

Social Change in Eleventh-Century Armenia: the evidence from Tarōn

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The social history of tenth and eleventh-century Armenia has attracted little in the way of sustained research or scholarly analysis. Quite why this should be so is impossible to answer with any degree of confidence, for as shall be demonstrated below, it is not for want of contemporary sources. It may perhaps be linked to the formative phase of modern Armenian historical scholarship, in the second half of the nineteenth century, and its dominant mode of romantic nationalism. The accounts of political capitulation by Armenian kings and princes and consequent annexation of their territories by a resurgent Byzantium sat very uncomfortably with the prevailing political aspirations of the time which were validated through an imagined Armenian past centred on an independent Armenian polity and a united Armenian Church under the leadership of the Catholicos. Finding members of the Armenian elite voluntarily giving up their ancestral domains in exchange for status and territories in Byzantium did not advance the campaign for Armenian self-determination. It is also possible that the descriptions of widespread devastation suffered across many districts and regions of central and western Armenia at the hands of Seljuk forces in the eleventh century became simply too raw, too close to the lived experience and collective trauma of Armenians in these same districts at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, to warrant or permit closer investigation. Whatever the underlying reasons may be, it remains the case that later tenth and eleventh-century Armenia continues to be viewed principally in terms of political decline, territorial annexation and material destruction.¹ It is only towards the end of the eleventh century, with the emergence of a patchwork of new and often precarious Armenian lordships outside the districts and regions of historic Armenia, that an apparent upswing in Armenian fortunes – and scholarly interest – has been detected, a process

¹ H. Bartikian, 'La conquête de l'Arménie par l'Empire byzantin', *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 8 (1971), 327-40; N. Garsoïan, 'The Byzantine annexation of the Armenian Kingdoms in the Eleventh Century', in *The Armenian People From Ancient to Modern Times*, ed. R. Hovannisian (New York, 1997), I, 187-98; J.-C. Cheynet & G. Dédéyan, 'Vocation impériale ou fatalité diasporique: les Arméniens à Byzance (IV^e–XI^e siècle)', in *Histoire du peuple arménien*, ed. G. Dédéyan (Toulouse, 2008), 297-326. Some historians posit a causal relationship between these processes, arguing that the annexation of the Armenian kingdoms and principalities provided the right conditions for the success of the Seljuk raids. This may have been the view of later Armenian historians such as Matthew of Edessa, looking back from third decade of the twelfth century, but that does not of itself prove the connection.

culminating in the restoration of an Armenian kingdom through the coronation of Levon I by Conrad of Wittelsbach, archbishop of Mainz, in the cathedral of Saint Sophia in Tarsus on 6 January 1198.²

By convention, therefore, this period has been treated as transitional. In purely political terms, this is incontrovertible. The century between the annexation of Tarōn in 966/7 CE and the surrender of the kingdom of Kars in 1064 saw the concession of substantial swathes of territory to Byzantine control and the permanent displacement of the leading Armenian families from the central districts of historic Armenia to estates hundreds of miles to the west, in Cappadocia and beyond.³ But whilst the historical trajectories of many of these families in Byzantium have been traced, the social and cultural development of the communities they left behind in territories now under Byzantine control has not been studied in anything like the same depth. Indeed one would be forgiven for thinking that as soon as these districts were transferred to Byzantine control, they fell outside the Armenian historical purview and effectively ceased to be Armenian. This notion, of an inexorable shrinking of Armenia in the century after 966/7, with all the negative connotations associated with that process, has proved remarkably resilient.

There are, however, several contemporary Armenian texts which offer a very different picture. The historical compositions of pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean (the first part of which is attributed, confusingly, to Zenob Glak), Uxtanēs and Aristakēs Lastivertc‘i were all composed in districts of western and central Armenia after the departure of the leading families.⁴ Such texts possess a particular significance, for whilst

² G. Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens entre Grecs, Musulmans et Croisés. Étude sur les pouvoirs arméniens dans la Proche-Orient méditerranéenne (1068-1150)*, 2 vols. (Lisbon, 2003). 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; Z. Pogossian, *The Letter of Love and Concord* (Leiden, 2010), 17-20 and n. 46.

³ N. Adontz, ‘Les Taronites en Arménie et à Byzance’, *Études arméno-byzantines* (Lisbon, 1965), 197-263, combining the three parts published under the same title in successive volumes of *Byzantion* (1934-1936); J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoirs et contestations à Byzance 963-1210* (Paris, 1990); N. Garsoïan, ‘The problem of Armenian integration into the Byzantine Empire’, in *Studies of the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. H. Ahrweiler & A.E. Laiou (Washington DC, 1998), 53-124.

⁴ Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy*, ed. A. Hakobyan, in *Matenagirk‘ Hayoc‘* (Antelias, 2005), V, 971-1126, trans. L. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean, The History of Tarōn*, Occasional Papers and Proceedings 6 (Atlanta GA, 1993). Uxtanēs, *Patmut‘iwn Hayoc‘*, ed. P. Yovhannisyanyan & G. Madoyan, in *Matenagirk‘ Hayoc‘* (Antelias, 2012), XV, 441-616, part 1 trans. M. Brosset, *Deux historiens arméniens. Kiracos de Gantzac, Oukhtanès d’Ourha* (St Petersburg, 1870), 206-76, and part 2 trans. Z. Arzoumanian,

only Aristakēs offers a contemporary historical narrative, they all reflect something of the social and cultural experiences of the Armenian communities who remained.

Furthermore, as texts composed within the eastern boundaries of the Byzantine Empire, they also offer a unique perspective from which to explore many aspects of contemporary provincial life, including literary culture. In other words, such texts need to be thought of as both Armenian and Byzantine: written in Armenian and aware of Armenian historical tradition but composed in a Byzantine provincial context and expressing, whether intentionally or not, present conditions and attitudes. This is not to argue that contemporary Armenian compositions written beyond the borders of the Byzantine Empire could not be influenced by Byzantine literary culture. One has only to examine the considerable attention paid to Byzantine imperial history in the third book of Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i’s *Universal History* to find support for the contention that the influence of Byzantine historical narratives extended beyond the immediate frontiers of the Empire.⁵ But these three texts may retain something of the character of life on the eastern frontier which those Armenian texts composed outside the Empire could not access, at least not directly.

Thus far, ‘Byzantine’ and ‘Armenian’ have been treated as singular and opposite categories. This is a considerable oversimplification. By the end of the tenth century, the Roman empire in the east and Armenia had been in relationship with one another for over a millennium. The political, social and cultural ties between them were multiple and varied, to the extent that it would be more appropriate to think of pulses of Byzantine influence being transmitted simultaneously from different foci, engendering a spectrum of receptions and reactions across the regions and districts of historic Armenia. Each encounter will have been specific and particular. Since, however, it is impossible to examine here the circumstances and the consequences of Byzantine interaction with

Bishop Ukhtanes of Sebasteia History of Armenia Part II History of the Severance of the Georgians from the Armenians (Fort Lauderdale, 1985); Aristakēs Lastivertc‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Aristakisi Lastivertc‘woy*, ed. K.N. Yuzbashian, (Erevan, 1963), trans. M. Canard & H. Berbērian, *Aristakēs de Lastivert: Récit des malheurs de la nation arménienne*, Bibliothèque de *Byzantion* 5 (Brussels, 1973). For an introduction to pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean’s *History of Tarōn* and Uxtanēs’ *History*, see T.W. Greenwood, *The Universal History of Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i* (Oxford, 2017), 17-32.

⁵ Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i Asoġik, *Patmut‘iwn Tiezarakan*, ed. G. Manukyan, in *Matenagirk‘ Hayoc‘* (Antelias, 2012), XV, 735-829, trans. Greenwood, *Universal History*. For the Byzantine dimensions of book III, see Greenwood, *Universal History*, 55-62.

every district or constituency of Armenian society during the later tenth and eleventh centuries, this study will for the most part be confined to assessing the social and cultural history of one district, Tarōn, in the century after its annexation in 966/7 CE, and the removal of its princely house.⁶ This is not as hidden as one might have assumed.

The process of engagement between Byzantium and the princes of Tarōn in the century before 966/7 CE has been well-described elsewhere.⁷ From the first award of the prestigious title of *kouropalatēs* to Ašot prince of Tarōn at some point after 858 and before 878, through the elevation of Krikorikios to the rank of *strategos* of Tarōn in 900 down to the desperate (and unsuccessful) efforts of the *patrikios* Tornikios to obtain sanctuary inside the Empire for himself, his wife and their child in the 930s by offering his lands in exchange, it is clear that there were long-standing ties. These had more than simply political implications. Under pressure from his cousins, Bagrat and Ašot, Tornikios devised before his death that all his country should be subject to the emperor of the Romans.⁸ This implies the adoption of Roman legal practice by Tornikios because using written instruments to transfer property rights to a nominated heir was not Armenian custom. In the event, the emperor Romanos accepted the territories left to him by Tornikios but then exchanged them with his erstwhile oppressors for Oulnoutin/Elnut, a fortress on the north-western fringe of Tarōn.⁹ He did, however, honour Tornikios' plea for protection for his family by giving to his widow a monastery in Constantinople as her

⁶ Although three kingdoms of Armenia were annexed in the course of the eleventh century – Vaspurakan in 1021, Ani in 1045 and Kars in 1064 – the surviving Armenian compositions offer less scope for studying internal social and cultural developments before the battle of Manzikert.

⁷ Adontz, 'Taronites', 197-220; P. Karlin-Hayter, 'Krikorikios de Taron', in *Actes du XIV^e congrès international des études byzantines*, ed. M. Berza & E. Stănescu (Bucharest, 1975), II, 345-58; repr. in her *Studies in Byzantine Political History* (London, 1981), no. XIV; B. Martin-Hisard, 'Constantinople et les archontes du monde caucasien dans le livre des cérémonies II, 48', *Travaux et Mémoires*, 13 (2000), 375-81; J. Shepard, 'Constantine VII, Caucasian openings and the road to Aleppo', in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, ed. A. Eastmond (Aldershot, 2001), 22-5; T.W. Greenwood, 'Patterns of Contact and Communication: Constantinople and Armenia, 860-976', in *Armenian Constantinople*, ed. R. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa CA, 2010), 82-4 and 89-91.

⁸ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio* 43.171-77, ed. & trans. G. Moravcsik & R.J.H. Jenkins (Washington DC, 1967), 197.

⁹ *DAI* 43.177-86. Aristakēs notes that during the reign of Theodora (11 January 1055-early September 1056), Iwanē, the son of Liparit, arrested a judge, *datawor*, who had responsibility for the east, in the fortress of Hawačič' and imprisoned him in Elnut, that is Oulnoutin: Aristakēs, *Patmut'awn*, 106.6-14.

residence.¹⁰ This arrangement, exchanging unspecified lands within Tarōn for security and property rights in Constantinople, predates by some thirty years the district's complete annexation. The difference is one of scale, not of principle. In the 930s, Tornikios appears to have been a lesser figure who tried to stave off the depredations of Bagrat and Ašot by appealing to the emperor and offering the lands he held in Tarōn. By contrast, in 966/7 the sons of Ašot, Gregory/Grigor and Bagrat, together yielded the whole of Tarōn in exchange for the rank of *patrikios* and unspecified but revenue-producing estates within the Empire.¹¹ That this occurred immediately after the death of Ašot, and that both his sons were involved, implies the lapse of a prior agreement which had guaranteed Ašot a life-interest in Tarōn, the district then reverting to the emperor at his death.¹² There can be little doubt that this transfer shifted the balance of power in central Armenia in favour of Byzantium. Just two years later, Step'anos Tarōnec'i observes that Bardas Phokas, nephew of Nikephoros I Phokas and *doux* of Chaldia and Koloneia, advanced through Apahunik' – immediately to the north of Tarōn – and destroyed the walls of the city of Manzikert.¹³

The subsequent career of Gregory, known as Taronites, is well attested. Step'anos Tarōnec'i records that he sided with Bardas Skleros in his rebellion of 977, alongside his brother.¹⁴ However the Christian Arab historian, Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṭākī, writing in the 1030s, reports that the *magistros* Taronites remained loyal to Basil II during the revolt of Bardas Phokas in 987, leading a counterattack, albeit an unsuccessful one, through

¹⁰ *DAI* 43.175-77. The monastery of the *protospatharios* Michael, a former *kommerkiarios* of Chaldia, was in the district of Psamathia, on the sea of Marmara, between the wall of Constantine and the church of John Studios.

¹¹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, 279.82-6, ed. I. Thurn (Berlin-New York, 1973), trans. B. Flusin, with comm. by J.-C. Cheynet, *Jean Skylitzes Empereurs de Constantinople* (Paris, 2003), 234-5. Step'anos Tarōnec'i, *Patmut'iwñ Tiezerakan*, 757, trans. Greenwood, *Universal History*, 235.

¹² A similar agreement was made with *kouropalatēs* David of Tayk in 989 after he had sided with Bardas Phokas against Basil II: Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṭākī, *Histoire*, ed. & trans. I. Kratchovskiy & A. Vasiliev, *Patrologia Orientalis*, 23 (1932), 429, echoed in Step'anos Tarōnec'i, *Patmut'iwñ Tiezerakan*, 822, trans. Greenwood, *Universal History*, 307-8. The same approach was employed in respect of Yovhannēs-Smbat III Bagratuni in 1022: Matthew of Edessa, *Žamanakagrut'iwñ Matt'ēosi Urhayec'woy*, ed. M. Melik'-Adamean & N. Ter-Mik'ayelean (Vaḥaršapat, 1898); repr. with facing modern Armenian translation by H. Bart'ikyan (Erevan, 1991), 56-8, trans. A.E. Dostourian, *Armenia and the Crusades tenth to twelfth centuries The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* (Lanham MD, 1993), 46. Matthew finished his chronicle in c. 1129.

¹³ Step'anos Tarōnec'i, *Patmut'iwñ Tiezerakan*, 757, trans. Greenwood, *Universal History*, 235.

¹⁴ Step'anos Tarōnec'i, *Patmut'iwñ Tiezerakan*, 763, trans. Greenwood, *Universal History*, 243.

Trebizond in 988.¹⁵ Finally Skylitzes confirms that the *magistros* Gregory Taronites was appointed *doux* of Thessalonike in 991 but killed five years later trying to rescue his son Ašot who had been ambushed and captured by Bulgars.¹⁶ If these references are all to the same figure, he enjoyed a long and successful career in imperial service.¹⁷

It is less clear, however, who followed Gregory Taronites and his family into the Byzantine Empire in 966/7. Were Gregory and Bagrat accompanied by a handful of close relations or did they take a large body of supporters with them? One way of approaching this question is to examine what happened in 1021 when Senek'ërim Arcruni gave up his ancestral lands in Vaspurakan in exchange for 'the honour of *patrikios* and *strategos* of Cappadocia' and 'the cities of Sebasteia, Larissa, Abara and many other domains,' as Skylitzes reports.¹⁸ The fullest account of both the terms and the process is preserved in the *History* of Matthew of Edessa:

At that time he resolved to give the country of his ancestors to the king of the Greeks Basil and to receive Sebasteia and he wrote straightaway to the king. When king Basil heard this, he was happy and had Sebasteia given to him. And Senek'ërim gave the country of Vaspurakan, 72 fortresses [*t'emaberds*], 4,400 villages and he did not give the monasteries [*vanoraysn*] but he kept those that prayed for him, 115 monasteries, and he gave everything in writing to Basil. And king Basil sent to Senek'ërim to send to him David in royal splendour and he sent his son, and with him the sons of the nobles [*azatk*] and the bishop lord Ehišē and 300 pack-mules, laden with treasures and various goods and 1000 Arabian horses. And in such glory, David entered Constantinople and the city was stirred and everyone came out before him and they decorated the streets and palaces and they showered many treasures upon him. And king Basil rejoiced exceedingly at the sight of David and he conveyed him to Saint Sophia's and made him his adopted son [*ordegir*] and they revered him as the son of a king. And the king gave to him many presents and returned him to his father and he gave to him Sebasteia, with many districts. And Senek'ërim left with all his relatives and people and came to Sebasteia, and the country of Armenia was abandoned by its kings and princes.¹⁹

This passage offers many fascinating details as well as posing some intriguing questions. The country of Vaspurakan is imagined in terms of fortresses, villages and monasteries,

¹⁵ Yahyā b. Sa'īd al-Antākī, *Histoire*, PO 23 (1932), 424. He went by sea to Trebizond where he assembled a large force to march to the Euphrates but was put to flight by troops despatched by David *kouropalatēs*.

¹⁶ Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, 339.69-71 and 341.16-22, trans. Flusin & Cheynet, *Jean Skylitzes*, 283, 285.

¹⁷ For a study of the Taronites, including an important discussion of the seals, see J.-C. Cheynet, 'Les Arméniens dans l'armée byzantine au X^e siècle', in *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Mahé. Travaux et Mémoires*, 18 (2014), 175-92.

¹⁸ Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, 354.94-355.6, trans. Flusin & Cheynet, *Jean Skylitzes*, 296.

¹⁹ Matthew of Edessa, *Žamanakagrut'iwñ*, 54-6, trans. Dostourian, *Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, 45-6.

that is, in terms of settlements and communities, but strangely there is no reference to the urban centres of Amiwk, Van or Ostan. Were these outside his immediate control, and so not his to give, or were they defined as fortresses?²⁰ The 115 monasteries that prayed for him were excluded from the agreement and retained by Senek'ërim, thereby ensuring their on-going intercession on his behalf. But did Senek'ërim continue to protect the endowments of each community, and if so, how did he manage this from Sebasteia? The description of David's entry into Constantinople records not only the makeup of the procession but also its reception inside the city, with people lining the route and the streets and palaces decorated. This visual demonstration of the wealth of Vaspurakan, and its public reception, is strongly reminiscent of Basil's own triumph through the streets of Constantinople in 1018 after the final submission of Bulgaria.²¹ According to Skylitzes, Basil entered the city through the Golden Gate preceded by Maria, the widow of John Vladislav, the daughters of Samuel, other Bulgars and the Bulgar archbishop. In comparison, David entered the city accompanied by the sons of the nobles and bishop Elišē. In both cases, the range of figures is significant. Just as David was acting as the representative of his father Senek'ërim, so it seems that the sons were representing their fathers. By participating in the procession, they were displaying their fathers' approval of Senek'ërim's decision and hence their willingness to accompany their king into Byzantine service. No less important was the presence of bishop Elišē in David's entourage, for this too implies his consent to the surrender of Vaspurakan and subsequent transfer to Sebasteia.

Therefore when Senek'ërim came to terms with Basil II over the sovereignty of Vaspurakan and took possession of Sebasteia and its surrounding districts, he was

²⁰ A third description is supplied by one of the Continuators of T'ovma Arcruni's *History*: T'ovma Arcruni and Anonymous, *Patmut'iwñ tann Arcruneac'*, ed. G. Tër-Vardanean, in *Matenagirk' Hayoc'* (Antelias, 2010), XI, 298, trans. R.W. Thomson, *History of the House of the Artsrunik'* (Detroit, 1985), 370-1. This account is very general, referring to the transfer of unspecified cities and fortresses by Senek'ërim. Since this has been combined with a description of the Bagratuni concessions made twenty years later, its reference to the concession of cities is not decisive.

²¹ Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, 364.89-365.95, trans. Flusin & Cheynet, *Jean Skylitzes*, 303. It is highly significant that when Maria surrendered to Basil II at Ochrid, she was accompanied by her three sons and six daughters, together with an illegitimate son of Samuel, and two daughters and five sons of Gabriel Radomir, son of Samuel: Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, 359.20-28, trans. Flusin & Cheynet, *Jean Skylitzes*, 299. After her surrender, Maria was sent to Constantinople with her sons and all her relatives: Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, 363.57-364.66, trans. Flusin & Cheynet, *Jean Skylitzes*, 302. See C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025)* (Oxford, 2005), 212 and 501.

accompanied by his extended family, his nobles and at least one bishop. It is not possible to work out how many people this would have involved but one of the continuators to T'ovma Arcruni's *History* puts the figure as high as fourteen thousand men, excluding women and children.²² Whatever the true figure may have been, it is certain that there were other clerics among them. A Gospels manuscript completed in 1066/7 CE in Sebasteia contains a colophon which opens in the following manner:

515 of the number of the Armenian cycle.

I the priest Grigor, at the weakening of this people of Armenia, in the time of our persecution by the people of Ismayel. We were brought up in the regions of the east, in the mountains of Ayrarat, in the village which is called Arkuri, and having followed our pious king, Senek'erim, we went and settled in this city of Sebasteia, where the Forty Martyrs poured out their blood, who gave battle during the time of bitter wind and water-freezing. And then five years later, my much-favoured and greatly-honoured father Anania, a priest, died in the royal city of Biwandion and we were left, two brothers Gēorg and Grigor. During infancy, we studied at the feet of the blessed lord P'ilippos and his sons Step'annos and Sahak and in accordance with their customary goodness, they became our nourishers and teachers...²³

The colophon then describes how Grigor became an expert scribe and illuminator, skilled in the use of gold leaf. His lord Sahak was able to procure for him a box of equipment from the royal city of Constantinople and Grigor used this when finishing this Gospel.²⁴ Once again this colophon supplies much significant evidence. Grigor and his brother Gēorg were born in Arkuri, probably to be identified as the village of Axorik, located in the east of Vaspurakan, close to T'ornawan. They were taken by their (spiritual?) father Anania to Sebasteia when Senek'erim moved there and after Anania's death in Constantinople, they were taught there by the blessed lord P'ilippos. Although he is not

²² T'ovma Arcruni, *Patmut'awn tann Arcruneac*, 298, trans. Thomson, *History of the House of the Artsrunik*, 370-1.

²³ A.S. Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren Jeragreri Hišatakaraner* (Erevan, 1988), no. 124.

²⁴ Professor Thomas Mathews has commented on the different palettes employed in the decoration of the Gospel of King Gagik-Abas of Kars (J2556) and the Trebizond Gospels (V1400). Mathews argued that the latter was completed in Princess Marem's scriptorium at Tzamandos following her relocation there in 1065 and was influenced by the former. However the absence of indigo blue and organic green pigments from the Trebizond Gospels, coupled with the introduction of an organic brown, suggests a significant change in the availability of certain pigments and the use of a Byzantine palette provides a neat solution. Armenian illuminators tended to use mineral-based pigments whilst Constantinopolitan artists used vegetal-based pigments: 'The Secrets of the Gospel of Gagik-Abas (J2556)', delivered at the XII^e Conférence Générale of the *Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes*, Central European University, Budapest, 7 October 2011.

specifically identified as such, it is possible that P‘ilippos was also a bishop; both his title and his role as teacher imply this.²⁵ This colophon therefore reveals that Senek‘erim was accompanied by priests when he relocated to Sebasteia. The corollary is that on his departure, Vaspurakan was deprived of both episcopal oversight and priestly provision.

Returning to the annexation of Tarōn fifty years before, it seems very likely that Gregory’s departure was accompanied by a similar disruption to the episcopacy. A second colophon, attached to a commentary on the Song of Songs completed in 973/4, reports contemporary ecclesiastical turbulence in Tarōn:

In 422 of the Armenian era [28.iii.973–27.iii.974] and 725 of the era of Rome²⁶ this commentary of the Song of Songs was written in the district of Tarōn by the hand of Petros, unworthy scribe at the command of father Kiwrakos and with the consent of these brothers, as a memorial for their souls, at the time of the flight from the country of Grigor bishop of Mamikoneank‘, and after his death, there was much disorder and opposition in connection with the ordination of a bishop.²⁷

This passage therefore describes the turmoil in two stages: firstly the flight of bishop Grigor and secondly, after his death, troubles surrounding the ordination of a successor. Both merit analysis. There can be no doubt that Grigor bishop of the Mamikoneans had episcopal oversight of Tarōn. The bishop of Tarōn was traditionally also known as the bishop of the Mamikoneans. In the list of signatories to the pact of union agreed at the Second Council of Dvin on 21 March 555, the first-named bishop after the Catholicos Nersēs was Meršapuh, ‘bishop of Tarōn and the Mamikoneans’.²⁸ The circumstances surrounding Grigor’s flight are not recorded but there are strong grounds for arguing that it should be associated with the departure of princes Gregory and Bagrat. As outlined

²⁵ The use of *tēr*, lord as an episcopal title is a consistent feature of mediaeval Armenian compositions, including Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i and Matthew of Edessa.

²⁶ Remarkably this chronology is based on the foundation of old Rome, *ab urbe condita*, in 753 BCE; the year 1000 fell in 247 CE, which, when added to 725, produces 973/4. This is its first attested use. There are two other confirmed examples. The Ējmiacin Gospels (M2374) were completed in 438 of the Armenian era [24 March 989–23 March 990] and according to the era of Rome 742. Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Tiezerakan*, 828, trans. Greenwood, *Universal History*, 314. , treated this slightly differently, employing a chronology based on the reign of Philip the Arab, during which the millennium of old Rome’s foundation occurred. Two of the three dates are associated with Tarōn. It seems therefore that this chronology was devised locally after the annexation of Tarōn, possibly in response to this event, and that it was short-lived.

²⁷ Mat‘evosyan, *Hayeren Jeragreri Hišatakaraner*, no. 75 (M2684).

²⁸ *Girk‘ T‘t‘oc‘*, ed. Y. Izmireanc‘ (Tiflis, 1901), 73.26-7. A letter composed by catholicos Yovhannēs II Gabelean (c. 558–c. 574 CE) refers to ‘Abraham bishop of Tarawn and the Mamikoneans’; *ibid.*, 81.10-11.

above, bishop Elišē – and arguably bishop P‘ilippos – left Vaspurakan with Senek‘erim Arcruni. Armenian bishops were aligned with, and often related to, the leading princely families of the districts over which their episcopal oversight operated; they were not independent appointments imposed from outside. This continued to be the case in the middle of the tenth century. In Anania Mokac‘i’s description of the rebellion of the see of Ałunk‘ from the see of the holy Illuminator (and hence his own authority), he recounts how he travelled to Kapan in the district of Bałk in Siwnik‘ in spring 958 and there consecrated Vahan, the son of Juanšir, prince of princes, as bishop of Siwnik‘.²⁹ Better known perhaps is the figure of Xosrov, prince of Anjewac‘ik‘, the father of Grigor Narekac‘i, who took holy orders after the death of his wife and was consecrated bishop of Anjewac‘ik‘ by Anania Mokac‘i before 950/1.³⁰ The ties between the princely houses and the bishop(s) established across their territories were close, the actions of the former determining the decisions of the latter. In the absence of a princely family to promote its own candidates as bishops and secure their election, turmoil over the succession would have been inevitable, which is exactly what this colophon records.

On the basis of the above, it seems that the Byzantine annexation of districts of Armenia involved the removal of both the lay and the ecclesiastical leadership and the severe disruption, if not complete collapse, of local networks of power and authority. How were these replaced? From an administrative perspective, we know that Tarōn was designated as a theme; it is listed as such in the *Taktikon Scorialensis*, a composition dated to either the reign of emperor John I Tzimiskes or the first years of Basil II.³¹ Moreover Matthew of Edessa’s *History* preserves a short letter seemingly appended to

²⁹ Anania I Mokac‘i was catholicos of Armenia between 941/2 and 965/6. For text and translation, see P. Boisson, A. Mardirossian & A. Ouzounian, ‘Trois opuscules d’Anania Mokac‘i’, *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Mahé. Travaux et Mémoires*, 18 (2014), 771-841, at 818-20.

³⁰ Mat‘evosyan, *Hayeren Jeřagreri Hiřatakaraner*, no. 70: ‘The commentary on this book came into being by the hand of bishop Xosrov Anjawac‘ik‘, a close follower of the commands of God, in Armenian era 399 [3.iv.950-2.ii.951]. The first copy of this book came into being through the hand of Sahak, son of the same lord Xosrov. May the Lord remember them with compassion and mercy; through our prayers, may he visit goodness upon us’. See also P. Cowe, *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy by Xosrov Anjewac‘i* (New York, 1991), 3-18; A. & J.-P. Mahé, *Grégoire de Narek Tragédie (Matean olbergut‘ean)*, CSCO vol. 584, Subs. 106 (Louvain, 2000), 34-9.

³¹ K.N. Yuzbashian, ‘L’administration byzantine en Arménie aux X^e et XI^e siècles’, *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 10 (1973-4), 139-83; N. Oikonomidès, ‘L’organisation de la frontière orientale de Byzance aux X^e-XI^e siècles et le taktikon de l’Escorial’, in *Actes du XIV^e congrès international des études byzantines* (Bucharest, 1975), I, 285-302. For the text, see N. Oikonomidès, *Les Listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles* (Paris, 1972), 263 and 355-6.

the famous letter addressed by Tzimiskes to king Ašot III Bagratuni, composed in 975 which reported, and embellished, his many successes on campaign in Syria.³² The attached letter, also written from the perspective of the emperor, was apparently prepared on receipt of a report from the *protospatharios* Leo, *strategos* of Derĵan and Tarōn. Since it addresses matters considered earlier in the narrative, it seems highly likely that this too was addressed to Ašot III Bagratuni:

From the *anap'ora* of the *prtōspat'r* Lewon commander of Derĵan and Tarōn, greetings and joy in the Lord. We have learned that the fortress of Ayceac' which you seized you have not returned. We have now written to our commander, that he should not take the fortress or the grain which you had contracted, since we do not need it now. But give the *chrysobull* which we had sent to our commander, who will forward it to our Majesty; and for your labours and your corn, you shall obtain full compensation for your seeds.³³

The particular combination of honorific title and office, *protospatharios* and *strategos*, is found repeatedly on seals of the tenth and the eleventh centuries from themes across the Byzantine Empire. Although there are no published seals attesting this single command over Derĵan/Derxene and Tarōn, it may be significant that *magistros* Č'ortuanēl, an erstwhile supporter of Bardas Phokas, is reported by Step'anos Tarōnec'i to have seized the districts of Derĵan and Tarōn and held out against forces loyal to Basil II until defeated and killed on the plain of Bagarič in Derĵan in 990/1.³⁴ Moreover there is one seal, of Michael *spatharios epi tou Chrysotriklinou, logariastes* of the *Great Kouratourikion, artoklines* and *anagrapheus* which indicated his administrative responsibilities across Chaldia, Derzene and Tarōn.³⁵ But it is clear that the combinations of themes changed over time. So whilst one seal identifies Pankratios (Bagarat)

³² Matthew of Edessa, *Žamanakagrut'awn*, 24-32, trans. Dostourian, *Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, 29-33.

³³ Matthew of Edessa, *Žamanakagrut'awn*, 32, trans. Dostourian, *Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, 33. *anap'ora*, a transliteration of *ἀναφορά*, report: see Adontz, 'Notes arméno-byzantines', in his *Études arméno-byzantines* (Lisbon, 1965), 143-4, originally published under the same title in successive issues of *Byzantion* (1934-1935).

³⁴ Step'anos Tarōnec'i, *Patmut'awn Tiezerakan*, 805, trans. Greenwood, *Universal History*, 289-90. The districts of Derĵan and Tarōn are proximate but are not traditionally thought of as being adjacent. This incidental reference suggests that the two themes were adjacent to one another, lending support to the contention that the combination of commands held by Lewon was contemporary. Intriguingly *Notitia* 10 lists at no. 56 the Byzantine metropolitan province of Keltzene, Kortzene and Taron: J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (Paris, 1981), 336. The north-west/south-east orientation of this eparchy means that it broadly corresponded with the thematic combination of Derĵan/Derxene and Tarōn.

³⁵ *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks*, ed. E. McGeer, J. Nesbitt & N. Oikonomidès (Washington DC, 2001), IV, 76.1.

protospatharios and *strategos* of Tarōn, another, dating from the 1050s, refers to Gregory Arsakides – the famous Armenian man of letters Grigor Magistros – as *magistros, epi tou koitonos* and *doux* of Tarōn and Vaspurakan.³⁶

The consequences of this thematic designation for the communities left in Tarōn are at first sight harder to determine, given the apparent silence from within Tarōn. What type of theme did Tarōn become? If Tarōn became a theme similar to the cluster of small themes first attested in the 950s and known collectively as ‘Armenian themes’, then it is possible to advance a series of propositions.³⁷ Some of the lands within the new theme of Tarōn would have obtained the legal status of *stratitika ktemata*, or military lands, which generated *stratitotai*, soldiers who were enrolled in the thematic forces under the command of the *strategos*. The creation of such military lands would have completely transformed the patterns of landholding and lordship across the district, linking possession of property to military service in the Byzantine army and supplanting the web of personal relationships and family ties which had operated hitherto and preserved the power of the leading family across many decades. Such a radical policy could only have been implemented if the former owners of these lands had been displaced and all potential claims extinguished. As argued previously, that appears to have been the situation in Vaspurakan and so it is likely that Tarōn experienced something very similar. It is striking that Nikephoros II Phokas, during whose reign Tarōn was annexed, issued a novel concerning contested land claims and compensation for murder in the Armenian themes.³⁸ Aware of the ‘instability and wandering’ of Armenian *stratitotai*, the legislation narrowed the time limit for recovering abandoned lands from thirty years to three years.

We decree that if Armenian *stratitotai* have gone off and spent a period of three years elsewhere, and afterwards upon their return discover that their properties have been granted either to refugees, to other *stratitotai* for courage in battle, or else have been

³⁶ *DOS IV*, 76.5 and 76.2 respectively.

³⁷ Such themes are attested sigillographically: see *DOS IV* 56.1-15. They are also recognized in the imperial land legislation: see below. H. Kühn, *Die byzantinische Armee im 10 und 11 Jahrhundert* (Wien, 1991), 60-4, excludes Tarōn from his putative list of Armenian themes.

³⁸ N. Svoronos, *Les Nouvelles des Empereurs Macédoniens concernant la terre et les stratitotes* (Athens, 1994), 162-73, trans. E. McGeer, *The Land Legislation of the Macedonian Emperors* (Toronto, 2000), 86-9. That both landholding and compensation for murder were treated in the same legislation reveals that the annexation of these districts, and the resultant reconfiguration of land ownership, had significant legal consequences.

offered to officers of the themes or *tagmata*, or to valiant *strategoï*, or even to others because of public service, the Armenian *stratiotai* who return after three years are not to claim or recover these properties.

The only exceptions concerned those Armenian properties which were not abandoned but had been donated to the imperial monastery of Lakape, assigned to *kouratoureiai* of any kind or given to one of the powerful as a favour. In those circumstances, the three-year rule did not apply and the owners or their heirs had thirty years within which to reclaim their properties. These exceptions reveal that the Armenian themes also contained other categories of land in addition to *stratiotika ktemata*, including *kouratoureiai*, land under direct imperial supervision and control, land owned by officers in both the thematic and tagmatic armies, including *strategoï*, land owned by others by virtue of public service and land owned by monasteries. This range of landowners suggests that only some of the lands incorporated into an Armenian theme would have been held by individual *stratiotai*.

On the other hand, if Tarōn was not one of the Armenian themes, as Kühn proposed, then we are faced with the challenge of trying to establish what kind of theme it was. It seems less likely that it was related to those older, interior themes, established away from the borders, where annual military service was increasingly being commuted for a money payment. And if it was not in the mould either of the Armenian themes or the older, established themes, then it fell into a third, as yet undefined, category. Yet if it could be combined both with an Armenian theme, Derjan, and an established theme, Chaldia, at the same time, and on another occasion with Vaspurakan, created some fifty years later, we should admit the possibility that all of these themes possessed common administrative and legal features which made such temporary conjunctions possible.³⁹ The alternative would be to envisage a *strategos* trying to exploit different systems operating within the themes under his control.

Up to this point, the creation and development of the theme of Tarōn has been studied primarily through Byzantine sources. It is however also possible to trace something of the transformation of Tarōn after its annexation in 966/7 by studying the

³⁹ *DOS IV* 76.1 and 76.2 respectively.

eponymous Armenian text, the *History of Tarōn*.⁴⁰ This is not as obvious as it might seem because the first part of this text, attributed to Zenob the Syrian, purports to record the activities of Grigor the Illuminator in Tarōn at the start of the fourth century and the second part, attributed to Yovhannēs Mamikonean, reports the travails of Tarōn and its elite during the first half of the seventh century.⁴¹ There are, however, several features of both parts of the text, identified by Avdoyan and others, which collectively support a date of composition in the second half of the tenth century, after the Byzantine annexation and before Uxtanēs of Sebasteia completed his own work of history, between 982 and 988 CE.⁴² Uxtanēs is the first Armenian author to cite Zenob’s *History* or to refer to the monastery of Glak and even he seems to have been sceptical as to its historical value.⁴³ But whilst it is certainly the case that the *History of Tarōn* has nothing to contribute to the study of the conversion of Armenia in the fourth century or the era of Heraclius and Khusro II at the start of the seventh century, this does not mean it is without historical merit. When viewed as a composition of the later tenth century, it obtains a completely different significance, commenting upon the present through a creative refashioning of the past. It therefore expresses something of the conditions then operating across the newly-annexed district of Tarōn, showing how both authority and historical memory were in the process of being renegotiated. The old order had been swept away and this text represents an ambitious attempt by one monastic community to establish its antiquity and its sanctity by claiming St Grigor as its founder. After all, with their individual and independent traditions of worship, literacy and landholding, monasteries were particularly well-placed to take advantage of the displacement of the lay and clerical elite

⁴⁰ For a study of this composition, see T.W. Greenwood, “‘Imagined past, revealed present’: A Reassessment of *Պատմությունը Տարօնի* [*History of Tarōn*]”, *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Mahé. Travaux et Mémoires*, 18 (2014), 377-92.

⁴¹ For the part traditionally attributed to Zenob Glak, see Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut’iwn Tarōnoy*, 981-1044; for the part traditionally attributed to Yovhannēs Mamikonean, see Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut’iwn Tarōnoy*, 1045-1126. Despite their historic separation, they should be treated as a single composition.

⁴² Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 16-25 and 42-8.

⁴³ For the first reference, see Uxtanēs, *Patmut’iwn Hayoc’*, 492, trans. Brosset, *Oukhtanès d’Ourha*, 256: ‘Now concerning this child, who was the brother of Saint Grigor, Zenob the Syrian has stated truthfully in his *History*’. For his uncertainty, see Uxtanēs, *Patmut’iwn Hayoc’*, 509, trans. Brosset, *Oukhtanès d’Ourha*, 275: ‘We have written in our *History* more than once about the reign of Trdat, when and in whose times it occurred. But Zenob and Movsēs were not in agreement with one another about this, for Zenob states that Trdat became king under Probus [*i Prōbay*]...Now Movsēs states he became king under Diocletian...’. Uxtanēs is highly unusual among Armenian historians in identifying his two conflicting sources by name.

in the years after 966/7. As Avdoyan has noted, this is the oldest Armenian example of a work of institutional history, tracing the foundation and history of the monastery of Glak.⁴⁴ The radically different circumstances subsisting across Tarōn at this time provided exactly the right context for such a novel form of historical writing to emerge.

How then does the *History of Tarōn* advance our understanding of the restructuring of the district as a Byzantine theme? One of the subjects developed in the course of the narrative is how the monastery acquired its own lands. According to Zenob, once Grigor had founded the church, placed relics there and appointed Epip‘an as abbot of the monastery, he endowed it with twelve *dastakerts*, estates, seven of which are then named. These are defined not in terms of their location or their boundaries but in terms of their human and more particularly military resources:

Among these, the first is Kuars and Mełti and Parex, which is Brex, and Xortum, which is Tum, and Xorni and Kitełk‘, which is Kełs, and Bazrum, which is Bazum, because these are the greatest settlements (*avans*) which exist in the record of the Mamikonean princes. Because Kuars had 3012 houses (*erdahamars*), 1500 cavalry (*heceloc*‘) and 2200 infantry (*hetewaks*). And Mełti had 2080 houses (*erds*) and 800 cavalry and 1030 infantry. And Xrtum 900 hearths [*cuxs*] and 400 cavalry. And Xrtni, 1906 houses, and 700 cavalry and 1007 infantry. Then Parex, 1680 houses and 1030 cavalry and 400 infantry. Then Ketełk‘ 1600 houses and 800 cavalry and 600 infantry. Then Bazrum, which is translated the home of Bazmac‘, 3200 houses and 1040 cavalry, 840 archers (*alelnawors*) and 680 javelin-throwers (*tigawors*) and 280 stone-throwers (*parsawors*). And these had the district of Haštēank‘ stretched out as pasture for their flocks of sheep.⁴⁵

These are of course impossibly large figures, more appropriate to whole themes rather than individual villages, but the very fact that these settlements were imagined in terms of households and military contingents is strikingly similar to the connection between landholding and military service found in the *stratitika ktemata* outlined above. Furthermore whilst six of the seven estates generated cavalry or cavalry and infantry, Bazrum was required to produce not only cavalry but archers, javelin throwers and stone-throwers/slingers. These different specialised groups all feature in the tactics described in two contemporary Byzantine military treatises, the *Praecepta militaria* (c. 965 CE)

⁴⁴ Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 6 and 47.

⁴⁵ Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy*, 1026-7, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 88-9.

attributed to the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, and a revised, expanded version of this treatise, the *Taktika* of Nikephoros Ouranos, composed in c. 1000 CE.⁴⁶ Both texts begin by stating that the infantry should be raised from Romans and Armenians, that is, heavy infantry (*ὀπλίται*), archers (*τοξόται*), javelin-throwers (*ἀκονισταί* or *ρίπταρισταί*) and slingers (*σφενδοβολισταί*). The range of military skills anticipated in the *Taktika* is replicated in the levies imposed on Bazrum.

On the basis of this evidence, it appears that land in the newly-annexed theme of Tarōn was designated *stratitotika ktemata*, with military obligations attaching to it. On the other hand, the use of *dastakert* to describe the land-holdings of the monastery is striking, for this term is a familiar one from late Antiquity, found in Armenian texts, including the *Buzandaran*, and deriving ultimately from the Middle Persian *dastkart*, meaning landed estate or plot.⁴⁷ It may therefore be the case that pre-existing patterns of settlement and property-division were retained but that new responsibilities were imposed. In other words the system of land tenure operating within the theme of Tarōn combined some features which predated the Byzantine annexation – the names of estates and hence their territorial definition – with new elements, specifically in relation to military recruitment.

No further evidence has yet come to light on how this system functioned or developed across Tarōn over the course of the following century. There is, however, one further piece of evidence which attests the extent of Tarōn's integration into the Byzantine administrative structures, and specifically the fiscal system. This dates from shortly before the battle of Manzikert in 1071 CE and the collapse of Byzantine interests in the east. A Gospels manuscript dated 1067/8 CE contains the following sworn statement:

In the name of God, we the *tanutērk'* of Mayraĵor, who are in this monastery of Saint [...] for the sake of the *demosion* [*dimosin*] of Lagnut and our allocation [*vičoyis*], which falls every year. We have had father Davit' bring the Cross and the Gospel; we have written in our [...] through grace and God, we have separated Ełrdut from Lagnut, which we have written in the registers of the *demosion* [*i č'ors dimosin veray*] and we have honoured through grace and God and through this holy Gospel; the plot [*čot'n*] of Anklvaritk' which is to Lagnut from Ełrdut, they give in exchange. The site of its mill is excluded, (which) the registers of *demosion* [*yays č'ork' dimosēs*] record this thing. God

⁴⁶ These texts have been edited and translated in the same volume: E. McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* XXXIII (Washington DC 1995), 12-59 and 89-163.

⁴⁷ See N. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk')*, *Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies* 8 (Cambridge Mass., 1989), 520.

appoints the owner of the soil, not for his benefit. It also recalls Lagnut to add the plot [for *č'arn*, read *čot'n*] to these taxes [for *durs ta*, read *tursda*] of the *demosion*.

I, Davit' and the brothers of this community, we are witnesses of this testament, in era 516. It is established as God wishes.⁴⁸

Admittedly in several places, the precise meaning of this text is hard to discern and it is capable of different interpretations.⁴⁹ Several questions remain unresolved. For example, were there two parties to this transaction or just one party wishing to divide a single landholding into two properties, and if so, why? Nevertheless its significance for the study of eleventh-century Tarōn, and Byzantine provincial administration generally, should not be underestimated. It records a land transaction in two stages, involving the separation of Ełrdut from Lagnut and the transfer of another plot from Ełrdut to Lagnut, although possession of a mill on that plot is excluded from the transfer (and so retained in the portfolio of assets belonging to Ełrdut). The deed was clearly intended to have legal force because it was drawn up and witnessed by father David and the brothers of the monastic community in front of a cross and Gospel book. But the most striking aspect is that the transaction was articulated in terms of liability for the *demosion*, the basic Byzantine land tax.⁵⁰ Both the separation of the two properties and the transfer of the plot are described as being recorded in the registers of the *demosion*. Indeed this deed displays a particular anxiety over the updating of the current registers; the fiscal consequences of the transaction are given considerable attention. Although this document is not an extract from a land-tax register or *cadastre*, it strongly suggests that the *demosion* was still being collected from monastic estates in Tarōn as late as 1067/8. The contention that the

⁴⁸ Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren Jeřagreri Hiřatakaraner*, no. 125 (M10099). Lagnut and Anklvaritk' cannot be identified but Ełrdut was located ten miles west of the city of Muř in Tarōn. It is likely that the monastery in question was Ełrdutivank', dedicated to Surb Yovhannēs: M. Thierry, *Répertoire des monastères arméniens* (Turnhout, 1993), no. 365, which however only attests it from the twelfth century. Armenian era 516: 5 March 1067–3 March 1068. That such a deed was preserved in a Gospels manuscript is very surprising, unless one accepts that this was the Gospels manuscript on which the deed was sworn and that this single sheaf was accidentally left inside the manuscript. This could be evidence of mere oversight but it may also suggest that the transaction, so carefully recorded, rapidly lost meaning and significance and so was never transferred to a dossier of similar documents or searched for subsequently.

⁴⁹ For *i č'ors dimosin*, read *i řars dimosin*. The conclusion of the main section is also very hard to understand; it is possible that *ayl yiřē* is a scribal interpolation, mistakenly repeating *ayl yiřē* of the previous sentence.

⁵⁰ For a description of the workings of the taxation system, see L. Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society 950–1100* (Cambridge, 2004), 47–65.

Byzantine fiscal system never extended across the eastern themes, or that it had collapsed in the face of Seljuk raiding long before this date, can no longer be maintained. Rather this short passage reveals a keen awareness that the transaction needed to be declared and recorded in the tax register, implying that these were still being updated just four years before Manzikert. But even if this is not the case, and the transaction was expressed using concepts and terms which were by then historic rather than current, this does not undermine the central proposition, that the *demosion* was collected from Tarōn after its annexation. Therefore although it is of a very different character to the *Cadastré of Thebes*, this neglected fragment confirms that the *demosion* was a universal tax which operated across the Empire, uniting themes in the east and the west.⁵¹ Moreover if one takes it at face value, this document confirms that the *demosion* continued to be collected – and the registers continued to be updated – right up to the moment of Byzantine eclipse and exclusion from Armenia.

The Byzantine annexation of Tarōn therefore entailed a political and social reordering of the entire region. With the departure of the lay elite, the traditional networks of power and authority were displaced and we have seen something of the administrative reconfiguration which followed. From an ecclesiological point of view, the flight of the local bishop Grigor, recorded in the colophon quoted above, was no less significant. An extensive search has not revealed any direct successor to Grigor. Indeed a notice in the *Universal History* of Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i only reinforces the impression of a lack of episcopal oversight. After the election of Step‘anos of Sevan as Catholicos in 967/8, he is described as ‘pastoring the western region of Armenia’ and collecting together a multitude of monks from several western districts including Tarōn to take with him on his visit to Vaspurakan to reproach his recently-deposed predecessor and rival, Vahanik.⁵² Both these actions, his ‘pastoring the western region’ and gathering of monks

⁵¹ N. Svoronos, ‘Recherches sur le cadastre byzantine et la fiscalité aux XI^e et XII^e siècles: le Cadastre de Thèbes’, *Bulletin de Correspondance hellénique* 83 (1959), 1-166; repr. in his *Études sur l’organisation intérieure, la société et l’économie de l’Empire Byzantin* (London, 1973), no. III; Neville, *Authority*, 171-2.

⁵² Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Tiezerakan*, 756, trans. Greenwood, *Universal History*, 233-4. Pastoring the western region, *hovuēr zarewmteay kolmn Hayoc*’. The same passage records that Step‘anos of Sevan was elected in Ani by *tēr* Xaç‘ik bishop of Aršarunik‘, father Poġikarpos, leader of Kamrġajor, father Sargis, abbot of the monastery of Hořomos and other bishops and many other fathers. The inclusion of abbots in the election process is striking.

in support, imply an absence of bishops to perform these tasks. After 967/8 there is no evidence for the gathering of Armenian bishops in general council and whilst arguments from silence are always problematic, the absence of such councils may reflect the contraction of the episcopate.

Conversely, one of the contemporary *Notitiae*, outlining the episcopal structure of the church of Constantinople, implies that Tarōn had obtained two or three new bishops by the end of the tenth century, under the oversight of the metropolitan of Keltzene, Kortzene and Tarōn.⁵³ The newly established dioceses included one in the city of Muš and one in the region of Xoyt', south-east of Muš; it has been suggested that a third new see, that of Khatsoun, was based on the village of Hac'iw'n, north-east of Muš, although a connection with a community named *Surb Xac'*, Holy Cross, should not be discounted.⁵⁴ The exact dating of *Notitia* 10 is open to interpretation but the overall trend seems clear: the historic Armenian diocese of Tarōn disappeared and was replaced by several, smaller sees, at least one of which was situated in an urban context, all under the overall control of the patriarch of Constantinople.⁵⁵ Previously I had envisaged two overlapping networks of bishops stretched out across western and central Armenia, jostling for the hearts and minds of the faithful, and that may indeed have been the situation for a time in places like Sebasteia.⁵⁶ The evidence from Tarōn however suggests that the two hierarchies were consecutive rather than concurrent, that the new Byzantine dioceses superseded the former Armenian ones, and in so doing reconfigured the episcopal landscape. Even if the new bishops were local Armenians – and there is no way of telling

⁵³ *Notitia* 10: Darrouzès, *Notitiae*, 336: τὸ Μοῦς, ὁ Χοῦτ', ὁ Χατζοῦν. A seal of Basil metropolitan of Keltzene, dated to the eleventh century, has been published: *DOS IV*, 66.1. Someone of the same name and office attended the council held at Hagios Alexios in Constantinople in 1072 CE and they are probably the same figure: See Basileios 181 and 20251 in *Prosopography of the Byzantine World* (2011), available at <http://blog.pbw.kcl.ac.uk/> consulted on 9 February 2014.

⁵⁴ R.H. Hewsen, *Armenia. A Historical Atlas* (Chicago, 2001), 105.

⁵⁵ *Notitia* 10 is notoriously difficult to date: 'cette notice 10 n'a cessé de torturer les générations d'historiens qui l'ont consultée': Darrouzès, *Notitiae*, 116. However, focusing on the long list of 22 sees, two clear groups emerge: 1-8, extending across Keltzene and Tarōn, and 11-22, further east, across Vaspurakan: Darrouzès, *Notitiae*, 336. I would argue that the second group of fourteen was inserted after the annexation of Vaspurakan in 1021; therefore *Notitia* 10 was compiled after 966/7 and before 1021. The sees established in Vaspurakan include some in urban contexts – in τὸ Ἀρτζέσιν/Arčēs, Ἀμίουκτιον/Amiwk, τὸ Περκί/Perkri and τὸ Ὀστάν/Ostan.

⁵⁶ For confrontation in Sebasteia in 435 AE [25 March 986–24 March 987], see Step'anos Tarōnec'i, *Patmut'iw'n Tiezerakan*, 769-70, trans. Greenwood, *Universal History*, 252.

since we do not know who anyone of them were, even by name – their dioceses represented a complete break with the past.

In order to gauge something of the response from within Tarōn to these changes, let us return to the *History of Tarōn*. As argued previously, the author of this composition chose to appropriate and refashion the narrative of the conversion of Armenia by Grigor the Illuminator. The alterations serve to promote the antiquity and the sanctity of the monastery of Glak at Innaknean, at the expense of the traditional centre of Christianity in Tarōn, Aštišat.⁵⁷ Locating its origins in the time of, and through the initiative of, Grigor the Illuminator gave the monastery of Glak an unimpeachable pedigree. But returning to this formative era also enabled the writer to reiterate – and reimagine – the historic ties between Armenia and the East Roman church, particularly in terms of ecclesiastical authority and oversight. Both recensions of the *History of Armenia* attributed to Agat'angelos – the standard narrative of the actions of Grigor the Illuminator – report that Grigor was consecrated in Caesarea in Cappadocia by its metropolitan bishop Leontius; only *Vs* diverges from this tradition, making Leontius the patriarch of Rome, but even this version looks to the west for sanction and legitimation.⁵⁸ It is striking that Grigor's ordination by Leontius in Caesarea is referred to in the first sentence of the *History of Tarōn*.⁵⁹ This establishes from the outset that the primary context for the following narrative is dependence on the imperial Church. The conversion narrative as constructed in the *History of Tarōn* both represents and justifies the radical transformations in religious hierarchy and sacred space experienced in Tarōn at the end of the tenth century. Admittedly that earlier transformation had entailed the banishing of demons and the appropriation of pagan shrines as places of Christian worship and these do feature in the account preserved in the *History of Tarōn*. The modifications to the conversion narrative, however, indicate that the author of the *History of Tarōn* wanted to establish that Tarōn had been incorporated into the ecclesiastical structures and traditions of the imperial

⁵⁷ For the traditional narrative, see Agat'angelos, *Patmut'iwñ Hayoc'*, ed. G. Tēr-Mkrtč'ean & S. Kanayanc' (Tiflis, 1909; repr. Delmar NY, 1980), §809-815, trans. R.W. Thomson, *The Lives of Saint Gregory* (Ann Arbor MI, 2010), 417-25. Aštišat is identified in both the A and V recensions as the primary centre of pagan worship in Tarōn; there is no reference to Innaknean in any version of either recension.

⁵⁸ Agat'angelos, *Patmut'iwñ Hayoc'*, §804-806, trans. R.W. Thomson, *The Lives of Saint Gregory*, 404-10.

⁵⁹ Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut'iwñ Tarōnoy*, 981, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 55-6.

church based in Constantinople during the era of St Grigor. In other words, the *History of Tarōn* generated historical precedent to validate present circumstances.

How was this relationship between Tarōn and the Roman church – this sense of dependence and belonging – articulated in the *History of Tarōn*? It has several aspects, many of which feature at the start of the work. The text opens with an exchange of letters between Grigor the Illuminator and Leontius/Łewondēos, the holy patriarch of Caesarea.⁶⁰ This is followed by a series of letters between Grigor and various bishops living and travelling in Roman space.⁶¹ By adopting an epistolary form, the narrative is framed in terms of reported action and response, with one party situated inside Tarōn and the other located inside the Roman Empire. Tarōn was therefore orientated westwards. Secondly, Grigor thanks Leontius for his gifts of the relics of John the Baptist which, Grigor explains, he has placed in a martyrium on the site of the pagan temple at Innaknean, together with relics of Athenogenes.⁶² The translation of these relics is reported in the *History of Agat'angelos* but the stress on the relics of John the Baptist being given by Leontius to Grigor is a modification of the earlier tradition.⁶³ Since these were the key miracle-working relics in the possession of the monastery at Glak at the end of the tenth century, their origin is significant; they came from within the Roman Empire, specifically from the metropolitan of Caesarea. Thirdly Grigor reports to Leontius that he had left at Innaknean two living confessors of Christ, Anton and Krawnidēs, whom 'you out of your love presented to this country of Armenia'.⁶⁴ This reveals that the metropolitan of Caesarea had supplied qualified clerics to minister in the newly-founded martyrium. And finally Grigor asks Leontius to send him more workers, specifically Eliazaros, the bishop of Niwstra (and brother of Zenob), and Timot'ēos the bishop of

⁶⁰ Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut'iwñ Tarōnoy*, 981-90, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 55-61.

⁶¹ Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut'iwñ Tarōnoy*, 990-8, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 61-8. Grigor writes to Eliazar bishop of Niwstra and Timot'ēos bishop of Akdēn and receives a letter back from Bektor and Anastas and T'ēovnas and Arkiwlas and Markelios, all of whom were then in Constantinople. The first two are described as Egyptian bishops.

⁶² Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut'iwñ Tarōnoy*, 982-4, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 56-7.

⁶³ Agat'angelos, *Patmut'iwñ Hayoc'*, §810; trans. Thomson, *Lives of Saint Gregory*, 418-19. St Athenogenes/At'enaginēs was martyred in Sebasteia under Diocletian.

⁶⁴ Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut'iwñ Tarōnoy*, 984, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 57.

Agdēn, whose knowledge of literature is particularly prized.⁶⁵ According to the *History of Tarōn*, therefore, Grigor looked to Caesarea to supply additional bishops to advance the process of conversion. Moreover the Roman Empire was deemed to be a place of intellectual endeavour and achievement. Therefore this opening passage establishes multiple connections between the site of Innaknean and the metropolitan see of Caesarea. Not only was the martyrium founded by Grigor who had been consecrated by Leontius; Leontius is also represented as sending his own clerics to conduct the services there and as being invited by Grigor to send more bishops. Their learning is noted approvingly, implying recognition and validation of Greek scholarship and erudition. The dependence of Innaknean, the site of the future monastery of Glak, upon the spiritual, human and intellectual resources of Caesarea, and by extension the Roman Church, is therefore established.

The reply of Leontius to Grigor develops these themes. Leontius asks Grigor to write his name in his literature so that he might receive a share of blessing.⁶⁶ The metropolitan also directs Grigor to build a monastery at Innaknean and tells Grigor that he is sending Epiphanius/Epip‘an, the pupil of Anton, and forty monks to start the community. Grigor is instructed to appoint Epiphanius as abbot.⁶⁷ Thus Leontius is portrayed providing leadership and resources for the new monastery. It also contains one other intriguing feature. Leontius urges Grigor to establish a coenobitic community with a perpetual rule under Epiphanius. The alternative, an eremitical structure, ‘each one building a temple to the Lord and living alone’, is explicitly rejected.⁶⁸ Yet in his extended description of Armenian monasticism, of near contemporary date, Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i commends the eremitical life, highlighting a number of righteous individuals.⁶⁹ As Mahé has observed, ‘‘On relève ainsi aux X^e–XI^e siècles, une indéniable diversité d’une communauté à

⁶⁵ Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy*, 984-5, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 57-8. Thomson, *Lives of Saint Gregory*, 68-9 notes the addition of the names of the assistants.

⁶⁶ *zim anun gresjir i k‘o dprut‘eand ew gresc‘es zi ew aynu masn awrhnut‘ean ēnkalayc‘ yet k‘o*: Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy*, 987, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 59.

⁶⁷ Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy*, 987-8, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 59.

⁶⁸ *šinelov iwraak‘anč‘iwr umēk‘ ztērut‘ean tačarn ew arāncinn bnakel*: Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy*, 988, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 60.

⁶⁹ ‘How can we possibly describe in a few words the magnificently-embellished virtues of the hermits, those who shared the Cross with the crucified Christ... like the famous and praiseworthy Vardik... and the holy father Karmir’: Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Tiezerakan*, 752, trans. Greenwood, *Universal History*, 228.

l'autre, voire au sein d'une même communauté, où un seul style de vie religieuse ne semble pas s'appliquer obligatoirement à tous'.⁷⁰ Clearly there is a sharp difference of opinion between these two works on this subject which is not easy to interpret. It is possible that the prohibition may be echoing the well-known novel of Nikephoros II Phokas of 964 CE which sought to prevent the foundation of new monasteries, hostels and homes for the old.⁷¹ Yet even this legislation made an exception for those who wished to found cells in deserted regions. It remains unclear why Leontius is presented as so disapproving of the eremitical life.

The opening passages therefore forge multiple links between Caesarea and the foundation and development of the monastery of Glak. The role of Zenob the Syrian in these processes, however, is less obvious. We first encounter Zenob in the letter of Grigor the Illuminator to Leontius, where he is identified as the brother of Eliazaros who has been ordained by Grigor as bishop of the Mamikoneans.⁷² In his letter to Eliazaros, Grigor confirms that he had appointed his brother Zenob as bishop in the land of the Mamikoneans which included the regions of Innaknean, now renamed Glak.⁷³ But Grigor goes on to observe that Zenob was enthusiastic in his service to the relics of John the Baptist and that he had undertaken building work in stone at the monastery, including the building of the church. In a later passage, Zenob reports that 'I asked the holy Grigor to go to my monastery which he had established in the name of the Karapet'.⁷⁴ And Zenob is also placed at the head of the sequence of abbots of the monastery of Glak/Glakavank'.⁷⁵ Yet this sits very uneasily with the notice that Leontius sent Epiphanius to Grigor with instructions to appoint him as abbot of the monastery at Innaknean.

These inconsistencies are not easily understood but there is evident uncertainty over whether Zenob should be treated as the first bishop of the Mamikoneans or the first abbot

⁷⁰ J.-P. Mahé, 'Érémisme et Cénobitisme en Arménie après l'Islam (IX^e-XIII^e siècles), *Revue théologique de Kaslik*, 3-4 (2009-10), 111-24, at 120.

⁷¹ Svoronos, *Novelles des Empereurs Macédoniens*, 151-61, trans. E. McGeer, *Land Legislation*, 92-6.

⁷² Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut'iwñ Tarōnoy*, 985, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 57-8.

⁷³ Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut'iwñ Tarōnoy*, 991-2, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 62.

⁷⁴ *Isk im alač'eal zsurbn Grigor gnal i vansn im qor ink'n himnarkeac' yanun Karapetin*: Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut'iwñ Tarōnoy*, 1030, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 92.

⁷⁵ *Zenob ekac' hayr vanac'n Glakay, ams 20*: Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut'iwñ Tarōnoy*, 1045, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 104.

of the monastery of Glak, or both. The holding of both offices at the same time would be unprecedented from an Armenian perspective. It is striking, however, to observe that several of the new Byzantine dioceses established further east, in Vaspurakan following the departure of Senek‘erim in 1021CE, appear to bear the names of pre-existing religious institutions. According to *Notitia* 10, we find, amongst others, the dioceses of Hagios Nikolaos, Hagios Georgios and Hagios Elissaios.⁷⁶ This is unprecedented in the long list of dioceses recorded in the *Notitia*, all of which are located in urban centres or associated with specific districts of Armenia. A second see of Hagios Nikolaos is specifically associated with the city of Artzesin/Arčēš, on the northern shore of lake Van.⁷⁷ Two sees at Eva (Iban) and Sedrak (as yet unidentified) are also named Theotokos.⁷⁸ It is not clear whether these pre-existing institutions were major churches, martyria or monastic communities, or any combination of these. However the relationship between new imperial diocese and prior religious institution expressed in these titles seems to be remarkably close to that of bishop, martyrion and monastic community proposed in the *History of Tarōn*. Could it be that the author of the *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy* was seeking to associate that tradition – of founding new dioceses on existing religious institutions – with the era of Grigor the Illuminator as well as claiming it specifically for the monastery of Glak? A similar conjunction is reported by Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i at Xlat‘/Hilāt on the northern shore of lake Van during the winter of 997/998.⁷⁹ Here there was ‘an Armenian church outside the circuit wall which had become a bishop’s residence and a monastery – previously it had been an Armenian community dedicated to Holy Cross and Saint Gamaḥiēl’. In other words, an existing Armenian monastery had become a bishop’s residence. This would seem to match the situation described in the *Notitia* at other urban centres on the shore of lake Van and, arguably, the conflation envisaged at Glakavank‘. Whether or not the monastery of Glak

⁷⁶ Darrouzès, *Notitiae*, 336: ὁ Ἅγιος Νικόλαος, ὁ Ἅγιος Γεώργιος, ὁ Ἅγιος Ἐλισσαῖος. Thierry, *Répertoire*, no. 545 identifies a monastery dedicated to Hagios Elissaios (Eliševank‘) with the monastery of S. Nšan of Č‘arahan, today Gevaş (Vostan/Ostan). For one identification of Hagios Nikolaos, see Thierry, *Répertoire*, no. 391, S. Nikolayos of Apahunik‘.

⁷⁷ Darrouzès, *Notitiae*, 336: τὸ Ἀρτζέσιν ὁ Ἅγιος Νικόλαος.

⁷⁸ Darrouzès, *Notitiae*, 336: τὸ Εὐὰ ἢ Θεοτόκος, τὸ Σεδράκ ἢ Θεοτόκος.

⁷⁹ Step‘anos Tarōnec‘i, *Patmut‘iwn Tiezerakan*, 817, trans. Greenwood, *Universal History*, 302.

really did become the seat of a new imperial see is less important than the assertion that it had been in the formative era.

The narrative offers one final reflection on the ecclesiastical situation in Tarōn. In his response to Grigor, Leontius reports that bishop Eliazaros had fled from his city.⁸⁰ Grigor in turn writes to Eliazaros and asks him why he has fled ‘to that foreign and remote land, especially as you knew that for every *gawar*, bishops are needed as well as priests...yet you yourself have taken so many priests and have dedicated yourself to a remote and distant journey’.⁸¹ The narrative is very tangled here but Grigor seems to be registering shock at the flight of a bishop and his priests. Given the proposed date of composition, this seems to be an allusion to the recent flight of Grigor, bishop of the Mamikoneans, from his see of Tarōn. Intriguingly Grigor then attempts to persuade him to return, offering all the lands of Ekeleac‘ and Hark‘ to him and all those who come with him, and hinting that Zenob might be prepared to give up the land of the Mamikoneans to him.⁸² In the event, neither of these invitations is taken up but Eliazaros does eventually return and is entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the relics of the Holy Apostles deposited in the martyrion at a site which is renamed Eliazaruvank‘, the monastery of Eliazaros.⁸³ Since we know nothing of the fate of bishop Grigor after his flight from Tarōn, it remains unclear whether these invitations reflect attempts to bring about his return or justifications for a return which has already taken place.

The study of the district of Tarōn has by convention been focused on the period leading up to its annexation in 966/7. On the basis of the above analysis, however, it seems that there is much more that may be said about conditions within Tarōn after that date. The displacement of the lay and clerical elite brought about a complete reworking of the structures of power and authority within the district. This can be viewed both in

⁸⁰ *zi Eliazar gnac‘ i k‘alak‘ēn iwormē p‘axskakan*: Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy*, 989, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 60.

⁸¹ *yawtar ew i taradēm yerkird ēndēr elēk‘ halacakan. Manawand zi gitēk‘ et‘ē amenayn gawarac‘ s episkoposk‘ pitoy en ew k‘ahanayk‘ s...Isk duk‘ aydē‘ap‘ bazum k‘ahanays areal taradēm ew heri ulegnac‘ ut‘ean etuk‘ jez*: Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy*, 991, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 62.

⁸² Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy*, 991-2, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 62-3.

⁸³ Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy*, 995-6, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 66.

terms of the designation of Tarōn as a theme and the extension of the Byzantine episcopal network. As the *History of Tarōn* illustrates, this era of social and political upheaval opened up new opportunities for institutional and personal advancement. Monastic communities were well placed to take advantage of these circumstances. Not only did turmoil permit the consolidation of existing interests; it also allowed communities such as the monastery at Glak to claim ownership of the past, promoting its present reputation by asserting that it had played a primary role in the ministry of Grigor the Illuminator and the conversion of Armenia. Monasteries were not only permanent features in a changing social and cultural landscape; they were also repositories of local historical memory, with profound implications for the preservation of the late Antique and medieval Armenian past. That urban communities across western and central Armenia may also have generated their own historical memories at this time has been considered elsewhere but the fact that Mušeł Mamikonean could be titled ‘lord of Muš and Xut’ before being described as ‘prince of Tarōn and Sasun’ in the *History of Tarōn* suggests that a second, and no less significant, transformation in the balance and structure of Armenian society was underway by the end of tenth century, with status and identity now represented in terms of urban centres.⁸⁴ From princes and bishops to towns and monasteries: the annexation of Tarōn precipitated a radical social and cultural reconfiguration, one that was far more dynamic and constructive than the nineteenth-century fathers of Armenian history ever envisaged, and one that has repercussions for the study of eleventh-century Byzantium.

⁸⁴ *zMušeł ztēr Mšoy ew Xot‘ay, Tarawnoy išxann ew Sasnoy*: Yovhan Mamikonean, *Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy*, 1053, trans. Avdoyan, *Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean*, 111. For eleventh-century urban consciousness, see T.W. Greenwood, ‘Aristakēs Lastivertc‘i and Armenian Urban Consciousness’, in *Being in Between: Byzantium in the Eleventh Century*, ed. M. Lauxtermann & M. Whittow (Abingdon and New York, 2017), 88-105.