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Problematising the Greek Influence on Armenian Texts

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Abstract

It is generally acknowledged that the Greek language and culture exerted a notable and durable influence, especially on learned Armenian milieux. However, the full effect of these ties has often been recognised mainly in cultural and literary niches, such as those responsible for the most slavish translations of Greek specialised texts, which are generally perceived as clearly distinct both from 'Classical' versions and from the more genuine Armenian production. The present paper adheres instead to more recent trends of thought: it addresses the topic of the Greek influence on Armenian by underlining its continuity through time and textual typologies, thus avoiding clear-cut and strictly chronological periodisations, without denying the reality of language change. Indeed, since several factors, including but not limited to foreign influences, can affect internal variation, the separation between translated and original literature on the one hand, and between different – and internally homogeneous – schools of translators on the other, should not be overemphasised. Within this context, the paper also addresses the problematic nature of some widely used labels, such as *Classical Armenian* and *Hellenising School*.

Key Words – Ancient Greek; Ancient Armenian; language contact; translations; internal variation

Problematising the Greek Influence on Armenian Texts[*]

Greek culture is known to have exerted an influence on Armenian milieus, whether directly or indirectly[1], from an early stage, although the linguistic influence was probably more limited, affecting primarily the élites and learned circles[2]. Greek artists and poets were likely invited to the Armenian court already in the 3rd-2nd century BCE[3]. Later, under the Aršakunis, the Armeno-Iranian ruling class had cultural links with the Hellenistic area, and the influence was still detectable in early Sasanian times[4]. After Armenia converted to Christianity (c.a. 314 CE), Greek was one of the two languages of the liturgy, alongside Syriac. Furthermore, the invention of the alphabet around the

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[1] Cfr. *e.g.* MAHÉ (1996: 1306-1308).
[2] This is suggested for instance by the (limited) number and type of loanwords (see below): cfr. *e.g.* MORANI (2010: 146-148 and forthcoming) and CLACKSON (forthcoming), with references.
[3] Cfr. *e.g.* DE LAMBERTERIE (1999), focusing on the Greek inscriptions of Armavir, with references.
[4] Cfr. MORANI (2010: 148-149 and forthcoming), and CLACKSON (forthcoming) with references. The Parthian Aršakunis ruled over Armenia from around 60 to 428 CE, when their last king was deposed by the Persian Sasanians. The Armenian territory had already been divided into two spheres of influence (Persian in the East, Byzantine in the West) in or around 387 CE.

beginning of the 5th century CE (cfr. ORENGO 2005) initiated an intense translation activity (ORENGO 2010: 449).

As a consequence, the bibliography concerning Greek-Armenian cultural relations is comparatively extensive. Clearly, the present article does not aim to account for all – or even a significant section – of it, nor does it aim to discuss specific case studies representative of the linguistic interaction between Armenian and Greek within the highly multilingual environment of Armenian society[5]. Instead, it will focus on some general but crucial issues relating to the Greek influence on Armenian written texts[6], underlining its continuity through time and textual typologies, while stressing the problematic nature of some widely used labels (*e.g. Hellenising School*). At the same time, it will provide concise and up-to-date references – mostly, although not exclusively, in languages easily accessible to the Western scholar – that will allow the interested reader to put these remarks into context, and have access to linguistic examples (whose presence is deliberately limited here) and to further bibliography.

It should be pointed out immediately that the most prominent and extreme embodiment of the linguistic and cultural relations between Armenian and Greek is usually identified with the so-called 'Hellenising School'[7], a translation movement whose dating and geographical collocation have been, and still are, much debated (see below). The products of its activity have often been perceived as clearly distinct from more genuine Armenian texts (cfr. *e.g.* MERCIER 1978-1979: 59), which adhere more or less closely to the Golden standard set by mid 5th-century works, both original and translated.

Several key differences between 'Classical' and Hellenising translations are usually highlighted[8]. The earliest, 'Classical' translations from Syriac and Greek aimed to satisfy the immediate needs of the Armenian Church, and thus included the Bible, literature concerning ritual and Church history, commentaries, apologetic, canonical, and hagiographical works, and so on. In contrast, Hellenising translations mainly concerned theological, philosophical, grammatical, rhetorical, and generally specialised writings, and were the result of a conscious effort of transferring Greek scholarly knowledge into an Armenian context[9].

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[5] In particular, the complex – and comparatively little studied – topic of Greek as a spoken language in Armenian milieux, which would require the inclusion of data attested in non-literary sources, will not be addressed here. As a starting point, the interested reader can consult CLACKSON (forthcoming), and MORANI (2010 and forthcoming), with references. Useful information and references on the subject can also be gathered from the materials made available online by Dr Bert Vaux (VAUX 2009).

[6] On written texts, especially translations, as a medium for linguistic interference, cfr. *e.g.* KRANICH et al. 2011.

[7] Among the many contributions on the topic, see at least MANANDEAN (1928); AKINEAN (1932); AREVŠATYAN (1971; 1973; 1979); MERCIER (1978-1979); TERIAN (1980; 1982); COULIE (1994-1995); WEITENBERG (1997a; 2001-2002); AREVŠATYAN and MIROWMYAN (2007); CONTIN (2007); MORANI (2011a; 2016); MURADYAN (2012a; 2014a); KÖLLIGAN (2014); CALZOLARI (1989; 2014); TSORMPATZOGLOU (2016); CLACKSON (forthcoming), each with further references.

[8] Cfr. *e.g.* MORANI (2011a: 9-11) and MURADYAN (2012a: 1-16 and 2014a), with references.

[9] The *Téchnē grammatikḗ* by Dionysius Thrax, a rhetorical handbook known as *Girk[c] pitoyic[c]* (based on works by Aphthonius of Antioch), some works of Aristotle (*e.g. De Interpretatione* and *Categories*), Plato (*Timaeus, Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, Laws*, and *Minos*), Philo (*e.g. Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin, De Providentia*, etc.), and the Neoplatonist Dawit[c] Anyałt[c], numerous philosophical commentaries, the *Refutation of the Decisions of the Coucil of Chalcedon* by Timothy Aelurus, the *Progymnasmata* of Aelius Theon, the *Phainomena* of Aratus, the *Hexaemeron* of George of Pisidia, and the so-called *Alexander Romance* are only a few of the prominent texts whose (complete or partial) translations have been attributed – not always uncontroversially: cfr. *e.g.* TINTI (2012) – to the Hellenising

Strict adherence to the letter of the source on the one hand, and pervasive Hellenisation at all levels of the linguistic analysis on the other[10], have been perceived as the defining and mutually linked features of Hellenising translations (whereas the 'Classical' ones were rendered more competently, with greater respect for what was acceptable in the target language). From this perspective, Hellenising texts may be useful witnesses for reconstructing the underlying Greek text, even when the latter is lost, but are often so obscure as to be virtually incomprehensible to anyone who is not familiar with Greek in general, and the source text in particular (cfr. *e.g.* BOLOGNESI 2000 [1985]: 15; MORANI 2016, with references).

Unsurprisingly, this widely accepted representation contains many elements of truth; however, while addressing the corpus of translated specialised literature, we should more effectively adopt an approach that considers scalar categories rather than clear-cut definitions: indeed, the general features just outlined may apply perfectly to some Hellenising texts that might be called *prototypical*; most texts, however, deviate from the prototype in one way or another.

First of all, it should be noted that some degree of Greek influence can be detected in Armenian texts since our earliest testimonies; that is hardly surprising, since the very earliest Armenian collection of works, the Bible, is a translation conducted, or at least revised, on a Greek basis[11]. Thus, semantic calques on Greek (*i.e.* semantic shifts that an Armenian term undergoes under the influence of the corresponding Greek one) can already be found in the early Christian vocabulary[12], which is, in turn, comparatively poor in Greek loanwords[13]. Sometimes the attested calques also concern phrasemes, which can acquire a new meaning – one which is not the regular sum of the meanings of their parts – under the influence of a Greek idiom[14]. As for structural calques (in which an Armenian word reproduces the internal structure of a Greek one), most of them were actually used for the first time in Hellenising translations, when an Armenian vocabulary for specific areas of knowledge was created (cfr. *e.g.* MURADYAN 2012a: 247-257). However, a few are also present in early Armenian texts: some compound verbs, for instance, seem to occupy an intermediate position between types in which the presence of the preverb is clearly motivated, and pure Hellenising types, in which it is simply used as an Armenian stand-in for a Greek preverb[15]. Finally, syntactic features likely

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School. For a more exhaustive inventory, see the bibliographical references listed in note 7. Cfr. also McCOLLUM (2015: especially 46-49): the Armenian case is compared here with other linguistic and cultural milieux of the Christian East.

[10] For copious linguistic examples, cfr. *e.g.* MURADYAN (2012a) and KÖLLIGAN (2014), with references.

[11] The nature of the Greek source text needs to be defined book by book; the exact degree of Syriac influence, at least on the earliest layer of translation, also remains to be ascertained: see on both accounts at least COWE (1993) and COX (2014), with references.

[12] Cfr. *e.g. hreštak,* "messenger", an Armenian term of Iranian origin that came to mean "angel" under the influence of Gr. *ángelos* (MORANI 2010: 165 and forthcoming).

[13] That is especially true if we do not take into account borrowings exclusively mediated by written texts and often scarcely attested, mere transliterations of Greek words, or indirect borrowings whose immediate source was actually Syriac or a variety of Iranian. Cfr. *e.g.* MORANI (2010, 2011b, forthcoming), with references.

[14] Cfr. *e.g. tełi tal*, literally "to give place", which came to mean "to yield, consent, give up, submit" under the influence of Gr. *tópon didónai,* itself a probable calque on Latin *locum dare* (BOLOGNESI 2009: 331-332).

[15] WEITENBERG (1997a: 452-453) points out for instance that a verbal form such as *aṙpʿoxem*, "to change, to add a change", attested in the Armenian version of the *Commentary on Genesis* by Eusebius of Emesa, perfectly corresponds, both formally and semantically, to Gr. *parallátō*. Since the verb coexists in 5th-century Armenian with *pʿoxem,* which also means "to change", this compound can be considered to

influenced by Greek (such as the association of a plural subject with a singular verb, favoured by the presence in Greek of neuter plural nouns with singular verb agreement)[16] can also be found in early texts.

There is also some continuity in translation technique between early 'Classical' versions and those that increasingly deviate from what is perceived as the genuine 5th-century standard (COWE 1993: 34). For instance, COWE (1990-1991), while studying the two extant Armenian versions of the *Books of Chronicles,* has noted that at least one of them (Arm2) is fairly literal, taking the word rather than the phrase as its basic unit, and is moderately prone to stereotyping[17], thus sharing some features of 'non-Classical' translations. The earlier Arm1 is instead freer, taking the phrase as its basic unit, and shows a low degree of stereotyping[18]. Moreover, from a linguistic point of view (*e.g.* as far as phraseology is concerned), Arm1 seems to be closer to the language of 5th-century historians than Arm2 is. It is therefore evident that the whole Bible cannot and should not be considered as the epitome of the genuine Armenian language: the linguistic features found in it are not necessarily representative of original writings, or indeed of 'Classical' Armenian as a whole[19].

On the other hand, there is no clear-cut distinction between translated and original literature, either. First of all, the Bible itself exerted a considerable and, in some cases, perhaps even unconscious linguistic influence on original writings. That is hardly surprising, since entire sections of it, especially those most commonly used in the liturgy (*e.g.* the *Psalms*), would have been known almost by heart to Armenian authors, many of whom were clergymen[20]. Secondly, even an early 'original' text such as Eznik's *Confutation of the Sects* is actually heavily dependent on previous sources, having incorporated almost in its entirety the translation of a Greek text, the treatise *On Free Will* by Methodius of Olympus[21].

As a matter of fact, the notion of 'Classical' Armenian itself must be problematised, to avoid downplaying internal variation. The usual diaphasic, diastratic and diatopic variations were likely present in the ancient Armenian diasystem, especially given the extension and articulation of the territory in which some form of the language was spoken. Indeed, our ancient sources (*e.g.* Eznik and the translator of the *Téchnē grammatikḗ* by Dionysius Thrax, among others) hint, occasionally, at local differences

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occupy an intermediate position between types like *aṙxetʿem*, "to push forward, towards something", in which the presence of the preverb is semantically motivated, and a Hellenising verb like *aṙem* (cfr. Gr. *pareími*), attested from the 6th century onwards, in which *aṙ* is used as a mere stand-in for Gr. *pará*. Similarly, *aṙlnowm* and *lnowm* are both used with the meaning of "to complement" by one of the earliest Armenian authors, Eznik Kołbacʿi (5th C).

[16] Cfr. MINASSIAN (1996: 107); it does not seem likely that all these instances should be due to mistakes occurring in the manuscript tradition or the editions, as Minassian suggests.

[17] *I.e.* it often adopts a standard rendering for multiple occurrences of the same Greek item.

[18] This might reflect a transition from an approach still influenced by the earlier *lecture hétéro-épique* (*i.e.* the practice of reading the sacred texts in Greek or Syriac and simultaneously translating them into Armenian during the liturgy; see SARKISSIAN 1993: 201), and one more influenced by the written page and by a greater amount of formal training on the translators' part.

[19] Cfr. at least COWE (1993: 34 and 1994-1995: 129); DUM-TRAGUT (2002: 10-11); ORENGO (2005: 455); MEYER (2013: 95-98), with references.

[20] As late as the 12th century, Nersēs Lambronacʿi quoted twice, in a homily and a commentary, a sentence from the Armenian *Timaeus* in a slightly altered form, probably because of the mnemonic interference of a passage from the *Book of Proverbs*: see TINTI (2012: 270).

[21] Cfr. ORENGO (1996: 16-18 and 2016), with references.

within the Armenian-speaking territory[22]. Besides, other clues pointing towards an early dialectal articulation have been detected, for instance by examining ancient inscriptions and by considering the evidence provided by modern dialects[23]. However, admittedly, the earliest surviving literary texts offer the image of a largely unitary language, especially on the syntactic and lexical levels of analysis (ORENGO 2005: 455, 461). The reasons behind this apparent uniformity have been debated, and the previous practice of oral literature, whether based on a prestigious local variety or a common superdialectal language, has been mentioned as a possible influence[24].

Nevertheless, even if we inevitably have to work mostly with texts that are the product of a small, privileged section of the population, and are often attested in much later witnesses, some degree of internal variation can actually be detected in 5th-century works, even when foreign influences are not directly involved. For instance, unexpected phonological outcomes (ORENGO 2005: 461) and a certain morphological variation, especially in the nominal system (where one noun can often be declined according to different patterns, even by the same author, without any appreciable difference in meaning)[25] , are attested. The problem is that we often do not have enough elements to contextualise and interpret these variants (BELARDI 2003: 79), so we can merely detect a possible pattern of variation, without being able to attribute each variant to a specific subset – be it diatopically, diastratically or diaphasically defined – of the Armenian-speaking community[26]. Besides, generally speaking, some caution is needed, lest we be tempted to get rid of any element that does not fit our expectations by labelling it as dialectal, rustic, and so on. In any case, Armenian was certainly not, at that stage, rigidly normalised and stabilised. Thus, the label of *Classical*, usually associated with 5th-century literary texts, must be interpreted as referring to the exemplary role that has been ascribed to this phase of the language at a later time, rather than to its intrinsic qualities (cfr. *e.g.* WEITENBERG 1993; BELARDI 2004; MORANI 2014: 211).

In the light of all these elements, we can see why an approach that avoids rigid categorisations and considers instead the ancient Armenian corpus as a continuum of texts and linguistic features can have its advantages (WEITENBERG 1997b: 170; CLACKSON forthcoming). As a matter of fact, WEITENBERG (1997a) has shown that even the most typically Hellenising features can be analysed not as extraneous monstrosities completely severed from synchronic linguistic usage, but rather as choices made on the basis of tendencies that were actually available in the target language. For instance, the genitive absolute – a typically Greek structure with a circumstantial meaning, in which a nominal or pronominal element in the genitive case is associated with a participle, also in the genitive – may be virtually absent from prototypical 5th-century Armenian texts[27]; its

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[22] Cfr. at least ORENGO (2005: 457-459), with references. On *ays* with the meaning of "wind", see also MARTIROSYAN (2010: *s.v.*).

[23] Cfr. at least MARTIROSYAN (2010: *passim*, especially 689-704), with copious references.

[24] Cfr. *e.g.* AJELLO (1997: 227); BELARDI (2003: 79); ORENGO (2005: 456), with references.

[25] MARTIROSYAN (2010) usually signals these variants and lists the complete declensions when analysing each lexeme. Cfr. also JUNGMANN and WEITENBERG (1993: 296-322).

[26] Of course, the distinction is not always easy even when more information is actually available, because the same non-standard feature might be perceived as a local variant, an archaic variant, a diaphasic variant, or all of them at the same time, since a more archaic trait might be preserved longer in a peripheral area, and thus come to be associated with rustic people, for instance.

[27] See MURADYAN (2012a: 161).

introduction into Armenian, however, was likely favoured by the existence in the target language of participial constructions with a genitive subject (*ibidem*:455)[28].

We should also keep in mind that not every feature deviating from what is perceived as the 'Classical' norm in prototypical Hellenising texts must necessarily be attributed to the influence of Greek[29]: internal and external factors can both affect linguistic variation, and it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint a single cause[30].

In addition, even translational strategies that seem typical of Hellenising texts may actually continue well attested features of original texts. That is the case with Armenian synonymical doublets, which are used rather frequently to render a single Greek term (cfr. *e.g.* MERCIER 1978-1979: 70-71; SGARBI 1990: 247 and 2004: 355-356; MURADYAN 2014a: 335-336; AIMI 2014, with references). This solution might have been meant to offer the reader a choice between different nuances of meaning, or between an Armenian term more suitable to the context and one closer to the Greek original, reflect lexicographical tools that offered multiple *interpretamenta* for a single word, or all of the above; however, the practice of juxtaposing near equivalents is not unheard of in 5th-century original texts, either (WEITENBERG 1997a: 453-455)[31].

In light of these data, the appropriateness of other widely used labels should also be questioned. For instance, the undeniable evidence of some degree of continuity in translated literature prompted early on the creation of labels such as *translations of the Silver Age* (AKINEAN 1932) or *pre-Hellenising translations* (*pre-hellénophile*: LAFONTAINE and COULIE 1983: 137), reserved for texts mostly, although not exclusively, of religious contents, which, from a linguistic and translational point of view, fell somewhat in-between 'Classical' and prototypically Hellenising texts[32]. However, rather than be seen as anticipating a later phenomenon, the so-called 'pre-Hellenising translations' must clearly be interpreted as a cluster of texts within a continuum, as we said, and not necessarily one that developed linearly or chronologically (COULIE 1994-1995: 57-59), but that should rather be visualised as a multidimensional web.

Of course, suggesting that chronology is not the only factor influencing variation does not mean that we should deny the reality of linguistic change, or ignore that the language of the 5th century, or even the first half of it, differs to a certain extent from that of later times (cfr. WEITENBERG 1993: 223). However, any attempt at a periodisation based on linguistic data should steer clear of pre-existing value judgements, and consider a wide set of criteria based on the features of dated texts, including not only lexical information and data on word-formation, but also syntactic features (cfr. WEITENBERG 1993: 224-225; 2001-2002), which are less prone to be lost and revived, as well as more difficult to

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[28] Whether or not such constructions are themselves genuinely Armenian in origin, they were clearly an integral part of the language at that point.

[29] WEITENBERG (2001-2002) proposed an even more subtle distinction between features that would not have developed in Armenian without the influence of Greek, and others that have merely been favoured and enhanced by said influence.

[30] Cfr. *e.g.* the increased use of the dative/locative ending *-owm*: WEITENBERG (1997a: 456) lists it among recent inner-Armenian developments, whereas MURADYAN (2012a: 91-94) considers it a morphological Grecism meant to introduce a formal difference between the genitive and the dative (despite admitting that there are counterexamples; MURADYAN 2012a: 94, n. 215).

[31] CLACKSON (forthcoming) points out that some of these early pairs involve both a native word and an Iranian loan. Thus, at least in some cases, the juxtaposition might have been meant to clarify a comparatively less known word through a more common one, as is often the case in Hellenising translations (cfr. SGARBI 1990: 247 for 'etymological' and 'contextual' renderings).

[32] See MURADYAN (2004), with references.

censure and substitute with alternative features perceived as more adherent to the language standard.

On that account, we should emphasise that several scholars have argued that 'Classical', 'Pre-Hellenising' and even 'Hellenising' texts might belong to parallel rather than subsequent trends, and likely coexisted, possibly even within the production of the same author, both in the 5th century and afterwards[33]. Indeed, both the degree of Hellenisation and that of structural adherence in translated literature could have been influenced more by the type and prestige of the translated text (*e.g.*, religious vs. technical; ADONTZ 1970: CLXXII), or by the purpose of the translation (see below), than by the personality or identity of the translator[34]. WEITENBERG (1997a and 1997b: 447) also highlighted that the mere fact that the considerations on translation expressed by Eusebius of Emesa in the introduction to his *Commentary on the Octateuch* were translated into Armenian at a very early stage[35] suggests that at least a certain degree of awareness of different translation techniques was present in Armenian milieux right from the start[36].

In any case, even if we focus purely on translated texts that have been traditionally labelled as 'Hellenising', which actually display a significant amount of Greek influence, and give consideration to their linguistic and translational features, their original purpose, and their impact on original literature, a rather varied picture will emerge.

First of all, it is worth emphasising that the presence of a lexical, syntactical or, less frequently, a morphological Grecism in an Armenian text is not necessarily linked to the presence of the corresponding feature in the underlying Greek text; indeed, there is not always a biunique (*i.e.* one-to-one) correspondence between Greek and Armenian elements. Thus, to return to a familiar example, a genitive absolute can be rendered not only with a precise syntactic calque (*i.e.* with an Armenian participle in the genitive, associated with a nominal or pronominal element also in the genitive), but also with a circumstantial subordinated clause, a coordinated clause, a participle with a subject in genitive, an infinitive in the instrumental case with a subject in genitive, etc[37]. On the other hand, Armenian genitive absolutes can be used even when the corresponding structure was not present in the source text[38]. This suggests that, at least in some cases, Hellenising options were present in the inventory of linguistic resources available to the translator, or indeed to the writer of original texts, and were not necessarily associated with the slavish rendering of a Greek original. Therefore, slavish adherence to the source and pervasive linguistic Hellenisation are not as inextricably linked as has often been implied.

As a matter of fact, the prototypical – or rather, stereotypical – word for word rendering of the original is rarely to be found, and that is not only true of texts that have been somewhat adapted for an Armenian audience rather than simply translated, such as for instance the *Téchnē Grammatikḗ* attributed to Dionysius Thrax (cfr. *e.g.* SGARBI 2004). On that account, consider the following remarks:

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[33] Cfr. *e.g.* CONYBEARE (1892: V), TER PETROSIAN (1992: 6) and more recently CONTIN (2007: 35).

[34] COULIE (1994-1995) suggests that an interest for rhetorical ornamentation (*i.e.* an attention to 'style') could also affect the final product and its linguistic adherence to the source text.

[35] Cfr. MURADYAN (2012a: 1, with references).

[36] Cfr. also COULIE (1994-1995: 57-59).

[37] Cfr. MURADYAN (2012a: 161-167), with references.

[38] Cfr. TINTI (2016).

> although the Armenian version of Philo's works belongs to the Hellenising School and contains all types of grecisms [*sic*], it is far from a word by word translation in which every Greek word and every construction has its strict Armenian equivalent. Moreover, the 'ideal' level of literalness in rendering the original also cannot be found in the case of such scientific texts as the Grammar of Dionysius, the Progymnasms of Aphtonius and even the Categories of Aristotle (MURADYAN 1996: 280).

It is true that, compared to less prototypical Hellenising texts, some versions display a remarkable adherence to their source, so much so that, especially in some passages, the text actually looks like an interlinear translation from Greek[39]. However, that seems to be more the exception than the rule.

Since texts that are traditionally ascribed to the 'Hellenising School' can differ dramatically not only in their degree of Hellenisation, but also in the level of literal adherence they display, it is reasonable to assume that they might have been realised with different purposes in mind.

Some of them might indeed have been initially conceived as purely mechanical transpositions (cfr. *e.g.* AKINEAN 1932; LEWY 1936; TERIAN 1980, 1982; see also COULIE 1994-1995: 58), with a partly conscious neglect of Armenian syntax[40]. In other words, they would have been mere tools not meant to be used independently from the original texts (cfr. *e.g.* CLACKSON, forthcoming), but rather developed for tutorial purposes, for instance to help Armenians get into Byzantine schools, or ease the task of those who did not know Greek well enough to access the source texts unaided.

However, other texts clearly had some degree of circulation, and even influenced original literature; for instance, as TERIAN (1982: 177, 180) pointed out, direct or indirect quotations from the Armenian versions of Philo are attested in several authors, among them the mathematician, astronomer and geographer Anania Širakacᶜi (7th C). Again, the adaptation of the treatise attributed to Dionysius Thrax shaped the Armenian linguistic and grammatical tradition for centuries, and its influence, especially on the lexical level[41], spread outside the genre. Indeed, although some scholars (cfr. *e.g.* PARAMELLE 1984: 69) have argued that Hellenising translations soon became incomprehensible to readers and scribes, thus justifying the great number of textual corruptions and the emergence of *scholia*, others, like LEWY (1936: 16), have underlined that even the 'interlinear' versions initially conceived as school aids could eventually have achieved a greater degree of autonomy than their authors expected, being actually understood by Armenians and studied without reference to the original Greek text. In addition, even setting aside the instances in which precise intertextual contacts can be detected, the influence of the Hellenising register itself is apparent in many original writings[42], and is still recognisable nowadays in the specialised vocabulary of many disciplines[43].

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[39] Compare *e.g.* the Armenian version of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, 21a 32-33 (CONYBEARE 1892: 173 and *Matᶜenagrowtᶜiwnkᶜ* 1932: 388) with the corresponding Greek text (WEIDEMANN 2014: 26).

[40] On that account, it should be pointed out that not only the extent, but also the deliberate and programmatic nature of the Greek influence has been considered as characterising prototypical Hellenising translations, as opposed to other translated literature. Cfr. *e.g.* WEITENBERG (2001-2002: 64-65), with references.

[41] Cfr. *e.g.* SIRINIAN (2003), with references. For a possible morphological influence on a later text, see ORENGO (2010: 460).

[42] See MURADYAN (2001-2002: 83-84; 2012a: 25; 2014a: 327-328), with references. Other observations on the topic can be found in TERIAN (1982: 182-183) and WEITENBERG (2001-2002: 69-70); the latter even

Be that as it may, it should be pointed out that as long as the knowledge of Greek was reasonably widespread in the learned élite, Grecisms would not have been a huge obstacle to the reader. On that account, TERIAN (1980: 206) suggested that a certain awareness of the underlying Greek syntax would have been present in learned circles, at least until Grigor Magistros's generation (10th-11th century). Indeed, this Armenian statesman and scholar, himself a translator, was capable of using a heavily Hellenised language when he so wished, displaying many of the features that are more commonly associated with translated literature[44]. Grecisms are also attested, albeit in differing degrees, in the works of near-contemporaries (*e.g.* Grigor Narekac[c]i, 10[th]-11[th] C; Anania Sanahnec'i, 11[th] C) and even in later authors (*e.g.* Vanakan Vardapet, 12[th]-13[th] C; Vahram Rabowni, 13[th] C)[45]. Furthermore, we know for sure that the practice of translating from Greek continued after the 11[th] century, although a native speaker of the source language was then frequently involved in the enterprise[46].

In light of all the above, the so-called 'Hellenising School' should probably not be called a school at all (CLACKSON forthcoming), since the term, as TERIAN (1982: 175) pointed out, «stands for a school of translators: founders and successors devoted to the same translational tendencies», while we have no actual proof that a structured movement even existed. Besides, we know little about the translators themselves, except for the information contained in a few colophons and *proemia* (TERIAN 1982); thus defining, even broadly, the geographical context and chronological limits in which the prototypical Hellenising translations were realised is highly problematic.

As for the location, several elements – such as the distribution of Greek manuscripts, the links with Armenian students pursuing a Greek education abroad, the military and political situation of Armenia, possible dialectal clues[47], as well as ancient testimonies concerning the state of learning in the country – have been taken into account, but no general consensus has ever been reached on the subject. Thus, for instance, Constantinople, Edessa, various areas of Armenia proper, and a combination of Armenian and Greek centres of learning have all been suggested in turn[48].

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suggested that native 'Hellenophile' texts should be distinguished from native texts that were instead merely influenced by the 'Hellenophile' ideal.

[43] Cfr. *e.g.* MOWRADYAN (1971), on grammatical terminology.

[44] See MURADYAN (2014b: 10-11 and 41-44). On Grigor's knowledge of Greek texts and culture, cfr. also MURADYAN (2013) and VAN LINT (2012, 2014 and especially 2016, where the question of the transmission of Greek learning in Armenia between the 8th and late 10th centuries is also addressed). It should be pointed out that Grigor was also capable of writing in reasonably straightforward Armenian, as shown in his epistolary: he alternated between different registers even while writing to the same person, depending on the purpose of the letter (cfr. on that account VAN LINT 2012 and 2016). In any case, even his most complex and Hellenising letters were addressed to correspondents who were clearly expected to understand them, and be able to appreciate the degree of learning they displayed. Especially significant in that regard is Grigor's use of lexical Grecisms: when he uses Greek words for commonplace extralinguistic referents that could be easily designated with an Armenian word (*e.g.* t[c]alatay, from *thálatta*, "sea", attested in letter 26, MURADYAN 2012b: 289), he is doing so deliberately, to show erudition, but also to establish a privileged connection with his learned interlocutors. In this sense, such words become the means of a reciprocal, in-group identification, serving a similar function to the lexical units of a jargon.

[45] See MURADYAN (2001-2002: 83-84).

[46] See TINTI (2012: 224), with references.

[47] On the possible dialectal status of Hellenising texts, cfr. WEITENBERG (1997a: 456), with references.

[48] For details and further references, cfr. *e.g.* LEWY (1936: 13-1; TERIAN (1982); CALZOLARI (1989: 114-116); TER PETROSIAN (1992: 19); MORANI (2011a: 11); TSORMPATZOGLOU (2016).

Regarding the chronology, by combining the most popular proposals, the production of prototypical Hellenising texts could be roughly ascribed to a timeframe that goes from the mid-5th century (thus placing the earliest Hellenising texts in 'Classical' times) to the first three decades of the 8th century; the exact dates within this broader period are however much debated, and, once again, no consensus has ever been reached. The hypotheses have usually been based on the evidence provided by texts that can be reasonably – if not indisputably – dated thanks to internal references, to the information given in colophons, or to *termini ante quem* provided by quotations in dated authors. On these bases, starting with the seminal study by MANANDEAN (1928), several internal periodisations, or relative chronologies of the translations (usually with a subdivision into three of four phases) have been built, taking into account translational and linguistic – especially lexical – similarities and differences[49]. However, needless to say, the proposed internal classifications did not encounter universal approval, in part because they are inherently problematic in their insistence on strictly chronological succession (TERIAN 1982: 176), in part because most of them did not include a wide enough set of criteria (WEITENBERG 1993: 224-225; 2001-2002).

To conclude, as MURADYAN (2012a: 24) rightly points out, we do not have enough information at present to reconstruct any objective and motivated general chronology of translated literature, especially given the state of the available documentation and the scholarly tools at our disposal, which are, in many instances, still quantitatively and/or qualitatively insufficient[50]. In any case, at the current state of knowledge, the picture of a Hellenising school neatly divided into phases and clearly separated from other currents of translations and original texts seems little more than methodological fiction. We will hopefully gain a better understanding of the topic when all the relevant texts are critically edited and studied from a linguistic point of view, in relation with un-translated literature on the one hand and with the available Greek originals on the other. Traditional attributions might fall apart on closer scrutiny, while others will be reinforced. However, once we have critically edited texts in digital format, ideally linguistically annotated, and hopefully updated lexicographical tools as well, it will be much easier to cross-reference different works, detecting linguistic similarities and intertextual references, and possibly even exact quotations.

With better tools and better documentation on single texts, we hopefully will also be able to prepare linguistic descriptions that are less 'Classical'-oriented[51], and consider Ancient Armenian as a diasystem (cfr. MORANI 2014: 211-212; WEITENBERG 2014: 223), rather than as an ensemble of rules and deviations from them.

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[49] For details and further references, cfr. at least MANANDEAN (1928); AKINEAN (1932); AREVŠATYAN (1971); TERIAN (1982); AREVŠATYAN and MIROWMYAN (2007: 252); CONTIN (2007: 34-42); MORANI (2011a: 10-11); MURADYAN (2012a: 2-3 and 2014a: 322-325).

[50] Cfr. *e.g.* COULIE (2014: 155-168) and MURADYAN (2014a: 341).

[51] Cfr. *e.g.* the titles of the following reference works: MEILLET (1936); GODEL (1975); THOMSON (1975); SCHMITT (1981); DE LAMBERTERIE (1988-1989); MINASSIAN (1996); cfr. also BELARDI (2003, 2006, 2009), who uses *armeno aureo* ("Golden Armenian") instead.

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 and <https://www.academia.edu/181300/Linguistic_manifestations_of_Greek-Armenian_contact_in_Late_Antiquity_and_Byzantium_handout_see_powerpoint _file_above_for_images_> [9 July 2017].

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