

THE BOOK OF THE SIX THOUSAND: AN ARMENIAN MAGICAL TEXT*

The book called in Armenian *Vec' hazareak*, «The Six Thousand» (henceforth, *Vh*), has enjoyed for many centuries renown and reverence throughout the Armenian world; and in the scattered settlements of the Diaspora, marvellous and sometimes awful powers are ascribed to it still. The Book is preserved in very many manuscript versions of greatly varying length, embracing about seven centuries: from the thirteenth to our own. In its contents, the *Vh* is a multifaceted text containing materials on mathematics, botany, theology, and astrology, all pressed into the service of magic for the purpose of obtaining the object of one's desire or predicting the future. In fine, it is the principal Armenian magical text of the Middle Ages; and its study is accordingly of value in illuminating the thought and beliefs of that vanished time. The memory of the *Vh* is not wholly diminished, though, and may be sustained in part by an enduring, if unarticulated conviction that the several parts of science and wisdom, sundered in our day, belong to a common, harmonious, and intelligible mass to which we are no strangers. Magic must ultimately become a gross manipulation, rather than a comprehension of that unity; and superstition would seem less a gate than a bar to consciousness. Still such recent conceptions as the Gaia hypothesis of a sentient cosmos, seem to be in part an effort to recover the conception of a seamless world before the shattering alienation of this hollow, nihilistic age.

In a letter of Dawit' *vardapet* to Grigor Tutēordi we read, «And he [scil. Anania Širakac'i] brought to the realm of Armenia the praiseworthy *Vh*, the mother of numbers» (*Ew zZReakn goveli ězmayrn*

* This is a revised and expanded version, in English translation, of my paper *Vec' hazareak mateanē Hayoc' mef*, which was published in *Banber Erevani Hamal-sarani* 1988, 1 (64), pp. 85-93.

t'uoc' eber na yašxarhn Hayoc')¹. Širakac'i was born in the 610's, and died ca. 685; he studied with the Greek scholar Teukhikos at Trebizond, who had travelled to Armenia; he had a vast library, about which Širakac'i marvels, «He had everything, exoteric and esoteric» (*Amenayn kayr ar nma: yaytnik' ew galt'nik'*)². The *Vh* presumably belonged to the latter category and had come from Armenia, for Širakac'i writes of it, «It is a treasure hidden in the land of Armenia and a jewel concealed in the house of T'orgom, for it is the mother of all arts, with every section... all the skilled men of the Greeks saw it in our province and marvelled. And if one understands it, he knows what kinds of wisdom are hidden therein, but unless he penetrates it, he cannot comprehend, nor hear the entirety through the written [character], whatever he do, since each speaks 12,000 orations» (*Ganj ē cackeal i yerkins Hayoc' ew akn t'aguc'eal i tann T'orgomay, zi mayr ē amenayn aruestic' handerj amenayn bažanmamb... tesin amenayn čartark'n Yunac' i merum nahangis ew zarmac'an, ew t'ē ok' imanay zsa, na gitē, t'ē inč' imastk' en i sma cackeal, ew t'ē č'ē or mteal i sa, č'i karē imanal kam grov bovandakn lsel, t'ē zinč' aīnē, zi amenayn mi ŽB R čais xawsi*). According to Erevan Matenadaran Ms. 8098, there is no doubt that it is the *Vh* of which Anania speaks in the above passage from his writings: «This is the craft of the *Vh* which Anania Širakac'i praises, saying, "You were a hidden treasure in the land of Armenia..."» (*Ays ē arhest ZReakin, or govē Anania Širakac'in ew asē: ganj cackeal ēir yerkins Hayoc'...*)³.

The passage suggests that the wisdom of the *Vh* lay in an esoteric, presumably Pythagorean understanding of numbers which could not, or was not to be conveyed entirely in writing. This reminds one of Plato's caution in his Seventh Letter that the deepest teachings must be given by word of mouth, not in writing. Certainly the sole *Vh* contained in Anania's published writings, for which there is no difficulty of certain attribution, betrays no sense of hidden wisdom. It is a table of division arranged thus: ŽD. NIĖ (Z)R

1. *Osk. Mekn.* 2 Tim. Čar 8 (Vol. 1, p. 252), cited by Patriarch ELIŠĖ DUREAN, *Hayoc' hin krōnē*, Jerusalem, 1933, 15.
2. P. M. POLOSAN, «"Eōt'nagreank'"-i aīelcvacē ev Davit' Anhalt'ē», H. L. MIRZOYAN, ed., *Davit' Anhalt' 1500, hotvacneri žolovacu*, Erevan, 1980, 154-6.
3. P. M. POLOSAN, «"Eōt'nagreank'"-i gitakan ev patmakan aržek'ē», in G. A. BRUTYAN, S. AREVŠATYAN, et al., eds., *Davit' Anhalt', hin Hayastani mec p'ilisop'an*, Erevan, 1983, 536 & 548, n. 5.

(i.e., 14, 428, 6000)⁴, and Ašot Abrahamyan, followed by Hrač'ya Ačariyan, explained that some unknown writer named Vardan in the thirteenth century converted Anania's simple arithmetical table into a magical text⁵. The Armenian word for the genre of such books, *Axt'ark'*, means literally, the constellations of the Zodiac used in astrology; the word is a loan from Pahlavi, indicating a Sasanian precedent for such things; the Zoroastrian use of the number 6000 is to be discussed shortly⁶.

Adonc' pointed out that in the thirteenth century also, king Het'um expressed interest in the book called *Eawt'nagreank'*, literally, the «Seven Letters» (vowels of the alphabet)⁷. Texts almost identical to the *Vh* come sometimes with this heading also, so it is possible the *Vh* was reshaped under this name, at the king's order. On fol. 251b of Ms. 1288, dated A. D. 1273, of the Armenian Monastery of St. James', Jerusalem (Bogharian, *Cat.*, vol. 4, p. 492), the Grammar (*K'erakan*) is equated with the *Eawt'nagreank'*, which the fifth-century Armenian philosopher Dawit' (called *Anyalt'*, the Invincible) is supposed to have learned from a *vardapet* (celibate priest) in Rome named *P'iwnik* (the Phoenician!, possibly Porphyry); and this is itself identical to the art (*aruest*) of the *Vh*, about which Anania's words of praise are then cited, with attribution. The number seven is a mystical one, and Anania once wrote, «And in the house of wisdom are established seven pillars» (*Ew yimastut'ean tan eawt' hastatin siwnk'*) (cited by G. Xrlopyan, *Anania Širakac'u ašxarhahayac'k'ē*, Erevan, 1964, p. 33). It is not a new thought: Lawrence of Arabia did not learn it from the writings of the Armenian, either. «Seven Letters» is a suitable title for a work in which all the stones of the temple of wisdom are to be mortared together, and one Anania

4. Modern Eastern Armenian translation and commentary by A. G. ABRAHAMYAN, G. B. PETROSYAN, *Anania Širakac'i, Matenagrut'yun*, Erevan, 1979, 47-8.
5. A. ABRAHAMYAN, *Anania Širakac'u Matenagrut'yunē*, Erevan, 1941, 64; H. AČAREAN, *Hayoc' anjnanunneri bařaran*, 5, 91. According to PETROSYAN, 1979, 11, citing a letter of Grigor Magistros, the works of Anania were placed under a ban.
6. In agreement with Zoroastrian conceptions, we find *apaxt'ark'* grouped with the «unlucky constellations» (*džbaxt axt'ark'*; see PETROSYAN, 1979, 82). Sasanian astrologers were called in Pahlavi *axtar-āmār*, the latter part of the term equivalent to Arm. *hamarol*; see C. BRUNNER, «Astronomy and Astrology in Sasanian Culture», *Encyclopedia Iranica*. See also H. A. ANASYAN, «Axt'ark'», *Hayakan matenagitut'yun*, vol. 1, Erevan, 1959, 424-68.
7. POLOSYAN, 1980, 152.

himself might have used. All this, and the book's very popularity with Het'um, suggests we must assume some prototype of it to have existed before Vardan's work; and at the very least, the number 6000 itself, arbitrarily selected by Anania for his table, had to have been of deep and recognized significance to the seventh-century scholar and his readers.

Hermetism of any kind, in any age, has until recently been regarded as somewhat disreputable in academe, at least until scholars like Frances Yates showed us its influence on thinkers like Giordano Bruno, and on the founding members of the Royal Society in England. Anania is perhaps regarded still as too much the scientist (in an anachronistically contemporary mold, of course) to have had truck with magic, and theories whose tendency is to distance him from the magical text *Vh* we possess were motivated in part, one imagines, by a desire to safeguard his reputation. A. G. Abrahamyan, in the essay on the *Vh* that prefaces his voluminous study and edition of Širakac'i's writings (Erevan, 1944), cites approvingly this remark of N. Adontz (Adonc') from the latter's *Dionisii Frakiiskii i armyanskii tolkovateli*, Saint Petersburg, 1915, p. LXI: «Of course it is impossible to imagine such respected writers as having had any part in such rubbish. But its author needed weighty names to lend credence to his nonsense amongst the gullible. Naturally he settled upon such recognized authorities in grammatical and mathematical literature as David (the Invincible), Moses (Xorenac'i), Anania, and even Homer». But Anania's own writings, cited above, hint strongly of esotericism; and so do native traditions concerning him: Fr. L. Ališan (*Hay-Venet*, Venice, 1896, p. 191) recounts an Armenian legend of the exile of Anania from his homeland; he went to Venice and taught alchemy to the king, who learnt from him the secret of transforming iron into gold. Another tradition reported by A. Mnac'akanyan (*Haykakan zardarvest*, Erevan, 1955, 486-7) credits Anania with the discovery of the *hamasp'iwr*, a mythical flower to which wondrous properties are ascribed in Armenian magical texts.

In ancient times, long before Anania, it was believed 6000 years constituted one world-age. It has been suggested that Hesiod's scheme of four world eras named after the metals was of Eastern, perhaps Iranian origin⁸, each age lasting 3000 years, for a total

8. See M. FINLEY, *The World of Odysseus*, Penguin Books, 1972, 30, 31; and M. L. WEST, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*, Oxford, 1971, 32.

of 12,000, for which 6000 brings us to a mid-point or fulcrum. Zoroastrianism applies these numbers, evidently borrowed from Babylonian mathematics, to its sacred cosmology⁹. According to the *Bundahišn*, or Creation, a Pahlavi work compiled in the ninth century A.D. on the basis of very archaic traditions, Ahreman, the Destructive Spirit, invaded the good universe made by the Creator Ohrmazd (Avestan Ahura Mazda) at noon on the day of the Vernal Equinox of the 6000-th year of Creation. With this dark event, the *Ēbgad* (Incursion), commenced the time of Mixture of good and evil forces. The Prophet Zarathushtra came on the eve of the 9000-th year (changed in Christendom to a 7000-th, a Sabbatical, as will be seen below); the redemption of the world, an event called *Frašegird*, the Making Wonderful (Armenian loan-word *hrašakeri*), will come in the year 12,000¹⁰. Thus, the history of the Universe is divided into two main periods of 6000 years' duration each, the first culminating in the demonic assault of Ahreman and the start of the world as we know it; the second, in the expulsion of evil and the purification of the world. Iranian astrologers professed to be able to foretell events based on the twelve signs of the Zodiac, each of which determines the shape of its millennium¹¹. Their labors were devoted mostly, as one might expect, to the six thousand years of our predicament, and not to the beatific otium of the first half of history¹².

Jews and Christians probably received an impetus from Zoroastrian Iran towards the development of cosmological and eschatological doctrines within their own systems, and adopted besides

9. BEROSSUS in his *Babyloniaka* uses periods of years called *saroi* (3600), *nēroi* (600), and *sossoi* (36) (see S. M. BURSTEIN, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, Sources and Monographs: Sources from the Ancient Near East, Vol. 1, fasc. 5, Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1978, 160). These terms must have entered Armenian via Greek, and not directly from Akkadian (see G. B. DZHAUKYAN [JAHUKYAN], «Ob akkadskikh zaimstvovaniyakh v armyanskom yazyke», *Patma-banasirakan Handes*, 1980, 3, 111).
10. The Iranian cosmological scheme appears to have undergone several stages of development, reaching its present form in the Achaemenian period. See M. BOYCE, *Zoroastrians*, London, 1979, 74-5; and R. C. ZAEHNER, *Zurvan*, Oxford, 1955, 96 et seq.
11. See BRUNNER (fn. 6). ZAEHNER, *op. cit.*, 96-7, points out that Bīrūnī linked the Zoroastrian 12,000-year world era with the twelve zodiacal signs.
12. The Greeks expressed the belief that Zoroaster was the first to explain the meaning of the signs of the Zodiac; see J. BIDEZ, F. CUMONT, *Les Mages Hellénisés*, Paris, 1938, Vol. 1, 122.

specific features of the Zoroastrian beliefs¹³. Thus, 2 Baruch, 56, 34 and 4 Ezra, 14, 11, divide history into twelve periods. According to the *Tanna dē-Be Eliyyahu*, the world will last 6000 years, of which 2000 belong to the void (corresponding to the motionless time of *Bundahišn*, «Creation»), 2000 to the Law (this age of *Gumēzišn*, «Mixture»), and 2000 to the Redeemer (Heb. *Māšiah*, corresponding to the Avestan savior, *Astvat. ērēta*-)¹⁴. The seventh millennium is the Sabbath of a cosmic week: God rested on the seventh day of Creation¹⁵.

Christians equated the millennium of the year 6000 with the Nativity of Christ. Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i, the fourteenth-century Armenian poet, wrote: «Love removed Adam from Paradise, / Cast him to the earth and made him mad, / And betrayed him to Satan, / Who tortured him for six thousand years» (*Sērñ zAdam draxtēn ehan, / Yerkir jēgec' w'arar šīwar, / Ew Satani ēzna matneac', / Or č'arč'areac' am vec' hazar*)¹⁶. The Syriac *Book of Treasures* places the Nativity in the year 5500; with the seventh millennium, earthly life ends. From the Armenian Apocrypha: «For Christ for our sake was offered in sacrifice upon the Cross, and He snatched out of the hands of Satan the souls of the six centuries» (*Zi K'ristos vasn mer pataragec'aw i veray xač'in, ew zvec' darun zhogik'n i jērac' Satanayi korzeac'*); «The Lord God swore His oath with the Forefather, written by means of him [i. e., Adam] and sealed by His finger, that: "In the sixth day of the six-thousandth year I shall send My Sole-begotten Son, My

13. See S. SHAKED, «Iranian influence on Judaism: 1st cent. BCE to 2nd cent. CE», Ch. 12 of the *Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol. 1, 1984, 320.

14. See J. NEUSNER, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, Leiden, 1971, 152. Text: *Tanna dē-be Eliyyahu šēseth alāfīm šānāh hewē ha-'ōlām šēnē alāfīm tōhū šēnē alāfīm Tōrāh šēnē alāfīm yēmōth ham-māšiah*. It adds that because of our multitudinous sins God has filled the years of the Messiah with tribulations. Eng. tr. by WILLIAM G. [GERSHON ZEV] BRAUDE, ISRAEL J. KAPSTEIN, *Tanna dēbe Eliyyahu: The Lore of the School of Elijah*, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 5741/1981, 52 & n. 1. The Talmud adds, people before the Deluge refused to have children, since they knew the world would end after 6000 years. This angered God, Who sent the Flood as punishment.

15. RAV KATINA, *Sanhedrin*, 97a-b. Compare Psalm 90, 4, which 2 Peter 3, 8 repeats: one day of God is a thousand terrestrial years. The belief endures: see ADIN STEINSALTZ, *The Thirteen-Petalled Rose*, New York, 1980, 74.

16. E. PIVAZYAN, ed., *Hovhannes T'lkuranc'i, Taler*, Erevan, 1960, XIV, 53-6, p. 161; see also J. R. RUSSELL, *Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i and the Mediaeval Armenian Lyric Tradition*, University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies 7, Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987, 79 & 186, commentary on line 114.

Logos, God, who coming is incarnated by a child of yours and becomes My Son, Son of Man. And he will restore you to your primal glory. And then you will be Adam, having become immortal in body, God united with God, as one of Us, to know the good and the evil". This is the writing written and sealed with the signet-ring of God, which the Magi brought and presented before Christ» (*Ed Tēr Astuac zerdumn iwr ěnd naxahayrn, miġnordut'eamb greal ew knk'eal matambn iwrov et'ē i vec' hazarerord ami awur vec'erordi, arak'em zmiacin ordin im zbann Astuac, or ekeal marmnanay i zawakē k'ummē ew lini ordin im ordi mardoy, ew zk'ez darjeal yarajin p'arsn kangnesc'ē. Ew yaynžam elic'is du Adam anmahac'eal marmnov, Astuac ěnd Astuac miaworeal, ibrew zmi i menj čanač'el zbari ew zč'ar. Ays ē girn greal ew mataneawn Astucoy p'akeal, zor bereal mogk'n araji Yisusi matuc'in*). At another point it is stated that the prophecy of Christ's birth in the sixth millennium comes from Persia: Melk'on, king of the Persians, has a book which says, «In the year six thousand on the sixth day I send My Sole-begotten Son, Son of Man» (*I vec' hazar ami awr vec'errordi [sic!] arak'em zmiacin ordi im ordi mardoy*). The sixth day is of course Armenian Christmas, 6 January¹⁷. The same schema exists in Western Christendom and is found in diverse sources¹⁸.

In the *Letter of Barnabas*, ca. A.D. 130, it is assumed the world will last another six thousand years until the second coming of Christ: the world lasts 12,000 years in all, not 7000 (the latter a cosmic week modelled on the Sabbath, though not without the Zoroastrian parallel of the coming of Zarathushtra and the Saviors, as seen above). This schema of 12,000 years is close to the Zoroastrian; and we find something like it in the Armenian text of Agathangelos: from Adam to Noah is 7000 years. After the world catastrophe of the Deluge is the second age, 5000 years long, which ends with the birth of Christ – 12,000 years in all¹⁹. Like the Pahlavi

17. Fr. E. TAYEC'I, ed., *Ankanon girk' hin ktakaranac'*, Venice, 1896, 303; IDEM, *Ankanon girk' nor ktakaranac'*, Venice, 1898, pp. 51, 276.

18. See C. A. PATRIDES, «Renaissance Estimates of the Year of Creation», *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 26, San Marino, CA, 1963, 315-22; IDEM, ed., Sir THOMAS BROWNE, «Christian Morals», *Major Works*, Penguin Books, 1977, 439; and WILLIAM BLAKE, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Oxford, 1975, facsimile plate 15.

19. Citations from Y. GALAYEAN, «Vec'hazareak», *Hask*, Antelias, Lebanon, 1955, pp. 254-7, 349-52, 383-5: see AGATHANGELOS, *Patmut'iwn Hayoc'*, paras.

axtarmārān (astrologers), early Christians sought through these cosmological calculations to fix the events to come and the term of this world. The week of Creation in Genesis determined the larger cosmic week, and study of those six first days inspired much speculation about the last. In the seventh century, Bp. Jacob of Edessa began an *Hexameron* (Arm. *Vec'awreay*)²⁰; in the eighth century, Step'anos of Siwnik' completed a prose translation of the *Hexameron* of George of Pisidia; but the *Hexameron* of Basil of Caesarea, which Širakac'i knew²¹, was the most important work of the genre, and it remained for centuries basic reading for Armenian students. In its very first chapter we are told, «Now, if the world has had a beginning in time, doubt not that it shall have a final end. And everything that is made and subject to change in the world, and under dominion will enter the sign of day and night, has its completion stamped unfailingly upon its conception»²².

St. Basil cautions the reader that mathematics alone will not reveal the secrets of creation to the inquirer. He was referring perhaps to the claims of the magicians called mathematici in the ancient world. In the Near East, the Mandaean Book of the Zodiac boasts, «This computation (*həšbānā*; cf. Arm. loan-word from Aramaic, *hašiw*; the usual Arm. *hamar-olut'iwn* is based on Pahlavi *āmār*) is excellent, for all numbers proceed from it, so that it explains the seven (planets) and the twelve (Zodiacal signs) and the five (?)...»²³. The *Vh* itself is called sometimes the *Hamarolakan*, «Computation or Reckoner»²⁴. It has been seen that the Book was sometimes called also after the seven letters, specifically, the Armenian vowels²⁵.

295 and 667-71, tr. by R. W. THOMSON, *The Teaching of St. Gregory, An Early Armenian Catechism*, Cambridge, MA, 1970, pp. 54, 166-7.

20. See J. SEGAL, *Edessa, the Blessed City*, Oxford, 1970, 211.

21. See PETROSYAN, 1979, 70.

22. See K. MURADYAN, ed., *BARSEL KESARAC'I [ST. BASIL OF CAESAREA], Yalags Vec'awreay Ararč'ut'ean*, Erevan, 1984, 10.

23. See Lady E. S. DROWER, *The Book of the Zodiac*, London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1949, 96. On the Roman mathematici, see, e.g., J. BALSDON, *Romans and Aliens*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1979, 242.

24. See Erevan Matenadaran Ms. 8334, fol. 1a: Grn. *hamarolakanin or asi vec' hazareak: ognea hogid Surb Astuac. Giteli ē kerpiw imm vec' hazareak: or asi hamarolakan*.

25. POLOSAYAN, 1980, 157.

The seven vowels of the Greek alphabet were anciently thought to possess curative properties; and one can compare them with the Orphic sacred octave (the eighth note is, of course, the start of the next series, the whole graphically describing the *helikē klimax*, or winding staircase of the mystics, also the spindle in the Vision of Ēr, Plato, *Politeia*, X, with the pure sounds heard there). Ammianus Marcellinus reports that a certain youth once went to the public baths and began with the fingers of both hands to touch the seven Greek vowels (*a, e, i, o, y, ē, ō*) engraved there on a marble plaque, in the belief this procedure would cure his stomach ache. He was arrested and decapitated as a sorcerer²⁶. One sees a Renaissance survival of this belief in the *Hieroglyphics* of Horapollo, 2.29: the symbol of two fingers enclosing the seven vowels denotes fate. Christians saw seven as the number of the archangels²⁷; Armenian has seven vowels, held to possess magic properties (*a, e, ē, ě, i, o, w*)²⁸, seven planets (*Aregak, Lusin, Hrat, P'aylacu, Lusēn'ag, Lusaber, Erewak*), days of the week, and archangels as elsewhere in Christendom²⁹.

26. See AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS (4th cent. AD), 29, 2, 28, discussed by A. MOMIGLIANO in the vol. edited by him, *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, Oxford, 1963, 111.

27. *Loc. cit.*

28. Erevan Matenadaran Ms. 599, fol. 27a (see POLOSYAN, 1980, 165).

29. Often attested; see for example F. FEYDIT, *Amulettes de l'Arménie Chrétienne*, Venice, 1986, No. 153, p. 371. Note that the *tačik* «Turkish» equivalent of Arm. *Kiraki-Aregak* (Sunday-Sun) is *Burxan*, from original Buddha Khan, «Lord Buddha», so named perhaps in response to an older, Zoroastrian name of the Sun found in Central Asia, whence came the Turks, Khotanese *Urmaysdan* «Belonging to Ahura Mazda». In the list, each planet and day has also an angel attached to it. One may compare Columbia University Smith Collection Arm. Ms. 5, fol. 6b for the planetary names *Zōhal, Marex, Zawhray, Lamar, Muš'ari, Šams, Awtaria* (read *Ōtarit*), all Arabic. Armenian and Muslim angelic names are often mixed. One angel at least, Saragmiel or Sarak'miel, I find only in Armenian sources (St. James', Jerusalem, Ms. 3669, p. 249; cf. Erevan Matenadaran Ms. 8972, fol. 3a, where the angel rules Mercury); see remarks on the British Library Ms. Lists of angels, with their functions, are given in other arm. Mss., with instructions. For example, «Remember the angels Nelnos and Melk'os when you drink water or go into river or sea» *Yišay zNelnos ew Melk'os hreštakn yoržam ėmpes furn ew i cov kam i get mtanes* (see L. MELIKSET-BEKOV, «Angely-khramiteli», *Khristianskii Vostok*, 3, 1, 1914, 51). It is interesting that this Hellenised form of the Semitic *malak*, «angel», made into a rhyming pair, corresponds to the two Mandaean divine beings Zutheyr and Zahrun, who belong to the class of *melki* and aid in baptismal rites (see G. DAVIDSON,

The original understanding of the seven vowels seems to have lapsed into oblivion, and one Ms. presents seven sacred letters, of which only one is a vowel: «x. s. k'. e. v. p'. b. Xēn. Thus was Christ crucified on the *Cross and (his blood) shed for the sake of the creatures. Sēn. Not only a man, but true God. K'ēn. He oversees the Cherubim; who resides over *them. Eč'n. I am God and there is no other. Vevn. God, supreme amongst gods. P'iwrn. Savior and vivifier of all the world. Bēn. I am encompassing and eternal to the world. Write these seven letters». (x. s. k'. e. v. p'. b. Xēn: aysink'n xač'ec'eal Ac. i ... č' helusaw vs. araracoc'. Sēn: sosk mard oč': ayl Ac. čšmarit. K'ēn: k'erovbēic'n veray ditol: or hangč'i i vr. nr. Eč'n: es Ac. ew č'ik' ayl ok'. Vev: Vehagoyn Ac. astucoc'. Bēn: bawabdak [sic!] ew yawē-žabar [sic!] kendani em ašxarhin. Zays eawt'n girs grē)³⁰. This group of seven letters is sometimes called the seal of Christ (cf. the seal of God in His covenant with Adam, cited above).

Širakac'i probably connected the 12,000-year cosmic age with the twelve symbols of the Zodiac, for he listed these in his writings, together with an astrological description of the birth sign: the Scorpion (*karič*), for example, is «genital and frowning» (*cnelakan ew xožorakn*)³¹. One Ms. insists that every letter has 12,000 speeches:

A Dictionary of Angels including the fallen angels, New York: The Free Press, 1967, 189, citing E. S. DROWER, *The Mandaean of Iraq and Iran*, Leiden, 1962, 328). One is reminded of the popular rhyming pair of Zoroastrian angels given in Armenia dominion over water, Horot and Morot (see J. R. RUSSELL, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, Harvard Iranian Series 5, Cambridge, MA, 1987, 375-98). It seems most likely that Nelnoš and Melk'os belong, because of their Semitic name, to a magical re-interpretation of the Byzantine period of that Aggadic legend of Harut and Marut in a well in Babylon which informed their treatment in the Qur'ān.

30. See Columbia Smith Coll. Arm. Ms. 5, fol. 56b. These same text exists in Georgian: see L. MELIKSET-BEKOV, «Semipechatie i ego tolkovanie, prilozheniya k otvetu Spasitelya na poslanie Abgara Edesskago, v redaktsiyakh gruzinskoi i armyanskoi», *Khristianskii Vostok*, 3, 1, 1914, 44-50.
31. See Fr. L. ALIŠAN, *Hin Hawat' kam Her'anosakan Krōnk Hayoc'*, Venice, 1910, 140: Astrological superstitions are widely reflected in mediaeval Armenian thought. For example, ARAK'EL SIWNEC'I composed a work «Concerning the twelve zodiacal signs» (*Vasn erkotasan kendanakerpic'*); see A. G. ARAK'ELIAN, *Hay žolovrdi mtavor mšakuyt'i zargac'man patmut'yun*, Vol. 3, Erevan, 1975, 251. It was believed every country had its own sign. According to the *Syriac Book of Medicines* (ed. by E. BUDGE, London, 1913, Vol. 2, p. 604), the sign of Armenia is the Crab, Cancer. This belief is reflected on the popular level in the exclamation of the epic hero Jenov-Ohan, «Rise, woman! The star of Sasun is working»

a microcosm with a vengeance! «Give the letter(s) of the alphabet and divide into four parts without syllable(s) (?). Each letter recites ineffable things; it illuminates the mind of the listener, about which they are certain, and each letter speaks, without a syllable 12,000 orations» (*Tur zgir groy ew bažanea i č'ors masuns aranc' hegoy: girs xawsi bans ančars, or paycařec'uc'anē zmits Isolac', vasn oroy vstah en, ew amēn gir xawsē aranc' hegoy ŽBR čars*)³². These four divisions seem to be based upon the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth – arranged in the shape of a square.

The various elements of esoteric learning of antiquity unite in the *Vh*, rendered, in the words of Koriwn, «Armenophone, Armenologue» (*hayabarbak', hayerēnaxawsk'*)³³; Širakac'i (in his *Saks bac'ayayt'ut'ean t'uoc'*) attributed to Solomon himself the primary teachings concerning the number six, and Solomon is the discoverer of magic in much ancient tradition³⁴. In the «Tale of the City of

(*Knik, ilē ver, Sasnu astlē mžlawer ē*); see G. TER-MKRTC'YAN, *Hayagitakan hetazotut'yunner*, Vol. 1, Erevan, 1979, 472.

32. See Erevan Matenadaran Ms. 8098, fol. 1a (POLOS'YAN, 1983, 546).

33. See M. ABELYAN, ed., KORIWN, *Vark' Mařtoc'i*, Erevan, 1941, repr. 1981, 11.

34. See GALAYEAN, *op. cit.*, 384, citing «On the revelation of numbers» (*Saks bac'ayayt'ut'ean t'uoc'* of Anania, *vardapet* of the Armenians. Abrahamyan doubted whether this was Širakac'i, and thought it might have been Anania Narekac'i, uncle of St. Gregory of Narek (A. G. ABRAHAMYAN, *Anania Širakac'u matenagru't'yunē*, Erevan, 1944, 237-50). I do not discern Anania Narekac'i's convoluted style in this simple listing, which seems to partake, rather, of Pythagorean number-symbolism and the Hexameron in equal measure. The opinion of the Pythagoreans (*Pwt'agoreank'n, sic!*) is cited with approval that two is a bad number; three, perfect; and four, a perfect even because it makes ten (i.e., the Pythagorean tetractys: *Ew orpēs miakn ew erkeakn ew erreakn ew č'orreakn šaradrelow cnani zŽeakn*, «And as the one, and the two, and the three, and the four, placed in [vertical] order give birth to the ten»).

In the disputed work, we read, «And Solomon completes the Temple in six years, in the manner of the creation of the first man on the sixth day. But our Lord was not pleased when he dwelt therein, and that of the six days He broke; and in the perfect number of three days He raiseth up through the Resurrection the temple of the body that had been sealed by the antiquity of sins of the six centuries. And dwelling therein, He maketh His academy and the temple of the soul». (*Naew Solomon i Z amēn katarē ztačarn, zawrēn arajin mardoyn i vec'erordin stelcanelow, ēnd ōr Tēr mer oč' hačael pnaki, ayl k'akeal zŽ awurn, ew yeris katareal t'iw awurc' kangnē yaru't'eambn zbolor tačar marmnoy p'akeal hnu't'eamb melac' Zean daruc'n, yors bnakeal aine iwr čemaran ew tačar hogwoyn*). To Solomon is ascribed the art (*tekhne*) of binding demons to cure men; Solomon's medicine, sealed with his ring (*sphragidi*), cured lunatics (see JOSEPHUS, *Jewish Antiquities*, 8, 5,

Bronze» from the *Thousand and One Nights*, an episode much loved by mediaeval Armenians, Solomon seals djinn in jars. The Amīr al-Mu'minīn has them recovered: they burst forth from their millennial imprisonment, crying only «Repentance, O Prophet of God!». The chastened Caliph, who had, presumably, wished to use their power, abdicates his throne and departs on the Sufi path³⁵.

A king can derive moral edification from Solomon's demons; but a man of humbler estate might well be tempted to use magic for money, health, or love. Magic also provided an alternative to the spiritual world of the Church controlled by priests and princes, whose promises, besides, had to do with another world than this. Not that the demands of Armenian magic were easier than anywhere else: the Mss. demand that one expel doubt and force one's body into a state of receptive passivity through endless recitation of prayers, angelic names, letters, or nonsense syllables, the burning of incense at precisely specified times. Armenian national tradition soundly warns of the dangers of insanity in studying the *Vh*: success lies only at the end of a long chain of precise rituals and iron discipline.

Here is an example of a text with its warning: «Counsel on application to the *Vh*. Before the thing you desire, make application. Gather the reckonings of the letters. The unitary is part one. Group the secondary ones in a column. Multiply this and see how much

LOEB ed., Cambridge, MA, 1977, Vol. 5, p. 597, note a); cf. the signet of the Magi discussed above. Josephus was well known to Classical Armenian authors. Solomon was famed for the extent of his empire; and it has been suggested his Temple was the largest such construction ever undertaken. There are the makings of hubris here; and it is interesting to note in passing the similarity of the mighty king Solomon as physician and harnesser of demons to the glorious Shāh Jamshīd in Pahlavi and Persian literature; perhaps the Iranian image of the failed god-king colored the Jewish conception of the historical Solomon, who returns to Iran as the legendary Suleimān, virtually interchangeable with Jamshīd as the popular builder of ancient monuments.

35. See J. R. RUSSELL, «The Tale of the Bronze City in Armenian», in T. SAMUELIAN, M. STONE, eds., *Mediaeval Armenian Culture*, University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies, 6, Scholars Press, Chico, CA, 1984, 250-51. Even the demons correspond to the principal numbers of arithmetical theory. In FEYDIT, *Amulettes*, No. 123, p. 330, we read, «I bound the 6672 cults of women and witches who cause perdition to the human race» (*Kapēi ZĠ ZĠ HB alands kana(n)c' ew kazardac' or korusanen zags mardkan*). In one spell published by Feydit, the expelled demons are bound, even as Solomon sealed them in a bronze cask (*ēac i sap'orn plnji: Amulettes*, p. 270).

there was. It should be 100. From this 100 subtract 30. What remains in the fourth part, take and put with the other three; then take the first part, and start. First make painful cuts in the shape of a square... then take the dividends and multiply them in the column from top to bottom. See if the multiplied sum equals the mother of reckoning above, 100. If it does, then your table is correct. But if it is not equal, then you write it wrong: reckon it again, and divide anew. If it still doesn't work, then it is mistaken, and harm remains. It will bring damage and the thing for which you are asking will not come to pass – as though you wanted to paint your eyes with antimony and poked them out instead!»³⁶. (*Xrat vec' hazareaki malxasin*. [The latter is, with metathesis, a loan from Arabic *maxlaš*]. *Yaraj inč' ban or k'uzes molxas* [sic!] *ara: ew žolovē zhamark' tr.erun* [a magic square seems to be intended here]: *na miaworn. a. karg erkt.s ztunsn mēk...* *ew bardē zsa tes t'ē k'ani elew čēmn ew ays čēmēs. l. i boc'* [possibly an error for *bac'*] *jgē ew zor inč' mnay i. d. bažin ara ew erek' bažawinn yet jgē ew. a. bažin ar ew skizbn ara araži tanjsn i k'arankiwn jewē srē...* *ew yetoy zayd iJacnerd verēn i vayr amēn kargd bardē tes t'ē*

36. In the British Library Vh, the symbol of a teardrop on its side, cancelled by a diagonal stroke to its center, represents the evil eye. This is an ancient symbol, originating in a spear piercing the pupil of an eye. In a spell Christ pronounces called «Prayer (against the) evil eye, evil demon, evil tyrant» (*Alōt'k' č'ar nazari, č'ar dewi, č'ar bīnawori*: FEYDIT, *Amulettes*, No. 114, p. 304), the Lord commands: «Turn, evil eye, to the evil thorn, / Evil thorn into the evil fire, The evil demon to the rocky waste» (*Darjir č'ar akn i č'ar p'ušn, / Č'ar p'ušn i č'ar krakn, / Č'ar dewn i aparaž vēmn...*). The thorn corresponds to the older spear. Compare an inscription, probably from Rome (E. PETERSON, *Heis Theos*, 1926, 230): *Heis Zeus Serapis: baskanos lakēsetō* «Sole Zeus, Serapis: May the evil eye be destroyed!». An evil pierced by a spear is depicted in the Basilica Hilariana at Rome (M. J. VERMASEREN, *Cybele and Attis: The Myth and the Cult*, London, 1977, 45, fig. 16), and in a synagogue at Dura Europos (see E. R. GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, Bollingen Series, 37, New York, 1964, Vol. 9, p. 54; and J. M. UNVALA, «Doura-Europos», *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 6, London, 1930-32, 145). Against the spear or thorn or needle, as though it might be used against one's good eye, one finds the use by the Jews of Soviet Tajikistan of a thimble (*oymaq*) as an amulet together with the blue glass eye (the latter the universal Near Eastern charm Greeks and some Armenians call the *mati*, «eye»). In the *Nor Baigirk' Haykazean Lezui*, the word *Aslnani*, pl. from *Asel*, «Needle», means «talisman». The needle was an ambiguous symbol: it could blind either the evil eye of the good. For blindness as a curse, cf. the Arm. «May you go blind in both eyes!» (*Juxt ač'k'ovd kurnas!*), and T'likuranc'i's vow for the sake of love, «I shall give both my eyes to the needle to be taken out» (*Zač'k's čali tam hanelu*: PIVAZYAN, ed., No. 7, 10, p. 138).

bard acer ē čēmēn veri mayr hamrank'in: hawasar ekaw šitak ē vexēd [*Vex-i Šerif* is the «Turkish» name of the Vh; see Polosyan, cited in the Notes, 1980, p. 151] *ew t'ē hawasar č'ē sxal gres krkin hamarē ew nor ijr č'i lini t'ē sxalac mnay zēn* [possibly from Arm. *zean*, New Persian *ziyān*, «harm»; otherwise the letter representing the number six] *ew vnas hasuc'anē ew oč' lini bani katarumn zor xndres: km. t'ē ēst aynm zač'k'n carureln i bac' ač'k'n hanes...*³⁷. The text throws an interesting sidelight on what is still a commonplace of Middle Eastern life: applying antimony to the eyes. This is kept in a small, vase-like jar, usually of silver, called in Persian a *sormadān* (*sorma*, «antimony»; -*dān*, «holder») with a screw-top attached to a needle-like applicator immersed in the antimony. The applicator is brushed over the eyelashes; and careless application could cause injury.

The text is extremely difficult, and my interpretation is tentative. But the outlines are clear: one groups the letters of the alphabet in four sets or columns. They are multiplied. The result is *čēm*, a word which can mean, perhaps, the Armenian letter Č, representing 100. In a text attributed to Širakac'i, Č is used in this sense: «Then they range 100 with 200 and 300, heaping it upon a fourth of the 100's [=400?] and complete the number of the 1000's». This is simply a tetractys. The number 30 of the above text is subtracted, columns are regrouped, a square is made (why *tanj*, «torture», appears is not clear) and the calculations are done anew. The result should be the same as the first time: *čēm* again.

The Ms. contains also a drawing of a tripod from which a box is suspended over a fire, with the caption «What you are to smoke. And this is the shape of the pipe you must suspend» (*cxelik'd ew ays ē kerpñ č'plun or piti kaxes*). There follow these instructions: «When you hang this, let it stand there that way, and you stand one or two hours long and ask your wish again, and implore and pray and ask for God's help to accomplish your concern. And when it is morning, pick it up with a pipe and take it to a warm place and keep it there. When night falls, bring it out again and smoke that which you are to smoke beneath the stars, and prayerfully ask your desire, and go and stand singleminded and keep your thoughts on it, singleminded. (If) it was not fulfilled, and morning comes, keep it the same way

37. Armenian Convent of St. James', Jerusalem, Ms. 3669, pp. 230-4. It is a pleasure here to express my gratitude to my friend and colleague, Dr. Roberta Ervine, who sent copies of these pages, and to her mentor, Abp. Norayr Bogharian. The tetractys of 1000 is in ABRAHAMYAN, 1944, p. 241.

again and do it every night until the days are done. After that keep it on you. Keep it on you and wash your head with it, and go and ask what you want from that man or great one or king»³⁸.

The number of days is not specified, nor is it clear whether it is incense or some substance such as cannabis (well known in Armenia) that is burnt (or actually inhaled) in the pipe (the Turkish loan-word *č'ibux* is used for the latter). But each day had its angel and Zodiacal sign. For example, one Ms. instructs, «Then we took the (letter) A and moved 36 letters, and it was this much: 12. We went 12; 5 remained, the lion fell. The sign is the lion. Its day is Sunday. Its star is the Sun. Its angel is Raphael. It holds man's heart. And prayers are to God, the spirit and ordainer of the word. Keep well in mind this word of mine on Lordship (?) and remember the request you want»³⁹. There is a remarkable consistency to these instructions in Mss. spanning centuries; though it is hard to imagine the complex rituals and baffling mathematical operations could be learnt from these abbreviated writings alone, without the aid of a teacher and exemplar. They presuppose a harmony between letters and numbers, stars, angels, and days which make precisely timed and repeated rituals effective for specific ends. Underlying these magical procedures are assumptions about Pythagorean numbers, Greek vowel theory, and Iranian world ages. One Ms. of the *Vh*, in the British Museum, uses the word *mazdeac'ik'*, «Mazdeans», a hapax in Armenian, in the chain of transmitters of the text⁴⁰. Although Classical Armenian books refer to the Zoroastrian religion in transcription from Pahlavi as *deni mazdezn*, the term for Mazdeans does not seem to have been derived from any classical book. Nor is it likely to be a mere corruption of Magdalenac'i «Magdalene», mentioned in magical historiæ, whose letters in Armenian can easily be misread as **mazdazenac'i* or the like.

38. *Ibid.*, 234. On the theme of a simple, that is to say, pure and fervent, prayer see FEYDIT, *Amulettes*, No. 145, p. 362, in which the *mohr* (seal) of Solomon is employed. The one uttering the prayer greets the Sun and recites a verse of the Qur'ân – the source appears to be non-Armenian, or from a mixed Christian-Muslim, Armeno-Kurdish milieu. «Now take the seal from a piece of cloth and say, "O Sun, as you are lovely, delicate, and noble in the world, sweeten the hearts of all men on earth towards me"» (*Apa ew mohrn hanir i p'arč'en ew asay t'ê: Arew, orpēs or du i mēf ašxarhi sirun, nazeli ew patuakan es, ays bolor ašxarhi mardkanc' sirtm in veray k'alc'rac'uc'anes*).

39. See Erevan Matenadaran Ms. 8334, fol. 8334, fol. 3a-b.

40. See the text below, with English translation.

The *Vh* was probably transmitted from teacher to pupil, and its rituals were performed by one adept, in isolation; often, as we have seen, at night⁴¹. Presumably, the mystical, eschatological, and Hermetic teachings that comprised the real inner wisdom Anania Širakac'i had taught were not written down, or else were indicated in a way that would but confuse and frustrate the uninitiated: *angitac' anpet*, «useless to the ignorant». Those interested in magical power rather than esoteric wisdom used the *Vh* to that end. It is perilous to argue thus from silence, yet the practice of alchemy (a science for which Širakac'i was renowned in Armenian tradition) presents the same picture. For centuries, people undertook useless, difficult, and expensive procedures which, they must have known early on, could not produce gold. Some of the most enlightened and intelligent men of the seventeenth century produced splendid books full of engraved illustrations of the symbols and processes of the royal art. If alchemy is taken literally, this intense and continuing interest is a conundrum, an intellectual embarrassment. But if alchemy is understood as an allegorical system, a moral teaching veiled by symbols, as recent scholars such as Jung and Burckhardt have assumed it to be, then its real concerns emerge. The allegorical study of the *Vh*, its divine side, as it were, seems to have been lost; and in Armenian communities today, mention of the *Vh* sometimes inspires real fear. One correspondent wrote to me, «(the *Vh*) is not understood by the common individual and its uses are abused to destructive purposes»⁴². It is worth noting that profound texts such as the Psalms, the *Book of Lamentations* of St. Grigor Narekac'i, and

41. JANE HARRISON, *Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Cambridge, 1921, repr. University Books, New Hyde Parc, NY, 1962, XXI-XXII, offers a tentative social definition of magic: «...religion is social, magic is or may be individual, religion is of the group however small, magic of the single unit... The essence of magic is the opus operatum, the act effective in itself». The study of esoterica at night is common through the ages: the Kabbalist who saw the Sun shine at midnight meant he had been illuminated by wisdom (the *nyktelios*), but engravers showed the Sun ablaze at night in his garret window. Heterodox cults also gathered at night, for the sake of concealment: in the early seventeenth century, the Armenian traveller Simeon Leahac'i still knew of the *Arewordik'* (Children of the Sun) who had met at night in a temple near the Mardin gate of Amida before they were forcibly converted to Islam or exiled.
42. Letter of R. S. Young, Boston, MA, 13 Nov. 1981, in response to my query for information on the *Vh* published in the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

extracts from the Lives of the Saints, have also been used for purely magical purposes, in Armenia and elsewhere⁴³.

Who used the *Vh*? From the descriptions following, it seems to have become the province of village witches and recluses, clairvoyants and eccentrics. Garegin Sruanjteanc', an ethnographer of the mid-19th century in Western Armenia, describes the witch «Korec, from the neighboring house... there were lots of tales of her, which one comes to mind? They say she had a *Vec' hazarek [Vh]*, cast fortunes, did stargazing, knew what passed through a man's heart. She knew what was in heaven and beneath the earth. Eclipses, earthquakes, famine, death, who was going to die, who would live, sickness and fortune – she knew it all. The Pashas and aghas couldn't do without her. If there was a robbery or a murdered, she would uncover it all, piece by piece. She opened closed doors. She entered houses by the smoke-hole in the ceiling, and left them the same way. May God save and free us! She would extract the sense from a man's head, write a paper, and young brides, women would leave their mothers and dance stark naked. Whomever she wanted, she would go inside and take him right out of his house»⁴⁴.

Y. K. Čanikean wrote of life in nineteenth-century Akn: «In old times, the Armenians of Akn spoke often of the *Vh*, which was regarded as practically the foundation of the sciences of witchcraft. Sometimes they said, "So-and-so has gone mad from reading the *Vec'hazarea*". The reader of this book isolates himself in a room and reads for so-and-so many days. If he was able to learn all the knowledge without becoming confused, then he can prophesy everything, he becomes aware; if not, he goes stark raving mad. The Armenians, getting, I think, this idea from others, think this book or teaching of witchcraft exists in two types: one is Godly; the other, satanic. If one

43. The prayers of Narek were used for magical purposes, e.g., «If a newly-married man is bound, let him recite this nine times over water» (Erevan Matenadaran Ms. 9428, fols. 293a-297b; cf. ANASYAN, *art. cit.*, 446-7). The bond as a magical effect is immemorial, but in the Bible, cf. Matt. 16, 19; 18, 18; etc. Wolves are often bound in Armenian spells, and this is probably a Zoroastrian survival, as well as a natural concern of a pastoral people (on *gaylakaps*) in Narek, see J.-P. MAHÉ in *REArm*, 1982). Historiolae were long used in magic – amongst Christians, they are extracted from the lives of the Saints – as tales intrinsically possessing power in the retelling (see e.g., J. NAVEH, S. SHAKED, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, Jerusalem, 1985, 192; H. GOLLANCZ, *The Book of Protection*, London, 1912, Codex A, para. 10).

44. G. SRVANJTYANC', *Erker*, Vol. 1, Erevan, 1978, 167-8.

is successful in keeping in mind the first, he will always use his knowledge for good. But if he has studied the satanic one, then he will bring to himself the woman he desires, bind whomever he wishes, and so on. But what is the cause, that that person should be capable of bewitching, binding, loosing, and being omniscient, as it were. They answer, "Because the *Vec' hazareak* is the teaching of the natures and secrets of the demons, and the one who reads it becomes acquainted with the demons, who submit to him. When he calls, they come; and when he sends them someplace, they go. If he asks them a secret, they reveal it. Gold, silver, a woman, whatever he wants – they bring it. Finally, they serve him forever". Lo, so much power is ascribed to the *Vh* and to those fortunate enough to study it, whose number, and, accordingly, the opinion of the people concerning the same, has decreased thanks to enlightenment, and is on the point of disappearing»⁴⁵.

For some Armenians in America, the *Vh* has become a myth. Bedros Norehad wrote, «Belief in magic, too, has been prevalent among the Armenians, but it has not thrived in the atmosphere of the New World. However, they talk about a book of magic called "Vetzhazarya", which supposedly contains all the secrets of the occult science. There are reputed to be a few copies of this book and no person has actually seen it»⁴⁶. The Very Rev. Fr. Khajag Barsamian, born in Arabkir, Turkish Armenia, in 1951, told me that a man named Nishan Tashjian lived in his home town. People said Tashjian had the *Vh*⁴⁷. Once the latter called Mrs. Barsamian to him and told her to open her hand. In her palm, as in a mirror, she saw people's faces. She was frightened, and ran away. If somebody lost something, he would go to Mr. Tashjian, but folks feared him. Fr. Khajag never saw the book; his family, Mr. Tashjian, and most of the other Armenians of Arabkir migrated to Istanbul, and their traditional way of life was lost, along with the old attitudes that had allowed the *Vh* to be studied⁴⁸.

45. Y. K. ÇANIKEAN, *Hnut'iwnk' Aknay*, Tiflis, 1895, 145-6.

46. BEDROS NOREHAD, *The Armenians in Massachusetts*, WPA Federal Writers' Project, Boston, MA, 1937, 128.

47. Interview, St. Vartan Cathedral, New York, 1979.

48. Empedocles taught universal or cosmic sympathy. Plotinus later cautioned the magicians they they were not alien from that which they besought. Cognate to this is the ancient Indo-European belief that the parts and proportions of man are homologous to the macrocosm. This idea pervaded the Old World down

The short text of the *Vh* from an Arm. Ms. in the British Library, London, presented here in translation, was received at Marsovan by the copyist, according to his colophon on fol. 258. The miscellany is dated A. D. 1611. It is of possible relevance that Marsovan (Merzifun, Marsvan) was a city where the Arewordik' (Children of the Sun, an Armenian sect retaining some Zoroastrian beliefs) settled when they were driven from Amida, according to Simeon Lehaç'i. A spell invoking the Sun has been cited above, which Arewordik' might have used or inspired; and the exposure of the *cxelik* («incense») to the stars in another spell recalls another Zoroastrian survival in Armenia: the exposure on Ascension Eve of a pot of water and blossoms of the *horot-morot* flower to the stars. The *Vh* occupies both sides of fol. 233 in this Ms., on good paper, in a clear but badly rubbed *šelagir* script; and it appears to have been used more than the other texts in the miscellany. Possibly it was not written by the same hand. The verse from Scripture, «Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened», may have ironic reference to the somewhat sinister clairvoyant powers of the adepts mentioned above. Some of the angels mentioned I have been unable to find in any list, and they may be local inventions: Mazaniel seems to contain an old Iranian word *mazan-*, «giant, monster»; in Saragmiel one might discern Persian *saranjām*, «eschaton», the name of a principal text of the northwestern Iranian sect of the Ahl-i Haqq, some of whose early leaders seem to have had Armenian names.

TRANSLATION. British Library Or. Ms. 6471 fol. 233 a-b

It is known, in the form... *o... n... sps...* it is called the Six Thousand, which are constructed and established by the choice of the Holy Spirit, and by his suggestion [are established also] the power of letters by thaumaturgy for heart and mind and also the courses of the luminous bodies, and the twice three thousand, and

to recent times: in Armenia, Sayat' Nova wrote of the 365 or 366 parts and 12 members of the body (ed. HASRAT'YAN, Erevan, 1959, No. 30; cf. FEYDIT, *Amulettes*, p. 274: «the 12 members, the 365 parts» [zŽB *andamk'n*, zGČ K E *yōtuacsñ*]). Magic manipulates these natural sympathies in an individual or group interest, rather than seeking to conform the individual to harmony with them.

of other planets, fixed and moving, and of the stars. This great treasure was transmitted by the great philosophers and Mazdeans, and by Dionysius the Areopagite and the idolatrous philosophers and our father Abraham, down to Plato and Aristotle and Porphyry, down to the great Armenian philosopher David the Invincible, and his own people, from nation to nation, down to Anania of Širak, indeed from them down to Isaac and Mesrop: in the Armenian language it is called the Reckoner⁴⁹, which is the Six Thousand, and the Greeks call it the *Ōxlat'at'*⁵⁰, and the Chaldaeans call it *K'esir past'*⁵¹, and the Turks call it *Vex i šerif*⁵². For it contains the power which is in the letters of every word and the impelling power of actions, and their nature, which is the elements. Especially may the angels of actions not take mastery before you have learned the power of actions, and their nature, of which the elements and numbers are thus: Fire: a.b.g.d.e.z.ē.ē.t'.; Wind: ž.i.l.x.c.k.h.y.l.; Water: č.m.y.n.š.o.č'.p.j'.; Earth⁵³: ĩ.s.v.t.r.c'.w.p'.k'. And the strength of the secondary letters is humid, and since 1000 from a to ž, 60. From ž to č is 457. Č to ĩ is 4500, and from ĩ, 45, wherefore it is called the Reckoner, and of all, containing the number of tertiary letters and bald ones, you must know the male and the female. The male, a.z.c.j.l.s.c'.r.d. [are] of fire. The female, b.g.e.ē.i.v.k.m.y. [are] the water numbers. T'.h.o.n.l.t.c'.w.p'. [are] those of earth, the bald. Z.c.x.p.j.s.r.k'. [are] those of

Yet magicians recognize that their spells must be both all-embracing and precise to be effective, as it were, so there emerges in Armenian spells a kind of international consciousness, at least, which one does not find in the more circumscribed official religion. A spell in Columbia Ms. 5, fol. 51b, reads: «Prayer for fever, which is trembling. Write it and tie a string... when Jesus came to the house of Peter, his *mother-in-law [reading *zok'anē*] suffered the pangs of trembling. Writing for fever... If an Armenian, I conjure you by Jesus Christ; if you are a Tačik [i.e., a Muslim], I conjure you by Ali and Muhammad; if you are a Jew, I conjure you by Moses and Aaron; if you are of another nation, I conjure you by your king. Do not come closer, nor sin against this servant of God». The same spell, with the same words of incantatory gibberish (*xalumay xalunay Ašxuneay Anapi Asxiē Manat'i*), is found in Fr. V. HAC'UNI, *Erdmunk' hin Hayoc' mēf*, Venice, 1932, 232-3, so it must have been rather popular.

49. On *hamarolakan*, see *supra*.

50. Perhaps Arabic *al-xalāt*, «the letters». Less likely is *axlalat*, «the four elements».

51. Possibly Arabic *qaṣr* «castle» and Pahlavi *past* «dejection (astrological)».

52. *Vex* is apparently Arm. *veh* «lofty, good»; and *šarīf*, «noble» in Arabic.

53. The text has *holmayin* «windy», but the wind has been mentioned already, so I emend this to *hotayin* «earthy».

air. The quaternary vowels and nine consonants and vowels are a.e.ē.ě.i.o.w. Thus, all the vowels: a.b.a.g.a.g.d. until k'. Then take z: za.zb.zg. until k'. Then take o.a.o.a.o.b.o.g. until k'. Then take w.a.w.w.p.w.g. until k'. Then ask for that which you desire.

Ø [evil eye simbol]. This is against the soul and the heart. For the Father or the angels, every day there is a vowel-letter which has dominion, and speech against God, and an angel has a [specific] power, and [there are] prayers to God every day. First divide the vowels. Carry over His creation according to days and according to meaning: then we took a by a, by b, and by g, up to k'. Then [as] we said before, we began from a, until k'. Let there be this many numbers. And the angel Raphael's day is Sunday, and his vowel is a. His zodiacal sign is a lion, and with respect to man's nature and its principal members, he his the heart. And this prayer is to the soul, and the controller of deeds: understand with good wisdom, remember the requests which you want to make. And of the four angels, make your request by the name of each, and with respect to deeds, the unit is thus: and the angel K'rip'imos, Illuminate my soul. The number was fifty times this, and we went back by 12. 12 remained. Five lions and the courses of the planets and of the signs of the Zodiac, and then begin to pray to God according to the Reckoner, [and] to read what is written. By the intercession of the holy angel Krip'os receive our petitions, 100 times. 36 times to the angel Raphael. And remember his thought and burn incense. 1001 times say Holy and Beloved, and then return another time until it ends. For seven days live in purity in all respects, whether a Sunday or a work day, until your matter ends. Then behold by the mercy of God and give thanks, on account of which the holy Evangelist recites and bears witness: For he who seeks shall find, and for him who knocks will it be opened. I earnestly enjoin you to live in purity in all respects, especially concerning the frequency of your prayers. For it is the Six Thousand – if, God willing, the Holy Spirit influences – man is empowered thereby. For illuminate by one letter: the gate wise men have mentioned is the moon. Concerning the moon, it has dominion over Monday. His is the bile of man, and the angel is Gabriel, and his letter is e. When you want to perform a deed, do thus: O angel Mazaniel, cure my pains. We made a reckoning and it was, in all, this much: 12. We went 12 and 4 remained, and his zodiacal sign is the crab. The moon is the star. On Monday morning at the first watch begin reading thus: By the intercession of the holy angel Mazaniel receive, O Lord, my supplications. 106 times say:

O angel, holy angel Gabriel, fulfill my requests. 101 times say Holy and Beloved, and this day is against the angels. Wherefore recite 101 times, for seven days in its hour, that the thought be fulfilled. Mars is the third gate they have mentioned. Mars rules Tuesday and man's bile, and Michael is its angel, and its letter is e. O angel Nathaniel, save me. We made a reckoning and it was this much: 12. We went 12, [and there remained] one. It was the ram, and its [planet], Mars. On Tuesday morning begin at the first watch. By the intercession of the holy angel Michael and the angel Nathaniel, O Lord, receive my supplications. Say Holy and Beloved 136 times: O angel Michael, fulfill my requests. Say Holy and Beloved 1001 times and burn incense for seven days, this for the Father, wherefore say: Holy Father, save us and be merciful unto us. Mercury is the fourth door they have mentioned, and it has dominion over man's liver. Its angel is Ananiel, and its letter is ě. O angel Saragmiel, raise high my glory. We made a reckoning and it was this much, 12. We went 12, and six remained. A virgin descended whose star was Mercury. On Wednesday at the first watch of the morning begin to read: O angel Saragmiel, fulfill my supplications. 136 times say Holy and Beloved. O angel Ananiel, fulfill my supplications. 1001 times say Holy and Beloved, and burn incense seven days. For this day is against the heart. Then say: Holy Son, strengthen and save. After saying Holy and Beloved, say: By the intercession of the holy angel Saragmiel and other holy angels. Holy and Beloved, most Holy Trinity, you are necessary souls: Gabriel, Michael, Anayel, Raphael, Uriel: this is the total: the angels At'nayel and P'anel. The angelic beings are of fiery material, of fire, of flame and light. And all the other orders in Heaven before our eyes, yours is to be adorners of the house of God. We hold you in our eyes and bow to the ground and request of you that you ask of Him atonement for our sins and forgiveness for our transgressions, for that license has been given you for intercession on behalf of all sinners, for you are holy and make offerings to the holy. You are incorporeal and sinless, while I am possessed of body and sin. You are immortal and dwell amongst the holy, while I am mortal. Your course is light, and swifter than a thought, neither weighed down with sin nor angered by transgression. Wherefore we beseech you to plead with God on my account and ask forgiveness for my numerous transgressions, for He loves mankind and wills the salvation of the one in doubt. Do not neglect the salvation of this one, who is in doubt. But unite the pleas of this sinner with those of the purest desires you present of this

petitioner that He make salvation for you of this doubting one, He who is God in Heaven, and I by your intercession be cleansed of sin to plead for my transgressions, glorified together with you, most Holy Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever, Amen.

JAMES R. RUSSELL

Columbia University, New York, USA

ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

ՎԵՑՀԱՋԱՐԵԱԿ ԿՈՉՈՒԱԾ ՄԻՋՆԱԴԱՐԵԱՆ ՀԱՅ ՄԱՏԵԱՆԸ

ՋԵՑՄՋ ՌԱՍՄԵԼ

Վեցհազարեակ կոչուած միջնադարեան Հայ մատենանը, թէև ղիթական բընոյթ ունի, կը պարունակէ նաեւ կարեւոր մաթեմատիկական, աստղաբաշխական եւ այլ գիտական տեղեկութիւններ, որոնք կ'օգտագործէր կախարդը՝ իր նպատակներուն համար, կուսելով անոնց միստիկական ներդաշնակութիւնը:

Վեցհազարեակի աղբիւրները սկզբնական կերպով իրաւական են, ուր խառնուած են բաղմթիւ նիւթեր թէ՛ Համաքրիստոնէական եւ թէ՛ Համամերձարեւելեան աշխարհէն: