

# Historical Tradition, Memory and Law in Vaspurakan in the Era of Gagik Arcruni

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Scholars of medieval Armenia owe a great debt of gratitude to Step‘anos Ōrbelean, historian and metropolitan archbishop of Siwnik‘ at the end of the thirteenth century. Not only did he compile his own *Patmut‘iwn nahangin Sisakan* [*History of the Province of Sisakan*], a vast, variegated and under-appreciated work devoted to the history of Siwnik‘; he was also responsible for the survival of the principal witness to the historical tradition of Vaspurakan, T‘ovma Arcruni’s *Patmut‘iwn tann Arcruneac‘* [*History of the House of Arcrunik‘*]. For if Step‘anos had not requested a copy of T‘ovma’s *History* from Catholicos Zak‘aria of Alt‘amar, Zak‘aria would not have commissioned Daniēl the scribe to undertake that task, and M10451, the solitary manuscript to preserve T‘ovma’s *History* in its entirety, would not have been created in 1303 CE.<sup>1</sup> There are, of course, aspects of Daniēl’s endeavour which remain unknown. We do not know exactly what records Daniēl had at his disposal but he does reveal that the copy was made ‘under the shade’ of the church of the Holy Cross of Alt‘amar, suggesting that he had found what he needed within the archives on the island itself.<sup>2</sup> Nor is it clear what happened after Daniēl had finished making the copy, for while one would have expected immediate despatch to Step‘anos in Siwnik‘, the final colophon reports what happened after the death of Zak‘aria in 1326 from the perspective of his immediate family, implying that the manuscript was still on Alt‘amar or somewhere in Vaspurakan, rather than in Siwnik‘.<sup>3</sup> As Step‘anos Ōrbelean died in 1304, it could be that the manuscript was never sent or that if it was, it was swiftly returned. But we can be certain that without the request from Step‘anos, this manuscript would not have been copied, and our knowledge of the historical and legal traditions of Vaspurakan would be immeasurably poorer.

Before turning to consider certain features of T‘ovma’s *History*, it is worth reflecting on how Daniēl conceived of the text. In his concluding colophon, Daniēl recorded that this “beautifully composed *History*” had been written by the *vardapet* T‘ovma.<sup>4</sup> *Vardapet* is not a title associated with the author in the work. Rather it was Kirakos Ganjankec‘i, writing between 1265 and 1270, who first refers to T‘ovma as a *vardapet*.<sup>5</sup> Although T‘ovma was evidently a cleric — his account of the death of Ašot Arcruni, reporting only questions of a spiritual dimension asked by the stricken prince and commenting on his confident hope in salvation, seems to confirm this — he may not have held the rank of *vardapet*.<sup>6</sup> Daniēl reports that T‘ovma had started with Adam and Noah and then advanced

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<sup>1</sup> T‘ovma Arcruni 2010, 26–30 and 307; T‘ovma Arcruni 1887, 319.

<sup>2</sup> The second anonymous continuator, writing in the third decade of the twelfth century, refers to “this book of T‘ovma the historian,” suggesting that he considered the first continuation to be part of T‘ovma’s original composition; T‘ovma Arcruni 1887, 317; T‘ovma Arcruni 2010, 306: *զմատեանս Թովմայի պատմագիրս զայս*. Both T‘ovma’s own *History* and the first so-called continuation on break off mid-sentence, suggesting that they had become fused before this date: T‘ovma Arcruni 1887, 261 and 305; T‘ovma Arcruni 2010, 263 and 296.

<sup>3</sup> T‘ovma Arcruni 1887, 321–326; T‘ovma Arcruni 2010, 308–312.

<sup>4</sup> T‘ovma Arcruni 1887, 318; T‘ovma Arcruni 2010, 306: *զեղեցկայարմար Պատմութիւնս այս գոր սրարեալ ստուգարանութեամբ անյտղթ եւ գիտնական վարդապետին Թովմայի*.

<sup>5</sup> Kirakos Ganjakec‘i 1961, 7: *Թովմայ վարդապետն*.

<sup>6</sup> T‘ovma Arcruni 1887, 248–251; T‘ovma Arcruni 2010, 252–254.

to consider individual members of the house of Arcrunik', their deeds and purposes.<sup>7</sup> The principal context in which T'ovma had depicted the Arcrunik', according to Daniël, was in conflict with the Muslims, fighting to remove their wicked presence from many places. This is not wholly correct because T'ovma's narrative also depicts members of the Arcruni family in violent conflict with one another and with rival princely houses in Vaspurakan and beyond; moreover it contains significant passages which lack any Arcruni association.<sup>8</sup> Daniël then observes that the work focused on "the divinely-crowned, pious and most wise king of Armenia, Gagik, who by his wisdom and orthodox life and by God's will reigned over many lands... He was responsible for building churches, in particular this most famous and wonderfully constructed holy church of the Holy Cross of Aht'amar."<sup>9</sup> In other words, Daniël believed that T'ovma was responsible for the entirety of the composition from which he had made his copy, including the substantial account of the construction of Holy Cross on Aht'amar. And yet, careful assessment of the work reveals that T'ovma's original narrative breaks off when Gagik was still struggling to establish his authority, in c. 904 CE, and so before he was crowned king (in c. 908 CE) and before he began building on Aht'amar. This famous description of the building of the church of Holy Cross on Aht'amar appears in one of the later writings appended to the original work, rather than within T'ovma's own composition.<sup>10</sup> It was composed by someone who was writing shortly after Gagik's death in 943 — and so some forty years after T'ovma — with his own literary and historical purposes. Daniel's assumption that T'ovma was responsible for the whole work was therefore mistaken.

This is not the occasion to analyse every dimension of the compilation preserved under the title of T'ovma Arcruni's *Patmut'awn tann Arcruneac'*. Since the publication of Thomson's inestimable translation and commentary thirty years ago, important studies by Darbinyan-Melik'yan and Tēr-Vardanean have appeared on the sources and the editions and manuscripts of T'ovma's *History*.<sup>11</sup> In 2010 the latter also published a new edition of the text, drawing upon not only M10451 but also several other manuscripts, including two preserved in the Mekhitarist collection in Venice, which had not previously been consulted.<sup>12</sup> Instead, this paper is limited to addressing the themes of historical tradition, memory and law in Vaspurakan in the era of Gagik Arcruni, primarily, although by no means exclusively, through T'ovma's *History*. It will argue that historical tradition in Vaspurakan at this time was plural and contested, far more dynamic than has been appreciated hitherto. Secondly there is much to be gained from considering T'ovma's *History* in terms of historical memory and the complex relationship between the distant past and the present as constructed in a single work of history. Not only could the remote past be used to prefigure and make sense of the present, thereby imbuing ancient narratives with significance for studying contemporary concerns, attitudes and practices; existing historical works could also provide archetypes and imagery to inform — and sometimes skew — representations of the present. The creative refashioning of the distant and more recent Arcruni past expressed in the so-called *History of the Anonymous Story-Teller*, a work confusingly attributed to Pseudo-Šapuh Bagratuni, will briefly be considered in this context. And finally, evidence for the existence of a vernacular legal culture in Vaspurakan will be introduced and

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<sup>7</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 318–319; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 306–307.

<sup>8</sup> For example, book II.3 lacks any Arcruni dimension: T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 85–98; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 122–133.

<sup>9</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 319; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 307: *սատուածայասկ եւ բարեպաշտ եւ ամենինաստն թագաւորն Հայոց Գագիկ որ ինաստույթեանք եւ ուղղափառ վարութիւն իրովք եւ կամաւքն Աստուծոյ տիրեաց բազում աշխարհաց... Եւ եղեւ առիթ շինութեան եկեղեցեաց եւս առանկ գերահռչակ եւ սքանչելագործ սուրբ եկեղեցոյս Սուրբ Իւրաշխ Աղթամարայ.*

<sup>10</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 297–299; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 290–292.

<sup>11</sup> Thomson 1985; Darbinyan-Melik'yan 2006; and Tēr-Vardanean 2009.

<sup>12</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 30–34. The two manuscripts in Venice: V1402 and V291. M10451 is the manuscript described by Thomson as preserved in the Matenadaran but uncatalogued: Thomson 1985, 15 and n. 1.

compared with contemporary evidence from other regions of Armenia. While historical tradition was fluid, legal culture was less susceptible to change.

Let us start therefore with three particular features of T'ovma Arcruni's *History* which reveal something of the nature and character of historical writing in Vaspurakan in the second half of the ninth and first half of the tenth centuries. The identity of his sponsor remains contested. In the original preface, T'ovma states that he was commissioned by Grigor, lord [*tēr*] of Arcrunik' and prince [*išxan*] of Vaspurakan.<sup>13</sup> This is Grigor Deranik, born in 847 CE who succeeded his father Ašot in 874 and was killed in an ambush in 887 CE. Elsewhere in the text, however, we find references to his son Gagik as patron: "We, in accordance with your command, Gagik, commander of Armenia and prince of Vaspurakan, have attempted to convey in abbreviated form the stories of the past."<sup>14</sup> Gagik is also addressed as "valiant lover of words," although it is telling that he is never addressed as king, a title he secured in 908.<sup>15</sup> Although it is possible that T'ovma or a copyist simply made a mistake and conflated the two figures, the slightly different titles applied to them suggests that this distinction should be maintained. In other words, T'ovma had successive sponsors, father and son, both of whom had literary interests. And since Gagik did not succeed his father Grigor, in 887 CE, but his elder brother Ašot, in November 903 CE, evidently T'ovma compiled his *History* over the course of at least sixteen years. Quite why Ašot is not similarly addressed as a sponsor is not clear. The sympathetic description of Ašot's death contains no hint of antagonism between them; indeed T'ovma asserts that he was beside him as he lay dying, an occasion which deprived him of "my valiant and great prince, my hero and glorious chief... Ašot the honourable, noble and grandly eminent, absolutely the most prominent among all the Armenians."<sup>16</sup> Although Ašot's attitude to Arcruni historical tradition remains obscure, we can be confident that both his father and brother sought to use T'ovma's skills as a historian to record the Arcruni past and promote present Arcruni interests.

Less well-known than the double sponsorship of the work is the prominence afforded to another figure, Gurgēn Apupelč, prince of Anjawacik'. He is repeatedly described as *k'aj*, valiant, and treated in a sympathetic manner, even when his actions bring him into conflict with Grigor Deranik. Two passages reveal why this is the case. In the first, the author observes the following: "With particular joy I am delighted to undertake the history of the noble, glorious and victorious champion Gurgēn," one descended from two royal lines and one deserving of the most abundant praise, the equal of the martyrs.<sup>17</sup> Moreover after another long eulogy, T'ovma acknowledges that he is unable to assemble a full account of his deeds but that "some others have written before us and have set down in one account."<sup>18</sup> Later on, he notes that Gurgēn increased in strength in many places — Tarōn, Anjewacik', Arzn and everywhere — "as the records which were kept before us indicate."<sup>19</sup> When taken together,

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<sup>13</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 3; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 51: *Եւ արդ եւ սակս որոյ մերս է շարագրութեան յեղանակի իննիոր ի քէն Գրիգոր Արծրունեաց տէր եւ Վասպուրական իշխան.*

<sup>14</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 45; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 89: *Չոր եւ մեր ըստ հրամանի քում Գագիկ զարավար Հայոց եւ Վասպուրական իշխան ջան յանձին տարեալ ընդ համաստատութիւն գրուցատրոյթեանց անցեալ.*

<sup>15</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 76; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 114: *քաջոյ բանասիրաց Գագիկ Վասպուրական եւ մեծ զարավար Հայոց.*

<sup>16</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 248; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 252: *զի ի քաջէն իմ եւ ի մեծ իշխանէն, ի քաջատոհմիկ եւ ի բարեխառ գիտոյն իմնէ գրկեալ լինիմ ... ՉԱշտոմէ սսեմ գնագելի եւ զբարձրագահ ճոխացելոյ փեմնասպեռէ, յընդհանուր նախագահանստեալ ի մէջ բոլոր Հայաստանեայցս...*

<sup>17</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 192; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 209: *Յաւէտ իրախնանոյթեանք բուն հարկանել ախորժելի է ինձ զպատմութենէ քաջատոհմիկ եւ բարեխառ բարեխաղթ նահատակէն ... ՉԳորզինայ սսեմ.*

<sup>18</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 198; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 214: *յառաջագոյն քան զմեզ այրոց ոմանց բանակարգեալ, գրեալ, հաւաքեալ է ի մի շար...*

<sup>19</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 208; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 221: *Իսկ Գորզէն ար ըստ արեւ սներ զարտութեանք ի բազում քան թէ ի սակաւ տեղիս, գոր ի Տարան եւ գոր յԱնձաւացիս եւ գոր յԱրզն եւ գոր առ այլ ամենայն ուրէք, որպէս ցուցանեն յիշատակարանքն, որք յառաջ քան զմեզ հոգացան.*

these passages indicate that T'ovma had access to a contemporary collection of stories which focused on the deeds of Gurgēn Apupelč and promoted his reputation; it is even possible that the first-person narrative cited above was derived from this collection rather than being written by T'ovma himself. The inclusion of passages with a pro-Gurgēn spin generates tension in the narrative when Gurgēn and Grigor Deranik are depicted confronting one another. It is often Grigor Deranik, one of the sponsors of the work, who is deemed to be in the wrong and criticised for his actions. By way of illustration, while Gurgēn passes up an opportunity to kill Deranik when the latter is asleep, Grigor Deranik captures and imprisons Gurgēn on at least two occasions and is described as being false to Gurgēn when seizing territory from him.<sup>20</sup> In other words, T'ovma had access to a body of material from a related but separate branch of the extended Arcruni clan, the Anjewacik', now preserved only within T'ovma's *History*. It is striking that Gurgēn himself was interested in learning and scholarship, judging by a solitary colophon, dated AE 322 [873/4 CE] and published by Mat'evosyan:

With the assistance of Jesus Christ, the martyrology of the servant of Christ [Abdlmseh] was translated from Syriac into Armenian, at the command of the God-protected Lord Gurgēn Arcruni, lord of Anjawac'ik', 322 of the Armenia era, for the intercession and assistance of himself and his wife, God-loving Heřinē, and his sons Tačat and Atovm...<sup>21</sup>

We can be confident that this is Gurgēn Apupelč because T'ovma tells us in his *History* that Gurgēn married Heřinē the widow of Mušel lord of Anjawacik'; and that his son Atom succeeded to his domains after his death.<sup>22</sup>

The third feature of T'ovma's *History* which confirms the vibrancy of historical tradition in Vaspurakan is that it is found to have supplementary materials appended to it. T'ovma's own composition breaks off in mid-sentence, indicating the loss of one or more folios from the underlying manuscript.<sup>23</sup> It is followed, however, by at least four separate collections of material.<sup>24</sup> These have been recognised as later additions but their significance has not been appreciated, perhaps because they have been treated differently in the published editions and translations, perhaps because they have been perceived as mere adjuncts to T'ovma's *History*.<sup>25</sup> Three of the four are anonymous and untitled, further diminishing their status as independent compositions, or abridgements thereof. Only the short colophon of Daniēl the scribe, composed in 1303 CE and discussed above, contains a specific attribution. Again this is not the occasion to embark upon a full study of all four collections;

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<sup>20</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 209; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 222: *Եւ զի ստեալ Դերանկին Գուրգինայ...*

<sup>21</sup> Mat'evosyan 1988, no. 45: *Ազնականութեամբ Յիսուսի Քրիստոսի թարգմանեցաւ Վկայաբանութիւնն ծառային Քրիստոսի յատրի գրոց ի հայս, հրամանաւ ստտուածապահ տեսոն Գուրգենայ Արծրունոյ Անձաւացեաց տեսոն ՅԻԲ Թուականութեանն Հայոց ի բարեխոսութիւն եւ յազնականութիւն անձին իւրոյ եւ անուանոյ իւրոյ Հեղինէի ստտուածասիրի եւ որդոց իւրոց Տանասոյ եւ Ատովմայ.*

<sup>22</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 209 and 235; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 222 and 242.

<sup>23</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 261; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 263.

<sup>24</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 2010: 264–296, titled *Patmut'iwñ Ananun* or *Anonymous History*, in twelve chapters; 296–306, titled *Yaweluac* or *Supplement*; 306–308, titled *Yišatakaran 1* or *First Colophon*, the work of Daniēl the scribe in 1303 CE; and 308–312, titled *Yišatakaran 2* or *Second Colophon*. This is the best description of the four collections of material and will be used in this paper.

<sup>25</sup> The treatment of the first collection illustrates this observation. In T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 262, the text continues without a separate heading; book IV.1 opens at 268 and extends to the conclusion of IV.11, at 305. Thomson, 1985, treats this hiatus differently, inserting a heading 'Anonymous Continuator' at the end of T'ovma's own composition, at 325, and then repeating the same heading at the start of book IV.1, at 332, but following the same chapter divisions. T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 264, follows Thomson in inserting *Patmut'iwñ Ananun*, in square brackets, after the original ending, but differs in identifying this as chapter 1. As a result it appears in twelve chapters in the most recent edition, 264–296, rather than eleven chapters in the other publications.

each has its own characteristics. Even a cursory examination however reveals that the first of these so-called continuations is not strictly a continuation at all but rather a separate, albeit anonymous, historical composition. It opens abruptly, without introduction or contextualization, with an account of the birth of Grigor Deranik's third son, Gurgēn, in 882 CE. Yet the final notices of T'ovma's original text depict a mature Gurgēn valiantly defending the eastern districts of his territorial inheritance and suffering a heavy defeat somewhere near lake Urmia.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the narrative has been shifted two decades back in time. The following notices show that this anonymous compilation offers a proximate but separate version of events to that in T'ovma's own composition. This can be seen in terms of content — does queen Sop'i pass away one year and eight months after the death of her husband Grigor Deranik, as T'ovma asserts, or just seven months afterwards, as the anonymous indicates?<sup>27</sup> — but it is also displayed in the numerous orthographical differences, identified at the start of the twentieth century by Biwzandac'i and referred to briefly by Thomson.<sup>28</sup> By way of illustration, the fortress and city of Vantosp in T'ovma's *History* is called simply Van in the anonymous work; and T'ovma's Awšin is rendered Ap'sin.<sup>29</sup> Far from being a continuation, it would be more accurate to describe these passages as deriving from a separate historical compilation, also focused on the deeds of the Arcruni family, which stretched from the birth of Grigor Deranik's third son Gurgēn in 882 CE through to the death of Gagik Arcruni in 943 CE. It was commissioned by the author's "dear friend" who was "foremost of brave men" and a "great benefactor and ancestor of a heroic and distinguished house."<sup>30</sup> Since the author also records that the composition was for the glory of the house of Arcrunik' and praises the character, deeds and building activities of Gagik Arcruni in fulsome terms, it is highly likely that he was invited to compose the work by one of Gagik's relatives soon after his death. The concluding elegy to Gagik is incomplete, breaking off mid-sentence.<sup>31</sup> Once again, this seems to indicate that by the time this anonymous composition was fused with T'ovma's original, it too had suffered the loss of at least one folio.

To recap, it has been argued that T'ovma's *History* refers to two patrons; that he drew upon a collection of traditions associated with Gurgēn Apupelč, prince of Anjawacik', which were incorporated without significant alteration, thereby generating tensions in the narrative; and that the supplements to his *History*, previously misidentified as continuations, should be treated and studied as distinct compositions, with their own purposes and features. The first of these — itself a compilation, comprising both prose and poetry — was compiled shortly after the death of Gagik Arcruni in the middle of the tenth century by an anonymous author who was commissioned by one of the leading members of the Arcruni house. Therefore T'ovma's *History* reveals that three distinct historical compositions were commissioned by four Arcruni princes within a narrow timeframe, perhaps six decades (c. 890 — 950 CE). If one also accepts the *History* of the Anonymous Storyteller as another expression of historical tradition in Vaspurakan — albeit of a slightly later date and very different nature, on which more below — it is clear that this was an era when the composition of historical literature in Vaspurakan flourished.

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<sup>26</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 260–261; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 262–263.

<sup>27</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 229 and 269; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 238 and 269.

<sup>28</sup> Biwzandac'i 1905. Thomson 1985, 327, n. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Vantosp: T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 63, 242; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 104 and 248; and eight other instances. Van: T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 263, 308; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 265, 299; and four other instances. Awšin: T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 232–234 and 239–242; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 240–241 and 245–248, although the edition has rendered this consistently Ap'sin, relegating Awšin found in M10451, to the footnotes, establishing consistency but losing the significance of the nuance. Ap'sin: T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 273–275; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 272–274.

<sup>30</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 290; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 285: ...*ևս քեզ սիրելի քաջ, եւ քաջի արանց նախնական...* T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 296; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 290: *ն՛յլ քաջազդի եւ տան արգասաւոր եւ նախնական մեծ.*

<sup>31</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 305; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 296.

Let us now turn to consider T'ovma's treatment of the past and specifically his approach to the distant past. This is not to suggest that the second half of T'ovma's *History*, covering the era of T'ovma's own lifetime and events of the recent past, from the middle of the ninth century down to 904, is not of significance. Its value has long been recognised, comprising a version of the recent past compiled under Arcruni, not Bagratuni, patronage and completed some twenty years before the more prominent and influential *History* of Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless studying the remote past as it was devised by T'ovma has its advantages, for it allows us to discern issues which were deemed by T'ovma to be meaningful for the times in which he was living and working. T'ovma's presentation of the remote past is largely derivative, in the sense that it borrows extensively from known works — principally the *History* of Movsēs Xorenac'i but also the Armenian version of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius, the *Histories* of Elišē and Sebēos and several other compositions.<sup>33</sup> There are, however, a multitude of passages and details concerning the conduct and experiences of earlier generations of the Arcruni house which are unique to T'ovma's *History*. Arguably these were imagined and inserted by T'ovma himself. This contention is supported by two features. In addition to the consistent presentation of the past from an Arcruni perspective, implying the direction of a single mind, it is striking that the Arsacid king of Armenia, Artašēs, is described as favouring one Hamam Arcruni and sending him as an envoy to the emperor Hadrian.<sup>34</sup> As Thomson observed, this Hamam Arcruni is unattested outside T'ovma's *History* and is unlikely to be a historical character.<sup>35</sup> But his name is significant, for Hamam is a personal name of Arabic origin. The earliest attested Armenian to bear this name, Hamam Amatuni, appears in the final notices of Łewond's *History*, a work of contested date but composed either in the last decade of the eighth century or the final years of the ninth century.<sup>36</sup> Prince Hamam of Ałuank' and the scholar Hamam Arewelc'i, author of a commentary on Proverbs, are also associated with the end of the ninth century.<sup>37</sup> Whilst not capable of definitive proof, it seems that the name Hamam emerges in the ninth century, supporting the contention that T'ovma was responsible for the additions and revisions.<sup>38</sup> This reworking of the past to promote the involvement of the Arcrunik' — one could almost speak of an 'Arcrunization' of the past — had another consequence, for it transposed concerns, practices and attitudes which belonged to T'ovma's present-day into the remote past. In other words, these alterations and additions may add nothing to our knowledge of the remote past but have the potential to contribute to our understanding of the political, social and cultural context in which T'ovma was active, specifically Vaspurakan at the end of the ninth century.

Some elements of this reworked antiquity have long been appreciated. T'ovma was determined to anchor the genealogical origin of the Arcrunik' in the deep past. He therefore maintained that the Arcrunik' were descended from Senek'erim, the king of Assyria, who was in turn descended from Semiramis who was in turn descended from Noah's son, Sem.<sup>39</sup> T'ovma also inserted Arcruni figures into well-known episodes within the Armenian historical tradition. Tiroc' Arcruni was baptised by St. Grigor the Illuminator alongside king Trdat while Vahan Arcruni fought alongside Vardan

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<sup>32</sup> Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc'i 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Thomson 1985, Introduction, especially 20–51.

<sup>34</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 55; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 97–98.

<sup>35</sup> Thomson 1985, 119, n. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Łewond 2007, 850. The contested date: Greenwood 2012, 99–121.

<sup>37</sup> Thomson, 2005, 1–2.

<sup>38</sup> It seems very likely that T'ovma was also responsible for including bare lists of names purportedly belonging to members of the Arcruni house. T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 45; T'ovma Arcruni, 2010, 89: Cyrus, Vargēn, Vahan, Šambit', Ĵaj, Ĵajur. T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 56; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 98: Hamazasp, Šawarš, Asod, Babgean; T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 57; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 99: Mušel, Vahan, Nerseh, another Babgēn, Tiroc'.

<sup>39</sup> For the first specific association between Senek'erim and the Arcrunik', see T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 46; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 90.

Mamikonean at the battle of Awarayr and died with him.<sup>40</sup> These revisions confirm the ongoing importance of establishing a secure and complete ancestry as well as remembering and promoting the achievements of heroic ancestors.

There are however other aspects to this imagined past whose value has not been appreciated. The first of this is territorial. Not only do these narratives illustrate how members of the Arcruni house participated in key historical episodes; they also justify contemporary Arcruni possession of certain districts and locations on the basis of foundation, concession or control in the past. T'ovma repeatedly identifies the city of Vantosp on the eastern shore of the eponymous lake as the city founded by Semiramis.<sup>41</sup> This establishes an ancient connection between the site and the Arcruni house. According to T'ovma, king Artasēs restored to Vač'ē and Aršawir Arcruni the mountain of Sim and Aĭjnik as far as the border of Asorestan, respectively to the west and south-west of lake Van.<sup>42</sup> Subsequently Sahak Arcruni, the son of Vač'ē, was entrusted by king Artasēs with the district of Aĭbag, to the east of lake Van.<sup>43</sup> The same passage reveals that Sahak also married Jaylamar, who controlled the fortresses of Jmar and Sring, in Lesser Aĭbag, and these feature regularly in the *History*.<sup>44</sup> Aĭan Arcruni shed bitter tears of anger and remorse before the catholicos Sahak III for the conduct of his relatives; he later became a hermit and was buried in Hadamakert.<sup>45</sup> These and other passages not only inserted members of the Arcruni house into the Armenian past; they also associated them with regions and places under Arcruni control at the time T'ovma was writing.

The deep past also supplied a convenient canvas on which to depict the contemporary political rivalry between the Bagratunik' and Arcrunik' houses. Several features of this rivalry can be traced in a single narrative. T'ovma records how in the time of Herod, king Arĭam, the father of Abgar, tormented the Bagratunik', torturing some and putting others to the sword.<sup>46</sup> As Thomson notes, he derived this account from the *History* of Movsēs Xorenac'i (II.24–25).<sup>47</sup> But T'ovma develops the original account by introducing an otherwise unattested figure, one Ĵajuĭ Arcruni.<sup>48</sup> Not only did he rescue the leading member of the Bagratunik', Enanos, by cutting him down from a gibbet; he also settled him in the district of Aragac', in the village of T'alın. These were the circumstances which gave rise to the first marriage between an Arcruni prince and a Bagratuni princess, Ĵajuĭ's son Sahak marrying Smbatuhi, daughter of Enanos. This episode not only attests that the relationship between the two princely houses was ancient; through the actions of Ĵajuĭ, T'ovma is also claiming the superiority of the Arcrunik' in that relationship, acting to prevent the slaughter of the Bagratunik' and then endowing them with lands in Aragac'. Enanos is merely the passive recipient of Arcruni intervention and assistance. Nor does the rivalry end there. In the next generation, it is Xuran Arcruni, the great prince of the Arcrunik' and commander-in-chief of the army and cavalry of the kingdom of Greater Armenia, who is recorded as being the first Armenian Christian, baptised by the apostle Thaddeus.<sup>49</sup> This was clearly intended to subvert and supersede the tradition reported by Movsēs

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<sup>40</sup> The baptism of Tiroc' Arcruni: T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 57; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 99. The martyrdom of Vahan Arcruni at Awarayr: T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 79–80; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 117–118.

<sup>41</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 63; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 104: *ի Վանտոսսյ՝ ի քաղաքն Շամիրասնայ...*; T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 240; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 246: *ի քաղաքն Շամիրասնայ ի Վանտոսսյ*.

<sup>42</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 52; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 95.

<sup>43</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 54; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 97.

<sup>44</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 135; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 163 and four other instances, all dated to the second half of the ninth century.

<sup>45</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 83; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 121.

<sup>46</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 45; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 89.

<sup>47</sup> Thomson 1985, 109, n. 4.

<sup>48</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 45–46; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 89–90.

<sup>49</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 47; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 90–91.

Xorenac'i (II.33), but not by T'ovma, that on his arrival in Edessa, Thaddeus stayed with Tobias Bagratuni and that he became the first Armenian Christian. Intriguingly the Arcrunik' are described as high-ranked and equal-throned, and although T'ovma does not reveal with whom they are deemed to be equivalent in status, it seems highly likely that he was thinking of the Bagratunik'.<sup>50</sup> In this instance, T'ovma exploited the freedom afforded by the constructed character of the historical past to articulate aspects of contemporary political discourse. As we shall see below, other features of T'ovma's present, specifically in relation to legal culture, may also have seeped into his version of the remote past.

The above analysis addresses one form of historical memory, the re-imagination of the past by an author. Another expression of historical memory is displayed in T'ovma's representation of the recent past and the present, one which works in the opposite direction. Instead of the historian reshaping the past to suit his own purposes, we find the historian being influenced by Armenian historical tradition in his construction of the present. Elišē's account of the Armenian rebellion under the leadership of Vardan Mamikonean in the middle of the fifth century shaped the historical consciousness of T'ovma and others. Elišē had portrayed the Armenian people as a community of Christians, united in their confession of faith, recognising the leadership of one Catholicos, and devised in opposition to an impious, 'ash-worshipping' Persian *šahanšah* and the administrative and religious institutions of Eran. This image, of a beleaguered but defiant people preferring martyrdom to compromise, oppressed by an imperial Persian 'other' proved to be particularly potent for the construction of Armenian identity across space and time. Therefore when T'ovma came to describing the years of dislocation, exile and oppression experienced in the middle of the ninth century at the hands of the 'Abbasid caliphate and its representatives, he exploited the model supplied by Elišē's *History*. As Thomson has shown, T'ovma based his description of the caliph Ja'far al-Mutawakkil on Elišē's description of the impious *šahanšah* Yazdegird II, just as his Bugha, the Turkic commander who campaigned across Armenia in the 850s, was modelled on Elišē's Mihrnerseh.<sup>51</sup> T'ovma's portrait of the Sājīd emir Awšin at the end of the ninth century, also owed much to Elišē's archetype. Awšin is depicted as loving evil and hating peace, as insatiable in his thirst for human blood, as plotting constantly, above all, as one who had reintroduced Persian dominion.<sup>52</sup> Here once again T'ovma was invoking the memory of, and inviting comparison with, the villainous Yazdegird II, rather than describing the character of Awšin. Yet there are also some signs of anxiety on T'ovma's part, that the circumstances he was living through and recording could no longer be reconciled with the historiographical framework. For he was faced with an uncomfortable reality, that all three sons of Grigor Deranik, Ašot, Gagik and Gurgēn were negotiating with Awšin and submitting to him in return for favours, to the detriment of fellow Armenians. They could no longer be represented as performing the traditional roles of steadfast Christian champions united in opposition to a Persian oppressor as had been envisaged by Elišē. Certainly T'ovma had to work hard to justify their conduct and his explanations were not wholly convincing. By commenting "willingly and unwillingly performing the things ordered, they went and returned one by one," T'ovma left his opinion of their behaviour curiously, but deliberately, opaque.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 46; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 90: *Դարձեալ վերստին հրճուանաք ռոռգեալ լինի պատմութեան սստ սակս բարձրագահ, համայօռո նոխազգի ազգապետութեան Արժրունեացս...*

<sup>51</sup> Thomson 1985, 46–50 and 139, nn. 3, 5 and 6.

<sup>52</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 239; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 245: *Բայց Աւշին որդի Ապուսէնի, քանզի էր այր խռովասէր, ստեցող զխաղաղութիւն, անյազ առ արքունն արեան մարդկան...;* T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 232; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 240: *Որդին Ապուսէնի Աւշին, որ զպարսկային հարստութիւնն հզարսպէս յարթութեամբ ի գրովս եհան...*

<sup>53</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 239; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 246: *կամաոր եւ սկամայ զնորայն կատարելով հրամայեալս եւ երթային մի մի, նոյնպէս եւ դառնային...*

By the middle of the tenth century, Elišē's model for Armenian engagement with Persians was redundant. The fiction of Persian 'otherness' could no longer be maintained. The writer of the anonymous historical compilation, defined previously, presents the relationship between Gagik Arcruni and Awšin's brother and successor, Yūsuf abu Saj, in completely different terms. Gagik is no longer represented as being deceived by a cruel and oppressive Sājīd emir. Instead their relationship is imagined as warm and close.<sup>54</sup> On hearing of his reputation, bravery and intelligence, Yūsuf invites Gagik to his court where he is deeply impressed by the latter's wisdom. They discuss profound and obscure questions, otherwise undefined, as well as various aspects of kingship, including practical solutions to present dilemmas, knowledge of past royal dynasties and the dimensions of their kingdoms. Gagik is depicted as a young and handsome man, his outward appearance reflecting his inner virtues. This passage strongly evokes tenth-century Persianate salon culture where the court was treated as the locus of intellectual dialogue and debate.<sup>55</sup> It seems improbable that a Sājīd would have sought to take any lessons in kingship from an Armenian prince, nor that an Armenian prince would have given them, but the story clearly held meaning for its author and reflects something of the contemporary cultural milieu. Although the continuation is undated, as discussed above its composition seems best suited to a time shortly after Gagik's death in 943, when memories of Gagik were strongest and such a work held greatest significance. Evidently in the middle of the tenth century, even the recent past was capable of being refashioned. Now that the threat of Sājīd depredations had disappeared and even the memory of them was fading, the relationship between Yūsuf and Gagik could be reimagined on new terms, as equals respecting and learning from one another. Not only does this indicate that Armenian historical writing, at least in Arcruni Vaspurakan, was now in dialogue with contemporary Arabic and Persian literature and forms and modes of expression; it also suggests that a process of political and social transformation was underway, with traditional loyalties and identities breaking down. It is striking to observe that one of the representations on the façade of Alt'amar is that of Jonah before the king of Nineveh, with its citizens looking on.<sup>56</sup> Although capable of different interpretations, this tableau suggests that dialogue in a court setting was an element of contemporary rulership which Gagik Arcruni wished to have portrayed, one that obtains its literary analogue in the description of Gagik's encounter with Yūsuf outlined above.

T'ovma's *History* was not the only work of historical literature to emerge from Vaspurakan in the era of Gagik Arcruni. The little-studied *History of the Anonymous Storyteller* — sometimes known as the *History* of pseudo-Šapuh Bagratuni as a result of an unfortunate misidentification in the early part of the twentieth century — deepens this sense of social and cultural engagement between local elites and the collapse of historic binary categories, Christian and Muslim, Armenian and Persian.<sup>57</sup> It is a highly imaginative work, a creative blend of fiction and history in which separate,

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<sup>54</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 283–284; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 279–281.

<sup>55</sup> See *EP* s.v. *Madjlis* [Consulted online on 15 June 2016 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_0606](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0606)]: a meeting place, assembly or chamber for debates, often associated in the tenth century with the setting, real and fictional, in which political and judicial decisions were discussed and adopted, plaintiffs and panegyrists gathered to petition the sovereign, and poetry was recited. *EP* s.v. *Munāzara* [Consulted online on 15 June 2016 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_5507](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5507)]: a formal theological or juridical dispute, employing a question and answer framework, but also a rhetorical contest for entertainment. It also defines a literary genre in which two or more figures debate and display their intellectual and rhetorical gifts. The court of Sayf al-Dawla in Aleppo in the middle of the tenth century is often viewed as representative of such a culture, where poets such as Abū Firās and al-Mutanabbī and scholars such as Ibn Nubāta were patronized; see *EP* s.v. *Sayf al-Dawla* [Consulted online on 15 June 2016 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_1010](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1010)].

<sup>56</sup> The scene is located on the western flank of the southern façade, facing the palace; see Jones, 2007, 92–95 and fig. 4.30, for brief discussion.

<sup>57</sup> Darbinyan-Melik'yan 1971; Thomson 1985.

but homonymous, historical figures have been fused to form single, composite characters.<sup>58</sup> It is not a work to turn to if one wants to determine ‘what happened’; there is no value in trying to disentangle the real from the make-believe. But even invented worlds reveal the context in which they were imagined. While the characters may be partly, or wholly, fictional, the space they occupy is remarkably similar to the space used for episodes in T‘ovma’s *History*. Events are set principally against the backdrop of eastern Vaspurakan, the districts of Hēr, Salmast and Zarewand and the cities of Mosul and Tabriz. Critically, there is no hint of any movement westwards to Cappadocia, prefiguring the relocation of the Arcruni elite under Senek‘erim in 1021, nor do figures of Turkic descent feature. These elements are important when seeking to date its compilation. Although incapable of definitive proof, in my view, the work seems to fit the circumstances of the later tenth or early eleventh centuries.<sup>59</sup> This collection of entertaining stories is in no sense a work of religious history. Nor can it be described as the history of a single family, given the prominence of Arcruni, Anjawaci and Rštuni figures. But as a collection of tales pertaining to the regions to the east of Lake Van and around Lake Urmia, this composition offers rare insights into a world which could be characterised as hybrid, a blend of local and regional traditions, practices and beliefs. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the paradigm devised by Elišē, conceptualising ‘Armenian’ and ‘Persian’ identities in antithetical terms, no longer held meaning for the author of the anonymous compilation appended to T‘ovma’s *History*.

The final part of this study assesses the legal culture within which the church of the Holy Cross on Ałt‘amar was established. At first glance, the prospects for research in this field look unpromising. No documents or legal instruments associated with the foundation or endowment of this church — or indeed any other religious institution across the region of Vaspurakan — have been preserved, either in cartularies or by way of inscription. Admittedly the twelfth-century *History* of Matt‘ēos Urhayec‘i records that the country of Vaspurakan handed over by Senek‘erim Arcruni to Basil II in 1021 CE comprised 72 fortresses and 4,400 villages; only the 115 monasteries within Vaspurakan were retained by Senek‘erim.<sup>60</sup> Such precision indicates that a formal transfer of title occurred and Matthew’s account notes that “he [Senek‘erim] gave all this to Basil in writing.” But Matthew does not reveal any further information about the documents which executed and attested this transfer, nor the legal framework within which the transaction was performed. Was it governed by local Armenian tradition, by Byzantine law and practice or a combination of the two?

We can be confident however that Gagik Arcruni was aware of the use of written documents for the foundation and endowment of religious institutions. According to the *History* of Step‘anos Ōrbelean, Gagik Arcruni was present when the new church of Holy Cross at Tat‘ew in Siwnik‘ was consecrated in 355 AE (14 April 906—13 April 907).<sup>61</sup> On that occasion, properties previously transferred to the church were reconfirmed in its possession and new grants were made. The boundaries of the lands vested in the community of Tat‘ew were walked, marked and then described in the single document preserved by Step‘anos.<sup>62</sup> This inviolable and permanent deed was witnessed

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<sup>58</sup> Thomson 1988–89, 176–180.

<sup>59</sup> Thomson, 1988–89, 173, observed that “the written text of the whole *Tale* exhibits medieval grammatical forms and western Armenian spelling more characteristic of the Cilician period”; that such a lively and entertaining collection of stories should have been recast in later forms presents no barrier to an earlier date of compilation.

<sup>60</sup> Matt‘ēos Urhayec‘i, 1991, 54–56: Յայնժամ խորհեցաւ տալ զաշխարհ հայրենեաց իւրոց յարքայն Յունաց Վասիլ եւ առնուլ զՍեբաստիա եւ գրէր վաղվադարձի առ թագաւորն. գոր իբրեւ լուաւ թագաւորն Վասիլ՝ ուրախ եղև եւ ետ նմա զՍեբաստիա. եւ տայր Սենեքերիմ զաշխարհն Վասպուրականի. թեմաբերդս չԲ եւ գեղս ՏՆ եւ զվանորայսն ոչ ետ, այլ պահեաց իւր աղօթարարս. ՃԺԵ վանք եւ ետ զայս ամենայն գրով ի Վասիլն.

<sup>61</sup> Step‘anos Ōrbelean 1861, 168–171.

<sup>62</sup> “Behold these are the boundaries which we have trodden with our own feet, seen with our own eyes and marked with our own hands”. Step‘anos Ōrbelean 1861, 170: Միս այս իսկ են սարսննք զ որ մեր մերովք կոխեալ եւ աչաւք մերովք տեսեալ եւ ձեռաւք մերովք նշանեալ. Distance and terrain make it very unlikely that the boundaries were walked

first by the Catholicos of Armenia, Yovhannēs, who sealed it with his customary ring; secondly by the king of Armenia, Smbat Bagratuni, who “confirmed this deed with my own hand and set my royal seal on it, underneath”; and thirdly by Gagik, in the following terms: “I, Gagik of Vaspurakan and lord of Arcrunik‘, son of Grigor Deranik, am a witness to these grants and the definition of the boundaries of the see of Siwnik‘.”<sup>63</sup> Ten other signatories are listed below Gagik. Intriguingly Gagik and the nine secular lords who witnessed the transaction after him are not recorded as sealing the document; only the final signatory, Yovhannēs, bishop of Siwnik‘, also sealed it with his ring. In other words, the only witnesses to sign and seal the document were Catholicos Yovhannēs, king Smbat and bishop Yovhannēs. It is not clear why this should be the case. The variety of these attestations in form and content is also striking. Again this is hard to fathom but it may indicate that the witnesses attested the transaction individually and personally, reflecting their own understanding of what had taken place. Gagik Arcruni is the only witness to refer specifically to the definition of the boundaries.

The evidence outlined above presents Gagik Arcruni witnessing a legal transaction in Siwnik‘ three years after the death of his elder brother Ašot, in November 903, and two years before he obtained the title of king, probably in 908. This however is not the only evidence for contemporary legal culture in Vaspurakan. T‘ovma’s *History* may not preserve complete charters or other legal documents but the work contains two passages which indicate that T‘ovma himself was familiar with legal language and process. The first occurs in his representation of the distant past. King Artasēs “sealed and confirmed the land” [of Ałbag] for Sahak Arcruni “as a personal inheritance.”<sup>64</sup> Not only was the practice of confirming and sealing associated with king Smbat Bagratuni in identical terms in the transaction described above; the same phrase defining the legal status of property transferred, *i sephakan žaranguť iwn*, is found within the mass of legal documentation preserved by Step‘anos Orbelean, including in the terms of the endowment of the church of St Peter at Šołuagay.<sup>65</sup> It seems highly likely therefore that T‘ovma was reflecting his familiarity with contemporary legal culture when he composed this passage; it is not in any sense a reflection of legal practice in the time of king Artasēs.

The second passage is more detailed. It reports the death of Sop‘i, the widow of Grigor Deranik in 888 or 889 CE, the arrangements for her burial undertaken by her three sons, Gagik and Ašot and Gurgēn, and the grant of four estates in commemoration of both of them. It reads as follows:

But the Lady Sop‘i, having lived one year and 8 months after the death of Deranik, was gathered to her ancestors. And they brought and buried her in the same monastery of Holy Cross. And after this, her sons Gagik and Ašot and Gurgēn prescribed their commemoration for the Feast of Holy Cross; and they gave to the holy Church 4 estates [*agarak*s]: the monastery of P‘šoc‘ and the estate of Ahavank‘, facing the church on the island, and the Rock of Manakert which is opposite, on the south side and Berkri and many other places which the king’s sons transmitted after the death of their father and mother for the needs of Holy Cross of Ałt‘amar; and their commands are as firm as a rock. And if anyone tries to remove, by God’s command may he not inherit his throne

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or marked by those assembled to confirm the earlier grants. The metrical and rhyming features of the sentence imply a legal formula.

<sup>63</sup> Step‘anos Orbelean 1861, 170: *Ես Յովհաննէս՝ շնորհիւն Աստուծոյ կայտորիկոս Հայոց, վկայ եմ այսմ անխախտ եւ անխախտան վճռոյս, որ աւանդեցաւ ի մեծ իշխանացս Սիւնեաց, եւ կնքեցի իմով սովորական մատանեաւս: Ես Սմբատ Բագրատունի թագաւոր Հայոց, հաստատեցի իմով ձեռամբս զայս վճիռս եւ եղի ի վերայ զիմ թագաւորական մատանին ի ստորեւ: Ես Գագիկ Վասպուրականի եւ Արծրունեաց տէր, որդի Գրիգորոյ Դերենկի, վկայ եմ այս ընծայից եւ սահմանադրութեանց այտոյս Սիւնեաց.*

<sup>64</sup> T‘ovma Arcruni 1887, 54; T‘ovma Arcruni 2010, 97: *...եւ կնքեալ զաշխարհն հաստատէ Սահակայ ի սեպիական ժառանգութիւն.*

<sup>65</sup> Step‘anos Orbelean, 1861, 127: *...ընծայէ ի սեպիական ժառանգութիւն սուրբ եկեղեցոյն.*

and his kingdom. And if anyone should wish to confirm, may he be unshaken in this world. Amen.<sup>66</sup>

If we compare this description with the documents preserved intact in the collection of Step‘anos Ōrbelean — forty-four of which date to the period between 839 and 1089 CE — we find considerable overlap in terms of purpose, form and content. The grant of property to a religious community in return for the commemoration of a parent, spouse or child occurs in several charters.<sup>67</sup> By way of illustration, in 359 AE (13 April 910—12 April 911), Šušān, the lady of Siwnik‘, conveyed the village of Artasamux with all its boundaries to the monastery of Xotakert for the sake of the soul of her deceased husband, Ašot, her own soul, and for the health and prosperity of their sons.<sup>68</sup> It was common to prescribe the feast day in the liturgical year when the service of commemoration would take place. In this instance, Grigor Deranik and Sop‘i were to be remembered on the Feast of the Holy Cross but other festivals, including Vardēvar (Transfiguration), could also be stipulated.<sup>69</sup> All of the charters identify the property being conveyed by name; some further describe its location by reference to other locations; and several describe the boundaries of the property being transferred in remarkable detail.<sup>70</sup> It was not unknown for several estates or interests to be transferred at the same time. In 352 AE (15 April 903—14 April 904), Šapuh Bagratuni transferred several villages to the community of Vanevan in the same deed.<sup>71</sup> The use of a sanction clause at the end of the charter to try and deter anyone from violating its terms in the future was standard, although the penalties prescribed varied, from condemnation by the 318 patriarchs (a reference to the Council of Nicaea) to receiving the lot of Cain, or Judas or “the fate of Satan in the eternal fire.”

On the basis of the above analysis, it seems clear that T‘ovma’s description of the donation attests the use of documents by Gagik Arcruni and his brothers to transfer title to land in Vaspurakan. Furthermore the precision of the details supplied — the date of commemoration, the estates conveyed and the retention of the sanction clause — strongly suggests that T‘ovma had access to the deeds themselves. But there are several differences between T‘ovma’s record of the endowment and the documents preserved by St‘epanos Ōrbelean. It appears that the term *agarak* was not used in Siwnik‘ as a term for an estate; the charters employ other terms, including *dastakert* and *giwl*. The sanction

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<sup>66</sup> T‘ovma Arcruni 1887, 229; T‘ovma Arcruni 2010, 238: *Բայց Տիկինն Սոփի կեցեալ յետ մահու Դերանկին գտարի մի եւ զամիսս Ը՛ յաւերաւ առ հարս իւր. եւ տարեալ հանգուցանեն ի նոյն վանս Սուրբ Խաչին: Եւ յետ այսորիկ որոյր նորս Գագիկ եւ Աշոտ եւ Գուրգէն կանոնեցին յիշատակութիւն նոցա ի տունի արքոյ Խաչին, եւ ետուն ի սուրբ եկեղեցին Դ ազարակս, զվանքն Փշոց եւ զազարակն Ահալանք, յանդիման եկեղեցոյն որ ի կղզին, եւ զքարն Մանակերտ որ է հանդէպ հարաւոյ կուսէ, եւ զԲերկրի եւ այլ բազում տեղիս, զոր աւարեցան որոյր թագաւորին յետ մահուան հար եւ մար իւրեանց ի պէտս Սուրբ Խաչին Աղթամարայ, եւ են հրամանք սոցա իբրեւ զվէմ հաստատում. եւ թէ որ խախտել ջանայ՝ ի հրամանէն Աստուծոյ ո՛չ ժառանգէ նա զայժոր իւր եւ թագաւորութիւն: Եւ թէ հաստատել որ կամեացի՝ անասանելի կսցցէ յասմ աշխարհիս. Ամէն.*

<sup>67</sup> Such reciprocity is a feature of many contemporary inscriptions as well, found in both Siwnik‘ and the districts under Bagratuni control. See for example the inscription at Aruč dated to 436 AE (25 March 987—23 March 988): “In the name of God in era 436 I Smbat Šahanšah son of Ašot Šahanšah exempted for the sake of the soul of my father and my health and remission of sin...” It is however only in the eleventh century that the surviving inscriptions begin to record when the commemoration should take place.

<sup>68</sup> Step‘anos Ōrbelean 1861, 173.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 149–150, records the precise boundaries of the village of Arciv: “And these are its boundaries, on the eastern side, that straight line/road which [runs] between Haržik‘ and Berdkanerič‘, it ends at that river, and from there to that hill, to its tower, and from there by way of the watercourse to Sterjac‘ Gavak [‘Barren Gavak’], and along that ridge, to the gap of the field of Vardan, and from there to the end at Arciv. And on the western side, along that ridge of the valley of Lor. And on the southern side, Haržik‘, from that road to that gap, it runs out along the valley down to Sevajord [‘Blackwater’] and up to the rock of the valley of Vanac‘, along the ridge.”

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 133.

recorded by T'ovma — exclusion from the kingdom of heaven — is not found in these terms in the collection of Step'anos Ōrbelean whose sanctions tend to be more like maledictions or curses, involving condemnation and the imposition of additional spiritual liabilities. Nor do the Siwnian documents preserve a blessing clause for anyone who confirms the donation subsequently. This attempt at 'future-proofing' the transaction appears to be unique. The inclusion of this clause may reflect local legal practice in Vaspurakan, although this can only be conjectured, given the limited sample. Collectively however these differences suggest that Vaspurakan legal traditions may not have been identical to those found in Siwnik'.

It is also important to note that some elements in the passage preserved by T'ovma are hard to interpret. T'ovma reports in an earlier passage that Grigor Deranik was buried with his ancestors in the monastery of Holy Cross in the district of Ałbag in 887.<sup>72</sup> The above extract reports that Sop'i was buried in the same monastery of Holy Cross and the implication is that it was the same monastery as her husband. In a later passage, T'ovma records that her eldest son, Ašot, was also buried in the monastery of Holy Cross in the village of Awsi in Ałbag; this occurred in November 903.<sup>73</sup> Yet this extract seems to be describing the grant of specified properties on the shoreline of Lake Van, close to the island of Alt'amar and far away from the eastern district of Ałbag. One of the estates is described as "facing the church on the island" which could refer to the church of the Holy Cross itself. Furthermore T'ovma refers specifically to the brothers granting many other properties after the deaths of their parents for the needs of Holy Cross of Alt'amar. Although the three members of the Arcruni were reportedly buried in Ałbag, this passage is linked to the island of Alt'amar and its church of Holy Cross. This conflation, of two sites dedicated to Holy Cross and associated with the Arcruni family, suggests that the passage has undergone revision. One hypothesis would be that Sop'i was buried in Holy Cross in Ałbag, with grants to fund her perpetual commemoration, but that Arcruni attention later transferred to Holy Cross on Alt'amar, with further grants of proximate estates. Whether this also involved the translation of Arcruni remains from Ałbag is unclear. When this may have occurred is also unclear. As Gagik was placed before Ašot and Gurgēn in the above passage, it could be that this occurred after the death of his elder brother and perhaps after the death of his younger brother as well (after 923/4). Again this is conjectural. It seems unlikely however that such revisions would have been made after Gagik's death in 943, given the specific association with Grigor Deranik and Sop'i. Irrespective of the revisions to this passage, and the reasons for them, its significance as evidence for the existence of vernacular legal culture in Vaspurakan in the era of Gagik Arcruni is undiminished.

In conclusion, T'ovma Arcruni's *History* attests the vitality of historical writing in Vaspurakan in the age of Gagik Arcruni as well as its evolution. At the start of the tenth century, T'ovma's own *History* looked back to earlier Armenian traditions; it was also populated by a very wide range of characters from the Vaspurakan elite, some of whom feature prominently but most of whom emerge briefly into the historical record and disappear without trace. By contrast, the author of the anonymous historical compilation appended to T'ovma's *History* was more focused on the figure of Gagik Arcruni but was also influenced by surrounding non-Armenian historical cultures. The *History of the Anonymous Storyteller* seems to fit better into this latter category. Finally we can be confident that there was a vernacular legal culture operating in Vaspurakan in the era of Gagik Arcruni. This then is the historical and legal context within which the church of Holy Cross on Alt'amar was constructed.

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<sup>72</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 228; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 237: Եւ յևտ անցանելոյ արուր զնացեալ Աշոտ որոյի Դերանկին, առեալ զղի նորա՝ տարեալ հանգոց առ հարս իւր՝ յԱղբազ գաւառի, ի վանս Սուրբ Խաչին.

<sup>73</sup> T'ovma Arcruni 1887, 249; T'ovma Arcruni 2010, 253: եւ տիկինն Սեդայ առեալ զղի նորա՝ տարեալ հանգուցանէ յԱղբազ ի գեառոյն Աւսի ի վանս Սուրբ Խաչին.

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