

DUMBARTON OAKS

ART • NATURE • SCHOLARSHIP

Armenian Scholars in Byzantium and Byzantine Scholarship in Armenian Byzantine Studies Colloquium November 3, 2023 Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3

- 8:30 a.m. Registration, Fellowship House Lobby
Coffee and tea, Oak Room
- 9:00 - 9:20 a.m. Welcome
Thomas B.F. Cummins and Nikos D. Kontogiannis, Dumbarton Oaks
- Introduction
Emilio Bonfiglio, University of Hamburg

Armenian Translations of Religious and Secular Greek Literature

Chair: Claudia Rapp, University of Vienna

- 9:20-9:50 a.m. "Armenian Philosophers in Byzantium and Greek Philosophy in Ancient and Medieval Armenia"
Valentina Calzolari, University of Geneva
- 9:50-10:20 a.m. "Lost in Layers' or the Uncovering of the Armenian Translation of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Psalms* through Its Palimpsested *Membra Disiecta*"
Emilio Bonfiglio, University of Hamburg
- 10:20-10:50 a.m. Discussion
- 10:50-11:00 a.m. Coffee and tea

Learning Centers and Artistic Transfers

Chair: Elizabeth Bolman, Case Western Reserve University

- 11:00-11:30 a.m. "Subverting Romanicity: Armenian Translators in Constantinople"
Sergio La Porta, California State University, Fresno
- 11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. "Coins, Cabbages, Calendars, and Carnivory: Byzantium at Ani, Fifth to Eleventh Centuries"
Christina Maranci, Harvard University
- 12:00-12:30 p.m. Discussion

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12:30–2:00 p.m. Lunch and Speakers' Photo, Guest House

Perceptions and Representations of Cultural and Material Contacts

Chair: Dimiter Angelov, Harvard University

- 2:00–2:30 p.m. “Unsteady People’: Byzantine Perceptions of Modes and Networks of Armenian Mobility to and from the Eastern Roman Empire between the Sixth and Tenth Centuries CE”
Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Austrian Academy of Sciences
- 2:30–3:00 p.m. “Greeks’ or ‘Romans’? Perceptions of the Eastern Empire in the Early Armenian Historiography”
Giusto Traina, Sorbonne University
- 3:00–3:30 p.m. Discussion
- 3:30–3:45 p.m. Coffee and tea

Hellenic Wisdom and the Armenian Tradition

Chair: Stratis Papaioannou, University of Crete

- 3:45–4:15 p.m. “The Armenian Legacy of Dionysios Thrax: Byzantine Commentaries and the Rationalization of the Absurd”
Robin Meier, University of Lausanne
- 4:15–4:45 p.m. “Plato in Armenian: Between Translation and Adaptation”
Irene Tinti, University of Florence
- 4:45–5:15 p.m. Discussion

Concluding Remarks

Chair: George Demacopoulos, Fordham University

- 5:15–5:30 p.m. Concluding Remarks
Bernard Coulie, Catholic University of Louvain
- 5:30–6:30 p.m. Reception (with Memorial for Nina Garsoïan by Levon Avdoyan), Garden Room

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Armenian Scholars in Byzantium and Byzantine Scholarship in Armenian Byzantine Studies Colloquium November 3, 2023 Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC

Emilio Bonfiglio, Colloquiarch

Scholarly interests into Armeno-Byzantine studies started in the nineteenth century thanks to the Mekhitarist publication of scores of original Armenian texts and Armenian translations of ancient Greek and Byzantine authors. The availability of this mass of previously unknown literary sources resulted in the gradual creation of a new field of studies that gained momentum in the 1960s, after the appearance of groundbreaking studies such as those by Adontz (*Études arméno-byzantines*, 1965), Charanis (*The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire*, 1963), and Der Nersessian (*Études byzantines et arméniennes*, 1973). In 1980, Dumbarton Oaks joined in the growing awareness of the relevance of the Armenian element for the study of Byzantium with its now renown *Symposium East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (organized by Garsoïan, Matthews, and Thomson).

Four decades later, and unhappily coinciding with unfolding tragic events in Nagorno-Karabach, this colloquium aims to showcase the state of the art of Armeno-Byzantine Studies by going beyond the mere acknowledgment of Armenia and the Armenians as significant Eastern neighbors of the Empire of the New Rome. Building on a wealth of new studies, it re-examines the extent of the Armeno-Byzantine interconnectedness at both the social and material level by focusing on the impact Armenian scholars had on the dissemination of Byzantine culture, the repercussions of Greek scholarship on the formation of an Armenian identity, and on the material underpinnings and technical aspects that made possible such a colossal cultural transfer.

ABSTRACTS

“Lost in Layers’ or the Uncovering of the Armenian Translation of John Chrysostom’s *Commentary on the Psalms* through Its Palimpsested *Membra Disiecta*”

Emilio Bonfiglio, University of Hamburg

Throughout the late antique and medieval periods, interactions between Armenian and Byzantine scholars took many forms, the most prominent being the imposing translation movement from Greek into Armenian that began in the early fifth century CE with the translation of the Scriptures, followed by Armenian renderings of canonical and liturgical books and, above all, a great number of Patristic texts.

Within Armenia, this early translation movement coincided with the development of a remarkable and original manuscript culture. Starting from the fifth century, thousands Armenian manuscripts were produced, acquired, exchanged, and transmitted in the Armenian homeland—the Armenian plateau, as well as abroad—in the various cultural, religious, and

economic colonies in which sizeable groups of Armenians lived and flourished, for instance, Jerusalem.

While the majority of the extant Armenian manuscripts date to the second millennium, this paper focuses on one of the earliest manuscripts (ca. eighth century) and one of the earliest Armenian translations. The latter is the Armenian translation of John Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Psalms* (CPG 4413), which is now extant in four *membra disiecta*, that is, separate parts of the original manuscript, preserved in Milan, Leiden, Oslo, and Mount Sinai.

The paper provides a history of the *membra disiecta* as well as the first results of a codicological and palaeographical study of them. The study of the *membra disiecta* is of particular importance in understanding the ways in which Armenian scholars appropriated, adapted, imitated, and/or reshaped the earliest examples of late antique Greek manuscript culture, as well as how they selected and "reorganized" Greek literary culture into the particularism of an Armenian canon.

"Armenian Philosophers in Byzantium and Greek Philosophy in Ancient and Medieval Armenia"

Valentina Calzolari, University of Geneva

My paper deals with the transmission and reception of Greek philosophy in Armenia and will stress how late ancient Neoplatonism was received and transmitted to Armenia over the centuries. Special emphasis will be placed on the corpus of the Armenian translations of the Greek commentaries on Aristotelian logic by David, a Neoplatonist who taught at the School of Alexandria in the sixth century CE. First, I will consider when, how, and why the Armenians were able to encounter, read, translate, assimilate, and then disseminate in their language Greek Aristotelian texts studied in the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria in its last years. Secondly, a study of Armenian assimilation and dissemination of the Greek Neoplatonic corpus must be conducted, bearing in mind that, at the time of the Armenian translations, Greek Neoplatonic philosophy had a long-standing tradition behind it. In the case of Armenia, there was no such tradition: the Armenian translators were pioneers. They faced the need to understand and make clear, in Armenian, new philosophical notions and practices for an audience that was not familiar, or not totally familiar, with Greek philosophy. Finally, the transmission of Neoplatonic philosophy into Armenia will lead to the third issue, namely the impact of the Greek philosophical literature that entered Armenia in the form of translations.

"Subverting Romanicity: Armenian Translators in Constantinople"

Sergio La Porta, California State University, Fresno

Between the eighth and eleventh centuries CE, a set of texts was translated from Greek into Armenian by pairs of scholars who worked in Constantinople. The most famous of these scholars are the eighth-century Step'anos Siwnec'i and Dawit' Hiwpatos; slightly less renowned are Joseph and Pantalēon, who worked in Hagia Sophia in the tenth century. To these two pairs we may add a third: a certain Grigor, from the monastery of Step'anos Ulneç'i, and a certain Kalužan, who translated the life of Step'anos Ulneç'i in Constantinople in the eleventh century. This paper will argue that an intriguing aspect of the work of these translating duos

is that they present Constantinople as a locus of textual authority, only to subvert the cultural dominance of the imperial capital through their translations. In doing so, these scholars translated spiritual authority from Constantinople and the Empire to their own context in a manner similar to the translation of relics.

“Coins, Cabbages, Calendars, and Carnivory: Byzantium at Ani, Fifth to Eleventh Centuries”

Christina Maranci, Harvard University

The city of Ani is associated with a range of cultures, foremost among them the Armenian Bagratid dynasty for whom Ani was the royal capital from 961 to 1045 CE, after which the city was annexed to the Byzantine empire before the arrival of the Seljuks in 1064. Yet traces of contact and connections with the Byzantines are plentiful and possibly more ancient. This talk will present a diachronic survey of Byzantium at Ani through a range of media, exploring for example, textual traditions connecting Ani with the emperor Maurice (and his father); the role of the architect Trdat in constructing the Cathedral and repairing the Hagia Sophia; the use of the “Calendar of the Romans” in the foundation inscription at Ani; and the relic of the Holy Cross brought from Constantinople and sheltered in the Church of the Saviour. I will conclude with the example of the inscriptions on the west façade of Ani Cathedral, which date to the era of annexation and recently studied by Tim Greenwood. This broad array of references will demonstrate the many ways that Byzantium and Byzantines were understood in Ani.

“The Armenian Legacy of Dionysios Thrax: Byzantine Commentaries and the Rationalization of the Absurd”

Robin Meyer, University of Lausanne

The Armenian philosophical and scientific tradition modeled itself to no small extent on its Greek predecessors, initially by translating their works into Armenian. One, if not the earliest, translation from Greek into Armenian is the *Art of Grammar*, the earliest grammar composed in the West, attributed to the second-century BCE Alexandrian scholar Dionysios Thrax. Confusingly, the Armenian version of the *Art of Grammar* is not a straightforward translation, nor is it an adaptation that might serve as an Armenian grammar. Simply put, it is the worst of all worlds in meandering between translation, adaptation, and the invention of Armenian forms to correspond to Greek grammar. To give but one example: Armenian version does not possess grammatical gender, but for the purposes of this version, it is created ad hoc.

The purpose of this version remains unclear. Its differences from the original mean that it doesn't lend itself to being used as a translation or *aide-mémoire* for Armenian students of the Byzantine trivium. At the same time, (near-)contemporary explanatory wordlists and later commentaries suggest that even for educated readers it was difficult to understand.

This paper focuses on the commentaries penned by Movses Kerdot', Step'anos Siwnec'i, and Grigor Magistros, among others, and discusses two questions: Why do they almost exclusively discuss or clarify philosophical matters from a broadly Aristotelian or Neoplatonist

perspective, without touching on the grammatical issues the Armenian version produces? And what can be learned from them about the purpose of said version?

“Unsteady People’: Byzantine Perceptions of Modes and Networks of Armenian Mobility to and from the Eastern Roman Empire between the Sixth and Tenth Centuries CE”

Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Armenians were among the most important ethno-religious groups both present within and migrating from beyond the borders of the Byzantine Empire before and after the establishment of the Arab Caliphate in the seventh century CE. Their significance especially within the Byzantine elite and the modes and limits of their integration into Byzantine society have been discussed frequently, and in very recent scholarship, with different interpretations.

This paper looks at the Byzantine perceptions of the various modes and motivations of the mobility of individuals and groups identified as Armenian, as well as of the networks through which Armenians found their way into the empire. As becomes evident, such descriptions in historiography, but also hagiography, and even in legal texts, cannot solely be read as factual reports, but also reflect certain stereotypes and narrative traditions on the “unsteadiness” of the Armenians since antiquity.

“Plato in Armenian: Between Translation and Adaptation”

Irene Tinti, University of Florence

At the present state of knowledge, only five Platonic or pseudo-Platonic dialogues survive in ancient Armenian translations: the *Timaeus*, *Euthyphro*, *Apology of Socrates*, *Laws*, and *Minos*. Written in Hellenized Armenian, and attested in their entirety in one late manuscript (Venice 1123: seventeenth century?), they are anonymous, undated, and critically unedited as a whole. The issue of their authorship and date has been the object of a longstanding scholarly debate, with proposed dates ranging from the fifth to the eleventh century CE.

This paper will briefly summarize the arguments in favor of an attribution to the Byzantinophile Grigor Magistros Pahlawowni (c. 990-1059) and/or to his circle of collaborators, whose activity coincided chronologically with a renewed interest in Platonism in Byzantine circles. Then, it will show with textual examples that the Platonic versions—despite their Hellenizing character—are not literal translations from the Greek.

Finally, the paper will consider the kind of changes introduced into the texts to adapt them to their new context, including a Christian Armenian audience far removed in time from the original composition (a process for which Byzantine attitudes toward pagan texts can provide a source of comparison). This analysis is especially relevant considering recent acquisitions that prove that—contrary to what was previously believed—the Armenian Platonic dossier had some degree of textual circulation and influence in Mediaeval Armenian circles.

All textual data will be drawn from the manuscript witnesses, emended whenever necessary.

“Greeks’ or ‘Romans’? Perceptions of the Eastern Empire in the Early Armenian Historiography”

Giusto Traina, Sorbonne University

This paper will consider the image of Rome and Early Byzantium in the earlier Armenian historiographies. Usually, in the Armenian sources, the Roman Empire as a geographical entity is considered only for its Eastern part. Accordingly, the Roman Empire is usually named the Empire of the Greeks. Agat’angelos and the Epic Histories (where only in a few passages are the Romans named Romans) name them Greeks, whereas Łazar P’arpec’i speaks of Greeks or Romans more or less interchangeably. A peculiar situation concerns Movsēs Xorenac’i’s *History of Armenia*, where the Romans are called Armenians until the period between the rise of the Sassanids in Iran and the conversion of the Armenians to Christianity. Before the third century CE, Xorenac’i usually depicts the Romans in a rather negative way. When the Armenian Arsacids lost their traditional connection with Iran, they subsequently showed a less ambiguous position toward Rome, and as a result, the Romans became Greeks.