La Rédaction laisse aux différents auteurs la responsabilité des opinions exprimées dans leurs article, sans vouloir préjuger de la valeur intrinsèque de ces derniers au niveau de la recherche.
PART I

Historical Overview

Translations by the Mekhitarist fathers

From the Golden to the Middle Ages, the Mekhitarist Renaissance and beyond, a great amount of translation work was accomplished in the Armenian cultural sphere. Due to the language’s richness and flexibility, classical and modern masterpieces have been able to be translated into Armenian with great success.

One of the main objectives of the Mekhitarist Congregation was to create a new bridge between East and West to facilitate intellectual exchange. Wrapped in the strict silence of their cloisters, the Mekhitarist Fathers began their untiring labor of translating the works of the ancient Greeks and Romans and European masterpieces from the time the order was first established. This tradition was kept alive and renewed by the training of countless, excellent translators. Almost all of the immense translation work was accomplished in the 19th Century with the translation of European Classical and Romantic literatures into Old Armenian and then into Modern Western Armenian in the 20th Century. Thanks to the Fathers’ work, Armenians have been able to read not only anthologies but entire texts by Italian authors in their own language, including Dante (Divina Commedia), Tasso (Gerusalemme Liberata), Metastasio (Zenobia), Alfieri (Saul), Foscolo (Dei sepolcri), Manzoni (I promessi sposi), Leopardi (Conti), De Amicis (Ricordi di Londra), Giacosa (Come le foglie), Vittoria Aganoor (Leggenda eterna; Nuove liriche), Papini (Pane e vino; I testimoni della passione; Storia di Cristo); Greek literature such as Homer (Iliad; Odyssey), Sophocles (Oedipus Rex; Antigone; Electra), Demosthenes (On The Crown), Euripides (Supplicants), Plato (Phaedo); from the Latin, such as Virgil (Aeneid; Georgics), Cicero (Pro Archia; Pro Ligario; Pro rege Deiotaro; Philippiis); from the French, Lamartine (Méditations poétiques), Bossuet (Oraison funèbres), Racine (Britannicus; Mithridates; Iphigénie; Phèdre), Voltaire (Altire, Mérope), Fénélon (Traité de l’éducation des filles) and others.

The aesthetic taste and artistic knowledge of an entire generation was formed under the aegis or thanks to the example of the classicist school, launched by excellent translators such as Father Vrt’anes Askarian and Father Yeghia T’ovmachian. This activity reached perhaps unequalled heights with such translators as the Hrémizian brothers and, above all, Father Arsen Bagratuni, who spearheaded the initiative. Aside from being the author of the neoclassical poem Hayk diutsan [Hayk the Hero], Bagratuni, one of the greatest representatives of Armenian classicism, also produced excellent translations of the Iliad, Olympic Odes, Antigone, Electra, The Characters, Ars poetica, Orations, Funeral Orations, Britannicus, Mithridates, Iphigenia, Alzira, Merope, the Sepolcri, Saul, Paradise Lost, etc. He translated these texts into classical Armenian, or grabar, with the refined and solemn style which distinguishes the Mekhitarist school (Bagratuni 1863, 1869). It is thanks to the brilliance of Father Arsen Bagratuni that the Armenians could read Dante’s masterpiece before many in Asia and even some in Europe (Haroutyunian 2012).

One of the worthy heirs of the great Mekhitarist translation tradition was Father Arsen Ghazikian. Ghazikian’s translation style is almost always distinguished by care, faithfulness, harmony, literary value and vocabulary, in addition to which is his extraordinarily intuitive choice of texts (Haroutyunian 2011).

The role played by the Mekhitarists in Armenian culture is evident. Thanks to them and their translations, Armenian culture came into close contact with various cultures from all over the world, and in particular with that of the West, allowing it to be assimilated and re-elaborated. As the great erudite Arshak Chopanian said, «The Mekhitarists opened up the whole of the West to the Armenians».

Armenian-Latin Translations

Unequivocally, the foundations for Armenian translation in Italy were laid in the first half of the 19th Century when, on the Island of San Lazzaro, the Mekhitarist monks printed books, which also provided their Latin translations alongside the Armenian texts. This created a widespread interest in the publications among Europe’s ecclesiastical and cultural spheres.

A figure of particular prominence in these philological studies was Mekhitarist Father Giovanni Battista Aucher (Mtirich Aygerian, 1762-1854), who in 1818 published a critical edition with a new Latin transla-
tion of the *Chronicon* by Eusebius of Caesarea. Until its publication, this book was believed to be lost, however the Armenian translation was able to reproduce it in its entirety (Aucher, 1818). This publishing event caused a great sensation and immediately highlighted the importance of the Armenian manuscript tradition. In the words of Professor Gabriella Uluhogian, “almost nothing was then known of the fact that, thanks to the Armenian translators, from the 5th until the 7th and even 10th Centuries, many Greek works which were lost had been translated into Armenian. Moreover, the translation technique kept extremely faithful to the originals, which made these translations also function as historical witnesses of the original texts” (Uluhogian 2004).

The importance of the Armenian translations is clear also in the works of Ephraim of Syria, Athanasius of Alexandria, Philo Judaeus, John Chrysostom and others, which have been preserved in the global literary canon thanks to the classical Armenian translations. These Armenian texts are the closest surviving texts to the originals. While only a few fragments of Eusebius’s *Chronicon* are left from the original Greek, it is preserved in its entirety in classical Armenian.

Only three years after Father Giovanni Battista Aucher published the *Chronicon*, he published three sermons by Philo of Alexandria, *ex armena versione antiquissima* (as was written on the title page), again alongside its Latin translation (Aucher 1822). In 1826, other exegetical sermons by Philo on the Old Testament were added to this publication, and in 1827, so were the *Fifteen Homilies of Severian* (Aucher, 1826; 1827). At the same time, an edition of the *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew* in 1826 marked the beginning of a series of editions that highlighted the works of St. John Chrysostom from the ancient Armenian manuscript translations. These editions would conclude only in 1862 with the *Commentaries on the Letters of St. Paul*.

In 1878, from the manuscripts kept on Saint Lazarus, the Fathers published the fragments of an *Apologia* by Aristides, a Christian author of the 2nd Century quoted in some ancient sources but until publication believed missing. The event gained international resonance, and gave rise to research over the following decades, making it possible to rediscover and become reacquainted with the original texts in their entirety (Peratuner (ed) 2006).

**Armenian-Italian Translations**

By the mid-19th century, the Mekhitarists presented translations of important Armenian books to the Italian public, including two invaluable literary translations of the *History of Moses of Khoren* and the *History of Agathangelus*—two pillars of Armenian historiographical literature from the Golden Age. These books were thus made accessible to western culture via San Lazzaro’s printing tradition and were the fruit of the Mekhitarist monks’ collaboration with Niccolò Tommaseo (Tommaseo, 1841; 1843).

Other notable translations and publications include: Father Avagian’s *Orations of Nerses of Lambon*, remembered as one of the most significant figures in Armenian literature and ecclesiastical history (Aucher, 1812); Father Mesrop Gianashian’s *The Hymns of Nerses Shnorhali* (Gianascian, 1973), Nerses Shnorhali (Nerses the Graceful) being one of the most important representatives of the Armenian church; Sayat Nova’s *Works* (Gianascian, 1964); *Modern Armenian Poetry* (Gianascian, 1966), etc.

The Mekhitarist fathers were and continue to be the primary figures in the nation’s intellectual rebirth and cultural history.

---

2 *Sancti Aristidis Atheniensis sermones duo quorum originalis textus desideratur, ex antiqua armeniaca versione nunc primum in latinam linguam translati*, Venetiis 1878. The publication includes fragments of two works. The attribution of the second of these to Aristides is currently considered dubious.

3 Cardinal Pitra wrote to the Fathers on 28th November 1878: «Short though it may be, that which reaches us from your inexhaustible Armenia is all gold and reflects the Golden Age of apologetics». The issue of 1st December of *Le Monde* praises the cultural work of the Congregation which puts a treasure at the disposal of scholars of which they had until then lost all trace (cfr. DIANACHIAN M., *Les Arméniens et les Mekhitaristes*, San Lazzaro, Venezia 1969, 42).
**PART II**

**Armenian-Italian Translations 1991-2012**

Having referenced the unique role and significance the Mekhitarists’ translations played in the Armenian «Awakening», I now turn to the main argument of UNESCO’s Next Page Foundation’s task, which requested a compilation of the titles of Italian translations of Armenian texts from 1991 till today.

The list of Armenian-Italian Translations 1991-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of publ.</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Original Title</th>
<th>Translated Title</th>
<th>Translator</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Grigor Narekatsi</td>
<td>Կանանց կրթությունը եվ որոշ կենսագիր</td>
<td>Claudio Guggerotti</td>
<td>Edizioni Quipiam-Monastero di Bose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Daniel Vardjan</td>
<td>Սուրբ Սեբաստոս</td>
<td>Mari di grano e altre poesie armene</td>
<td>Guerini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Ezmir Kebac'</td>
<td>Տեսանկյություն</td>
<td>Ezmir di Kohb, Confrontazione delle sette</td>
<td>Alessandro Orengo</td>
<td>ETS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Pawstos Bzunad</td>
<td>Մերձականությունը Հայոց ճարտարապետությունը</td>
<td>Marco Bais, Loris Dina Nocetti</td>
<td>Mimeisis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Nerses Lambron</td>
<td>Սուրբ Սեբաստոս</td>
<td>Mario di grano e altre poesie armene</td>
<td>Guerini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2013**

**ARMENIAN LITERATURE IN ITALIAN TRANSLATION 1999-2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Original Title</th>
<th>Translated Title</th>
<th>Translator</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Kerian</td>
<td>Վարդան</td>
<td>Canto d'Armenia. Yerg Hayastani</td>
<td>Boghos Levon Zekjian, Gabriella Ushoglian, Paola Midesian, Antonia Avitan, Alfred Hemmat Sirky, Giusto Trina, Claudio Guggerotti</td>
<td>In forma di parole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Nerses Lambron</td>
<td>Սուրբ Սեբաստոս</td>
<td>La caparra della spesanza</td>
<td>Vahé Larseyan</td>
<td>Edizioni Quipiam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Aknel Bakunts</td>
<td>պատերազմ</td>
<td>Le Mele dell'immortalità</td>
<td>Sonya Orfalian</td>
<td>Guerini e Associati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Sonata Basso</td>
<td>Մերձականությունը Հայոց ճարտարապետությունը</td>
<td>Raccorci dal silenzio – Cinque novelle armene</td>
<td>Milena Bernardelli, Emanuela Bollacci, Sasan Karkonyan, Sara Mancini Lombardi</td>
<td>Guerini e Associati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Anna Simonian</td>
<td>Մերձականությունը Հայոց ճարտարապետությունը</td>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>Marco Ibaia, Anna Simonian</td>
<td>Bollettario. Quadrimestrale di Scrittura e Critica. Le avanguardie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The present study of Armenian-Italian translations between 1991 and 2012 begins with the publication of the translation of *Urbat’agirk’*, the first printed Armenian book. This translation was published as a monograph by the world’s ancient and prestigious Roman National Academy of Lincei in the series *Memories of the Lincei Academy*.

Being that 2012 marks the 500th anniversary celebration around the world of Armenian Typography, this study is a symbolic coincidence. The *Urbat’agirk’* was the first Armenian book published in the world, and this year (2012) marks its jubilee; it also happens to appear first in my catalogue as the first book translated into Italian after 1991.


Translations from Eastern Armenian to Italian include Aksel Bakun’s novellas (*Tales from the Silence - Five Armenian novellas*), Hovhannes T’umanian’s *Fairy Tales*, a collection of different authors’ poetry *Armenia*, Raffi’s *The Meliks of Karabakh* (1600-1827). *Materials for the Modern Armenian History*, Vahagn Grigoryan’s *Last Journey of Vostan* and Elda Grin’s *Hands*.

Translations from Western Armenian to Italian include Daniel Varujan’s *The Song of the Bread* and *The Seas of Wheat* and the other Armenian poems poetry collections, Father Boghos Ananean’s *The Life of Mashots*, Yervant Odian’s *Comrade Clueless*, Zabel Yessayan’s *The Gardens of Silihdar* and *Among the Ruins*. There are also books whose Armenian titles are not marked in the catalogue, for example in the cases of the publications of *Il Canto d’Armenia* (*The Song of Armenia*) and *Armenia*. As a matter of fact, the mentioned books are selections of different Armenian authors’ poetry collated into one publication. The first one of these anthologies was undertaken by Father Levon Zekiyian. From ancient times it includes *Vahagn’s birth* and *Church Hymns*. From the Middle Ages, it includes *Kostandin of Erznka*, Frik, Arak’el of Siunik’, Hovhannes of T’ikarun, Sayat’ Nova and excerpts from Alexander Romance. The compilation’s translation also highlights contemporary authors including Hovhannes T’umanian, Siamant’o, Daniel Varujan, Misak Metzarenets, Vahan Terian, Yeghishe Charents, Hovhannes Shiraz, Paruyr Sevak and Zbrat. These translations have been realized by Father Boghos Levon Zekiyian, Gabriella Ulahogian, Paola Mildovan, Antonia Arslan, Alfred Hemmat Sokary, Giusto Traina and Claudio Gugerotti. The collection *Armenia* includes poems by Sonia Antonyan, Artem Haruthyunyan, Henrik Edoyan, Manase, Rosa Hovhannisyan, Hratchy Saruchan, Artak Hambardzumyan.

In the catalogue, *La Cucina d’Armenia* (*The Cuisine of Armenia*) and *Cosi ride l’Ararat* (*Ararat Laughs Like This*), nr. 1 and *Anche l’Ararat ha la suocera* (*Even Ararat has a mother-in-law*) are without Armenian titles. The first book is a translation-study on Armenian cuisine and the second includes anecdotal excerpts.

Elda Green’s novel *Hands*, which is published in 34 languages including Italian, as well as a bilingual Armenian-Italian book devoted to Armen Zaryan’s life and works, published on the 95th anniversary of his birth, are also included in the catalogue. Also among the catalogued works is the first Italian printing of Hovhannes T’umanian’s *Folktales* (2005). It includes only six tales, while in 2007 twenty were printed in Yerevan. Only five out of the catalogued books are without ISBN numbers, most likely due to the fact that assigning numbers was not a necessary stipulation in the past.

APPENDIX

TWO INTERESTING INTERVIEWS

Before passing to the conclusions, below I present two special interviews conducted with world famous novelist Professor Antonia Arslan and with my Armenian Studies colleagues in Venice and Bologna, Professors Aldo Ferrari and Anna Sirminian, whose translated works are included in the catalogue.

Responses to the Next Page Foundation’s Investigation
by Antonia Arslan

1. Sona Haroutyunian (SH): Please speak about the role your translations played in the divulgation of Varujan’s poetry to an Italian readership.

Antonia Arslan (AA): Poetry functions in an immediate and unexpected way. I discovered Daniel Varujan, his strength and his grace, when reading some of his poems in Italian and the entire The Song of

2. SH: Please speak about your idea of publishing with «Tabula Gratulatoria», others can take as an example.

AA: When—after the success of the translation of Varujan’s The Song of Bread—we thought about publishing a series of Armenian topics. I proposed to my editor Angelo Guerini a solution that turned out to be perfect. It comes from the «Tabula Gratulatoria» of the academic system, which is only used by the so-called Festschriften, that is, the books published at the end of a university professor’s career by his or her friends and students. Each subscriber (meaning the person who reserves a copy of the book while in the process of publishing) pays a bit more than the actual cost of the volume and in exchange his or her name appears on the list on the back of the book. Like this the editor can at least cover the basic costs of printing. We’ve done this for anyone who was interested in the Armenians and their culture. The names of the financial contributors are published in the back of the book, which they receive in a bound edition.

3. SH: In the recent years you’ve played a leading role in raising the interest in Armenian culture, history and literature in Italian society, especially with your Armenian genocide narrative best-sellers and your numerous conferences. What will you suggest to the Italian publishers about publishing Armenian literature?
AA: Abroad, the world of Armenian culture is receiving a lot of attention; it’s a growing interest. In Italy’s case, many medieval texts from the Golden Age of the Armenian civilization are by now available in excellent editions. Having to make a suggestion to Italian publishers, I consider it appropriate at this juncture to have the novels and poems of the modern and contemporary eras (the 1800s and 1900s) translated into Italian to paint a more complete picture of a cosmopolitan culture, which had extraordinarily interesting developments in more recent centuries in places as diverse as Venice, Tbilisi and Istanbul.

Interview with Aldo Ferrari and Anna Sirinian

1. Sona Haroutyunian (SH): Has there ever been a collaboration between Armenian and Italian publishing houses?

Aldo Ferrari (AF): As far as I know, this type of collaboration has never existed.

Anna Sirinian (AS): Not that I know of, neither in the past nor the present.

2. SH: How would you define the situation of literature translated from Armenian to Italian?

AF: I would say it’s good, but very limited. Ultimately, various texts important in ancient literature by authors like Sebess, Pavstos Buzand, Eghishe and Eznik were translated, but very few from modern literature. It’s a pity because a knowledge of modern literature is fundamental to getting closer to a foreign country.

AS: Very little is translated. Armenian literature of almost any epoch remains very little known to the Italian public.

3. SH: What kind of market do these translations have?

AF: The translations from classical Armenian have a limited dissemination because of their intrinsic difficulty, while modern literature could have a lot of success, like the many editions of Varujan’s poems demonstrate. A major push in coordinating the ideas and activities of the Italian Armenists in this direction would be important.

AS: Actually, it’s very limited; but it’s also true that the publishing houses interested in terms like «ethnic» might want to take initiative in this regard. However, it would need to be a well-translated work, well-presented to the Italian public. And the publishing house would naturally need to have good advertisement.

4. SH: Why have there been certain subjects and genres for translation and others not?

AF: The major part of the translators have a philological or historical background which thus favors the translation of more antique texts, or at least texts not strictly of a literary character. Nevertheless, this would be an opportune moment to add new translations of modern Armenian literature to the canon.

AS: I think that the choice was made arbitrarily. For example, in terms of poetry, for the beautiful anthology In Forma di Parole there was a favorable situation between the Armenologists of Italy and the editor, Gianni Scalia, already interested in diverse forms of poetry. It’s also like this with Nadia Cavaleria and the magazine Bollettario (Armenia). Having already published other literary collections from other ethnic peoples, she wanted to “open up” Armenia to the readership as well. These publications were thus undertaken by publishers already «accustomed» to multiculturalism. Besides, there are also scientific works that are products of historical, philological, and more specifically theological, studies. These publications generally gather in specialized spheres within the various disciplines, but naturally their circulation remains limited.
5. SH: And what of the financial resources, prospectives and collaboration among the Armenian community and the publishing houses in the promotion of Armenian literature?

AF: The availability of the Armenian community in Italy is limited, but it could be better utilized if there were a precise project to undertake and articulated translations. It should be noted that there really exists a notable editorial richness in Italy that could be better utilized to spread the knowledge of modern Armenian literature in Italy. Other than publishing single authors, a large anthology of Armenian poetry could also be conceptualized.

AS: It would really be desirable to promote this literature, both with Italian initiatives and with the collaboration of the Italian and Armenian publishing houses. The Italian public, in my opinion, is ready to welcome a good and wide selection of Armenian modern and contemporary works in translation. I’m thinking about an anthology, for example, of Armenian poets from 1900, or a novel, or a selection of short stories. However, it needs to be, like I said, a good and accurate translation, prepared ad hoc for an Italian readership, and presents Armenia and its cultural richness in an authentic way. And, of course, it needs to be a «special» and courageous publishing house ready to invest in this. This is not easy, especially at this moment.

Conclusions

1. The Armenian-Italian translations were carried without an intermediary language.
2. A significant amount of work was translated from old Armenian literature, i.e., Sebeos, P’avstos Buzand, Eghishe, Eznik, etc., but comparatively little is translated from contemporary sources like Khechoian, Beledian, etc. Thus, these authors remain quite unknown. However, over the past two decades, modern poetry has been included in one comprehensive anthology, Armenia, and the work The Song of Armenia, half of which includes modern poetry.
3. Realistically speaking, at this moment it is especially difficult for publishers to invest in translation. On the other hand, let’s not forget that an entire market for literary translation exists, and besides the publishers and translators, agents, book fairs, presentations and reports play a significant role in the dissemination of these books. Thus, whereas once only the publisher and translator were involved in the process, now there is a need of group collaboration with people playing various roles to ensure the success of the book.

4. It is necessary to seriously consider training new translators, perhaps by choosing from among the best students in Armenian Studies, as it is not a given that someone who knows both Armenian and Italian can necessarily translate well. It’s necessary that the translator have linguistic skills and specific training as a translator, a deep sense of responsibility and the ability to consult, compare and willfully collaborate. At the same time I must painfully admit that until today Italy’s Ministry of Education has not provided «Translation Theory and Linguistics» as a subject in the Armenian language curriculum. Meanwhile, this same Ministry has provided this course for a number of other languages. It is thus not possible at this juncture to officially train students in this domain.

5. Speaking about the translator’s responsibilities, it’s also necessary to consider their rights. While talking to the translators it became clear that the major part of their work was done upon their own initiative, often for free or for very low pay which was sometimes made much later after the completion of the work. Thus, before all else, it is necessary that the translator is paid accordingly. It’s also important that serious literary translations with introductions, footnotes and summaries, are finally considered as scientific publications. Otherwise skilled translator-scientists would give preference to one’s own creative work and not to the translation of another’s work. This being said, it should be recognized that the translation is in fact a creation. And, as the well-known Mekhitarist monk Father Arsen Ghazikian explained, translating is ten times more difficult than the writing. Let us not forget that translation is a result of intricate philological and linguistic hard work interlaced with other factors as well.

Let’s hope that the scholars of Armenian Studies of Italy work collaboratively on new ideas and projects. The results of such work will replenish the present bibliography of Armenian to Italian translations, benefiting the spread of Armenian culture, and honoring our sacred translators by continuing the mission they began in the 5th century.

SONA HAROUTYUNIAN
ԱՐՄԵՆԻԱՆ ԽՈՒՐԱՍԱՆԻ ՆԱՐՎԵԼ ՆԱՐՎԵԼԻ 1991-2012

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3. Բառական գրության տարածաշրջանում, սպասարկում են տարածաշրջանի համար և լրացուցիչ գիտելաբանական աշխատանքներ。

1. Աբովյան, Հայկ. Կարևոր դեպքեր ու գործքեր համալսարանական և գրական գիտության մեջ. 2013

2. Պարուսակցություն և կրթության համար և գրական գիտության աշխատանքներ. 2013

3. Հակոբյան, Վարդան. Հայկական գրողներ վերաբերյալ կարևոր գիտական գիտություն. 2013


5. Սահակյան, Ս. Հայկական գրության գերագույն էկոնոմիկա. Երևան, 2013.

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