

Translation of the Genitive Absolute in the Armenian *Alexander Romance*

Exploring the Shift from Sensus de Sensu to Verbum de Verbo Approach

▼ **ABSTRACT** This article discusses the translation techniques employed in rendering the Greek genitive absolute in Book I of the Armenian *Alexander Romance*, amidst the transition from *sensus de sensu* to *verbum de verbo* translation approach. Through a comparative analysis of corresponding passages in the Armenian and Greek texts, six primary techniques are revealed – three leaning towards descriptive interpretations and three favouring a more literal rendition. These techniques align closely with those found in other translations labelled pre-Hellenising. The findings not only enhance our understanding of translation practices in the fifth and sixth century Armenia, but also provide valuable insights for the broader field of translation studies. Also, the results add evidence to the discussion of the still obscure question of continuity between the classical, pre-Hellenising, and Hellenising translations.

▼ **KEYWORDS** *Alexander Romance*, genitive absolute, translation technique, Armenian, Hellenising School, pre-Hellenising translations.

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1. Introduction

The phenomenon of translation is probably as old as human language, and some of the earliest documented discussions regarding various manners and methods of translation trace back to classical antiquity. In his treatise *De optimo genere oratorum*

Rok Kuntner  0009-0007-4208-8273 • Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, Institut für Altertumswissenschaften, Lehrstuhl für vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft, Würzburg, Germany, (Email: rok.kuntner@stud-mail.uni-wuerzburg.de)

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(14), Cicero mentions two translation approaches — “ut interpretes” (like an interpreter) and “ut orator” (like an orator).¹ The former merely aims to convey the literal meaning of the words from the source language to the target language, while the latter additionally strives to capture their character and impact. The practice of translating “ut interpretes” seems to have been common for handling legal texts, while translating “ut orator” was better suited for literary prose and poetry (see Brock 1979, 69–70).

The dilemma, which technique to apply, logically arose for translating the Bible, which possesses both legal and literary character. This dilemma might be reflected in the inconsistent nature of the Septuagint translation(s) (71–73). However, it appears that, eventually, the more literal approach to translating the Holy Scriptures prevailed. Jerome, the author of the Latin *Vulgata*, when confronted with the issue of translation technique, which he discussed in his letter to Pammachius, declared (*Letters* 57.5): “me in interpretatione graecorum, absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo mysterium est, non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu” (“in translating from Greek, except for the Holy Scriptures, where even the order of the words is a mystery, I render sense for sense and not word for word”).²

In the West, Jerome’s approach largely established the principles for translating the Holy Scriptures in the ages to come.³ Before Jerome, however, the competition between the two approaches — *sensus de sensu* and *verbum de verbo* — was widespread. It arose in virtually every literate society with a tradition of translation practice long (or rich) enough for the prevailing approach to undergo critical scrutiny. The potential reasons for a shift in the translation approach were numerous and differed from age to age and from culture to culture.

Differences between the renderings of Hebrew in the Septuagint and Aquila as well as between the renderings of Greek in the Syriac Peshitta and the Philoxenian/Harclean translation are just two well-known early examples for a shift from predominantly *sensus de sensu* to predominantly *verbum de verbo* translation approach.⁴

In Armenian literary history, a similar shift occurred, with the line most commonly drawn between the classical and Hellenising translation schools.

The Armenian translation of the Bible, produced in the early fifth century, established a standard for the *classical* translation approach, marked by precise and transparent renderings of Greek⁵ into clear, idiomatic Armenian, prioritising sense over form (Cuendet 1929, see also Muradyan 2012, 191–201). The natural flow of

¹ See the Loeb edition (Hubbell 1949).

² Hieronymus 1845 (Latin text); Schaff and Wace 1893 (English translation).

³ See further Brock 1979, 69–70.

⁴ An even freer approach than that of the Peshitta is characteristic for Tatian’s *Diatessaron*, a harmonised version of the Gospel accounts dating back to the second century.

⁵ Stanislas Lyonnet presented a compelling argument in his monograph (1950) that there likely existed an older Armenian translation of the Gospels, produced from a Syriac text (Arm. 1). The nature of its Syriac source has been a subject of debate, with discussions revolving around whether it was a harmony of the Gospels (Lyonnet 1950) or an Old Syriac version of the separated Gospels (Vööbus 1950). In the first half of the fifth century, still during the same period, the initial translation (Arm. 1) underwent a thorough revision on the basis of a Greek source (or sources), giving rise to the Armenian vulgate type of text (Arm. 2). This revised version is most notably represented by the Zohrabian edition (1805, see Metzger 1977, 167.).

language, the beauty of diction, and the refined style of the Old Armenian Bible prompted the French orientalist Mathurin Veyssière de La Croze (1661–1739) to label it as the Queen of the Translations (Hacikyan et al. 2000, vol. 1, 97). A similar approach was also employed in the Armenian translations of the greater part of patristic literature.

In classical translations, Grecisms occur only as exceptions;⁶ however, in the corpus of the Hellenising School, they are consistently present across all levels of linguistic analysis (see Muradyan 2012). It doesn't appear, however, that this shift toward a literal translation technique and the standardisation of vocabulary was primarily driven by the desire to enhance clarity in interpreting the Holy Scriptures or to resolve a theological dispute, which might have been among the main motivating factors behind revisions of the Syriac Bible (see Wright 1894, 13–17 and Baumstark 1922, 185–89). This is evident from the content of the Hellenising corpus, where one encounters grammatical, rhetorical, and philosophical treatises, such as Dionysius Thrax's *Grammar*, Aelius Theon's *Progymnasmata*, and various works by Plato, Aristotle, and Philo. On the other hand, there are few works of religious significance, and, crucially, no programmatic revision of the Bible translation.⁷ The bulk of the Hellenising corpus consists of texts with technical, often scientific, content suitable for higher education. Therefore, it seems plausible that these texts were translated both to aid students in better understanding the Greek originals, and to develop a native technical terminology and abstract vocabulary — essential for the evolution of scientific genres in Armenian (see Calzolari 1989 and Muradyan 2014, 322–23).

The texts traditionally categorised as Hellenising, however, do not form a homogeneous group. The differences among them have been considered in numerous attempts to periodise the School's activity.⁸ In the course of the history of research, several texts characterised by a more moderate Hellenising approach than that of the majority of the Hellenising translations have been identified. In many respects, these texts are closer to classical translations, and they are now labeled *pre-Hellenising*.⁹ In terms of translation technique, they exhibit many syntactical and few morphological and lexical Grecisms. Particularly noteworthy is the near absence of stereotypical preverbs calqued on Greek. Besides differences in translation technique, the Hellenising and pre-Hellenising texts also differ in terms of their content. The majority of the texts associated with the pre-Hellenising corpus — the *Sermons* of Gregory of Nazianz (Lafontaine and Coulie 1983), the *Asketikon* and the *Sermons* of Basil the Great (Uluhogian 1993), the entire Armenian corpus of Athanasius of Alexandria

6 On the lexical level, Grecisms often manifest as loanwords, particularly in terms associated with the Church as an institution. Examples include նախկոպոս from ἐπίσκοπος, կաթողիկոս from καθολικός etc. Syntactical Grecisms occur sporadically.

7 See Manandean 1928; Akinean 1932; Arevshatyan 1973, and Terian 1982 for detailed studies of the Hellenising School corpus and its classification; an overview is given in Arevshatyan 1973, 186–88. For brief introductions into the Hellenising School, see Mercier 1978; Calzolari 1989; Kölligan 2014, and Muradyan 2014.

8 Most notably Manandean 1928; Akinean 1932; Arevshatyan 1973, and Terian 1982.

9 *Pré-héllenophile* in French, see Lafontaine and Coulie 1983, 137. For previous designations, see Muradyan 2014, 16–17, and for a brief introduction into the topic, see Muradyan 2004.

(Calzolari 2000; Muradyan 2004 and 2014, 326), the *Sermons* of Gregory of Nyssa (Muradyan 2004 and 2014, 326), and a *Letter to Theodore* by John Chrysostom (Scala 2005, 240) — are primarily theological in nature. This stands in stark contrast to the grammatical, rhetorical, and philosophical treatises characteristic of the Hellenising School.

The Armenian version of the legendary narrative recounting the adventures of Alexander the Great, attributed to Pseudo-Callisthenes and commonly referred to as the *Alexander Romance*, is one of the earliest translations of this literary work.¹⁰ While it is traditionally placed into the Hellenising corpus (see Manandean 1928; Akinean 1932; Arevshatyan 1973, and Terian 1982), recent scholars have reevaluated its connection to this group. Notably, due to similarities in style and translation technique, it has been linked with the pre-Hellenising translations (Cowe 1996 [implicitly]; Traina 1997; Mancini Lombardi and Uluhogian 1998; Muradyan 2004 and 2014). However, it is crucial to note that this classification, while presented with persuasive arguments, relies on limited research. A thorough and comprehensive examination of the translation technique remains an important area for further scholarly exploration.¹¹

The present article examines the approach taken by Armenian translators in rendering the distinctively Greek grammatical construction of the genitive absolute. The focus is primarily directed towards the evidence in the Armenian version of the *Alexander Romance*.

2. The Genitive Absolute in Classical, Hellenising, and pre-Hellenising Translations

In its basic and most frequent form, the genitive absolute is a grammatical construction in Greek consisting of a noun and an appositive participle, both in the genitive case. With no reference word in the main clause,¹² the genitive absolute often denotes phenomena or actions that condition or accompany the activity of the main clause, thereby conveying adverbial meaning. In English, as well as in many other modern languages, the genitive absolute is typically rendered as an adverbial clause, commonly expressing temporal, conditional, causal, or concessive relationships. In the earliest pieces of original Armenian literary production, there are no instances of the genitive absolute. The first authors to make use of it in their original works are the historiographer Movsēs Khorenats'i (Jensen 1959, 134–35; Topchyan 2002, 77;

¹⁰ The Armenian translation of the *Alexander Romance* was very popular in medieval Armenia and had a considerable influence on Armenian historiography, see Topchyan 2011.

¹¹ I aspire to contribute to bridging this research gap in my forthcoming PhD thesis, currently in preparation at the University of Würzburg, Germany, under the guidance of Prof. Daniel Kölligan (University of Würzburg), Prof. Christian Tornau (University of Würzburg), and Prof. Giusto Traina (Sorbonne université). For the chapters concerning translation technique, I draw inspiration from studies such as Lafontaine and Coulie 1983, focusing on *Sermons* by Gregory of Nazianz, Uluhogian 1993, examining *Asketikon* by Basil the Great, and Calzolari 2000, which explores a portion of the Armenian corpus of Athanasius of Alexandria.

¹² For exceptions already in Greek literature of the fifth century BC, see Schwyzler 1950, 399–400.

Uluhogian 1989, 56; Muradyan 1993; Weitenberg 2002, 70)¹³ and the neo-Platonic philosopher David the Invincible (Weitenberg 2002, 69–70). Both are already influenced by and possibly affiliated with the Hellenising School.

In the Armenian translation of the Bible, occurrences of the genitive absolute are predominantly resolved in three ways.¹⁴

1. As an adverbial clause — temporal clauses are mostly introduced by the conjunctions *իրրեւ* or *մինչ(դեռ)*, e.g. Lk. 4:42 *եւ իրրեւ տիւ եղեւ* for *γενομένης δὲ ἡμέρας*, Mk. 14:22 *եւ մինչդեռ ուտէին* for *καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν*. Causal clauses are mostly introduced by the conjunctions *իրրեւ* or *(քան)զի*, e.g. Mk. 11:11 *եւ զի էր երեկոյացեալ ժամն* for *ὅψ' ἤδη οὕσης τῆς ὥρας*.
2. As a simple or compound sentence, most commonly joined together by the coordinating conjunction *եւ* or separated by adequate punctuation, e.g. Mk. 8:1 *դարձեալ ժողովորդ բազում էր եւ ինչ ոչ ունէին ուտել. կոչեաց զաշակերսսն իւր եւ աւել ցնուսա* for *πάλιν πολλοῦ ὄχλου ὄντος καὶ μὴ ἔχόντων τί φάγωσιν προκαλεσάμενος τοὺς μαθητὰς λέγει αὐτοῖς*.
3. As a prepositional phrase with *ընդ* or *ի* and a substantivised infinitive in the accusative (for the Greek participle) and the agent in genitive, e.g. Mk. 5:2 *եւ ընդ ելանելն նորա ի նաւէ անտի* for *καὶ ἐξελθόντος αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου*, Mk. 6:22 *եւ ի մտանել դստերն Հերովդիայ եւ ի կարաւել* for *καὶ εἰσελθούσης τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτοῦ Ἑρωδιάδος καὶ ὀρχησαμένης*.

In the instances under (1) and (2), the opposition between the perfective (aorist participle) and the imperfective aspect (present participle) is maintained and evident in the selection of either an aorist or imperfect finite verb in Armenian. However, this opposition dissolves in the instances under (3), as there only exists an infinitive formed from the present stem in Armenian.¹⁵ Occasionally, alternative *ad hoc* renderings of the Greek genitive absolute can be identified in the Armenian translation of the Bible:

The Greek phrase *ἡγήμενόντος* ... “when ... was governor” is translated into Armenian with *ի դատաւորութեան* ... “in the (time of the) governorship (of)”, e.g. Lk. 2:2 *ի դատաւորութեան Ասորոց Կիրենեայ* for *ἡγήμενόντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηνίου*, Lk. 3:1 *ի դատաւորութեան Հրεաստանի Պիղատոսի Պննացւոյ* for *ἡγήμενόντος Ποντίου Πειλάτου τῆς Ἰουδαίας*. The manner in which the action of the main clause is carried out can be emphasised by incorporating a noun in the instrumental, e.g. Mk. 16:20 *քարոզէին ընդ ամենայն երկիր Տեառն զորձակցութեամբ* for *ἐκήρυξαν πανταχοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου συνεργοῦντος*.¹⁶

¹³ For a more detailed study of Hellenising elements in the *History* of Movsēs Khorenats'i, see Topchyan 2002.

¹⁴ The examples provided below are sourced from Uluhogian 1989.

¹⁵ See also Bănăţeanu 1937, 113–15 (temporal clause), 118 (causal clause), 124–25 (prepositional phrase), 136–37 (compound sentence).

¹⁶ The examples are sourced from Bănăţeanu 1937 and Uluhogian 1989.

As Gohar Muradyan (2012) has suggested, the following passage from the Acts of the Apostles is the only instance in the Armenian translation of the Bible to include a calqued genitive absolute:

Acts 1:10 եւ մինչդեռ պռուցեալ հայէին ընդ երկինս երթալոյն նորա, եւ ահաւասիկ արք երկու երեւեցան նոցա ի հանդերձս սպիտակս for καὶ ἀτενίζοντες ἦσαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν πορευομένου αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο παρειστήκεισαν αὐτοῖς ἐν ἐσθήσεσι λευκαῖς.

If this is the only instance of a calqued genitive absolute in early Armenian literature, then the technique employed by the translator is certainly striking. However, in my opinion, it could hardly be seen as a deliberate attempt to render the genitive absolute literally. I am more inclined to assume a sort of misinterpretation of the Greek original as the underlying cause of it. The Armenian translator might have analysed εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν πορευομένου αὐτοῦ as a noun phrase dependent on ἀτενίζοντες ἦσαν (“they were gazing at him departing into heaven”), although it was most likely not intended by the author of the original text. This would be possible based on the analogy with Greek instances where an animate object of a verb of perception takes the genitive form.¹⁷ Examples of a genitive object of a verb of (acoustic) perception are attested in the Greek New Testament, and these are sometimes rendered in Armenian by a prepositional phrase using the ablative case or even literally by a genitive:

Lk. 2:46 յեր ի նոցանէ եւ հարցանէր զնոսա for ἀκούοντα αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπερωτῶντα αὐτούς; Heb. 3:7 երբ ձայնի նորա լուիցեք for ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε.

Thus, for Acts 1:10, one might arguably consider either an original երթալոյն նորա rendering a supposed genitive object of ἀτενίζοντες ἦσαν, or an original ablative *յերթալոյն նորա (< *ի երթալոյն նորա), which could have subsequently been corrupted to երթալոյն նորա and perceived as genitive. This corruption, if it indeed took place, may have arisen from a common mistake in Armenian text transmission, involving the interchange of word-initial patterns յի- and ե-, which were likely near-homophones at some point in time.

Should this alternative explanation be correct, there is no clear instance of a deliberately calqued genitive absolute in the Armenian translation of the Bible. And even if the assumption of Muradyan is correct and the evidence in Acts 1:10 as

¹⁷ Admittedly, the construction is predominant with verbs of acoustic perception and understanding, such as ἀκούω, ἀκροάομαι, αἰσθάνομαι, πυνθάνομαι, συνίημι etc. It is by far less common with verbs of visual perception, such as ὁράω, βλέπω etc. To my knowledge, there are four occurrences of ὁράω/βλέπω τινος in Classical Greek literature, Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.11, Plat. *Rep.* 558, Arist. *Ran.* 815, and Arat. *Phaen.* 430, and it is questionable whether all of them can be considered clear instances of this syntactic construction (see Kühner and Gerth 1898, 357–59, 361–62 and Schwyzler and Debrunner 1950, 106, 392, n. 1). As for the verb ἀτενίζω, it often occurs with prepositional phrases εἰς τινα/τι and πρὸς τινα/τι, sometimes with dative, and never with accusative or genitive (see LSJ 1996, s.v. ἀτενίζω). In the New Testament, there are instances of a direct object in the genitive only with verbs of acoustic perception, such as ἀκούω (also εἰς-, ἐπ- and παρακούω), ἐπακροάομαι, and no instances of a direct object in the genitive with verbs of visual perception. See Blass, Debrunner and Rehkopf 1979, 142. Therefore, πορευομένου αὐτοῦ is a genitive absolute and couldn't have been originally intended as a genitive object of ἀτενίζοντες ἦσαν. However, it could arguably have been perceived as one by the Armenian translator.

an instance of a deliberate calque can be taken at face value, it remains an isolated occurrence in a relatively large text corpus and thus of very limited significance for the translation technique at large. In both cases it seems reasonable to conclude that calquing was not among the methods employed by the Bible translators for rendering the Greek genitive absolute. Instead, it appears that the translators closely adhered to the principles of the *sensus de sensu* translation approach. In the case of the genitive absolute, this technique necessitated a significant degree of interpretation on the part of the translator. A genitive absolute can formally embody various adverbial dimensions (temporal, causal, concessive, etc.), and the translator had to contextually select the most appropriate one.

The shift from the *sensus de sensu* to the *verbum de verbo* translation approach by the Hellenising School resulted in the most profound transformation in the treatment of the Greek genitive absolute. The emphasis shifted towards prioritising form over content, and the imitation of the structure of the source language took precedence over clarity in the target language. Consequently, a hitherto (all but) non-existent grammatical construction was introduced into Armenian, entirely modeled on the Greek genitive absolute, for example:

Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata* Arm. 94 զիարդ զհշերի էլոյ եւ որացն փակելոցն /.../ ղիրաւ եկին մտին for Gr. 5.90.11–13 πῶς οὖν νυκτὸς οὐσης καὶ τῶν πυλῶν κεκλεισμένων /.../ ῥαδίως εἰσελθόντες.

Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* Arm. 83 խոստովանեցելոց պատրաստաբար նոցա թափաւորն հրամայեաց նոցա զրով զհաւատս տալ for Gr. 1.25.44–45 τῶν δὲ συνθεμένων ἐτοιμῶς ὁ βασιλεὺς ἔγγραφον αὐτοὺς ἐπιδιδόναι τὴν πίστιν ἐκέλευσεν.¹⁸

While the translators of the Hellenising School exhibited a very strong tendency to calque the genitive absolutes,¹⁹ the texts of the so-called pre-Hellenising group present a more diverse picture. Within these texts, there is a varied combination of classical and Hellenising approaches, encompassing all the previously mentioned techniques and introducing some new, partially hybrid solutions. Thus far, the following techniques for rendering the Greek genitive absolute have been identified in the pre-Hellenising text corpus:²⁰

18 The critical editions employed for the above examples are as follows: Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata* Arm. = Manandean 1938, Gr. = Bolognesi and Patillon 1997; Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* Arm. = Tēr-Movsēsean 1897, Gr. = Hansen 1995. Additional instances illustrating the Hellenising treatment of the Greek genitive absolute can be found in Muradyan 2012, 161–67.

19 Classical renditions also occur in the Hellenising translations, e.g. Philo, *De Abrahamo* 8 իբրով միայն ճշմարտութեամբ իցէ մարդ պն, որ բարեացն ալն ունի և սպասիցէ և ի վերայ բարի յուսոյն անցեալ հաստատելալ իստի for gr. ὡς μόνου πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ὄντος ἀνθρώπου τοῦ τὰ ἀγαθὰ προσδοκῶντος καὶ ἐλπίσι χρησταῖς ἐφιδρυμένου. See Philo 1892; the Greek text follows Cohn 1962. The Armenian edition is not critical, see Nikolsky 2024, 108.

20 The examples are drawn from Uluhogian 1975 and 1989, which specifically address the Armenian version of Basil the Great's *Asketikon*. It is important to note that these papers predate the critical edition, and only the folia in the main manuscript A (M5595) are referenced. For the critical edition, see Uluhogian 1993.

1. Translation by an adverbial clause — temporal clauses are mostly introduced by the conjunction յորժամ, e.g. Basil, *Asketikon* Arm. A 34 յորժամ նուն քելանիցի “when the foot breaks” for Gr. ὀκλάσαντος τοῦ ποδός “as the foot slackened”.²¹ Causal clauses are mostly introduced by the conjunction (քան)զի, e.g. Basil, *Asketikon* Arm. A 95 զի առաքելալ աւել for Gr. τοῦ ἀποστόλου λέγοντος.
2. Translation by an independent clause, e.g. Basil, *Asketikon* Arm. A 228 գիրք սովորութիւն ունին /.../ կարգել for Gr. τῆς γραφῆς ἔθος ἔχουσης /.../ τάσσειν.
3. Translation by a prepositional phrase, mostly with a temporal meaning, e.g. Basil, *Asketikon* Arm. A 33 ի սկիզբն զհշերդն for τῆς νυκτὸς γενομένης.
4. Translation by a past participle in the nominative and an agent in the genitive or, rarely, in the nominative — a regular Armenian construction, e.g. Basil, *Asketikon* Arm. A 33 առաքելոյ հրամայելալ for τοῦ ἀποστόλου προστάσσοντος.
5. Literal rendering by an artificial genitive absolute, e.g. Basil, *Asketikon* Arm. A 14 ժամանակի երբեմն ի վերայ եկելոյ for καιροῦ ποτε συνεμπεσόντος.
6. Rendering by the construction *սկսան լսելով* — a substantivised infinitive in the instrumental and an agent in the genitive, in most cases in formulaic phrases such as Basil, *Asketikon* Arm. A 90, 176, 213, 216, 234, 241 սկսան (or առաքելոյ) աւելով for τοῦ κυρίου (or ἀποστόλου) λέγοντος.²²

3. The Genitive Absolute in the *Alexander Romance*

As noted in the closing lines of the Introduction, the Armenian version of the *Alexander Romance* has been associated with pre-Hellenising translations. Section 2 concludes with a brief overview of the translation techniques used to render the Greek genitive absolute in one of the pre-Hellenising translations that has undergone thorough examination — the *Asketikon* by Basil the Great. The aim of the present section is to provide evidence from Book I of the Armenian version of the *Alexander Romance*, with the primary question being to what extent the classification of this text as a pre-Hellenising translation is justified. The examination of the genitive absolute — a construction absent from the earliest Armenian literature and later incorporated as an imitation of the Greek language — serves as an effective means to assess the degree of Greek influence on the language of this translation.

The Armenian version of the *Alexander Romance* has survived in five recensions: Arm. A, Arm. A' (“intermediate version”), Arm. B, Arm. G, and the “short version”. Of these, Arm. A and Arm. A' exhibit the highest number of correct readings, while the latter three are adaptations and thus of limited relevance for the present purposes.²³

²¹ Greek ὀκλάσαντος (“slacken”) was read as **κλάσαντος (“break”) by the Armenian translator.

²² For an attempt to trace the origin of this construction through its individual stages of development, see Uluhogian 1989, 60–63. For additional examples from various pre-Hellenising (and some Hellenising) texts, see Muradyan 2012, 164–67.

²³ Preliminary comparisons of individual readings in Arm. A, edited by H. Simonyan (1989, 69–363), with corresponding Greek passages in Gr. A (Par. Gr. 1711, the sole Greek witness of the a-type text, see Kroll 1926), and Gr. β (Bergson 1965), have revealed that this recension, despite numerous interpolations, still contains

Consequently, only Arm. A and Arm. A' were employed for this survey. In this context, an Armenian reading is considered reliable and as such included in the survey, if two conditions are met: (1) Arm. A and Arm. A' are in agreement; (2) there is an attested genitive absolute in the corresponding Greek (α or β) passage.²⁴ In such cases, one can reasonably assume that the reading in question was produced by the original translator and not by subsequent redactors or copyists.

In Book I, I have identified fifty-nine reliable instances of the genitive absolute. These were rendered as follows: seventeen times by an adverbial clause, six times by a simple or compound sentence, three times by a prepositional phrase, twenty-one times by a participle in the nominative and an agent in the genitive (or nominative), ten times by a calqued genitive absolute, and once by the *unkunū uukhnyl*-construction. Below I provide some illustrative examples for each of the techniques used.

1. Translation as an adverbial clause: temporal clauses are introduced by the conjunction մինչդեռ and իրրել, e.g. Arm. A 78 մինչդեռ գնայր շրջեր Աղերսանդրոս for Gr. β 1.31 περιπατούντος τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου. Arm. A', M 1664, 65b (= Arm. A 134) իսկ իրրել եղել Աղերսանդրոս թագաւոր for Gr. α 1.47 γεναμένου δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρου βασιλέως. Causal clauses are introduced by the conjunction զի, e.g. Arm. A 95 զի ուղին դժուարին լինէր for Gr. α 1.34 τῆς ὁδοιπορίας δυσχεροῦς οὐσης. In the following case, the translator extended his liberty and decided to emphasise both the causal and temporal dimension by introducing an entirely new main clause not warranted by any of the Greek witnesses: Arm. A 6 քանզի դիպեցաւ ի ժամանակին, յորում ի բաց խաղացեալ գնացեալ էր ի պատերազմունիս Փիլիպոս for Gr. α 1.4 ἀποδημούντος Φιλίππου πρὸς πόλεμον τυγχάνοντος. Alternatively; this “addition” in Armenian might be due to the fact that there are two participles in Greek. Thus, յորում ի բաց խաղացեալ գնացեալ էր could be there to translate ἀποδημούντος, while քանզի դիպեցաւ ի ժամանակին could present an attempt to render τυγχάνοντος.
2. Translation as a syndetic or an asyndetic compound sentence, or as a series of independent simple sentences, e.g. Arm. A 125 եւ նա աւել, ոչ է առնել նմա պատասխանի /.../: եւ բարկացեալ արքայն աւաց for Gr. α 1.45 τῆς δὲ λεγούσης

the highest number of correct readings (cf. Cowe 1996; Mancini Lombardi and Uluhogian 1998; Traina 1997; Topchyan 2019 and 2020). The so-called “intermediate version”, a slight adaptation of the initial translation, denoted in the present paper by the siglum Arm. A', often provides valuable variant readings (see Topchyan 2019 and 2020). Since this text (included in the collation of the new forthcoming critical edition by Gohar Muradyan and Aram Topchyan) has neither been separately edited nor consistently collated in Simonyan's edition of Arm. A, I utilise the manuscripts M1664 and M10448. The text Arm. B, represented by M10151 and edited by Simonyan (1989, 364–445), is, for the most part, significantly different from the Greek texts of α and β type. Contrary to Simonyan's observations (1979; 1989, 26, and 1998), it appears to be an adapted and abbreviated redaction of the ancestor of Arm. A (Cowe 1996; Mancini Lombardi and Uluhogian 1998; Traina 1997; Topchyan 2019 and 2020). Arm. G, edited by Simonyan (1989, 446–89), is a short folklore version of the Armenian *Alexander Romance*. The so-called “short version”, a critical edition of which is also being prepared by Muradyan and Topchyan, appears to be a mechanical abridgement of the initial translation (see Topchyan 2020).

²⁴ In certain instances, the genitive absolute in question is formally an absolute construction, however, with a reference word present in the main clause; it functions as a *participium coniunctum*. Such anomalous cases sporadically occur even in Greek authors of the fifth century BC, such as Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon (see Schwyzler 1950, 399–400.), but become more frequent in post-classical texts.

μη χρησιμοδοτεῖν αὐτῷ /.../ ὀργισθεῖς ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος εἶπεν. Arm. A 134 եկն զսլաւին առնուլ զկռուղին: Ասաց թագաւորն for ἐπελθόντος δὲ αὐτοῦ στεφανωθῆναι τὸν τῆς πάλης στέφανον εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος.

3. Translation as a prepositional phrase, featuring the preposition *ի* with a substantivized infinitive in the accusative or locative (for the Greek participle) and the agent in the genitive, e.g. Arm. A 96 *ի զալ Պարսից* for Gr. α 1.34 ἐρχομένων τῶν Περσῶν. Arm. A 96 *ի խնդրելն մեր զնա եւ յաղաչել զաստուածսն* for Gr. α 1.34 ζητούντων δὲ ἡμῶν αὐτὸν καὶ ἀξιούντων τοὺς θεούς. In the following case, the translator used a simple prepositional phrase, featuring the preposition *լսան* with a noun in the genitive, neglecting the participle, which can be perceived as a verb of being: Arm. A 80 *ստամբալեացն ընդ միմեանս թշնամացաւր ւսան անրաւ քաղնութեանց* for Gr. β 1.31 διχοστατήσουσιν εἰς ἀλλήλους διαφερόμενοι, ἀπείρου ὄχλου τυγχάνοντος.
4. Rendering by a past participle in the nominative and an agent in the genitive, e.g. Arm. A 104 *այսպէս ընթերցեալ Աղերսանդրի, երկուցեալ զարհուրեցան զարքն* for Gr. A 1.37 οὕτως ἀναγινώσκοντος Ἀλεξάνδρου ἐδειλαίνοντο τὰ στρατεύματα. Arm. A 121 *եւ խնդիր արարեալ Աղերսանդրի /.../ եւ նա սսաց նմա Մելանդրս նշանալորն* for Gr. β 1.42 (α has a lacuna) τοῦ δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρου ζητούντος /.../ λέγει αὐτῷ Μελάμπους ὁ σημειολύτης. As illustrated by both examples, the transformation of a genitive absolute into a *participium coniunctum* takes place only on a formal level, i.e. the absolute construction is syntactically retained, but the translator makes no effort to rephrase the sentence in a way that the subject of the participle and that of the finite verb would be the same.
5. Literal rendering by an artificial genitive absolute, e.g. Arm. A', M1664, 2a (= Arm. A 1) *եւ սնաց մկրտելոցն եւ ի ծովու նաւր /.../ կորնչէին*²⁵ for Gr. β 1.1 βαπτιζομένων αὐτῶν τὰ ἐν τῷ πέλαγῃ πλοῖα /.../ ἀπώλοντο. Arm. A 99 *հաւար կռուլ եղելոյ զքաղունս սպանին ի Մակեդոնացւոցն* for Gr. α 1.35 κραταιᾶς μάχης γενομένης πολλοὺς ἀναιρουῖσι τῶν Μακεδόνων. Arm. A 132 *եւ սալաւուց մնացելոց քարոզեաց Աղերսանդրս* for Gr. A 1.46 ὀλίγων δὲ καταλειφθέντων ἐκήρυξεν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος.
6. Rendering by the *mkamli suliq* construction, only found once: Arm. A 27 *այսպէս սսելով Փիլիպոսի* for Gr. β 1.13 οὕτως εἰπόντος τοῦ Φιλίππου.

In the twenty-three cases under (1) and (2), the contrast between the perfective and imperfective aspect in Greek is faithfully reproduced in Armenian — present participles are translated with finite verbs in the present and imperfect tenses, while aorist participles find their counterpart in finite verbs in the aorist tense. This also appears to hold true for the instances under (3), two of which involve prepositional phrases with an infinitive, derived from the present stem, serving as translations for Greek present participles. However, establishing with certainty that such phrases were

²⁵ Arm. A gives *ի սնաց մկրտելոցն*, likely a *lectio facilior*, produced by a copyist who would rather see ***ի սնաց մկրտելն*, a reading which would make more sense from the Classical Armenian point of view.

indeed understood as imperfective is challenging due to their indiscriminate use in classical translations, as discussed earlier.

In stark contrast, the opposition between the perfective and imperfective aspect in Greek is forfeited in the thirty-three cases under (4), (5), and (6).

4. Conclusions

The examples from Book I of the Armenian *Alexander Romance* reveal the translator's inclination toward renderings by means of participles. The thirty-three instances under (4), (5), and (6), representing 56% of all fifty-nine cases, can be considered as one group, since in the vast majority of cases the absolute construction is retained, even though the instances of a participle in the nominative and an agent in the genitive, in standard use, share the subject of the main clause. All thirty-three instances indicate the translator's tendency to imitate the style and reproduce the form of their Greek source to a degree untypical of classical translations, and often at the expense of clarity.

Conversely, the twenty-six instances under (1), (2), and (3), representing 44% of all fifty-nine cases, seem to show a contrary, albeit somewhat weaker, tendency favoring clarity in the content over fidelity to form.

In the Armenian *Alexander Romance*, faithfulness to established approaches appears to compete with the innovative Hellenising trends. The cited examples suggest that, in terms of translation technique, the Armenian version of the *Alexander Romance* aligns strongly with the other translations identified as pre-Hellenising.²⁶ The study of various techniques for rendering the genitive absolute thus allows us, to a certain extent, to retrace and better understand the individual steps in the transition between the *sensus de sensu* and *verbum de verbo* approaches. However, certain questions pertaining to the circle that produced the translations of the pre-Hellenising type still remain open.

The diverse range of techniques employed to render a single grammatical construction, without apparent criteria governing the choice in each instance, appears to indicate an absence of a standardised set of norms. Against this backdrop, it seems unlikely that the pre-Hellenising translation approach was codified in a programmatic work or handbook, similar to the *Grammar* of Dionysius Thrax with its Armenian appendix. The latter seems to have influenced the style of some Hellenising translations,²⁷ and it has been argued that it served as a handbook for the translators (Manandean 1928). However, it appears more likely that the style reflected in the pre-Hellenising translations resulted from an increasing tendency towards prioritising form over sense among a certain group of translators schooled in the established translation norms.

²⁶ An observation that should be critically reevaluated on the basis of further inquiries into the translation technique on all levels of linguistic analysis: syntax, morphology, and lexicon.

²⁷ A significant influence of the Armenian appendix of the *Grammar* of Dionysius Thrax has been observed in the translation of the *Progymnasmata* by Aelius Theon (Bolognesi 2000, 125).

In this light, it is possible to view the pre-Hellenising circle as the core of the Hellenising School in its early, formative period when various innovative techniques were still being tested, but standardisation had not yet taken place. Nevertheless, while it is appealing to see a continuity of knowledge transmission and technique development, there are still too many unknowns, and no cogent reasons have been put forward to assume a direct link between the pre-Hellenising tendencies and the Hellenising School. Hence, additional investigation in both fields is required.

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