

BACK TO THE ROOTS:
NOTIONS FROM *THE LETTER OF LOVE AND CONCORD*
AND 13th-CENTURY ARMENO-SYRIAC INTERACTIONS
IN CILICIAN ARMENIA *

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Abstract

This article analyses, publishes and provides an English translation of a short text about the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great and the Armenian King Trdat the Great, found in manuscript no. 947 of the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, Matenadaran (Erevan, Armenia). I first provide a study of the manuscript, including a diplomatic and palaeographical analysis, as well as its adventurous life and travels before reaching the Matenadaran. Then, I analyse the text and its claim to have registered Ephraem the Syrian's answer to the question of his disciple Sahak, later translated from Syriac into Armenian. Subsequently, the article includes the Armenian original and English translation of the text.

Keywords: Emperor Constantine, King Trdat, Armeno-Syriaca, St Ephraem the Syrian, Armenian orthodoxy, apology, Cilician Armenia

A word of gratitude

In the 90s of the last century and for a long time thereafter, entry into the marvellous world of the Department of Medieval Studies at the Central European University introduced students from the start to pure intellectual, aesthetic and social fun: a three-day field trip to medieval sites in Hungary involving students and faculty alike. My first conversations with István on Armenian and Byzantine history, religion and philosophy, Eastern Christianities and the cardinal role of the Syriac churches, his enthusiasm for unconventional and frequently very challenging topics of research, started then and never stopped. It was in this spirit that he encouraged me to undertake the study of a medieval Armeno-Byzantine heterodox religious movement – the Paulicians and the later Tondrakites – for my M.A. thesis. It was likewise his contagious fascination with 'strange' texts that dispelled my doubts regarding the topic of my doctoral thesis: a thorough study and a critical edition of a medieval Armenian text long

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disparaged as a forgery and not necessarily worth a new dissertation – the so-called *Letter of Love and Concord between Emperor Constantine and King Trdat, Pope St Sylvester and Catholicos St Gregory the Illuminator*.¹ It is therefore fitting to honour my *Doktorvater* by presenting a short, unpublished, intriguing text that relies on the same traditions about Emperor Constantine and King Trdat, their meeting and their joint actions, as those set forth in much greater detail in the *Letter of Love and Concord*. In this case, the text presented here is attributed to Ephraem the Syrian. The context of the relevant manuscript's production in Cilician Armenia in 1215 and its content shed light on intensified Armenian-Syriac relations in that particular region and period, too. These circumstances make the analysis, edition and translation of the text proposed here, as well as the history of the manuscript itself, all the more suitable for this festive occasion, highlighting the common research interests that have come to solidify my friendship and continuous scholarly exchange with István.

Introduction

In manuscript no. 947, preserved in the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts – Maštoc' Matenadaran – in Erevan, Armenia (M947), the last six folios contain questions posed to St Ephraem the Syrian by his disciples and the venerable Syriac church father's answers, concluding with four colophons (155r-160v + 161r-v for the main colophon).² Within these questions and answers there are two textual units, marked so in the manuscript by their incipits written in capital letters, as well as an interlaced design running horizontally along the right column of the fol. 159v that separates them, all in black ink. The purpose of this article is to provide an analysis, edition and translation of the second textual unit (fols 159v-160v), which is Ephraem's answer to a question regarding the origin of orthodox churches.

According to the main colophon on fol. 161r-v, M947 was copied in the Cilician Monastery of Akner (Ակներոյ վանք/Ակաւնց վանք / Akneroy vank' / Akanc' vank') in 1215, but a detailed investigation reveals a more complex situation.³ Like countless Armenian manuscripts, M947 had an eventful life. Its

¹ Published as Z. POGOSSIAN, *The Letter of Love and Concord: A Revised Diplomatic Edition with Historical and Textual Comments and English Translation (Medieval Mediterranean, 88)*, Leiden, 2010.

² A description of the manuscript is in Ò. EGANEAN ET AL., *Mayr c'uc'ak hayerēn jeḡagrac' Maštoc'i anuan Matenadaran* [Grand Catalogue of Armenian manuscripts of the Maštoc' Matenadaran], Vol. 3, Erevan, 2007, pp. 1379-1384.

³ This colophon has been published several times. Major excerpts are in N. MARR, *Efrem Sirin. O dniax prazdnovanija Roždestva. Ob osnovanii pervyx cerkvej v Ierusalime* [Ephraem the Syrian. On the days for celebrating the Nativity. On the establishment of the first churches in Jerusalem], in *Izdaniya fakul'teta vostočnyx jazykov S. Peterburgskogo Universiteta. Teksty i razyskanija po armjano-gruzinskoj filologii, Kn. 1, No. 5*, St. Petersburg, 1900, pp. 6-7; G. YOVSEP'EAN, *Yištakaran*

movements are worthy of note as part of Armenian cultural history. Therefore, the paper will first expose these details and allow the readers to trace the manuscript's fascinating history from its creation to its present shape and location in Erevan. I will then discuss the purpose of the short tale attributed to Ephraem the Syrian as an answer to a question, both in the context of the given manuscript created in a high-profile Cilician Armenian monastery as well as in a milieu characterised by intensified Armeno-Syriac exchanges.

Matenadaran Ms 947: history, context, content

The Monastery of Akner or Akanc' vank' was one of the most celebrated and royally sponsored monasteries of Cilician Armenia, patronised since the first Cilician Armenian King Levon I (r. 1198-1219), whose heart and entrails were buried there. An intellectual centre in its own right, its scriptorium has also left a vital manuscript production legacy with translated and copied works.⁴ The Monastery of Akner was located near today's village Eġner in Turkey and may be partially under water.⁵

M947 was part of the core of more than four thousand manuscripts from the Holy See of Ējmiacin that had a long and intricate history.⁶ In 1915, the collection was transferred to Moscow for safekeeping during the First World War and the Armenian Genocide, but in 1922 it was dispatched back to Erevan, where it formed the nucleus of what would become the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts – Maštoc' Matenadaran.⁷ Prior to Ējmiacin, M947 was in another renowned centre of pilgrimage and learning, the Monastery of the Protomartyr St Stephen in Darašamb known also as Mařardavank', today a UNESCO World

jeřagrac' [Colophons of manuscripts], *Vol. 1, E daric' minč'ew 1250 t'* [From the fifth century to 1250], Antilias (Lebanon), 1951, cols 777-782, 799-800; N. AKINEAN, *Akanc' kam Akneri vank'ə* [The Monastery of Akanc' or Akner], in *Matenagrakan hetazötut'iwinner (Bibliographical studies)*, Vol. 5, Vienna, 1953, pp. 157-160; A. MAT'EVOSYAN, *Hayeren jeřagrerı hiřatakaranner. ŽG dar* [Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts: 13th century], Erevan, 1984, pp. 91, 118-119. Mat'evosyan's publication of the original colophon that followed the writings of Ephraem the Syrian (which is earlier) together with the colophon of 1219 (on pp. 118-119) creates a confusion regarding the different dates of these colophons. The most recent edition of the colophon is in EGANEAN ET AL., *Grand Catalogue*, pp. 1382-1384.

⁴ L. ALIŠAN, *Sisuan*, Venice, 1885, pp. 153-156; AKINEAN, *The Monastery of Akner*, pp. 137-196.

⁵ The approximate coordinates are: 37°25'35.2"N 35°26'41.1"E. See F. HILD – H. HELLENKEMPER, *Tabula imperii Byzantini, Band 5, Kilikien und Isaurien, Teil 1*, Vienna, 1990, pp. 167-168. I am grateful to my colleague Samuel Grigoryan, whom I consulted about the location of the Monastery of Akner, as well as the medieval town of K'esun. See note 29.

⁶ Ö. EGANYAN – A. ZEYT'UNYAN – P. ANT'ABYAN, *C'uc'ak jeřagrac' Maštoc'i anvan matenadaranı* [Catalogue of manuscripts of Maštoc' Matenadaran], *Vol. 1*, Erevan, 1965, cols 14-50.

⁷ For the history of the collection of the Matenadaran, see EGANYAN – ZEYT'UNYAN – ANT'ABYAN, *Catalogue*, cols 13-174; on the manuscripts from the Holy See of Ējmiacin, see *ibidem*, cols 14-110.

Heritage Site in northern Iran.⁸ It entered the collection of Ējmiacin in 1848 due to the efforts of the monk, scholar and keeper of the manuscripts of the Ējmiacin library Yovhannēs Šahxat‘uneanc‘. He was keen on collecting manuscripts spread in various monasteries of historical Armenia, often in lamentable conditions according to the accounts of various visitors.⁹ A. Sedrakyan informs us with displeasure that only 69 manuscripts from the Monastery of the Protomartyr St Stephen in Darašamb were transferred to Ējmiacin due to the efforts of Šahxat‘uneanc‘. The latter had sent Makar *vardapet* Ter-Petrosyan to accomplish this task, who left the remaining 54 manuscripts there, in deplorable conditions, according to Sedrakyan. The fate of these remaining codices is unknown.

How did a manuscript copied in Cilicia end up in northern Iran? Codicological information allows us to form a hypothesis. In the 17th century, the manuscript was rebound. This operation must have been carried out in Jerusalem, rather than the Monastery of the Protomartyr St Stephen for the reasons set forth below.

According to the main colophon of M947 on fol. 161r-v, it originally formed part of a codex that included the *Homilies* (alternatively translated as *Discourses*) – attributed to St Gregory the Illuminator – known as *Yačaxapatum Čairk‘* (Յաճախապատում ճարք) and theological writings, or as the colophon says “the Orthodox teaching against various heresies along with testimonies from the Holy Scriptures” by Severianus of Emesa (Severian of Gabala). Currently M947 includes only the sermons of Severian of Gabala, followed by the two textual units – questions and answers – between Ephraem the Syrian and his disciples, among whom Sts Sahak and Zenob are singled out as their head – գլխաւոր աւակներուց (fol. 155r).¹⁰ These Ephraemian (more precisely Ps.-Ephraemian) expositions are not mentioned in the colophon. This is not unusual since colophons did not necessarily list all the works copied in a manuscript.

⁸ GPS coordinates 38.978980507836724, 45.473065280430475, on the right bank of the river Araxes. On the history and architectural significance of the monastery see: H. HOFRICHTER, *Das Kloster Sdepannos Nachawega in der iranischen Provinz Aserbaidšchan*, in *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 9 (1972), pp. 193-239; G. ULUHOGIAN, *Hyusisayin Irani haykakan čartarapetakan hušarjanneri vimagrüt‘yunə* [The epigraphy of Armenian architectural monuments in northern Iran], in *Patmabanasirakan hands*, 1 (1979), pp. 143-153; H. HOFRICHTER (ed.), *S. Stephanos, Il convento di S. Stefano / The St. Stephen Monastery (Documenti di architettura armena, 10)*, Milan, 1980; A. HAKHNAZARYAN, *Sb. T‘adēos Arak‘eali ew Sb. Step‘anos Naxavkayi vank‘erə / The Monasteries of St. Thaddeus the Apostle and St. Stepannos Nakhavka (Research on Armenian Architecture)*, Erevan, pp. 19-31.

⁹ EGANYAN – ZEYT‘UNYAN – ANT‘ABYAN, *Catalogue*, cols 38, 49.

¹⁰ The presumed identity or models behind these persons – Sts Sahak and Zenob – require a separate investigation and will not be discussed in this paper. It is possible that an allusion to the Catholicos St Sahak the Great (r. 387-438) and Zenob Glak are intended, at least for an Armenian audience. The latter is the presumed author of a purportedly fourth-century *History of Tarōn*, which narrates a folkloric version of Armenia’s conversion. The *History of Tarōn* is variously dated between the seventh and tenth centuries. According to Marr, however, the names are taken from the *Vita* of St Ephraem and were members of his entourage, although Sahak (Isaac) does not appear in one of the recensions, see MARR, *Ephraem the Syrian*, p. 12.

Yet, other features of the manuscript indicate that these folios came from a different codex. In order to understand the complex structure of M947, let us first look at the most glaring omission: the absence of *Yačaxapatum Čark'*.

Scholars had noticed it before.¹¹ One of the founding fathers of Armenian palaeography, Garegin Yovsēp'ean, identified the manuscript of the *Yačaxapatum Čark'* copied in the Monastery of Akner in 1215 as Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate no. 94. Another major and unique connoisseur especially of Armenian manuscripts in Jerusalem – Bishop Norayr Połarean, who edited the eleven-volume catalogue of its collection – confirmed Yovsēp'ean's hypothesis.¹² Incidentally, Jerusalem manuscript no. 94 is the oldest surviving copy of the *Yačaxapatum Čark'*, whose exemplar dated to the beginning of the tenth century. The *Grand Catalogue* of the Matenadaran manuscripts indicates that the *Yačaxapatum* occupied the first 163 folios of the original manuscript in the quires numbered Ա-Խ (corresponding to I-XIII) plus 7 folios from the quire Ծ (corresponding to XIV). It is these first 163 folios that formed manuscript no. 94 in the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, even though currently the first quire (Ա) is lost. Although the *Grand Catalogue* of the Matenadaran manuscripts holds that the remaining quires were numbered Ծ to Ջ (corresponding to the second part of XIV to XXVII) and received a new numbering from Ա, to ԺԴ (corresponding to I-XIV) in the 17th century, a detailed codicological analysis of M947 does not confirm this data fully. The numbering Ջ does not appear at all in the last section of the manuscript.

Currently, M947 has at least five production layers, four of which took place in the Monastery of Akner. The first layer consists of almost all the *Homilies* of Severian of Gabala, copied on fols 1r-151v. However, the full text of the *Homilies* runs up to fol. 154v. The last three folios – 152r-154v – possibly added at the end of the 13th or beginning of the 14th century, are written in a different hand and on a different quality paper. Thus, the current full text of the *Homilies* of Severian of Gabala in M947 is the result of two stages of copying. The Ps.-Ephraemian textual units (155r-160v) represent a third production layer, and its characteristics diverge from both parts of the *Homilies* of Severian of Gabala with regards to the hand, paper quality and colour of the ink.¹³ There is no quire

¹¹ MARR, *Ephraem the Syrian*, p. 7; MAT'EVOSYAN, *Colophons*, pp. 91-92. See also the following note.

¹² YOVSEP'EAN, *Colophons of Manuscripts*, cols 778-780; N. COVAKAN [Połarean], *Yačaxapatum (1215) (jeř. S. Y. T'. 94) [Yačaxapatum (1215). Ms 94 of the Saints James {Armenian Patriarchate Library}]*, in *Sion*, 3 (1961), pp. 74-75; IDEM, *Mayr C'uc'ak jeřagrac' Srboc' Yakobeanc'* [Grand Catalogue of Manuscripts in St James {Armenian Patriarchate Library}], Vol. 1, Jerusalem, 1966, pp. 288-289.

¹³ The difference in hand and paper quality of the Ephraemian texts, which Marr calls *Homilies*, were first noticed by MARR, *Ephraem the Syrian*, pp. 7-9. See also YOVSEP'EAN, *Colophons*, col. 780. I studied the manuscript in situ in 2018. Several details were reconfirmed by a further examination carried out in July 2021 by Dr. Armine Melkonian, to whom I express my deepest gratitude.

mark on these folios, which means that the original manuscript ended with the quire Ω and not \mathcal{Q} , as per the *Grand Catalogue*. Furthermore, the folios with Ps.-Ephraem's texts were cut too deeply at the upper border to fit the final, 17th-century rebinding, causing textual damage at least on one occasion. Fortunately, the folios with the *Homilies* of Severian of Gabala (1r-151v + 152r-154v) were only slightly cut and there is no mutilation of the text. The fourth production layer of the manuscript is the final colophon on fol. 161r-v, copied in a different (fourth) hand.

The folios with two Ps.-Ephraemian texts must have belonged to a different codex, which, too, was copied in the Monastery of Akner during the same Abbot T'oros' tenure, as per the short colophon that follows immediately on the same folio and column (160v). Most likely, these folios were joined to the manuscript with *Yačaxapatum Čark'* and the *Homilies* of Severian of Gabala sometime at the end of the 13th or early 14th century in the Monastery of Akner. At this time the last colophon with data on the *Yačaxapatum* and the *Homilies* of Severian (fol. 161r-v) was copied into the last page of the new, enlarged codex. Hence, the presence of the fourth hand on the last folio of M947.

It was not atypical that a manuscript originally copied in the Akner monastery would end up in Jerusalem. Numerous other codices in the personal possession of Cilician Armenian élites or monasteries shared this fate after the fall of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia in 1375, as well as in the subsequent centuries. They came to enrich the library of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem, which is presently one of the most important repositories of Armenian manuscripts in the world. In the course of the 17th century, while in Jerusalem, the manuscript with the *Yačaxapatum Čark'*, the *Homilies* of Severian of Gabala and the two textual units attributed to Ephraem the Syrian was divided into two. The first part became Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate Library manuscript no. 94, while the second part moved yet again, eventually becoming M947.

M947 has another fascinating feature related to the rebinding in Jerusalem. We find a bifolio of parchment with a Ge'ez text at the beginning and end of the manuscript respectively, serving as flyleaves. Turaev studied these Ge'ez fragments in 1912 while the manuscript was still in the library of the Holy See of Ējmiacin with the call no. 919. He identified the text as a *Homily on Melchizedek* attributed to Cyril of Alexandria, known as *Qeralos* in the Ethiopian tradition.¹⁴ In 2018, during a visit to the Matenadaran with the Ethiopianist colleague Fr Rafał Zarzeczny from the Pontificio Istituto Orientale of Rome, the flyleaves were studied again *in situ*, confirming that what Turaev studied in 1912 is now manuscript 947 of the Matenadaran. Fr Zarzeczny is preparing a palaeographical analysis of these fragments but in his preliminary estimation

¹⁴ B. TURAEV, *Iz armjano-abissinskix snošenij* [From Armenian-Abyssinian Interactions], in *Zapiski vostočnogo otdela imperatorskogo russkogo arxeologičeskogo obščestva*, 21/1 (1912), p. 7.

the text was most likely copied in the 15th, rather than the 12th-13th centuries, as per the *Grand Catalogue* of the Matenadaran Manuscripts.

What is of concern to this paper is the use of Ge'ez fragments, which would presume a location where Ethiopian manuscripts were easily available for reuse to an Armenian binder. It is hard, although not impossible, to imagine that this location was the Monastery of Akner in Cilicia or St Stephen in Darašamb in today's northern Iran, rather than the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Indeed, Jerusalem was one of the most important locations where Armenian and Ethiopian monks and pilgrims met, lived together and exchanged material objects, such as codices.¹⁵ Moreover, another Matenadaran manuscript, no. 685, copied in Jerusalem in 1632, likewise employed flyleaves from an Ethiopian manuscript with Ge'ez fragments of the Psalms.¹⁶

It must remain an open question who brought the newly bound manuscript to the Monastery of the Protomartyr St Stephen of Darašamb and in what circumstances. It is possible that this occurred around the middle of the 17th century. At this time, the basin of the Araxes river on both of its sides saw a flourishing of construction activity undertaken by Armenians.¹⁷ They renovated and expanded many old religious establishments but there were also new foundations, as attested by material remains and epigraphic material, though the once numerous architectural monuments on the left bank of the Araxes river (today in the Republic of Azerbaijan) have been completely obliterated in the past 30 years.¹⁸ Numerous pilgrims who left graffiti at the monastery of the Protomartyr St Stephen in Darašamb qualified themselves as *mahtesi*, i.e. pilgrims who had also visited Jerusalem.¹⁹ This attests to the wealth of the region's population, who could afford to undertake lengthy travels, as well as its mobility. These features must be placed in the context of the burgeoning trans-continental trade in which Armenian merchants from New Julfa (Isfahan) played a prominent role and which involved other regions of Armenia, particularly the geographically and culturally connected area of Darašamb, Old Julfa – the original homeland of most New Julfans – and the town and district of Naxičewan more generally.²⁰ The

¹⁵ E. CERULLI, *Etiopi in Palestina. Storia della Comunità etiopica di Gerusalemme, Vol. 1*, Rome, 1974, pp. 82, 85, 108, esp. pp. 119-124, 134, 215-216, 373. E. ISAAC, *Catalogue of Ethiopic mss. in the Manuscript Library of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem*, in *Le Muséon*, 89 (1976), pp. 179-194.

¹⁶ TURAEV, *Armenian Abyssinian Relations*, p. 6, numbered as ms 807. Fr Zarzeczny confirmed that this is the current Matenadaran ms. 685, based on his *in situ* study of the fragments.

¹⁷ ULUHOGIAN, *Armenian architectural monuments in northern Iran*, pp. 143-153, esp. p. 152.

¹⁸ This now-destroyed heritage has been documented in dozens of books and articles by Argam Ayvazyan, a native of Naxičewan, among which see A. AYVAZYAN, *The Historical Monuments of Nakhichevan*, Erevan, 1990, and a digital archive at: <https://julfaproject.wordpress.com/the-argam-ayvazyan-archive/>

¹⁹ ULUHOGIAN, *Armenian architectural monuments in northern Iran*, p. 151.

²⁰ ULUHOGIAN, *Armenian architectural monuments in northern Iran*, pp. 147-152. On the 17th-century trans-continental trade and the prominent role of Armenian merchants from New Julfa

pilgrims' graffiti also indicate on-going links and traffic between the area of Darašamb and Jerusalem. Thus, the transfer of the rebound codex (now M947) from Jerusalem to Darašamb could have easily taken place during such travels, even if we cannot establish anything more precise at this stage of research.

To sum up, the movements of the manuscript may be succinctly presented as follows: from the Akner monastery in Cilicia to Jerusalem (most likely at the end of the 14th century); rebinding undertaken in Jerusalem (beginning of the 17th century); from Jerusalem to the Monastery of the Protomartyr St Stephen of Darašamb (Mařardavank[՝]) in northern Iran (likely around the middle of the 17th century); from the monastery of St Stephen to the library of the Holy See of Ējmiacin in 1848; from Ējmiacin to Erevan in 1922 (with a brief period in Moscow between 1915 and 1922), where it is currently preserved. The manuscript's wanderings remarkably mirror the vicissitudes of certain parts of the Armenian population.

Ephraem the Syrian on Emperor Constantine and King Trdat?

The content of the original manuscript (including the *Yačaxapatum Čark[՝]*) indicates that its creators were concerned with orthodoxy, orthopraxy and other kinds of specific Armenian ritual, calendrical and ecclesiastical traditions, seeking to confirm their authenticity and veracity through the most venerated fathers of the Armenian and Syriac churches of the fourth century – St Gregory the Illuminator and St Ephraem the Syrian as well as of Severian of Gabala. The study of the first piece of questions and answers attributed to Ephraem in this manuscript (fols 155r-159v), currently underway by the present author and B. Roggema, leaves no doubt that the monks of the Akner monastery envisioned an active use of these texts when engaging in discussions with their Syriac peers.²¹ The first unit expounds on the Armenian custom of celebrating the Nativity on January 6 and puts its justification in the mouth of St Ephraem. Such a *modus operandi* emphasises the prestige that Ephraem enjoyed among Armenian and Syriac monks alike, as well as highlighting the use of an efficacious argumentation technique. It entailed exposing your point of view through a figure whose authority on matters of faith was indisputable among your interlocutors and who was equally venerated by both parties. In addition, the formulation of the arguments is permeated with a spirit of accommodation rather than confrontation on the issue of liturgical and calendrical differences.

Similar considerations underpin the second unit attributed to Ephraem, focusing on Emperor Constantine and King Trdat, published here. It is presented as yet another answer of the saint to a question put forward to him. Intriguingly,

(Isfahan), see S. ASLANIAN, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*, Berkeley, 2010.

²¹ This first unit has also been discussed in detail by MARR, *Ephraem the Syrian*, pp. 9-33.

the first sentence claims that the “blessed *vardapet*”, through his divine knowledge, reiterated and confirmed what the inquirers already knew, implying that well-known facts would be set forth in what follows. The question focused on the origin of “the orthodox churches”, by which Miaphysite churches were meant. Such a preamble to a forthcoming opinion allowed the Armenian author to associate his view with the one reputedly held by the (west) Syriac churches: they both shared membership in the primordial Orthodox community. This orthodoxy, the text affirmed, was to be traced back to the Council of Nicaea convened by Emperor Constantine with the help of King Trdat and St Gregory the Illuminator. Already here one has legitimate doubts as to the presumed respondent of the question – Ephraem or another Syriac author. The rest of the text relies on accounts of the alliance and cooperation between Emperor Constantine and King Trdat, which have a long history in the Armenian literary and oral traditions and which flourished since the middle of the 12th century in the Cilician Armenian *milieu*. Various distinct narratives culminated in the apocryphal *Letter of Love and Concord* mentioned at the beginning of this paper, but not only that. A range of apocalyptic texts and homilies likewise elaborated on these legends, also imagining a collaboration between an Armenian and a Roman (viz. Crusader) king at the End of Times.²² It is, therefore, highly improbable that Ephraem or any other Syriac source lies behind our Armenian text. Yet, all the other mentioned texts focused on relations between Armenia and Rome (viz. the crusaders and the Church of Rome), both from political and religious points of view. In M947, these same traditions came to buttress efforts to strengthen Armenian-Syriac connections. This is an intriguing use of Armenian legends on Constantine and Trdat in the context of Armeno-Syriac relations that deserves further investigation.

The short tale of M947 develops two main themes: the role of King Trdat in safeguarding the Council of Nicaea, providing details that to the best of my knowledge are unique, and the division of the holy sites in Jerusalem between Constantine and Trdat.²³ We encounter the latter notion in various other Armenian texts especially from the Cilician milieu, such as the *Letter of Love and Concord*, an apocalyptic *Sermo de antichristo* attributed to Epiphanius of Salamis, one of the recensions of another apocalyptic source from the Cilician period

²² R.W. THOMSON, *Constantine and Trdat in the Armenian Tradition*, in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 50/1-3 (1997), pp. 277-289; POGOSSIAN, *The Letter of Love and Concord*; EADEM, *The Last Emperor or the Last Armenian King? Considerations on Apocalyptic Themes in Armenian Texts from the Cilician Period*, in K. BARDAKJIAN – S. LA PORTA (eds), *Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: A Comparative Perspective*, Leiden, 2014, pp. 457-503.

²³ There is a long and consolidated tradition in Armenian sources that connected Emperor Constantine and King Trdat with Nicene orthodoxy. See M. BAIS, *Costantino nelle fonti storio-grafiche armene*, in M. PAMPALONI – E. BISHARA (eds), *Costantino e l'Oriente. L'impero, i suoi confini e le sue estensioni. Atti del convegno di studi promosso dal PIO in occasione della ricorrenza costantiniana (313-2013), Roma 18 aprile, 2013*, Rome, 2016, pp. 57-211.

known as the *Prophecies of Agat'on*, and others.²⁴ Yet, the idea that the Council of Nicaea lasted for four years and that it was Trdat who made sure it could meet in security because he²⁵ waged war against “the army of the Persians who are also called Aryans” is a tradition that I have not encountered elsewhere. This narration incorporated Trdat into the history of the Universal Church on a par with the first Christian Roman emperor. On the other hand, the text is careful not to over-emphasise Trdat’s pre-eminence but strives to maintain a balance between the two rulers’ respective standing and actions. For example, no priority is assigned to the conversion of one or the other; an important theme that received different formulations in Armenian sources.²⁶ This text implies that they were baptised and subsequently healed from an incurable disease simultaneously. If the narrative credits Trdat with a decisive role in successfully concluding the Council of Nicaea, upon which Arius was ripped apart and cast into an abyss (sic), his and St Gregory’s journey to meet Constantine occurred upon the latter’s convocation. Once the protagonists meet, the text shifts to the third-person plural, signifying a sense of unanimity with regard to their purposes and actions. They travel together to Jerusalem, divide the holy places between themselves and proclaim exemptions from taxes for the building of new churches. It is noteworthy that no Roman prelate, for example St Sylvester who features prominently in the *Letter of Love and Concord*, appears in Ps.-Ephraem’s answer. Was its purpose to underscore the communion between Armenian and Syriac churches and their shared orthodoxy without expanding the circle to include the Roman Church? Such an intention could be one important reason for this absence.

Issues of orthodoxy and orthopraxy were of continuous concern and matters of debate between Armenian, Byzantine, Syriac and, later, Latin church representatives throughout the 12th and 13th centuries in the Cilician Armenian *milieu*.²⁷

²⁴ G. FRASSON, *Pseudo Epiphani: Sermo de antichristo*, Venice, 1976, p. 27; POGOSSIAN, *The Letter of Love and Concord*, pp. 109-111; EADEM, *The Last Emperor*, p. 479, n. 88, pp. 480-498.

²⁵ The manuscript is damaged in this location, and it is only a presumption that Trdat, rather than Constantine, waged war against ‘Persians’ during the fourth year of the Council of Nicaea. This is also how Marr reconstructed the text. MARR, *Ephraem the Syrian*, p. 54.

²⁶ See the literature in note 24.

²⁷ P. TÉKÉYAN, *Controverses christologiques en Arméno-Cilicie dans la seconde moitié du XII^e siècle (1165-1198)* (OCA, 124), Rome, 1939; B.L. ZEKIYAN, *Un dialogue œcuménique au XII^e siècle: Les pourparlers entre le Catholicos St. Nersēs Šnorhali et le légat impérial Théorianos en vue de l’union des églises arménienne et byzantine*, in *Actes du XV^e congrès international d’études byzantines*, Athènes, Septembre 1976, Vol. 4, Athens, 1980, pp. 420-442; L. TER-PETROSYAN, *Asorineri derə haykakan Kilikiy mšakut’ayin keank’um ŽB-ŽG darerum* [The role of the Syrians in the cultural life of Armenian Cilicia in the 12th-13th cc.], Venice, 1989; H. BARTIKIAN, *Les relations des églises de l’Arménie Cilicienne et de l’Empire Byzantin et leurs implications politiques*, in *Actes du Colloque “Les Lusignans et l’Outre mer”, Poitiers-Lusignan 20-24 octobre 1993*, Poitiers, 1994, pp. 47-53; POGOSSIAN, *The Letter of Love and Concord*, pp. 22-44. On the renaissance of translation activity from Syriac to Armenian during the Cilician period, highlighting the importance of translations of Ephraem’s works, see e.g. MATHEWS, JR., *Syriac*

The Ps.-Ephraemian answers on the date of the Nativity, as well as regarding Constantine and Trdat, are further specimens that allow a glimpse into the kind of issues discussed between Armenian and Syriac monks in the second half of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th centuries. It testifies that while (some of) the representatives of the Armenian Church emphasised their common orthodox faith with their Syriac peers, they also insisted on the origins of this orthodoxy as going back to Emperor Constantine and their very own king Trdat the Great. This ‘original’ Armenian pre-eminence would ideally buttress their aspirations to the same position in contemporary, late 12th and early 13th-century, inter-ecclesiastical politics in Cilicia. Yet, a generally equanimous spirit characterises the answers attributed to Ps.-Ephraem, akin to what B.L. Zekiyān has qualified as “*ante-litteram* oecumenism” in relation to the correspondence between St Nersēs Šnorhali (r. 1166-1173) and Emperor Manuel Komnenos (r. 1143-1180) in the central decades of the 12th century.²⁸ The source presented here adds another piece of evidence to reinforce this idea.

Our text is the last item in M947. Hence, besides a colophon relevant to the questions and answers attributed to Ephraem the Syrian, there is also a longer colophon which concludes the manuscript as a whole, written in a different hand, as discussed above. The first and second short colophons are placed immediately below the text, on the same folio 160v, and written in the same hand. However, these are copies of colophons whose originals were written at an earlier date. The colophon of the exemplar (referring exclusively to the questions and answers attributed to Ephraem) was written by a “sinful Gēorg”, who says that he “translated” (բարգմանեցի) these “celebrated homilies” of Ephraem in the town of K’esun (today Çakirhüyük).²⁹ The verb բարգմանեմ has a range of meanings: to translate, to comment, to recount, to make a discourse.³⁰ I am inclined to think that on this occasion Gēorg meant “I translated”, as he provided snippets of the original Syriac text in the previous answers attributed to Ephraem (the first Ps.-Ephraemian textual unit in this manuscript). The colophon also mentions one Vahram, who was probably the original scribe, and his parents, as well as one Yakob who “received” this codex in memory of his parents. There are no dates in Gēorg’s colophon, but it was surely composed

into Armenian: *The Translations and their Translators*, in *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies*, 10 (2010), pp. 26-30; B.-G. DRĀGHICI, *Syriac Orthodox-Byzantine Polemics in the High Middle Ages: John Bar Šušan and Dionysius Bar Šalibī*, in *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 65/1-2 (2021), pp. 87-151.

²⁸ ZEKIYAN, *Un dialogue œcuménique* and IDEM, *St. Nerses en dialogue avec les grecs: un prophète de l’œcuménisme au XII^e siècle*, in D. KOUYMIJAN (ed.), *Armenian Studies/Études Arméniennes in Memoriam Haig Bérberian*, Lisbon, 1986, pp. 861-883.

²⁹ Coordinates: 37°33’39.19”N 37°51’19.76”E. K.-P. TODT – B.A. VEST, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini 15, Syria (Syria Prôtē, Syria Deutera, Syria Euphratēsia), Teil 2*, Vienna, pp. 1381-1389, s.v. Kēssos.

³⁰ AWEGEREAN, ET AL., *Nor Baġgirk’ haykazean lezui* [New Thesaurus of the Armenian Language], Venice, 1936 (rpt. Erevan, 1979), s.v. բարգմանեմ.

before 1215, probably sometime in the second half of the 12th century in K'ēsun. The second short colophon mentions the abbot of the Akner monastery T'oros, during whose tenure the texts were copied and the manuscript was produced. T'oros also appears in the colophon after *Yačaxapatum Čark'*, in the separated first half of the manuscript which is now in Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate Library no. 94.³¹ Thus, whenever Gēorg translated and produced the exemplar containing the (Ps.)Ephraemian texts, it was surely copied in the Monastery of Akner when T'oros was its abbot, i.e. between 1215 and 1261.³² The long 1215-colophon mentions not only the Abbot T'oros but also the scribe Petros and his brother Simeon, the ruling Armenian King Levon I Rubenid (r. 1198-1219) and Catholicos Yovhannēs VI (r. 1203-1221), as well as Rōben who bound the codex. In the end, the scribe asks to remember old and young, deceased and future members of the monastery. In 1219, the colophon was updated by adding the notice of the death of King Levon I of Cilicia (fol. 161v) as well as the destruction of churches and part of the city walls of Jerusalem by Muslims (*tačiks*).

I would like to conclude this short contribution with a question. Gēorg, who penned the original of the first colophon, stated that he *translated* (բարբաղմանեցի) these “celebrated homilies” of Ephraem, as we saw above. Yet, what kind of a Syriac text would posit King Trdat on a par with Emperor Constantine and accept him as the founder of a shared Armeno-Syriac orthodoxy? And when? Or shall we mistrust Gēorg altogether? I leave the search for an answer to a future study.

In the edition bellow all abbreviations are resolved, proper names are capitalised, the orthography has been standardised, the punctuation follows the rules of modern Armenian. On occasion the scribe confused voiceless unaspirated occlusives with voiced ones, i.e. ր/d for տ/t, գ/g for կ/k before the nasal ն/n. These ‘errors’ stem from the features of the Cilician dialectal pronunciation. Sometimes an otiose intervocalic լ is inserted in words. These are emended but the original readings from the manuscript appear in the footnotes. The text is written in black ink, in two columns with 25 lines each, in *bolorgir* script.

The following symbols are used:

- [] reconstruction/emendations of the Armenian text
- < > additions in the English translation
- /160r/ folio numbers
- /r the beginning of the right column on the given folio

³¹ POLAREAN, *Grand catalogue*, pp. 288-289.

³² There was a different abbot at the Monastery of Akner in 1261 but we do not know when Toros' tenure ended. AKINEAN, *The Monastery of Akner*, p. 150.

/159v/

Նորին իսկ երանելոյն Եփրեմի ասացեալ զճշմարիտն գիտելով

Յանախէ երանելի³³ վարդապետն աստուածային գիտութեամբն զնոյն բանն հաստատել զհարցողին, թէ ե՞րբ եւ կամ յորու՞մ ժամանակի անրացեալ հաստատեցան եկեղեցիք ուղղափառաց: Քանզի աստուածընտիր³⁴ արքայն Կոստանդին հռովմայեցի ի հաւատալն իւրում ի Քրիստոս, որպէս ազդեալ նմա հոգւովն սրբով, արար զմեծ եւ զաստուածահա/160ր/նոյ ժողովն Նիկիայ՝ աւգնութեամբ հզար եւ նորահաւատ արքային Տրդատայ Հայոց Մեծաց:

Վասնզի կամեցաւ բարձրեալն Աստուած թագաւորն երկնաւոր ն[ո]բաւ հաստատել զեկեղեցի իւր սուրբ ի վերայ անդրդելի վիմին յաւատոյ, որ ի Հայր եւ յՈրդի եւ ի Սուրբ Հոգին: Ուստի եւ ի միասին խրատեալ՝ կոչեաց զնոսա, զմինն՝ յարեւելից, եւ զմիւսն՝ յարեւմտից: Յանբժեկա[կա]ն³⁵ ցաւն եւ յախտն բժեկեաց³⁶ զնոսա: Եւ նոբա հաւատով Սուրբ Երրորդութեանն մկրտեցան ի մահն Քրիստոսի: Եւ առողջական հոգով եւ մարմնով ելեալ յաւագանէն՝ զարացան ի Քրիստոս:

Եւ արդ՝ գիտել արժան եւս է, քանզի զամս չորրորդ հազիւ եղեւ կատարումն ժողովոյն: /Ի Եւ ... [զ]այր յաղթութեամբ³⁷ ընդդեմ զարացն պարսից, որ եւ ազգ արեաց կոչելին՝ եւ զընտիրս³⁸ ի նոցանէ անմահ անուանելին: Եւ արքայն Տրդատ զարութեամբ խաչեցելոյն անկասկած պահեաց զսուրբ ժողովն զչորրորդ ամն զայն: Ուստի եւ նոբա Սուրբ Երրորդութեամբն կարողացեալ՝ ի բաց ընկեցին³⁹ զչար հերձուածն Արիոսի եւ զնոյն ինքն զԱրիոս պատառեալ անդնդասոյզ⁴⁰ արարին: Եւ դաւանեցին զբանն Աստուած՝ զԱստուծոյ Հաւր Որդին յառաջ քան զյաւիտեանս, ծնունդ⁴¹ Աստուծոյ Հաւր անժամանակ, յաւիտենից, եւ ոչ արարած, այլ արարիչ ամենայնի, որ երեւին՝ եւ որ ոչն երեւին:

Եւ ի կատարման սուրբ ժողովոյն՝ կոչեաց մեծ արքայն զհզար թագաւորն առ ինքն եւ զսուրբ /160v/ լուսաւորիչն Գրիգորիոս մեծաւ փառաւորութեամբ՝ շնորհ ունելով նոցա, յանհոգս անելով զաստուածահրաման եւ զմեծ ժողովն Նիկիայ: Եւ եկեալ նոբաւ յԵրուսաղէմ եւ բաժանեալ սեպիականեցին զսուրբ⁴² տեղիսն տէրունական: Շինեցին տանարս փառաւորս եւ աստուածաբնակս: Եւ քարոզ կարդալով ընդ չորս

³³ The first word and the first three letters of the second are written in capital letters: ՅԱՃԱԽԷ ԵՐԱՆԵԼԻ.

³⁴ In the manuscript ա[ստուա]ծընտիր.

³⁵ In the manuscript յանբժեկան.

³⁶ In the manuscript բժեկեաց.

³⁷ The folio was cut on the upper part, damaging the text. The last two words on the line can be reconstructed from the context. I would like to reiterate my gratitude to Dr. Armine Melkonyan for verifying these readings *in situ*. The context would also imply that it was Trdat who waged the war with the “Aryans”, ensuring the security of the Council of Nicaea during its fourth year.

³⁸ In the manuscript զընտիրս.

³⁹ In the manuscript ընկեցին.

⁴⁰ In the manuscript անդնդասոյզ.

⁴¹ In the manuscript ծնունդ.

⁴² In the manuscript ըզսուրբ.

կողմ աշխարհի, եթէ ոք որ եւ շինիցէ⁴³ եկեղեցի Քրիստոսի քարամ[բ]ք եւ կրով եւ սրբաշինով՝ ամենայն ուրեք, ի շինեալ եւ յանձնեալ, ազատ լիցին ի յարժուեացն հարկէ՝ ազգաց յազգս: Եւ յայնմ արեւ առեալ եկեղեցիքն հաստատութիւն ի ձեռս երկուց թագաւորացն, որ եղեն անդրանիկի ի հաւատս Քրիստոսի՝ փառաւորելով զամենասուրբ զԵրրորդութիւնն՝ զՀայր եւ /r զՈրդի եւ զՍուրբ զՀոգին, այժմ եւ միշտ եւ յաւիտեանս յաւիտենից: Ամէն.⁴⁴ Ամէն:

զԳէորդ մեղապարտ յիշեսցիք մեզաց թողութեամբ ի Քրիստոս, որ զայս Հանդիսաւոր ճառս թարգմանեցի ի քաղաքս Քեսուն, վասն սիրոյ եւ խաղաղութեան:

Եւ ՎաՀր[ա]մն ողորմեսցի ի Տէր Աստուած եւ ծնողաց նորա: Յիշեալ, Քրիստոս Աստուած, զՅակոբ, որ փափագանաւք ստացաւ զսա ի յիշատակ իւր եւ ծնողաց իւրոց:

Ջսուրք եւ զպատուական եւ զաստուածաՀանոյ Հայրն՝ զԹորոս զԱկանց անապատին առաջնորդ, յիշեսցիք ի Քրիստոս, որք կարդայք կամ ընդաւրինակէք, եւ զծնաւորս նորա, եւ որ յիշէ՝ յիշեալ եղիցի:

By the very same blessed Ephraem who knew the truth

The blessed *vardapet* who had divine knowledge repeated and confirmed the same <answer> <of> an enquirer <regarding> when and in whose times the orthodox⁴⁵ churches were strengthened and solidified.⁴⁶

When the God-chosen King Kostandin the Roman believed in Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit he called the great and God-pleasing Council of Nicaea with the help of the mighty and newly believing⁴⁷ King Trdat of Great Armenia.⁴⁸

Because God from on high – the heavenly king – wished to strengthen through them His holy church on the unshakable rock of faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, he admonished the <kings> together, calling them one from the east and the other from the west.⁴⁹ He healed them from an incurable affliction and disease. And they believed in the Holy Trinity and were baptised

⁴³ In the manuscript շինիցէ.

⁴⁴ In the manuscript Ամմէն.

⁴⁵ The author doubtless means the non-Chalcedonian, Miaphysite Armenian and Syriac churches.

⁴⁶ This sentence appears to be in *medias res* and presumes that the enquirer had asked the same question already.

⁴⁷ The Armenian text employs a word that literally means a “neo-believer”.

⁴⁸ Both Constantine and Trdat are qualified as “king”, using the same word *արքայ/ark’ay*, although later two synonyms are employed, perhaps for stylistic reasons. The text envisions a relationship between equals.

⁴⁹ Here one may notice a slight preference for Trdat since God first calls the ruler from the east, then the one from the west. However, in the preceding clause it says that God admonished them together.

unto the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3). Then they emerged from the font with a wholesome soul and body and were fortified in Christ.

And now, it is also worth knowing that the council was well into its fourth year when it was finally brought to completion. [For ... went]⁵⁰ victoriously against the army of the Persians, who were also called the nation of the Aryans, and the best among them were known as the immortals. And King Trdat through the power of the crucified One kept the Holy Council safe during that fourth year. Therefore, with the power of the Holy Trinity they⁵¹ were able to set themselves free of the evil heresy of Arius. And they tore Arius asunder and cast <him> into the abyss. And they professed God the Logos as the Son of God the Father before eternity, the begotten of God the Father, timeless <and> eternal, not a creature, but the creator of all – of that which is visible and of that which is invisible.

And at the completion of the Holy Council the great sovereign called the powerful king⁵² and saint Gregory the Illuminator with great honours, being grateful to them for securing the safety of the great <and> divinely ordained Council of Nicaea.

And coming to Jerusalem together they divided among themselves the holy dominical places and made them their own property. They built magnificent sanctuaries in which God dwelled. Then, they heralded to the four corners of the world that whoever builds a church for Christ, with stones and lime and with refined slabs, wherever that may be, in inhabited or uninhabited areas, these <churches> shall be free of royal taxes from generation to generation. And from that day, the churches were strengthened by these two kings who were the first to accept the faith in Christ, glorifying the all-holy Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen. Amen.

Remember the sinful Gēorg in Christ and <ask for> the remission of his sins, who translated these celebrated homilies in the city of K'esun for the sake of love and peace. And may the mercy of the Lord God be upon Vahram and his parents. Christ God remember Yakob who eagerly received this <codex> in memory of himself and his parents.

Those who read and copy <this>, remember the holy and honourable God-pleasing father T'oros, the leader of the desert⁵³ of Akanc', and his parents. And the one who remembers, may he be remembered <too>.

⁵⁰ See discussion on pp. XX.

⁵¹ "They" refers to the participants of the Council of Nicaea.

⁵² In order to distinguish the two rulers, the text uses two synonyms for 'king', i.e. արքայ/ark'ay for Constantine and բազմաւոր/ragawor for Trdat.

⁵³ This implies a monastery, in this case the Akner monastery.

