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TEXTUAL OBSERVATIONS ON ST. GREGORY OF NAREK'S
“ODE OF THE LITTLE CART”

Introduction

This work was initially motivated by the search for a serviceable text of this ode for the purpose of preparing the first complete Czech and Western Armenian translations of the odes of St. Gregory of Narek. Initially, the three main published versions were considered:

A. The 1513 Venice publication². K'ēōškerean and Prof. van Lint may both be right in (respectively) characterising it as being “noticeably corrupted” (*zgali č'ap'ov alčatuac*)³ and the product of a “defective” tradition⁴ of codices; but significant information of an indirect nature that may be elicited from it.

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² *Տաղարան [BOOK OF ODES]*, Venice; this is probably the second ever Armenian book to have been published, and though it does not bear a date, it is believed to have been printed in 1513. The publisher was Yakob Melapart. The ode appears on pages 16 *recto* – 18 *verso*.

³ **Գրիգոր Նարեկացի, Տաղեր եւ Գանձեր [Odes and Ganj Litanies]**, աշխ. Արմինէ Քէօշկերեան, Yerevan 1981, p. 251; henceforth this volume will be referred to as the K'ēōškerean edition.

⁴ **T. M. van Lint**, “Grigor Narekac'i's *Tal Yarut'ean*: The Throne Vision of Ezekiel in Armenian Art and Literature I”, in: **V. Calzolari Bouvier et al.**, eds., *Apocryphes armeniens: transmission – traduction – creation – iconographie*, Lausanne: Editions du Zebre, 1999, p. 105-127; see p. 117.

B. The 1840 Venice (San Lazzaro) publication⁵ (itself very similar⁶ to the earliest San Lazzaro publication of 1827⁷). This version⁸ was used in Archimandrite Garegin Sruanjteanc‘s Mananay anthology⁹; and Archbishop Garegin Xaç‘aturean Trapizoni¹⁰ and Aršawir Mxit‘arean¹¹ used it in their editions and for their own translations – despite (in the case of the latter) the presumable availability of MS sources from the

⁵ Մրբոյ Բօրն մերոյ Գրիգորի Նարեկայ վանից վանականի մատենագրութիւնք [Works of Our Holy Father Gregory, Monk of the Monastery of Narek], Venice, 1840, p. 473-474.

⁶ The two versions are well-nigh identical, the only discernible difference being that the 1827 version has the word Աստուծոյ written out in full, whereas the 1840 edition has the abbreviated form այ with a horizontal bar over it.

⁷ Գրիգորի Նարեկայ վանից վանականի մատենագրութիւնք [Works of Gregory, Monk of the Monastery of Narek], Venice, 1827, p. 381-382.

⁸ It is, incidentally, fascinating to compare the two Venetian editions of 1827 and 1840 more generally. Indeed, a highly worthwhile and non-trivial project would be to trace the development of the recensions of the various odes included in the two editions, aided by an examination of the dates of acquisition of various manuscript sources by the Venetian Mekhitarist Fathers (as would also be the highly interesting but rather more ambitious challenge of establishing which specific manuscript sources were employed by the editors towards the preparation of the editions). In some cases – as in that of the present ode – there was little change. In others – such as the ode *Hawun art‘ənac‘eal*, the 1840 edition was able to present a rather more complete version of the ode than the earlier volume (as may be seen by comparing p. 383 of the 1827 publication with p. 475 of that of 1840). In this instance the version found in the earlier edition would suggest the use of later sources, where, very possibly, the increasingly melismatic manner of execution of the melody may have resulted in the sheer lack of time for the performance of the later stanzas. In the case of *Ač‘k‘ən cov* (now generally considered the continuation of *Erg šaržvarženi*), the two editions presented substantially different recensions of the same ode – and it is significant that Prof. Abraham Terian, in his forthcoming volume of richly annotated translations of the complete extant Festal Works of the saint, has chosen to treat both recensions individually – see **A. Terian**, *The Festal Works of St. Gregory of Narek: Annotated Translation of the Odes, Litanies and Encomia* (forthcoming). Interestingly enough, K‘ēdškerean has presented both versions separately in her 1981 edition, as well as providing a third, in some ways “intermediate” version within the notes in the appendix.

⁹ See *Մանանայ [Manna]*, ժողովեաց եւ ի լոյս էած Գ. Վ. Սրուանձաւեանց, Constantinople, 1876, p. 240-241. It is perhaps significant that Sruanjteanc‘ follows one or other of the Venice editions (1827 or 1840) but (i) makes an excision, eschewing most of the “key” stanza (incl. the reference to the “fourfold” *kurcn* of the cart not referred to elsewhere in the ode), and also (ii) omits the final abbreviated indication *Aysōr arjakec‘ak‘*, recognising, no doubt, that this was a cue to start singing the final stanza of the *De caelis* hymn.

¹⁰ See **Ս. Գրիգոր Նարեկացի**, *Նարեկ Մատենան Ողբերգութեան [Narek Book of Lamentation]*, աշխ. եւ թրգ. Գարեգին Արք. Խաչատուրեան (Տրապիզոնի), Aleppo 2003 (a republication of the original 1948 Buenos Aires publication), p. 716-719.

¹¹ See **Գրիգոր Նարեկացի**, *Տաղեր [Odes]*, աշխ. եւ թրգմ. Արշաւիր Մխիթարեան, Yerevan 1957, p. 62-65.

Matenadaran. More recently the 1840 text was adopted by Achb. Zareh Aznaworean of blessed memory for his millennial edition of the complete canon of works by St. Gregory of Narek, published in Antelias in 2003.¹²

C. The Soviet Armenian edition by K'ēōškerean, published in 1981¹³ (but reproduced without any substantial alteration more recently by the editors of the *Matenagirk' Hayoc'* volume 12 published in 2008¹⁴, as in the case of the *Matenagirk' Hayoc'* version of the Book of Lamentation, which, too, is a mere reproduction of the 1985 Soviet publication¹⁵).

Our reservations about all three versions have been fully discussed elsewhere¹⁶; here we merely reiterate the main reason why C may not be used in our judgement¹⁷. Consider the rather limp couplet found just before the "key" block (explaining the allegory of the earlier stanzas) in C. The version in B had, by way of the second line of the couplet, a repetition of the servant's shout to the pair of oxen (already found in line 4 of the "lithe servant" stanza). Here, however, K'ēōškerean has the sentence Այսաւր անուշահոտ բուրմամբ ընթանայ; yet this line is none other than the

¹² Ս. Գրիգոր Նարեկացի, *Մատենան Ողբերգութեան եւ այլ երկասիրութիւնք* [*Book of Lamentation and other works*], հազարամեակի հրատարակութիւն, աշխ. Զարեհ Եղս. Ազնաւորեան, Antelias 2003 – for this ode, see p. 658-659. Though it is by no means flawless, and despite the fact that some of the ode texts are in need of updating, of all published versions of the works of St. Gregory of Narek, this publication remains perhaps the best "reader's edition" of the corpus as a whole. The inclusion in a single, convenient volume of the *Book of Lamentation, Commentary on the Song of Songs, Encomia, Litanies, Odes, and Word of Counsel* enables ready cross-reference, in turn a potentially highly-illuminating procedure. A cautious and conservative editorial approach was brought to bear: throughout the volume there is a certain bias in favour of the traditional readings of the Venetian fathers – though judicious use of the Soviet-era "critical" editions has also been made, especially to fill in lacunae. The late archbishop did not himself have access to manuscript sources, but in our view remains unrivalled for his acumen, good taste, linguistic sensitivity and biblical scholarship.

¹³ K'ēōškerean, op. cit., see p. 59-65 for this ode, as also the valuable notes and table on p. 251-254.

¹⁴ See p. 727-730, Գրիգոր Նարեկացի [Gregory of Narek], in *Մատենագիրք հայոց* [*Medieval Armenian Literature*], ժԲ հատոր, Antelias 2008.

¹⁵ Գրիգոր Նարեկացի, *Մատենան Ողբերգութեան* [*Book of Lamentation*], աշխ. Պողոս Մ. Խաչատրեան եւ Արշալոյս Ա. Ղազինեան, Yerevan, 1985.

¹⁶ H. Utidjian, "On the printed sources of the 'Ode of the Little Cart'", in: *Parrésia* 7 (2013), p. 185-203.

¹⁷ Though in the present article we have cause – however reluctantly – to criticize the text of this ode as it appears in this volume, there can be no doubt that Arminē K'ēōškerean's contribution in the twentieth century to textual advances concerning the odes of St. Gregory of Narek and of St. Nersēs the Gracious has been second to none. Our modest attempt to build up on her work in some small way should not be deemed to detract from our appreciation of her achievement.

beginning of the third stanza of the very same *De caelis* hymn employed elsewhere in the ode (*Փառքք Քրիստոսի ամենագոր յարութեան*)! The full stanza (in the version of the hymn to be found in the standard Portable Hymnal¹⁸ – p. 502) is: *Այսօր անուշահոտ բուրմամբ ընթանային սուրբ կանաչքն, տեսանելով ըզհրեշտակն արեգակնակերպ փայլմամբ ի վերայ վիմին գոչէր ասելով. փառքք Քրիստոսի ամենագոր յարութեան*: Thus, not only is օտ‘անայ an abbreviation for օտ‘անային, but in fact the whole line (labelled as line 46 in the K‘ēōškerean edition) is intended as an abbreviation for the interpolation of the whole stanza. Devoid of this line, the line *I yarēlēn* (that is, line 45 in the K‘ēōškerean edition) cannot stand on its own. This, to our mind, renders version C well-nigh inadmissible in its present form. Yet the connection of line 46 to the hymn has not been recognised so far – a blunder that could have been avoided by dint of reading through the *De caelis* hymn in question, or had but edition A been taken more seriously: there the line in question directly succeeds an abbreviated version of the first stanza of the hymn, *փառքք քի*: and is itself highly abbreviated, appearing as: *Այսաւր անուշահոտ բուրմ*: The incomplete nature of this phrase in the 1513 publication would surely have provoked the questions: why did the scribe not write it out fully, and how could the singer know how to proceed at this point? This surely would have led to the realisation that the words could not possibly be taken at face value as a mere continuation of the ode, but constituted yet another interpolated cue referring to some other source – namely the Armenian hymnal. There was, of course, clearly no need for it to be written out fully, as the singer would either have known the hymn by heart¹⁹ or have had a hymnal at hand.

Accordingly, we now turn to the texts of the three earliest manuscript recensions of this ode known to the present writer. All three are to be found in the Scriptorium of the Mekhitarist Congregation of San Lazzaro in Venice, and the existence of these sources has been known at

¹⁸ *Շարական Զեռաց [Portable Hymnal]*, Antelias 1997 (republication of Jerusalem version of 1936 with added alphabetical index), referred to henceforth simply as the Portable Hymnal or PH.

¹⁹ The earliest extant Armenian hymnal manuscript known to the author (copied in Jerusalem in 1193 – Matenadaran MS No. 9838) is itself highly abbreviated, on two counts: many words are omitted, and many words that have not been omitted are themselves abbreviated. It genuinely does therefore seem that at least some church singers were so well-versed in its contents that mere reminders would suffice to allow them to render the hymns convincingly. For a reproduction of an extreme example (folio 51 *verso* of this codex), see **H. Utidjian**, “Ukázky z Hymnáře arménské apoštolské církve [Specimens from the Hymnal of the Armenian Apostolic Church]”, in: *Parrésia* 5 (2011), p. 229.

least since the publication in 1995 of the relevant volume of the late Fr. Sahak Čemčemean's masterly and extraordinarily user-friendly Master Catalogue of Armenian MSS at the Mekhitarist library in Venice²⁰. Despite this fact, these texts appear not to have been used by previous editors, translators or commentators of the ode.

The three oldest Venetian MS recensions

There are six entries for this ode to be found in Čemčemean's Mayr C'uc'ak, Vol. 5 (the volume of the San Lazzaro Master Catalogue that embraces codices of odes and of ganj litanies). We enumerate the three earliest sources²¹:

1. *Գանձարան ժԶ., Ձեռագիր Թիւ 159*, Catalogue Entry No. 775, 15-16th century, place unknown. The codex was received by the Fathers as a gift, during Fr. Nersēs Akinean's travels in Armenia in the years 1846-1852. The MS could, therefore, not have been available to the editors of the 1823 and 1840 Venetian editions of the Saint's works (Version B). It is of very special interest indeed, and will henceforth be referred to as our **Recension 1**. Incidentally, it is noteworthy that here we have the ode in a Ganjarian – that is, in a collection embracing Ganj litanies, and the ode does indeed rub shoulders with Ganj items for the Holy Resurrection, being preceded and succeeded by such pieces – which puts paid to the claim that the ode is artaganjaranayin (see p. 727 of vol. 12 of *Matenagirk' hayoc'*, compiled by Hrač'eay T'amrazean, Antelias, 2008). Finally, we note that in this codex the ode is attributed not to St. Gregory of Narek, but to Kostandin Srik²².

2. *Տաղարան Ե., Ձեռագիր Թիւ 234*, Catalogue Entry No. 790, 16-17th century, place (at which the relevant part of the codex was copied) un-

²⁰ **Հ. Սահակ Վրդ. Ճեմճեմեան**, *Մայր Յուդակ Հայերէն ձեռագրաց մատենադարանին Մխիթարեանց ի Վենետիկ, Հատոր Ե., Յայտնաւորք – Գանձարան – Տաղարան – Տօնացոյց [Master Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts at the Mekhitarist Library in Venice, Vol. V, Menologia – Books of "Ganj" litanies – Books of Odes – Typica]*, San Lazzaro, Venice, 1995.

²¹ For a discussion of the remaining three, the reader is referred to H. Utidjian, "On the early Venetian manuscripts of the 'Ode of the Little Cart'", in: *Parrésia 7 (2013)*, p. 205-228.

²² It is, however, not all that unusual for there to be a lack of unanimity in attributions. There do exist a number of odes by the Saint which are sometimes attributed to Srik (as well as vice-versa), and, even more commonly, a number of odes where attributions to St. Gregory compete with attributions to St. Nersēs the Gracious. This particular ode, however, and especially this particular recension of it are highly redolent of features found in other odes by St. Gregory; and in our view it is a surrealistic piece of striking originality, and the undoubted fruit of a powerful imagination well worthy of St. Gregory of Narek's genius, as well as (as we shall see) sharing various features with a number of other odes that indisputably belong to his pen, such as (for instance) *Hawun art'anac'eal*.

known. The codex was acquired by the Fathers in 1755, so in principle it could have been used by the editors of the 1823 and 1840 editions; but if it was, it seems to have had little influence on the redaction published in those editions, which must have been largely based on some other source. The remarkable feature of this recension is that, whereas all printed versions of the ode incorporate one or more stanzas of one specific hymn, in the case of this recension parts from a variety of hymns interlace the ode's stanzas. In his Master Catalogue Čemčemean refers to hymns for Easter Day and the Resurrection²³; but in fact we find hymns for the Resurrection, Easter Day, the Archangels, as well as for the Feast of the Transfiguration. All these hymns are of the Fourth Plagal Mode, so musically the transitions from ode to hymn interpolations and back will have been seamless. This is our **Recension 2**.

3. *Տաղարան Գ., Ձեռագիր թիվ 1330*, Catalogue Entry No. 789; the relevant part of the the codex was written in Kafa in 1563; the year of acquisition by the Venetian Fathers is not known. This is our **Recension 3**.

Now the earliest MS consulted by K'ēōškerean was no earlier than seventeenth-century²⁴, whilst Prof. van Lint refers to the oldest extant MS as “dating from about 1622”²⁵. We may therefore claim that Recensions 1 and 3 are older, whilst in the case of our Recension 2 (of which the dating is less exact) there is a reasonable chance that it too may be older than the MSS K'ēōškerean used (although, as we shall see, it would have been of undiminished interest even if it were to be of lesser vintage).

Brief summary of salient features of Recension 1

This recension evinces highly interesting elements not present in the published versions²⁶. We note the substantial extension to the Jayn afnēr section, the introduction of the apostles towards the end of the ode, as well as the use of the plural – apparently the carts were descending – and yet on “it” were placed various objects and personages. Finally, though it is commented that the cart and its wheel (curiously enough, in the singular) were immobile, the recension lacks any dramatic moment following which they might resume – or rather, commence their movement.

²³ Čemčemean, *op. cit.*, p. 687: Կը յաշորդեն Զատկի օրուան եւ յարութեան շարականներ:

²⁴ See K'ēōškerean, *op. cit.*, p. 252: Տաղի հին օրինակներ չեն պահպանուած: Վաղագոյնները ժէ դարից այն կողմ չեն անցնում եւ բոլորն էլ աղատաղումներով:

²⁵ T. M. van Lint, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

²⁶ For a full transcriptions of all three manuscript recensions (the inclusion of which here with space restrictions must regrettably preclude) the reader is referred to H. Utidjian, “On the early Venetian manuscripts of the ‘Ode of the Little Cart’”, in: *Parresia* 7 (2013), p. 205-228.

The recension is also noteworthy for what it lacks. The usual stanza starting with եթէ հարիւր բարդ խոլընամն – “If one hundred amassed orchids” – ought to have been present, since the “key” block, with its suggested interpretation of particular items, does indeed appear in this recension of the ode, and refers to features that are missing in the absence of the stanza; thus, its absence would seem to be an anomaly. Also the *Իյառեղէն առեալ շարժէր գունդըն* stanza (or couplet) is missing altogether. The references to the “eight” days – or “seven”? awt‘nawreay could be a corruption of either – are both spurious, revealing an apparent ignorance of the very notion of the Hexameron (despite the fact that the Armenian version of St. Basil’s Hexameron was popular and widespread). Only ten apostles have been named. The second stanza of the *De caelis* hymn is also absent. Finally, the hymnal interpolations in this recension are from the usual *De caelis* hymn for the Holy Resurrection, namely the first, third and fourth (and final) stanzas of *Փառքք քրիստոսի ամենազօր յարութեանն* (p. 501-502 of the PH).

Brief summary of salient features of Recension 2

The ode lacks any title in this recension. In terms of clarity of structure, symmetry and equality of stanzas it is rather more problematic than any of the printed editions. (One obvious instance of asymmetry is the line shortened by the absence of the cross held by the children in the cart – incidentally, a feature Recension 2 shares with Version A – the 1513 Venice publication.) However, this recension is remarkable and uniquely valuable for the extraordinary latitude and copiousness with which interpolations from the hymnal appear to have been adopted – the spectrum being, in fact, even wider than that described by Fr. Čemčemian in his Catalogue entry. The fact is that the ode incorporates excerpts from hymns – all from the Fourth Plagal Mode (thus ensuring musically smooth and seamless transitions) – for the Holy Resurrection, Easter Day, the Feast of the Archangels as well as the Transfiguration. The precise choices made by the redactor of this recension appear to be highly specific²⁷, giving rise to the crucial question: did the redactor merely take somewhat further a procedure initiated by the author of the ode himself?

²⁷ See *Portable Hymnal* (PH), p. 501-502, for the usual *Patrum* hymn interpolations. The remaining interpolations are the first three stanzas of the *Patrum* hymn for Easter Day, Այսաւ մեծ աւետի՛ք աղամայ նախաստեղծի՛ն (PH, p. 376-377); all three stanzas of the Midday hymn Այսաւ ուրախացեալ սուրբ եկեղեցի քրիստոսի, associated with the Canon for the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel, and for all the Heavenly Hosts (PH, p. 713);. and the third stanza alone of the *Patrum* hymn Այսօր ըզխորհուրդն աննաւ

Again, apparent ignorance of the Hexameron appears to result in an inappropriate number – “five”, in this recension – instead of the requisite “six”. The “key” block interestingly refers to the one hundred sheep referred to by Christ (Matthew 18:12-14, Luke 15:3-5), rather than to the more usual one hundred “patriarchs and prophets”. It may plausibly be argued that the non-uniformity of some of the interpretations found in our recensions may perhaps in itself reinforce the suspicion that the “key” blocks may have been retrospective additions, extraneous to the ode as it was composed by the Saint²⁸, and with an element of arbitrariness possibly reflecting a variety of local traditions. (We shall find that all three recensions here incorporate slightly different interpretations, as does Version A; and the majority of the MSS inspected by K‘ēōškerean lacked the “key” block altogether).

This recension too includes an “apostles” section, and this time all eleven are featured; but the different structure of the relevant section here renders it unsuitable for any attempts to “complete” Recension 1. (The apostles are presented in pairs in that recension, whereas here we have a pair followed by three triplets.) Further: (1) this section, after a further hymn stanza interpolation, is followed by yet another line where the four Evangelists are mentioned; and (2) the apostles as well as the Evangelists are accompanied by a modification whereby what was previously *i gil gayr* has now been transformed into *i gorc gayr* (or, twice, *kayr* instead of *gayr*). Thus, *gil* is transformed into *gorc*, with as it were the apostles and Evangelists carrying out “the work”.

There is a similar usage of the plural form, *saylk‘*, with the ensuing verb matching it in number, but not the following pronoun, which remains in the singular; this is much as in Recension 1. But here we encounter, in addition, *saylik‘n* (instead of *saylikn*)²⁹.

for the Third Day of the Feast of the Holy Transfiguration Այսօր անմահութեան հոտ անոյշ բուրեաց ի բարօր. թըմբեալ ընդարմացոյց զդասս առաբեղոցն. Աստըսած հարցըն մեռոց: (PH, p. 609-610) – where we note that both the reading բարօր (a reference to mount Tabor) and the punctuation of the hymnal version seem preferable to the version that appears in the ode recension.

²⁸ The ode *Zōrk‘ i verust iĵeal*, of uncertain attribution, is the only other comparable example known to us.

²⁹ This, taken as an intermediate form between *saylk‘n* and *saylikn*, might reinforce the hypothesis (kindly personally communicated to the author by Prof. Terian) that *saylk‘n* itself might possibly be a corruption of *saylikn*. This would explain the lack of agreement in number with the ensuing *nora*, though still not accounting for the plural

Brief summary of salient features of Recension 3

This recension (in common with Version A – the Venice publication of 1513) eschews mention of the seraphim and cherubim in the first stanza; but (perhaps in its stead?) it does, unlike Version A, include the second stanza of the usual *De caelis* hymn (which refers to them). In common with Recension 1, the stationarity of the little cart and of the wheel (always in the singular) is never altered.

By its inclusion of the greater part of stanza 3 of the usual *De caelis* hymn, this ode provides yet further evidence in support of our firm view that the line Այսօր անուշահոտ բուրմամբ ընթանայ: in the 1981³⁰ and 2008³¹ editions (Version C) ought not to be taken at face value, and instead be recognised for what it is: a cue to the appropriate stanza of the hymn.

Unlike Recensions 1 and 2, Recension 3 does not list the apostles by name, but refers to *metasan arak'eloc'* ("eleven apostles"). Furthermore, Recension 3 is the only one of the three MS recensions to refer to *vec'* ("six"), or more precisely *vez* [sic] *korənkən* ("origan plants"), consistently with the Hexameron. We also note that this recension too (in common with Version A and with Recension 2) lacks the cross held by the children in Recension 1 and Version C, or placed on their laps in the Venetian 1823 and 1840 editions (Version B). We finally note in passing that this recension features particularly interesting neumations.

Discussion

One wonders if an element of oral transmission might not perhaps have played a role in bringing about such a shocking degree of diversity – both of detail³² and in larger-scale structure. Interestingly, both

ijānēin. Of course it is also possible that the plural, *saylk'* might represent an unattested usage whereby the plural form may have had a singular meaning associated with it.

³⁰ Գրիգոր Նարեկացի, *Տաղեր եւ Գանձեր [Odes and Ganj Litanies]*, աշխ. Արմինէ Քէօզկերեան, Yerevan 1981, p. 63, line 46.

³¹ Գրիգոր Նարեկացի [Gregory of Narek], in *Մատենագիրք հայոց [Armenian Medieval Literature]*, ԺԲ հատոր, Antelias 2008, p. 729, line 46.

³² A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this point. (1) We have encountered variously Սայլի իջանկին ի մասեաց լեռնէն (Manuscript Recension 1), Սայլին իջանկին ի լեռնէն ի մասանց (Recension 2), Սայլն իջանկին ի լեռնէն մասանց (Recension 3), further to the printed versions Սեպլն իջանկին ի լեռնէն ի մասանց (Version A) and Սայլն այն իջանկն ի լեռնէն ի Մասեաց (Versions B and C). (2) We have seen that the plural form, *Saylk'*, is accompanied by the plural verb, *ijānēin* – yet is followed by the singular possessive pronoun, *nora*, when one would have expected the plural *noc'a* for the sake of agreement in number. This feature is not entirely surprising if we return to

Sruanjteanc' in 1876³³ and Pidedjian in 1999³⁴ cite this ode as particularly exemplifying what they see as the propinquity of St. Gregory of Narek's artistry with folk poetry and oral forms. Thus, oral tradition might well have served to bridge severe gaps caused by forcible interruptions in scriptorial tradition and enabled the ode to reach us at all. MSS could have been destroyed, but survivors in isolated pockets sang on, able to rely on their memory and on the teaching of their fathers. Their singing may, in turn, have been recorded by later generations of scribes. In such circumstances it is natural that details were changed, refrains multiplied or modified, explanatory keys introduced, interpolations variously selected and deployed, and that the sequence of the various constituent stanzas inevitably grew unstable. Granted – whereas *Hawun art'ənac'eal*, where the earliest extant MS (Paris No. 79, Drazark 1241) is removed by a quarter of a millenium from the author's lifetime (in itself no small distance), in the case of the “Ode of the Little Cart” we are facing a chasm that is twice as great. Yet even so, it is difficult to explain away the degree of diversity of readings encountered in connection with this ode by evoking the possibility of successive layers of copyists' errors alone.

We have seen that Recension 1 is especially richly endowed with additional features that the printed editions lack. In particular, the *Jayn*

the 1513 Venice publication, where we have *Sealk'n* [sic] *ijanēin*, again followed by the singular *nora*. Incidentally, it is clear that *sealk'n* is not an isolated slip, given that it appears as the title of no fewer than four out of the five pages occupied by this ode. (3) The issue of the missing second stanza of the *De caelis* from Recension 1 (in the face of the presence of the other three stanzas of the hymn) has been glossed over. Our argument that it is too similar to the ode and that there would therefore be ungainly repetition were it to be included (the stanza is: Քրիստոսի ամենագոր յարութեանն երկրպագեն և փարոք փարոք փարոք ամենագոր յարութեանն:), was apparently supported by the observation that Recension 3, which does include the stanza, eschews the usual lines of the first stanza of the ode referring to the cherubim and seraphim. But the same argument was weakened upon noting that Recension 2 includes both – whilst the Venice 1513 publication includes neither! (4) It has not been possible to shed light on the sources the Venetian fathers used for their 1823 and 1840 editions, and the matter requires further investigation.

³³ See *ՄԱՆԱՆԱՅ [MANNA]*, p. 242: Կըտեննե՛ս Ռշտունցի հօտաղ եզնավարին սրբազնացուցեալ երգն...

³⁴ Գ. Փիտէնեան, *Գրիգոր Նարեկացի շարականագիր* [Gregory of Narek a hymnographer?], Eǰmiacin, 1999, esp. p. 28: Նարեկացիի գործածած բարդ ու մնային ոճը կուգայ գուսանական, ժողովրդական լեզուէն, որուն մէջ տակալին վառ կերպով պահուած կըմնային ժողովուրդի անգիր շրջանին յատուկ արտայայտչական կերպերը:

arñēr... section has been extended through the addition of a whole block, entailing a surrealistic journey all the way back to the Song of Songs. The imagery in this block could powerfully contribute to the link between the voices of the seraphim and cherubim praising God in Ezekiel's vision and that of St. John the Baptist (alias the servant urging the oxen on). The "Mounts of Bethel" are evoked, no doubt with the usual associations with Jacob's ladder (e.g. Gen 35:6-7), in addition to what the author himself makes explicit in his own *Commentary to the Song of Songs*³⁵. The "firm walls" (*amur parəspac* ') or "fortified ramparts" lend themselves to various interpretations (see, for example, Song 2:14), but may well refer to the Holy Cross – traditionally viewed as furnishing the faithful with solid protection (as exemplified by hymns for the Elevation of the Holy Cross³⁶). "Let me into the house of wine" (*mucēk' zis i tun gin[w]oy*) may be the voice of the bridegroom uttering a sort of counterpart to the words of the bride (Song 8:2) Առեալ ածից զքեզ ի տուն մօր իմոյ, ... արբուցի ցքեզ ի գինույ իւղագործաց, or indeed a response to Wisdom's invitation (Proverbs 9:1, 9:5) Իմաստութիւն շինեաց իւր տուն, ... Եկայք ... եւ արբէք զգինի իմ զոր խառնեցի ձեզ; there are, of course, further

³⁵ See **Ս. Գրիգոր Նարեկացի**, *Մատենան Ողբերգութեան եւ այլ երկասիրութիւնք* [*Book of Lamentation and other works*], հազարամեակի հրատարակութիւն, աշխ. Զարեհ Եպս. Ազնաւորեան, Antelias 2003, p. 474: «Փ վերայ լերանց Բերեյայ»: Ըստ երբայեցոց լեզուին Բերեյ երկինք կոչի, որ եւ հանէ գիրկեալսն յօձէն:

³⁶ See, for example, the first stanza of the *Cantemus* for the Saturday of the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross (also heard – usually in a gravely beautiful melismatic version – during the long and splendid evening service on the First Day of the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, as part of the elaborate procession that goes outside the church to bless all four sides of the globe), p. 664-665 of the Portable Hymnal: Ուր ծագեցեր մեզ լոյս մեծ ըզնրջան յաղթութեան խաչի քո թագաւոր յափտեմնից. եւ Լոտուր պարիսպ ամրութեան հաւատացելոց քոց, աշտարակ հրգօր լերեսաց թշնամույն. Աղայեմք ըզքեզ տէր պահպանեար զմեզ ընդ հովանեալ խաչի քո սուրբ: A discussion of the hymn and a Czech translation may be found in **H. Utidjian** and **M. Pičmanová**, "Ukázky z Hymnáře arménské apoštolské církve", in: *Parrésia* 5 (2011), p. 227-244; an English translation may be found in **Michael Daniel Findikyan**, "Armenian Hymns of the Church and the Cross", in: *St. Nersess Theological Review* 11 (2006), p. 63-105. Both Archimandrite Findikyan (see **Michael Daniel Findikyan**, "Armenian Hymns of the Holy Cross and the Jerusalem Encaenia", in: *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 23 (2010), p. 25-58) and Fr. Renoux (**Charles Athanase Renoux**, "Le croix dans le rite arménien: Histoire et symbolisme", in: *Melto: Recherches orientales* 5/1 (1969), p. 123-175) convincingly argue in favour of the antiquity of the Armenian hymns for the Elevation of the Holy Cross; it is thus not improbable that this hymn could have been well known to the Saint. Finally, we note that, interestingly enough, Recension 1 would otherwise lack any references to the Cross – lacking as it does mention of the crosses handheld by the children or placed in their laps in the first stanza of the ode.

possible associations, such as the wedding at Cana (John 2), or even a response to the eucharistic invitation to partake of the blood of Christ. Next, we hear the plea of the bride of the Song of Songs (representing Christ's Church – indeed, the “children of Sion”) to be covered with apples (cf. *Kutec 'ēk' yis xncor*, Song 2:5), which represent “the beauty of good works”.³⁷ Shockingly, without a moment's respite we then hear of Christ's descent into Hades, the liberation of the imprisoned souls (a theme we find in the Saint's ode *Es jayynn zAriwcunn asem*) – all of whom are united in jubilant song, even as the servant in charge of the oxen utters his cries and the array of apostles makes its appearance (each mentioned by name in Recensions 1 and 2 – perhaps inspired by Matthew 29:28 – *Ասէ ցնա Յիսուս, Ամէն ասեմ ձեզ զի դուք որ եկիք զկնի իմ, ի միւսանգամ գալստեան, յորժամ նստցի Որդի մարդոյ յաթոռ փառաց իւրոց, նստջիք եւ դուք յերկոտասան աթոռ՝ դատել զերկոտասան ազգն Իսրայելի*:³⁸ – or just referred to collectively as the “eleven apostles” in Recension 3), reinforced (in Recension 2) by a hymnal interpolation referring to *zdas arak'eloc'n* to boot; with the breathtaking pageant enhanced (again in Recension 2), by way of a final twist, by the appearance of the four Evangelists – accompanied by the modification of the *i gil* of the chariot to the *i gorc* of the apostles³⁹.

This penchant – and near-miraculous aptitude – for effortlessly and naturally spanning millenia of Biblical history in but a few verses of text is highly characteristic of the author, not least in his odes. Much as in the case of *Hawun art 'ənac' eal*,⁴⁰ in almost surreal fashion we traverse, as it were, the Old Testament and the earthly life of the Word incarnate, and embrace Christ's death and resurrection. This is achieved in Recensions 1 and 2 in a manner wholly in keeping with the same tendency already encountered to some extent in the printed versions (which share with

³⁷ See p. 472 of the Aznaworean millennial edition: *Խնձոր՝ զբարի գործոց գեղեցկութիւնն ասէ:*

³⁸ I am indebted to Prof. Terian for his kindness in drawing my attention to this most pertinent allusion.

³⁹ At this point it is interesting also to note that Version A (the Venice publication of 1513) does include *petrosi ew pōlosi* (though no further apostles); and though we cannot be sure whether or not this is really a cue for the inclusion of a fuller list, as per Recensions 1 and 2, yet it does provide corroboration for the inclusion of the names of apostles at this point. So too, conceivably, does the mention of apostles encountered in the “key” in Version A, where the “one hundred amassed orchids” are associated with “the prophets and the apostles” (*ayn margarēk'n en [e]w arak'ealk'n*).

⁴⁰ See our detailed discussion in, for instance, **H. Utidjian, E. Kindler**, “Ukázky z díla sv. Řehoře z Nareku”, in: *Parrésia 4* (2010), p. 255-262.

these recensions the juxtaposition of the Old Testament vision of Ezekiel's chariot with the cries to glorify the Resurrection of Christ⁴¹), yet on a more massive scale and with heightened intensity. With all these features combined, and the interpolations from the hymnal added to boot (and we saw that the MS recensions bespeak of a substantial element of possible discretion and flexibility in this), the overall result – especially in its musical setting (which, alas, remains unknown to us, given our inability to read the neumes), would have constituted a veritable *tour de force*, especially when performed in its entirety.

Contemplating the possible musical setting of the ode may prove helpful in another respect also. The seemingly endless recurrences in Recension 1 of *ամոյ ընծայն ամնէր*, as well as various other repetitious elements might, arguably, be deemed to be somewhat less convincing, and perhaps less characteristic of the Saint's literary style. It is – at least on a first reading – difficult to imagine the Saint composing a whole stanza that consists of nothing more than a defective list of apostles grouped in pairs, each pair followed by *սայլիկն ի գիւ գայր ի գիւ*, since we do not have anything comparable in any of the remaining odes.⁴² But of

⁴¹ Prof. van Lint (op. cit., p. 123) sums up this aspect of the ode in a particularly felicitous and elegant manner: "In Grigor Narekac'i's poem the incorporation of elements from texts other than the Throne Vision and the chapters following it in the book of Ezekiel is a central building block in the construction of the overall picture. One biblical allusion is used to elucidate another, and the amalgam of these is put into an Armenian context carrying pre-Christian notions. The ideas of divine locomotion, the presence of the holy carried or protected by cherubs and its festive accompaniment by angels, prophets, saints and other servants are brought together from Ezekiel, Isa 6, the vision related in Rev 4 and the entrance of the tabernacle into Jerusalem, related in 2 Sam 6. From these visions the references to descriptions of the cherubim and seraphim at various places in the Bible are derived, as well as the tendency in both poet and exegete of combining the cherubim as watchers of the Ark of the covenant between God and his people with their function as carriers of the throne of God. In this respect exegesis and religious poetry parallel each other, since the former also enumerates at least several of these associations".

⁴² This part of our Recension is slightly reminiscent of another well-known ode (of uncertain attribution, and likely to be considerably less ancient than the Saint's output) – *K'ristos p'arac' t'agawor*, for the eve of Candlemas (see, for instance, the Tntesean hymnal, Constantinople, 1934, p. 773-774); it too consists of a section that is repeated numerous times, but with different names being substituted each time: *Մեծ անտիս է ալսօր նահապետաց ամննից* is successively repeated with the word *նահապետաց* being successively replaced by *Հայրապետաց*, *Մարգարէից*, *Առաքելոց*, *Մարտիրոսաց*, *Քահանայից*, *Ժողովրդոց* – thus attesting to a comparable practice whereby one element is kept constant as verses are successively repeated, with just one particular variable being allowed to change each time.

course lists abound in the *Book of Lamentation*: verses commencing with *Vay inj* – “Woe me!” (Word 7), or verses embedded both at the beginning and at the end with the word *melay* – “I have sinned” (Word 27) do come to mind immediately. Above all, however, it has to be borne in mind, specifically in connection with the musical genre of the *tal*, that repetitions that might look uncharacteristic and even tedious on paper could have worked highly effectively *when sung* – and if the Saint planned his ode as a musical composition, the edifice so constructed could be especially grand and imposing, precisely in the air of aural – indeed *musical* – actuality.⁴³

In the received versions of the ode, and in Recension 2, the immobilised cart is necessarily set into motion again, at some point or other in the ode, presumably having moved originally and then come to a grinding halt. We have seen, however, that Recensions 1 and 3 lack this “resumption” of motion. In these, the cart is descending Masis, approaching Jerusalem, yet is immobile; its wheel does not “play” (*xalal* – perhaps denoting an element of rhythmical, eccentric movement, or perhaps some loose, axial motion of the wheel⁴⁴) and its state does not evolve. This could, of course, just be a consequence of error due to scribal carelessness. On the other hand, is it not possible that the change from 𐌲𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌹𐌸 and 𐌶𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌹𐌸 into 𐌲𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌹𐌸 and 𐌶𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌹𐌸 at various points in the printed versions of the ode may itself have been made by lesser lights, unable fully to comprehend some of the paradoxes inherent both to Ezekiel’s vision and to the mystery of the Incarnation, and that the original version of the ode may indeed have included only the negative forms of the verbs after all? Could it thus be that the true antithesis

⁴³ Another possibility may be that these apparently tedious repetitions may have been introduced at a later stage, in connection with the sung versions – again, with refrains being more natural and more desirable whilst singing a melody aloud, than whilst reading a verbal text on paper. The ode could thus have “expanded” somewhat, along with its musical evolution and development over the centuries. Here too, we should be cautious of applying too readily the current preference for the aesthetic of the “short and sweet”. It is probable that over much of its less recent career, every moment in which the ode was sung was savoured to the full by less hasty and more receptive congregations, with the various refrains allowing ample time to contemplate on the rich diversity of its imagery, serving to demonstrate the unity of the Old and New Testaments through the person of the Word made incarnate, as also the unity of his divinity and humanity in his person.

⁴⁴ The rather varied and at times seemingly idiosyncratic use by the Saint of the verb *xalal* in his various odes is itself worthy of study and in need of elucidation.

between motion and arrest is not a temporal one – that is, a linear progression whereby the cart moves, then stops, and then a particular event makes it resume its motion; but rather, that the cart is at once mobile *and* stationary? In heaven, the chariot may appear deceptively still, being sustained and supported by the angels – representing the divinity of Christ. Yet at the selfsame time, thanks to the incarnation, the mighty and heavenly chariot is perceived as a small cart that is creaking away into Jerusalem – much as Christ's entry on an ass, eschewing the grandeur and mystique of the celestial vehicle. We also know that Christ died and rose again – and the angels supporting the chariot know also. Heaven and earth may thus join each other in giving praise for the resurrection at all times. Whether we perceive its wheels as moving or not at a given moment depends on our own vantage point; that is, as to whether or not we are focusing on the Word as God, or on the Word become man. This could explain the main paradoxes: we have a noble, celestial chariot, yet it is no less an earthy, creaking cart; it seems to descend mount Masis, yet is approaching Jerusalem. It creaks its way into the city, yet its wheels are motionless; there is stillness – bar the chorus of the voices of angels, children, apostles, and the holy Church of Christ, which we too are exhorted to join in song: *Ergemk' ew mek' and nosin!*⁴⁵

Conclusion

Three early MS recensions of the ode have been discussed, the main objective having been to advocate the adoption of at least some of the novel features and additional elements found therein, which, as we have demonstrated, are very much in keeping with the compositional practice of the Saint as exemplified by several of his other works. It would follow that there is a strong argument for the retention of such elements in any version of the text with the slightest claim to being definitive, or at least representative – on the grounds that they ring uncannily true, as potentially authentic flowerings genuinely betokening the poetic imagination of the Saint and worthy of his genius. The recensions taken individually are decidedly problematic, and it would be difficult to justify any simple-minded procedure whereby one might seek to make good the deficiencies of one by dint of having recourse to elements of the other two. It would, however, not be unreasonable cautiously to consider ways in which one might combine the novel pieces of information provided by the three

⁴⁵ Recension 1, line immediately preceding the first *I gil gayr...* block.

recensions with existing editions as a means of arriving at an enhanced general understanding of the ode as a whole.

**Հայկ Սրկ. Իսթինեան
Բնագրային դիտողութիւններ Ս. Գրիգոր Նարեկացոյ «Սայլիկի Տաղ»-ին
վրայ**

Ս. Գրիգոր Նարեկացոյ «Սայլիկի Տաղ»-ի վերջերս լայն տարածում գտած խմբագրութեան լուրջ անպատեհութիւններէն մին բացայայտելէ ետք՝ մեր ուշագրութիւնը կը դարձնենք տաղիս Վենետիկոյ Ս. Ղազարի ձեռագրատունը գտնուող բնագրային տարբերակներուն վրայ, որոնցմէ առ նուազն երկուքը հնագոյն են քան ցարդ օգտագործուած աղբիւրները: Այս տարբերակներուն առանձնայատկութիւնները կը նկարագրենք, եւ իրենց նորայայտ եւ յոյժ շահեկան բաժինները կը շանանք քննական մօտեցմամբ գնահատել՝ յանգելով այն եզրակացութեան, թէ յիրաւի սրբոյն հանճարին որոշակի դրոշմը կը կրեն, եւ թէ իր գրչին վերագրելի են ամենայն հաւանականութեամբ: Բնագիրները իրարմէ բաւական կը տարբերին, եւ բերանացի փոխանցումը կրնայ կարելորդեր խաղցած ըլլալ տաղիս պահպանման որոշ փուլերու ընթացքին: Ըստ մեր կարծեաց՝ արժանի են համակողմանի ուսումնասիրութեան, եւ կրնան մեծապէս նպաստել տաղիս բարելաւեալ ու լիագոյն հասկացողութեան: