions associated with it, such as novel papermaking techniques and so on, would be more easily accessible to port Armenians than their landlubbing counterparts.

Third, with the exception of a small minority from the mercantile town of Agulis in the Caucasus, the overwhelming majority of these port Armenians traced their ancestry to the township of New Julfa, the prosperous suburb of the Iranian Safavid imperial capital of Isfahan where their forebears were relocated by Shah ‘Abbas I in 1604–1605 in the course of the Ottoman-Safavid wars. Their original homeland, the town of Old Julfa in what is today the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhijevan, was probably the last place in the world to be associated with oceans and seas. Its land-locked position and inhospitable environment were traits that had caught the attention of more than one European traveler who passed through the town before its destruction in the early years of the seventeenth century. The French traveler and writer Jean Chardin, for instance, remarked “that it is not possible to find another town situated in a place that is more dry and more rocky.” It was Shah ‘Abbas I’s razing of the town to the ground and the brutal relocation of its mercantile denizens to his newly-built capital of Isfahan that altered the future trajectory of Armenian history. The Shah’s granting of a royal protection and quasi monopoly of the Crown’s silk trade to the Julfans (1619) and subsequent unlocking of the gates of the Indian Ocean in 1622, when the fort of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf fell from Portuguese to Iranian control, prized open the wide watery world of the Indian Ocean to merchants from New Julfa and helped transform the Julfans into port Armenians. Like some of their counterparts who had settled or were in the process of settling in the port cities of the Mediterranean world (Venice, Livorno, Marseille, Smyrna/Izmir, and Constantinople/Istanbul as well as on the Atlantic seaboard in Amsterdam), they did not take long to establish mercantile communities in most of the ocean’s important port cities. Most settled in port cities under the rule of the English East India Company such as Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay, followed by Singapore and Dutch-controlled Batavia in the nineteenth century; others resided in French and Portuguese outposts, such as Pondicherry in Southern India and Macao/Canton in China whence they plied a lucrative trade with Manila exchanging Indian textiles and spices as well as Chinese porcelain and silk for New World silver that arrived each year from Acapulco on Spanish convoys known as the Manila Galleon. But what could these port Armenians have to do with the history of the Armenian book and the printing press, which after all was almost entirely confined to its European cradle from 1512 to the late 1600s when it began to gravitate slowly to the East? This brings us to the fourth and final attribute of port Armenians, their active patronage of the arts and culture in general and of the new craft of printing in particular.

The PPP Link: Port Armenians, Ports, and Printers

The bonds that connected ports and port Armenians to printers across the oceans and occasionally over land were complex. First and foremost, the location of the printing establishment was crucial. Most Armenian printers in the early modern period, with a few exceptions, were members of the literati belonging to the clerical hierarchy of the Armenian Church. They usually set up their presses in the port cities in Europe that already had a substantial
presence of port Armenians with ties to New Julfa. The port city location was preferred for several reasons. For reasons alluded to above port cities were the most dynamic nodes of the world economy during the early modern period and therefore leading loci of technological innovation. As far as printers were concerned, port cities offered access to paper manufacturers, font casters, engravers, as well as compositors and press operators. In addition, the fact that they usually contained a substantial presence of port Armenians willing to patronize and shore up new printing presses meant that Armenian port settlements already came equipped with a diasporic community infrastructure including churches and other community institutions. Most important perhaps, port cities afforded printers with relatively cheap and efficient access to transportation. In an age when transportation by water was almost always cheaper, safer, and faster than its overland counterpart, location in a port city meant that a printer could load his newly printed commodity (books) and have it shipped to the nearest markets of consumption. In the eighteenth century, the major reading market for Armenian books was Constantinople/Istanbul, home to the largest urban population of Armenians. The city’s close to 80,000 Armenians by the second half of the eighteenth century was the prized destination for printed Armenian books that were shipped there either directly to its bustling port with its minaret-studded skyline or by caravan routes once the books were unloaded in the port of Smyrna/Istanbul in the south. A few examples of Armenian port city presses will suffice to clarify what has been said thus far.

Amsterdam, where an Armenian press was installed in 1660, and where Armenian printers were active until the second decade of the eighteenth century, was an important Armenian port city with a significant presence of Julfan merchants and two successive churches: Surb Karapet in 1663/64 followed by Surb Hogi in 1713. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the city had clearly taken the lead as the most dynamic printing center in the world with over forty printing houses publishing in multiple languages, including Armenian and Hebrew. Parly as a result of this reputation, it attracted Armenian printers beginning with the most famous of them, Oskan Yerevantsi (originally from New Julfa) who, with the active financial support of several Julfan merchants in Livorno, printed the first Armenian bible in Amsterdam in 1666. After Yerevantsi moved to Livorno and Marseille with his press, his place was eventually filled by members of the illustrious family of savants and printers, the Vanandets’is from the region of Ghoghtn in Nakhijevan, who actively published first-rate books from their set¬

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In addition to providing Armenian printers with an institutional or community infrastructure, port Armenians provided the capital investments necessary to shore up the printing activities of the clerical elite. They did this in several ways. They were directly involved in partnerships with printer-priests as a form of what has come to be known as "print Capitalism." An example of this is the partnership contract that a Julfan merchant named Paolo Alexan (Poghos ordi Aleksani?) had entered with two Armenian priests (Oannes de Ougorlou and Matheus di Hovhannes) who ran an important press in Amsterdam from 1685 to the mid-1690s. After printing 8,300 copies of Armenians books, many of them destined for Smyrna to be sold there and, one would assume, in Constantinople, the partners had had a falling out and took their dispute to a notary public. However, business partnerships between port Armenians and printers based exclusively on the profit motive were the exception in the history of the Armenian book, unlike its European counterpart where printing was from its origins a model of a capitalist enterprise. The small size of the Armenian reading market, itself a function of low population numbers and even lower literacy rates, was probably the main reason why the profession of the printer was not a profitable one. Merchants were thus quick to realize that printing for capitalist motives was not a paying proposition and began supporting printing presses not necessarily with the intention of engaging in a capitalist enterprise but rather as a form of cultural patronage for both Church and "nation." They could have done this for reasons that we would today call "prestige power" or the vanity of having the names of their family members immortalized in the colophons of
the books published through their benevolence. The case of Simeon Yerevantsi’s press in Ejmiatsin—the first printing press in the homeland—as far away from a port city as one could imagine—is an example of the latter. Established in 1772, this press was entirely paid for by a port Armenian residing in Madras known as Grigor Agha Chekigents (alias Mikael Khujjianian), who donated 18,000 rupees to the Catholicosate to help buy the appropriate material for casting of types and even for the establishment of a paper mill in 1775 on the grounds of the Catholicosate.21 Thus when technical specialists could not be procured in situ, a port Armenian in Madras made sure not only to raise the required capital but also to rely on his local connections in India and dispatch to the Catholicosate French technical specialists from the port settlement of Pondicherry to help the monks in their enterprise of printing. Sometimes both activities (cultural patronage and entrepreneurial investment) were combined, as was the case with Oskan Yerevantsi’s press in Amsterdam, which was bought with the capital investment of Oskan’s brother, Avetis Ghlijents, a merchant from New Julfa. This press was later donated by Oskan to Ejmiatsin under whose name it functioned during its various peregrinations from Amsterdam to Marseille and thence to Constantinople. Merchants also stepped in to support Armenian printers through directly commissioning important works for publication. The publication of several trade and language manuals useful to merchants, such as the celebrated Gants ch’ap’oy kshroy twoy ew dramits’ bolor askhbari (A treasury of measures, numbers, and moneys of the entire world (Amsterdam, 1699) and the first Armenian book in the vernacular, Arhest Hamaroghut’e’an, ambochy ev katali (The art of arithmetic, complete and perfect) (Marseille, 1675), are examples of such mercantile patronage of Armenian books. The same can be said for works of translation from foreign languages, such as Charles Rollin’s Histoire Romaine (Patmut’iwn hrovmeakan) and William Robertson’s multi-volume History of America (Vipasanut’iwn Amerikoy), both commissioned by Julian merchants from Madras and printed or published by Mkhitarists in Venice and Trieste, respectively. In a few cases, merchants carried out the translations themselves and paid for the publication of their own works such as Marcara Shahramian’s translation of Petis de la Croix’s Histoire du Grand Genghizcan, (Patmut’iwn Metsin Gengizkhani arajin kayser nakhti mghulats ev tatarats, bazianceal’ chors girs) (Trieste, 1788).

In addition to patronizing the printing activities of priests, did port Armenians also own and operate their own printing presses? As mentioned above, the miniscule size of the Armenian reading public and the low levels of literacy made print capitalism unfeasible for port Armenians and the few cases of merchant printers were few and far in between.23 In the seventeenth century, Armenian merchants operated at least two Armenian presses in Venice: Gaspar Shahramian’s press of 1687 and the press of Khwaja Nahapet Gulnazar Agulets’i, which published the Psalms of David, the second of only three printed Armenian books in the vernacular during the seventeenth century.24 In the eighteenth century, it became more common perhaps to find port Armenians who were also owners of their own printing presses. The most celebrated case of this was the merchant prince Shahamir Shahamian, who established in Madras in 1772 the first Armenian printing press in India and printed a number of trailblazing books including in 1787–89 Girk’ anuuaneal vorogayt’ Parıats (Book called Snare of Glory), the republican proto-constitution for a future republic of Armenia.25 Later this same press appears to have been used to print the first Armenian newspaper in the world, Azdarar (1794–1796). The press of Grigor Khojamal Khaldarian, a Julfan from India who had traveled to and resided in London in the 1770s26 and later opened Russia’s first Armenian printing press in the port city of Saint Petersburg in 1781 is another case in point. It is interesting to note that the first published work by an Armenian woman, Kleopatra Sarafian’s Banali Gitt’e’an (Key of knowledge) saw the light of day on Khaldarian’s press in 1788.27

As Armenians across the world celebrate an important milestone in Armenian history, we need to remember that many important aspects of the history of the Armenian book remain to be properly scrutinized and studied. What I have sketched above in an impressionistic way is only the maritime and mercantile underpinnings of Armenian print culture. Other scholars before me have touched upon this in more or less fruitful ways but never systematically. There are entire areas of the history of the Armenian book that remain not only untouched but whose very existence has not even been properly acknowledged and therefore examined. Important questions such as how does the study of the printed book in its multifaceted dimension—from its production site in port cities or elsewhere to its destination into the hands of readers—contribute to our understanding of the mentalité of any given society? In other words, how do books begin to transform the mental universe of ordinary readers once they are released into a network of circulation? Who were the principal readers among the early modern Armenians, what was the literacy rate, and how does one even begin to measure it? In addition, the “history of reading” or who read what, how, and where is a topic that has occupied center stage in the discipline of the history of the book in Europe and North America but remains
terra incognita in the scholarship on the Armenian book. As the worldwide celebrations of the quincentenary continue and exhibits and conferences are convened, one hopes that scholars of the Armenian past will pause, take critical stock of what their predecessors accomplished, and while grateful for standing tall on their shoulders will forge ahead to pose new and imaginative questions of their own. As every good historian knows, the ability to pose the right kinds of questions to the evidence one has at one’s disposal is among the most important questions that members of the historian’s tribe cherish. One can only wish that in the wake of the quincenary celebrations new and theoretically vigorous studies will bloom in the study of the printed Armenian book. If we are fortunate, this crop will be conceptually informed by the most recent Euroamerican scholarship in the tradition of the post-Annales L’histoire du Livre while simultaneously being archivally grounded in notarial and other documents. A hundred years ago at the last centenary as Armenians in Istanbul, Tiflis, and other locations prepared to celebrate the accomplishments of Hakob Meghapart in the port city of Venice, they inspired a new generation of scholars of the book, including Teotik, and the formidable Leo (Arakel Babakhanian) to blaze new paths of scholarship that superseded the work of Garegin Zharbanalian and others in the generation before them. May the same happen with this centenary.

ENDNOTES


4. Thus Robert Gross writes: “The current consensus, nearly summarized by the French historian Roger Chartier, is that the change from the manuscript to the printed book was no big deal. In its physical design, the newcomer kept the old ways. It employed devices developed in monastic scriptoria to order the text: signatures, page numbers, columns and lines, ornaments, alphabetical tables, systematic indexes. It inherited a hierarchy of sizes, from the learned folio to the humanist quarto down to the bedside libellus. And it called upon methods of silent reading of long standing in medieval universities and popularized among aristocratic laymen in the fifteenth century. The printing press thus depended on, rather than altered, the fundamental form of the book.” (Emphasis added) Robert A. Gross, “Communications Revolutions: Writing a History of the Book for an Electronic Age,” Rare Books and Manuscript Librarianship, 13 (1998) 15.


7. Armenian merchants from Agulis were particularly active alongside Julfans in Mediterranean port cities such as Venice, Livorno, and Marseille.


16. The press in Livov established in 1616 was also an exception to the port city pattern but it too was paid for by the town’s Armenian merchants some of whom had maritime connections in the Black and Mediterranean Seas.

17. The document is a letter written by Primate Stepanos Boghystis in New Julfa and addressed to the “pious and Christ-loving Julfan Merchants residing in the city of Venice,” dated September 27, 1686, New Julfa, Isfahan. See Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Acquisti e doni busta123, nn. 77–7. I thank my friend Meroujan Karapetyan for placing this document at my disposal.


19. See Sarukhan, Hollandaen eu Hayer, 102–103 for the translation of a notarial document where the dispute between the involved parties is discussed, and Gregorian, Nor Ntwrt ew Ditoght’iunner, 48–50 for a brief discussion.


22. The Trieste branch of the Mkhitarians was established in 1773 by Minas Gasparian and Astuatsatur Babikian (scion of a wealthy family from New Julfa) who were exiled from the mother convent in San Lazzaro following a violent quarrel with the then reigning Abbot, Stepanos Melklonian. The Trieste branch was relocated to Vienna, where it continues to exist, in 1811. See Aslanian “Silver, Missionaries, and Print” for fuller account of their separation from San Lazzaro.

23. I thank Meroujan Karapetyan for discussions on this matter.


25. See Kévorkian, “Mesrop’s Heirs,” 75.


28. See Aslanian, Dispersion History and “Silver, Missionaries, and Print” for a detailed account of their separation from San Lazzaro.


Hakob Meghapart’s pioneering effort exactly five centuries ago this year has made it inconceivable ever since to analyze and evaluate the worldwide dissemination of Armenian culture bypassing the medium of printing—both books and periodicals. For a people with a long diasporic tradition and, until 1918, without a state of their own, printing technology made it easier for Armenian authors and their readers to establish and maintain their own worldwide network of printing, distribution, reading and exchanging ideas. This study focuses on one particular facet of the history of Armenian printing: the editing and publication of the works of Armenian medieval historians who lived in the 5th–18th centuries. It analyzes the patterns of publication of both their original texts, written overwhelmingly in Classical Armenian (grabar), and their more recent translations into both the Eastern and Western branches of the modern Armenian literary language (ashkharhabar). It thus provides one important indicator to how the locus of Armenian Studies research activities shifted across a number of cities and institutions situated on three continents over the last 300 years. At the same time, it will be this author’s humble tribute to all the prominent scholars whose efforts made medieval Armenian histories accessible to their peers and lay readers interested in the Armenian past.

This article covers the works of those 37 Armenian authors, who were treated in a separate chapter each in Levon Hovhannes Babayan’s trilogy on Armenian historiography, arguably the most comprehensive study in this domain to date. To make it easier both for the reader to follow the chronological structure of this article and for the author to make comparisons and generalizations, a number of ground rules were followed during the
presentation of the compiled data. First, the works of Tovma Artzruni and Matteos Urhayetsi are considered as a single unit each; their continuators are not accorded individualized treatment. Secondly, if the same work has been published at different times under the name of different authors, all of its editions are listed here under the author, who is now accorded the widest acceptance. Thirdly, only the works of history of these 37 authors are covered. Finally, if an author has produced more than one work of historical nature, only his major work is considered. Thus all but one of the 37 authors covered do appear in this article with only one work, that which is generally considered as their magnum opus in history.

‘GRABAR’ EDITIONS

Medieval Armenian historiography flourished not long after the creation of the Armenian alphabet in the 5th century. In contrast, publishing works of history was not foremost in the minds of the first Armenian printers after 1512. It took exactly 157 years—until 1669—to see the first work of history printed in Armenian. By then, 70 titles in Armenian had already seen the light.

The first printed Armenian history was that of Arakel Davrizhetsi, published by Archbishop Voskan Yerevantsi in Amsterdam. Most of the earliest Armenian language printing had been carried out in Italy. However, from 1660, Armenian printers had become attracted to the Dutch capital, considered then to be the world’s wealthiest city. Printing standards had dropped in Italy during the 17th century and, perhaps more importantly, the largely Protestant Dutch Republic was renowned for its relative religious tolerance. Roman Catholic censors could not hamper the work of Armenian printers there. Voskan, often considered as the second most important early Armenian printer after Meghapat, arrived in Amsterdam in 1664 and printed 15 Armenian-language books during his five-year stay. Foremost among his Amsterdam publications was, of course, the first full edition of the Armenian Bible in 1666–68.

Davrizhetsi’s History printed by Voskan is significant because it was published during the author’s lifetime. The circumstances that pushed Voskan to print Davrizhetsi’s work remain unclear. The author had completed his manuscript in 1662 and had already ordered a number of hand-copies to be made, probably to guarantee the work’s preservation in the future. Voskan’s print version contains numerous grammatical errors. Moreover, he omitted certain sections, combined or rephrased others, and made stylistic changes to bring Davrizhetsi’s style into conformity with grabar. All these would necessitate the preparation of a critical edition of Davrizhetsi three centuries later.

The choice of the next Armenian medieval historian to go into print appears more logical. For centuries, Movses Khorenatsi had been considered as the Father of Armenian History. The Geography attributed to him had already had two editions when the editio princeps of his History was printed in 1695, again in Amsterdam, but by Bishop Tovmas Nurijanian, a member of the Vanandetsi family of printers, who published over 20 Armenian-language books in the Dutch capital in 1685–1717. Khorenatsi’s first edition was based only on a single manuscript, which was full of errors. Nevertheless, it helped bring the work to the attention of western scholars and was reprinted in Venice in 1752.

After a couple of short-lived attempts in 1567–69 and 1677–78, Armenian printing was established in Constantinople on a more regular footing at the end of the 17th century. For the next 100 years or so, the Ottoman capital consistently remained the city where the largest number of Armenian books was published. Among these Constantinople publications were the next four editiones princeps of medieval Armenian historians: Grigor Marzvantesi printed Agatangeghos (1709–10) and Hovhannes Mamikonian (1719); Martiros Sargsian, Pavstos Buzand (1730); and Hovhannes Astvatzatian, Yeghishe (1764). This was an era where the tasks of choosing the manuscript and editing it for publication were not yet separate from the technical process of printing. Therefore, the owners of the printing presses are also acknowledged as the publishers of the respective works, although they usually had a number of associates, from those who provided the manuscript and/or supervised the process of copy-editing and proofreading to those who covered the printing expenses.

When the Mkhitarist Father Mikayel Chamchian compiled in the 1780’s his monumental, three-volume History of the Armenians, the most ambitious such project since Khorenatsi and the first
comprehensive Armenian history in modern times, only five medieval Armenian histories were in print. Chamchian mentions twelve other authors included in this survey, whose works he probably consulted in manuscript form. Indeed, he continued to receive new manuscripts as writing was in progress. He also indicates awareness of the existence of other medieval historians, whose works he did not have at his disposal. Among them, Ukhtanes, Sebeos, Ghevond, and Movses Kaghankatvatsi would be discovered and published in course of the next century.

Indeed, by 1915, all but three of the authors surveyed for this article were already in print, and many of them had had multiple—a few, even critical—editions. These new editions came out in over a dozen different cities across the Ottoman and the Russian empires, but also in Western Europe and even the British colony of India. These cities were either centers of Armenian monastic communities, both Apostolic and Roman Catholic (Venice, Vienna, Vagharshapat, and Jerusalem), or towns hosting vibrant Armenian communities (Constantinople, Smyrna, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Feodosiya, Shushi, Tiflis, and Calcutta). Paris, meanwhile, appears on this list solely because of the single-handed efforts of Father Karapet Shahnazarians (1814–65), who set up a printing press in the French capital in the second half of the 1850’s and published the series Shar hay patmagrats (Armenian Historians’ Series), including the editiones principes of Ghevond, Stepanos Taronetsi Asoghik, Stepanos Orbelian, Kaghankatvatsi, and Tovma Metzopetsi. The 19th century is also the period when the publication of new editions of medieval histories gradually became associated with their editors, who were otherwise famous as academics or scholars, rather than with the entrepreneurs who owned and ran the printing presses, as had been the case previously.

The first ever Armenian-language book printed in Calcutta was the editio princeps of Abraham Kretatsi (1796). Thereafter, the printing press of Jentlum Avetian issued reprints of Hovhannes Mamikonian (1814) and Yeghishe (1816), both based on the 18th-century editiones principes published in Constantinople.

The Mkhitarist Congregation, founded in 1700, joined the efforts to print medieval histories relatively late. By the end of
(1851) and Artzruni (1852). In Smyrna reprints were issued of both Koriun and Yeghishe.

The Sts. James Armenian Convent in Jerusalem was the third and only other location on Ottoman territory where medieval Armenian histories were printed in the 19th century, including the editiones principes of Hovhannes Draskhanakerttsi (1843), Urhayetsi (1869), and Grigor Aknertsi (1870). Medieval Armenian histories were never printed in Western (Ottoman) Armenia and Cilicia, although limited Armenian-language printing activity occurred there after 1860.

Finally, the uncovering of the full range of reasons that put an end to the printing of medieval Armenian histories in Ottoman lands from the last quarter of the 19th century necessitates an in-depth study in the future. The steady suppression of various forms of Armenian nationalist expression under Sultan Abdülhamid II was probably among these causes. The restoration of the Ottoman Constitution in 1908 did not alter this trend; the only medieval Armenian history published in grabar in the Young Turk era was the editio princeps of Grigor Daranaghtsi in Jerusalem in 1915.

In the Russian Empire, Armenian printing developed later than under the Ottomans. Nevertheless, medieval Armenian histories were printed in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century not only in the Russian Empire’s large cities with vibrant Armenian communities, like Moscow, St Petersburg, Feodosiya (Crimea), and Tiflis, but also in two other important Armenian cultural centers in Eastern Armenia, Vagharshapat (Ejmiatzin) and Shushi. In Moscow, almost all the scholarly work in this domain is tied to the name of Mkrtich Emin, a professor of Armenian Studies at the Lazarev Institute. He published the editiones principes of Kaghankatvatsi (1860),11 Mkhitar Ayrivanetsi (1860), and Areveltsi (1861), as well as new and better editions of Draskhanakerttsi and Orbelian. The editiones principes of Smbat Sparapet (1856) and Gandzaketsi (1858) also appeared in Moscow, but they are not endowed with the scholarly qualities of Emin’s works.

The first medieval Armenian history printed in St. Petersburg and in the Russian Empire in general was Yeghishe’s second edition (1787). The printing of medieval Armenian histories resumed in the Russian capital exactly eight decades later and, for the next 20 years, it was largely associated with the academic career of Kerovbe Patkanian, Professor of Armenian Studies at the St. Petersburg University. He published the editiones principes of Aknertsi (1870) and Mkhitar Anetsi (1879). Moreover, his new editions of Ayrivanetsi (1867), Sebeos (1879), Pavstos (1883), and Artzruni (1887) surpassed in quality earlier editions of these works. Also in the Russian capital, Stepan Malkhasiants published a new edition of Asoghik; and Karapet Yeziants, of Ghevond, Armenian Apostolic clergyman and monastic institutions played a pivotal role in the publication of medieval Armenian histories in Eastern (Russian) Armenia, beginning with the editio princeps of Catholicos Yesayi Hasanjalians in Shushi in 1839. The Holy See of Ejmiatzin, in Vagharshapat, became prominent in this field beginning in 1870. Its printing press released the editiones principes of Zakaria Kanakertsi (1870), Ukhtanes (1871), Gvuchas Sebastatsi (1871), Simeon Yerevantsi (1873), Samuel Anetsi (1893), and Khachatur Jughayetsi (1905).

In the last quarter of the 19th century, Tiflis, the administrative capital of Russian Transcaucasia, challenged and eventually surpassed Constantinople as the city where the largest number of Armenian-language books was being printed. Among the histories released in Tiflis were reprints of Yeghishe, Khorenatsi, Agatangeghos, and Pavstos, published mostly for popular consumption. More prominent among these popular reprints were the 16 volumes of the series Gvuchasian matenadaran (Ghukasian Library), published in 1904–17 with money bequeathed by Avetis Ghuakasian, an Armenian oil entrepreneur from Baku. Nevertheless, the most important, at least from an academic viewpoint, was the launching in 1903 of the series Patmagirk hayots (Historians of Armenia). It aimed at the preparation of critical editions of the most important medieval histories, based on all earlier printed editions and all the extant manuscripts accessible to the specialists involved in this project. Galust Ter-Mkrtchian and Malkhasians published the critical edition of Parpetsi (1904); Ter-Mkrtchian and Stepan Kanayants, of Agathanegelos (1909); and Manuk Abeghian and Set Harutiunian, of Khorenatsi (1913). The outbreak of the First World War brought this project to a halt and only a dozen volumes were published. From 1914 onward, Tiflis was occupied by the Bolsheviks, and it was not until 1920 that a new Armenian printing house was opened in the city. The series appeared sporadically until 1925, when the printing press was relocated to Yerevan. In the 1930s, the editors and scholars involved in this project continued their work in Leninakan (present-day Erevan). The project was terminated in 1940 and only seven more volumes were brought out. Thereafter, the series remained dormant until the late 1960s, when it was revived, with a new aim to focus on the history of the 20th century. The last volume of this new series was published in 1977. Unfortunately, none of the Armenian-language histories published in Tiflis can compare in quality with those of the Ejmiatsin imprint.

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halt. However, both Malkhasiants and Abeghian continued to study and publish medieval Armenian histories in subsequent decades.

The period between 1914 and 1923 would bring dramatic changes to Armenians living in the Ottoman and Russian empires. Prior to the Sovietization of Armenia in 1920, however, 34 of the medieval Armenian historians surveyed in this article were already in print. Of these, many, especially 5th-century authors, had had numerous editions and reprints. Yeghishe was the most popular; by 1914, his grabar text had been printed on 27 occasions. Khorenatsi had had twelve printings; and Agatangeghos, seven. There was less interest in post-10th century historians, who only had between one and three printings each.

The genocide, followed by the Turkish Nationalist takeover of Cilicia and Smyrna, destroyed almost all of the Armenian communities across the former Ottoman world. Survivors would end up constituting the Armenian Diaspora. An important Armenian community persisted in Constantinople (now, Istanbul), but its cultural freedoms, especially overt expressions of Armenian nationalist sentiment, were severely curtailed.

At the same time, a new Communist order replaced Tsarist rule in Eastern Armenia, and an Armenian republic emerged within the new Soviet federal structure. The Soviet nationalities policy accorded this new entity and other constituent republics of the federation wide cultural privileges, and hundreds of Armenian-language titles were thereafter published in Soviet Armenia every year. However, their content was carefully censored to make sure that the guidelines of Communist ideology and Soviet foreign policy were followed. At the same time, other Armenian cultural hubs across former Russian Tsarist territory, especially Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Tiflis, gradually became extinguished. Yerevan thus became the undisputed center of Armenian Studies scholarship throughout the Soviet Union and even the world.

Moreover, it was also around this period when grabar, having been gradually pushed out of Armenian school curricula, ceased to be a language enjoying a wide readership. With it the tradition of commercial publishers printing affordable grabar reprints of Armenian medieval histories faded away. All new grabar printings of these histories would now target a small readership of scholars and college students in the humanities and social sciences. In Yerevan, the publishers were usually the Soviet Armenian Academy of Sciences and the Matenadaran, the repository of Armenian manuscripts. The only exceptions were those few editions by the State Publishing House (Haypethrat) and Yerevan University Press, where the grabar texts were reprinted alongside the askhkarhabar translations of these histories.

Aside from the History of Ananun Zrutsagir, which was compiled by Galust Ter-Mkrchian and Bishop Mesrop Ter-Movsisian and published by the Scientific Institute of Ejmiatzin in June 1921, just a few months after the Communist takeover of Armenia, Soviet Armenian scholars did not devote themselves to publishing new editions of medieval histories until the appearance of the editiones principes of Zakaria Aguletsi and Abraham Yerevantsi in 1938. Thereafter, Malkhasiants published a new edition of Sebeos (1939); and Abeghian, a critical edition of Korin (1941). That same year, Ashot Garegin Abrahamian, a relatively young scholar, issued what he described as the critical edition of Hovhannes Mamikonian, based on all previous editions and 23 manuscripts housed in the Matenadaran. However, this edition was heavily criticized soon after its publication and did not win acceptance from respected scholars.


In the period of independence in the last 20 years, other reputable publishing houses from the Soviet era, plus newly established private firms, have joined the market of releasing the original grabar texts of medieval histories. However, the scholarly lead these new editions is still carried largely by philologists working in the Matenadaran and trained in the late Soviet era. In 1994, the volume of Korin in the newly established Hayots matenagirner (Medieval Writers of the Armenians) series, published by the Hayastan publishing house (the former Haypethrat), included a new critical text compiled by Artashes Matevosian. In 1999, Magaghat Publishers posthumously released
The contributions of the Mkhitarists of Vienna to this domain remained modest even after 1915. Volumes II and III of Keomiurchian’s History of Istanbul, prepared by Torgomian, were published in 1932 and 1938, respectively. Later, Father Nerses Akinian prepared a new critical text of Koriun (1950).

Three medieval histories surveyed in this article have been published in Jerusalem since the end of the First World War. Garnik Fvtglian released a new version of Koriun in 1930, while Archbishop (later Patriarch) Mesrop Nshanian compiled the editio princeps of Keomiurchian’s Diary. Finally, the critical edition of Aknertsi was published by Archbishop Norayr Pogharian in 1974.

Outside monastic institutions, medieval Armenian histories in the post-genocide diaspora have been printed the most in the United States. Outside North America, we can only point to two cases where the grabar texts of medieval Armenian histories were printed outside a monastic context. Of these, the more important is the editio princeps of Keomiurchian’s History of the Burning of Istanbul by Gevorg Bampuchian (1991). The other is the grabar text of Koriun, which appeared in the 1954 Cairo reprint of Abeghian’s 1941 critical edition.

Among the numerous grabar texts of medieval Armenian histories printed in the United States, two were original works of scholarship. In 1951, Stepan H. Banian published in Boston a new critical text of Koriun. The second was Levon Khacherian’s critical edition of Sebastatsi. The editor had compiled the text when he still lived in Yerevan, but the book was published in Los Angeles in 1988, after he had emigrated from Soviet Armenia.

All other printings of medieval Armenian histories in the United States have been reprints of earlier editions, sometimes in facsimile format. In 1949, the English translation of Aknertsi by Robert Blake and Richard Frye appeared in the Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, and the grabar text was printed alongside the translation. The same work was re-published under a separate cover in 1954. Ten years later, Abeghian’s critical text of Koriun was printed alongside its new English translation by

Levon Khachikian’s critical text of Metzopetsi. In 2005, the Zangak-97 Publishing House issued a reprint of the 1979 critical text of Seboes, together with a new askharhabar translation. The next year, Darbinian-Melikian published the critical text of Artzruni, again through Magaghat Publishers. Finally, Nairi Publishers (the former Sovetakan Grogh) published in 2011 the critical text of Samuel Anetsi, compiled by Anahit Hayrapetian. That same year, the new askharhabar translation of Aknertsi also reprinted the 1974 critical text by Archbishop Norayr Pogharian, upon which it was based.

Within this context of reprints, mention should also be made of the 2007 edition of Hasan-Jalalians, which was compiled by Arto Martirosonian and published by Dizak Plus in Stepanakert, and included a reprint of the grabar text of the 1868 Jerusalem edition.

The contribution of Yerevan University Press to the publication of the grabar texts of medieval Armenian histories has been extremely limited in both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. This press has concentrated on the publication of the askharhabar translations of these works, initially through a series called Usanoghi gradaran (the Student’s Library). For example, the askharhabar translations of Khorenatsi, Parpetsi, Agatangeghos, Artzruni, Pavstos, Yeghishe, Urhayetsi, and Draskhanakerits were printed in this series next to the reprints of earlier grabar editions. The new askharhabar translations of both Sebastatsi (1992) and Areveltsi (2001), published by Yerevan University Press as well, but outside this series, also include the grabar texts. Finally, the 1941 grabar critical text of Koriun is included in the Yerevan University Press’s multi-lingual editions of 1981 and 2005.

In the post-genocide Armenian Diaspora, the publication of the original texts of medieval Armenian histories also decreased, again because of the inability of the younger generations to read grabar. Here, too, the realm of reading the grabar texts became restricted among a small community of scholars.

After 1915, the Armenian Apostolic and Catholic monastic institutions went on for some time playing an important role in the domain of publishing and disseminating medieval Armenian histories. Until 1955, the Mkhitarists of Venice periodically re-issued reprints of their 19th-century editions of Agatangeghos, Parpetsi, Pavstos, Yeghishe, Koriun, and Khorenatsi. However, since then, the Mkhitarist editions of the grabar texts of medieval Armenian histories have all been critical editions targeting a narrow circle of scholars. A new edition of Smbat, edited by Father Serobe Agelian, appeared in 1956. In 1977, Father Sahak Chemchian published a new edition of Abraham Yerevantsi, and, the next year, Father Samuel Aramian released a new edition of Sebastatsi. Finally, Father Poghos Ananian prepared a new critical text of Koriun, which was published alongside its Italian translation in 1998.
Petros Norhat (Bedros Norehad). Robert W. Thomson’s 1976 English translation of The Teaching of St. Gregory (which constitutes an important segment of the History by Agatangeghos) included a reprint of the 1914 grabar text of Ghukasian Matenadarans. In 1980–93, Caravan Press, in Delmar, N.Y., printed the Classical Armenian Texts Reprint Series, as many grabar editions from the 19th and early 20th centuries had become difficult to find for scholars engaged in research in the United States. Agatangeghos, Draskhanakerttsi, Khorenatsi, Pavstos, Parpetsi, Korun, Artzruni, Areveltsi, and Yeghishe were reprinted in this series. Finally, a facsimile reprint of the 1868 Jerusalem text of Hasan-Jalaliants was included alongside George A. Bournoutian’s 2009 English translation.

The last serious effort to reprint medieval Armenian histories—as part of the series Matenagirk Hayots (Medieval Writers of the Armenians), a collaborative effort among the Digital Library of Armenian Classical Literature, based at the American University of Armenia (Yerevan), the Catholicosate of Cilicia (Antelias), and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon). Fifteen volumes were published in 2003–12, but all the scholarship behind this series emanates from post-Soviet Armenia. The diasporan contribution is confined to providing the money and the printing facilities to publish these volumes. The works of Korun, Pavstos, Yeghishe, Agatangeghos, Khorenatsi, Sebeos, Hovhannes Mamikonian, Ghevond, Ananun Zrutsagir, Artzruni, Draskhanakerttsi, Kaghankatvatsi, Ukhtanes, and Asogikh—i.e. authors, who lived until the 11th century—have already been printed. Most of these texts are reprints of earlier critical—or what are still considered as the best—editions of these histories. However, in five cases, new critical texts were published. Gevorg Ter-Vardanian prepared the new critical texts of Ghevond, Artzruni, and Draskhanakerttsi; Aleksan Hakobian, of Hovhannes Mamikonian; and Gurgen Manukian, of Asogikh. Moreover, Petros Hovhannesian and Gevorg Matoyan, the editors of the text of the History by Ukhtanes in this series, have attempted to correct the errors which had crept through the 1871 editio princeps of this work. The works of later historians will probably appear in the forthcoming volumes.

In the post-genocide era, Yeghishe has lost the top spot as the most frequently published medieval historian in his original, grabar text to Korun. The latter’s grabar text has had nine editions printed since 1920. Among these, no less than six are new critical texts. We can surmise that not only does the importance of Korun’s topic—the life of Mesrop Mashtots, the inventor of the Armenian alphabet—make the work attractive for new critical editions, but its relatively concise nature does not demand perseverance extending over a number of years, as would be the case with longer works.

As of now, most of the opera magna of medieval Armenian historians living in the 5th-10th centuries have had their critical grabar texts prepared. Pavstos is the only notable exception. However, more effort is needed to prepare critical editions of a number of later historians, including Urhayetsi, Areveltsi, Ayrivanetsi, and Orbelian, particularly if the author’s original manuscript has not survived and all that we have are a number of copied manuscripts independent of one another.

‘ASHKHARHABAR’ EDITIONS

The imperative of having ashkharhabar translations of the important works written originally in grabar arose in the second half of the 19th century when Armenian school curricula shifted toward a wider use of the modern vernacular as the language of instruction, and the reading public in good command of grabar narrowed. From then on, critical editions and reprints of the grabar texts targeted mainly the community of scholars, while the ashkharhabar translations are still primarily for the wider lay public.

The first efforts to render the medieval Armenian histories into ashkharhabar go back to the 1860s, and most of these translations were into the Eastern branch of the modern Armenian language. The first historian translated in full and published as a separate book was Yeghishe. Martiros Simeoniants’s Eastern Armenian translation was printed in 1863. Thereafter, three other ashkharhabar translations of Yeghishe appeared until 1914, making him a leader not only in the total number of grabar but also of ashkharhabar editions for the pre-World War I period. Among these, Hakob Varzhatapetian’s translation (Constantinople, 1911) was the only Western Armenian rendering of a medieval Armenian history before 1914, as well as the first medieval Armenian historian to be printed in the Ottoman Empire since the beginning of the Hamidian Era. The only other medieval historians translated into Eastern Armenian prior to 1914 were Khorenatsi, Parpetsi, and Lastivertsi. Khorenatsi had two separate ashkharhabar editions, both by Father Khoren Stepale, while the translations of Lastivertsi and Parpetsi were both accomplished by Rev. Minas Ter-Petrosian and published in Alexandropol.

Thereafter we observe a lull of nearly three decades during which no new ashkharhabar translations were published, nor earlier pre-war editions reprinted. The situation changed drastically in the 1940’s, and since then many medieval Armenian histories have been translated to the modern Armenian literary language—mostly to Eastern, but in a few cases also to Western Armenian.

In Soviet and post-Soviet Armenia, all translations have been made in Eastern Armenian. In 1940, Haypetirats launched a series entitled Hay patmagirneri matenashar ashkharhabar targmanu-tiamb (the Armenian Historians Series in Ashkharhabar Translation). The translations of four medieval histories appeared in this series. The first was Malkhasiants’s translation of Khorenatsi. The second, published the following year, was Abeghian’s critical grabar text of Korun and the accompanying ashkharhabar translation. Ter-Miniasian’s translation of Yeghishe came out in 1946, and, finally, Malkhasiants issued a translation of Pavstos in 1947. In 1958, Ter-Miniasian revised his translation
of Yeghishe based on the new critical grabar text, which he had published the previous year. These four askhharhabar editions have since reappeared (with small editorial changes) on a number of occasions in Armenia and the diaspora.

Following its publication of the revised askhharhabar translation of Yeghishe, Haypetrmat also reprinted in the early 1960’s the 1940’s translations of Khorenatsi and Koriun. In 1964, this publishing house was renamed Hayastan and in 1968 launched the Hay matenagirner (Armenian Medieval Writers) series to make the famous works of medieval Armenian authors available in Eastern Armenian. When the Sovetakan Grogh (Soviet Author) publishing house was separated from Hayastan in 1976, the task of continuing the Hay matenagirner series passed on to the new entity. Thirteen of the 16 volumes, published in this series between 1968 and 1989, are the works of medieval Armenian histories covered in this article: the reprints of Khorenatsi, Pavstos and Yeghishe, plus new translations of Kaghankhavatsi (by Varag Arakelian), Lastiverti (Vazgen Gevorgian), Urhayetsi (Hrach Bartikian), Agathangelos (Aram Ter-Ghevondian), Artzruni (Vrezh Vardanian), Ghevond (Aram Ter-Ghevondian), Gandzaketsi (Varag Arakelian), Orbelian (Ashot Arsen Abrahamian), Davrizhetsi (Varag Arakelian), and Hovhannes Mamikionian (Vardan Hakob Vardanian).

Askhharabar translations of medieval Armenian histories also appeared as part of the Yerevan University Press’s Usanoghi gradaran series, launched in 1981. Khorenatsi, Pavstos, Yeghishe, and Urhayetsi were reprints, but the translations of Parpetsi (by Bagrat Ulubabian) and Draskhanakerttsi (Gevorg Tosunian) were new. The Usanoghi gradaran edition of Agatangeghos (1983) also included the askhharhabar translation of the section known as The Teaching of St. Gregory, which had been omitted in the 1977 Sovetakan Grogh edition. Moreover, Vrezh Vardanian reportedly introduced important improvements in the 1985 Usanoghi gradaran edition of Artzruni to the askhharhabar translation, which he had first published in 1978. Finally, it should be added that two separate editions of Khorenatsi were released in 1981 as part of Usanoghi gradaran. One was simply another reprint of the 1940 Malkhasiants translation; the other, however, printed in parallel both the 1913 grabar critical text and Malkhasiants’s askhharhabar translation. This last approach was later followed for the Usanoghi gradaran editions of Parpetsi, Agatangeghos, Artzruni, Pavstos, Yeghishe, Urhayetsi, and Draskhanakerttsi.

Efforts toward producing new askhharhabar translations of medieval Armenian histories have continued in the independence period. Yerevan University Press and Hayastan continue to remain the most consistent publishers in this domain, although they have been joined by a few newly established private publishing firms. Almost two decades after yielding the privilege of publishing the askhharhabar translations of medieval Armenian authors to Sovetakan Grogh, the Hayastan publishers returned to this domain in the early 1990’s with an ambitious new series, Hayots matenagirner (Medieval Writers of the Armenians). However, economic difficulties after the disintegration of the Soviet system limited the total number of volumes eventually published in this series to just four. The askhharhabar translations of Yeghishe and Khorenatsi were reprints, but Koriun’s new translation by Artashes Matevosian (1994) was based on significant amendments the latter had proposed to Abeghian’s 1941 critical text. Varag Arakelian’s 2006 askhharhabar translation of Ukhtanes was also entirely new.

In addition to publishing a new trilingual edition of Koriun (2005), Yerevan University Press printed in the independence period new askhharhabar translations of Sebastatsi (by Arshak Madoyan), Asoghik (Vardan Hakob Vardanian), Areveltsi (Gevorg Tosunian), and Metzopetsi (Arshak Madoyan).


In the domain of askhharhabar translations, too, the overwhelming majority of the work published in Armenia, even in the independence period, is the output of scholars trained in the Soviet era. Among them, Varag Arakelian tops the list, with the translation of five medieval histories to his credit. However, at the other end of the age spectrum is Vano Yeghisazarian, who was still in college when the Soviet Union disintegrated. He has since been involved in the translation of three medieval histories.

New askhharhabar translations have been much rarer in the diaspora and mostly in Western Armenian. In 1949, Karo Sasuni translated a large excerpt from Hovhannes Mamikionian and published it as a book in Beirut. Two years later, Stepan H. Banian included a parallel Western Armenian translation of his critical text of Koriun. Another Western Armenian translation of Koriun by Zulal Gazanchian was published in the periodical Bazmavep in 2005. The celebrations marking the 1500th anniversary of the Battle of Avarayr were the main motive behind the publication of a new edition of Yeghishe in New York in 1952. It included a Western Armenian translation by Hovhannes Tsovovian (Zovickian) and an English translation by Dickran H. Boyajian. Both were independent of the 1946 Eastern Armenian translation printed in Yerevan. This 1952 edition of Yeghishe was reprinted in two separate volumes—Western Armenian and English—in 1975. More important is Very Rev. Arshavir Gabuchian’s Western Armenian translation of Sebeos, printed in Antelias in 1990. It marked the first occasion when the Western Armenian translation of a medieval Armenian historian predated its Eastern Armenian version. Finally, a new Eastern Armenian translation of Sebastatsi was published by Khacherian in Los Angeles in 1988, alongside his critical text. Khacherian’s Eastern Armenian translation predated Arshak Madoyan’s translation of the same work, which would appear in Yerevan in 1992,
but, as mentioned above, Khacherian had completed most of this work prior to his emigration from Soviet Armenia.

Finally, two other separate projects of ashkharhabar translation in the diaspora should also be mentioned. The first was the reprinting by the Husbaber Press in Cairo in 1950–54 of earlier Eastern Armenian translations of Yeghishe, Khorenatsi, Koriun, and Pavstos, which had appeared in Yerevan in the 1940’s. The only change was the adoption of Classical Armenian orthography, instead of the reformed Soviet orthography used in the original Yerevan editions. Four decades later, the works of Agatangeghos, Khorenatsi, Yeghishe, and Koriun were printed again in Western Armenian translation in Beirut in 1995–96 as part of the Hayogi (Armenian spirit) series. These translations are not made directly from the grabar texts, as is the case with all other ashkharhabar translations, but from earlier Eastern Armenian translations.

Yeghishe’s History again leads the pack in the number of separate ashkharhabar translations it has had.13 It has been translated on six separate occasions—four times to Eastern and twice to Western Armenian. Altogether, different ashkharhabar translations of Yeghishe have been printed on 12 occasions—four of them prior to 1914 and the rest, since 1946. Ter-Minasian’s 1946 Eastern Armenian translation (amended in 1958) has had six different printings. Koriun has had four separate translations—two of them into Eastern Armenian—and nine editions overall, all since 1941. Of these, Abebian’s Eastern Armenian version has been published six times. Khorenatsi has had three separate translations—all into Eastern Armenian—and its ashkharhabar versions have been printed twelve times overall, sharing the top spot in this category with Yeghishe. Malkhasiant’s translation has had nine editions, the most for any ashkharhabar translation. Yet, there are still no ashkharhabar translations for 10 out of the 37 medieval Armenian historians surveyed in this article. All of these yet-to-be-translated authors lived in the 12th century or later. □

ENDNOTES

1. The author wishes to thank Artzvi Bakhchianin, George A. Bournoutian, the Rev. Father Serob Chamurlian, Zhirayr Danielian, Karen Matevosian, and the Rev. Father Vahan Ohanian for providing some of the data used in this study. The article follows The Armenian Review Transliteration Key, based on the phonetic values of Classical and Eastern Armenian, and omits the use of diacritics. For the sake of consistency, even the names of Western Armenian scholars are transliterated according to Eastern Armenian pronunciation. A more detailed version of this study will be submitted to the journal Bazmavep (Venice).

2. In order to keep it within a manageable size, the article does not cover the translations of these works into foreign languages, despite the undeniable fact that many of these translations, together with the accompanying introductory chapters and annotations penned by their scholar-translators, have made these works accessible to the international scholarly community, clarified many of the difficult terms and passages in these texts, and, more recently, provided a gateway to ethnic Armenians in the diaspora who can no longer read in Armenian, to connect with these texts through the languages of their adopted countries.

3. See Drvagner Hayastani vagh foedalizmi darashrjani patmagrutian (V–VIII daver) (1977); Drvagner Hayastani zargatsats foedalizmi darashrjani patmagrutian (IX–XIII daver) (1981); and Drvagner Hayastani XIV–XVIII daveri patmagrutian (1984). All three volumes were published by the Soviet Armenian Academy of Sciences in Yerevan. The only medieval historian analyzed by Babayan in detail, but excluded from this article, is Heturum Korikotsi (13th century), as his magnus opus, La flor des estoires de la terre d’Orient, was written in medieval French and not in Armenian. Consistent with the approach adopted toward the other historians covered in this article (see note 6), the author did not take into consideration Heturum’s lesser known chronologies, written in Armenian.

4. For example, all editions of the History of Taron are listed under Hovhan Mamikonian (and not under Zenob Glak) and those of the History of Aghvank, under Movses Kaghankatsatsi (and not Daskhurantsi). The same principle is followed in relation to the Histories of Ananun Zrutsagir, Vardan Areveltsi, Grigor Aknertsi, and Ghukas Sebastatsi, which were initially attributed, respectively, to Shapuh Bagratuni, Vardan Bardzberdtsi, Maghakia Abeqha or Vardan Patmich, and Stepannos Vrdanisian Shahumian.

5. For example, all other works attributed to Movses Khorenatsi and Yeghishe, and those authored by Areveltsi and Simeon Yerevants, which do not fall into the medieval genre of history, are excluded.

6. Thus, Ghazar Parpetsi’s Letter to Vahan Mamikonian, the List of Catholicii by Hovhannes Drskhankerttsi, the Chronology attributed to Stepanos Orbelian, Tovma Metzopetsi’s Colophon, and the Journal by Simeon Yerevantsi are excluded if they were published under a separate cover.

7. The only exception is Yeremia Chelepi Keomiurichian, of whom four works of history have been published, each of them having a single edition to date. It would have been overambitious to go ahead and single-handedly accord to any of these works the status of Keomiurichian’s magnus opus, without an already established consensus among the community of scholars.

8. Among the 37 medieval historians surveyed, only two others had their works printed during their own lifetime: Keomiurichian, a contemporary of Davrizhetsi, and Simeon Yerevantsi, who lived over a century later. However their historical works, covered here, were not among these publications; they were printed posthumously. Khachatur Jughayetsi’s History of the Persians was published in installments in the first-ever Armenian-language periodical Azdavar (but not as a separate book) in 1795, the year, it is thought, the author died.

9. In classical scholarship, editio princeps (plural: editiones princeps) means the first printed edition of a work that previously had existed only in manuscripts.

10. Indeed, two separate editions of Aknertsi were printed in 1870. Because the efforts toward these two editions were carried independently, this article considers both to be editiones princeps.

11. In the case of Kaghankavatsi, too, there were two editiones princeps in 1860, the other by Shahnazarantsi.

12. Aramian’s edition of Sebastatsi was earlier published in installments in Bazmavep from 1972.

13. The Western Armenian translations, made from Eastern Armenian, in the Hayogi series have not been considered as separate translations when compiling the data used in this paragraph.
These were the first words translated into Armenian upon the creation of the Armenian alphabet in the early 5th century by St. Mesrob Mashdots. This year marks UNESCO’s selection of Yerevan as the World Book Capital of 2012, corresponding with the 500th anniversary of the first printed book in Armenian. The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. has inaugurated an exhibition—which runs from April 19 to September 26—that features 76 items from Armenian print throughout the centuries.

Curator Dr. Levon Avdoyan authored the 100-page illustrated catalogue titled “To Know Wisdom and Instruction: 500 Years of Armenian Printing,” which describes the items on display at the Library of Congress. He stresses that although the celebration of the anniversary is important, its main goal is to illustrate the ancient literary tradition of the Armenian people. “We did not plan a beautiful exhibit, although there is plenty of beauty in it. We designed the exhibition to educate in a non-didactic way about all aspects of that tradition—including its musical extension.” The presentation, he added, “was fashioned to showcase the growth of the Armenian-language collections from some 7,000 items in 1992 to an estimated 45,000 today.”

The exhibition at the Library of Congress, through its various books, poems, and maps, represents large elements of Armenian history and culture since the 14th century. Avdoyan’s dedication to the exhibition has been instrumental in both its inception and continuation over the past several months. Two smaller exhibitions in the Greater Boston area also celebrated the 500th anniversary of Armenian printing this year.

Harvard University, with the assistance of several Armenian organizations such as the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and the Armenian Cultural Foundation (ACF), held its own exhibit in April featuring the first Armenian printed book, *Urbatagirk* (“The Book of Friday”) by Jacob the Sinner. The director of NAASR, Marc Magonian, considers the exhibition both celebratory and educational. “The primary mission of the exhibition was to educate Harvard students who might otherwise be unaware of Armenian history and culture. Thus, the exhibition covered a lot of ground in a relatively succinct manner. I think the celebratory aspect of the exhibition is implied—we did not set out to make this a ‘hooray for the Armenians’ exhibition, but the texts and materials included testify
to a book culture of which Armenians can be proud.”

As the principle organizer of the event, Prof. James Russell of Harvard University reached out to Armenian groups in the area, as well as his colleagues at Boston University and Tufts for cooperation. This milestone is an opportunity for Armenians and non-Armenians to appreciate the antiquity and perseverance of the Armenian alphabet, he says.

“The Armenian alphabet was essential to the survival of the Armenian language, culture, and tradition. I think this story of cultural survival against unbelievable odds should be of interest to any person aware that cultural diversity is as vital as biodiversity, not only to the quality of life, but to life itself,” notes Russell, who holds the Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies. He is very pleased with the popularity of the Harvard exhibit, and hopes for similar presentations that raise interest in the culture of Armenian print.

Shortly after the conclusion of the exhibit at Harvard, another opened at the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) in Watertown, featuring a larger collection of books on display, which will be shown through November 30. This exhibition focuses on similar aspects of the occasion, such as the creation of the Armenian alphabet, and the subsequent development of Armenian printing over the centuries. Many questions are addressed about Armenian history and the legacy of the manuscripts. The exhibition will be accompanied by a day-long symposium at ALMA on Sat., Sept. 15, featuring several guest lecturers. ☐
The name Teotig meant little to the English reader until the recent publication of the volume II of Rita Soulahan Kuyumdjian’s Trilogy—April 24, 1915, which includes Teotig’s biography and Soulahan Kuyumdjian’s translation of Monument to April 11, Teotig’s compilation of biographies of intellectuals who were victims of the Genocide.

Himself a survivor, Teotig (Teotoros Lapjinjian, 1873–1928) was a prolific editor, author, and publisher. A native of Scutari (Constantinople), he started his literary career in the late 1890’s. His name has become synonymous with his almanac, Amenun Daretsuytse (“Everyone’s Almanac”; 1907–29), an encyclopedic undertaking of well over 10,000 pages, which today stands as an inexhaustible reference for anyone interested in Armenian life in the first quarter of the 20th century.

Teotig was assisted in his enterprise by his British-educated wife, Arshaguhi Teotig (1875–1921)—herself a writer and educator—until her untimely death. He fled from Constantinople in 1922 on the eve of its occupation by the army of Mustafa Kemal. He lived a wandering life for the next six years, in Corfu, Nicosia, and Paris, with the last yearbooks being printed in Venice, Vienna, and Paris. He passed away in May 1928 in Paris, when the 18th volume of his yearbooks (his “paper children,” as he called them) was in press. His son Vahakn Teotig died in the United States sometime in the 1960’s.

The yearbook contains a huge array of diverse material, ranging from poetry and fiction to scholarship and yearly chronicles and obituaries. It has become a classic, both because of its well-crafted editions, profusely illustrated, and its extensive contents, which included, in addition to Teotig’s enormous output, contributions by many writers and scholars of the time—from poets Taniel Varoujan and Vahan Tekeyan to women writers Zabel Essayan and Shushanik Kurghinian, to historians Arshag Alboyadjian and Garabed Basmadjian.

Among Teotig’s many published and unpublished works—one of them, Koghkota hay hokevoraganutian (“The Golgotha of the Armenian Clergy”), was painstakingly edited by Ara Kalaydjian, recently deceased, and first published in 1985 by St. Vartan Press in New York—his lavish Dib u darr (“Type and Letter”), published in 1912 by V. and H. Nersessian Press in Constantinople on the 400th anniversary of Armenian printing, stands out. It is an outline of the history of Armenian printing since the beginnings, and until his time. After an introduction of the history of printing since Gutenberg’s time, Teotig also surveyed, for the first time, Armenian books published all around the world, from Turkey (and Western Armenia) and Russia (and Eastern Armenia) to Asia, Europe, and the New World. He gleaned information from various reference sources, as well as his own library, which contained well over 4,000 volumes.

On the 500th anniversary of Armenian printing, we offer for the first time in English a translation of the brief chapter of the book devoted to Armenian printing in the United States (pp. 186–8), enriched with some footnotes (the title is ours). Despite its shortcomings, it is a pioneering and neglected source for the study of Armenian American culture, written at a time when the East Coast, particularly New York, was the hub of Armenian American life (a position that has been mostly ceded to the West Coast in the past four decades). It is a memory of a bygone time when printing in Armenian flourished in the area, before the period of major expansion between both World Wars. Today, a few generations later, some relics of that time (books, newspapers, and journals) have been painstakingly gathered, albeit not completely, in the main Armenian and non-Armenian research libraries of the area. Some may also turn up in church or club libraries, private collections, or even basements and attics.

This translation may also serve as a timely reminder. In the last decade, the name of Teotig experienced a rebirth among Armenian-language readers in the diaspora (despite their dwindling numbers) because of the enterprising spirit of publisher Matig Eblighatian from Aleppo (Syria), the owner of the Armenian bookstore-press “Cilicia.” The first 15 volumes
The first Armenian to set foot in this populous metropolis of the United States was a teenager called Khachadour Vosganian, who arrived in 1834 to pursue higher education. Back in Constantinople, he had published the newspaper ԱզդարարԲուզանդեան (“Byzantine Monitor,” 1840). Following his steps, many Armenians immigrated to the New World to study in the universities.

The Protestant missions—just like they did in Calcutta, London, Malta, Smyrna, and Constantinople—established Armenian typography in the land discovered by Columbus to promote the Bible among Armenians too, particularly with publications in modern Armenian. In this way, half a century ago, Armenian-smelted letters entered New York, and the following two printing houses were established:

1. Bible Society (ԱստուածաշունչիԸնկերութիւն): It printed Ապաշխարացոյց (Atlas of the Repentant) in 1857 (first printing, Smyrna, 1839); the Ancient and the New Testament altogether in 1859 (second printing in New York, 1867); the New Testament in 1862 (reprinted in 1864, 1866, and 1867); the Book of Psalms in 1864; and the Gospel of St. Mark in 1868 (in modern Armenian).

2. Book Society of America (ԱմերիգայիՏետրակիԸնկերութիւն): It published ՀաւաքումնվկայութեանցՍ.Գրոց (Collection of Testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, first printed twice in Smyrna in 1849 and 1852) twice, in 1860 and 1879; Քրիստոնէականվարդապետութիւն (Christian Doctrine, 1862); ՔրիստիանոսինեւՔրիստինէինճամբորդութիւնը (The Journey of Christian and Christine, first printed in Smyrna, 1843); Առաջինդասագիրքմանկանց (First Textbook for Children, 1869); Ավետարանականքարոզներ (Evangelical Sermons); advices related to natural health; ՍիրոյխրատներՏաճկաստանիքրիստոնեայկնինհամար (Love Advice for Christian Women in Turkey), authored by teacher M. E. West, in fluent modern Armenian, a respectable book of morals, large fonts, 230 pages (1874); Քրիսթիանթալիմաթի (Christian Teaching, 1877); and ԲանալիՍԳիրքըբանալուկամդիւրիդասեր (Key to Open the Holy Bible or Easy Lessons, 1879; second printing, 1886).

The number of Armenian-Americans continued to grow year after year. Following, especially, the Armenian massacres of 1895–1896 in the Ottoman Empire, a big wave rushed to the New World to ensure their life, property, and honor. Naturally, that wandering mass included representatives of the various revolutionary parties that had already started elsewhere the task of Armenian liberation, and would have their organs in various cities in America.

Before the emigration of the 1890’s, Haigag Eginian opened a print shop in Jersey City and published the paper Արեգակ (Arekag, “Sun,” 1888), the first in Armenian-American journalism. In 1889, he published ԱզդարարԲուզանդեան (AZDARAR BUZANDEAN)” by Teotig translate and edited by Dr. Vartan Matossian

of Teotig’s Amenun taresuytse (up to the 1925 issue) have already been reprinted since 2007 in careful photographic editions that also include much-needed indexes, patiently prepared by another intellectual from Aleppo, Levon Sharoyan. The reprint is sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

In 2006, Eblighatian had reprinted Teotig’s landmark Dib u darr, again with the sponsorship of the Gulbenkian Foundation. I have used this second photographic reprint for the translation, as a testament to the cultural renaissance that the Syrian-Armenian community experienced over the past two decades, in these critical days when both our brothers and sisters in Syria, former Syrian-Armenians scattered around the world, and any concerned Armenian anxiously follow the developments of a country practically engulfed in a civil war.
“Ararat” Press: From 1891–92, Parnag Ayvadian published the newspaper Արարատ (Ararat), continuing the homonymous paper published by his father Mateos in Constantinople (1876), which had been shut down by Turkish authorities. The same press became Հարված (Harvadz), continuing the homonymous weekly (Gymnasium), published the same year, in his hand-written catalogue.

Together with his professional career, Gabrielian fervently supported the Armenian cause. He translated many books for Armenian writers. In 1905, he published Միության խնդրիը (Constitutional Governments); Երկրագործութիւնըորպէսուղիղճանապարհ (Agriculture as the Right Way); and Հայոց Պատմութիւն (History of the Armenians), which was first published on May 1, 1899 in New York by Mr. Chashfjian, who afterwards transferred it to the Hnchakians and finally to the ARF. The presses of the Hnchakian Party published the illustrated weekly Կարմիր Բառարան (Craingeville); Մերվարդագոյնտետրակը (Our Pink Notebook); Զայրոյթիօրը (Day of Fury); and Երազս (Towards the Country, by E. Agnoni); Ենթաժողովրդակյան Կոչում (The Problem of Unity); Ազատութիւն (Liberty), resuming publication, an interruption in 1906. During the last year, the young editor, using his own resources, published the English monthly “Armenia”—illustrated and with very fine printing—in New York. The monthly, which previously (1904) was the organ of the U.S. Hnchakian Committee, featured translations from well-known Armenian writers.

The Reorganized Hnchakian Party published the illustrated weekly Արարատ (Aradziv) in 1911, with lavish printing and rich contents. It only printed 20 issues, however, since the press was burned by a fire.

Boston

The presses of Հայրենիք (Hairenik, “Fatherland”), the organ of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), were founded in Boston. The Hairenik was first published on May 1, 1889 in New York by Mr. Chashfjian, who afterwards transferred it to the Hnchakians and finally to the ARF. The presses of the Hairenik have published the following books, among many: Հայոց Պատմութիւն (Araratian); Ազատութիւն (Dawn); Արարատ (Ararat), continuing the homonymous (Ararat), which had been shut down by Turkish authorities. The same press was first published on May 1, 1899 in New York by Mr. Chashfjian, who afterwards transferred it to the Hnchakians and finally to the ARF.

Twenty issues of Կարմիր Բառարան (Craingeville); Մերվարդագոյնտետրակը (Our Pink Notebook); Զայրոյթիօրը (Day of Fury); and Երազս (Towards the Country, by E. Agnoni); Ենթաժողովրդակյան Կոչում (The Problem of Unity); Ազատութիւն (Liberty), resuming publication, an interruption in 1906. During the last year, the young editor, using his own resources, published the English monthly “Armenia”—illustrated and with very fine printing—in New York. The monthly, which previously (1904) was the organ of the U.S. Hnchakian Committee, featured translations from well-known Armenian writers.

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Constitutional party. The presses of Azk published Փաշպառք աղբյուր (The Hearth of Corruption, 1908); Հայրենիք ամուսնություն (The Prayer of the Freedom Fighter); Գրիգորուս Սիրբ (Ninety-Three, 1910); and Սերբ ռեալիզմ (The Realism of Serbs) (Our Protests and the Power of the [Armenian Revolutionary] Federation Against Them, 1911).

The newspaper Խուսի (Luys, “Light”) was published by [Mikayel Minasian from 1901–06]. Its distribution in Turkey was not forbidden during the old regime because of its educational and agricultural contents.

The “Pilibosian and Dikranian” Press published Ասպարէզ (Asbarez) in 1904 and also Գործնական առողջաբանութիւն (Image of the Armenian Revolution).

“Atlantian” Press published the following books between 1905 and 1909: Կրթական Յուրացութիւն (The Armenian Crisis and Renaissance); Բահակ Մերբողոք (Youth Emotions); and Երազանց տեսարաններ (Educational Principles and Ideals).

I. A. Yeran (Yeran Press) published in recent years Հայերէն-է անգլիերէն անգլիերէն (Armenian-English Dictionary); Անգլիերէն-է Հայերէն (English-Armenian Dictionary); Մարդկանց կրթական տեսարաններ (Educational Principles); Անգլիերէն-է հայերէն (Educational Principles) and Երազանց տեսարաններ (Educational Principles).

The following newspapers have been published in Fresno: Պատանեկան յոյզեր (Asdghig) in 1902, edited by H. Eginian) and Կրթական Յուրացութիւն (Image of the Armenian Revolution).

“Guliguita” Press belongs to Bishop Mushegh Seropian and has published Պահակ Փտութեանօճախը (Armenian-American Yearbook) and Փտութեանօճախը (Speeches, 1912).

Other cities

The following newspapers have been published in Fresno: Աստղիկ (Asbarez, “Citizen,” 1902, edited by H. Eginian) and Բահակ (Bahag, “Guard”) has been published since 1912 in Providence by the Reorganized Hanchakian Party. This newspaper was the first published in Boston since January 1911, successively edited by Hrach Yervant, Yervant Mesayan, and Dr. Arshag Der Margosian.

Many of the American presses did not have printing machines, and thus various Armenian books and newspapers were printed by the foreign presses. □

Translator’s Notes

1. Given the nature of the article, the transliteration of names is based on Western Armenian phonetic values.
2. This is the Armenian translation of John Bunyan’s The Pilgrim’s Progress.
3. This book was published in Turkish with Armenian characters.
5. "Gochnag" was published in New York until 1968.
6. “Veridasaart Hayastan” was published until the late 1990’s in New Jersey, in its last years.
7. This is the translation of the wisdom sayings (andarz) of a 4th-century Zoroastrian priest, made by a noted Armenian Iranist, Harutjun Tiryakian.
8. “Armenia” was continued by “New Armenia” and published until 1929.
9. This is the translation of L’affaire Crainquebille, by French novelist Anatole France.
10. The first issue of “Eyez Hayastan” appeared in 1899.
11. The Armenian Democratic Constitutional Party was founded in 1908 in Constantinople and lasted until its merging with the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party in 1921.
12. “Asbarez” was founded in 1908.
13. “Azk” and “Bahag” became forerunners to “Baikar,” the organ of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party since 1922.

Cyrillic fonts, and in 1818 he had his masterpiece, the first Serbian dictionary, published there. Karadžić’s dictionary was the first Serbian book in history that was written following new grammatical rules, and in the vernacular. It was also the first Serbian, and in fact Slavic, book that was printed by Vienna’s Mkhitarists.

Following the publication of Karadžić’s work, the Mkhitarists also published the first Serbian Alphabet book (1827); the philosophical work, The Mountain Wreath (1841), by the Serbian Orthodox Prince-Bishop of Montenegro Petar II Petrovic-Njegos, as well as his other work, Three days in Trieste in the Month of January in 1844 (1844).

In the history of Moldovan printing, Akim Ivanovich Popov (most likely Papian) has left his mark, as Chisinau’s first publisher. He was an Armenian from the city of Grigoriopol. In June of 1840, Popov began his publishing work, printing books in Moldovan, French, Russian, and Armenian. He published Normal Contact (1846), The Book of Armenopulo-Donic (1850), as well as an alphabet book and elementary level books, the works of Ion Sirbu. Popov died in 1885.

Even in the 20th century, when most people already had a printing press, Armenians continued their pioneering work in the field. In Addis Ababa, due to the efforts of the president of the Publishing House of Fine Arts G. Jerahian, for the first time in history the ancient Ethiopian language of Amharic appeared in print in 1956; the printed work was the Gospel According to St. John.

This brief account paid homage to eight Armenians who contributed to the field of publishing in Europe, Asia, and Africa between the 16th and 20th centuries. Their work impacted nine peoples (Polish, Moldovan, Bulgarian, Turkish, Lebanese, Georgian, Ethiopian, and also Serb), not mentioning Anton the Armenian who observed the printing process in China. For Armenians, interest in the printing press was a reflection of their gravitation toward modernity. As Father Levon Zekiyan had rightfully noted, “I consider the very quick assimilation by Armenians of the printing as a signal of ‘modernization’ not only for the technical change in the way of producing books, but for a series of circumstances which show that we find ourselves before a changing social and economic reality.” □

Sources


Literaturen front, Sofia, 1965, December (Bulgarian).

Ch. S. Fanian, “The First Publisher of Chishinau,” Patmabanasirakan Handes, 1974, #3.


—(TRANSLATED BY NANORE BARSOUMIAN)
A World History of Armenian Printers

BY ARTSVI BAKHCINIAN

On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Armenian printing, it is worth remembering Armenian printers who were pioneers in publishing in various countries. Driven by a yearning for enlightenment, a curiosity for what was new, and a mission to spread the products of modern civilization to populations in their region, these Armenians appreciated the printing press, the new revolutionary invention, and worked towards its development in different countries and cultures.

Also created the Turkish “Nesih” and “Taliq” fonts, which were named “Arab Oglu” after him. In 1770 he traveled to Tbilisi on the invitation of King Erekle, where he created Georgian fonts, established printing houses, and published Georgian language books. He also contributed to perfecting the newly founded printing house in Echmiadzin.

Beginning in 1839, Hovhannes Mouhendisian (1810–1891) worked on the creation and casting of various fonts for the press. He was a well-known engraver and musician, who studied under the renowned Hampartsoum Limonciyan. His work began in the creation of Armenian fonts, but in 1843 he began designing also Turkish and Arabic typefaces, which were later known as “Mouhendisian letters.” He published Armenian and Turkish language books and newspapers, and also designed and illustrated some Turkish banknotes. He was called “The Turkish Gutenberg.”

One of the pioneers of the Bulgarian printing press is Tatevos Divijjan (1810 Constantinople—died in Bulgaria). In 1841, with his help, Constantine Ognyanovitch founded the first Bulgarian publishing house, “The Hardworking Bee,” in Constantinople. Divijjan molded Bulgarian fonts, and published 77 books in Bulgaria—some original, while others translations. For his activities, he was arrested numerous times, until he finally sought refuge in Bulgaria. His student A. Minasian published 97 books in Bulgarian in Constantinople between 1856 and 1873. It is noteworthy that out of the 452 Bulgarian language books published in Constantinople—until Bulgaria gained independence in 1906—221 of them were published at the initiative of Armenian publishers.

Publisher George Meger (Kevork Megerian) was a descendent of the Meger family in Constantinople. He lived in Beirut from his childhood, and later studied printing with the Jesuit Fathers. He traveled to France, then to Tunisia, where he published an Arabic language newspaper to counter Italian propaganda. In France, he met with Prime Minister [Léon] Gambetta (who served as Prime Minister from Nov. 1881 to Jan. 1882) to discuss the creation of a print media in Arabic. After moving to Leiden (Holland) he preoccupied himself with printing books in Arabic. He purchased a printing press in France, and brought it with him to Lebanon, where he founded an Arabic printing house. Later, he also acquired Armenian fonts, and published Armenian language books.

Armenians also contributed to Serbian culture and language. Renowned Serbian enlightener, philologist, and founder of the modern Serbian language Stefanovic Karadzic (1787–1864) had his historical dictionary published at the Mkhitarist printing house in Vienna. His first books were published in Serbia, without permission from a Serbian metropolitan. That had greatly angered the Serbian religious leaders, because at that time they had tight control over the printing press. Karadzic moved the operation to Vienna, which was away from the metropolitan’s reach. He discovered that the Mkhitarist printing house possessed

Bakhchinyan, continues to page 27