

Aristakēs Lastivertc‘i and Armenian Urban Consciousness

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Eleventh-century Armenia is usually studied in terms of three wider historical processes: firstly, the eastwards expansion of Byzantium, a process already underway in the tenth century; secondly, the advent of Turkic raiders across the Caucasus on a frequent basis in the years after 1047, to devastating effect; and thirdly, the emergence of a patchwork of Armenian lordships, some ephemeral, others more persistent, to the west and south of historic Armenia in the aftermath of the battle of Manzikert in 1071.¹ These are not solely the contentions of modern scholars. One Armenian historian of the early twelfth century, Matthew of Edessa, certainly believed that the Byzantine annexation of territory and its corollary, the displacement of the Armenian nobility from their hereditary districts, had contributed directly to Seljuk success. Matthew reserves some trenchant criticism for the ‘Romans’ who had destroyed the Armenian kingdom, described as a ‘protective wall’, and removed all the Armenian princes and commanders from the east, forcing them to settle among the Greeks. Matthew observes sourly that they were replaced with eunuch commanders instead, whose effeminacy and softness had

¹ M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204* (London and New York, 1997), 40-48; N. Garsoïan, ‘The Byzantine annexation of the Armenian Kingdoms in the Eleventh Century’, in R. Hovannisian, ed., *The Armenian People From Ancient to Modern Times* (New York, 1997), 1, 187-198; G. Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens entre Grecs, Musulmans et Croisés*, 2 vols. (Lisbonne, 2003); J.-C. Cheynet and G. Dédéyan, ‘Vocation impériale ou fatalité diasporique: les Arméniens à Byzance (IV^e–XI^e siècle)’, in G. Dédéyan, ed., *Histoire du peuple arménien* (Toulouse, 2008), 297-326.

brought about the subjugation of the faithful at the hands of the Turks.² Looking back from his vantage point in the late 1120s, Matthew had no hesitation in blaming Byzantium for the disasters of the past. It is worth remembering, however, that Matthew's hostility towards Byzantium was conditioned by contemporary political and ecclesiastical antagonism.³ His historical survey was inevitably shaped, whether consciously or otherwise, by his own views and preconceptions. His *History* may offer a dramatic sweep of eleventh-century affairs but it does so from a twelfth-century perspective.

This unhappy narrative for the eleventh century, of political capitulation, territorial concession and widespread devastation, sits very uneasily with the conventions of Armenian historiography. The Armenian past is imagined by medieval writers and

² Matthew of Edessa, *Žamanakagrut 'iwn Matt'ēosi Urhayec 'woy*, ed. M. Melik'-Adamean and N. Ter-Mik'ayelean (Vałaršapat, 1898; repr. with facing modern Armenian translation by H. Bart'ikyan (Erevan, 191), 148-150; tr. A.E. Dostourian, *Armenia and the Crusades tenth to twelfth centuries. The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* (Lanham, MD, 1993), II.13, pp. 96-7. All the translations from Armenian are my own and may differ from the published English or French translations.

³ See for example Matthew's deep animosity towards Philaretos – of Armenian origin but loyal to Byzantium and a Chalcedonian – who is called 'an impious and wicked tyrant', 'the eldest son of Satan' and 'the forerunner of the filthy Antichrist': Matthew of Edessa, *Žamanakagrut 'iwn*, 222; tr. Dostourian, *Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, II.60, p.137; and his presentation of T'oros Rubenid avenging the murder of the last Bagratuni king Gagik II by killing one of the sons of Mandalē: Matthew of Edessa, *Žamanakagrut 'iwn*, 346-350; tr. Dostourian, *Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, III.53, at 207-9. For a brief but useful discussion, see Z. Pogossian, *The Letter of Love and Concord* (Leiden and Boston, 2010), 8-10; for a detailed study of the career of Philaretos, see Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens entre Grecs, Musulmans et Croisés*, I, 5-416.

modern commentators alike in terms of political and religious independence; tenacious and costly resistance to external threats which were ultimately overcome; and a distinctive and defiant cultural legacy, expressed in ecclesiastical, linguistic and architectural terms. This powerful impression of the past has been projected as the shared experience of all Armenians by Armenian writers from the fifth century onwards and has proved to be particularly resilient to change or re-imagination. Eleventh-century Armenia has never fitted into this dominant national narrative and consequently has attracted little in the way of scholarly attention, at least on its own terms. Instead it has been viewed as an era of profound loss, one which witnessed the end of political independence across the districts of historic Armenia, material destruction and mass emigration. Only with the restoration of an independent Armenian kingdom in Cilicia in 1198 does scholarly interest pick up once again although much of the previous century is often treated as merely the prologue to this inevitable political revival.⁴ Eleventh-century Armenia has been left in-between periods.

This is not the place for setting out a range of new approaches and lines of enquiry which could be applied to the study of Armenia in this period. What follows, however, is an attempt to explore one dimension of eleventh-century Armenian society which has not, to my knowledge, been considered previously, and that is the development of urban consciousness. By this, I mean more than a historical or archaeological survey of cities or towns in eleventh-century Armenia, although such research could yield valuable

⁴ For the date of the coronation, see P. Halfter, *Das Papsttum und die Armenier im frühen und hohen Mittelalter: von den ersten Kontakten bis zur Fixierung der Kirchenunion im Jahre 1198* (Köln, 1996), 189-245.

results.⁵ Urban consciousness requires a clear sense of group identity, of collective responsibility which could be expressed in action, of community and relationship based upon living or working in a city as opposed to a village or district. Studying the emergence of urban consciousness requires us to move outside the traditional narrative of eleventh-century Armenia, characterised by despondency, destruction and dislocation and consider the extent to which Armenian society was being transformed in this era. Arguably the social landscape of eleventh-century Armenia was radically different to that of the tenth or twelfth centuries. The displacement of the dominant lay and clerical elite following the Byzantine annexation of swathes of western and central Armenia was accompanied by the emergence of new forms of social organisation and expression, centred on urban communities.

It has become something of a convention to sharply differentiate town and country across medieval Armenia. In a famous article, Professor Nina Garsoïan maintained that ‘Armenian cities were by their very concept and institutions incompatible with, or at best peripheral to, Armenia’s essentially aristocratic society, devoid of any tradition of municipal or republican institutions...and linked fundamentally with Iran, where the city also remained outside the power elite’.⁶ Garsoïan’s article was focused on

⁵ It would be fascinating, for instance, to determine how many urban centres there were in eleventh-century Armenia, their distribution and ties to one another. Such a survey could also define the differences, if any, between a *mayrak’alak*, a calque of *metropolis*, and a *giwlak’alak*, a calque of *komopolis*, and how these centres of population were distinguished from an *avan*, town.

⁶ N. Garsoïan, ‘The Early-Medieval Armenian City: An Alien Element?’, *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 16-17 (1984-1985), 67-83; repr. in Garsoïan, *Church and Culture in Early Medieval Armenia* (Ashgate, 1999), no. VII.

pre-Islamic Armenia but she did make several forays into tenth and eleventh-century urban history, noting the apparent reluctance of kings and princes, patriarchs and monks, to live in cities: ‘No important group of city-dwellers can be identified within the ruling class until the end of the Middle Ages’.⁷ The corollary of this line of argument appears in the article’s title: ‘The Early Mediaeval Armenian City: An Alien Element?’ There were cities in Armenia but they were not founded by Armenians, they were not inhabited by Armenians – or at least Armenians who mattered – and they were not exploited or developed by Armenians.

Garsoïan and others are right to point out that many of these settlements were not Armenian foundations, in the sense that Armenian kings and princes inspired their creation and invested in their construction. Most have Hellenistic, Persian or Arab origins.⁸ They may initially have had significant non-Armenian populations, comprising Greek colonists or Persian or Arab garrisons and administrators, but unless one accepts a model of continuous immigration into these cities from outside Armenia, it seems inevitable that these urban centres eventually became ‘Armenian’, in the sense of having

⁷ Garsoïan, ‘Alien Element’, 81. The *mecatun* or wealthy merchant nobility of Ani who emerged, allegedly, at the start of the thirteenth century, are relegated to fn. 97.

⁸ Garsoïan, ‘Alien Element’, 68 and 74. However the tradition that Armenian kings had founded eponymous cities is a common trope in early mediaeval Armenian historical texts, indicating that there was an awareness that this is what kings should do, irrespective of whether they did or how successful the foundation turned out to be: see for example Vałarš who built Vałaršawan and fortified Vałaršapat: Movsēs Xorenac‘i, *Patmut‘iwn hayoc‘*, ed. M. Abelean and S. Yarut‘iwnean (Tiflis, 1913; repr. Erevan, 1991), 199.11 and 200.1-2; tr. R.W. Thomson, *Moses Khorenats‘i History of the Armenians* (rev. ed., Ann Arbor MI, 2006), II.65, at 207-8.

substantial Armenian populations. It is true to say that before the end of the ninth century, many of the urban centres in Armenia were located in various local Arab emirates – Dvin, Naxčavan, Theodosiopolis/Qālīqalā and Manzikert, together with the string of cities along the north shore of lake Van – rather than on lands controlled by the Armenian elite, but this has more to do with the historic control by the dominant powers of the major communication routes through Armenia on which the cities were located, rather than any disdain for urban life or living on the part of the Armenian elite. These corridors were strategically significant, providing access into the Anatolian and Iranian plateaux and were controlled by fortresses, some of which were established as, or grew into, urban centres. Although the Armenian elite seem to have been excluded from them, their enthusiasm for urban life should not be underestimated.

To this end, it is striking that the earliest Armenian visual representation of an urban community appears on the west flank of the southern façade of the Church of the Holy Cross at Aht'amar, commissioned by Gagik Arcruni at the start of the tenth century.⁹ It is a relief of the familiar Old Testament narrative of Jonah and the whale (fig. 1).¹⁰ This relief has attracted some attention because of its depiction of the whale as an Iranian *senmurv* but it is the four figures in the roundels to the right of the seated king of Nineveh who are relevant for this study because they represent the citizens of the city reacting to

⁹ S Der Nersessian, *Aht'amar: Church of the Holy Cross* (Cambridge MA, 1965); J.G. Davies, *Medieval Armenian Art and Architecture: The Church of the Holy Cross, Aht'amar* (London, 1991); L. Jones, *Between Islam and Byzantium: Aht'amar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Rulership* (Ashgate, 2007), 53-95; A. Sarafian and O. Köker, *Ahtamar A Jewel of Medieval Armenian Architecture* (Istanbul, 2010), 107 and 135.

¹⁰ I am very grateful to Professor Paul Magdalino for giving me permission to use this image.

Jonah's message of destruction if they did not turn from their evil ways. The citizens play a role in the Biblical narrative but it is hardly a major one. Their inclusion in the relief therefore represents a deliberate choice within the artistic programme. Given the relationship between the figures and the seated king, their presence seems to be saying something about the ideal context in which a king is to be imagined – namely an urban context. Nor is this the only expression of this, for the first continuator of the early tenth-century Armenian historian T'ovma Arcruni who described Gagik's church and palace on the island of Ałt'amar sets them in a decidedly urban context, with golden streets and elaborate buildings.¹¹ This is a complete fiction, as anyone who has visited the island and seen its size and predominantly rocky character would acknowledge. This passage tells us more about how Gagik wished to be represented as a ruler and that required an urban landscape. Therefore, even if Garsoian is right about the exclusion of the Armenian elite from cities in earlier centuries, it seems that by the start of the tenth century, the ideal context for an Arcruni king was an urban environment. Without going into detail, Bagratuni kings from the middle of the tenth century onwards realised that ideal, residing in the rapidly-expanding city of Ani, an expansion which can be traced through the double extension of its circuit walls, once in the 950s and again in the 980s.¹² Whether

¹¹ T'ovma Arcruni, *Patmut'awn tann Arcruneac'* ed. K'. Patkanean (St Petersburg, 1887), 294.27-295.5 and 296.20-29; tr. R.W. Thomson, *History of the House of the Artsrunik'* (Detroit, 1985), IV.7, 356-358: *zoskezard zp'oloc'sn*, golden streets. The site is repeatedly called a city, *k'alak'*: 295.5, 296.14 and 296.18.

¹² For the second extension under Smbat II Bagratuni (977-990), see Step'anos Tarōnec'i, *Patmut'awn Tiezarakan*, ed. S. Malxazean (St Petersburg, 1885), 187.13-19; tr. F. Macler, *Histoire Universelle par Étienne Asolik de Tarōn Deuxième partie Livre III* (Paris, 1917), III.11, p. 49. It is generally assumed that it was his father Ašot III Bagratuni (953-977) who built the earlier circuit in the 950s when he transferred to

this expansion was motivated by security or by the desire to define the limits of the city for legal and/or fiscal reasons is not clear. But whilst these examples of Arcruni Alt‘amar and Bagratuni Ani are interesting, they attest very much a top-down approach to Armenian urbanism, that is, articulating the aspirations and attitudes of the princely Armenian elite towards cities and city life. They do not reveal any sense of collective urban consciousness.

How might this be traced? With regret, no archive recording the legislative decisions of a city council has been preserved. Nor is it possible to sketch in any more than the barest of outlines how an Armenian city was governed or administered or policed or taxed in either the tenth or the eleventh century. There are to my knowledge no liturgies which reflect local traditions, practices or cults venerated in an Armenian city, nor is there any description of exactly what happened in a city during a festival or feast day which might attest some sense of civic pride or responsibility. The closest I have found is a general observation implying that major festivals were celebrated in cities by some kind of public spectacle or procession involving different coloured costumes: ‘Because it is a tradition of cities at the Lord’s feasts for men and women, old and young, according to their means and capability, to dress up in many costumes, in the likeness of spring flower-gardens.’¹³ We have no grants, confirmations or removals of privileges to

Ani from Kars and granted the latter to his brother Mušel: J.-P. Mahé, ‘L’enceinte urbaine d’Ani (Turquie orientale): problèmes chronologiques’, *Comptes-rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 143.2 (1999), 732-3.

¹³ Aristakēs Lastivertc‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Aristakisi Lastiverte‘woy*, ed. K.N. Yuzbashian, (Erevan, 1963), 83.25-84.1; tr. M. Canard and H. Berbérian, *Aristakès de Lastivert: Récit des malheurs de la nation arménienne*, Bibliothèque de *Byzantion* 5 (Brussels, 1973), 74.

or on behalf of cities or towns. And we have almost nothing to go on when it comes to studying commercial organisations or business practices in an urban environment in this era.

There is, however, one historical composition which does begin to shed some light on this phenomenon, and from which the above description on religious festivals in urban spaces was derived, and that is the *History* of Aristakēs Lastivertc'i. This composition has not received much in the way of textual study or criticism since Yuzbašian's edition and partial Russian translation, upon which Canard and Berbérian's French translation was based. In certain respects, Aristakēs fits into the standard profile of medieval Armenian historians. He is identified as a priest and his *History* presents a Christian interpretation of the past and the present: 'In accordance with your Creative will, do not let us slip from your hands; may we not be completely tormented by the pagans, those who hate you; for all this and more than this record of account came upon us because of our sins'.¹⁴ Aristakēs also sets his composition very deliberately in the context of another Armenian history, that of Step'anos Tarōnec'i, whose work is identified approvingly: 'And Step'anos Tarōnec'i, who composed with marvellous organisation his books of world history, beginning with the first man and completing his history at the death of Gagik'.¹⁵ This direct association with earlier historians comes to be

¹⁴ Aristakēs 144.28-145.3; Canard and Berbérian, 131.

¹⁵ Aristakēs 26.12-14; Canard and Berbérian, 9. Although Step'anos does indeed begin with Adam, every manuscript of his *History* ends in 1004, long before the death of Gagik I Bagratuni who lived until c. 1017. If a continuator did extend the original conclusion of Step'anos' *History*, no trace of that continuation survives other than via Aristakēs' own *History*. Turning to the actual relationship, the respective descriptions of the death of Davit' of Tayk' and Basil II's rapid march eastwards are proximate in terms of

a familiar feature of medieval Armenian historiography after Step'anos Tarōnec'i but can also be found in the opening of the *History* of Łazar P'arpec'i, composed at the end of the fifth century.¹⁶

On the other hand, there is much more that is decidedly atypical about the *History* of Aristakēs. The author, if indeed it was him, elected to open his *History* with a dramatic poetic prologue: 'Times of affliction have come upon us and terrible troubles have befallen us because the measure of our sin has been filled and our appeal has gone out before God. Every person has polluted his path and the land is full of impiety. Righteousness has diminished and debauchery has increased. Layman and priest have lied before God and consequently foreign peoples have expelled us from our dwelling.'¹⁷ This general lament, which is incomplete, is followed by twenty-five chapters covering the period between the years 1000 and 1072; in the context of Armenian historiography

content but not language: Step'anos Tarōnec'i 275.3-276.14, Aristakēs 22.25-8; the same goes for the descriptions of the violence between the *azatagund* of David and the Ėuzk'/Russians in Basil's camp: Step'anos Tarōnec'i 276.22-277.15, Aristakēs 23.10-12. However passages describing the award of imperial titles to Bagarat and his father Gurgēn are linguistically proximate: Step'anos Tarōnec'i 276.15-21, Aristakēs 24.1-4.

¹⁶ Łazar P'arpec'i, *Patmut'iwñ Hayoc'*, ed. G. Tēr-Mkrtč'ean and S. Malxazean (Tiflis, 1904; repr. Delmar NY, 1986), 1.3-5.5, tr. R.W. Thomson, *The History of Łazar P'arpec'i* (Atlanta GA, 1991), 33-8, identifying the first *History* as that of the blessed Agat'angelos and the second as that of P'awstos Buzandac'i. It is also striking that six of the nine manuscripts upon which Yuzbašian based his edition of Aristakēs also contain the *Universal History* of Step'anos Tarōnec'i. Five of these – Mat. 3160, 3502, 3070, 1482 and 4584 – date from the seventeenth century; Mat. 2865 has been dated on palaeographical grounds to the thirteenth century.

¹⁷ Aristakēs 22.6-23.22; Canard and Berbėrian, 1-2.

this is a narrow timeframe. The work was written after 1072 because its final notice refers to the death of the sultan Alp Arslan.¹⁸ On the other hand it seems very likely that it was completed before 1087 because when referring to the capture of Edessa in 1031 by the Romans, the passage notes ‘And from that day to this, the city has submitted to the control of the Romans’; Edessa fell to the Seljuks in 1087.¹⁹ With the exception of Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i, whose composition was finally completed in 1004, Aristakēs’ *History* is the only extant Armenian historical compilation of the eleventh century. Unlike Matthew of Edessa, therefore, Aristakēs lived through the dramatic and bewildering events of the middle of the eleventh century, and whilst it would be wrong to treat his account as a simple narrative of events, it will not have been reshaped by later concerns and attitudes.

Two particular features of the composition merit comment.. Firstly it is clear that Aristakēs drew upon a recent work of Byzantine imperial history when compiling his work. This supplied both the chronological and the narrative framework around which the rest of the composition was arranged. The influence of this source can be seen from the first sentence which reports the progress of Basil II through western Armenia ‘in the twenty-fifth year of his reign’ following the death of the *curopalates* Davit‘ of Tayk‘. Thereafter the text explores the origins, characters and actions of successive emperors

¹⁸ Aristakēs 141.17-22; Canard and Berbérian, 128: ‘And after this, when he saw that he had been seized by his nobles through treachery and they had blinded him and he had not recovered his kingdom but had died from his injuries, he was filled with anger and fury; he wanted to take revenge for his friend but then death apprehended him and he left this world following all created beings, to where kings and paupers are as one.’

¹⁹ Aristakēs 45.18-19; Canard and Berbérian, 31.

and whilst many of these passages have a broadly ‘eastern’ dimension, there are important exceptions. Thus we learn that at his accession, Michael IV ‘made one of his brothers *magistros* and gave T‘ēsatonik [Thessalonica] into his control and entrusted to him responsibility for the Bulgarians and the regions of the west.’²⁰ Or again, there is a description of the rebellion and death of George Maniakes at the start of the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos in 1041.²¹ Such incidental details do not advance our understanding of events in eleventh-century Armenia but they do reveal the nature of the underlying source consulted and exploited by Aristakēs. This was a composition, originally in Greek, which traced imperial history; that eight of the twenty-five sections carry headings which refer to either the reign or the death of an emperor attests its prominence. This work of imperial history, however, seems to have concluded in 1057, a date which by coincidence matches the end of Skylitzes’ *Synopsis Historion*. The final notice of the *Synopsis* reports the retirement of Michael VI Stratiotikos to his house, on ‘the fourth day, the thirty-first of the month of August, the tenth indiction’, and the

²⁰ Aristakes 47.2-4; Canard and Berbérian, 33. He also appointed ‘the third of his brothers, who was a eunuch and a monk, whose name was Ōrt‘anōrōs [Orphanotropos] to the royal city of Constantinople, making him *sinklitos* [Gk: *σύγκλητος*] and giving all the responsibilities and concerns of the palace into his hands’: Aristakēs 47.6-9; Canard and Berbérian, 34. The Armenian text reads *hogs*, responsibilities or cares; the use of *pronoia* for this word in the French translation is misplaced.

²¹ Aristakēs 52.13-55.6; Canard and Berbérian, 42-3 (partially translated). It is possible that this passage was included because an earlier passage – Aristakēs 44.14-45.19; Canard and Berbérian, 30-1 – records Maniakes’ capture of the city of Edessa, traditionally viewed as an Armenian city. The inclusion of this account is of itself interesting, corresponding to the theme of urban devastation explored elsewhere.

coronation of Isaac Komnenos the day after.²² Aristakēs offers a short account of Michael's downfall 'in the tenth Roman indiction' and the accession of Isaac Komnenos, but his reign is not otherwise discussed.²³ Constantine X Doukas does not feature at all and a Byzantine focus only re-emerges at the end of the work, with the 1071 campaign of Romanos IV Diogenes.²⁴ The gap between 1057 and 1071 is filled with one narrative recording the fall of Ani in 1064 and two chapters reporting outbreaks of heresy, one in the district of Hark', which appears to date from the start of the eleventh century, and a second in Mananali and Ekeleac', from an unknown date in the eleventh century.²⁵ These two chapters sit uncomfortably within the narrative at this point but they do fit thematically with the wider purposes of the composition, attesting the presence of heterodox beliefs and practices within Armenia and thus justifying God's anger against his people.

Perhaps the key point to note however is that Aristakēs' access to, and use of, a work of contemporary Byzantine history is not without precedent. Step'anos Tarōnec'i exploited just such a work in book III of his *Universal Chronicle* and used it in much the same way, as a chronological spine for his coverage of tenth-century history. From book

²² Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn (Berlin and New York, 1973), 500.84-85 and 90-93; tr. B. Flusin, with comm. by J.-C. Cheynet, *Jean Skylitzes Empereurs de Constantinople* (Paris, 2003), 411.

²³ Aristakēs 103.24-25: *yorum hořom dik'tioni ēr tasn*. The tenth indiction: 1.ix.1056-31.viii.1057. See Aristakēs 112.5-22; Canard and Berbėrian, 104, for the account of the deposition of Michael and the coronation of Isaac. The only additional detail provided by Aristakēs but missing from Skylitzes is that Michael was tonsured and exiled to an island.

²⁴ Aristakēs 137.12-141.22; Canard and Berbėrian, 124-28.

²⁵ Aristakēs 119.1-136.23; Canard and Berbėrian, 108-24.

III.6, short notices of Byzantine imperial history are tacked on to the ends of the chapters which otherwise concentrate on Armenian affairs.²⁶ From III.10 onwards, the chapters open with Byzantine history and it is now the Armenian notices which are appended.²⁷ Nor is Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i’s *Universal History* the only recent work of Armenian historiography to fuse Roman and Armenian history. Book I of the *History* of Uxtanēs of Sebasteia, a work which was composed in the 980s, and in any event by 989/90, reflects a similar interest, albeit one that is expressed through a study of the classical era. It comprises a summary of world history from Adam to Constantine the Great, one which was based ultimately from Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* but which was derived from a late seventh-century Armenian work of universal history and chronology, known as the *Anonymous Chronicle*. Uxtanēs interleaved extracts from this work, recording imperial Roman history from Julius Caesar to Constantine, with passages recording episodes of Armenian history lifted from the *History* of Movsēs Xorenac‘i.²⁸ Unlike Step‘anos and

²⁶ Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i 169.13-170.19; tr. Macler, *Histoire Universelle*, III.6, pp. 23-5.

²⁷ Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i 186.12-187.6; tr. Macler, *Histoire Universelle*, III.10, pp. 48-9. There are several specific linguistic features in book III which confirm that the original work was in Greek. The figure of Kalokyros Delphinias is identified as Tlp‘inas in III.25; in III.44, Nikephoros Ouranos is identified simply as Kanikl, a reflection of his office of Keeper of the Imperial Inkstand, *ἐπί τοῦ κανικλείου*; and in III.22, Step‘anos recalls that Samuel and his brothers were referred to as *Komsajagk‘*; this is an Armenian calque of the Greek *Κομητόπουλοι*, ‘children of the count’.

²⁸ Uxtanēs, *Patmut‘iwn Hayoc‘* (Ejmiacin, 1871); part 1 tr. M. Brosset, *Deux historiens arméniens. Kiracos de Gantzac, Oukhtanès d’Ourha* (St Petersburg, 1870). The extracts from the two principal sources are combined but separated into chapters. Uxtanēs exploited Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* via Part II of so-called *Anonymous Chronicle*, sometimes attributed to Anania Širakac‘i; see T.W. Greenwood, ‘New Light from the East: Chronography and Ecclesiastical History through a Late-Seventh Century Armenian

Aristakēs, Uxtanēs was able to compile his study from underlying sources in Armenian; he did not exploit, or need to exploit, a work of Byzantine history. But all three authors attest an interest in Roman or Byzantine history and situate Armenian history in that context. Moreover all three authors are associated with western regions of Armenia firmly under Byzantine control at the time of composition: Sebasteia (always Byzantine but apparently subject to Armenian immigration from the middle of the tenth century), Tarōn (annexed in 966/7) and Lastivert, a village close to Theodosiopolis (captured in 949 but permanently annexed in 1000 after the death of Davit‘ of Tayk‘).²⁹ In his long description of the city of Arcn, just outside Theodosiopolis, Aristakēs states categorically that ‘this city of ours,’ *k‘alak‘s mer*, shone like a valuable jewel and later on muses ‘who can put in writing the terrible and intolerable wrongs of this city of ours,’ *zk‘alak‘is meroy* [78.1-2].³⁰ Whilst the Byzantine advance eastwards has usually been studied in

Source’, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16.2 (2008), 197-254, for a study of this work. The inclusion of an account of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia – Uxtanēs 85.22-88.8, Brosset, *Oukhtanès*, §76 – is persuasive when identifying his episcopal see as Sebasteia rather than Edessa.

²⁹ Sebasteia: see G. Dédéyan, ‘L’immigration arménienne en Cappadoce au XI^e siècle’, *Byzantion* 45 (1975), 41-117; Tarōn: see T.W. Greenwood, ‘Social Change in Eleventh-Century Armenia: the Evidence from Tarōn’, in J.D. Howard-Johnston, ed., *The Transformation of Byzantium in the Eleventh Century. Social Change in Town and Country* (Oxford, Forthcoming); Theodosiopolis: C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025)* (Oxford, 2005), 152 and 319-22.

³⁰ Aristakēs 74.10-79.22; Canard and Berbérian, 63-68. The specific references are at Aristakēs 75.3 and 78.1-2. Admittedly Aristakēs, at 115.4, also calls Melitene ‘this city’, *k‘alak‘s ays*, adding ‘about which we have composed our narrative’ but he does not specifically call it ‘our city’. This association with Melitene may belong to the author of the lament; alternatively it may reflect a move by Aristakēs to Melitene from Arcn.

terms of territorial annexation, these three historical works indicate that the transmission of Byzantine political and literary culture was no less significant, informing how both the remote and the recent Armenian past was conceptualised.³¹

It is however the second feature of Aristakēs' *History* which brings us back to the issue of urban consciousness. His descriptions of the Turkic raids into Armenia are imagined and represented principally in terms of their impact on particular urban centres: Arcn, Kars, the towns of Mesopotamia, Melitene and Ani.³² The narratives take the form of individual laments, reporting not only the grim litany of torments suffered by the inhabitants during the sack of their city but also exploring why God had allowed them to suffer in this way. For Aristakēs, the only possible explanation was the collective sinfulness of the population itself. Unlike Matthew of Edessa, therefore, Aristakēs did not seek to transfer responsibility to Byzantium; these self-contained narratives look for internal reasons and find them in the conduct of the cities' inhabitants. The following extract describes how the city of Arcn became corrupted and forms the prelude to a long account of the destruction of the city:

Such a city, famous and illustrious in all countries...crowned with an abundance of good things...like a newly-married woman, in beauty of form and brilliance of adornment, desirable to all. For its leaders (*išxank* ' were philanthropic [*mardasērk* '], its judges [*datawork* '] just and intolerant of bribes, its merchants [*vačarakank* '] founders and adorners of churches who gave repose to monks and were charitable and generous to the

³¹ C. Holmes, 'Byzantine historians at the periphery', in E. Jeffreys, ed., *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies London 21–26 August 2006* (Aldershot, 2006), II, 156-57, asked 'why historians operating on or beyond the periphery of empire read Byzantine historiography and why they chose to integrate it into their narratives'.

³² Aristakēs 74.9-79.22, 83.15-84.14, 110.22-112.2, 113.1-118.23 and 133.14-136.23; Canard and Berbérian, chapters XII, XV, XIX, XXI and XXIV

poor. There was no dishonesty in business and no fraud in commercial exchanges. Profiting from usury and exorbitant interest was a matter of slander...everyone rivalled one another only in piety...Its priests were celebrated and prayer-loving, compliant and attentive in church service. Therefore its merchants were celebrated and its agents [*aṛgnōlk*] kings of the peoples. And this city of ours shone like a valuable jewel, with luminous brilliance among all cities...But rightful religion was turned into impiety and a love of money became more precious than a love of God, mammon [*mamonay*] more [precious] than Christ. Its leaders became like thieves, evildoers and slaves to money. Its judges were corrupted by bribes and did not protect the rights of orphans. Usury and exorbitant interest were established...and the one who deceived his neighbour boasted that he was wise, saying “I am powerful”...³³

Aristakēs examined the conduct of the city’s leaders, judges, merchants and priests and suggests that their virtues had become corrupted by a love of money and excess. It is far from clear whether or not this account reflects the actual composition of this city’s population, although it certainly reveals how Aristakēs envisaged it. On the other hand, Aristakēs also highlighted merchants as prominent members of the communities of Kars and Melitene, referring to ‘honourable and respectable merchants [*vačarakank*] being cruelly put to death’ in Kars and to the merchants [*vačarakank*] of Melitene as ‘the glory of the country and its agents [*aṛgnōlk*] were the kings of the peoples’.³⁴ Given the absence of specific references to merchants and commerce in all previous Armenian historical compositions – they simply do not feature at all – this coincidence suggests commercial activity in all three cities. But we should be cautious about this, given the similar phrasing about merchants and agents in the descriptions of both Arcn and Melitene.³⁵ It is hard not to see the hand of Aristakēs behind this coincidence, shaping

³³ Aristakēs 74.11-75.12; Canard and Berbérian, 63-4.

³⁴ Kars: Aristakēs 84.7; Canard and Berbérian, 74. Melitene: Aristakēs 115.7-8; Canard and Berbérian, 105.

³⁵ Compare Aristakēs 75.1-2: *vačarakank’ sora p’arawork’, ew aṛgnolk’n t’agawork’ azgac’* with Aristakēs 115.7-8: *oroy vačarakank’n p’arawork’ erkri, ew aṛgnolk’ sora t’agawork’ azgac’...*

these two narratives. It may not be possible to disentangle the relationship between the historical and the literary aspects of these passages.

More important is the editorial decision taken by Aristakēs to represent the raids in these terms, contemplating both the impact of the devastation on the urban populations one by one and trying to understand why they had suffered this fate. This echoes the experience and fate of several cities in the Old Testament – Sodom, Damascus, Tyre, even Jerusalem – and the literary dimension should not be overlooked. But Aristakēs' choice to depict the raids in these terms is so significant because it seems to be reflecting not only the prominence of urban life in eleventh-century Armenia but also a sense of collective identity in cities. In so doing, Aristakēs is taking a very radical step outside conventional Armenian historiography. He is imagining Armenia not in terms of its kings or princely families, nor even in terms of the Armenian Church, but in terms of its urban communities and their surrounding districts.

This new construction of Armenian social identity needs to be placed in context. The Byzantine expansion eastwards over the previous century had necessarily entailed the displacement of the Armenian princely elite and the episcopal leadership. In the course of the eleventh century, it becomes very difficult to find any bishops of the Armenian Church operating in their historic sees.³⁶ The fact that Catholicos Grigor II

³⁶ For the collapse of the Armenian episcopal network and the extension of the Byzantine Church, see T.W. Greenwood, “‘Imagined past, revealed present’: A Reassessment of *Patmut’iwn Tarōnoy* [*History of Tarōn*]”, in *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Mahé*, ed. P. Boisson, A. Mardirossian, A. Ouzounian and C. Zuckerman, *Travaux et Mémoires* 18 (2014), 384. For unequivocal evidence of the latter, see *Notitia* 10, 56 (the metropolitan province of Keltzene, Kortzene and Taron), in J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (Paris, 1981), 336. This lists 22 new episcopal sees across both Tarōn and

Vkayasēr (‘Martyrophile’) is best-known for wandering through the Middle East collecting and translating martyrologies rather than for his leadership of the Armenian Church suggests that this institution was under intense strain, if not close to complete collapse by this time. In a society and culture whose lay and clerical leadership had been sliced off, cities emerged as key centres of communal identity and local memory.³⁷ How Aristakēs chose to portray the Seljuk raids is therefore significant for its narrative value, which can be set against other accounts; for its literary and theological skill; but also for its insight into fundamental developments in Armenian society and culture in the middle of the eleventh century.

Can this argument be sustained independently of Aristakēs? There are some features which can be corroborated. Skylitzes for example reports that Artze (that is, Arcn) was a town of many people and much wealth, with many merchants living there, Syrians, Armenians and other nationalities.³⁸ Its size, its wealth, its commercial character and even its mixed community – these all tally with Aristakēs’ impression, for the final comment on the mixed character of the communities seems to be echoed in Aristakēs’ observation about the countless number of priests from other countries who had met their end in the sack of the city, in addition to the one hundred and fifty Armenian priests who

Vaspurakan (thereby dating recension **c** to after the annexation of Vaspurakan in 1021, because it includes sites in that region, and recension **d** to before that date, because it lacks them).

³⁷ For the contemporary role of monasteries in reimagining Armenian historical traditions, see Greenwood, ‘Imagined past, revealed present’, 375-392.

³⁸ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 451.28-30: τὸ Ἀρτζε tr. Flusin, *Jean Skylitzes*, 374-5. It is also striking that Skylitzes refers to the inhabitants of the city collectively: Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 451.50: οἱ Ἀρτζηνοὶ.

had perished.³⁹ By contrast, Matthew of Edessa is writing in a more conventional mode and tends to concentrate on the efforts of the powerful, the elite, to repel the Seljuks. For example, when commenting on the resistance of the city of Manzikert, Matthew notes that the town was full of Christians who fought courageously, the whole population of the town fighting together, but swiftly moves on to consider how the Roman commander, Basil son of Apuk‘ap, responded to the crisis.⁴⁰

Fortunately there is another body of evidence which support this notion of Armenian urban community and identity. This comprises a group of eight colophons, extracts from which are set out below in chronological order:

(i) Gospel [988/9 CE]⁴¹

In Armenian era, in the year 437, this holy Gospel was written by Yovsēp‘, a humble sinner and unworthy priest, with ignorant mind and contemptible pen....

I Kirakos, a merchant [*vačarakan*], a sin-serving and unworthy servant, with my close relatives, became desirous of this Gospel because I was very sin-serving personally and I had this holy Gospel of mine written in the *komopolis* [*giwłak‘alak*] of Ačnawan which is called Tētiawor, in the patriarchate of Xačik‘, kat‘olikos of Armenia, in the kingship of Basil and Constantine, who at their becoming king divided the kingdom of the Greeks into two and many very serious misfortunes, persecutions, and terrors and much turbulence occurred in the country of the Romans, as previously in the past to the Israelites.

(ii) Gospel [1001/2 CE]⁴²

Through the grace and infinite mercy of Christ I completed this four-booked fruitful...Gospel...priest...in 450 of this Armenian era, in the patriarchate of Lord Sargis, kat‘olikos of Armenia, in the kingship of Davit‘ *kiwrapalat* and pious king of Virk‘, in the district of Basean, in this city [*k‘alak‘s*] which is called Ōrdru....

(iii) Maštoc‘ [1035/6 CE]⁴³

³⁹ Aristakēs 79.1-4; Canard and Berbérian, 67.

⁴⁰ Matthew of Edessa, *Žamanakagrut‘iwn*, 13034; tr. Dostourian, *Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, II.3, p. 86-8.

⁴¹ A.S. Mat‘evosyan, *Hayeren Jeřagreri Hiřatakaraner* (Erevan, 1988), no. 84.

⁴² Mat‘evosyan, *Hayeren Jeřagreri Hiřatakaraner*, no. 90.

Glory to the all-holy Trinity, who rendered [me] worthy to reach the end of this writing. In 484 of this era, this holy and divinely-narrated Maštoc' was written by the hand of the humble and insignificant priest Sargis, in this city of Manandzkert, under the shadow of [...]

(iv) Gospel [1042/3 CE]⁴⁴

In the 491st year of the Armenian era, in the seventh month of Navasard, in this city of Ordru, decorated by the hand of the insignificant scribe Sargis, in the name of Sarkavag, the holy priest, son of lord Mesrob, translated to Christ...

(v) Gospel [1048/9 CE]⁴⁵

...It was written in the great town [*awan*] of Arcn, in the district of Karin, in the patriarchate of Lord Petros, the overseer, and in the episcopacy of Yovhannēs, holy overseer and orthodox leader, and in the kingship of the Romans of Mixayl. Davit' a faithful servant of God became generous in respect of several decorated, illuminated, God-declared ... having encouraged...to the hope of eternity...

(vi) Gospel [1057/8 CE]⁴⁶

...these letters [were written] by the hand of T'ovmas, humble priest and least scribe, in this city of Melteni, under the shadow of Saint Grigoris, in this Armenian era five hundred and six, in the office of kat'olikos of lord Xačik', when he was in the monastery of T'awblur....

(vii) Gospel [1066/7 CE]⁴⁷

515 of the number of the Armenian cycle. I Grigor priest, at the weakening of this people of Armenia in the time of our persecution by the people of Ismayel, having been brought up in the regions of the east, in the mountains of Ayrarat, in the village which is called Arkuri, and followed the pious king of ours, Senek'erim, we dwelt in this city of Sebasteia where the Forty martyrs poured out their blood...

(viii) Martyrology of St Eudoxia called Mařinos and Řomel and Zeno and Makara [1092/3]⁴⁸

The narratives of the holy martyrs were translated from Greek books into Armenian in the Armenian metropolis [*mayrak'alak' Hayoc'*] which is called Meletini, in Armenian era five hundred and forty-one...

⁴³ Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren Jeřagreri Hiřatakaranner*, no. 101.

⁴⁴ Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren Jeřagreri Hiřatakaranner*, no. 107.

⁴⁵ Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren Jeřagreri Hiřatakaranner*, no. 111.

⁴⁶ Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren Jeřagreri Hiřatakaranner*, no. 118.

⁴⁷ Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren Jeřagreri Hiřatakaranner*, no. 124.

⁴⁸ Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren Jeřagreri Hiřatakaranner*, no. 136.

The first of these dates from the year 988/9 and the other seven date from the eleventh century. They have been selected on the basis that they were all copied in urban centres in Armenia. Whilst we know of manuscripts copied in earlier centuries in cities outside Armenia – in Jerusalem, in Edessa, in Constantinople – these are the earliest to have been produced in urban centres within Armenia. Six of the eight are Gospels, one is a *maštoc* ‘ or liturgy and the last a collection of martyrologies. The earliest is significant for a number of reasons, for it was commissioned by an anxious merchant – Kirakos, from the *giwlak* ‘*alak*‘ or *komopolis* of Ačnawan, in other words the *awan* of Ačn, which is a variant of Arcn. Kirakos was clearly very troubled by his life and his wealth in particular. Elsewhere in the colophon he meditates on the transience of life:

In everything and everywhere time passes, it comes and reaches the present and having passed, once more moves on, but the one who triumphs over affliction triumphs once for all...the waves of sin caress my ship-wrecked self...I corrupted the path of goodness and I demolished the wall of my soul. The darkness of sin blinded me and I was deprived of the right religion, the darkness clouded me and I was plunged into a sea of sin...I shall give reply when the questions come, when thoughts are examined at the dreadful tribunal.⁴⁹

This is the first manuscript to be commissioned by a merchant. The other seven are not as forthcoming about their sponsors but there is a second Gospels (v) from the great *awan* of Arcn, dated to the very year of the sack of the city. Of the others, two come from Ordru, a site to the east of Theodosiopolis, two come from Melitene, one is from Manzikert and the last was written in Sebasteia. Of course, this represents just a tiny fraction of what would have been produced; indeed (v), despite its damaged state, implies that Davit‘ had sponsored several illuminated Gospels. Nevertheless, these colophons attest the presence of Armenian scriptoria in these cities and hence monasteries: ‘under the shadow’ means

⁴⁹ Mat‘evosyan, *Hayeren Jeřagreri Hiřatakaraner*, no. 84.

in the community dedicated to. And there has to have been a relationship between sponsor and scriptorium, thereby connecting two different constituencies within these Armenian urban communities. By way of comparison, when describing the city of Arcn before its demise, Aristakēs refers specifically to the financial support given by merchants for the decoration of churches and the repose of monks.⁵⁰ These colophons, and particularly that of Kirakos, illustrate this connection.

A rather different insight comes from the inscription carved onto the western façade of the cathedral church in Ani in about 1060, during the brief period of Byzantine control of the city and shortly before its capture by the Seljuks in 1064:

Through the name of the Almighty Lord and through the mercy of the holy and autocratic king Constantine Duk, it happened for me Bagrat *magistros* and *katapan* of the east Vxxac‘i, to take pity upon this metropolis of Ani. At that time they received the lordships [*tanutērut‘iwnk’*] Mxit‘ar *ipatos* son of Kurt and Gregor son of Lapastak *spat‘arkankitat* and Sargis son of Artavaz *spat‘arkankitat* and they freed the service of one sixth [*vec‘kēkor*] and the cart [*sayl*] and the thresher [*kamin*] and *angarion*. And the *katapan*, whoever he is, shall give 600 *mod* [bushels] of grain/seed and the cost of the cavalry; the *tanutērk’* shall make the rest from their own house, which is not something heavy for Ani. And for an Anec‘i trader, whether by cart or pack-horse, the levy [*bažn*] is free. And an Anec‘i who buys skins [*mort‘elik’*] for himself, the levy is free. And an Anec‘i carrier/dealer in cotton material [*bambēnc‘av*] the levy is half free. And they used to give 6 dram per dahekan for the *kapič* now they give 4 and 2 is free. And for the butcher [*msagorci*], whether the head is of cattle or of sheep, he gives half and half is free; and from the property of the seat, 700 dram is free.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Aristakēs 74.19-20; Canard and Berbérian, 64.

⁵¹ *Divan hay vimagrut‘yan (Corpus Inscriptionum Armenicarum), I Ani K‘alak’*, ed. H.A. Orbeli (Erevan, 1966) I, no. 106, p. 37 and pl. XII.

That it was carved onto such a prominent structure was surely intended to assert and project the authority of the *katepan* Bagrat Vxkac‘i as much as advertise its content.⁵² It is a visual statement of appropriation which would have left a powerful impression on the population of the city passing by on the main thoroughfare. Its secular character subverts the holiness of the site whilst its use of Armenian rather than Greek implies that it was intended to be read. The inscription has been studied recently by Mahé but a number of mysterious features remain, chief amongst which is the meaning of *tanutērḱ*.⁵³ In previous eras, it had meant head of a family but it seems to possess a different meaning here. Could the three figures have been put in charge of specific quarters of the city, as Mahé suggested? Or could they be heads of commercial associations? Since the number of trades whose exemptions and partial exemptions are detailed in the second half of the inscription is greater than three, it does not look as though they were responsible for one each. Clearly this inscription was intended to advertise a number of changes to the existing duties and levies then in force – these are mostly Armenian in origin but it is striking that they included the *angarion*, the standard term in Greek for labour service. Whatever the responsibilities of the three figures may have been, they were exploiting the resources of Ani to cover the costs of defence and provisioning other than those paid by the *katepan*. But finally there are specific provisions limited to those described as Anec‘i, that is those of Ani. How one qualified as an Anec‘i is unlikely to be fully resolved; on

⁵² For the identity of Bagrat, see H. Bartikian, ‘La généalogie du magistos Bagarat, catépan de l’Orient et des Kékauménos’, *Revue des études arméniennes* 2 (1965), 261-72, and P. Lemerle, ‘La famille Vichkatzi-Kékauménos’, *Revue des études arméniennes* 3 (1966), 177-84.

⁵³ J.-P. Mahé, ‘Ani sous Constantin X, d’après une inscription de 1060’, *Mélanges Gilbert Dagron, Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (2002), 403-414.

the other hand the very fact that such a definition is being employed indicates that the term was meaningful and understood. So this inscription has several layers of meaning and significance. For the purposes of this study, its particular value lies in the way in which it imagines the population as inhabitants of the city rather than ethnic, confessional or family terms. The population had a collective identity which derived from their residence in the city and which had legal status and meaning. It may not be entirely a coincidence that, in the course of the eleventh century, we begin to find individuals being identified by their city of origin, including David Dunac'i, that is, of the city of Dvin.⁵⁴

Finally, how is this relevant to eleventh-century Byzantium? Hitherto, Aristakēs has been treated as an Armenian author, and to the extent that he writes in Armenian and contemplates the fates of cities and districts of Armenia at the hands of the Seljuks, that is undeniable. But Aristakēs was apparently born and brought up in a part of Armenia which had been taken over by Byzantium at the start of the eleventh century. He shows a particular concern for the fates of the urban populations of western and central Armenia – of Arcn, Kars, Melitene and Ani – all of which had been under direct Byzantine control in the 1060s before falling to the Seljuks. Does this not make him a witness to provincial life and culture within the Byzantine Empire? If so, then Aristakēs needs to be thought of as a Byzantine author quite as much as an Armenian one, making his reflections on urban communities and identities as relevant for the study of eleventh-century Byzantium as for eleventh-century Armenia.

⁵⁴ Aristakēs 62.20-21; Canard and Berbérian, 52: *i Dawit'...i Dunac'in*.