Oskan Erewanc'i as a Translator from and into Latin[*]

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Oskan vardapet Erewanc'i (1614–1674) was a prominent Armenian printer, best known for producing the first printed edition of the Armenian Bible (Amsterdam, 1666–1668). He was also active as a translator both from and into Latin. Erewanc'i translated and subsequently abridged a grammatical treatise originally composed in Latin by the Italian philosopher Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639). While the full translation survives in a few manuscripts, the abridged version was printed in 1666 by the same Amsterdam-based press that issued the Bible. In addition, Oskan contributed to a Latin translation of the shorter version of Koriwn's *Life of Maštoc'*. Although the original *Life* was composed in the fifth century, it also exists in a later abridged form, which served as the basis for Oskan's translation. This paper examines Oskan's role as a translator between Latin and Armenian, focusing on his objectives and methods.

Keywords: Oskan Erewanc'i, Tommaso Campanella, Koriwn, Armenian language, Latin language, Translations.

Vardapet (Archimandrite) Oskan Łličenc' Erewanc'i (1614–1674) was a significant figure in seventeenth-century Armenian culture. He is usually remembered as a printer and notably as the individual responsible for the first printed edition of the Armenian Bible. Several of his predecessors had likewise moved to Europe to pursue the same goal. Finally, the first Armenian Bible was printed in Amsterdam between 1666 and 1668.

However, Oskan was also a writer and the author of an autobiography, as well as a translator from and into Latin, although it is possible that he enlisted the help of some collaborators to this end (as I discuss in greater detail below). As part of his aforementioned edition of the Bible, Oskan translated the *Book of Sirach* or *Ecclesiasticus* and the fourth *Book of Ezra* from the Latin *Vulgata* into Armenian.[1] He was also responsible for translating and adapting the first two books of Tommaso Campanella's (1568–1639) *Grammaticalia*. The latter

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1 In the Bible printed in Amsterdam, Oskan explains in great detail how he endeavored to make the Armenian biblical text adhere to the *Vulgata*. The relevant parts of Oskan's explanation are published and translated in Kévorkian, *Catalogue*, 51–57.

translation, which is fairly close to the original, remained in manuscript form, but it was later abridged into a booklet for didactic purposes and printed in Amsterdam in 1666.[2] Oskan also appears as the author of the Latin translation of the shorter version of Koriwn's *Life of Mesrop/Maštocʻ*.

The main purpose of this paper is to describe the methodology Oskan used and the goals he pursued while translating Campanella into Armenian and Koriwn into Latin. Before addressing these topics, I offer a general presentation of his life and education.[3] The latter in particular is relevant if one seeks to understand the cultural backdrop of his translation of Campanella's work.[4]

Oskan was born in New Julfa, not far from Isfahan, in 1614 to a family originally from Erevan. He began his studies in his native town, but in 1634, he moved to Ējmiacin. Here, he met a Dominican (and thus Catholic) friar, the Italian Paolo Piromalli (1591–1667), originally from Calabria. He then spent some time in Lvov (Lviv, Lemberg), which at the time was part of the Kingdom of Poland, and later returned to Armenia. In September 1662, he left his homeland for good and moved to Europe. Once in Amsterdam, he took charge of the printing house called *Sowrb Ējmiacin ew sowrb Sargis Zōravar* (Saint Ējmiacin and Saint Sergius the General), which at the time belonged to his brother Awetis. The printing house prospered under his direction (or occasionally under that of

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2   The title of the booklet is as follows: [Oskan Erewancʻi], *Kʻerakanowtʻean Girkʻ Hamařōtiwkʻ cayrakʻał arareal Yałags mankancʻ, ew noravaržicʻ krtʻowtʻe(an)* [Books of grammar, abridged for the instruction of children and novices], Amsterdam, 1666.

3   On Oskan's life and work, see chiefly Amatowni, *Oskan vrd. Erewancʻi*. See also Devrikyan, *Voskan vardapet Yerevantsi*.

4   Doubts concerning Oskan's knowledge of Latin were raised, perhaps disingenuously, in 1668. Jean-Baptiste van Neercassel, vicar-apostolic of the United Provinces from 1662 to 1686, sent a report to the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* alleging that the Armenian bishop Oskan ("Episcopus Armenus … Viscanus") was working on a printed edition of the Bible in his own language. At first, van Neercassel mistakenly states that Oskan wanted to translate the entire *Vulgata* as opposed to a couple of books. More relevant for our purposes, he also says that the enterprise seemed very dangerous to him, and that he had tried without success to dissuade Oskan from pursuing it. Among the reasons for his mistrust, he cites Oskan's allegedly imperfect knowledge of Latin as well as his shortcomings as a theologian ("praesertim cum nec Latinae linguae peritus nec magnus mihi videatur theologus"). Later in the report, he adds that Oskan had argued that he could read Latin easily enough, even though he could not speak it fluently ("cum dicat se Latinam linguam bene intelligere dum legit, quamvis eam congrue loqui nesciat"). It is difficult to say whether the vicar-apostolic was genuinely assessing Oskan's linguistic skills or simply using his alleged deficiencies as an excuse to oppose an enterprise that he considered dangerous on other grounds. For the Latin text of the report see Post, *Romeinsche bronnen*, 398–99. See also de Veer, "Rome et la Bible," 176–77. Similar doubts concerning Oskan's imperfect knowledge of Latin were also expressed by Maturin Veyssière De La Croze (1661–1739) in a text dated 1712: see Weitenberg, "Studies in Early Armenian Lexicography," 376, 401–2, 407–12.

his representatives) and produced many printed editions, both in Amsterdam and, in its later incarnations, in Leghorn and Marseille. Oskan himself died in Marseille on February 14, 1674.

It is worth dwelling for a moment on the aforementioned meeting between Oskan and Father Piromalli and on the latter's presence in Armenia. These contacts had an undisputable impact on Oskan's translation activity, or at least part of it. One of the available sources in this regard is Oskan's autobiography, published as an appendix (Chapter 57) to Aṙakʻel Davrižecʻi's *Patmowtʻiwn* (History), the first edition of which was printed in 1669 at *Sowrb Ējmiacin ew sowrb Sargis Zōravar*, then under the direction of Oskan himself.[5] Below, I compare the information provided in this text, technically anonymous but certainly authored by Oskan, with the report presented by Piromalli to the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* in 1637, in which Piromalli detailed his activities in Armenia between June 1634 and January 1637.[6]

In his autobiography, Oskan recounts that, in Ējmiacin, he met a Catholic clergyman named Pōłos (i.e. Paolo), Italian by origin, who was very learned if not fluent in Armenian. Oskan became a student of his and thus learned some Latin and, most importantly, grammar. He then translated this grammar into Armenian and abridged it. Later in the autobiography, Oskan again states that he began to translate the grammar he had learned from Latin into Armenian. The same information can be found in the colophon of the grammatical compendium itself, published in Amsterdam in 1666.

These events are described somewhat differently in Piromalli's report. Piromalli states that during his stay in Armenia he held lectures about grammar in Armenian, both in accordance with the local tradition (or in other words, following the commentaries to the sixth-century Armenian version of the *Technē Grammatikē*, attributed to Dionysius Thrax) and using a book he had authored himself. He then adds that Oskan was one of his students.

Thus, the exact connections between Piromalli's grammar and the one Oskan translated and abridged are not made clear in our sources, although I have formulated a hypothesis in this regard (see below).[7]

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5   See Aṙakʻel Davrižecʻi, *Girkʻ Patmowtʻeancʻ (1669)*, 629–38. For a French translation of the autobiography, see Brosset, *Collection*, 596–600. On the text, see also Orengo, "Come e perché."

6   The text has been published in Longo, "Piromalli," 342–63. See also Longo, "Giovanni da Siderno" and Orengo, "Oskan Erewancʻi traduttore."

7   I have devoted several works to the relations between Campanella's *Grammaticalia*, Oskan's two grammars, and the one supposedly authored by Piromalli. See for instance Orengo, "Tommaso Campanella

As for the aforementioned Tommaso Campanella (also from Calabria), he was a philosopher and author of Latin writings on grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, poetics, and historiography. These were all published in Paris in 1638 by Jean Dubray (Iohannes Du Bray) as one volume titled *Philosophia rationalis*. The section devoted to grammar, titled *Grammaticalium libri tres*,[8] was written between 1619 and 1624[9] and initially circulated in manuscript form among Campanella's students, for whom it had been originally composed. As the title suggests, it is organized in three books. The first concerns the parts of speech, the second touches on problems related to syntax, and the third addresses reading and writing, with an appendix on the ideal features of a future philosophical language.

It is not easy to trace the history of Oskan's translation. In theory, it could simply be assumed that Oskan, who lived in Europe between 1638 and 1640 (or 1641) and later from 1663 until his death, got to know Campanella's work and, finding it useful, decided to translate and later to abridge it. However, the longer Armenian translation includes some passages that seem to reflect a better Latin text than the one published in Paris. This suggests that the Armenian translation was likely based on a different model, earlier than the printed edition. In fact, the sources allow us to reconstruct the following sequence of events:

1. Tommaso Campanella gave parts of the manuscript of his *Philosophia rationalis* to some of his students, one of whom was Paolo Piromalli. We know this from Campanella himself, and notably from a report of his literary activity, *De libris propriis et recta ratione studendi syntagma*.[10]

2. Later, Piromalli went to Armenia as a missionary, came into contact with Oskan, and taught him Latin and grammar.

3. Around the same time (1634–1636) and in the same context, according to his own testimony, Piromalli taught grammar to some Armenian students, using among other tools a work that he himself had put together.

4. Finally, in the spring of 1639, less than a year after the *Philosophia rationalis* was published, Oskan sent to his friend Siméon J̌owłayecʻi a work on grammar

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in armeno"; Orengo, "Oskan Erewancʻi traduttore"; Orengo, "Traduction des noms propres"; Orengo, "L'origine et la Valeur"; Orengo, "Ma in armeno."

8   The only modern reprint of this work is Campanella, *Opere*, which includes the Latin text and an Italian translation and detailed commentary.

9   See *Cronologia* in Campanella, *Opere,* LXXXV.

10   See Campanella, *De libris propriis*, 47. On Campanella and Piromalli's relationship, see Longo, "Fr. Tommaso Campanella," 347–67.

which he had likely authored. J̌owłayecʿi in turn, in a letter, offered critical remarks on this text.[11]

Given these details, we can surmise that Piromalli was the likely link between Campanella and Oskan. Piromalli possibly gave Oskan a manuscript version of the grammatical work by Campanella (who had been his teacher) and perhaps even collaborated on its translation by Oskan. Later, both Piromalli and Oskan could have laid claims to this translation at different times. It is also possible that Oskan later revised this version by comparing it with Campanella's text, which had been published by then.

As mentioned above, Oskan's Armenian version, titled *Kʿerakanowtʿean Girkʿ* (Books of Grammar), reproduces only the first two books of the source text. It has come down to us in two redactions: a longer, basically complete version which has never been printed and a shorter one, the abridged version mentioned by Oskan himself in his autobiography, which was printed in Amsterdam in 1666.

The longer redaction, to the best of our knowledge, survived in the following manuscripts:

A	2274 Matenadaran	(the grammatical section was copied in 1658; the manuscript was completed in 1662, at the Owši monastery)
B	2277 Matenadaran	(copied in 1659 in Ganjasar)
C	2275 Matenadaran	(copied in or slightly before 1666)
D	2276 Matenadaran	(copied in 1688)
E	3391 Matenadaran	(seventeenth century)
F	2294 Matenadaran	(eighteenth century)
T	Ma XIII 80 Tübingen	(perhaps seventeenth century; the text is incomplete).

Among these witnesses, Ms A is particularly relevant because it was copied in the monastery of Owši when the monastery was headed by Oskan himself. Although Oskan did not write the codex himself, it could have been copied from an autograph or created under his direction.

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11   For this letter, see Amatowni, *Oskan vrd. Erewancʿi*, 279–80.

Furthermore, as pointed out by Tat'evik Manowkyan,[12] a redaction that is close albeit not identical to Oskan's longer version of the grammar is found in Ms 2295 of the Matenadaran, copied in 1683; in Ms A 81 (dated to 1688) of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Saint Petersburg; in Ms 1941 (seventeenth century) of the Casanatense library in Rome; and in Ms 1266 (no date) of St. James in Jerusalem. Manowkyan has highlighted notable divergences between this possibly "third redaction" and Oskan's longer version. The differences concern the structure of the two works, their grammatical terminology, and the type of language used with a metalinguistic function (decidedly Latinized in Oskan's version and closer to "Classical" Armenian or *grabar* in the third version).

Setting aside the third version, which could represent a redaction by someone other than Oskan, from now on, I address the two that are certainly associated with him. As mentioned before, while the longer version has never appeared in print,[13] the shorter version was published by Oskan himself in Amsterdam in 1666. As for its source, Campanella's work is not mentioned in the short version. Rather, Oskan simply states that he has personally translated and abridged the text. However, the longer version makes it clear that the author of the source text is "the great rhetor, T'owmay the Italian" (*mec hřetorn T'owmay italac'i*),[14] or in other words, as I myself showed in 1991, Tommaso Campanella.[15]

I now focus on the longer version of the *K'erakanowt'ean Girk'*. Although this is certainly a translation, the author occasionally adapts the text to reflect more accurately the features of "classical" Armenian. Furthermore, at times he diverges from Campanella's text (or at least from the published version of the text) and shows his knowledge of the Armenian tradition, based on the ancient version of Dionysios Thrax and/or its commentaries. Oskan's flexible approach to the source text is not unusual. Even the Armenian translator of Dionysios Thrax, while occasionally following his source to an extreme, was able to introduce innovations. Thus, on the one hand, he tried to reproduce his model and went so far as falsely to attribute features such as vowel length, dual forms for nouns and verbs, and grammatical gender (which exist in Greek but

12   Manowkyan, "Oskan Erevanc'own."
13   I have been working on a critical edition for several years.
14   In all manuscripts except for F, the text begins with the following words: *Քերականութեանց գիրք առաջին. Արարեալ մեծի հռետորին Թումայի իտալացւոյ. Արտադրեալ ի հայս [ի հայս ot. T] Ոսկանի Երեւանցւոյ.* "First book of grammar, realized by the great rhetor T'owmay the Italian, transferred into our Armenian (tongue) by Oskan Erewanc'i."
15   See Orengo, "Tommaso Campanella in armeno."

not in Armenian) to the variety of Armenian he was describing. On the other, he was able to propose an original classification of phonemes, different from the one he found in his source and more realistic when compared to the Armenian phonological system. Furthermore, he correctly mentioned the instrumental (which does not exist in Greek as a separate form) among the nominal cases that exist in Armenian.

Oskan, however, goes even further. First, he follows his source even when the source refers to other Latin works by Campanella, which virtually no Armenian reader would have been able to recognize, access, or read in the original.[16] Second, in some cases, Oskan does not simply and unobtrusively adapt his model. Rather, he translate it faithfully, only to say immediately thereafter that the features in question do not exist in Armenian. This (rather bizarre) approach is followed consistently when the text addresses grammatical categories, as in the examples offered below.[17]

The first concerns the degrees of comparison of adjectives. In accordance with his source, Oskan states that there are three degrees: positive, comparative, and superlative. He then gives an example but immediately adds that the superlative is not made in Armenian through a dedicated suffix, as it is in Latin. However, in this instance, Oskan is perhaps expanding on a brief remark in Campanella's original. In fact, after listing the three degrees of comparison, Campanella adds that the distinction, though valid in Latin, is not universal.[18]

However, Oskan returns to the topic towards the end of his work. After listing the different constructions of the comparative and the superlative, he adds that in Armenian there is no difference between these two degrees of the adjective, or, rather, in Armenian there is no true superlative, because the comparative can serve this function with all adjectives.

In any case, it is worth recalling that separate forms of the superlative, though artificial, are listed in previous Armenian grammatical texts from the version of Dionysios Thrax onwards.

To turn to a second example, after discussing the degrees of comparison, Oskan addresses the grammatical gender of nouns. His source, Campanella, lists seven possible genders: *masculinum, foemininum, neutrum, commune, omne, promiscuum, incertum*.[19] While the first three are clear enough, the others require

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16 Some of these references are listed in Orengo, "L'origine et la valeur," 138, note 34.
17 For a more detailed discussion of these examples, see Orengo, "Ma in armeno," 477–78.
18 "Et hoc apud Latinos, non in cunctis linguis," Campanella, *Opere* 476.
19 Campanella, *Opere*, 484.

some explanation. According to Campanella, *commune* means that a certain noun or adjective, like, for instance, *homo* (person, human), which can refer to a male or female person, can be either masculine or feminine and consequently can be used with either a masculine or feminine article. *Omne* means that a noun or rather an adjective, such as *felix* (happy), can be masculine, feminine or neuter and thus can be used with the respective forms of the article. In the case of Latin, by "article," he means the demonstrative *hic, haec, hoc*. Leaving behind grammatical morphology to address the physical features of the referent, Campanella calls *promiscuum* a noun, like *passer* (sparrow) or *aquila* (eagle), that despite having a grammatical gender can refer to both female and male animals. Finally, going back to strictly grammatical gender, he calls *incertum* a noun, like *finis* (end) that can be both masculine and feminine, maintaining the same meaning. Campanella is following here an old classification of grammatical gender that is already found in late antique and medieval reflections on Latin.

Oskan in turn reproduces Campanella's classification as well as the same examples, only to conclude that, based on these examples and his own additions, it is evident that Armenian does not have a gender distinction for nouns. He addresses the topic again later on, while discussing the concordance between adjective and noun, and he repeats that the evidence shows that Armenian does not have nominal gender.

The situation is similar in the abridged version. While discussing the two aforementioned cases, Oskan repeats that neither the superlative degree nor grammatical gender properly belong to Armenian. However, in the shorter version, he gives a classification with only three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Thus, even in a work meant for beginners, Oskan feels compelled to present the general linguistic theory he found in Campanella, while at the same time pointing out when the latter does not correctly describe Armenian.

In light of the discussion above, Oskan's approach as a translator and adapter is somewhat puzzling, since it includes both extreme (and sometimes not terribly useful) adherence to the model and a justified renegotiation of the same. With this approach, Oskan is clearly the product of his time. As Sylvain Auroux argues, a process of *grammatisation* was prevalent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By that neologism he means that two main tools, the grammar and the dictionary, were being progressively developed in European milieux. This tendency was based on an underlying linguistic theory presupposing the existence of one universal grammar, valid for all languages and reflecting thought categories shared by all human beings. This grammar was identified with that of Latin in

the broadest sense (encompassing not just the Classical language, but also the accretions it had acquired over the course of the centuries). Therefore, Latin provided both the logical and grammatical patterns to describe any language and, in many cases the necessary metalanguage. Consequently, all languages had to be made to fit these patterns. This is clearly a case of the Procrustean bed (i.e. a scheme into which something is arbitrarily forced), especially if one considers the non-European languages (Asian, African, later Amerindian) that became progressively known to Europeans and that were structurally very different from the model that supposedly needed to be used to describe them. It must be pointed out, however, that this (to our eyes) absurd methodology actually presents some advantages, at least from a didactic standpoint. In fact, learners knew from the beginning what they were supposed to be looking for and what they could expect to find in the description of any new language that they set out to master. Such is the paradigm within which, for instance, the gentlemen of Port-Royal compiled their *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* (Paris, 1660).[20] Whenever he remarked that a certain category, though presupposed by the linguistic theory, did not exist in Armenian, Oskan was trying to resolve the conflict between general theory and actual linguistic data.

I now consider why Oskan translated such a grammatical text and why he decided to abridge it. It is worth pointing out that, before the seventeenth century,[21] the Armenian grammatical tradition consisted chiefly of commentaries on the ancient translation (from Greek) of Dionysios Thrax. These commentaries had been systematized twice: once by Grigor Magistros Pahlawowni (d. 1058), who had cited and expanded upon four previous commentaries, and once by Yovhannēs Erznkacʻi Plowz (d. 1293), whose goal had been to create a manual that would overcome the limits of Magistros's compilation. Yovhannēs certainly used the latter, but he integrated it with other commentaries, added his own opinions, and tried to create a coherent ensemble without repetitions or omissions.

The practice of compiling commentaries, moreover, lasted for centuries after these manuals were produced. The only exception was the work of Yovhannēs

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20 The title of the book is as follows: [Claude Lancelot and Antoine Arnauld], *Grammaire Generale et Raisonnée Contenant Les fondemens de l'art de parler; expliquez d'une maniere claire & naturelle; Les raisons de ce qui est commun à toutes les langues, & les principales differences qui s'y rencontrent; Et plusieurs remarques nouuelles sur la Langue Françoise,* Paris: chez Pierre le Petit, 1660.

21 For an outline of the Armenians' approach to grammar before the seventeenth century see Orengo, "Histoire des théories." On the following centuries see Orengo, "Armenian and European."

K'ṙnec'i (first half of the fourteenth century). As Gohar Muradyan explains in this issue, K'ṙnec'i had become familiar with and was influenced by the Latin grammatical tradition thanks to his close contacts with Dominican missionaries in the context of the activity of the *Fratres unitores* (*Ełbark'miabanołk'*) or Unitor Brethren (referred to as such because they were in communion with the Latin church). His grammar, however, did not have much success in Armenian circles.[22]

Be that as it may, by the seventeenth century, the traditional way of approaching grammar was no longer able to provide the Armenians with a solid grasp of the topic, as an episode recounted by the aforementioned Aṙak'el Davrižec'i seems to confirm. He says that in Lvov, around 1630, some Armenian clergymen who were considered learned by their countrymen engaged in a debate with Catholic colleagues from Europe. The latter asked the former whether the word *varem*, which means "to labor, cultivate" or "to conduct, drive," was a noun or a verb, and the Armenians, taken aback, gave a random answer and were mocked by their adversaries.[23]

Still, the traditional approach to grammar saw significant changes only in the seventeenth century, when Armenian knowledge hubs existed in some European cities, often where Catholic institutions were also based. Notable examples were the Ambrosiana library in Milan, founded in 1609, and especially the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* in Roma, founded in 1622.[24] Here, chiefly for missionary purposes, dictionaries and grammars of what was then considered "Classical" Armenian (albeit described through the lens of Latin) were published.

Oskan's activity fits within this paradigm: grammar was considered especially relevant, indeed, it was the starting point of the *cursus studiorum*. Piromalli's teaching activity in this domain is further proof of the importance attributed by the Armenians to grammar, since the Italian missionary could well have decided to teach other subjects, had they seemed more pertinent. A philosophical grammar, such as Campanella's, provided enough information for a higher course of studies and could be used for advanced students. However, printing it would not have been practical at the time, since the potential sales (or at least the potential audience) would not have outweighed the significant production costs. Thus, it continued to circulate in manuscript form, as was often the

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22   On Yovhannēs K'ṙnec'i's grammar see Cowe, "Role of Priscian's *Institutiones.*"

23   The event is described in chapter 29 of the *History* of Aṙak'el Davrižec'i. See Aṙak'el Davrižec'i, *Girk' patmut'eanc' (1990)*, 316 and, for an English translation, Bournoutian, *History*, 296; for a French translation, Brosset, *Collection*, 462.

24   On the linguistic policies of *Propaganda Fide* see De Clercq *et al.*, "The Linguistic Contribution."

case with other books destined for a learned audience. However, there was a second potential audience, composed of children and novices who were in need of a first introduction to grammar. They were the target audience of the abridgement, which, in a little more than 100 pages, provided the basic elements thereof. In this case, the potential demand justified the costs, and the book could thus be printed.

Having discussed Oskan's activity as a translator from Latin into Armenian, I now address his efforts as a translator in the opposite direction. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, his name is associated with a translation of the shorter version of Koriwn's *Life of Mesrop*.[25] The Parisian manuscript that preserves the text (see below) reads:

> Vita beati Magistri Mesrop, qui primus caracteres Armenicos invenit, composita a discipulo ipsius nomine Coriun. Ea continetur in ingenti volumine quod antiquo sermone Armenico scriptum est et in bibliothequa [sic] regia asservatur (f. 2ʳ).

> Life of the blessed teacher Mesrop, who was the first to discover the Armenian letters, composed by his own disciple called Coriun. It [i.e. the life] is contained in a substantial volume written in the ancient Armenian language and kept in the royal library.

The previous page (f. 1ʳ) reads instead "Vita Mesropae[26] ex Armenico in Latinum translata a domino Uskan Vartabiet Archiepiscopo Armeno," (Life of Mesrop, translated from Armenian into Latin by the reverend [lit. lord] Uskan Vartabiet, Armenian archbishop). And, at the top of the same page, on the left, one finds the following: "Lacroix scripsit dictante Archiepiscopo Uscano" (Lacroix wrote it under archbishop Uscan's dictation).

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25   In the Parisian manuscript (Ms 178: see below), the text in question bears the following title: *Ի յիշատակի պատմութեան վարուց երանելոյ սուրբ վարդապետին Մեսրովբայ զոր ասացեալ է նորին աշակերտի Կորեան.* "In memory of the life history of the blessed and holy *vardapet* Mesrovb [= Mesrop], which has been told by his disciple Koriwn" (Kévorkian and Ter-Stépanian, *Manuscrits arméniens*, 598). However, this title is not always present in modern editions and translations. Koriwn's work survives in two redactions. The longer one, probably closer to the original, is attested in its entirety only by one manuscript kept at the Matenadaran in Erevan (Ms 2639), copied in Baleš (Bitlis) between 1674–1675 and 1703, although substantial fragments are attested elsewhere. The shorter redaction is an abridgement of the longer version, with interpolations drawn from later sources. For an introduction to the topic see Orengo, *Aspetti della società*, 121–29.

26   The final letter (*-e*?) is not easy to read.

This suggests that the translation was authored by Oskan himself, who dictated it to someone else. The manuscript in question is kept at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* in Paris (NAL 2083) and can be consulted online.[27] The corresponding record, also available on the library's website, dates it to the eighteenth century. If this dating is accurate, the manuscript must be a later copy of the translation rather than its autograph. The Latin text was published by Ananean in 1966.[28]

As for the source used by Oskan and Lacroix, it can be identified without doubt with the text contained in another Parisian manuscript, kept at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (arm. 178), which had belonged to Gilbert Gaulmin (1585–1665) and in 1668 was sold to the royal library, together with other oriental manuscripts of his.[29] This codex, copied in Sebaste (Sivas) in the twelfth century, contains more than 150 lives of saints. An index of persons, written in Latin and composed by Oskan in 1669, has been added at the beginning of the manuscript. Furthermore, a marginal note clarifies that "Lacroix scripsit dictante archiepiscopo Oskano" (Lacroix wrote it under archbishop Oskan's dictation).[30] Lacroix can be identified with François Pétis de la Croix *père* (1622–95),[31] secretary and interpreter to the king, and he was certainly the same person who set Oskan's translation of Koriwn down in writing.

Thus, the Latin version of Koriwn's shorter redaction, originally translated and written down by a two-person team (one dictating, the other acting as scribe), has in turn reached us only through a later copy. Thus, clearly, any divergences between the Armenian text and the Latin version could be attributed to a mistake on the translator's part (either in understanding the Armenian or in rendering it into Latin), but also potentially to the process of textual transmission that resulted in the extant copy.

A detailed comparison of the two texts would exceed the scope of this paper (but will be the topic of a future publication). However, a few general observations can be made.

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27 https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b100336304.r=manuscrit%20NAL%202083?rk=21459;2, last accessed November 18, 2024.

28 Ananean, "Oskan vardapeti."

29 See Kévorkian in Kévorkian and Ter-Stépanian, *Manuscrits arméniens,* X. In this catalogue the manuscript is described at colls. 589–604.

30 Ms 178 is available online at: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b100874360#, last accessed November 18, 2024.

31 On this proposed identification see Kévorkian and Ter-Stépanian, *Manuscrits arméniens*, 590. It is worth pointing out that in this work (p. X) the year of Pétis de la Croix *père*'s death is given as 1704.

The translation is decidedly faithful to the source text. Even the word order is often the same, as the examples given below will show.[32]

As far as Armenian names are concerned, anthroponyms and toponyms that cannot be substituted with Latin equivalents are usually rendered phonetically inasmuch as possible: thus, *Taron* (277, 282) for Arm. *Tarawn*, *Hemaiac* (282) for *Hmayeak*. These equivalences usually reflect the phonetics of Eastern Armenian: thus, *Mesrop/Mesropa* (277, 278, 279, etc., as opposed to *Mesrob*) for *Mesrop*, *Coriun* (277, 280 as opposed to *Goriun*) for *Koriwn*, *Amatuni* (282, 283 as opposed to *Amaduni*) for *Amatowni, Vardan* (277, as opposed to *Vartan*) for *Vardan*. Occasionally alternative forms coexist: thus, *Mamigonensis* and *Mamiconian* (both at 282) for Arm. *Mamikonean*. Furthermore, the translator seems to have been aware that the grapheme <l> was supposed to represent a lateral consonant (rather than a velar fricative, as he would have pronounced it): thus, *Levond* (280) for *Łewond*, perhaps under the influence of forms such as the French *Leonce* or Italian *Leonzio* (or even the Latin *Leontius*), and especially *Goltn* (277) for *Gołt'n*. It is also worth pointing out that the digraph <sc>, not followed by a front vowel, is used to render the Armenian phoneme /š/: thus, *Arscacunorum* (277), a genitive plural form, to be compared with Arm. *Aršakowni*; *Scambith* (277) for *Šambit'*; *Vramscapuh* (278) for *Vṙamšapowh*; *Artiscat* (282) for Arm. *(Y)aštišat*. In this last case, the mistake in the second letter of the Latin form is perhaps due to the copyist of Ms NAL 2083.

There are other mistakes, misunderstandings, and odd lexical choices in the text.

For instance, the name *Eznik* appears three times in the Armenian text (always in this form, or in one that presupposes it). However, the translator uses *Eznac* twice (279, 280) and *Eznic* only once (280). Although the variant *Eznak* is well attested in Armenian, it is not present in the source text.

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32   The Armenian text was published several times. For the reader's convenience I have used the most recent edition, included in the first volume of the *Matenagirk' Hayoc'* (Koriwn, "Vark'"), even though it contains several typos. In my analysis of Oskan's translation, I only give references to the Latin text (according to Ananean's edition) while discussing individual anthroponyms or toponyms. However, while discussing the translation of entire sentences, I also refer to the aforementioned Armenian edition. The Latin text of the edition has been consistently compared with that of the manuscript, available online. In a few trivial cases (majuscule for minuscule, <c> for <k>, etc.), the orthography of the manuscript has been tacitly preferred and reproduced here. However, whenever the manuscript uses <u> for <v>, I opted instead for Ananean's editorial choice.

Again, near the beginning of the text, the Armenian tells us that Mesrop is

Որդի Վարդանայ, ի մանկութեան աստիս վարժեալ Հելլենացւոց դպրութեամբն (264)

Son of Vardan, in this age of infancy educated in the Greek letters.

The Latin translation reads:

Filius Vardan, in adolescentia illic est exercitatus Hellenica doctrina (277)

Son of Vardan, in (his) infancy, in that place, was educated in the Greek letters.

The problem is that Arm. *astiss* is rendered by *illic*, which would be a better match for an adverb of place such as *asti* or, even better, *ast*. Thus, the translator seems not to have recognized the term *astik'*, of which *astis* is the locative plural, followed here by the enclitic *-s* ("this"). *Astik'* is a *plurale tantum* meaning, among other things, "age of youth" (while the genitive *mankowt'ean* means in turn "of infancy"). It is worth noting that the passage in question matches, at least semantically, the corresponding section in the longer version of Koriwn's work (ch. 3),[33] which tells us that the future inventor of the Armenian alphabet was educated in the Greek letters *i mankowt'ean tisn*, that is, "in the age of infancy." This version of the text does not use the term *astik'* but rather the formally and semantically similar *tik'* ("age"), which could explain the variant that we find in the shorter version.

Slightly later in the text, the Armenian version reads:

Յետ այնորիկ ի ծառայութիւն Աստուծոյ մարդասիրի դարձեալ, մերկանայր յինքենէ զամենայն զբաղմունս (264)

After this, having turned himself to the service of God who loves mankind, he divested himself of all concerns.

The passage is rendered into Latin as follows:

Postea in servitutem Dei talem virum Amantis reversus exuit a se omnes sollicitudines (277)

Then, having turned himself to the service of God who loves such a man, he divested himself of all concerns.

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33   Koriwn, "Vark'," 234.

This would be a suitable translation of the source text, even down to the word order, if not for the bizarre form, "(Dei) talem virum Amantis", "(of God) who loves such a man" (i.e. Mesrop), which does not exactly match the more generic *mardasiri*, "(of God) who loves mankind."

To conclude, let us address one more passage from the final part of the text. The Armenian version reads:

> Յետ այնորիկ դէպ լինէր փոխել յաշխարհէս երանելույն սրբոյն Սահակայ հայրապետին Հայոց, ճշմարիտ վարուք եւ ուղղափառ հաւատով, լցեալ աւուրբք (269)

> After this, it happened that the blessed saint Sahak, patriarch of the Armenians, departed this world (i.e. died), (he) of the true life and righteous faith, at an old age (or more literally, full of days).

The Latin translation reads as follows:

> Postea accidit ut beatus et sanctus Patriarcha Isahac, vera vitis Armenorum, occubuerit recta fide,   plenus diebus (281).

> Then it happened that the blessed and saint Patriarch Isahac, true vine of the Armenians, died in the righteous faith, at an old age (rendered in the Latin in a manner that keeps the metaphor from the original, i.e., full of days).

The translator had to restructure the text, chiefly because he could not reproduce to the letter a passage that literally reads "the removing of the blessed saint Sahak from this world happened." More striking, however, is that the Armenian *čšmarit varowkᶜ* "of the true life" (that is, whose existence had been in accordance with Christian truth) becomes in Latin *vera vitis* "true vine." This confusion between *vita* ("life") and *vitis* ("vine"), which cannot be justified on the basis of the Armenian text, likely originated when the translated text was dictated to the scribe. It seems much less likely that the mistake could have occurred during the process of textual transmission.

Setting aside these considerations of Oskan's approach to the text, one cannot help but wonder why he felt the need to translate it. As mentioned before, the Armenian source text was available in Paris, and a Latin translation would have made it accessible to a much wider public. It is also worth recalling that the protagonist of this text, Mesrop (also known as Maštocᶜ), was a figure of primary importance in the Armenian cultural landscape. Traditionally

considered the inventor of the Armenian alphabet,[34] he was also a celebrated translator and writer in his own right. Furthermore, he was active in the first half of the fifth century AD, when Armenian literature was in its infancy and the foundations were laid for its development. Mesrop was also considered a saint by the Armenian Church. Thus, relaying his story and making his life and work accessible to a wider public meant celebrating the activities of a veritable founding father of Armenian culture.

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34 On the earliest sources that report on the invention of the Armenian alphabet (though with differences in some of the details), see Orengo, *Aspetti della società*, 88–118.

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