

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

In Search of Purity:

Language, Ideology and Global Intellectual Movements in Ottoman Armenian History,

1750-1915

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Peter S. Cowe, Chair

This study explores the emergence of the standard language known today as Western Armenian. In particular, it examines the intellectual labor that led to the acceptance of this language as the dominant written medium among Ottoman Armenians by 1915. Drawing on insights from the fields of historical sociolinguistics, global intellectual history and nationalism studies as well as untapped Armenian-language primary sources, I uncover the fundamental role that beliefs about purity played in the formation of the standard language. While this focus on purity remained a constant among the intelligentsia throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I show how ideas about what was considered “pure” were shaped and reshaped by various actors and interactions with ideas that originated far beyond the Ottoman Empire. This interaction came in the form of four global intellectual movements—humanism, cultural nationalism, comparative philology and folkloristics—which created new and conflicting attitudes

about how Armenian ought to be used. I argue that the impact of these global movements on the language was all the more enduring, because they coincided with a decades-long process of vernacularization and standardization. In this way, my project firmly situates Ottoman Armenians within the global circulation of ideas and shows how these movements each left a distinct imprint on the standard language. I also highlight how these movements fundamentally shaped norms about “proper” Western Armenian usage that continue to predominate in post-Ottoman Armenian diaspora communities around the world today.

This study turns away from conventional philological treatments of Armenian language history and focuses instead on the social aspects of language use. In this way, it takes a socio-historical approach to the study of language, examines the people and ideologies that shaped its use and advocates for the broader application of historical sociolinguistic methods to the study of Armenian and other languages in the Ottoman Empire. Written for four distinct readerships, this study addresses topics of relevance to (1) historical sociolinguists interested in macro-sociolinguistic processes, such as purism and vernacularization; (2) social and intellectual historians of the Ottoman Empire, particularly those interested in the reception of global movements within the Empire; (3) researchers in Armenian studies; and (4) speakers and learners of Western Armenian outside academia who seek to better understand the history of the language.

The dissertation of Jennifer Shay Manoukian is approved.

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2023

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## Preface

Good ideas rarely come to me when I am poised to catch them. They most often come while I am in motion. Ambling around my neighborhood or puttering around my apartment always tend to yield much more clarity than sitting in front of my screen and watching the cursor tick. The following study is a compilation of ideas, connections and arguments that arrived at inopportune times, the surviving ones that I willed my mind to clutch while otherwise occupied and managed to retrieve once I returned to stillness.

The idea for this project also sprouted while in motion. On the subway, zipping under the streets of Manhattan and Queens, I had a seemingly unremarkable yet ultimately pivotal encounter. This was, to be sure, an encounter of the literary variety. At that time, in the fall of 2011, I was working at an Armenian research center in New York. One of the best parts of the job was spending quality time reorganizing books in the stacks. As I worked, I would keep my eye out for promising titles and pick one to take with me on my multi-leg journey home. One evening, on my way out, I pulled a book from the shelf, slipped it into my bag and opened it only once I had settled into a seat on the F train. The book, as I would be reminded years later, was a collection of essays about the state of the Armenian language past and present. I had been studying a variety of Armenian for a few years by that point but knew very little about the history of the language. On my ride home, I skimmed the different essays—lingering on some more than others—and returned the book to the shelf the following morning without a second thought.

But, for years after, a vague memory of something I had read during that commute kept drifting back to me. I had taken in so much writing during my time at the research center that I could no longer remember what exactly I had read, where I had read it or who had penned it. What

I did remember was the inkling of having caught sight of a puzzle in need of solving—albeit one that I was not yet ready to attempt.

From what I could recall, the essay in question was made up of a series of linguistic snapshots from over two millennia of history, explanations about select words that Armenian speakers had adopted from the languages around them: Hurrian and Persian, Greek and Syriac, Arabic and Turkish. Some words had stuck around and were embedded in the variety of Armenian I was learning; others had faded away. I remembered the food words most clearly. At a certain point in time, the writer had explained, Armenians had collectively abandoned the Armenian words for *carrot*, *cucumber*, *apricot* and *melon* and had started using Turkish words in their stead. Then, centuries later, the pendulum had swung in the opposite direction, and Armenians had collectively chosen to replace some—but not all—of their borrowings and to revive the ‘original’ Armenian words. It must have been the way the writer had collapsed this dramatic social change into a few short sentences, the way he had suggested that this undoubtedly complex process had taken place with ease and the way he had described legions of geographically dispersed Armenians all acting as a united front that stood out to me. It seemed hard to imagine this historical moment as having been anything other than messy, cacophonous and contentious.

What drifted back to me from time to time were basic questions without clear answers: Was this change really as simple as the writer had made it out to be? What had prompted people to transform how they used Armenian all of a sudden? How had people chosen which borrowings would stay and which would go? Who exactly had done the choosing? And, most naggingly, why did I still hear those Turkish food words used by Armenian speakers in the twenty-first century when they had supposedly been overridden centuries earlier? There was certainly more to this story.

I amassed only more questions once I started spending more of my free time translating literature from Western Armenian. What I saw while ensnarled in sentences from the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries ran counter to the assumption that ‘foreign’ influence had been expelled once and for all from the language, pared away long ago especially in its written form. While I could rely on Armenian dictionaries to define individual words, I needed Turkish and French dictionaries to decipher many of the idiomatic expressions and turns-of-phrase that my writers would use. It was clear that they were thinking in Turkish or French and writing in Armenian, giving way to countless calques and deep structural parallels that could easily go unseen by casual readers but that were glaring to a translator. What was going on here? How did standard Western Armenian come to be a repository of these influences? And why were they not more widely acknowledged? It was only over the course of my research for this study that I was able to slowly piece together satisfying answers to these questions, having uncovered the multilingual universe that these late-Ottoman and early diaspora writers inhabited alongside an enduring purist campaign aimed at curbing the influence of multilingualism on Armenian.

In my final months of dissertation work, I stumbled upon the essay I had read on the F train more than a decade earlier—this time, across the country in Los Angeles in a different set of stacks. What had first set me down my research path turned out to be nothing more than a six-page piece in an obscure collection of conference proceedings.<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to this short study for sparking my curiosity and raising the questions that would come to shape this project. Yet reading it again after so long gave me pause. The key passage I had retained through the fuzziness of my memory was much more suspect than I could have grasped in 2011. It goes as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> John A. C. Greppin, “Loan Word Intrusions and Extrusions in Armenian,” in *La langue arménienne: défis et enjeux*, eds. Khatoune Témisjian, Anna-Maria Folco and Nourhan Ouzounian (Montreal: Centre de langues patrimoniales, 1995), 82-88.

Some centuries later, after the Turks had destroyed Byzantium, the Armenian people began to descend into a cultural decline which reached its nadir by the eighteenth century. And during this time, they lost more of their language to Arabic, and later, to Turkish intrusions. But the decline was not fatal; circumstances changed, and the Armenians began to emerge from the despair of centuries of Turkish rule. Part of that emergence was linguistic, and the Armenians began to replace foreign vocabulary with traditional Armenian words...Through the clergy and intellectuals, the original words would be returned, and this was energetically carried out by all levels of Armenians, from the clergy to the illiterate peasant, for so important was their desire to save their language, that they willingly gave up their convenient Arabic and Turkish vocabulary and used the formerly lost traditional Armenian term. And thus, a nation and a language [were] reborn and became vigorous again.<sup>2</sup>

My research in the intervening years had unearthed a very different historical reality, one that called into question nearly every aspect of this account. My research had also exposed just how pervasive the assumptions, biases and generalizations present in this account were in scholarship on Armenian history, so deeply rooted that few had thought to question them. Reading the passage anew validated in my own mind the need for a study that offered an alternative view of this history, one that examined language change and language purism with the seriousness they deserved and unmasked the Ottoman-era ideologies that were not only still circulating today but that were treated as fact in scholarly and popular discourse alike.

A trite and triumphant tale of ‘national’ victory over ‘foreign’ enemies told through the history of language is not what readers will find in this study. In its place is a long and twisting saga populated with a cast of multilingual characters living in diverse locales with a host of conflicting perspectives, unexpected attitudes and thinly veiled emotions who at once collaborate with and sabotage one another as they strive to build a new language, one that is ultimately inscribed with their ambivalence over whether to be a part of or stand apart from the societies and social movements in flux around them.

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<sup>2</sup> Greppin, “Loan Word Intrusions and Extrusions in Armenian,” 86.

I could not have fathomed how exhilarating this project would be when I first embarked on it, how much I would enjoy spending time with these characters and learning what they had to tell me. From the endless polemics, pleas and grumblings they left behind, I would like to think that I have woven together a history that even they would find surprising, pinpointing patterns among them and tracing a historical arch that they were too close to see and that was too unlikely to imagine. Until the very end, I had been expecting to run into a major obstacle, to come across the reason why this story had not yet been written. Nothing of the sort ever materialized. Quite to the contrary, I found enough nooks and crannies in this history to sustain an entire lifetime of research. I hope readers will enjoy discovering how this history unfolded just as much as I have and that some will join me in continuing to uncover it.

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## Vita

### EDUCATION

- MA Columbia University May 2014  
Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies
- Thesis:* Toward Social Reconstruction: Armenian Education  
in Constantinople during the Armistice Period  
(1918-1922)
- BA Rutgers University, New Brunswick May 2011  
Departments of French and Middle Eastern Studies
- Thesis:* Armenité refoulée: les premiers écrits de Zabel  
Yessayan (1895-1900)

### SELECTED PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- 2023 “Cultural Nationalism and the Spread of a ‘National Language’ among Arabophone, Turcophone and Kurdophone Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1840 to c. 1860,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 59, no. 3 (2023): 359-376.
- 2022 “Literary Translation and the Expansion of the Ottoman Armenian Reading Public, 1853-1884,” *Book History* 25, no. 1 (2022): 128-171.
- 2017 “In Search of Linguistic Legitimacy: The New Speaker of Western Armenian,” in *Language and Globalization: An Autoethnographic Approach*, ed. Maryam Borjian (New York: Routledge, 2017): 195-206.

### SELECTED LITERARY TRANSLATIONS

- 2016 Zareh Vorpouni, *The Candidate: A Novel*, trans. Jennifer Manoukian and Ishkhan Jinbashian (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016).
- 2014 Zabel Yessayan, *The Gardens of Silihdar: A Memoir*, trans. Jennifer Manoukian (Watertown, MA: AIWA Press, 2014).

### SELECTED ONLINE PUBLICATIONS FOR A PUBLIC AUDIENCE

- 2022 “Loosening the Tongue: Language-Learning among Early American Missionaries to the Ottoman Empire,” *Commonplace: The Interactive Journal of Early American Life*, 11 October.
- 2022 “That’s Not Armenian! Encounters with Language Purists Past and Present,” *h-pem: Armenian Cultural Platform*, 5 August.

- 2021 “The Dedeyan Publishing House of Smyrna, 1853-1892,” *Houshamadyan: A Project to Reconstruct Ottoman Armenian Town and Village Life*, 12 August.
- 2020 “Survivor Testimony as Art: Zareh Vorpouni and the New Novel,” *Asymptote*, 20 April.
- 2018 “You’re Ironing My Head: Shared Western Armenian and Turkish Idioms,” *Bosphorus Review of Books*, 14 March.
- 2014 “The Legacy of Turkish in the Armenian Diaspora,” *Jadaliyya*, 3 October.
- 2014 “Armenian Intellectual Life in Constantinople during the Armistice Period,” *Tozsuz Evrak*, 8 April.
- 2012 “Exile and Memory in Contemporary Western Armenian Literature,” *Jadaliyya*, 16 August.

#### SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2023 “Book Societies, Literary Translation and the Spread of ‘Enlightenment’ among Ottoman Armenians (c. 1840-c. 1860),” Modern Language Association Annual Convention, San Francisco, 5 January.
- 2022 “Cultural Nationalism and the Spread of a ‘National Language’ among Arabophone, Turcophone and Kurdophone Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1840 to c. 1860,” Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting, Denver, 4 December.
- 2022 “Turkish as an Ottoman Armenian Prestige Language,” Western Ottomanists’ Workshop, UCLA, 19 November.
- 2021 “Archaizing and Ethnographic Purism in the Creation of an Ottoman Armenian Written Standard, 1870-1900,” North American Research Network in Historical Sociolinguistics Research Incubator Program, over Zoom, 24 April.
- 2021 “The ‘Discovery’ of the Rural Ottoman Armenian: Ethnography, Linguistic Legitimacy and the Making of a Modern Literary Language,” 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the Nineteenth Century Studies Association, over Zoom, 13 March.
- 2019 “Heresy or Progress? The Struggle between Classical and Modern Armenian in 1850s Constantinople,” *Entangled Encounters: Antiquity and Modernity in Armenian Studies*, Harvard University, 29 March.

## Introduction

### Prelude

We begin *in media res*. It is the early 1860s and we drop in on a young seminarian as he manages to find some humor in a stale and humorless debate. We watch as he crafts an allegory and brings to life an aggrieved father and headstrong son at loggerheads. The resentment that vexes the duo nearly vibrates on the page. Through a series of jabs and grumblings, the seminarian sketches a familiar familial dynamic: a father past his prime and a son eager to chart his own course are locked in dialogue and have arrived at an impasse. The father struggles to recognize his son's independence and sees his eagerness to separate as a form of rejection and an expression of ingratitude. The son, brash and brazen, does not shy away from questioning his father's authority and takes every opportunity to condemn him as old, decrepit and behind the times. The father does not take well to having his authority undermined and compensates by recounting his past glories at length and threatening his son into submission. The son resents being dismissed as naïve and compensates in turn by exuding bravado and shrugging off his father's criticism as the out-of-touch ravings of a madman.<sup>1</sup>

Personified in the seminarian's allegory are the two varieties of Armenian that will take center stage in this study: Classical Armenian and a vernacular-based print-language that would come to be called standard Western Armenian. When this allegory was published in 1863, the future of this print-language was far from certain and its right to exist as an alternative to Classical Armenian had been a bone of contention for decades. At its broadest, this study traces the slow rise of this rival print-language and the intellectual labor that led to its acceptance as the dominant

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<sup>1</sup> Գարեգին Սրուանձտեանց, “Հանդէս հակառակութեանց. հայոց գրաբառ եւ աշխարհաբառ լեզուաց,” *Արծուի վասսարական* 5, no. 2 (1862-1863): 51-61. Thank you to Nora Bairamian for drawing my attention to this article.

written medium for Ottoman Armenians by 1910. At its narrowest, this study explores the evolution of a transformative and ever-changing ideology that undergirded all phases of the language's formation and represented the primary preoccupation of its architects: the ideology of purism. Discussions of this ideology are absent from the seminarian's allegory and have long been overlooked in treatments of this period in Ottoman Armenian social and intellectual history.

Drawing on insights and approaches from the fields of historical sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and global intellectual history as well as untapped Armenian-language primary sources, I uncover the fundamental role that beliefs about purity played in the formation of standard Western Armenian. While anxieties about purity remained a constant among the intelligentsia throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, I show how ideas about what was considered “pure” were shaped and reshaped by various actors and interactions with ideas that originated far beyond the Ottoman Empire. Set against the backdrop of a rapidly transforming Ottoman Empire, this interaction came in the form of four global intellectual movements—humanism, cultural nationalism, comparative philology and folkloristics—which created shifting and conflicting expectations about how Ottoman Armenians ought to use and think about language. I argue that the impact of these global movements was all the more enduring because they coincided with the decades-long processes of vernacularization and standardization. I show how, unbeknownst to scholars and speakers of the language, the influence of these movements is inscribed in the standard Western Armenian still used today. I also highlight how these movements fundamentally shaped norms and attitudes about ‘proper’ usage that continue to predominate in post-Ottoman Armenian diaspora communities around the world.

In a word, this study is a social history of language among Ottoman Armenians in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Of interest here are macro-level debates

surrounding language purity not micro-level analyses of linguistic features, which have long been the norm in studies of the Armenian language. Breaking away from this dominant trend, the overarching goals of this study are threefold: (1) to write the social into Armenian language history and highlight the social history of language as a useful yet underutilized lens through which to understand the Ottoman Armenian past; (2) to underscore how changes in attitudes, anxieties and debates about language use can serve as barometers of larger ideological change; and (3) to reconstruct the constellation of actors and social forces that contributed to the fashioning and refashioning of the vernacular-based print-language that would come to be called standard Western Armenian.

Focused in its scope, this study does not purport to be an exhaustive history of all the actors and factors that contributed to the formation of standard Western Armenian nor does it aspire to chronicle the diversity of language practices among Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. It is admittedly only a sliver of a much larger language history that still needs to be written. It is also admittedly only a sliver of a much larger social and intellectual history that the confines of this study did not allow me to explore in the depth they deserve. My hope is that fellow researchers will follow the breadcrumbs I have left in my footnotes and delve deeper into this history in ways that I could not.

### **Whom Is This Study For?**

This study was written with four audiences in mind: (1) historical sociolinguists interested in macro-sociolinguistic processes; (2) historians of the Ottoman Empire; (3) researchers in Armenian studies; and (4) speakers and learners of Western Armenian outside of academia. Given that this study is aimed at distinct groups and brings together disparate fields, I am careful throughout to avoid unnecessary jargon and to explicitly define field-specific terms when they are

unavoidable. At various points, I also pause to provide information and explanations that may seem elementary to some; this is a conscious choice made in hopes that these details will make the study more accessible to a range of readers and facilitate its use across disciplines.

(1) Grounded in the field of historical sociolinguistics, this study is aimed at researchers in the field with an interest in large-scale, society-level linguistic phenomena—specifically, vernacularization, standardization in multilingual contexts and purism. At the most basic, I offer a new case study to the existing literature and broaden its focus beyond the languages of Europe. I also offer a counterbalance to the abundance of research on state languages shaped, championed and spread through formal institutions by looking at a language of an imperial minority unregulated by formal institutions and unaffected by state-level language policies. This case study thus presents exciting opportunities for comparative analyses of underrepresented topics in the field, particularly standardization processes that take place without state sponsorship or intervention.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, this study also contributes to developing the small body of scholarship on the historical study of language ideologies and takes a stance on one of the main debates in the study of purism.<sup>3</sup> This debate revolves around whether a language can be the target of purism outside the context of standardization.<sup>4</sup> My study offers a clear instance in which purist activity

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<sup>2</sup> Yaron Matras, “The Standardization of a Stateless Language,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Standardization*, eds. Wendy Ayres-Bennett and John Bellamy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 645-664.

<sup>3</sup> In the late 1990s, Jan Blommaert called for the development of the historiography of language ideologies. While the study of language ideologies has boomed in the intervening years, language ideologies still largely remain unhistoricized. Jan Blommaert, “The Debate is Open,” in *Language Ideological Debates*, ed. Jan Blommaert (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999), 1.

<sup>4</sup> On the side of standardization as a prerequisite for purism, see Nicoline van der Sijs, “The Role of Purism in Language Development: Historical and Political Aspects,” trans. Piet Verhoeff, in *Purism: Second Helping*, eds. Dónall ó Riagáin and Thomas Stolz (Bochum: N. Brockmeyer, 2004), 1-24 and Olivia Walsh, *Linguistic Purism: Language Attitudes in France and Quebec* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2016). On the other side, see Joseph Brincat, Winfried Boeder and Thomas Stolz, eds., *Purism in Minor Languages, Endangered Languages, Regional Languages, Mixed Languages* (Bochum: N. Brockmeyer, 2003).

long predated any attempt or interest in standardization and shows how such conditions can arise when a classical language is taken as a point of reference for purists. Relatedly, this study introduces the concept of a *purified vernacular*, an intermediate form born of purist intervention that helps illuminate the complex relationship between spoken and written language.

(2) This study is also of relevance to historians of the Ottoman Empire, particularly those interested in social and intellectual history. While this study is not a comparative history, I aim to offer a resource to Ottomanists who do indeed strive to put the experiences of Ottoman Muslims, Ottoman Rum, Ottoman Jews and Ottoman Armenians, among other communities, in conversation. The difficulty of finding reliable information about Ottoman Armenian history has led to both the exclusion of Ottoman Armenians from comparative studies and the perpetuation of conjecture masquerading as fact. When unsuspecting Ottomanists without a knowledge of Armenian have sought to include references to Armenians in their work, they have been obliged to make use of the same few, outdated and at times faulty English-language and French-language secondary sources, leading to a rehashing of information and hobbling attempts at substantive connection and comparison. Moreover, many of the most authoritative historical studies are written in Armenian, rendering them inaccessible to most Ottomanists. An English-language history based on Armenian-language sources, my study offers fresh new material to Ottomanists and facilitates the inclusion of a minority population in the study of imperial social and intellectual history. Furthermore, while this study can certainly facilitate the examination of the parallel debates over vernacularization and purism among different language communities within the Empire in pursuit of an eventual integrated history, it also offers new insight into broader social processes that drove them.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, it provides material that can contribute to situating the

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<sup>5</sup> On these parallel debates for Greek and Turkish, for example, see Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism*,

Ottoman Empire in a larger global frame and fostering a better understanding of how ideas fueled by global intellectual movements were received, interacted with local contexts and circulated within the Empire.<sup>6</sup> Finally, this study can also build on the growing scholarly interest in exploring the realities of Ottoman multilingualism that have been downplayed in long-dominant national historiographic paradigms.<sup>7</sup>

(3) Without a robust corpus of source-based research in Armenian studies, comparative work in Ottoman history will have no basis. My study contributes to a growing body of work that has begun to fill major gaps in scholarly knowledge of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ottoman Armenian history, which has long constituted a black hole in Armenian studies. Broadly, I address the near absence of scholarship on the creation of standard Western Armenian. Although the acceptance of a vernacular-based written medium facilitated many of the nineteenth century's most significant social transformations, its importance has only superficially been explored by scholars. Vernacularization has indeed commonly been acknowledged as a major component of Armenian nation-building, but these acknowledgements rarely go beyond a passing mention. In this way, scholarship on even many of the most basic elements of this process and on the linguistic landscape in which they functioned is essentially non-existent. Similarly, critical examinations of language ideologies like purism are only in their infancy in the field of Armenian studies. As we will see in the sections to come, philological approaches have dominated the study of Armenian for more than

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*1876-1908* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 56-80. Ottoman Armenian intellectuals express little awareness of contemporaneous Ottoman cases. The similarities in timing and approach appear to be driven more by interaction with the same global intellectual movements than by direct connection to one another.

<sup>6</sup> On the need for studies of global intellectual interconnection, especially of the interplay between global and local, see Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, "Approaches to Global Intellectual History," in *Global Intellectual History*, eds. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 3-30.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion and review of literature on multilingualism in the Ottoman Empire broadly, see Sooyong Kim and Orit Bashkin, "Revisiting Multilingualism in the Ottoman Empire," *Review of Middle East Studies* 55, no. 1 (2021): 130-145.

a century and sociolinguistic investigations of any kind have been few and far between. In Armenian studies, linguistic purism has not yet been seen as a topic worthy of historical inquiry. In passing mentions, it has either been touted as a primordial ‘national’ value or treated uncritically as a welcomed cultural achievement. My focus on the foundational role of the *global* in the development of this seemingly *national* value follows the lead of Sebouh Aslanian, whose work has highlighted the distortionary effects of the field’s longstanding insularity and emphasized transnational cultural connectivity as a historical norm.<sup>8</sup> By taking a historical sociolinguistic approach to the study of Armenian, my work strives to expand the bounds of Armenian studies and aims to end the scholarly neglect of this pivotal moment in Ottoman Armenian history and of its isolation from larger global trends. In so doing, I seek to put to rest the assumptions, generalizations and unsubstantiated claims that abound about Ottoman-era language use in scholarly and popular discourse and to ultimately work toward painting a clearer and more complete picture of the lived experiences of Ottoman Armenians.

(4) Over the course of this project, I came to see that many speakers and learners of Western Armenian—often descendants of Armenians who once lived in the Ottoman Empire—feel starved for information about the history of the language. Since UNESCO declared Western Armenian “definitely endangered” in 2010, there has been a growing interest in revitalizing the language but few resources to draw on to learn about its past. Existing histories are written by and for historical linguists, are not accessible to readers outside their field and say little about the history of *Western* Armenian in particular. Furthermore, the vast majority of these general histories are written in academic Eastern Armenian, which does not lend itself to perusal by the many Armenians in

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<sup>8</sup> See, in particular, Sebouh David Aslanian, “From ‘Autonomous’ to ‘Interactive’ Histories: World History’s Challenge to Armenian Studies,” in *An Armenian Mediterranean: Mediterranean Perspectives*, eds. Kathryn Babayan and Michael Pifer (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 81-125.

diaspora who cannot read any form of Armenian, let alone this variety and register of the language. Basic questions about the history of Western Armenian thus remain unanswered. In a day and age in which futile debates about whether Eastern or Western Armenian is the ‘oldest,’ ‘purest’ and ‘most correct’ form of Armenian dominate the popular discourse on Armenian language history and readers have little choice but to turn to the ideologically fueled misinformation circulating online, public-facing, source-based scholarship is more important than ever. Scholarly and popular unawareness of the historically distinct origins and trajectories of the two modern standards, which were created largely independently from one another, only fuels these pernicious debates. There is no reason why academic research needs to be confined to an academic readership, particularly when it has contemporary relevance, can offer insight into the origins of modern-day ideologies and practices and can address needs outside the ivory tower.

### **How Has Armenian Language History Already Been Told?**

Armenian language history has overwhelmingly been told from within a national paradigm and from within the discipline of historical linguistics. In existing popular overviews and studies, readers familiar with national-language historiography will find all the conventional tropes. Written to serve the national project, these histories strive to craft a continuous linear narrative from past to present, to establish a long and noble pedigree for the language and ultimately to frame the language as an enduring expression of identity and a symbol of unity.<sup>9</sup> Absent from these accounts are sociolinguistic realities—however pervasive—that would call this triumphant retelling of history into question or highlight languages attitudes or practices in the past that clash

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<sup>9</sup> Nationalist language historiography shares many features with nationalist historiography *tout court*. C.f. Paul Lawrence, “Nationalism and Historical Writing,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, ed. John Breuilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 713-730. For rare and refreshing critiques of the impact of the national lens on Armenian historiography, see Aslanian, “From ‘Autonomous’ to ‘Interactive’ Histories,” 81-125 and Sebouh Aslanian, “‘The Treason of the Intellectuals:’ Reflections on the Uses of Revisionism and Nationalism in Armenian Historiography,” *Armenian Forum* 2, no. 4 (2002): 1-38.

with the ones held dear in the national present. As we will see in this study, there is much for nationalist historiographers to bristle at in the language attitudes and *spoken* practices of Ottoman Armenians in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including dramatic linguistic variation, widespread multilingualism and little regard for the “national language.” Steering clear of these derailing details, overtly and methodologically nationalist historiographers tend to focus instead on the same handful of phases in the history of *written* Armenian, periodized and cultivated for their significance to two critical bolsters of the national movement: religion and statehood.<sup>10</sup>

Written to uphold a sense of national distinctiveness, canonical histories and overviews geared toward general audiences most often begin by declaring with pride that Armenian constitutes its own separate branch of the Indo-European language family. Still trapped in a nineteenth-century mentality set on asserting the “civilization” of Armenians by emphasizing ties to Europe, these accounts often continue by underscoring how Armenian is, thus, related to Greek, Latin and French.<sup>11</sup> The next dot on the conventional timeline of the Armenian language concerns another feature cultivated as a badge of national distinctiveness: the Armenian alphabet. Invented in the fifth century, the Armenian alphabet is most often discussed in the context of its early religious function.<sup>12</sup> Devised by a monk in the wake of elite conversion from Zoroastrianism to

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<sup>10</sup> This selection bias is a hallmark of what has been called *methodological nationalism*, or a research approach in which the “analyst unreflectively accepts nations as a universal starting point of interpretation and reasoning when that universality is unwarranted.” George Vasilev, “Methodological Nationalism and the Politics of History-Writing: How Imaginary Scholarship Perpetuates the Nation,” *Nations and Nationalism* 25, no. 2 (2019): 503-508.

<sup>11</sup> The relationship with Indo-European languages outside Europe like, for example, Persian and Hindi, is rarely, if ever, mentioned in these general accounts. This trend is one indication of a larger Eurocentric bent in Armenian studies and a tendency to ignore ties to the East. See Nina Garsoïan, “Reality and Myth in Armenian History,” in *The East and the Meaning of History* (Rome: Bardi Editore, 1994), 142-143.

<sup>12</sup> For a rare scholarly treatment of the invention of the Armenian alphabet untinged by national discourse, see James R. Russell, “On the Origins and Invention of the Armenian Script,” *Le Muséon* 107, no. 3-4 (1994): 317-333.

Christianity, the alphabet facilitated a burst of translations of Christian texts into the first attested form of written Armenian. Following the periodization common in nineteenth-century philological research, this form would later be referred to as Classical Armenian, styled after Classical Greek and Classical Latin. As we will see, this era was fashioned in the period of this study into the “Golden Age” of Armenian writing, a designation still used today in scholarship often without awareness of its role as a national construct.

In these sweeping histories, readers are typically sped forward more than six centuries to the so-called Middle Ages. Here they are told of the emergence of a vernacular form, later termed Middle Armenian, that was used to produce literary, medical and administrative texts.<sup>13</sup> This form of the language has been given a coveted spot on this timeline because of its connection to a fleeting period of Armenian statehood known as the Kingdom of Cilicia. After the fall of the Kingdom of Cilicia in 1375, national historiographers lead us to believe that Armenians along with their written language entered a “Dark Age” of corruption and decay until national sentiment began to stir in the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Drawing once again on national idiom, this stirring is referred to as the Renaissance or Reawakening (Չարթօսը) of the Armenian language, personified as stretching awake after a centuries-long slumber to reclaim its past glories in tandem with the Armenian nation. In this study, we will explore how the ideology of purism was bolstered by this narrative and how this so-called Renaissance was, in fact, defined much more by novelty than by rebirth.

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<sup>13</sup> For a study that examines Middle Armenian poetic expression from outside the national frame, see Michael Pifer, *Kindred Voices: A Literary History of Medieval Anatolia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

<sup>14</sup> Again, this notion of a ‘dark age’ for the Armenian language mirrors the way the larger history of the period has been told. For resistance to this portrayal, see S. Peter Cowe, “The Armenian Oikoumene in the Sixteenth Century: Dark Age or Era of Transition?,” in *Reflections of Armenian Identity in History and Historiography*, eds. Hourii Berberian and Touraj Daryaei (Irvine: UCI Jordan Center for Persian Studies, 2018), 133-160.

Without fail, these histories and overviews culminate triumphantly in the creation of two standard forms of Modern Armenian in the nineteenth century: Eastern Armenian and Western Armenian. These accounts offer few details about precisely how these complex standardization processes took place or the linguistic diversity that remained after standardization. Instead, we learn simply that the Eastern Armenian standard was developed in the Russian Empire and is used today in the Republic of Armenia, Iran and to varying degrees in their diaspora communities around the world, while the Western Armenian standard was developed in the Ottoman Empire and is a stateless language used today to varying degrees in post-Ottoman diaspora communities around the world.<sup>15</sup> I do not seek to challenge the significance of these historical moments or undermine the validity of every idea presented in these accounts. I seek only to draw attention to the limiting way Armenian language history has conventionally been narrated and to illustrate how much more we can uncover about Armenian language history when we shed a national historiographic paradigm and pursue an alternative method of inquiry.

In addition to having been viewed nearly exclusively through a national lens, the history of Armenian has also been examined nearly exclusively from within the discipline of historical linguistics. In the nineteenth century and still in many places outside the United States today, this discipline is also referred to as *philology*.<sup>16</sup> Such a disciplinary orientation means that research on Armenian standards and dialects is overwhelmingly technical and has focused largely on granular-

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<sup>15</sup> In this way, we can say that Armenian speakers today exist in a *standard language culture* in which speakers believe whole-heartedly in the existence of standard forms and in their prestige, superiority and correctness vis-à-vis non-standard forms. See James Milroy, "Language Ideologies and the Consequences of Standardization," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 5, no. 4 (2001): 530-555. We can also say that today Armenian is a *pluricentric* language, in that it has more than one standard form. See S. Peter Cowe, "*Amēn Tel Hay Kay*: Armenian as a Pluricentric Language," in *Pluricentric Languages: Differing Norms in Different Nations*, ed. Michael Clyne (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), 325-345.

<sup>16</sup> On differing definitions and perceptions of philology across time and space, see James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), ix-xi.

level linguistic processes, such as patterns of phonological, morphological and grammatical change over time. In this way, the approach to the study of Armenian has remained largely the same since the birth of the discipline in the nineteenth century; researchers, especially those in the Republic of Armenia, have shown little interest in integrating insights or methods from the mid-twentieth-century advances in sociolinguistics into their work.<sup>17</sup> In this body of work, the research has been both comparative and inward-looking, focusing primarily on tracing the ‘development’ of Armenian through the ages. Premised on the assumption that language has a linear history, this diachronic work has taken Classical Armenian as its point of departure and has compared all subsequent varieties of Armenian to it to identify general principles of language change. Comparative research has sought broadly to determine the ‘genetic’ origins of linguistic features and to reconstruct historical relationships between Armenian and other Indo-European languages.

From these kinds of *internal* language histories, we learn very little about the role that social forces have played in the history of Armenian or about the impact of language contact and human intervention in prompting and propelling in language change. In these histories and in the discipline of historical linguistics more broadly, language is very much viewed as an entity that exists *independent of* its users and disconnected from time and place.<sup>18</sup> Change, in other words, is attributed to factors internal to the language rather than to any social factors in the lives of its speakers or writers. While this approach certainly has its merits and has unearthed vital information

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<sup>17</sup> In recent years, a handful of doctoral students in the United States and Europe have begun to study Armenian usage from a sociolinguistic perspective. See, for example, Robin Meyer, “Iranian-Armenian Language Contact in and before the 5<sup>th</sup> Century CE: An Investigation into Pattern Replication and Societal Multilingualism” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oxford, 2017) and Shushan Karapetian, “‘How Do I Teach My Kids My Broken Armenian?’: A Study of Eastern Armenian Heritage Language Speakers in Los Angeles” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2014). This sociolinguistic work, however, still represents only a small sliver of research on the Armenian language.

<sup>18</sup> This is a broader sociolinguistic critique of historical linguistics. See Donald N. Tuten and Fernando Tejedo-Herrero, “The Relationship between Historical Linguistics and Sociolinguistics,” in *The Handbook of Hispanic Sociolinguistics*, ed. Manuel Díaz-Campos (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2011), 283-285.

about the history of Armenian, it cannot tell the whole story of the language and its users. As sociolinguists have long emphasized, “we are unlikely to make great progress in understanding the nature of language if we entirely ignore its *social* functions and characteristics.”<sup>19</sup> Here my aim is to show how much more we can learn about the history of Armenian when we work to overcome this disciplinary blind spot and turn our attention to the long neglected social history of the language.

### **Toward a Social History of Armenian**

At the risk of oversimplification, internal histories grounded in the discipline of linguistics use history to understand language, while external histories grounded in the discipline of history use language to understand people.<sup>20</sup> External histories are also focused on how macro-level politics, culture and society have prompted language change and how they have affected language communities. Breaking from the pack, this study offers an *external* language history to the field of Armenian studies and is guided by the basic premise of historical sociolinguistics: that “language is both a historical and social product and must therefore be explained with reference to the historical and social forces which have shaped its use.”<sup>21</sup>

Within the field of historical sociolinguistics, this study draws on methods informed by the social history of language, a surprisingly underdeveloped field at the crossroads of the oft-siloed

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<sup>19</sup> James Milroy and Lesley Milroy, *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*, third edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 7. Italics in the source.

<sup>20</sup> Steffan Davies, Nils Langer and Wim Vandenbussche, “Language and History, Linguistics and Historiography: Interdisciplinary Problems and Opportunities,” in *Language and History, Linguistics and Historiography: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, eds. Nils Langer, Steffan Davies and Wim Vandenbussche (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), 8.

<sup>21</sup> Suzanne Romaine, “Historical Sociolinguistics/Historische Soziolinguistik,” in *Sociolinguistics/Soziolinguistik: An International Handbook of the Science of Language and Society/ Ein internationales Handbuch zur Wissenschaft von Sprache und Gesellschaft*, vol. 2, eds. Ulrich Ammon, Norbert Dittmar, Klaus J. Mattheier, et. al. (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 2005), 1696.

disciplines of history, linguistics and sociology.<sup>22</sup> Developed, practiced and championed most notably by Peter Burke, the social history of language treats the study of language use more systematically, more directly and with more of a focus on social interaction than historical linguistics, historical sociology or social history *tout court*. Simply put, the field is premised on the idea that language is shaped by the people who use it and by the social environment that they inhabit.<sup>23</sup> Confronting head-on the privileging of national concerns over social realities in language historiography, the field also offers a pathway for reconstructing the sociolinguistic realities that national historiographic traditions have ignored, downplayed or manipulated.

Since the 1980s, Burke has taken language as a primary object of historical analysis and produced an exciting, insightful and celebrated body of work on European language cultures in the early modern period.<sup>24</sup> For decades, he has called on social historians to “think seriously about the role of language in creating and changing the social reality they study.”<sup>25</sup> Yet, few historians have heeded his call. Why is this? In the discipline of history, the same biases that Burke sought to expose and remedy in the 1980s remain to this day and have inhibited the development of the field. There is still work to be done to show historians that language can be a source for understanding social dynamics in the past. Many historians grapple privately with linguistic variation and change in their sources, but few see this variation and change as social phenomena worthy of scholarly

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Burke, “Introduction,” in *The Social History of Language*, eds. Peter Burke and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Burke, “Introduction,” 3-4. See also Robert McColl Millar, “Social History and the Sociology of Language,” in *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, eds. Juan Manuel Hernández-Campoy and Juan Camilo Conde-Silvestre (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), 41-59.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Peter Burke and Roy Porter, eds., *Languages and Jargons: Contributions to a Social History of Language* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Peter Burke, *Towards a Social History of Early Modern Dutch* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> Burke, “Introduction,” 15.

exploration. Unduly divorcing the social history of language from other forms of social history, some historians may have also been led to believe that they do not have the tools or training to study language, that language is the province of linguists, philologists or literary theorists, and that it has little to offer them. But, just like “other forms of social history, [the] history of language is concerned with both solidarities and conflicts, continuities and changes” and is, in fact, ripe for historical inquiry.<sup>26</sup> As Burke rightfully noted in 1987, “language is too important historically to leave to the linguists.”<sup>27</sup> Building on his work, my study seeks to underscore the potential of a language-centered approach for historians. In particular, I strive to underscore how examining changes in the discourses around language use can be barometers of social and ideological change, can shine a spotlight on unarticulated global linkages and can ultimately complement more conventional approaches to historiography.

### **Ottoman Armenian Sociolinguistic Realities: Fact or Fiction?**

The absence of social histories of language across the board, coupled with the national and philological orientations of the majority of research on Armenian, helps explain why a study like this one has not yet been written. But the absence of this kind of history has not been without consequences. One of the most unfortunate consequences of the dearth of historical sociolinguistic scholarship on Ottoman Armenians is that the attitudes and practices of their descendants today are uncritically overlaid onto the past and are assumed to have been the historical norm.<sup>28</sup> This presentism has created a fundamentally warped impression of how Ottoman Armenians both used and thought about language. This tendency has also obscured dramatic linguistic variation within

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<sup>26</sup> Peter Burke, “Introduction,” in *Languages and Jargons: Contributions to a Social History of Language*, eds. Peter Burke and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Burke, “Introduction [to *The Social History of Language*],” 17.

<sup>28</sup> I myself am guilty of making assumptions about the language practices of Ottoman Armenians and the history of Western Armenian in my earlier work. I strive to rectify these errors in this study.

this diverse population, variation based not only on geography and generation but also on class, gender, religious confession, and social situation.<sup>29</sup> In order to help readers inhabit the social context in which this study is set, it is crucial to expose these false assumptions upfront. The following sociolinguistic realities serve as the premise of this study, complicate the work of the architects of standard Western Armenian and will be taken as givens in the chapters to come.

### ***Not All Armenians Knew Armenian***

From within today's national paradigm, speaking Armenian is considered an essential component of Armenian identity. But the language an Armenian spoke was not always invested with the same ideological importance it has today. In the pre-national period, Armenians across the Ottoman Empire and beyond claimed Armenianness through their belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church. The languages they spoke in daily life had little bearing on this identity and were rarely policed or regulated.<sup>30</sup> Sometimes their primary language was a variety of Armenian, but many times it was another language entirely. In this study, we will periodically encounter communities of Armenians with little to no knowledge of any form of Armenian. Instead, like today, these individuals used the dominant languages of the societies around them as their everyday means of expression.<sup>31</sup> This meant that there were pockets of the Ottoman Empire in which Armenians had adopted Turkish, Kurdish or Arabic as their main or sometimes sole

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<sup>29</sup> It is also important to keep in mind that there is variation at the level of the individual (intra-speaker variation), who wields different registers of language depending on his or her context, interlocutor, topic and communicative intent. "Even if we accept a model as correct for all purposes," as Cooper aptly notes, "we do not use it for all purposes." The same certainly applies to historical subjects as well. Robert L. Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 135.

<sup>30</sup> This is a feature of many communities before the rise of national sentiment. Vasilev, "Methodological Nationalism," 516.

<sup>31</sup> Like today, we also find in the nineteenth century uneven levels of proficiency in Armenian and dominance in other languages. The following reference to Armenians in India c. 1875 could easily be mistaken for a commentary on the language habits of Armenians in parts of the world today: "It is strange to say, and yet it is an undeniable fact, that many Armenians know the English language better than their mother-tongue!" Matthias Bedrossian, *New Dictionary Armenian-English* (Venice: S. Lazarus Armenian Academy, 1875-1879), xi.

language. When, why and how these communities underwent this language shift still remains to be determined. What we do know is that this linguistic diversity became a source of tremendous anxiety and concern among the intelligentsia during the period of this study, particularly once the cultural-nationalist movement created the expectation that one nation should speak one language. Many of the same intellectuals who championed the ideology of purism that we will focus on also worked to force a change in the spoken language practices of these non-Armenophone Ottoman Armenians.<sup>32</sup> While these initiatives will not be given detailed attention in the present study, it is important to keep in mind that they ran parallel to our purist initiatives of interest, were intensified by the same national ideology and should be seen as two sides of the same coin.

### *Not All Armenians Gave Value to Armenian*

From within today's national paradigm, it may also be difficult to imagine a time when the Armenian language was not widely revered, even cherished, by its speakers. The reality is that the intellectuals whom we will meet in this study toiled for decades to create the sense of reverence and adoration that now dominates. Not unlike its status in the Armenian diaspora today, Armenian in the Ottoman Empire was a non-dominant language, had limited domains of use, was wielded by multilingual people and was largely confined to communication among Armenians. As such, it was in direct competition with the other languages in a speaker's linguistic repertoire and would often be dismissed by its own speakers as useless. Whereas today a national ideology props Armenian up and gives it an ideological significance that impels Armenians to use and perpetuate it despite this lack of utility, the language had little inherent draw in the pre- and early-national periods and was widely considered inferior to other languages in a speaker's repertoire. The sense

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<sup>32</sup> Jennifer Manoukian, "Cultural Nationalism and the Spread of a 'National Language' among Arabophone, Turcophone and Kurdophone Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1840 to c. 1860," *Middle Eastern Studies* 59, no. 3 (2023): 359-376.

today that Armenian is and should be superior to other languages in this repertoire was actively cultivated by nationally minded intellectuals in the nineteenth century. Particularly in the first two chapters of this study, we will read about the challenges early subscribers to a national ideology faced in inculcating in Armenian speakers a new sense of respect for Armenian, in both its classical and spoken forms, and in forcing a shift in attitudes toward the language. We will read about the difficulties they faced and the strategies they used—with varying degrees of success—to convince fellow Armenians that they should *want* to know Armenian and that the language should occupy a preeminent position in their linguistic repertoires as their “national” language. These early subscribers—our purists—struggled against social realities that made Armenian speakers reticent to use, develop and pass down their Armenian and led them instead to use, develop and pass down languages with more practical utility or prestige, like Turkish and French. As we shall see in Chapter 2, purism was part of the larger project of endowing the language with the prestige that it lacked in the eyes of its own speakers and of transforming the Armenian language into a pillar of Armenian identity.

### ***Turkish Was Not Always a Forcibly Imposed Language***

While the Turkish language for many Armenians today conjures up associations with the social rupture, human loss and forced assimilation of the Armenian genocide, the historical relationship between Armenians and the Turkish language has not always been one defined by violence. Nevertheless, the legacy of the genocide has fueled a prevailing, though unsubstantiated, claim found in both popular lore and certain scholarship that the use of Turkish was imposed on Ottoman Armenians by force. In actuality, the Ottoman Empire—unlike the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century—did not actively work to spread the state language among linguistic minorities

nor did it aim to suppress the use of minority languages.<sup>33</sup> In the final decades of the Empire, we do see this general linguistic indifference replaced with new state educational policies designed to increase literacy in Ottoman Turkish, but these policies were not designed not to supplant Armenian.<sup>34</sup> In earlier periods, the use and perpetuation of Turkish was fueled by Ottoman Armenians themselves, who selected the language from within their linguistic repertoires for particular social reasons.<sup>35</sup> There were indeed compelling social reasons that led Armenian speakers to gravitate toward Turkish in the same way they gravitate toward the socially dominant languages of the diaspora today. Chiefly among them was the utility of Turkish as an inter-communal lingua franca and as a vehicle for economic advancement. For urban bilingual men, knowledge of Turkish was also seen as a masculine attribute, given the association of Armenian with home life, and as having more social cachet than Armenian because of its association with state power.<sup>36</sup> For these reasons, Turkish was far more often actively chosen than forcibly imposed. Throughout this study, we will see our purists struggle—often in vain—to counter the appeal of, preference for and comfort with Turkish among Ottoman Armenians and to install Armenian in its place.

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<sup>33</sup> Johann Strauss, “Language and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire,” in *Imperial Lineages and Legacies in the Eastern Mediterranean: Recording the Imprint of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Rule*, ed. Rhoads Murphey (New York: Routledge, 2017), 116.

<sup>34</sup> The variety of Turkish with which Ottoman Armenians had most often come into contact was not the written variety of the Ottoman administration and literate elite but rather spoken forms of Turkish, which were picked up by ear. For more on Turkish varieties, see Linda T. Darling, “Ottoman Turkish: Written Language and Scribal Practice, 13<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” in *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, eds. Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2012), 171-195.

<sup>35</sup> This linguistic reality supports the claim that Turkish should, as Ghoogasian has argued, be considered an Armenian language. See Aram Ghoogasian, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Armeno-Turkish,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 9, no. 1 (2022): 321.

<sup>36</sup> Jennifer Manoukian, “Turkish as an Ottoman Armenian Prestige Language,” unpublished paper.

### *Armenians Did Not Speak ‘Purely’ in the Past*

This bilingualism—coupled with positive attitudes toward Turkish—manifested in the integration of thousands of direct Turkish borrowings and calques into spoken forms of Armenian.<sup>37</sup> As we will see in Chapter 3, speakers of the Constantinople variety of Armenian, the regional form to which we will be giving the most attention in this study, were known to have been some of the most enthusiastic borrowers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, integrating words from Turkish as well as Italian and French into their speech and applying the norms of Armenian grammar to them.<sup>38</sup> But contact with Turkish had a profound—albeit varied—effect on all varieties of Armenian in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, there is a misconception today that Armenian speakers long ago knew and used ‘clean Armenian’ (մաքուր հայերէն) in all domains of life and that they did not rely on words from the dominant languages of the societies around them like they do today. Many today believe that the loss of ‘purity’ is a consequence of post-genocide dispersion. But the same complaints about ‘linguistic decline’ resounded in the Ottoman period as well. There is little sense that Armenians in the past also needed to be taught or invent themselves the Armenian words for certain objects and concepts that they only knew in

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<sup>37</sup> As Cooper and others since have noted, “bilinguals, serving as agents of language change, introduce elements from one of their languages into another, influencing those monolingual speakers of the second language with whom they are in contact.” Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change*, 166.

<sup>38</sup> More research must be done to determine the precise kind of language convergence at play in forms of spoken Armenian, referred to in the period of our study as *նամկօրէն*. See Peter Auer, “From Codeswitching via Language Mixing to Fused Lects: Toward a Dynamic Typology of Bilingual Speech,” *International Journal of Bilingualism* 3, no. 4 (1999): 309-332. Handwritten ego-documents would provide a rich source basis for such a study. Samples of this kind of speech, although rare in print, can be found scattered in the press in the form of satire, ethnographic studies and printed transcriptions of handwritten historical documents. See, for example, Գ. Հնասէր, “Նիւթեր Կ. Պոլսոյ աշխարհաբարի պատմութեան համար,” *Անահիտ* 3, no. 1-2 (1931): 140-141 and Վ[ահան] Փ[ափազեան], “Բերայի մէջ Սամաթիայի մուշինան,” *Ճօնօկրուֆ* 1, no. 1 (1901): 9-13.

<sup>39</sup> Հրաչեայ Աճառեան, *Թուրքերէնէ վոխաստեայ բառերը Պօլսի հայ ժողովրդական լեզուին մէջ համեմատութեամբ Վանի, Ղարսբաղի և Նոր-Նախիջևանի բարբառներուն* (Moscow and Vagharshapat: Լազարեան ճեմարան արևելեան լեզուաց, 1902), 4-5.

another language.<sup>40</sup> Since the advent of the ideology of purism, using ‘pure’ Armenian has always been an exception, an ideal, an aspiration, never the historical norm that today’s speakers have been led to believe it was.<sup>41</sup>

Though often downplayed in national historiographic traditions, language contact and the contact-induced language change that can result from it are extremely common in the history of speech communities around the world.<sup>42</sup> Change is also an inevitable and a fundamental quality of language; yet contact-induced change—colloquially referred to as ‘mixing’—has been treated as an aberration in popular and certain scholarly discourses across languages.<sup>43</sup> In our particular context, what the ideology of purism has continued to do is pathologize the ordinary results of multilingual life—a feature of life in the Ottoman period just as it is in diaspora—and stigmatized a way of using language that had once been ordinary and unremarkable. Given the abundance of Ottoman-era Armenian materials written in a print language that bears few traces of language contact, this misconception is understandable. Yet it is essential to underscore that printed language and spoken language were not one and the same: the former was shaped by purist intellectuals for particular ideological ends while the latter was not. Throughout this study, it is critical to keep in mind the degree to which the loud dictates of the intelligentsia clashed with popular practice and were rarely heeded in the spoken realm.

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<sup>40</sup> For example, in 1890, a noted writer, teacher and lexicographer admitted with humor that, despite his age and erudition, he still did not know the Armenian word for *broom*, having only ever used the Turkish. Եղիա Տէմիճիպաշեան, *Աղջկանց դաստիարակութեան վրայ ճամ* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Գ. Պատաստլեան, 1890), 32.

<sup>41</sup> Even at the turn of the nineteenth century in the Ottoman capital, the noted linguist Hratchia Adjarian admits that intellectuals, despite all their success in creating a ‘pure’ written language, had had little success in excising borrowings from spoken language. Աճառեան, *Թուրքերէնէ փոխառեալ բառերը*, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Sarah G. Thomason, *Language Contact: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 8-10.

<sup>43</sup> James Milroy, “Sociolinguistics and Ideologies in Language History,” in *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, eds. Juan Manuel Hernández-Campoy and Juan Camilo Conde-Silvestre (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), 578-579.

### *Few Ottoman Armenians Spoke Western Armenian*

Relatedly, an awareness of the degree to which different forms of Armenian had different social functions has also faded over time. Many Armenian speakers today know from experience that the variety of Armenian used in church services differs from the varieties of Armenian used elsewhere. But in Ottoman times, this diglossia—a language situation in which there is a strict separation in form, function and perception between two varieties of the same language—was much more textured and multifaceted.<sup>44</sup> In daily life, Armenians navigated not only between different languages but also between different varieties of Armenian, both in speech and in writing.<sup>45</sup> They also often had uneven levels of proficiency in the modalities of Armenian, some knowing how to speak but not read, read but not speak, etc.<sup>46</sup> At its most basic, there was a rigid division between Classical Armenian, used in writing, and Armenian dialects, used in speech. As is the case in many language communities, diglossia was not a problem to solve.<sup>47</sup> There was no assumption that written and spoken language would or should be one and the same; the assumption was that they were inherently different. The fierce resistance of some intellectuals to the rise of a *written* language based on *spoken* norms can be understood as unease stemming from a

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<sup>44</sup> Charles A. Ferguson, “Diglossia,” *Word* 15, no. 2 (1959): 336.

<sup>45</sup> On diglossia as a broader Eastern Mediterranean phenomenon, see Johann Strauss, “Diglossie dans le domaine ottoman. Évolution et péripéties d’une situation linguistique,” *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 75-76, no. 1-2 (1995): 221-255.

<sup>46</sup> For example, it was common for Turkish-dominant Armenian students to know the Armenian alphabet and to read Classical Armenian texts in school but not to understand what they were reading. For such a scenario, see Գարեգին Սրուանձունեանց, *Թորոս սոքար. Հայաստանի ճամբորդ* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Ե. Մ. Տնտեսան, 1879), 75-76. There are also many instances of Armenian speakers who were educated in non-Armenian schools and never learned to read or write in the Armenian or to express complex ideas in the language. On the challenges and embarrassment this predicament caused, see Հրանտ Ասատուր, “Մայրենի լեզուին դէմ,” *Արևելք* 15, no. 3780 (1898): 1. With regard to Turkish, only a small minority of Armenians were ever literate in Ottoman Turkish, which used the Arabic alphabet. Literate Armenians most often accessed written Turkish through Armeno-Turkish, which is a form of vernacular Turkish written in the Armenian alphabet.

<sup>47</sup> Ferguson, “Diglossia,” 338.

fundamental reshuffling of this longstanding state of diglossia. That Classical Armenian was the primary means of formal written expression was a norm that had long gone unquestioned. Until the late nineteenth century, it had been the only codified form of Armenian and had been used in nearly all literary genres, in education and in most written communication. But Classical Armenian, a language of the learned wielded only by those trained in it, was inaccessible to the vast majority of the population, who were largely illiterate and, if Armenophone, spoke varieties of Armenian that were grammatically and lexically distinct from the classical language.<sup>48</sup> These varieties varied by region and were not always mutually intelligible.<sup>49</sup>

As we will see in Chapter 1, what is unique about the period of this study is that we see the introduction into Ottoman Armenian print culture of a new vernacular-based, *intermediate* form of Armenian, one that displayed features of both the classical language and the spoken variety of the capital. Over the course of the nineteenth century, this form assumed nearly all the functions that Classical Armenian had occupied for centuries. By the turn of the century, Classical Armenian had been relegated to the liturgy, Western Armenian reigned as the primary language of print and regional dialects—borrowings and all—continued to be used in speech, alongside Turkish or other local languages. In this way, Armenian dialects were not crushed by the rise of the print-language and continued to carry out their longstanding function until the end of the Ottoman period. Contrary to popular belief, Western Armenian was not widely spoken during the Ottoman period and no one could claim to be a native speaker of it. It was an acquired language learned through

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<sup>48</sup> There is evidence that Classical Armenian had become incomprehensible to the uninitiated as early as the twelfth century. Pifer, *Kindred Voices*, 136.

<sup>49</sup> Seventy-two distinct varieties of Armenian were identified as having been spoken in the Ottoman Empire and Europe on the eve of the Armenian genocide in 1915. See Ք. Բ. Ջահուկյան, *Հայ բարբառազիտությունն ներածություն* (Yerevan: Հայկական ՍԱՀ ԳԱ Հրատարակչություն, 1972), 32-36.

the school and the press. The epilogue will explore precisely how this Ottoman-era print language became a spoken language in the post-Ottoman diaspora.

### **The Drama of Vernacularization among Ottoman Armenians**

As I highlighted earlier, the study of nineteenth century vernacularization is essentially a terra incognita in Armenian studies.<sup>50</sup> Simply put, vernacularization refers to the social process by which a spoken variety of a language is transformed into a written language, often eventually forming the basis of a standard language. At first glance, this seems to be precisely what we see among Ottoman Armenians in the period of this study—nothing more than an Armenian *questione della lingua*, or language debate, during which intellectuals fought for the ‘emancipation’ of Modern Armenian from Classical Armenian just as their counterparts in Europe centuries earlier had fought for the ‘emancipation’ of the Romance language from Latin.<sup>51</sup> But when we dig just a little deeper and examine the writings of these intellectuals, we find that the Ottoman Armenian process of vernacularization was not nearly as simple as meets the eye. In particular, this portrayal obscures two main sociolinguistic realities:

First, until the 1870s, not even the most ardent advocate of a vernacular-based print-language questioned the supremacy of Classical Armenian as the one and only “legitimate” language of the Armenian people. As we will see in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, Classical Armenian was cultivated by two separate waves of intellectuals as a source of communal cohesion and held tremendous symbolic power that waned only in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Until

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<sup>50</sup> The most commonly cited reference on the topic of Armenian language history is Marc Nichanian, *Âges et usages de la langue arménienne* (Paris: Éditions Entente, 1989). As he himself specifies, much of his information on the history of Ottoman Armenian vernacularization comes from Վ[անուհի] Լ. Աճնյան, *Գրական արևմտահայերենի ձևալորումը* (Yerevan: Հայկական ՄՄՀ ԳԱ Հրատարակչություն, 1971), a groundbreaking study that, while certainly national in its approach, remains the most thorough look at Ottoman Armenian vernacularization between 1700 and 1870. No study has explored the transformations of the final decades of the nineteenth century.

<sup>51</sup> In Armenian-language scholarship, this debate is called լեզուապայքար or գրապայքար, styled after the French *querelle de la langue*.

this time, it was *the* Armenian prestige variety and the sole standard form of Armenian against which all other forms of Armenian were judged. Classical Armenian was *in no way* seen as a yoke to toss off.<sup>52</sup> Quite to the contrary, all attention was focused on how to bring the vernacular-based print-language closer to Classical Armenian, especially in its lexicon, and “elevate” it by association. Debates, in other words, did not revolve around *whether* the print-language should bear the imprint of Classical Armenian but on *how much* of an imprint it should bear.

Second, the vernacular-based print-language later called Western Armenian was not the exact transcription of an actively spoken variety of Armenian. As Florian Coulmas has noted, “the underlying notion of the unity of spoken and written language is strongly ideological...both the all-purpose language and the ‘write as you speak’ principle are ideal types, models for, rather than faithful portrayals of, linguistic practices.”<sup>53</sup> At no point in this study does any intellectual advocate for Ottoman Armenians to write exactly as they spoke, because of the extent to which Turkish loanwords were used in their speech.<sup>54</sup> As we will see, Turkish loanwords were stigmatized among intellectuals throughout the period of this study. When the social need for a written vernacular became apparent, the Turkish words in common parlance were excised before being put to print. This purist approach to spoken language brought about the *intermediate* form of Armenian referenced above—one inhabiting the space between Classical Armenian and spoken varieties—that bears little trace of the widespread use of loanwords and does not reflect spoken

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<sup>52</sup> This portrayal is likely a result of the modernization paradigm that once dominated in the retelling of Ottoman history. Since a continued allegiance to an ancient language does not fit common perceptions about what a ‘modern’ national subject should look like, it seems to have never made its way into the historiography.

<sup>53</sup> Florian Coulmas, *Writing and Society: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 43.

<sup>54</sup> To this day, spoken language is rarely seen in print. A rare example is Յակոբ Այվազ, *Լուցիքի սուսուն* (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2003). Published in serialized form between 1968 and 1996, it replicated the spoken Armenian of Constantinople. A testament to the power of the purist ideology, the introduction suggests that certain twentieth-century readers were not pleased to see this ‘unpurified’ form of Armenian on the page.

usage.<sup>55</sup> In this way, purism is *the* defining yet heretofore unacknowledged feature of vernacularization in the Ottoman Armenian context.

This intermediate form of Armenian first emerged in the 1780s as a pedagogical tool, was used throughout the nineteenth century as a language of print and was codified in grammar books and dictionaries beginning in the 1890s.<sup>56</sup> Only in the 1890s was it widely accepted as having superseded Classical Armenian in function and did it start to be referred to as ‘Western Armenian.’ While in popular discourse it is common to hear that standard Western Armenian is based on the Constantinople variety of Armenian, its dialect base has long been subject to casual debate among historical linguists. Some have identified phonological, morphological and lexical differences between the spoken Armenian of Constantinople and standard Western Armenian and concluded that its basis must lay elsewhere. Others have hypothesized that it is perhaps a koine, or an amalgam of multiple regional dialects.<sup>57</sup> However, as we will see in Chapter 1, the earliest architects of this intermediate form write explicitly about taking their own spoken Armenian of Constantinople as the basis of this new written form and “polishing,” “cleansing” and “improving” it before putting it to print, replacing its Turkish borrowings with Classical Armenian equivalents.

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<sup>55</sup> As Gijssbert Rutten has noted, a sociolinguistic landscape in which intermediate varieties exist alongside standards and dialects was pervasive in early modern Europe. This tri-partite breakdown can also be applied to the Ottoman Armenian case in this period and is referred to as *diaglossia*. See Gijssbert Rutten, *Language Planning as Nation Building: Ideology, Policy and Implementation in the Netherlands, 1750-1850* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2019), 34-35.

<sup>56</sup> It is not unusual for un- or semi-regulated written use to precede standardization. See Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change*, 149.

<sup>57</sup> For a short summary of the debate, see Ollie Sayeed and Bert Vaux, “The Evolution of Armenian,” in *Handbook of Comparative and Historical Indo-European Linguistics*, vol. 2, eds. Jared Klein, Brian Joseph, Matthias Fritz, et. al. (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2017), 1148-1150. The dominant varieties of Armenian spoken in Constantinople, Smyrna and other parts of Thrace and western Asia Minor in the mid-nineteenth century differed only slightly from one another. Հրայրա Աճառյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2 (Yerevan: Հայպետհրատ, 1951), 471. For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to this form as the *spoken Armenian of Constantinople* as shorthand throughout this study, with the acknowledgment that not all Armenians in the city spoke in the same way.

Overlooking the impact of prescriptivism and working with the presumption that the standard language was a representation of actual speech have led historical linguists astray.<sup>58</sup> Due to disciplinary blind spots, they have not considered the extent to which standard Western Armenian was a human creation. They have not viewed the standard language as the result of direct purist intervention by waves of intellectuals. They have not looked to the writings of these intellectuals for insight into in this process. Though words and forms from other sources would be integrated into the print-language in the period of this study, its dialect base was set in the 1780s and would not be questioned. The spoken Armenian of Constantinople should be recognized as the dialect base for standard Western Armenian. It is purist intervention, I aim to show, that is at the root of the differences between the spoken Armenian of Constantinople and standard Western Armenian.

This study thus represents a departure from the way vernacularization has been conceived. It is premised on the idea that Western Armenian is an *engineered* standard, or the product of a series of decisions made by individuals over the course of more than a century.<sup>59</sup> It, therefore, writes back into history an idea that Ottoman Armenian intellectuals acknowledged but that is no longer widely understood in popular or scholarly discourse: that standard languages are, as Kathryn Woolard puts it, “manmade constructs.”<sup>60</sup> Similarly, it also resists the pervasive idea in historical linguistics that language is “an organic body obeying natural rules and seemingly

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<sup>58</sup> The dismissal of prescriptivist behavior as irrelevant in the discipline of linguistics has been identified and critiqued in Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>59</sup> On engineered standards, see John Earl Joseph, *Eloquence and Power: The Rise of Language Standards and Standard Languages* (London: Frances Pinter Publishers, 1987), 60-63.

<sup>60</sup> Kathryn A. Woolard, “Introduction: Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry,” in *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, eds. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard and Paul V. Kroskrity (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 21. Eric Hobsbawm has made an identical claim about ‘national’ languages, calling them “almost always semi-artificial constructs.” See Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 54.

impervious to human agency.”<sup>61</sup> Instead, this study advocates for viewing standard languages as quasi-artificial historical constructions “subject to the interests of the dominant elite.”<sup>62</sup> Without agency and manipulation on the part of this dominant elite, the thousands of Turkish loanwords used in the spoken Armenian of Constantinople would not have been stigmatized and removed *en masse* in the transition to print. It is their ideological labor that fueled the process of vernacularization and brought this standard language into being. The questions now become: who were these intellectuals, what led them to pursue purism, and what did purity mean to them?

### **A Tangle of Terms: Naming Language Forms in Flux**

Before addressing these critical questions, a note on terminology is in order. The terms used to describe different varieties of Armenian are often frustratingly ambiguous. They mean different things to different people and their meanings often change dramatically over the course of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This goes both for the Armenian terms used in my sources as well as the English terms used in scholarship and popular discourse today. It is worth spending some time disentangling them and explaining precisely what they mean in the context of this study.

First, we have the word հայերէն (Armenian language). Today, speakers and scholars use this generic term to describe the form of Armenian *they* personally use or study. Eastern Armenian speakers use it to mean Eastern Armenian; Western Armenian speakers use it to mean Western Armenian; dialect speakers use it to mean Armenian dialects; scholars use it to mean Classical Armenian, etc. Only when the need arises to distinguish among varieties do people draw on the

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<sup>61</sup> Jan Blommaert, “The Debate is Closed,” in *Language Ideological Debates*, ed. Jan Blommaert (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999), 425.

<sup>62</sup> Francesc Feliu and Josep Maria Nadal, “Languages as a Construction: An Enlightening Perspective,” in *Constructing Languages: Norms, Myths and Emotions*, eds. Francesc Feliu and Josep Maria Nadal (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2016), 1.

terms արեւելահայերէն (Eastern Armenian), արեւմտահայերէն (Western Armenian), բարբար (dialect) or գրաբար (Classical Armenian) for clarification. The first two terms are exceedingly rare in the Ottoman period. While a similar term for Western Armenian (արեւմտեան հայերէն) begins to be used sporadically in the 1890s as Ottoman Armenian awareness of an Eastern Armenian standard grows, most common at the time were terms crafted not in opposition to the Eastern Armenian standard but to Classical Armenian and to spoken dialects. Tensions with *these* forms of Armenian are the ones most vexing our purists and these tensions are inscribed into the very terms used to describe varieties of Armenian. In the chapters to come, changes in terminology will continuously be highlighted in order to show the extent to which the language ideologies and attitudes of the time were expressed through the terms in vogue.

Today, the most common designator for Classical Armenian—գրաբար (figuratively translated, *the written one*)—harkens back to a time when it was the main form of Armenian used in writing. While times have changed and the modern standards are now used far more often in writing, the term has not. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this form of Armenian was also commonly referred to as գրոց լեզու (language of writing) and հայոց լեզու (language of Armenians). Because of social factors that will be addressed at length in this study, vernacular and vernacular-based forms of Armenian never bore these designations nor did they ever bear the even more ideologically loaded designations Հայկազեան լեզու (language of the people of Hayk, a figure cultivated as a progenitor of the Armenian people) or Արամեան լեզու (language of Aram, another progenitor figure). Both of these terms were reserved exclusively for Classical Armenian and fell out of fashion by the late nineteenth century as the role of Classical Armenian as the one and only ազգային լեզու (national language) was undermined.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Used more rarely were գրոց բարբար (*written idiom*), հայ բարբար (*Armenian idiom*) and դասական հայերէն (a calque on *Classical Armenian* used only by philologists).

Throughout the period of this study, there is a tremendous degree of ambivalence toward spoken forms of Armenian within the intelligentsia. In the first two chapters, these forms of Armenian were the subject of near universal disdain by intellectuals. In the second two chapters, intellectuals begin considering their utility for the nascent standard—but not without reservations. We see the general prejudice against the speakers of these forms of Armenian in many of the terms intellectuals used to describe their speech.<sup>64</sup> These include գոեհիկ լեզու (vulgar language), հայեվար (Armenian way) and ասկորէն (uneducated language), all of which denote an ‘unpurified’ spoken Armenian.<sup>65</sup> As Ottoman Armenian intellectuals become more acquainted with the Euro-American hierarchies of language varieties and standard language ideologies in the late nineteenth century, we begin to see other terms used alongside the earlier ones.<sup>66</sup> These include բարբար (dialect), գաւառաբարբար (provincial dialect) and գաւառական լեզու (provincial language), the latter of which was in circulation only among intellectuals who sought to valorize forms of Armenian used outside Constantinople.<sup>67</sup> The term *dialect* has an additional meaning today. While certain speakers continue to use it exclusively to denote a non-standard, regional variety of Armenian, others use it—somewhat paradoxically—to denote the two standards. It is not unusual for Armenian speakers to be asked what *dialect* they speak, when their interlocutors are seeking to elicit either Eastern or Western. In this study, the term *dialect* will be used

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<sup>64</sup> The irony is that these intellectuals too almost certainly spoke this way in informal situations.

<sup>65</sup> These terms were used to describe forms of Armenian spoken in different parts of the Empire that bore the lexical influence of regionally dominant languages like Turkish, Arabic and Kurdish.

<sup>66</sup> On these hierarchies, see Raf van Rooy, *Language or Dialect? The History of a Conceptual Pair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>67</sup> The word բարբար was also spelled բարբաւ throughout the period of this study. So too was աշխարհաբար spelled աշխարհաբաւ and գրաբար spelled գրաբաւ with little consistency.

exclusively to denote a non-standard, spoken regional variety of Armenian and will be used interchangeably with *spoken form*, *variety* and *variant*.<sup>68</sup>

The term աշխարհաբար and the synonymous աշխարհօրէն and աշխարհիկ լեզու (figuratively translated, *the secular one*) is by far the most common and the most nebulous of the terms used in the period of this study. Depending on the time period and attitudes of the writer, it can describe any form of Armenian that is not Classical Armenian. This flexibility means that in the period of our study, աշխարհաբար was used, sometimes within the same text, to label what were in fact distinct varieties of Armenian: (1) Civil Armenian, an early intermediate form that will be addressed in Chapter 1; (2) spoken forms of Armenian with their Turkish borrowings intact; (3) the vernacular-based print language with Turkish borrowings excised; (4) standard Western Armenian. It is only with context that the exact meaning becomes clear, and even then, not always.

Alongside աշխարհաբար, different terms dominate different phases in the history of the print language. Again, these terms often tell us quite a bit about how the writer using the term regards the language. Typically, detractors refer to it as աշխարհաբար, attempting to delegitimize it by making no distinction between ‘unpurified’ spoken and ‘purified’ written forms, while advocates attempt to legitimize it with aspirational designations like հասարակաց լեզու (common language, 1840s-1850s) and արդի հայերէն (Modern Armenian, 1860s-1910s). These terms, however, should not be understood as describing a singular, uniform way of writing; they are umbrella terms that house a multiplicity of forms under them, some relying more on Classical Armenian grammar than others for social reasons that we will explore in the chapters to come.

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<sup>68</sup> Today the term *dialect* is sometimes used colloquially with a negative connotation. My use of *dialect* in this study should in no way be understood as carrying any kind of value judgement or any implication that it is ‘inferior’ to any other form of Armenian.

Given the diversity, variability and ambiguity of the terms in my sources, it has been a particular challenge to name the different iterations of this intermediate, vernacular based print-language. Not wanting to erase the contentiousness of the period by using a single term or to apply the term Western Armenian *avant la lettre*, I have wrestled with how to best render them in this study. I have chosen to use the term *print-language* consistently in all four of the chapters to underscore its function. But in each chapter, I also use a term specific to the time period being discussed, either one that describes its form or its conception by advocates at the time. Following the lead of Milroy and Milroy in their pinpointing of a language’s stages of standardization, I propose using Western Armenian only once the language has—in their words—“defeated its competitors” (i.e. Classical Armenian); once it has assumed nearly all social functions; and once prescriptivist tools like grammar books and dictionaries—which treated the vernacular-based print language as a legitimate written medium distinct from Classical Armenian—began to be published in the 1890s.<sup>69</sup> While the term Western Armenian is sometimes used colloquially today to describe any and all forms of Armenian used by Western (i.e. Ottoman) Armenians, I use it in this study exclusively to name the standard(izing) language. I also refrain from using terms commonly found in English-language scholarship on this period in Ottoman Armenian history, such as *the vernacular* and *literary language*. Masking the diverse linguistic landscape and bolstering a nationally fueled veneer of linguistic homogeneity, these terms are much too ambiguous, vague and misleading to perpetuate.

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<sup>69</sup> Milroy and Milroy, *Authority in Language*, 22. Further strengthening this periodization is the fact that, as we will see in Chapter 4, Ottoman Armenian intellectuals writing in the early 1900s consistently point to the 1890s as the decade in which the modern standard emerged.

## The People at the Vanguard of Vernacularization

At the forefront of this study are individual men and women locked in debate. As an overarching premise, I take the notion articulated in language-ideological scholarship that, when studying language debates in historical perspective, it is crucial to examine real historical actors and to understand the discourses they produce as stemming from their conflicting preferences and beliefs, emotions and loyalties, ambitions and prejudices.<sup>70</sup> As Jan Blommaert has rightly noted, the history of language should by all means keep front and center the “people who use them, manipulate them, manufacture them, name them”; their labor and agency in language change should not be obscured or shrouded by abstraction.<sup>71</sup> This study strives to embody heretofore disembodied histories of Armenian, to understand the motivations behind the choices they made and to prompt readers to see human agency as a driving force in language change.

This choice is a reaction to the general absence of individuals—with their personalities intact—in the telling of nineteenth-century Ottoman Armenian history. Existing scholarship on this period is full of sterile lists of the names of “national actors” (ազգային գործիչ) but rare are thorough discussions of their multilayered worldviews and influences. These actors are also often misleadingly lumped into two monolithic categories—the լուսաւորեալք (the enlightened, i.e., defenders of Modern Armenian) against the խաւարեալք (the obscurantists, i.e., defenders of Classical Armenian)—and pitted against one another. These simplistic caricatures do not do justice to the nuanced views of the men and women who populated this period. Most significant for this study, these caricatures obscure much more nuanced attitudes toward Classical Armenian than these their categories suggest.

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<sup>70</sup> Blommaert, “The Debate is Open,” 7-8.

<sup>71</sup> Blommaert, “The Debate is Closed,” 425.

These figures represent a diverse group of clergymen, writers, teachers, translators and newspaper editors, many of whom wore different hats simultaneously. Some had formal training in medicine and law, among other fields, while many others were autodidacts. Some were from families with wealth and influence, but the majority were members of the urban middle class that was in the process of expanding in the nineteenth century. Left to argue among themselves by a disinterested Ottoman state, these figures were self-galvanizing and self-appointed language authorities with little power to enact policies, mandate change or control much more than the written language they used. Throughout this study, it is important to keep in mind that their work, disjointed and haphazard, was characterized much more by aimlessness and contention than by clarity and consensus. As is common in language communities around the world, vernacularization among Ottoman Armenians was a long, messy and cacophonous project that was far from meticulously planned or carefully executed. In the span of this study, more than five generations of these figures both built on and overturned the work of their predecessors.

Amid their differences, they did, however, share one major commonality. Starting in Chapter 2, all figures active in the vernacularization process—both for and against—subscribed to a national ideology, believed in the existence of an Armenian nation and saw their linguistic work as contributing to its betterment. This commonality guided their privileging of the symbolic function of language over its communicative function and their near-universal view of Turkish borrowings as an affront to the concept of national distinctiveness. As we shall see, their differences manifested in varied perspectives on how to replace these borrowings, but they can all be considered purists by virtue of their general belief that Turkish borrowings had no place in the vernacular-based print-language. Acknowledging the imperfect, homogenizing qualities of these

terms, I will refer to this diverse group as *Ottoman Armenian intellectuals, the intelligentsia, the elite, architects* and *purists* interchangeably throughout the study.

This history of Ottoman Armenian vernacularization is an urban tale. The actors that readers will meet in the chapters to come lived and wrote primarily in the print centers of Venice, Vienna, Constantinople and Smyrna. In Chapter 4, we will read about a fleeting period of provincial resistance to the views of the urban intelligentsia, but the voices of intellectuals outside these urban centers are marginal and minimal. My admittedly urban bias reflects the centrality of urban centers to the creation of the vernacular-based print language and the discourses around it. Perspectives beyond those of the urban intelligentsia are not well represented in print materials. The field would benefit from an additional study that takes a ‘language history from below’ approach, examines views of vernacularization beyond its decision-makers and uses a different source base to explore how the vernacular-based print-language was perceived and received outside urban centers and by a more socially diverse cross-section of the population.<sup>72</sup>

My source base is made up of the heretofore untapped printed writings of the intellectuals at the vanguard of vernacularization. These intellectuals had a remarkably strong meta-linguistic consciousness and seemed to discuss language at nearly every turn in the press and in individual books. To understand their perspectives and piece together this history, I have mined their newspaper articles and grammar prefaces, their dictionary introductions and schoolbook forewords. Particularly revelatory were the myriad of pieces that lamented contemporaneous language use, a rich source for historical sociolinguistic research referred to as the *complaint*

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<sup>72</sup> On the ‘from above’ approach, see Gijsbert Rutten and Rik Vosters, “Language Standardization ‘from Above,’” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Standardization*, eds. Wendy Ayres-Bennett and John Bellamy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 65-92. On the ‘from below’ approach, see Stephan Elspass, “A Twofold View ‘from Below’: New Perspectives on Language Histories and Language Historiographies,” in *Germanic Language Histories ‘from Below’ (1700-2000)*, eds. Stephan Elspass, Nils Langer, Joachim Scharloth, et al. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 3-9.

*tradition*.<sup>73</sup> These are invaluable texts that lay bare the anxieties of intellectuals surrounding the linguistic status quo and inadvertently offer rare insight into common everyday language practices often hidden from view. They also often highlight the disconnect between elite and popular language practices and attitudes. Ultimately, these writings expose a series of tensions that pulled our architects in different directions and shaped the vernacular-based print-language: tensions between Classical Armenian and Armenian dialects, between Turkish and Armenian, between the intelligentsia and the masses and between the communicative and symbolic functions of language. These tensions coalesced around a complex, multifaceted ideology that defines this entire process of vernacularization and endures to this day: the ideology of purism.

### **Purism and its Discontents**

The ideology of purism is by far one of the strongest and most enduring legacies of the period of this study. So deeply ingrained in the consciousness of Armenian speakers today, it can easily be mistaken as a feature of Armenophone life from time immemorial. Given the nationalist and historical linguistic orientations of the study of Armenian, it should come as no surprise that critical examinations of purism are essentially non-existent in Armenian studies. Even today, it is not uncommon to find scholars subscribing to an ideology of purism—albeit likely unknowingly and without ill intent—by extolling the ‘purity’ of a certain forms of Armenian, perpetuating the association between Turkish borrowings and ‘corruption’ and equating ‘purification’ with ‘improvement.’<sup>74</sup> Leaving this ideology unexamined has resulted in the reproduction of the discursive universe of Ottoman-era purists in the modern day. This study seeks to bring purism to

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<sup>73</sup> On the complaint tradition, see Milroy and Milroy, *Authority in Language*, 24-46.

<sup>74</sup> These “unexamined prejudices, presumptions of relevance, and value judgments that have inspired the adoption of the nation as a paradigm for understanding human relations” represent yet another expression of methodological nationalism in Armenian studies scholarship. Vasilev, “Methodological Nationalism,” 499.

light as an ideology by tracing its emergence among Ottoman Armenian intellectuals in the eighteenth century, its gradual entrenchment in the nineteenth century and the shifts in its conceptions into the twentieth century.

Throughout this study, I view purism as a *language ideology*, or “beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often [indicate] the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation states.”<sup>75</sup> At its most basic, purism is a form of prescriptivism, an attempt to intervene into a language and control how it is used. It resists a fundamental principle of language: change.<sup>76</sup> While standardization cannot take place without a certain degree of prescriptivism, purism is not an inevitability in all language situations. Often—though not always—beginning as a top-down ideology, it is a reaction to contact and/or variation within a language and can arise in response to a host of social factors.<sup>77</sup> The most common of these factors are the creation of a standard language and the rise of a national movement.<sup>78</sup>

In the Ottoman Armenian context, purism is most intimately intertwined with the slow, multifaceted and ever-changing project of nation-building. At the outset of this project, language acquired a symbolic function as a mark of national distinctiveness and long-ordinary instances of language contact with neighboring languages were suddenly seen as calling that distinctiveness into question. As Björn Jernudd rightly notes, “purism occurs at particular historical times to

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<sup>75</sup> Paul V. Kroskrity, “Language Ideologies: Emergence, Elaboration, and Application,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Nancy Bonvillain (New York: Routledge, 2015), 95.

<sup>76</sup> On the concepts of purism and prescriptivism, see Wendy Ayres-Bennett, “From Haugen’s Codification to Thomas’s Purism: Assessing the Role of Description and Prescription, Prescriptivism and Purism in Linguistic Standardisation,” *Language Policy* 19 (2020): 193-213.

<sup>77</sup> George Thomas, *Linguistic Purism* (London and New York: Longman, 1991), 133.

<sup>78</sup> Nils Langer and Agnete Nesse, “Linguistic Purism,” in *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, eds. Juan Manuel Hernández-Campoy and Juan Camilo Conde-Silvestre (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), 607.

defend, demarcate, and protect that which constitutes Self...[It] can be understood as an articulation of changes in relations between Self and Others in the medium of language.”<sup>79</sup> We will see this ‘national’ framing of language emerge in Chapter 2, be reinterpreted in Chapter 3 and transform yet again in Chapter 4, all reflecting changes in both conceptions of the national Self and the relationship of Self to Others within the national project.

Typically, purist attention is focused on influence from only one source; in the case of Ottoman Armenian purists, this source is, as we have seen, Turkish. In this social context, evidence of contact with Turkish came to be understood as having fundamentally ‘damaged’ and ‘corrupted’ Armenian, which purism, by their logic, sought to repair. In this study, I follow the lead of George Thomas in defining purism broadly as

the manifestation of a desire on the part of a speech community (or some section of it) to preserve a language from, or rid it of, putative foreign elements or other elements held to be undesirable (including those originating in dialects, sociolects, and styles of the same language).<sup>80</sup>

This definition best suits Ottoman Armenian conceptions of purism, in which both Turkish borrowings and, for the first half of this study, Armenian dialect words were deemed ‘impure’ and thus unsuitable for use in the vernacular-based print-language.

To be sure, ‘purity’ is an impossibility from a linguistic point of view as no language emerges or exists in complete isolation. All languages, even the most geographically isolated, bear at least some trace of contact with other languages. Purity, in other words, is a fundamentally unattainable ideal, a social construct, and a reflection of the attitudes of its promulgators first and foremost. It is also largely an aesthetic value that does not address any communicative need.

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<sup>79</sup> Björn H. Jernudd, “The Texture of Language Purism: An Introduction,” in *The Politics of Language Purism*, eds. Björn H. Jernudd and Michael J. Shapiro (Berlin and New York: Mouton De Gruyter, 1989), 3, 5.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 12.

Purism is not necessary for communication; in fact, in certain cases it may even hinder it. In the history of Armenian, purism—the attempt to achieve ‘purity’—is an anomaly, as it is in the pre-modern histories of other languages.<sup>81</sup> Before the eighteenth century, purity was not a preoccupation, and loanwords did not elicit the same hostility as they do in the period of this study.

At the height of the purist preoccupation in the 1860s, one Ottoman Armenian philologist put it best when he quipped that “our ancestors did not loathe foreign words nearly as much as we do today.”<sup>82</sup> What he knew that others did not was that Armenian speakers had borrowed from other languages unselfconsciously and integrated these borrowings into their Armenian since at least the beginning of the written record in the fifth century and likely long before that. We see this, for example, in Middle Armenian writings from the medieval period in which words from Arabic, Persian and Turkish as well as French, Italian and Latin co-mingle in poetry, medical treatises and administrative texts.<sup>83</sup> These words were confined to vernacular-based Middle Armenian and most did not outlive this fleeting period in the history of written Armenian. But borrowing was not restricted to vernacular-based forms. In fact, words from Iranian languages like Parthian and Middle Persian as well as Greek and Syriac, among others, form the very foundation of the Classical Armenian lexicon, including some of its most basic vocabulary.<sup>84</sup> By the fifth century, these words had been thoroughly nativized and had replaced the older Armenian words,

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<sup>81</sup> Burke, *Languages and Communities*, 156.

<sup>82</sup> Արսէն Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն աշխարհաբար կամ արդի հայերէն լեզուի* (Vienna: Մխիթարեանց տպարան, 1866), 334 (pagination of the grammar section). This book is composed of a preface and grammar section, each paginated separately. In this study, all references are to the preface unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>83</sup> Ռուբեն Ս. Ղազարյան and Հենրիկ Մ. Ավետիսյան, *Միջին հայերենի բառարան* (Yerevan: ԵՊՀ Հրատարակչություն, 2009).

<sup>84</sup> Հրայրա Անադյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 1 (Yerevan: Պետական համալսարանի հրատարակչություն, 1940) is a veritable survey of language contact through the ages. See, also, R. Schmitt and H. W. Bailey, “Armenia and Iran, IV: Iranian influences in Armenian Language,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 2, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 445-465.

the vast majority of which were never recorded. In the period of our study, these Iranian, Greek and Syriac words continued to be used without contestation and were never stigmatized or targeted for removal. Their integration was so thorough that not only were these words not recognized as borrowings but they were held up as the epitome of ‘purity’ because of their use in the earliest Classical Armenian texts. They remain an inextricably part of the lexicons of Classical, Eastern and Western Armenian today. This disconnect highlights the extent to which the ideology of purism is malleable and rests, above all, on an “*idealized* model of perfection.”<sup>85</sup>

It also underscores the degree to which purism is often driven much more by emotion and perception than by reason and research. Purism is a human endeavor that ultimately reflects the contradictions and inconsistencies of human thought and behavior. Few of the intellectuals we will meet in this study treated—or purported to treat—language with any kind of scholarly distance or objectivity. This means that, as we will see in Chapter 3, they saw no issue in scorning Turkish calques as ‘contamination’ while hailing French calques as ‘enrichment.’ Nor did they feel the need to research the origins of linguistic features before stigmatizing them. This means that our purists stigmatized certain grammatical features that were in use before contact with Turkish and barred them entry to the standard, simply because they bore a *resemblance* to Turkish features. In this way, their choices—choices that would fundamentally shape standard Western Armenian and the practices of its users—were many times arbitrary and based simply on personal preference.

Throughout this study, I use the terms *borrowings* and *loanwords* interchangeably to describe words that were adopted directly from other languages. Following the lead of our purists, my attention will be focused primarily on purism at the level of individual words, or *lexical* purism. Lexical borrowings are the most easily identifiable to the untrained eye and receive the most

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<sup>85</sup> Langer and Nesse, “Linguistic Purism,” 614.

attention by purists worldwide.<sup>86</sup> Any reference to purism will be a reference to lexical purism, unless otherwise specified. In Chapter 3, in response to a brief change in focus among certain purists, I will also discuss purist reactions to the perceived borrowing of Turkish grammatical structures. Calques, a form of borrowing in which words are directly translated from other languages, will always be specified and referred to as such.

### **Purism and Global Intellectual Movements**

What leads purists to stigmatize certain kinds of language use is not well understood in the small body of work on purism and is an issue of fundamental importance in this study.<sup>87</sup> Here viewing purism through the lens of social and intellectual history can help us catch a glimpse of the confluence of local and transnational factors that influenced their belief in and shifting approaches to purism. While local factors are certainly not insignificant, I argue that global intellectual movements were what gave rise to the emergence and transformation of conceptions of linguistic purity among the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia in the period of this study and guided ideas about what should be included and excluded from the vernacular-based print-language.<sup>88</sup> Taking this global approach resists the tendency to assume, as is often done in Armenian studies scholarship, that watershed moments in Ottoman Armenian political history

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<sup>86</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 68.

<sup>87</sup> Nils Langer and Winifred V. Davies, “An Introduction to Linguistic Purism,” in *Linguistic Purism in the Germanic Languages*, eds. Nils Langer and Winifred V. Davies (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 3-4.

<sup>88</sup> Few Ottoman Armenian intellectuals write explicitly about belonging to any kind of global movement. In fact, most act as if their new ideas about language and purity originated from among them or at least from within an Ottoman Armenian intellectual sphere.

meant dramatic change in language use.<sup>89</sup> Turning points in political history have not proven to be turning points in language history.

In particular, this study examines the impact of humanism, cultural nationalism, comparative philology and folkloristics, whose reception has only superficially been explored in the Ottoman Armenian context.<sup>90</sup> As Sebouh Aslanian has noted, despite its profound influence on Armenian experiences throughout history, the hemispheric circulation of ideas has been deemphasized in Armenian historiography and there has been a general reluctance among historians to “contextualize the study of the Armenian past(s) in an interactive framework.”<sup>91</sup> As few reliable secondary sources exist on this period, basic information about how Ottoman Armenian intellectuals received, adopted and adapted these global intellectual movements for their own purposes, thus, also requires reconstruction through primary-source research.<sup>92</sup> As such, I begin each chapter by briefly outlining the principles of the movement in question and the local conditions that primed its reception before positioning language within it and exploring its impact on approaches to vernacularization and purism.

As we have seen, Ottoman Armenian intellectuals stood united against the use of Turkish borrowings in the print-language throughout the period of this study. While this *external*

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<sup>89</sup> The Tanzimat reforms in 1839, the 1848 revolutions across Europe and the ratification of the Armenian National Constitution in 1863 are all often gestured to but there is no indication that these political events brought about any major change in language use or attitudes.

<sup>90</sup> While it is certainly unfashionable to study the transmission of ideas “from the West to the rest,” to pretend that this history was anything other than Eurocentric and unidirectional would be distortionary. The reality is that Ottoman Armenian intellectuals in this period eagerly followed intellectual currents coming out of Europe and looked to them as examples. My perspective in this study reflects the perspectives of the purists I study, whose gaze was fixed firmly on Europe.

<sup>91</sup> Aslanian, “From ‘Autonomous’ to ‘Interactive’ Histories,” 83-84, 110.

<sup>92</sup> “Much of the secondary source material in the field [of Armenian studies] is of dubious value. Therefore, excessive reliance on secondary source literature runs the risk of reproducing some of the drawbacks already found at the source.” Aslanian, “From ‘Autonomous’ to ‘Interactive’ Histories,” 95. For this reason, in this study, I use secondary sources on Armenian history very selectively and discerningly.

orientation (i.e., the attitude vis-à-vis other languages) remained constant, *internal* purist orientations (i.e., what form of Armenian was considered ‘pure’ at any one time and what should be used to replace Turkish borrowings) changed dramatically under the influence these global intellectual movements. As I will show, these movements gave rise to three major approaches to purity. Drawing on George Thomas’s terms, I refer to them as *archaizing purism*, which located purity in Classical Armenian; *elitist purism*, which located purity in the spoken Armenian of the capital; and *ethnographic purism*, which located purity in the spoken Armenian of the Ottoman provinces.<sup>93</sup>

These approaches overlapped temporally, and fierce conflict arose when some intellectuals lingered in one purist paradigm after others had adopted new ones. It is critical to remember throughout this study that debates about language echo broader ideological debates within the intelligentsia. Language ideologies, as Susan Gal has noted, “are never only about language...[They] provide insights into the workings of ideologies more generally.”<sup>94</sup> Language, in other words, is a proxy through which ideological battles play out, a site where “social conflicts find symbolic expression.”<sup>95</sup> While exploring this broader social universe is beyond the scope of this study, I strive to expose its ripeness for historical inquiry and advocate, as others before me have done, for viewing language and the debates around it as “sensitive indicator[s]...of cultural change.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> For a taxonomy of puristic orientations, see Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 75-81.

<sup>94</sup> Susan Gal, “Language Ideologies Compared: Metaphors of Public/Private,” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (2005): 24.

<sup>95</sup> Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene*, 11.

<sup>96</sup> Burke, *Languages and Communities*, 1.

## Chapter Breakdown

This study proceeds chronologically and is comprised of four chapters and an epilogue. The chapters are divided based on when new ways of thinking about language and purism emerge in my sources. Each chapter situates readers in a global intellectual movement before narrowing its focus onto how the movement was received by Ottoman Armenian intellectuals and how it subsequently shaped the language ideologies and conceptions of purity that they espoused. Each chapter also underscores how standard Western Armenian bears the imprint of the competing conceptions of purity in circulation in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Chapter 1 begins with an examination of the foundational work of a congregation of Venice-based Armenian Catholic monks. These monks inaugurated an ideology of purism among the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia in the eighteenth century and penned the first texts in our vernacular-based print-language. Using the dozens of dictionaries, grammar books, periodicals and schoolbooks these monks produced, I argue that it was the humanist orientation of their congregation that stimulated a new and enduring obsession with linguistic purity and the conceptualization of Classical Armenian as the ultimate source of purity. Chapter 2 explores the reinterpretation and intensification of the ideology of purism by a larger group of Armenian clergymen and laypeople in Constantinople and Smyrna beginning in the 1840s. I situate their work within the context of an Ottoman Armenian cultural-nationalist movement and contend that this diverse group began the ideological work of transforming the use of “pure Armenian” into a feature of the modern national subject and of expanding the function of the print-language. Here I track the discourses on linguistic purity found in a range of ideologically diverse, Armenian-language newspapers to chronicle the creation of a new, language-based national identity and its critical role in the enduring project of nation-building. It should be emphasized that at this time

the domains of use for this print-language were very limited. Little credence was given to the notion that a vernacular-based form would, could or should surpass Classical Armenian in prestige, be codified, or assume any of its social functions. All eyes were still firmly on Classical Armenian as the preeminent ‘national’ language; the print-language, widely considered a degenerate offshoot of the divine classical language, was seen merely as a stepping stone to it.

In Chapters 3 and Chapter 4, we witness an epistemological shift in conceptions of purity and enter a radically new linguistic paradigm. While Classical Armenian was seen nearly exclusively as the epitome of purity in the first two chapters, beginning around 1860 we find this perspective contested for the first time as certain intellectuals began advocating for giving value to words used in spoken varieties of Armenian. In both chapters, I mine print media, especially the prefaces of dictionaries, dialect glossaries and grammar books of the nascent standard language, for the indispensable sociolinguistic details they provide. In Chapter 3, language planning begins in earnest as a *modern* Armenian begins to be fashioned and be considered its own independent language distinct from *classical* Armenian, albeit at a snail’s pace and not without a great deal of strife within the intelligentsia. For the first time, the educated spoken usage in the Ottoman capital—rather than classical, written usage—starts to rise in prestige and rival Classical Armenian as a source of enrichment for the new standard language. I argue that this paradigm shift is connected to a growing awareness among a new generation of intellectuals of theories in Euro-American comparative philology that began to valorize spoken language. In Chapter 4, we see a continued valorization of spoken language as a source for the standard but a shift from urban, educated speech to rural, uneducated speech as the epitome of purity. I argue that this approach was reinforced and upheld by a transnational fascination with folk culture and by a new crop of

Armenian intellectuals who lived in the Ottoman provinces and challenged the long-dominant views of the urban intelligentsia.

I conclude my study with an epilogue that examines the post-Ottoman expansion of the Western Armenian standard in diaspora and shows how, contrary to popular belief, it was only in the aftermath of the Armenian genocide that Western Armenian became the spoken language it is today. I also briefly explore the contemporary ramifications of the purist language ideologies born during the Ottoman period and their legacies in the post-Ottoman Armenian diaspora today.

## Chapter 1

### **Purity and Pedagogy: Mekhitarist Humanism and the Invention of a Purist Ideology (c. 1750-c. 1830)**

#### **Introduction**

In the mid-eighteenth century, the monks of the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Congregation found themselves standing before a series of chimeras. These fire-breathing beasts with the bodies, heads and tails of different animals both daunted and dismayed them and could not be easily ignored. Seeing the chimeras rear their heads at every turn, the monks fixated on the variations in their jumble of parts and, deeming them strange and unnatural, concluded that the grotesque creatures needed to be slain. Slaying them, however, was not as simple as unsheathing a dagger or a sword. It required, first and foremost, alerting people to their danger and convincing them that these familiar creatures were indeed beasts.<sup>1</sup>

For the monks, these chimeras were not figments of the imagination. They were contemporaneous varieties of spoken Armenian. The chimeras' jumble of parts—so ungainly to the monks yet so ordinary to most speakers—was composed of the various languages that had contributed words to their lexicons. Over centuries of cultural contact, words from Turkish, Russian, Persian, Hungarian and many other languages had made their way into the diverse varieties of Armenian spoken across Eurasia. To everyday speakers, these words prompted little reflection or cause for concern. But to the monks of the Mekhitarist Congregation, they were glaring reminders of the geographic, cultural and linguistic fragmentation of people who, as the congregation's founder would claim, had once been united in their use of a single language:

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<sup>1</sup> Spoken varieties of Armenian are referred to as *chimeras* (տղջերոււաքստ) in the preface to *Բանգիրք հայկազգան լեզուի*, vol. 2 (Venice: Ի սպարանի Անտոնի Պօռթոլի, 1769), 11.

Classical Armenian. Reflecting on the sociolinguistic landscape past and present, its founder, Mekhitar of Sebastia, characterized the state of Armenian circa 1749 in the following way:

Regarding the particular character of the Armenian language [հայկազենն լեզու] or its words, it is necessary to know that from the beginning, from the first centuries in which our idiom [քարքառ] was created, all Armenians spoke Classical Armenian [զրարքառ լեզու]. But in later centuries, wandering away to different places and mingling with other peoples, little by little the native idiom [ընդարքոյս քարքառ] became corrupted in its letters, in its syllables, in its words, in its case endings and in other qualities of the language. Countless regional words were created, and many foreign words slipped in and entered it. What emerged is the vulgar idiom [քարքառ ռամկական], which is called the vernacular language [աշխարհարքառ լեզու]. The early language, having remained among nobles and learned people, passed into writing and became our classical language [զրարքառ լեզու].<sup>2</sup>

The notion that Classical Armenian was ‘perfect’ and ‘original’ and that all spoken varieties were corruptions of it composed a core tenet of the Mekhitarist language ideology. It was this idea that would shape the congregation’s approach to language during a formative period in the use of non-classical varieties of Armenian in print. As the earliest and most prolific writers to publish in these forms, the monks of the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Congregation formulated a language-ideological basis that would be taken up, developed and resisted by the various waves of intellectuals whom we will meet in the chapters to come. I argue that one of their most enduring legacies is an ideology of purism, which transformed a certain form of Classical Armenian into a paragon of purity. Shaping attitudes about appropriate language use, this ideology manifested most strikingly in a hostility to lexical borrowings, which would become a near universal fixation among writers and intellectuals in the century to come. While in later decades linguistic purism would be coopted by a panoply of cultural nationalist actors, I show that, at its roots, purism did not emerge as part of a Romantic nationalist drive to assert a sense of national ‘authenticity’ but rather as

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<sup>2</sup> *Բանգիրք հայկազենն լեզուի*, vol. 1 (Venice: Ի տպարանի Անտոնի Պօռթոլի, 1749), 12.

practical tool to aid in the realization of the Congregation's larger humanist project to 'correct' and 'perfect.'

This chapter explores why and how the ideology of purism entered Ottoman Armenian intellectual consciousness in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I attribute its introduction to the humanist project of the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice, Trieste and Vienna, a powerhouse in the world of Armenian print at this time. In the first half of the chapter, I show how Mekhitarist humanism manifested in a 'return to the sources' and a drive to purify Classical Armenian based on them. I call this set of sources the 'forebear canon' and show how, taken together, they were conceptualized by the Mekhitarists as the ultimate springs of linguistic purity. I also illustrate how humanist ideals were adapted to address the pressing fear of fragmentation in Armenian intellectual circles. In particular, I show how a humanist Classical Armenian was cultivated as a point of unity and seen as having the power to unite Armenians across confession and geography.

In the second half of the chapter, I demonstrate how, in pursuit of unity through Classical Armenian, the Mekhitarist Congregation used two strategies to help Armenians beyond the intellectual elite learn the classical language: 1) They developed an intermediate, vernacular-based print language that I call the *purified vernacular* and published works in it for children and adults and 2) they took an *archaizing* approach to that print language, replacing Turkish borrowings in common parlance with their humanist Classical Armenian equivalents. The chapter ends with an examination of the earliest purified vernacular texts to better understand how they were used and how the ideology of purism was first expressed, implemented and justified. In sum, I illustrate how purism as an ideology among Ottoman Armenian intellectuals initially stemmed from the larger Mekhitarist humanist project to 'purify' Classical Armenian and how the archaizing approach to

the vernacular-based print-language was an extension of that larger project. This approach emerged not in pursuit of vernacularizing or developing this vernacular-based print-language as a rival to Classical Armenian but rather as a practical teaching tool wielded in hopes of guiding Armenians directly to the classical language.

### **The Humanist Project of the Mekhitarist Congregation**

The invention of this purist ideology and the reason for its archaizing orientation are inextricably linked to the principles, beliefs and ambitions of the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Congregation. This congregation was founded in 1701 in Constantinople by a 25-year-old priest by the name of Mekhitar. Persecuted for his Catholic faith by the Armenian Apostolic clergy, Mekhitar and his small band of followers fled to Europe, eventually establishing a monastery on the Venetian island of San Lazzaro in 1717.<sup>3</sup> Emerging out of the context of the Counter-Reformation, the Mekhitarist congregation was not a cloistered order. The Mekhitarists have been throughout their history thoroughly enmeshed in the world outside the monastery, particularly in the realms of publishing and education. In their early years, it was the institutional framework of an order that facilitated their work and allowed them to produce a truly remarkable range of publications. Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the monks affiliated with this monastery and its offshoots in Trieste and Vienna were, among other areas, at the forefront of Armenian print and intellectual culture, producing a series of dictionaries, grammars, schoolbooks and periodicals that shaped not only the way Armenians used language but also the way they thought about its use.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For a rare treatment in English of the foundation of the congregation, see Minas Nurikhan, *The Life and Times of the Servant of God Abbot Mechitar, 1660-1750*, trans. John McQuillan (Venice: St. Lazarus' Island, 1915).

<sup>4</sup> For a summary of this early work, see Gabriella Uluhogian, "Note sull'attività filologica e linguistica dei Mechitaristi di San Lazzaro," in *Collectanea armeniaca*, eds. Rosa Bianca Finazzi and Anna Sirinian (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 2016), 227-235. For an overview of Mekhitarist philological work within its broader Armenian intellectual context,

From the foundation of the order, the Mekhitarist project was a Christian humanist project.<sup>5</sup> Though the Congregation produced much of its work at the height of the Enlightenment in the heart of Europe, its work does not bear the imprint of this movement and is decidedly pre-Enlightenment in its models and approaches.<sup>6</sup> Instead, we find the imprint of humanism, a movement that emerged centuries earlier in Renaissance Europe and was characterized by a newfound “combination of scholarly skills, looking at the ancient world as a model and example to follow, and criticism of accepted knowledge and values.”<sup>7</sup> Fomenting enduring intellectual change, Christian humanists have been described as

not only discuss[ing] religious or theological issues but also explicitly ma[king] a connection between their humanistic teaching and scholarship on classical languages and literature, on the one hand, and on the other hand, their study of ancient Christianity, including the Bible and the Church Fathers. Even more important, they associated their scholarly work (classical as well as biblical and patristic) with a determination to bring about a spiritual renewal and institutional reform of Christian society. That connection between their scholarly efforts and their longing for spiritual and institutional renewal is the specific characteristic that distinguishes “Christian humanists” as a group from other humanists who just happened to be religious.<sup>8</sup>

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see Paolo Lucca, “Philology, Documentary Research, and Channels of Cultural Diffusion from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century,” in *Armenian Philology in the Modern Age: From Manuscript to Digital Text*, eds. Valentina Calzolari and Michael E. Stone (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 417-465.

<sup>5</sup> Boghos Levon Zekiyian, *The Armenian Way to Modernity: Armenian Identity between Tradition and Innovation, Specificity and Universality* (Venice: Supernova Editrice, 1997), 51-56 and Boghos Levon Zekiyian, “La visione di Mechitar del mondo e della chiesa : una ‘Weltanschauung’ tra teologia e umanesimo,” in *Gli Armeni e Venezia : dagli Sceriman a Mechitar. il momento culminante di una consuetudine millenaria*, eds. Boghos Levon Zekiyian and Aldo Ferrari (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2004), 197-200. Broader and more developed explorations of the various aspects of Mekhitarist humanism are sorely needed.

<sup>6</sup> Nichanian makes this case for Mekhitarist historiography specifically. It can, however, be expanded to Mekhitarist philological work in the eighteenth century as well. See Marc Nichanian, “Enlightenment and Historical Thought,” in *Enlightenment and Diaspora: The Armenian and Jewish Cases*, eds. Richard G. Hovannisian and David N. Meyers (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 87-123.

<sup>7</sup> Paul F. Grendler, “Humanism: Ancient Learning, Criticism, Schools and Universities,” in *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Angelo Mazzocco (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 90.

<sup>8</sup> Charles G. Nauert, “Rethinking ‘Christian Humanism,’” in *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Angelo Mazzocco (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 155.

The humanist principle that has the most bearing on our discussion of Mekhitarist language ideologies is *ad fontes*, or “to the sources.” A drive to return “to the sources” guided much of the Mekhitarists’ philological and historiographic work in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and fundamentally shaped Mekhitarist conceptions of purity. In the context of Renaissance Europe, *ad fontes* referred to the interest among humanists in unearthing and studying materials in Hebrew, Greek and Latin as a way to purify medieval Latin and to recover the “perfect language.” For Renaissance humanists, the perfect language was spoken by Adam in the Garden of Eden, predating Babel and the ‘confusion of tongues.’<sup>9</sup> For Mekhitar and his congregation, the perfect language was Classical Armenian, which they viewed as the mythical language spoken by all Armenians before their scattering to different parts of Eurasia. Both of these ‘perfect languages’ were thought to be the purest, clearest and most ideal language and both sets of humanists believed that recovering them could mend the wound of dispersion.<sup>10</sup> The Mekhitarist Congregation thus adopted and adapted principles, ideas and approaches from within the European Christian humanist tradition and reinterpreted them for their own social context. One of the most transformational adoptions, adaptations and reinterpretations resulted in the Mekhitarist Congregation’s humanist belief in purity of language and the creation of a humanist Classical Armenian.

### ***The Making of Humanist Classical Armenian***

This humanist drive to recover the perfect language by returning “to the sources” manifested in a purification campaign for Classical Armenian within which we can contextualize the emergence of the purified vernacular and the archaizing purist approach to it. Part of the

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<sup>9</sup> Alan R. Perreiah, *Renaissance Truths: Humanism, Scholasticism and the Search for the Perfect Language* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 9-40.

<sup>10</sup> Perreiah, *Renaissance Truths*, 14.

Mekhitarist project entailed developing the notion that a certain form of Classical Armenian was purer than others and then codifying and disseminating this so-called ‘original language’ in a series of dictionaries and grammar books. We can see these prescriptive publications as instruments of purism and the first expressions of the Mekhitarist purist ideology. In the preface to Mekhitar’s 1749 monolingual Classical Armenian dictionary, we see him disturbed by the variation in contemporaneous Armenian usage, by its deviation from earlier norms, and by the absence of resources to regulate the language.<sup>11</sup> Laying the blame squarely on speakers, he condemned them for “blathering more in the language than protecting it.”<sup>12</sup> This blathering, he argued, resulted in many “grotesque [անհերթիթ] words” having been introduced; Mekhitar vowed to “repair our language” by providing a dictionary that would help readers see the “errors” in the way they used Classical Armenian and keep their “errors” from being perpetuated.<sup>13</sup>

The Mekhitarist drive to “correct,” “perfect” and standardize language and the Congregation’s predilection for classical models were, to be sure, part of broader European intellectual currents.<sup>14</sup> As Peter Burke shows us, linguistic purity (*puritas linguae*) was a humanist ideal that emerged in Renaissance Europe to remedy the “barbarity” and “coarseness” of medieval Latin.<sup>15</sup> While humanism had lived its heyday centuries earlier, many of its ideologies about language—particularly those regarding purity—were still alive and well in eighteenth-century

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<sup>11</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազգեսն լեզուի*, vol. 1, 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազգեսն լեզուի*, vol. 1, 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազգեսն լեզուի*, vol. 1, 5-6. We learn in the second volume of the dictionary that these “errors” arose because “many understand Classical Armenian [գրաբառ լեզու], but when they need to write or speak in Classical Armenian, they cannot remember whether such and such a word is spoken [նսսնկալան] or not.” We are told that this was a difficulty faced by the educated and uneducated alike and was one of the reasons for the Classical Armenian to spoken Armenian glossary in the second volume. *Բառգիրք հայկազգեսն լեզուի*, vol. 2, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Burke, *Languages and Communities*, 89-110.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Burke, *Hybrid Renaissance: Culture, Language, Architecture* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016), 101.

Europe and increasingly applied beyond Latin to written vernaculars like French and Italian, which were gaining legitimacy as languages of state.<sup>16</sup> Though Mekhitar does not reference them specifically, language academies and societies meant to regulate language had been popping up around Europe since the foundation of the Accademia della Crusca in late-sixteenth-century Florence.<sup>17</sup> This cultural climate favored prescriptivism and these academies, maligning contemporary usage, each located purity in different periods in the past and in the work of different kinds of writers.<sup>18</sup> By the eighteenth century, these movements had taken hold more broadly and academies and industrious individuals became increasingly invested in creating and maintaining the purity of their languages by producing expansive prescriptive grammars and dictionaries that dictated the “proper” usage and norms for their standardizing languages.<sup>19</sup>

At this time, purity was exemplified by a language that was stable and fixed—not constantly in flux. It was the ever-changing nature of spoken language, as the thinking went, that made it inherently subject to the introduction of “impurities.” It is critical that we see the Mekhitarists’ purist ideology as part of this ideological universe in which stability through regulation and prescriptivism, particularly regulation and prescriptivism that drew on a stable (i.e. written) language, was prized. We must, however, acknowledge one critical difference: while many Europeans were hard at work trying to assert the prestige and distinctiveness of their written

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Burke, “Nationalisms and Vernaculars, 1500-1800,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, ed. John Breuilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 30.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Linn, “Vernaculars and the Idea of a Standard Language,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Linguistics*, ed. Keith Allan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 371-373.

<sup>18</sup> Burke, *Languages and Communities*, 23.

<sup>19</sup> See John Considine, *Academy Dictionaries, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). To situate the production of Mekhitarist dictionaries temporally within the context of European lexicography more broadly, see “A Timeline of Lexicography in the Long Nineteenth Century,” in *The Whole World in a Book: Dictionaries in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Sarah Ogilvie and Gabriella Safran (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 319-322. Contrary to its title, this timeline also includes dictionaries produced in the early and mid-eighteenth century.

vernaculars from a classical language (i.e. Latin) and had come to think of their written vernaculars as able to achieve perfection, Mekhitar and his followers had no such ambition or preconception.<sup>20</sup> Their focus was on codifying—or in the case of grammars recodifying—the classical language, which was, in their eyes, the only legitimate and respectable form of Armenian.<sup>21</sup> As we see in the comments below from 1749, Mekhitar fully adopted the prescriptivism of his era and saw spoken forms of Armenian as nothing but corrupted:

This appears evident to all that if the Lord does not grant us an orderly dictionary, our language will slowly become disordered and corrupted. On account of which, the *Dictionary* is the canon for the correct studying of literature, which guides the multitudes to use the language with which one speaks or writes in a uniform manner. Otherwise, everything would be spoiled and corrupted as is evident with the vernacular language of ours, which on account of being disordered and bereft of guidance, is as torn and multiplied as there are regions of habitation or especially as there are cities or towns. And some [dialects] are so corrupted that they do not even appear to be spoken Armenian, but rather as barbarous groans of exclaiming in the air.<sup>22</sup>

If Classical Armenian was on the verge of “corruption” in the eighteenth-century, when did purity exist for Mekhitar and his congregation? To answer this question, we need to delve briefly into Mekhitarist beliefs about the origins of Classical Armenian. Like other humanist thinkers, Mekhitar believed that languages were given by God.<sup>23</sup> In particular, the Mekhitarists believed

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<sup>20</sup> As Perreiah notes, “Dante’s identification of perfect language with ‘the illustrious vernacular’ initiated the modern search for the perfect language among the vernaculars.” Perreiah, *Renaissance Truths*, 24.

<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that in the introduction to his dictionary, Mekhitar goes to great lengths to justify his use of Classical Armenian definitions, acknowledging that many would have found it “more appetizing” to have vernacular definitions. His comments suggest a certain demand for vernacular-based writing among the literate public. Despite his objections, Mekhitar did yield somewhat by including alongside the classical definition “vulgar [նասնկալիսն] words” as glosses for the “ignorant” and “foreigners” who were learning Armenian but made it clear that it was not only against his intention but also dangerous for the vulgar words to be used. *Բարձրիկը հայկազգեսն լեզուի*, vol. 1, 6-7, 17.

<sup>22</sup> This is a translation from Classical Armenian by Sebouh Aslanian. See Sebouh D. Aslanian, “‘Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites’: Abbot Mkhitar’s 1727 Armeno-Turkish Grammar of Modern Western Armenian,” *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 25, no. 1 (2016): 63.

<sup>23</sup> *Բարձրիկը հայկազգեսն լեզուի*, vol. 1, 9. As Joseph notes, into the eighteenth-century in Europe “there existed a general belief in an original God-given language, and in original, perfect, and static forms of existing languages, from

that Armenian was one of the languages created by God as punishment for erecting the Tower of Babel.<sup>24</sup> In their eyes, Armenian had been a single language, spoken from the “first centuries,” and had survived orally, unchanged, until it was first recorded in the Armenian alphabet in the fifth century CE.<sup>25</sup> Tracing the language’s lineage from Babel, the Mekhitarists perpetuated this idea of divine creation well into the nineteenth century to assert the purity, antiquity and “nobility” of Armenian in relation to other languages. Through this divinity, Mekhitar boasted, “Our language was not invented out of a mixture of the idioms of different peoples, like many Eastern and Western languages have been; it was bestowed on us from the heavens.”<sup>26</sup> Like a true purist, he lauded the “richness [անխուրժիւն]” of the Armenian lexicon, full of so many “native [ընդարոյս] words that it astonishes the minds of the learned.”<sup>27</sup> The most remarkable aspect of this lexicon, Mekhitar rushes to assert, was that—unlike Turkish and Latin—basic and learned words were not borrowed from other languages; they were, or so he claimed, Armenian through and through.<sup>28</sup> Purism would, through this logic, allow eighteenth-century Armenians to “get as close as possible to [their] original, hence divinely perfect, language.”<sup>29</sup>

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which actual usage could err. It was the archetypal myth of a Golden Age, in which dialects had not yet splintered off and words had not wandered away from their original meanings.” This idea was alive and well in Mekhitarist discourse as well. Joseph, *Eloquence and Power*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 1, 15.

<sup>25</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 1, 12.

<sup>26</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 1, 15.

<sup>27</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 1, 15.

<sup>28</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 1, 15. In a strange, almost promotional turn, Mekhitar spends the final pages of his introduction literally enumerating the virtues of Classical Armenian, as if trying to convince the suspicious of its merits.

<sup>29</sup> This was a common impetus for purists at the time. Langer and Nesse, “Linguistic Purism,” 614.

## *Purifying from the ‘Forebear Canon’*

But where could examples of this ‘pure,’ ‘divinely perfect’ Classical Armenian be found? Renaissance humanists fixated on the purity of Classical Latin and forged a *humanist* Latin by spurning its medieval iteration and emulating a certain group of writers from centuries earlier.<sup>30</sup> So too did the Mekhitarists create a *humanist* Classical Armenian by denouncing medieval and contemporaneous usage, inventing their own Armenian “classical” age and populating it with their own selection of writers whom they deemed worthy of emulation.<sup>31</sup> Here we see Mekhitar adapt the *ad fontes* principle to his own context, develop a corpus of inviolable Armenian sources and deem them paragons of linguistic purity. Beginning with the Armenian translation of the Bible, these sources represent some of the earliest writings in the Armenian alphabet, had been copied and recopied for centuries in monasteries and largely existed only in manuscript form. Compiling this corpus, in other words, was not an easy task.<sup>32</sup> It required decades of work for Mekhitar and his congregation to collect manuscript copies of these early writings and amass the source base required to construct their humanist Classical Armenian.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kristian Jensen, “The Humanist Reform of Latin and Latin Teaching,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 63-81.

<sup>31</sup> Even the English term used in this chapter, *Classical Armenian*, reinforces the humanist notion that a language and culture could have *classical* age. Although the concept of a classical (դասական) period for Armenian does not appear until the nineteenth century, Mekhitar’s work became the basis for its development.

<sup>32</sup> Jean-Pierre Mahé, preface to *Catalogue des ‘incunables’ arméniens (1511-1695) ou Chronique de l’imprimerie arménienne*, by Raymond H. Kévorkian (Geneva: Patrick Cramer éditeur, 1986), xxiv. For a study of the relationship between the Mekhitarists and one manuscript supplier, see Սահակ Ճեմճեմեան, *Գեորգ դպիր Տէր Յովհաննիսեան (Պապանկոց) եւ Մխիթարեանները* (Venice: Ս. Ղազար, 1984).

<sup>33</sup> Mekhitar writes in the 1740s of his congregation traveling far and wide to find these sources. *Բարձրորդ հայկազանի յեզուի*, vol. 1, 9. Djemdjemian shows us that manuscript sources were used not only for philological work but also historiographic work and were still being collected in the 1770s. See Սահակ Ճեմճեմեան, *Հ. Միքայել Չամչեան եւ իր Հայրոց պատմությունը* (Venice: Ս. Ղազար, 1983). The entanglement of these two parts of the Mekhitarist project has also been emphasized in Nichanian, “Enlightenment and Historical Thought,” 118.

The members of the Mekhitarist Congregation were not the first or only scholarly minded Armenians of their era to take an interest in these sources, nor were they the only ones to conceive of Classical Armenian as preferable to spoken varieties of Armenian.<sup>34</sup> They were, however, the first to locate in these sources a purity of language worthy of emulation, to codify in grammars and dictionaries the forms of Classical Armenian found in these sources and to use them in a flurry of publications. The choice to turn these sources into an archive of linguistic purity would have long-standing effects on how purity was conceived for Classical Armenian, for the purified vernacular and eventually for standard Western Armenian. Mekhitar called the writers of these sources the *forebears* (նախնիք) and extolled the “elegance of language that glimmers in [their] writings.”<sup>35</sup> Among these “forebears,” Mekhitar specifically cites the inventor of the Armenian alphabet and main translator of the Bible, Mesrop Mashtots, as well as the historiographers and theologians Movses Khorenatsi, Grigor Narekatsi, Nerses Shnorhali, Nerses Lambronatsi and Agathangelos, among others.<sup>36</sup> I will refer to this grouping of sources as the “forebear canon” in this chapter and throughout the entire study.

Drawing on a term already in circulation, Mekhitar called the kind of Classical Armenian found in the forbear canon “the speech of Hayk” (հայկաբանութիւն) and “the language of the people of Hayk” (հայկազեան լեզու).<sup>37</sup> Into the nineteenth century, these terms would be used to

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<sup>34</sup> As one example, van Lint notes that one of these sources, an eleventh-century work known colloquially as the *Narek*, was first published in Marseille in 1673 and was printed eleven times in the eighteenth century: nine times in Constantinople and two times in Venice. Theo M. van Lint, “Medieval Poetic Texts,” in *Armenian Philology in the Modern Era: From Manuscript to Digital Text*, eds. Valentina Calzolari and Michael E. Stone (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 384. See also Sebouh David Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers across the Armenian Diaspora, 1512-1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2023), 284.

<sup>35</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 1, 15.

<sup>36</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 1, 9.

<sup>37</sup> The Mekhitarists did not invent the term *հայկաբանութիւն*. We find it used as early as 1674 in the title of a grammar by the Armenian Catholic missionary Hohannes Holov: Յոհաննէս Կոստանդինուպօլսեցի [Հոլով], *Չորրորդին հայկաբանութեան/Puritas linguae armenicae* (Rome: Typographia Sacrae Congreg. de Propaganda Fide, 1674). In

denote models of Armenian linguistic perfection and refer to the Armenian myth of origin found in one of the forebear's works. According to Movses Khorenatsi, Hayk was the progenitor of the Armenian people and a direct descendant of Noah's son Japheth.<sup>38</sup> Hayk's name becomes synonymous with purity of language, because it was thought that he had preserved the perfect, divine Armenian, which was then recorded in the work of the forbearers beginning in the fifth century CE. It is through their work, in other words, that Mekhitar and his congregation believed they could access and revive this primordial (albeit mythical) language. In this way, we can start to understand why language change in the intervening centuries was not neutral for the Mekhitarists but a rupture with the divine language of the Armenian progenitor. In Mekhitarist discourse, the Classical Armenian of the forebear canon is offered as the ideal example of "our own style" (սեփական ճճ) and connected to concepts of originality and uniqueness. We will see these terms used to justify the primacy of this humanist Classical Armenian, especially once the purified vernacular became a rival form in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup>

For the Mekhitarist Congregation, not all writers of Classical Armenian were purveyors of the "language of Hayk" and thus not all writers of Classical Armenian were included in the forebear canon. As Mekhitar himself wrote, he was discerning in his choice of linguistic models, selecting only a handful of figures who lived between the fifth and twelfth centuries.<sup>40</sup> The

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his Latin title, we see him adapt this humanist concept of *puritas linguae* to the Armenian context, but his conception of purity clashed with that of Mekhitar. Hovhannes Holov's grammar was a *Latinizing* grammar. While Mekhitarists turned to the 'forebear canon' to find purity, Hovhannes overlaid European norms onto Classical Armenian and believed purity could be achieved by patterning its grammar on Latin.

<sup>38</sup> Moses Khorenatsi, *History of the Armenians*, trans. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), 74.

<sup>39</sup> For example, in 1810, we read the Mekhitarist monk Mgrdich Avkerian grapple with the realities of a world shedding classical languages. He wrote that he "did not deny the utility of the vernacular [սշխարհաբար]" but continued to champion the use of Classical Armenian because it is the "tradition of the original forebears." Մկրտիչ Աւգերեան, *Ղեղ կենաց, որ ևս է հոգևոր բժշկարան* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1810), 312.

<sup>40</sup> *Բարձրիք հայկազնան յնորի*, vol. 1, 9.

thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries represented a period of ignorance in the eyes of the congregation and, seeing their (mis)use of Classical Armenian as a preeminent mark of this ignorance, no writer from this period was included in the forebear canon. Just as purifiers of Latin described their quest to do away with medieval usage and reach the pure Latin of Cicero and Virgil, the Mekhitarist Congregation sought to recover the splendor of the Classical Armenian of the forebears by scraping away “the rust of the unlearned centuries.”<sup>41</sup> For the Mekhitarists, this rust referred to lexical borrowings as well as “twisted words” [բառք թիրեալք] and “contamination” from within in the form of “erroneous nonsense [աղճատանք սխալանաց] in words, syllables and letters.”<sup>42</sup> Here Mekhitar was alluding to words that eighteenth-century writers spelled based on contemporaneous pronunciations rather than on the orthography found in the forebear canon. One of the earliest examples we find of this drive to “correct” is Mekhitar’s 1730 grammar, which explicitly sought to “teach the language of Hayk” to the youngest students in his monastery by highlighting common deviations from the writing of the forebears.<sup>43</sup>

Mekhitar and other intellectuals at the time were well aware that there were “words in common” between the forebears’ Classical Armenian and other languages.<sup>44</sup> Unflinching in his belief in the divinity of this form, however, Mekhitar explained away many of these commonalities

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<sup>41</sup> This quote was attributed to Pietro Bembo in 1525, quoted in English in Burke, *Languages and Communities*, 144-145.

<sup>42</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազգևան լեզուի*, vol. 1, 5. Grammatical ‘contamination’ was not a focus for Mekhitar at this time, though it would become a concern for members of his Congregation later in the century.

<sup>43</sup> Մխիթար Սեբաստացի, *Քերականություն գրաբարի լեզուի հայկազգև սեռի* (Venice: Ի տպարանի Պաթիստա Ալպրիցի Ջեռոլիմօի, 1730), 469-470.

<sup>44</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազգևան լեզուի*, vol. 1, 9. Among other contemporary intellectuals aware of these similarities we find Ghougas Vanantetsi who in 1716 wrote that foreign words had “slipped into Armenian speech [հայկազգևան խօսք] and into the language and, having grown accustomed to them, today they seem almost native [ընտանի] to us.” Ղուկաս Վանանդեցի, *Պատկերասեր պատկերաստեաց* (Amsterdam: Ղուկաս Վանանդեցի, 1716), 132. He gives examples from Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, Old Persian, Parthian and Greek and does not see their adoption as cause for concern.

as (1) a coincidence, a result of God giving each language an assortment of similar words and as (2) examples of words that other languages had borrowed from Armenian.<sup>45</sup> In certain cases, however, he did concede that “foreign [սլլազգալիսն] words from Persian, Arabic, Greek, Latin and the like” were indeed used in the forebear canon; attesting to the inviolability of these sources in his eyes, Mekhitar bent his own rules and perpetuated these borrowings by including them in his dictionaries and grammars “because in places we find them used by the forebears.”<sup>46</sup>

While, as we will see, purification was largely confined to the lexicon in the creation of the purified vernacular, the creation of humanist Classical Armenian encompassed ensuring both lexical *and* grammatical purity based on the usage in the forebear canon. The targets of Mekhitarist ire over the “corruption” of the grammar of the forebears were two groups active in centuries past: the Hellenizers and the Latinizers. These “corruptions” were not the result of widespread language contact between speakers, as we will see with spoken Armenian and Turkish, but rather the result of deliberate intervention into written language by small groups of writers and translators during different historical periods. The Hellenizers, active from roughly the sixth to the eighth centuries, attempted to pattern elements of Classical Armenian grammar, syntax and morphology on Greek in their translations of theological, philosophical and grammatical texts.<sup>47</sup> The Latinizers, active in

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<sup>45</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազգեսն լեզուի*, vol. 1, 9. As examples of the first type, Mekhitar gives the similarities between the Latin *lux* and Armenian *լոյս*, the Latin *nav* and the Armenian *նավ*, etc. It would be a few decades before the Indo-European hypothesis would help shed new light on these similarities and more than a century before philologists would determine the Armenian had, in fact, borrowed many more words than it had lent.

<sup>46</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազգեսն լեզուի*, vol. 1, 8; Mekhitar likely became better acquainted with these borrowings while preparing his revised edition of the Armenian translation of the Bible, comparing it line by line with versions in Hebrew, Samaritan (Aramaic), Syriac, Chaldean, Arabic, Greek and Latin. See Nurikhan, *The Life and Times*, 327-328.

<sup>47</sup> For a readable overview in English, see Abraham Terian, “The Hellenizing School: Its Time, Place, and Scope of Activities Reconsidered,” in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, eds. Nina G. Garsoïan, Thomas F. Mathews and Robert W. Thomson (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1982), 175-186. For a more technical introduction, including a thorough literature review, see Gohar Muradyan, *Grecisms in Ancient Armenian* (Leuven and Paris: Peeters, 2012), 1-26. The Hellenizers also developed a great many lexical calques from Greek that still are used in Armenian today. Their calqued prefixes and suffixes, in particular,

the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, attempted to pattern elements of Classical Armenian grammar and morphology on Latin in a series of translations, original works and grammar books.<sup>48</sup> Latinized (լատինաբան or լատինաստիպ) Classical Armenian was still in use among certain Catholics when the Mekhitarist Congregation was founded in the early eighteenth century.

Mekhitar himself produced a Latinized Classical Armenian grammar book in 1730, which future members of his congregation would later revise based on the usage of the "forebears."<sup>49</sup> We see the first revised grammar published in 1779. In his preface, this Mekhitarist grammarian, Mikayel Chamchian, criticized those who, through their writing, had "led the Armenian language astray" and "introduced into it the speech styles of other peoples"; this act, he argued, "had begun to disturb the elegance of our language."<sup>50</sup> He directly targets Hellenizers and, careful not to denigrate the work of the founder of his congregation, writes in veiled terms about the erring ways of Latinizers in "having violated the customs of language."<sup>51</sup> As a remedy, Chamchian promises readers a new and improved grammar of Classical Armenian, one "composed entirely according

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help create abstract, philosophical, grammatical and technical terminology and continue to be drawn on to create neologisms today.

<sup>48</sup> Jos J.S. Weitenberg, "La grammaire arménienne 'latinatip' du XVIIe siècle," in *Analecta Indoeuropaea Cracoviensia Ioannis Safarewicz Memoriae Dicata*, ed. W. Smoczynski (Krakow: Universitas, 1995), 461-472. For a brief look at the relationship between Hellenizing and Latinizing Armenian, see Muradyan, *Grecisms in Ancient Armenian*, 215-224.

<sup>49</sup> Միքայել Չամչեան, *Քերականություն հայկազեան լեզուի* (Venice: Ի սպարանի Դեմետրեայ Թեոդոսեանց, 1779), Դ. Latinizing Armenian was developed and used exclusively by Catholics, especially—though, as we see with Mekhitar, not exclusively—those affiliated with the Propaganda Fide in Rome. Jahukyan proposes that Mekhitar used Latinizing grammar so as not to ruffle the feathers of the Vatican, which supported Latinism. Resistance, he suggests, might have put the position of Mekhitar's new congregation in jeopardy. Jahukyan also proposes that Mekhitar may have used Latinizing grammar because the congregation had not yet collected enough manuscripts to form an alternative source base. Գ[ևորգ] Բ. Չահուկյան, *Գրաբարի քերականության պատմություն (XVII-XIX դդ.)* (Yerevan: Երևանի համալսարանի հրատարակչություն, 1974), 210.

<sup>50</sup> Չամչեան, *Քերականություն հայկազեան լեզուի*, Գ-Դ.

<sup>51</sup> Չամչեան, *Քերականություն հայկազեան լեզուի*, Գ-Ե.

to qualities of our own language’s style” with rules based on “the writings of our forebears.”<sup>52</sup> Notably, Chamchian, while remaining within the bounds of Mekhitar’s periodization, expanded Mekhitar’s list of “forebears,” illustrating the plasticity of the concept.<sup>53</sup> A historian as well as a grammarian, Chamchian used the Classical Armenian of his expanded forebear canon in his own writing, notably in his three-volume history of the Armenian people published in the mid-1780s. In addition to spurning Hellenizing and Latinizing grammar, Chamchian also took issue with earlier Armenian historians who had used “entirely corrupted” lexical borrowings in their writing, dismissing such usage as a trend based in “ignorance and vanity” and describing himself as having “discerned right from wrong” by using the Classical Armenian found in the ever-expanding forebear canon.<sup>54</sup>

Fellow members of the Congregation followed suit in their Classical Armenian writings, and we see a nearly unanimous disdain for Hellenizing and Latinizing grammar alongside “corrupted” borrowings in Mekhitarist approaches to Classical Armenian into the nineteenth century. In 1815, for example, a new Mekhitarist grammar appears that takes the same tone and champions the same principles. It takes the “original language [բնիկ լեզու] of our forebear linguists” as a guide, sees them as faithful purveyors and conservers of the language of Hayk and denigrates those who had, in the past, “disrupted the authentic rules of language.”<sup>55</sup> Given that these Mekhitarist grammars were published in various print centers into the mid-nineteenth century, it can also help us to see how these Mekhitarist purist ideologies spread and had an impact

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<sup>52</sup> Չամչեան, *Քերականություն հայկազեան լեզուի*, Զ.

<sup>53</sup> For this expanded list, see Չամչեան, *Քերականություն հայկազեան լեզուի*, Թ.

<sup>54</sup> Միքայել Չամչեան, *Պատմություն Հայոց. Ի սկզբանէ աշխարհի մինչև ցամ տեսան* 1784, vol. 1 (Venice: Ի տպարանի Պետրոսի Վաղվազեանց, 1784), 4.

<sup>55</sup> Գաբրիել Աւետիքեան, *Քերականություն հայկական* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1815), Ը-Թ.

on language attitudes beyond the congregation. It is this drive to remove “foreign” styles from Classical Armenian and a conception of purity firmly rooted in the forebear canon that can help us better understand the emergence of the *archaizing* purist approach to the purified vernacular as the transposition of this purist ideology initially directed at Classical Armenian. Given this hostility to Latin and Greek, we can also begin to see how archaizing purism for the purified vernacular emerged not as a distaste for Turkish in particular but rather as part of a larger distaste for usage that did represent the “language of Hayk” as expressed in the forebear canon. In sum, within the Mekhitarist project at this time, purism was motivated by a desire to “fix” or “correct” language to recover its divine form. No matter the language in question, if it did not represent the language of the forebears, it was a target for purification.

### ***Humanist Classical Armenian as a Social Salve***

The Mekhitarist Congregation conceived of the spread of their humanist Classical Armenian as a solution to a pressing social concern in the eighteenth century: the geographic and confessional fragmentation among Armenians. At this time, there was a growing sense of anxiety among intellectuals that Armenians as an ethnic community were growing estranged from one another and losing a sense of collective identity.<sup>56</sup> Once geographically concentrated in Eastern Anatolia and the South Caucasus, Armenians had been migrating to different parts of Eurasia for centuries by this time.<sup>57</sup> Mekhitar saw the impact of this fragmentation vividly in the language

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<sup>56</sup> Sebouh Aslanian, *Dispersion History and the Polycentric Nation: The Role of Simeon Yerevantsi's Girk or Koči Partavčar in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century National Revival* (Venice: St. Lazarus, 2004), 5-6.

<sup>57</sup> Much of this migration from Eastern Anatolia, called the ‘Great Armenian Flight,’ to Western Anatolia, Constantinople, Thrace and beyond has been attributed to a long period of unrest in the eastern part of the Empire in the seventeenth century. See Henry R. Shapiro, *The Rise of the Western Armenian Diaspora in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire: From Refugee Crisis to Renaissance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 29-82. See, also, Հրայր Աճառյան, *Հայ գաղթականության պատմություն* (Yerevan: Չանգակ-97, 2002).

practices of these dispersed communities. In 1749, he offers us a glimpse into this “crisis of language”:<sup>58</sup>

On account of the fact that our nation was driven away to live in numerous foreign lands, it speaks in multiple tongues and mixes into the Armenian language uncountable foreign words from each nation in whose lands it happens to reside, as the inhabitants of the East have done with the Indians, the Persians, the Georgians, the Arabs, the Assyrians, the Turks and their likes, and those in the West have done with the Franks, the Hungarians, the Greeks, the Bulgarians, the Tatars...and their likes. Because of this, those who live in one region do not understand the language of another region, at least in part.<sup>59</sup>

These comments were, of course, about the spoken languages of these communities, whose multilingualism had left traces on their varieties of Armenian. To Mekhitar and his congregation, it was these instances of language contact that were a barrier first and foremost to Armenians understanding one another, as their spoken varieties of Armenian appeared to be “innumerable different languages.”<sup>60</sup> Clearly daunted and dismayed by the diversity of spoken Armenian and at a loss for how to address each of them, the congregation’s solution was to provide resources to help Armenians collectively return to its so-called ‘original’ language: humanist Classical Armenian. To Mekhitar and his followers, it was only the Classical Armenian of the forebears that had the power to remedy the cultural fragmentation they saw around them, attempting to create unity through a shared, “primordial” language that could transcend the differences in spoken varieties.

Alongside geographic fragmentation so too was confessional fragmentation a major concern in the eighteenth century. Before this period, the Armenian ecclesiastical elite conceived of Armenians as a single ethno-religious community led by the autocephalous Armenian Church.

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<sup>58</sup> Aslanian, *Dispersion History*, 15-18.

<sup>59</sup> *Բառզիրք հայկազգեսն լեզուի*, vol. 1, 6. This is Sebouh Aslanian’s English translation. It can be found in Aslanian, *Dispersion History*, 17, footnote 28.

<sup>60</sup> *Բառզիրք հայկազգեսն լեզուի*, vol. 2, 11.

In the eighteenth century, however, more Armenians—Mekhitar and his followers included—converted to Catholicism, complicating this long-standing communal identity. As Sebouh Aslanian has aptly noted, Mekhitar believed it was possible to be both Armenian and Catholic. “Though I submit myself and am always subject in every manner of faithfulness to the throne of Rome,” Mekhitar wrote in 1733, “...nonetheless, my love and efforts to work for the benefit of my nation (though I may be held in contempt for my submission [to Rome]) will never slacken.”<sup>61</sup> But not all Armenian intellectuals believed Catholicism and Armenianness were reconcilable and fears of ethno-religious disintegration as a result of conversions to Catholicism were on full display during this period.<sup>62</sup>

Given the confessional divisions of the period, we can see this focus on Classical Armenian as an expression of the drive to bring together Armenians of both confessions.<sup>63</sup> Humanist Classical Armenian, in particular, was a tradition that all Armenians could theoretically share, no matter their confession. By focusing on this form of Classical Armenian and holding the ‘forebears’ up as exemplars of purity, the Mekhitarists were also recalling a period before the spread of Catholicism and sidestepping the association of Latinizing Armenian with Catholic missionaries and the schism within the Church.<sup>64</sup> The Mekhitarists at this time were, in essence,

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<sup>61</sup> Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility*, 358. This is Sebouh Aslanian’s translation from Classical Armenian. A simplified and distorted version of this quote, without reference to a source, is in wide circulation in English-language secondary sources. We owe it to Aslanian for identifying the source and more fully and accurately rendering Mekhitar’s sentiments into English.

<sup>62</sup> Guillaume Aral, *Les Arméniens catholiques : étude historique, juridique et institutionnelle XVIIe-XIXe siècle* (Nice: Éditions de Nicéphore, 2017), 119, 161.

<sup>63</sup> Paolo Lucca, “The Religious and Humanist Inspiration of Abbot Mekhitar and His School,” in *Armenia: Imprints of a Civilization*, eds. Gabriella Uluhogian, Boghos Levon Zekian and Vartan Karapetian (Milan: Skira, 2011), 317-318.

<sup>64</sup> As Weitenberg notes, Latinizing grammar “became a weapon in the spiritual battle between Rome and Etchmiadzin [the seat of the Armenian Apostolic Church].” Weitenberg, “La grammaire arménienne,” 465.

using language to recall a time of Christian unity in the past to foster a sense of pan-Armenian Christian unity in the present. While Armenians may have belonged to two confessions in the eighteenth century, Mekhitar drew on the concept of the forebears and promulgated a humanist Classical Armenian that, ultimately, reminded members of both confessions that they were all “people of Hayk” (հայկազնան).<sup>65</sup>

The printed materials under examination in the rest of this chapter should, thus, be understood as intended not solely for the benefit of Catholic Armenians but for the benefit of all Armenians, no matter their confession. This feature of the Mekhitarist project can help us to distinguish it from other smaller-scale eighteenth-century efforts at reform through education and publishing, particularly those under the auspices of the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate in Constantinople.<sup>66</sup> In sum, the Mekhitarists cultivated their humanist Classical Armenian as a focal point of collective identity in hopes of fostering cohesion across geography and confession. But for this conception to have any real impact, they needed to find a way to lead Armenians to it.

### **How to Lead the Masses to Classical Armenian**

By the late eighteenth century, Mekhitarist writers had become vocal in lamenting how few Armenians could indeed read Classical Armenian.<sup>67</sup> Such knowledge would have required years

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<sup>65</sup> The Mekhitarists use this word in the titles of their grammars and dictionaries throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

<sup>66</sup> Lucca, “Philology, Documentary Research and Channels of Cultural Diffusion,” 432-435. For studies of eighteenth-century intellectual production in Constantinople, see Գ[ևորգ] Բամպուքնեան, *Յակոբ պատրիարք Նալեան* (1706-1764). *Կեանքը, գործերը և աշակերտները* (Istanbul: n.p., 1981); Բարգէն Կիլիկեան, *Կորոտ Յովհաննէս պատրիարք* (Vienna: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1904); and Հենրիկ Բախչինյան, *Պատրաստար Գպիր. ուսումնասիրություն և քննադրեր* (Yerevan: Գրականության և արվեստի թանգարանի հրատարակչություն, 1999).

<sup>67</sup> We find a handful of Mekhitarist books with a purified vernacular version published after a classical version. These purified vernacular books were composed because, as the writers tell us, readers complained that they had not understood the classical version. See, for example, Խաչատուր Միրմելեան, *Համառոտ թուարանություն և աշխարհաբար* (Venice: Ի տպարանի Յովհաննու Փիացեան, 1788); Ղուկաս Ինճինեան, *Տեսություն համառոտ հին և նոր աշխարհագրություն* (Venice: Ի վանս ս[րբոյ]ն Ղազարու, 1791) and Ի[գնատիոս] Փ[ափազեան], *Երկրաչափություն գործնական* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1817).

of training, which was not accessible to wide swaths of the population. Because of its significance to their project, the Mekhitarists had no interest in abandoning it altogether. If they were to succeed in fostering cohesion through Classical Armenian, they needed to devise ways to reach and teach the masses. Herein lies the central issue that led both to the emergence of a vernacular-based print-language and to an archaizing approach to it.

### **Use a Vernacular-Based Written Form to Reach Them**

The landscape of Armenian print in the eighteenth century was dominated by publications in Classical Armenian. As we can glean from the vast body of scholarship on early modern Armenian print, the printing press had been put at the service of reproducing materials in Classical Armenian since the early sixteenth century.<sup>68</sup> This corpus of materials had been made up in large part of church books and devotional works that were intended for the tiny sliver of the populace that was able to read them, namely the clergy and the merchant class.<sup>69</sup> At the tail end of the seventeenth century, however, we start to see the stirrings of an interest in using print to reach broader segments of the Armenian population, particularly those without a strong command of Classical Armenian.<sup>70</sup>

To reach the general public, a comprehensible language was, needless to say, of the essence. The strict separation of the spoken and written realms in the eighteenth century meant that there was never any question of writing exactly as one spoke, despite how effective that may

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<sup>68</sup> See, for example, Sebouh D. Aslanian, “Port Cities and Printers: Reflections on Early Modern Global Armenian Print Culture,” *Book History* 17, no. 1 (2014): 51-93. For a bibliography of early modern books, Ն. Ա. Ոսկանյան, Զ. Ա. Կորկոտյան and Ա. Մ. Սավալյան, *Հայ գիրքը 1512-1800 թվականներին* (Yerevan: Հայկական ՍՍՀ Կուլտուրայի Մինիստրություն, 1988).

<sup>69</sup> Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility*, 249-287 and S. Peter Cowe, “Print Capital, Corporate Identity, and the Democratization of Discourse in Early Modern Armenian Society,” *Le Muséon* 126, no. 3-4 (2013): 319-368.

<sup>70</sup> Writers had been conscious of the difficulties of using Classical Armenian to address a wider public since at least the twelfth century. See Pifer, *Kindred Voices*, 136.

have been in reaching readers. Instead, in the eighteenth century, we find the Mekhitarist Congregation making use of two vernacular-based varieties of Armenian in their printed materials: Civil Armenian and, what I call, the purified vernacular. These are *intermediate* varieties that share features with both Classical Armenian and spoken dialects of the period.<sup>71</sup> While different in their forms, Civil Armenian and the purified vernacular overlapped in their functions, both serving as means through which to address readers unversed in Classical Armenian.<sup>72</sup>

### ***Civil Armenian: The Printed Predecessor to the Purified Vernacular***

Civil Armenian (քաղաքական հայերէն) was the predecessor of the purified vernacular in the province of print and has long gone unexamined in scholarship. The little scholarly attention that has been paid to it has focused on its use as a merchant language and on its possible relationship to modern standard forms of Armenian. Dwarfing its use in print, Civil Armenian can be found in manuscript colophons, petitions, letters and other written records now scattered in archives in Armenia, Europe and beyond.<sup>73</sup> Our focus here will be on its use in print and intended readership in hopes of illustrating continuities with the uses and readership for the purified vernacular.

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<sup>71</sup> On intermediate varieties, see Massimo Cerruti and Stavroula Tsiplakou, eds., *Intermediate Language Varieties: Koinai and Regional Standards in Europe* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2020). We see how Civil Armenian was conceived of as an intermediate variety in its first known descriptions as an amalgam of “pure and regular” Classical Armenian and “disorderly and irregular” spoken varieties. See Յոհաննէս [Հոլով], *Չսորթին հայկաբանութեան*, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Armeno-Turkish, a form of vernacular Turkish written in the Armenian alphabet, was also used to address this reading public, as large segments of the Armenian population were monolingual or bilingual in Turkish. Most research on Armeno-Turkish has focused on its uses in the nineteenth century. For rare looks at eighteenth-century Armeno-Turkish works, see Aslanian, “Prepared in the Language,” 54-86 and Shapiro, *The Rise of the Western Armenian Diaspora*, 261-287.

<sup>73</sup> Nevard A. Parnassian, “On the Formation of Ashkharhabar,” *Annual of Armenian Linguistics* 6 (1985): 69 and Alessandro Orengo, “Una lettera del XVII secolo, scritta nell’« armeno dei mercanti » (վաճառականական հայերէն),” *Աշտանակ* 3 (2000): 24.

In 1736, we read Civil Armenian described as a cross between Classical Armenian (քերթողական) and spoken dialects (զրեհկական) used by city-dwellers (քաղաքական մարդիկ) as well as those unversed in Classical Armenian.<sup>74</sup> Here we are given a rare glimpse into how Civil Armenian fit into an Ottoman Armenian’s linguistic repertoire, with the writer noting that even those *versed* in Classical Armenian made use of Civil Armenian “in speeches and in conversation, so that the listeners could easily understand and, in that way, enjoy the conversation”; but when the same people wanted to write, the author emphasized, they used Classical Armenian, which, he asserted, “is the purest.”<sup>75</sup>

It bears emphasizing that the number of writers and books in Civil Armenian was miniscule and in no way was it intended to supplant Classical Armenian as the primary written variety of the language; it was, in other words, a distinct form with a distinct purpose for a distinct audience. In the eighteenth century, Civil Armenian printed books numbered fewer than a dozen and were produced by a total of four clergymen: Mekhitar of Sebastia from the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice as well as Hagop Nalian, Baghdasar Tbir and Manuel Gesarian of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Constantinople.<sup>76</sup> At a time of heightened strife between these two religious institutions, their publications were intended to teach readers “the necessary elements of their faith” in a form more comprehensible than Classical Armenian, aiding

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<sup>74</sup> Պաղտասար Դպիր, *Պարզաբանություն քերականության կարճառում եւ դիւրիմաց* (Constantinople: n.p., 1736-1738), 466-467. As the author describes spoken varieties (զրեհկական) as belonging to the domain of the village (գիւղական), there is a question here as to whether the term քաղաքական should be translated as “urban” rather “civil” and whether awareness of this intermediate form was largely confined to urban centers.

<sup>75</sup> Պաղտասար Դպիր, *Պարզաբանություն*, 467.

<sup>76</sup> All these clergymen also wrote in Classical Armenian, allowing us to see clearly how writers in this period selected their form of Armenian based on their intended audience.

in the reinforcement of divisions along confessional lines.<sup>77</sup> Suggesting confessional rivalry as a cause for the expansion of Civil Armenian into the realm of print, we see, for example, each faction produce its own Civil Armenian catechism within just a few years of one another.<sup>78</sup>

Given the dominance of Classical Armenian in print, writers were breaking an entrenched norm when they chose to publish in Civil Armenian. From their prefaces, it is clear that they wrote with the voices of detractors in their minds, consistently trying to preempt criticism by clearly defining their intended readership. In 1687, one writer pleaded with readers not to dismiss him as unversed in Classical Armenian but instead to realize that his book was “not for clergymen but for the use and benefit of the general public.”<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Mekhitar of Sebastia penned his Civil Armenian catechism in 1727 all the while expecting to be mocked and criticized for his language of expression.<sup>80</sup> It was this fear of backlash and reproach that led Mekhitar to defer his long-standing wish to write this Civil Armenian catechism “to help those who do not have sufficient abilities to understand compositions in Classical Armenian.”<sup>81</sup> This fear of criticism—alongside

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<sup>77</sup> Մխիթար Սեբաստացի, *Գիրք քրիստոնեականի վարդապետության* (Venice: ի տպարանի Անդոնի Պօռթոլի, 1727), 4. For a study of the impact of print on confessionalization, see Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility*, Chapter 7 and Chapter 9.

<sup>78</sup> While Mekhitar’s catechism cited above does not specify an Armenian Catholic readership, the catechism published by the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate clearly defines its intended readership as members of the Apostolic (ուղղափառ եւ յուսաւորչադաւան) Church. Յակոբ Չինաուացի [Նալեան], *Գիրք կոչեցեալ քրիստոնեական ուսանելի, կամ քրիստոնէից վարիչ* (Constantinople: n.p., 1737), 2. This defining of the audience and unconventional choice of language form—the first time it is used in print in Constantinople—was likely a reaction to the success of Mekhitar’s Civil Armenian catechism, which had been printed twice in the preceding decade. Similarly, in 1780, we see Gesarian accuse “enemies of faith and of truth” (i.e., Catholics) of targeting “our simpleminded” (պարզամիտք), a term used at the time for those unversed in Classical Armenian. Gesarian suggests that he chose Civil Armenian to reach this audience and alert them to the dangers of Catholicism, highlighting once again the use of print as well as language form in the reinforcement of confessional divisions. [Մանուէլ Սրմաբէշ Կեսարեան], *Տեսրակ որ կոչի սկնոց աչաց սրտի* (Constantinople: n.p., 1780), 2-3.

<sup>79</sup> Յոհաննէս Կոստանդինուպօլսեցի [Հոլով], *Պարզաբանութիւն հոգեկրօնագ ստղծուսացն Դաւթի մարգարէին* (Venice: n.p., 1687), 8.

<sup>80</sup> Մխիթար Սեբաստացի, *Գիրք քրիստոնեականի վարդապետության*, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Մխիթար Սեբաստացի, *Գիրք քրիստոնեականի վարդապետության*, 3.

the willingness to endure it to expand the reading public—will reemerge among the earliest writers of purified vernacular materials in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

To be clear, Civil Armenian was not a singular and standardized written medium. Beyond what have been called its Eastern and Western branches, there was a tremendous degree of variation in Civil Armenian grammar, lexicon and orthography among writers and sometimes even within the publications of a single writer.<sup>82</sup> This kind of internal heterogeneity is far from rare in pre-standardized written vernaculars more broadly. The variation can be seen in two main ways: (1) the degree of reliance on Turkish lexical borrowings and (2) the degree of reliance on Classical Armenian grammatical features. While the books published in Constantinople show an unselfconscious openness to borrowings from Turkish in their Civil Armenian, Turkish borrowings are entirely absent from Mekhitar’s Civil Armenian.<sup>83</sup> “Purity” of language, in other words, does not appear to have been a concern for Civil Armenian writers in Constantinople, likely because—unlike Mekhitar—they did not see borrowings as the embodiment of social fragmentation or Classical Armenian as a remedy for it. Instead, not yet influenced by a purist ideology, they use a lexicon in their Civil Armenian that more closely approximates the lexicon of

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<sup>82</sup> The Eastern and Western forms of Civil Armenian can be most neatly exemplified, respectively, by two grammar books: Johannes Joachim Schröder, *Արսանեսն լեզուին զանձ/Thesaurus linguae armenicae, antiquae et hodiernae* (Amsterdam: n.p., 1711), 299-370 and Մխիթար Սեբաստացի, *Գունն քերականութեան աշխարհաբար լեզուին հայոց* (Venice: Ի սպարանի Անդոնի Պօռթօլի, 1727). In his preface, Mekhitar describes the form of Armenian used in his grammar book as spoken by Armenians in Asia Minor. For an English translation of the preface, see Aslanian, “Prepared in the Language,” 85-86. The aforementioned grammar book taught Civil Armenian through Armeno-Turkish. Mekhitar composed a similar book that taught Civil Armenian through Civil Armenian, which was published posthumously by Fr. Nerses Der-Nersessian more than two centuries later. See Մխիթար Սեբաստացի, “Քերականութիւն աշխարհաբար լեզուին հայոց,” *Բազմալէս* 137, no. 1-4 (1979): 195-262.

<sup>83</sup> Mackridge notices a similar lack of “inhibitions about using loanwords, which are treated as being an integral part of the language” in Phanariot Greek writing in Constantinople in the eighteenth century. Peter Mackridge, “Borrowing and Code-Switching in Eighteenth-Century Phanariot Greek,” *Mediterranean Language Review* 28 (2021): 2.

the spoken variety of Constantinople, without apologizing for it or justifying it as we often see when borrowings are used among Mekhitarist writers.<sup>84</sup>

Civil Armenian publications also varied by the extent to which they relied on Classical Armenian grammatical features (case endings, prepositions, etc.). Given that nearly all writers at this time emphasized the *unintelligibility* of Classical Armenian to the general populace, relying largely on the grammar of an admittedly unintelligible language form raises questions about how intelligible Civil Armenian indeed was to readers. Writers often made use of non-classical verb forms in their writing, but these verbs are sometimes the only indication that we are reading a Civil Armenian text. Was this small change enough to render a piece of writing “easily intelligible,” as writers who penned Civil Armenian texts so often described their work? If the degree of familiarity with Classical Armenian grammar needed to understand Civil Armenian did indeed exist at the start of the eighteenth century, did it fade as the decades passed and lead to the obsolescence of the language form by the end of the century? These questions do not yet have clear answers but may nonetheless help us to contextualize the emergence of a distinct, non-classical written form of Armenian in the last quarter of the eighteenth century that swiftly replaced Civil Armenian. This form was based not on the grammar of the classical language but rather on the grammar of the variety of Armenian spoken in the Ottoman capital of Constantinople. This is a form that I call the *purified vernacular*.

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<sup>84</sup> We can see this openness to borrowings in the eighteenth-century Civil Armenian of Constantinople as mirroring Middle Armenian, another non-classical written form that, as Michael Pifer shows, brimmed unproblematically with loanwords from Arabic, Persian and Turkish in the medieval period. Pifer, *Kindred Voices*, 135-137.

## *Engineering the Purified Vernacular*

In the small body of research on this period in the history of Armenian, scholars have not drawn a distinction between Civil Armenian and the purified vernacular.<sup>85</sup> Instead, many have taken the use of Civil Armenian from the mid-1600s through to 1840 and have only vaguely—if at all—addressed the stark differences in language form between the beginning and end this period.<sup>86</sup> There was, however, a major change afoot in the last three decades of the eighteenth century. All of a sudden, without fanfare and without explanation, Civil Armenian disappeared from print and the terms that had been used to describe it—աշխարհաբար and աշխարհորէն—were applied to a different written form.<sup>87</sup> While Civil Armenian had been, in the words of the noted linguist Gevorg Jahukyan, “distanced from its spoken foundations” through its use of classical grammar, the purified vernacular was built upon these spoken foundations.<sup>88</sup> Gone were many—but not all—of the classical case endings; gone were many—but, again, not all—of the classical prepositions; gone was the flexible classical syntax.<sup>89</sup> What remained was a new intermediate variety in which we can find the raw material for the Western Armenian written

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<sup>85</sup> For a series of excerpts that illustrate the diversity in written vernacular forms of Armenian between 1358 and 1833, see Աճառյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2, 441-470.

<sup>86</sup> Parnassian, “On the Formation of Ashkharhabar,” 67; Աճառյան, *Գրական արևմտահայերենի ձևափոխումը*, 10-12 and Գ[ևորգ] Բ. Չախուկյան, *Չրոյցներ հայոց լեզվի մասին* (Yerevan: Կանչ, 1992), 93; While Nichanian admits that non-classical writing gradually “conformed more and more to spoken language,” he does not draw a distinction between Civil Armenian and the purified vernacular. Nichanian, *Áges et usages*, 279.

<sup>87</sup> As Ishkhanyan notes, these Armenian terms, particularly աշխարհաբար, have been used haphazardly since the fifteenth century to describe all written forms of Armenian that that were not Classical Armenian. Ռաֆայել Ա. Իշխանյան, *Նոր գրական հայերենը XVII-XVIII դարերում* (Yerevan: Երևանի համալսարանի հրատարակչություն, 1979), 14-15. In 1781, we see the purified vernacular called հայկական աշխարհաբար, perhaps as a nod to its absence of borrowings, but this term was not widely used. *Նոր այբբենարան հանդերձ մեկնությունք տաճկական բառից՝ հայկական աշխարհաբար լեզուսու* (Trieste: Ի տպարանի հարց Մխիթարեանց, 1781).

<sup>88</sup> Չախուկյան, *Չրոյցներ*, 93.

<sup>89</sup> It should be noted that these changes were not uniform or immediate. Depending on the writer and text, certain classical grammatical features could still be found in the early years of the purified vernacular’s use.

standard, raw material that would be shaped and reshaped by waves of intellectuals with different ideological ends over the course of the nineteenth century.

The purified vernacular emerged in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and gained momentum in the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>90</sup> To be clear, at this time the Mekhitarist congregation, as Nichanian underscores, “did not intend to reform, to improve, to transform or even to ennoble the ‘vulgar’ language in order to turn it into a literary language.”<sup>91</sup> Writers of the purified vernacular at this time did not herald its use as any kind of promising innovation but instead described it first and foremost as an unfortunate matter of necessity.<sup>92</sup> In a telling letter from 1797, we can feel the sense of resignation and tension in the mind of the Mekhitarist monk Mikayel Chamchian between reaching readers through a vernacular form and furthering the congregation’s larger project through Classical Armenian: “I know that producing in the vernacular [աշխարհաբան] seems contrary to our objective,” he wrote to the abbot of the congregation, “but since the era demands it, we dare to do it, and in changing things, we change our style. Let us do such work, let the members of our public not be abandoned and let us keep our knowledge standing.”<sup>93</sup> It bears emphasizing that the purified vernacular was not an all-purpose medium of written expression. The Mekhitarist Congregation continued to produce most of its work in Classical Armenian. Limited in its uses, the purified vernacular was confined nearly

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<sup>90</sup> For an overview of the early purified vernacular work of the Mekhitarists, including information about its main writers and samples of their writing, see Բարսեղ Սարգիսեան, *Երկհարիւրամեայ գրականական գործունէութիւն եւ նշանաւոր գործիչներ* (Venice: Ս. Ղազար, 1905), 131-143.

<sup>91</sup> Nichanian, “Enlightenment and Historical Thought,” 120.

<sup>92</sup> See, for example, Ալգերեան, *Ղեղ կենսագ*, 311-312.

<sup>93</sup> Cited in Սահակ Ճեմնեմեան, “Սուրբ Ղազարի տպարանին ծնունդը, 1789-1989,” part 2, *Բազմալէս* 148, no. 3-4 (1990): 269.

exclusively at this time to the Congregation’s schoolbooks, devotional books and periodicals.<sup>94</sup> Like materials in Civil Armenian, purified vernacular materials were written with a particular readership in mind. As we see emblazoned on many of their covers, these books were intended for children and the “simple-minded” (միամիտք or պարզամիտք), a common term at the time—much harsher in English translation—used to denote adults unversed in Classical Armenian.

As we saw in the introduction, there have been periodic debates in Armenian-language scholarship over whether the Constantinople variety of Armenian indeed constituted the basis for standard Western Armenian. Some have argued that the spoken Armenian of Constantinople differed too dramatically in its grammar and lexicon to be considered its source and instead hypothesized Civil Armenian as its source.<sup>95</sup> Again, what I am proposing here is *not* that the basis for standard Western Armenian was the Armenian of Constantinople *exactly as it was spoken* in the late eighteenth century. Rather, I am proposing that the basis for standard Western Armenian is the *purified vernacular*, an engineered intermediate variety that replaced Civil Armenian and assumed its functions. This intermediate variety relied on the spoken language of the capital to supply it with its grammar and syntax but relied on Classical Armenian to supply it with the bulk of its vocabulary.<sup>96</sup> What resulted was a *quasi-vernacular*—initially used exclusively in print—that shared features with but was distinct from the spoken variety of Constantinople. The

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<sup>94</sup> Two of the rare exceptions are history books: Մինաս Բժշկեան, *Պատմություն Պոնտոսի որ է Սեաւ ծով* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1819) and Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան, *Դարասպատում* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1824-1827). Even Pjshgian’s translation of Robinson Crusoe, which is sometimes referred to as a literary translation, was the *pedagogical* version of the story chosen “to whet children’s appetites and to encourage them to learn things and to be virtuous by following the example of Robinson’s life.” *Պատմություն վարուց Ռօսկէնսօնին Քոլիզօէ ՚ի իրաստ եւ ՚ի կրթություն մանկանց*, trans. Մինաս Բժշկեան (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1817), 3.

<sup>95</sup> Չահուկյան, *Չրոյցներ*, 93 and Sayeed and Vaux, “The Evolution of Armenian,” 1149.

<sup>96</sup> Both Achemyan and Adjarian consider the Constantinople variety of Armenian as the grammatical basis of standard Western Armenian. Աճեմյան, *Գրական արևմտահայերենի ձևալորումը*, 101 and Հրաչյա Աճառյան, *Քննությունն սղոսասիայ բարբառի* (Yerevan: Պետական համալսարանի հրատարակչություն, 1941), 8.

inaugurators and exclusive practitioners of the purified vernacular in its first three decades of use were the monks of the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Congregations of Venice, Trieste and Vienna, giving them unparalleled power in dictating the norms and shaping these uses and ideologies for this new variety of the language.

How can we know with confidence that these monks selected the spoken language of Constantinople as the basis of the purified vernacular? Here we must defer to a series of comments made by its first writers, who are explicit in their reliance on this spoken variety of the language. In the earliest purified vernacular texts, the complexities of selecting a spoken basis weigh heavily on the minds of their authors, aware that Armenian was spoken “very differently in almost every city or every region.”<sup>97</sup> These monks wrote of wanting the form they chose to be comprehensible to as many readers as possible, but, after grappling with the diversity of spoken varieties, they concluded that it would be impossible to make use of each one in a single book and chose instead to write in “the understandable idiom [բարբառ] of the Armenians of Constantinople.”<sup>98</sup> The perceived intelligibility of the purified vernacular certainly had to do with the origins of its first writers, nearly all of whom hailed from the capital.<sup>99</sup> Biased in favor of their own native dialect, they justified it—however dubiously—by asserting that it was “closer to the original Armenian of Armenia” and that it was understandable even to the faraway Armenians of Persia.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>97</sup> Միւրմէլեան, *Հանառօտ թուարբանութիւն աշխարհաբար*, 3.

<sup>98</sup> Եղիա Թովմանանեան, *Գպրութիւն նամակաց ՚ի լեզու գրաբար եւ աշխարհաբար* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1805), Ե.

<sup>99</sup> For a list of monks and their region of origin, see “Միխրթարեան ամբողջ հարք,” *Բազմապէլեց* 59 (1901): 216-226. This issue was a supplement (յաւելում) published on August 15.

<sup>100</sup> Յովհաննէս Չօրապեան, *Պատմութիւն աստուածաշունչ գրոց հին եւ նոր կոտակարանաց* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1803), 4. It is important to note that the Armenian variety of Constantinople was regarded by others as being particularly far from the “original Armenian of Armenia” and was in this way seen as “erroneous.” See, for example, Jacques-Chahan de Cirbied, *Grammaire de la langue arménienne*, vol. 2 (Paris: Imprimerie Éverat, 1823), 741.

we also know that Constantinople served as one of the Mekhitarists' largest book markets, which was also likely a factor in this spoken variety being selected.<sup>101</sup> After the first decade of the nineteenth century, there was little discussion of the regional basis of the purified vernacular. The Constantinople variety of Armenian was taken as a given, used even by writers who hailed from outside the capital and presumably spoke another variety of Armenian in their daily lives.<sup>102</sup> In this way, this regional variety quietly became the enduring informal written norm for non-classical publications intended for Ottoman Armenians in the nineteenth century.

Writers at this time readily acknowledged that the way they were writing was *not* simply a transcription of spoken language. It was, in their parlance, “polished” (կոկաժ) or “purified of its foreign parts.”<sup>103</sup> What, one might ask, was considered so ‘unrefined’ and ‘foreign’ about the spoken variety of Constantinople? Here is where we begin to see the significance of the *purified* in the *purified vernacular*. The body of evidence that we have of spoken language from this period shows that the variety of Constantinople was, like many minimally standardized language forms, open to “enrichment from all sources” and replete with borrowings, particularly from Turkish.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Djemdjemian has illustrated how Constantinople was a major hub for selling Mekhitarist books in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In particular, he shows us the degree to which monks stationed in the city were keeping tabs on reader tastes and bookseller habits and were reporting back about them to the monastery in Venice. See Սահակ Ճեմճեմեան, “Սուրբ Ղազարի տպարանին ծնունդը, 1789-1989,” part 1, *Բազմալէզ* 147, no. 1-4 (1989): 7-36 and Ճեմճեմեան, “Սուրբ Ղազարի տպարանին ծնունդը,” part 2, 259-273.

<sup>102</sup> Among these monks we find most notably Minas Pjshgian from the region of Trebizond and the brothers Mgrdich and Haroutiun Avkerian (known as Baptiste and Pascal Aucher in European sources) from the region of Ankara.

<sup>103</sup> Գրիգոր Խապարանեան, “Առ պերճապայծառ եւ իմաստախորի միաբան պարոնայս,” *Դիտակ քիզանդեան* 1, no. 1 (1812): 5 and Թովմանանեան, *Դպրոթիւն նամակաց*, Ե. As a general note, book prefaces, titles of articles—like this one—and titles of books during this period were often composed in Classical Armenian even if the text to follow was in Civil Armenian or the purified vernacular. This is a convention that lasted well into the nineteenth century.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 116. Illustrating the intensity with which purism was later espoused, even the noted twentieth-century linguist Hratchia Adjarian once described this form as a “Turkish jargon that disgusted thinking people” and that was “unworthy of being called a language.” His sentiments were far from unique. Աճառյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2, 471.

At the time, this “chimera” of Constantinople and those of other regions were called *նամկոբէն*, defined contemporaneously as “spoken Armenian mixed with Turkish” (*աշխարհաբարսն մը տանկերէնով խառն*).<sup>105</sup> As Mekhitar himself wrote in 1749, “It is common for common people [*նամիկ*] to speak in an Armenian mixed with [foreign] words and act as if they are Armenian words.”<sup>106</sup> The greatest testament to this degree of language contact is a dictionary published by the congregation in 1769.<sup>107</sup> This work—intended not to codify spoken language but to guide readers to Classical Armenian— includes two sections that offer us rare insight into language practices in the capital in the mid-eighteenth century: a glossary of spoken language to Classical Armenian and a glossary of Classical Armenian to spoken language.<sup>108</sup> Here we can see the kinds of words that made up the spoken lexicon: (1) words attested in Classical Armenian literary production (with the same or different meanings); (2) words considered Armenian but *unattested* in Classical Armenian literary production (e.g. *սկնայ*); (3) words whose current forms differed slightly from the classical form (e.g., *աժող* versus *արժող*; *կանաչ* versus *կանանչ*);<sup>109</sup> and (4) borrowings, mainly from or via Turkish.<sup>110</sup> It is by examining these glossaries that we can see the stark differences in vocabulary between the *spoken* variety of Constantinople and the *written*

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<sup>105</sup> Աւգերեան, *Ղեղ կենսաց*, 310.

<sup>106</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 1, 19.

<sup>107</sup> *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 2. The lexicographer notes that he is making use of the spoken Armenian of Constantinople in his preface. See *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 2., 12. We also find evidence of the spoken language of Constantinople in a series of translation exercises in contemporaneous grammar books. These exercises can offer linguists some insight into features of language contact with Turkish beyond the lexical level. Չամչեան, *Քերականութիւն հայկազեան լեզուի*, 584-591.

<sup>108</sup> Each of the four sections of the dictionary is paginated separately. The glossaries make up its final two sections.

<sup>109</sup> For examples of such words, see *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 2, 15 and Մխիթար Սեբաստացի, “Քերականութիւն աշխարհաբար լեզուին հայոց,” 233.

<sup>110</sup> This breakdown is adapted from Elias Riggs, *A Vocabulary of Words Used in Modern Armenian but Not Found in the Ancient Armenian Lexicons* (Smyrna: W. Griffitt, 1847), iii-iv.

purified vernacular. While the former exhibits substantial language contact with Turkish at the lexical level, most of that contact is absent in the latter.

It is difficult to pinpoint with certainty when Armenian language contact with Turkish began. Since the eleventh century, there had been waves of migration from Turkic-speaking peoples, which led to contact-induced language change in Armenian varieties throughout the region to varying degrees.<sup>111</sup> When studying contact situations, linguists measure the intensity of language contact by looking, among other features, at borrowings of basic and non-basic vocabulary.<sup>112</sup> In the glossaries, we find an abundance of both types. Over the course of their contact with Turkish, Armenian speakers in the capital had incorporated Turkish words not only to describe non-basic new, borrowed or abstract concepts, such as governance terms, professions and country names, but they also replaced basic vocabulary like certain body parts, nature terms, food words and animal names with Turkish equivalents.<sup>113</sup> Given that borrowings are adopted often not only to fill a gap in a lexicon but also for reasons of prestige and for other factors relating to speakers' language attitudes and given that words for such items indeed existed in classical and other forms of Armenian before contact began, the extent of Turkish borrowings in spoken Armenian *before* any purist language ideology took hold raises fascinating questions about the possible prestige value of Turkish among Armenians in early modern Constantinople.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Աճառեաւն, *Թուրքերէնէ վոխստեալ բառերը*, 1-4.

<sup>112</sup> Thomason, *Language Contact*, 70-71. See also Anthony P. Grant, "Contact-Induced Linguistic Change: An Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Language Contact*, ed. Anthony P. Grant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1-47 and Yaron Matras, "Borrowing," in *Language Contact: An International Handbook*, vol. 1, eds. Jeroen Darquennes, Joseph C. Salmons and Wim Vandebussche (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2019), 148-158.

<sup>113</sup> As Nir Shafir notes, this integration of Turkish terms was a feature of a panoply of languages, including Greek and Arabic, spoken by Ottoman subjects during the early modern period, "often covering terminology related to public life in the city: commercial goods found in the marketplace, e.g., types of food and fabric, occupations, buildings, and aspects of the military." Nir Shafir, "Phanariot Tongues: The Mavrocordatos Family and the Power of the Turkish Language in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *Oriente Moderno* 101 (2021): 182.

<sup>114</sup> Yaron Matras, *Language Contact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 161-165.

Using borrowings in spoken language did not end in the years or even decades after the purified vernacular emerged as a print language. Not only did the Congregation republish part of these glossaries in 1831 and produce a similar one in 1869, attesting to their belief in these works' continued relevance for speakers, but we also see a similar number of Turkish borrowings in a dictionary of spoken Armenian compiled in 1847 for American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire whose evangelizing work depended largely on their ability to deftly wield spoken language.<sup>115</sup> “The object of this [glossary] is not to teach what *should* be used, even in the language of conversation, but to explain what actually is used,” the missionary lexicographer Elias Riggs noted to explain the large number of borrowings included.<sup>116</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, Hrachia Adjarian, one of the foremost Armenian linguists, counted approximately 4,200 lexical borrowings from Turkish and about 860 from other languages in the spoken variety of the capital.<sup>117</sup> By that time, however, nearly all traces of language contact with Turkish had been excised from the print language as the purist ideology inaugurated during this early period intensified, diversified and became a defining feature of written language use. This century of evidence illustrates the gap that this ideology created between spoken and written language practices, particularly those in Constantinople, and lends credence to the notion that the purified vernacular was indeed an *intermediate* variety of Armenian existing in the space between Classical

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<sup>115</sup> The Congregation republished the classical to spoken section at the back of a new edition of Chamchian's grammar. See Միքայել Չամչեան, *Քերականություն հայկազգեան լեզուի* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1831); [Եղուարդ Հիւրմիզ], *Բառգիրք յաշխարհաբարտէ ի գրաբար* (Venice: Ի տպարանի սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1869) and Riggs, *A Vocabulary*.

<sup>116</sup> Riggs, *A Vocabulary*, iv. Emphasis in the source.

<sup>117</sup> On Turkish borrowings, see Անատեան, *Թուրքերէնէ փոխառեալ բառերը*, 9. On borrowings from Italian, French, English, German, Hungarian, Spanish and Russian, see Հրաչեայ Անատեան, *Եւրոպական փոխառեալ բառեր հայերէնի մէջ* (Vienna: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1951), 12.

Armenian and the spoken dialect of Constantinople. It was not simply a transcription of spoken language.

### **Archaize the Vernacular-Based Form to Teach Them**

In its first decades, the purified vernacular was used primarily as a teaching tool in service of the Mekhitarist Congregation's greatest ambitions: to spread their humanist Classical Armenian and, through it, to unify Armenians across confession and geography. Having rid Classical Armenian of its "twisted forms," the monks turned their attention to creating a purified vernacular infused with the words they had excavated from the 'forebears,' using them to replace the familiar Turkish borrowings in the Armenian dialect of Constantinople and thus offering a stepping stone to the classical language for those unversed in it. In this way, we can understand the invention of the purified vernacular as an extension of humanist Classical Armenian and a transposition of its ideals about what constitutes 'purity' onto a different variety of Armenian. It was, to be clear, the Classical Armenian found in the 'forebear canon' that became the ultimate reference point for purists in determining what words was 'correct' and 'desirable' for the purified vernacular.

While we have evidence of some of the earliest writers of the purified vernacular using the spoken language of Constantinople—complete with its borrowings—in their handwritten correspondence, the Mekhitarists generally had little tolerance for it in print.<sup>118</sup> There was the sense among them that it was an "absurd" practice and a source of embarrassment that highlighted the

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<sup>118</sup> In this way, we could adapt Joshua A. Fishman's famous question, used in the examination of language practices in multilingual societies, to ask "who *writes in* what language *variety* to whom and when?" to understand their choice of language variety for different audiences and contexts. Joshua A. Fishman, "Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When?" *La Linguistique* 1, no. 2 (1965): 67-88. For samples of the range of Armenian varieties used by Mekhitarist monks in the early to mid-eighteenth century, ՂԵՆՆԷ ՏԱՅԵԱՆ, *Մայր դիւան Մխիթարեանց Վենետիկի ի Ս. Ղազար, 1707-1773* (Venice: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1930).

speakers’ “ignorance and love of novelty.”<sup>119</sup> But, at their core, borrowings were seen as dangerous, standing in the way of social cohesion in a very practical way. The Mekhitarists saw borrowings as regionally specific and impeding pan-Armenian communication in print, thereby contributing to rather than combatting cultural fragmentation.<sup>120</sup> For the Mekhitarists, not using Turkish borrowings allowed their Civil Armenian and their purified vernacular publications to— at least theoretically—be understood by all Armenians.<sup>121</sup> As one Mekhitarist writer wrote in 1803 in the preface of his purified vernacular book,

... We saw to it that [the text] would be in pure [զուր] Armenian, without foreign words mixed into it, like Turkish or Persian or French (as nowadays our scattered people, when it lives with other peoples, has slowly taken elements from their language and mixed them into Armenian), which has damaged our spoken language [աշխարհաբար լեզու], and thus has changed it in such a way that one local person has trouble understanding what someone from another place is saying. For this reason, we tried for it not to be this way, so that as much as possible everyone can understand... wherever the spoken language was lacking, there we used Classical Armenian...<sup>122</sup>

Classical Armenian, in the minds of the Mekhitarists, was neutral, common to all and a way to overcome variation in spoken usage.<sup>123</sup> In this way, we can start to see how archaizing purism and a purist language ideology more generally emerged out of the larger Mekhitarist project and the Congregation’s particular conceptualization of Classical Armenian as a cohesive force.

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<sup>119</sup> We find the “absurd” (անսեղի) moniker on the cover of Մկրտիչ Աւգերեան, *Բարի խորհուրդներ* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1809) and Իզնատիոս Փափագեան, *Գիրք քաղաքավարութեան* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1806), 57-58.

<sup>120</sup> Թովմանեան, *Գործոթիւն նամակաց*, Ե.

<sup>121</sup> Djemdjemian writes that Mekhitar’s 1727 Civil Armenian catechism was sent for free or at a low cost across “the East” to propagate the faith. In this way, Turkish borrowings may have stood in the way of comprehension and the dissemination of his message. Սահակ Ճեմնեան, *Մխիթար արքայապետի հրատարակչական առաքելութիւնը* (Venice: Ս. Ղազար, 1980), 318.

<sup>122</sup> Զօհրապեան, *Պատմութիւն սատուածաշունչ*, 4.

<sup>123</sup> *Բաղդիրք հայկազեան լեզուի*, vol. 1, 6.

But while the Mekhitarists imagined Classical Armenian as a unifier, they were, once again, aware of the *practical* reality that few Armenians had a grasp of it.<sup>124</sup> The notion repeated throughout this period in Mekhitarist texts—that Classical Armenian was “common to all”—needs to be understood as *aspirational* above all else. To realize this aspiration, the Mekhitarists created resources that would help readers make the leap from their spoken varieties of Armenian to the classical language. The series of Mekhitarist grammars and dictionaries all served this purpose, highlighted by the fact that nearly all of them included glosses or explanations in the spoken language to help bridge the gap for readers. It is also in this light that we should see the purified vernacular and its archaizing orientation: as a bridge to Classical Armenian and an auxiliary to other Mekhitarist teaching tools that aimed at spreading the humanist Classical Armenian of the ‘forebears’ and ultimately securing the sense of unity that it was seen as promising.<sup>125</sup>

Drawing on the lexical stores of a classical language in the task of ‘purification’ is known as archaizing purism and is a common approach taken in language communities with “culturally associated” classical variants.<sup>126</sup> As Joshua Fishman shows, we see this relationship between modern Arabic and Classical Arabic, Hindi and Sanskrit, Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew, among others.<sup>127</sup> In all of these contexts, including ours, archaizing purism is characterized by “an attempt to resuscitate the linguistic material of a past golden age, an exaggerated respect for past

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<sup>124</sup> Nichanian, “Enlightenment and Historical Thought,” 120.

<sup>125</sup> As Teodora Shek Brnardić shows, Jesuits in the Kingdom of Hungary in the late eighteenth century also had a Christian humanist orientation that saw a vernacular as serving “only as an auxiliary means for understanding and imitating classical texts written in pure Latin used in the Golden Age of Latin literature.” Teodora Shek Brnardić, “The Enlightenment’s Choice of Latin: The *Ratio Educationis* of 1777 in the Kingdom of Hungary,” in *Latin at the Crossroads of Identity: The Evolution of Linguistic Nationalism in the Kingdom of Hungary*, eds. Gábor Almási and Lav Šubarić (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 149-150.

<sup>126</sup> Joshua A. Fishman, “Ethnicity and Supra-Ethnicity in Corpus Planning: The Hidden Status Agenda in Corpus Planning,” *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 1-2 (2004): 87.

<sup>127</sup> Fishman, “Ethnicity and Supra-Ethnicity,” 87.

literary models, an excessive conservatism towards innovations or a recognition of the importance of literary tradition.”<sup>128</sup> It is, in other words, premised on the idea that a language is a singular entity that evolves (or, from the perspective of purists, *devolves*) over centuries; that purity can be found in the past; that language change is a corruption and a deviation from an earlier model of perfection; and that wayward contemporary usage can and should be improved by being drawn closer to the classical language.

In contemporaneous Mekhitarist idiom, archaizing purism was described as bringing spoken language closer to Classical Armenian.<sup>129</sup> Though the purified vernacular was indeed stripped of its familiar borrowings and drawn closer lexically to Classical Armenian, Mekhitarist writers did not leave readers unfamiliar with classical words in the lurch. Drawing on a strategy used widely by purists across time and space, they included the borrowing alongside the classical word “as an aid to recognition and memory.”<sup>130</sup> Directly acknowledging the unfamiliarity of Classical Armenian, these glosses served as teaching tools to introduce readers to ‘pure’ language, because as one writer notes in 1806, “I know very well that the great majority would not be able to understand the Armenian if the same words in Turkish were not there.”<sup>131</sup>

It should be emphasized that the removal of lexical borrowings from purified vernacular materials was gradual, unsystematic and idiosyncratic.<sup>132</sup> These qualities are not rare in the early

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<sup>128</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 76.

<sup>129</sup> Իսաչատուր Սիւրմէլեան, *Հանառոտ թուարանութիւն աշխարհաբար* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1817), 3.

<sup>130</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 96.

<sup>131</sup> Յովակիմ Օղուլուխեան, *Նիւթ բժշկական* (Venice: n.p., 1806), 5. On the history of this text, see Stella A. Vardanian, *Histoire de la médecine en Arménie : de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, trans. Raymond H. Kévorkian (Paris: L'Européenne d'éditions, 1999), 226-231.

<sup>132</sup> Contemporary readers of Armenian might also notice that during this period the purified vernacular included both words from the Constantinople variety of Armenian and words that reflected contemporaneous pronunciation rather than classical norms—իրեք (rather than կրեք), մենծ (rather than մնծ), etc.—as well as grammatical elements (կոր,

histories of purist movements in which norms are not yet established and spoken languages are only just beginning to be subjected to regulation.<sup>133</sup> In the Armenian context, language at this time had not yet become the preeminent symbol of any kind of ‘national’ identity, nor was the purified vernacular yet seen as worthy of careful cultivation on the path to standardization. In this way, borrowings did sometimes appear in the purified vernacular in the first decades of use, resulting from a tension in the minds of writers between using words familiar to readers (i.e., borrowings) and replacing those borrowings with unfamiliar Classical Armenian that would serve their pedagogical purpose. “My intention here is not to teach this language,” one monk wrote frankly about his borrowing-laden purified vernacular. “It is to make things understood.”<sup>134</sup> This tension created a subset of purified-vernacular writing that, to the modern eye, may not look very “purified” at all. Depending on the writer, these texts continued to include a light to moderate sprinkling of borrowings that were used unselfconsciously and seemingly haphazardly in a way that would be unthinkable to writers only a few decades later.

There was a sense among some writers early on that using Turkish borrowings could help comprehension. In 1788, the writer of one of the earliest purified-vernacular publications writes of making use of Turkish words in practical terms as “they were comprehensible to almost everyone.”<sup>135</sup> As knowledge of Turkish was widespread, Turkish borrowings were drawn upon to

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նէ, etc.) that were later deemed impure and expunged from the vernacular-based print-language. The same goes for words in the Constantinople variety of Armenian that were later replaced with classical words in standard Western Armenian, such as ինչվան (ինչեւ) and բալլիք (բանալի).

<sup>133</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 116-117.

<sup>134</sup> Աւգերեան, *Ղեղ կենսագ*, 310.

<sup>135</sup> Միւրմէլեան, *Համառոտ թուարանութիւն աշխարհարար* (1788), 3. We see the same justification used by other contemporaneous writers, including a Mekhitarist grammarian who explains his inclusion of Turkish glosses alongside Classical Armenian words in his grammar book by saying that they are “used by all Ottoman Armenians [gli Armeni Ottomani], many of whom are ignorant of Classical Armenian,” pointing to the practical use of Turkish as a lingua franca among Ottoman Armenians. Գարրիէլ Աւետիքեան, *Զերպականութիւն թուրանեան լեզուի* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1792), Դ.

transcend regional differences in Armenian vocabulary. This belief in the practical utility of borrowings, however, does not last long. In the span of just under thirty years an archaizing purist ideology had intensified and these same borrowings—useful to Armenians within the Ottoman Empire—were considered too much of a barrier to cultural cohesion among Armenians beyond the Empire and across Eurasia to perpetuate. Thus, in the reprint of his book in 1817, the writer himself notes that he deliberately removed the Turkish borrowings from his first edition and replaced them with their Classical Armenian equivalents so that his book would be “understandable to many.”<sup>136</sup>

It bears repeating that archaizing purism was not an inevitability. It was a choice, a choice made by a congregation with certain interests to further. The reason that the Mekhitarist writers in the late eighteenth century did not locate purity in, for example, in the contemporaneous language practices of rural Armenians (ethnographic purism), in the contemporaneous language practices of the social elite (elitist purism) or even why they felt the need to purify spoken language before putting it to print in the first place was due to the particular objectives of their Congregation at that time. Let us turn our attention now to examining the first purified vernacular texts to understand how the archaizing approach to purism was first expressed, justified and used in service of easing the acquisition of humanist Classical Armenian among children and adults.

### **Early Purified Vernacular Materials: Schoolbooks and Periodicals**

The earliest purified-vernacular materials all served a pedagogical function and were used implicitly and explicitly as teaching tools. We will look below at two sets of materials for two distinct readerships: schoolbooks for children and periodicals for adults. Once again, by no means did the Mekhitarists intend for the purified vernacular to usurp any of the social functions of the

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<sup>136</sup> Միլրմելեան, *Համառոտ թուարանութիւն աշխարհարան* (1817), 3.

classical language in the early 1800s or to become a prestigious written medium. For them, the purified vernacular was merely a means to an end, drawn upon to help children and adults bridge the gap between their spoken varieties and the classical language. Taking an archaizing approach to the new vernacular-based print-language thus helped facilitate their acquisition of humanist Classical Armenian by exposing them to its vocabulary gradually, incrementally and through a language form that was grammatically similar to spoken Armenian.

### ***Purified-Vernacular Schoolbooks, or Bridges to Classical Armenian***

The purified vernacular emerges and expands alongside the expansion of Mekhitarist educational initiatives in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Education had been a focus of the Congregation since its early years, even before Mekhitar and his first followers settled in Venice.<sup>137</sup> The Mekhitarist monks had run schools for boys and girls in Transylvania since the 1740s and also opened a school in Trieste in 1775.<sup>138</sup> But the number of purified vernacular materials increases dramatically once the Mekhitarists of Venice establish schools in Constantinople in 1803 and 1808.<sup>139</sup> A similar burst can be seen in the years following the establishment of another school in the capital in 1825, this time by the Congregation's Viennese branch.<sup>140</sup> These patterns and many of their prefaces point to—if not explicitly confirm—the use of these books in Mekhitarist schools as teaching tools, making the selection of the spoken variety

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<sup>137</sup> Nurikhan, *The Life and Times*, 192-193.

<sup>138</sup> For information on the Mekhitarist schools in the Transylvanian towns of Elisabethopolis, Varadin and Szépviz, see Բարսեղ Սարգիսեան, *Երկհարիւրամեայ կրթական գործունէութիւն Վենետիկի Մխիթարեան Միաբանութեան* (Venice: Մուրր Ղազար, 1936), 11-34. For information on the Mekhitarist school in Trieste, see Mari Kristin Arat, *Die Wiener Mechitharisten: Armenische Mönche in der Diaspora* (Vienna and Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1990), 187.

<sup>139</sup> For more on these schools, see Սարգիսեան, *Երկհարիւրամեայ կրթական գործունէութիւն*, 34-60. For a list of Ottoman-era Mekhitarist schools in English, see *The Colleges of the Mekhitarist Fathers of Venice and Their Work* (Venice: Mekhitarist Press, 1956), 11-13.

<sup>140</sup> Եփրեմ Պօղոսեան, *Համայնապատկեր Վիեննական Մխիթարեան հայրերու կրթական գործունէութեան*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Ժամանակ, 2008), 27.

of Constantinople as the basis for the purified vernacular all the more evident. In both cases, we find that some of the monks who wrote these purified vernacular materials were also principals and teachers in these schools.<sup>141</sup> In the case of the Venetian Mekhitarist school founded in 1803, we find instilling “an understanding of the written language” among the school’s three major objectives alongside fostering religious devotion and an understanding of arithmetic, geography and other subjects.<sup>142</sup> The purified vernacular would have helped them do just that—as a medium, however, not as a subject of explicit instruction.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, it would have been unfathomable for the grammar of any form of Armenian other than Classical Armenian to have been considered for formal instruction in schools.<sup>143</sup> As was the case elsewhere around the world at this time, it was generally accepted that only a *written* language was in possession of a grammar, which, as it was argued, required fixed, stable and consistent literary models of usage that only written, often classical, languages could boast.<sup>144</sup> Since all spoken forms were understood as nothing more than

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<sup>141</sup> Most notably, Minas Pjshgian was the founder and principal of the Venetian Mekhitarist school in the Constantinople neighborhood of Pera from 1808 to 1817. Սարգիսեան, *Երկհարիւրամեայ կրթական գործունէութիւն*, 44. From among the Viennese Mekhitarists, we find Vrtanes Chalekhian, a textbook writer and principal of the Viennese Mekhitarist school in Constantinople starting in 1829. Պօղոսեան, *Համայնապատկեր*, 37. Alongside their work in Mekhitarist schools, some monks also worked as private tutors for the children of wealthy Armenians in Constantinople and published purified-vernacular textbooks at the behest of their parents. For example, we see on the title page of Մինաս Բժշկեան, *Հնտութիւն մանկանց*, vol. 1 (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1818) that this four-volume textbook series was commissioned specifically for Diran Alexanian, the young scion of a wealthy family in the capital. His father, Hovhannes, also commissioned Մերոպ Աղայրաղեան, *Բնական օրէնք կամ կրթութիւն առ 'ի յիննդ բարի և սարկեշտ քաղաքացի* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1819). For information on the Alexanians, see Hagop L. Barsoumian, *The Armenian Amira Class of Istanbul* (Yerevan: American University of Armenia, 2007), 71-72, 157.

<sup>142</sup> Սարգիսեան, *Երկհարիւրամեայ կրթական գործունէութիւն*, 39.

<sup>143</sup> For comparison, it was only in 1834 that children in France were officially permitted to begin learning to read in French rather than in Latin. François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 138. Thank you to Sebouh Aslanian for this reference.

<sup>144</sup> Stephanie Hackert, *The Emergence of the English Native Speaker: A Chapter in Nineteenth-Century Linguistic Thought* (Boston and Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2012), 159, 171.

corruptions of the classical language, it would have been laughable for such a corruption to have a grammar of its own, let alone one that would be formally studied. To be clear, by no stretch of the imagination were writers or grammarians working to promote the *study* of non-classical forms of Armenian in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. They were simply a pedagogical resource.

We can understand the uptick in purified vernacular materials as a response to the desire to usher students toward Classical Armenian, the mastery of which was considered by the Congregation to be the only way to be truly literate in Armenian.<sup>145</sup> As one Mekhitarist writer of purified vernacular books wrote in 1810,

Among our people, where we want to help sacred and secular knowledge flourish through God, we must before all else try to open the door to literacy [գրագիտութիւն]. If the door is closed, how can it be opened? Obviously with a key. What is the key to written knowledge [գրոց գիտութիւն]? Obviously written language [գրոց լեզու], which is called Classical Armenian [գրաբան].<sup>146</sup>

Given the limited number of materials and small range of topics treated in the purified vernacular, the key to accessing a wider array of knowledge through Armenian was indeed Classical Armenian. The Mekhitarists were not trying to change this longstanding status quo for their students or any other readers of their books nor were they encouraging learning the purified vernacular for its own sake. Instead, they were unanimous in their insistence that all readers of the purified vernacular also learn the Classical Armenian and become used to reading it so that they could understand other books.<sup>147</sup> Among the “other books” that were the most important to them

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<sup>145</sup> At this time, Classical Armenian was often referred to simply as գրոց լեզու, or “the language of writing,” as though there could be no other. To many monks, therefore, literacy did not mean the ability to read *any form of Armenian* but the ability to read *Classical Armenian*.

<sup>146</sup> Աւագերեան, *Դեղ կենսաց*, 309.

<sup>147</sup> Նոր սյրբենարան հանդերձ մեկնութեամբ տաճկական բառից՝ հայկական աշխարհաբան լեզուաւ (Trieste: Ի տպարանի հարց Մխիթարեանց, 1797), 89.

were, unsurprisingly, those included in the forebear canon. Minas Pjshgian, for example, attempted to convince students to learn Classical Armenian by explaining that in so doing they would be able to “read the beautiful writings, histories and geographies of our forebears, become learned and delight in them like educated [նւնւմնաստէր] children.”<sup>148</sup>

The purified vernacular, in other words, was not intended to be the final destination on the path to literacy. It was intended to be a bridge to the classical language, a way for Mekhitarist writers to acquaint readers with it slowly. We can see this understanding of the purified vernacular in the handful of bilingual (purified vernacular/Classical Armenian) books of the time, one of which was described as a way for everyone, but especially schoolchildren “to become acquainted with the written language through comparison.”<sup>149</sup> We can also see this understanding in the emergence of grammars of Classical Armenian with explanations in the purified vernacular “for the needs of schoolchildren to learn easily.”<sup>150</sup> And, most significantly for our purposes, we see this understanding in the archaizing purist approach to borrowings, which, in the words of one Mekhitarist writer, “little by little opens the door for readers to Classical Armenian” by slowly exposing them to its lexicon.<sup>151</sup> The metaphors of “opening a door,” “opening the way” and offering a “gateway” or “key” to Classical Armenian were common in Mekhitarist discourse on

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<sup>148</sup> Բժշկեան, *Հմտությունն մանկանց*, vol. 1, 32.

<sup>149</sup> This quote can be found on the title page of Մկրտիչ Ալգերեան, *Բանաստեղծությունն չորս ետքերնուս վրայ* (Venice: Աբրային վանքը՝ Սուրբ Ղազար, 1810). Many purified vernacular books also include portions in Classical Armenian, such as prayers and Bible quotes. These were not translated into the purified vernacular.

<sup>150</sup> This quote appears on the cover of Գարրիել Ալեոիքեան, *Քերականություն հայկական* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1819). Subtitles on the covers of purified vernacular books during this period often offer revealing insight into their intended audiences and uses. Avedikian had penned a Classical Armenian grammar in 1815 that makes similar use of the purified vernacular, and we see a Viennese monk do the same within the decade. See Վրթանէս Չալրիսեան, *Քերականություն հայկազեան լեզուի* (Vienna: Ի տպարանի Մխիթարեան հարց, 1827).

<sup>151</sup> Զօհրապեան, *Պատմություն աստուածաշունչ*, 4.

the purified vernacular at this time.<sup>152</sup> The practical utility of both a vernacular-based print-language and an archaizing purist approach to it can best be summed up in a passage from a 1826 schoolbook penned by the prolific Viennese Mekhitarist writer and educator, Boghos Hovnanian:

...The reason that we are publishing vernacular [աշխարհաբար] books—starting with primers to help students grow accustomed to reading—is so that children first learn to read easily, since people read more easily books they understand than those they do not. Second, it quickly clears the path for them to learn Classical Armenian as well, since the cleaner [մաքուր] the vernacular [աշխարհաբար] the closer it is to Classical Armenian. It is for this reason that many Armenians who speak clean vernacular Armenian can easily understand Classical Armenian books. In these books, we tried to make use of a clean [մաքուր] and pure [զուտ] vernacular, so that children grow accustomed to it from a young age and have an aptitude for and ease with Classical Armenian as well.<sup>153</sup>

Through these schoolbooks, we can also easily discern how the purist language ideology was first expressed and spread. We have evidence as early as 1797 of purified-vernacular schoolbooks that taught children “not to mix in words from other languages,” initiating readers into the ideology of purism.<sup>154</sup> By the 1820s, this ideology had firmly taken root among intellectuals, who began initiating students into this approach to language more explicitly. Such an initiation can best be illustrated by a passage from an alphabet primer published in 1825. As a reading exercise in the earliest stage of their education, students were asked to sound out and read aloud the quasi-pledge below, broken down by syllable:

When I speak, I should not mix in fo-reign words, so that the lan-guage I am speaking is not mixed [խառնած], so that it is clean [մաքուր]. If there is a word that I do not know, I should ask my tea-cher and learn it so that I can speak well.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> These metaphors are in the vast majority of prefaces of purified vernacular books this time. The writer of a purified-vernacular geometry book, for example, describe it in his preface as “one necessary gateway or key to the Classical Armenian geometry book.” [Փափագեան], *Երկրաչափություն գործնական*, [1].

<sup>153</sup> Պօղոս Յովնանեան, *Վարժություն մանկանց ՚ի հրահանգս ընթերցանությունն եւ բարեկրթությունն* (Vienna: Ի սպարանի հարց Մխիթարեանց, 1826), 168-169. As the writer tells us, this book was specifically written for the students at the Viennese Mekhitarist school in Constantinople.

<sup>154</sup> *Նոր պրբենարան* (1797), 64.

<sup>155</sup> *Սկիզբն ընթերցանության հայկական տառից* (Vienna: Ի սպարանի հարց Մխիթարեանց, 1825), 11.

As the domains of the purified vernacular expanded so too did the symbolic significance of archaizing purism. But through the 1820s, archaizing purism stemmed from the practical needs of the Mekhitarist Congregation in achieving their broader goal: spreading humanist Classical Armenian among their students and among the wider populace.

### ***Purified-Vernacular Periodicals, or Bridges to Classical Armenian***

While the Mekhitarists had a captive audience among the children in their schools, they needed to be creative in their efforts to capture the attention of grown adults and convince them of the need to learn Classical Armenian. Here they focused their efforts, first and foremost, on Armenians in Constantinople.<sup>156</sup> But, rather than foisting schoolbooks onto general readers, the Mekhitarists attempted to lure them in with a new kind of publication in the history of Armenian print: the periodical.<sup>157</sup>

At the vanguard of developing the Armenian periodical as a genre and the purified-vernacular used in it we find a fiery Mekhitarist monk by the name of Ghougas Injijian (1758-1833).<sup>158</sup> A multilingual man with a voracious appetite for knowledge, Injijian was aware of the expansion of European reading publics in the second half of the eighteenth century. Across

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<sup>156</sup> Injijian names this readership specifically in [Ղուկաս Ինճինեան], *Եղևնակ բիզանդեան 1804* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1804), 4. We have evidence that Armenians in Transylvania also received *Seasons of Byzantium*, suggesting that the readership was larger than originally intended. Սարգիսեան, *Երկհարիւրամեայ գրականական գործունէութիւն*, 22.

<sup>157</sup> The position of the first Armenian-language periodical is reserved for *Ազդարար*, which was published from 1794 to 1796 in Madras, India. As far as we know, however, this periodical did not circulate widely among Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Unlike the Mekhitarist periodicals, the primary language of expression of this periodical was Classical Armenian, though certain pieces were rendered in the Armenian dialect of New Julfa. Գրիգորիս Գալէմբեարեան, *Պատմութիւն հայ լրագրութեան ի սկզբանէ մինչև մեր ժամանակը* (Vienna: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1893), 23-25.

<sup>158</sup> For a rare overview of Injijian's life and work, see Վ. Գ. Չարդարեան, *Յիշատակարան հայ երեսփոխանաց կենսագրութիւնները, լուսանկարները, ձեռագիրները, գրութիւնները եւլն.*, vol. 2 (1512-1912) (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Նշան-Պապիկեան, 1911), 374-376.

Western Europe, illiteracy was in decline, the number of readers was increasing and different kinds of publications were emerging for these new readerships.<sup>159</sup> One particularly popular genre in Western Europe was the periodical, which we see Injijian adopt in three iterations around the turn of the nineteenth century: the yearbook, the almanac and the newspaper. Aligning with the goals of the purified vernacular schoolbooks and published contemporaneously with them, these periodicals were conceived as a way to slowly initiate adults into the practice of reading. A vernacular-based written medium, therefore, was a tool in this larger project to reach readers through a theoretically accessible language before guiding them to Classical Armenian.

Injijian starts off slow in this pedagogical pursuit with his first periodical *Տարեգրություն*, or *Yearbook*.<sup>160</sup> Published between 1800 and 1803, *Yearbook* was, in its content, conceived as a way to curb the spread of misinformation among Armenians in Constantinople. Injijian describes a social milieu in the capital in which there was profound curiosity about the toppling of monarchies and the waves of revolutions across Europe in the last decade of the eighteenth century: “Everyone wants to know what happened in the world over these past few months,” he writes in 1800. “For this reason...many people are writing what they have heard about notable events. But many times, they are wrong.”<sup>161</sup> Capitalizing on a curiosity about Europe, Injijian fills his *Yearbook* with what he called “general information” (ընդհանուր տեղեկություն), or information about European politics, wars, discoveries, medicine, trade and church affairs, among other

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<sup>159</sup> Some scholars have argued that a “reading revolution” took place in parts of Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. Reinhard Wittmann, “Was There a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?” in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 284-312.

<sup>160</sup> In Armenian-language scholarship, there are discrepancies over the years of this publication. The issue stems from the fact that two years appear on the cover of each issue: the year of publication and the previous year under review in the issue. The first issue, for example, discussed events that took place 1799 and was published in 1800.

<sup>161</sup> [Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան], *Տարեգրություն 1799 տարւոյն* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1800), 7.

topics.<sup>162</sup> The focus is firmly on Europe. This focus does not mean, however, that Injijian does not find a way to implicitly tie his retelling of European current events to the local concerns of his readers. We can see this attempt, for example, in his meditation on the decline of Latin in Europe. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the number of publications in European vernacular languages had increased while the number of publications in Latin had decreased.<sup>163</sup> Injijian took note of these publishing trends and framed them as detrimental to communication across borders.<sup>164</sup> In this retelling, it is difficult not to draw a parallel between Latin and Classical Armenian and read an implicit justification for the continued use of Classical Armenian as the primary means of written expression among Armenians.<sup>165</sup>

In Injijian's almanac, *Եղանակ քիզանդեան*, or *Seasons of Byzantium*, there is a continuation of this fixation on European affairs and an even more explicit articulation of the periodical's intended use as a means to slowly but surely lead readers to Classical Armenian. Published between 1804 and 1820, the almanac began strictly as a source for weather predictions for the year to come, so that Armenians in Constantinople would not be “deprived of this amusing information” found in European almanacs.<sup>166</sup> Injijian was clear with readers about how he

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<sup>162</sup> [Ինճիճեան], *Տարեգրութիւն 1799 տարւոյն*, 9.

<sup>163</sup> James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 88-89.

<sup>164</sup> [Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան], *Տարեգրութիւն 1802 տարւոյն* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1802), 15-17. This issue has multiple sections, each paginated separately. This part can be found in the February section. Injijian develops this idea even more in his *Գարսապատում*, vol. 1 (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1824), 111-112. This is not the only instance of material from his *Yearbook* appearing years later, sometimes word for word, in his *Գարսապատում*. He clearly used it as a source.

<sup>165</sup> Injijian was not the only Mekhitarist monk at this time to lament the decline of Latin in Europe. In 1810, Mgrdich Avkerian expresses a similar sentiment that offers us insight into his implicit link between erudition and classical languages: “The West is more enlightened than the East in all wisdom and knowledge...even though they grew bored of their classical language and sank into the vernacular.” Ալգերեան, *Ղեղ կենսոց*, 312.

<sup>166</sup> [Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ քիզանդեան 1804*, 4.

conceived of *Seasons of Byzantium* as a teaching tool. He encouraged readers to view the almanac as a lesson book that they could use to practice reading at their own pace.<sup>167</sup> He was sympathetic to the novelty of reading for many Armenians and acknowledged that large tomes in Classical Armenian could seem difficult for the uninitiated.<sup>168</sup> It was to make learning as easily achievable and palatable as possible, in other words, that he presented to his readers a “small annual book.”<sup>169</sup> Though Injijian does not address the language form he chose for his almanac, we can nevertheless see it as an extension of the general pedagogical function of the purified vernacular. Catering to the capabilities of his readers, his use of the purified vernacular rather than Classical Armenian removed an initial obstacle to reading and, like the Mekhitarist schoolbooks, offered a bridge to an eventual acquisition of Classical Armenian—or so Injijian and his Mekhitarist contemporaries hoped.

For our purposes, some of the most eye-opening sections of *Seasons of Byzantium* are Injijian’s recurrent meditations on the state of reading among Armenians in Constantinople and the general resistance to the Mekhitarist project to spread Classical Armenian. These sections, which he calls his “Annual Advice on Love of Learning” (Խրատ սարեկան յաղագրութեան), began in 1809 and, as the years passed, devolved from sober-minded appeals to pleas to rants as he attempted different rhetorical strategies to persuade largely indifferent Armenians of the value of reading.<sup>170</sup> The desperate, almost breathless, tone of these sections suggests the radical shift in attitude and practice that Injijian was attempting to prompt

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<sup>167</sup> Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան, *Եղանակ քիզանդեան բազմավէյ 1815* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1815), 6.

<sup>168</sup> [Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ քիզանդեան բազմավէյ 1809* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1809), 4.

<sup>169</sup> [Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ քիզանդեան բազմավէյ 1809*, 4.

<sup>170</sup> For the first of these meditations, see [Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ քիզանդեան բազմավէյ 1809*, 3-11.

among his contemporaries: making readers and learners out of people who, in his words, had not yet recognized the necessity of knowledge.<sup>171</sup> Injijian spends much of these sections railing against the Armenians he encountered in Constantinople who believed that reading was not lucrative and that learning could not “fill the belly.”<sup>172</sup> He condemned these individuals for “staying up all night sitting around and wasting time” playing cards and gossiping when, unlike generations past, they had a panoply of books on different topics at their disposal.<sup>173</sup> “The world could be in your hands,” he wrote. “...What laziness! What ignorance!”<sup>174</sup>

Injijian was one of the few writers of the era to openly recognize how much of a challenge learning Classical Armenian posed to most Armenians. “One major reason why our people are behind in reading,” he wrote in 1815, “is because they do not understand Classical Armenian.”<sup>175</sup> Given its importance to the Mekhitarist project, he does not reconsider its preeminence as the sole legitimate form of written Armenian. Instead, in *Seasons of Byzantium*, he attempts to persuade readers of the value of Classical Armenian by describing the joys to be found in its literary tradition in hopes of whetting their appetite. He quite endearingly describes how opening a book can bring to life writers who lived centuries ago and put their knowledge at the service of contemporary readers at a moment’s notice.<sup>176</sup> “Nerses Lambronatsi was just next to me,” Injijian writes about a notable twelfth-century writer included in the forebear canon. “He appeared to me and we had a

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<sup>171</sup> [Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1809*, 4.

<sup>172</sup> [Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1813* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1813), 89.

<sup>173</sup> [Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1816* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1816), 131-132.

<sup>174</sup> Ինճիճեան, *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1816*, 130.

<sup>175</sup> Ինճիճեան, *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1815*, 113.

<sup>176</sup> [Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1813*, 101-102.

nice chat. Now he is gone.”<sup>177</sup> Without a knowledge of Classical Armenian, he argued, modern readers would be deprived of these intimate and transformative encounters and miss the opportunity to learn about the wide range of topics broached in Classical Armenian.<sup>178</sup>

In the final years of the almanac, we see sections composed in Classical Armenian, largely on poetry and philology.<sup>179</sup> We can understand these sections as a way for Injijian to slowly expose readers to Classical Armenian and for readers to try making the leap from the purified vernacular to the classical. In the same vein, Injijian also used his almanac to appeal to his readers as parents and urge them to see value in having their sons formally study Classical Armenian. He maintained that Classical Armenian had become a “far-off, foreign language” to Armenians in his day and age not because it was inherently difficult but because parents did not show enthusiasm for their children to acquire it.<sup>180</sup> Many did not see the use in sending their sons to school to learn the language’s grammar, a commitment of four years, when they could be working and earning money instead. A boy “cannot become a man by learning to read” Classical Armenian, some retorted.<sup>181</sup> As a person who saw reading in Classical Armenian as a “priceless treasure” that “gives solace, instructs the mind, transforms an old man, helps you travel the world and dazzles,” Injijian ultimately struggled in vain to convey its importance in the practical terms that his contemporaries demanded.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> [Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1813*, 96.

<sup>178</sup> [Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1813*, 98, 101.

<sup>179</sup> It also shows us the domains of writing that the purified vernacular did not yet inhabit, i.e., the scholarly and literary domains.

<sup>180</sup> Ինճիճեան, *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1815*, 113.

<sup>181</sup> [Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1813*, 89.

<sup>182</sup> [Ինճիճեան], *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1813*, 101 and Ինճիճեան, *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմավէպ 1815*, 112.

While Injijian’s mounting frustration with each passing year’s almanac suggests that his impassioned pleas to read were largely met with indifference, he did find a group of like-minded supporters in the members of the Arsharounik Association (Արշարունեաց ընկերութիւն). The association was established in 1810 in Constantinople at Injijian’s suggestion and was led by two young scions of a wealthy Catholic Armenian family: cousins Hagop and Mgrdich Duz.<sup>183</sup> Composed at its founding of between forty and forty-five laymen in the capital, the members of the association aimed to fund the republication of Classical Armenian texts that it felt had been largely forgotten by the 1810s and the publication of new books on science, art and history.<sup>184</sup> In the words of Hagop Duz, the association promised to be a “lantern” for the Mekhitarists, to give as much money as needed for scholarly books and to have new books written and published for the learned, through which the nation could learn to read and “take in the sweet taste of wisdom.”<sup>185</sup> The members saw themselves, in other words, as an auxiliary to the larger Mekhitarist project already in progress.

The strings that came with their funding had a major impact on the proliferation of purified-vernacular publications and the spread of archaizing purism as an ideology. Contrary to their initial plans, the members of the association focused more on commissioning new texts than republishing

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<sup>183</sup> The few scholars who have made mention of this association have dated its founding to 1812, perhaps because it was in that year that the association began to fund *Դիտակ բիզանդեան*, or the *Observer of Byzantium*. Published letters by Injijian, however, illustrate that the association had already been established by 1810. Սարգիսեան, *Երկհարիւրամեայ գրականական գործունէութիւն*, 26. On the founding and goals of the association in Injijian’s own words, see “Lettre de M. Ingigian, membre de l’Académie arménienne de l’Île de Saint-Lazare de Venise, à M. Cirbied,” *Magasin encyclopédique, ou Journal des sciences, des lettres et des arts* 3 (1814): 339-350. In this piece, Hagop and Mgrdich are referred to by the French equivalents of their names, Jacques and Baptiste.

<sup>184</sup> Ինճիճեան, *Եղանակ բիզանդեան բազմալէզ 1815*, 5; Յ. Տ. [Յակոբ Տիւզ], “Բանասիրականք,” *Դիտակ բիզանդեան* 2, no. 1 (1813): 8 and Եփրեմ Պօղոսեան, *Պատմութիւն հայ վշակույթային ընկերութիւններու*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1957), 280-283.

<sup>185</sup> [Յակոբ Տիւզ], “Բանասիրականք,” 6. Hagop Duz was twenty years old when he wrote these lines and had been educated privately by Mekhitarist monks, who had been hired by his father to serve as his private tutors in their home. Սարգիսեան, *Երկհարիւրամեայ գրականական գործունէութիւն*, 351.

old ones. Nearly all of these commissioned texts were written in the purified vernacular, increasing and diversifying Mekhitarist publications in this language form. One particularly significant fruit of this partnership was the revival of *Դիտակ քիզանդեսն*, or *Observer of Byzantium* (1812-1816), a newspaper that Injijian had conceived and of which he had published a single issue in 1808.<sup>186</sup>

The Arsharounik Association, in collaboration with a series of Mekhitarist editors, took up the mantle of continuing this purified-vernacular periodical. Like Injijian, they conceived of the newspaper as a bite-size, manageable way to ease Armenians into the practice of reading. “We have a great deal of hope that this paper will help many people quite a bit and that their minds will open in no time,” wrote Krikor Khabarajian, the editor in 1812.<sup>187</sup> To remove language as an obstacle in their readers’ path, the use of a vernacular-based form was a stipulation of the funders of the Arsharounik Association. In the first revived issue of the newspaper in 1812, the editor makes it clear that it was by order of the association that *Observer of Byzantium* would be written in a vernacular form, which Mgrdich Duz later confirms and justifies in an editorial.<sup>188</sup> It was likely the Mekhitarist editors who decided that this vernacular form would be the *purified* vernacular, which they had been using for more than two decades by 1812. Unlike Injijian and the rest of the Mekhitarist Congregation, these funders did not have the same allegiance to Classical Armenian or the same stake in guiding readers to it. Instead, these laymen appear to have been ready to do whatever it took to ensure Armenians would not fall behind in reading and learning, including

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<sup>186</sup> For an explanation of this false start, see Սարգիսեան, *Երկհարիւրամեայ գրականական գործունէութիւն*, 23, footnote 3. This association also funded Injijian’s *Seasons of Byzantium*, beginning in 1815. See Ինճիճեան, *Եղանակ քիզանդեսն բազմալէլ 1815*, 5-6.

<sup>187</sup> Խապարանեան, “Առ պերճապայծառ,” 4.

<sup>188</sup> Մ. Տ. [Մկրտիչ Տիւզ], “Բանասիրականք,” *Դիտակ քիզանդեսն* 2, no. 3 (1813): 15.

writing in a less-than-prestigious form of Armenian.<sup>189</sup> To them, Classical Armenian represented above all an impediment that hindered the transmission of knowledge to the vast majority of the population, including, as they note, women readers who would largely not have had access to formal education in the classical language; it is for this reason, Khabarajian informs us, that as editor he would write in a “simple and easy style of the vernacular [աշխարհարար] from which everyone can derive benefit so that each person, no matter their condition and knowledge, can be aware of world events.”<sup>190</sup>

The association’s preference for a vernacular-based form extended to books as well. The Mekhitarist press in Venice published at least five purified-vernacular books sponsored by the Arsharounik Association. Among them, we find publications for both adults and children that range in topic from a book, written by Injijian, about the lives and habitats of elephants to the translation of a travel account by a seventeenth-century French Jesuit missionary to the Kingdom of Siam.<sup>191</sup> While this number may seem modest, it is critical to remember how few purified-vernacular publications there indeed were by the 1810s and how so many of them were religious in theme.<sup>192</sup> The association’s sponsorship, in other words, helped increase the number of purified-vernacular books on secular topics and, though distinct in their end goal and relationship to Classical Armenian, ultimately supported the larger project of the Mekhitarist Congregation in

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<sup>189</sup> [Մկրտիչ Տիւզ], “Բանասիրականք,” 16.

<sup>190</sup> Իսապարանեան, “Առ պերճապայծառ,” 5.

<sup>191</sup> Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան, *Փիղ* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1814) and Թաշար [Guy Tachard], *Ճանքորդոթին արեւելեան հինդիստանին մէջ* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1815).

<sup>192</sup> For a quantitative analysis of the breakdown of secular and religious books in the eighteenth century, see Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility*, 249-287. In addition to the books above, we find tomes on the natural history of birds; the grammar of Classical Armenian; and the concept of patriotism. They all indicate on their covers or in their prefaces that they were published “at the request and as a result of the Arsharounik Association.” We find other Mekhitarist purified-vernacular books sponsored by members of the Duz family and other Armenian notables in Constantinople at this time, but it is unclear whether their sponsorship was under the auspices of the association.

leading Armenians, slowly but surely, toward acquiring their humanist Classical Armenian and helping to transcend the confessional and geographic divides of the era.<sup>193</sup>

### **Spreading Archaizing Purism**

The purified vernacular and the purist ideology that brought it into being did not remain the sole province of the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Congregation for long. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century, we also see this form of Armenian used sporadically in print by a small number of clergymen and laymen in the Ottoman Armenian intellectual centers of Constantinople and Smyrna. While Apostolic Armenian persecution of Catholic Armenians was particularly fierce at this time, confessional strife does not appear to have kept Armenian Apostolic writers and later American Protestant missionaries and lay writers from perusing Mekhitarist publications and tacitly adopting the language form, ideologies and practices they inaugurated.<sup>194</sup> For our purposes, the most far-reaching and significant of these Mekhitarist language ideologies and practices was the archaizing purist approach to the vernacular-based print language and its conceptualization as a pedagogical tool for acquiring Classical Armenian.<sup>195</sup> Notably, in 1795, we

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<sup>193</sup> The association was relatively short-lived and dissolved by 1819. Պօղոսեան, *Պատմություն հայ վշակույթային ղեկերություններու*, 283. This dissolution was likely a result of the imprisonment, loss of wealth, exile and/or execution of certain members of the Duz family in that year as well as the imprisonment of other members of the Catholic Armenian elite in Constantinople. For the names of these men and women and the circumstances surrounding their dispossession, see Onnik Jamgocyan, *Le temps des réformes: L'Arménie ottomane, Mahmoud II, le Tanzimat, Constantinople 1800-1860* (Paris: Éditions du Bosphore, 2015), 69-75. One of people executed by hanging was Mgrdich Duz. We can perhaps attribute the decline of purified-vernacular publications printed in Venice in the 1820s to this loss of funding and the precarity of life for Armenian Catholics in the capital at this time.

<sup>194</sup> See, for example, Մերուր Տէր Յարութիւնեան, *Քերականություն համառօտ* (Constantinople: Ի տպարանի սուրբ Աստուածածնի, 1808) and *Քրիստոնէական վարդապետություն* (Constantinople: Ի տպարանի Յօհաննիսեան Պօղոսի, 1814). As an example of an early missionary publication in the purified vernacular, see *Չքօսարան մանկանց հոգեւոր տաղերու եւ խրատներու եւ բնական պատմություններու* (Smyrna: Տպագրութիւն Հօման Հալլօրի, 1838).

<sup>195</sup> Like the Mekhitarist publications of the period, the removal of lexical borrowings in purified-vernacular materials published in Constantinople was gradual, unsystematic and idiosyncratic. Many borrowings were used unselfconsciously, but there was an articulated desire on the part of at least one Constantinople-based writer to “gradually prune the wild Turkish and vulgar [ռամկական] branches” through “the language of Hayk.” This discourse shows us that a purist language ideology was indeed circulating beyond Mekhitarist circles by the early 1800s. Տէր Յարութիւնեան, *Քերականություն համառօտ*, Ե. For an expression of this ideology in an official publication of the

find an alphabet primer published in Constantinople that made use of the “unpurified” spoken Armenian of the city—complete with its borrowings—to teach children Classical Armenian, illustrating for us a period before the Mekhitarist purist language ideology had taken hold beyond the congregation.<sup>196</sup> Such publications, however, were rare and by the first decades of the nineteenth century, Mekhitarist notions that spoken language was impure, that it needed to be purified before being put to print and that purity meant infusing it with the Classical Armenian of a certain group of writers were being treated more and more as givens in the work of a geographically, confessionally and ideologically broader collection of intellectuals.<sup>197</sup>

One particularly striking example of the transmission of these language ideologies beyond the Mekhitarists can be found in the work of the Constantinople-based writer Krikor Peshdimaljian (c. 1773-1837). Like the Mekhitarists, Peshdimaljian’s intellectual output was shaped by his role as an educator. A teacher and later principal of schools affiliated with the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate of Constantinople, he agitated for changes to long-standing instructional methods and wrote primarily for his students.<sup>198</sup> Like Injijian, Peshdimaljian abhorred the “ignorance” he saw around him, condemned the general indifference to learning and saw the encouragement of reading

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Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate, see *Մահման սագային ժողովոյ. յաղագս բարեկարգութեան սուրբ ուխտի եկեղեցւոյ, եւ վարժապետաց, եւ համօրէն ժողովրդոց* (Constantinople: Ի տպարանի Պօղոսի Արապեան Ապուշեխցոյ, 1830), 32.

<sup>196</sup> *Քերական նորոց հաւաքեալ հատրնտիր գրաբար բառիք՝ հանդերձ ռամկօրէն մեկնութեամբք* (Constantinople: Առ տպարանաւ Յովհաննիսեան Պօղոսի, 1795).

<sup>197</sup> Like the Mekhitarists, we see as early as 1808 an awareness and criticism of a form of Classical Armenian that was “Greek in style” and the drive to “perfect it based on the qualities of the language of Hayk,” suggesting a transmission of Mekhitarist discourse. Տէր Յարութիւնեան, *Քերականութիւն համառօտ*, Գ.

<sup>198</sup> See Մ. Գ. Ծալեան, *Գրիգոր պատուելի Փէշտիմալճեան (1773-1837)* (Cairo: Տպագրութիւն Չ. Պերպլերեան-Ա. Չասեան, 1912). Peshdimaljian is particularly important because his students filled not only the ranks of the lay intelligentsia of the Apostolic persuasion but also included many of the Armenian men who worked for the American Protestant missionaries in the Ottoman Empire and wrote purified-vernacular evangelizing materials for them. This shared training may be a vector that can help explain the shared purist ideology that we will see in the next chapter. For the names of these students, see Ծալեան, *Գրիգոր պատուելի*, 34-39.

as a way to overcome it.<sup>199</sup> Penning works in both forms of Armenian, Peshdimaljian perpetuated the use of the purified vernacular as a pedagogical tool through which, as he writes, “the classical language could be learned quickly and easily.”<sup>200</sup> Like his Mekhitarist contemporaries, guiding students not to just any form of Classical Armenian but to the Classical Armenian of “notable authors” was his primary focus. Drawing on concepts like the “language of Hayk” (հայկաբանութիւն) and “original style” (բուն ոճ) developed and spread by Mekhitar, Chamchian and other Mekhitarist writers, Peshdimaljian also saw the “ancient” (նախնի) writers of the distant past as offering the purest specimens of Classical Armenian and used their writings as the basis of his own Classical Armenian dictionary and possibly for his widely used grammar book as well.<sup>201</sup> His purified vernacular publications were, like the others we saw in this chapter, a pathway to the classical language. Among them, we find a Classical-Armenian-to-Turkish alphabet primer and glossary reminiscent of the one published by the Mekhitarists in 1781 as well as a book on manners similar in theme to the one published by the Mekhitarists in 1806.<sup>202</sup> With regard to the form of the written vernacular, purity of language was of the essence and understood in the same terms: “Our clean vernacular language [նաբուր աշխարհաբառ լեզու] is born of [Classical Armenian],” he wrote in 1829, “and is very close to [it].”<sup>203</sup>

## Conclusion

<sup>199</sup> Գրիգոր Փեշտրմալճեան, *Կրթութիւն քաղաքավարութեան* (Ortaköy: Ի սպարանի Պօղոսի Արապեան Ապուշեխցւոյ, 1829), 125.

<sup>200</sup> Փեշտրմալճեան, *Կրթութիւն քաղաքավարութեան*, 133.

<sup>201</sup> Գրիգոր Փեշտրմալճեան, *Քերականութիւն հայկազեան լեզուի* (Ortaköy: Ի սպարանի Պօղոսի Արապեան Ապուշեխցւոյ, 1829) and Գրիգոր Փեշտրմալճեան, *Բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի* (Constantinople: Ի սպարանի Պօղոսի Արապեան Ապուշեխցւոյ, 1844). A draft of this dictionary burned in a fire in 1816 and he needed to start over. Sadly, he was not the only writer to have lost his work to fires at this time.

<sup>202</sup> Գրիգոր Փեշտրմալճեան, *Քերական լեզուագիտութեան* (Ortaköy: Ի սպարանի Պօղոսի Արապեան Ապուշեխցւոյ, 1827) and Փեշտրմալճեան, *Կրթութիւն քաղաքավարութեան*.

<sup>203</sup> Փեշտրմալճեան, *Կրթութիւն քաղաքավարութեան*, 133.

In this chapter, I have explored the impact of the humanist project of the Mekhitarist Congregation on the emergence of an ideology of purism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In particular, I investigated how the adoption and adaptation of the humanist *ad fontes* principle led to the formation of a ‘forebear canon’ and the creation of a thoroughly ‘purified’ humanist Classical Armenian. It was Classical Armenian, I argued, that the Mekhitarists viewed as a cohesive force for Armenians in the face of geographic and confessional fragmentation. Moreover, I showed how these purist ideals, initially directed toward Classical Armenian, were subsequently transposed onto the non-classical, intermediate forms of Armenian that were first being used in print at that time. I underscored how these vernacular-based print-languages—Civil Armenian and the purified vernacular—were intended for a non-elite readership and deployed in hopes of helping the masses acquire Classical Armenian. I also emphasized how the act of archaizing in the transition from speech to print was yet another pedagogical tool conceived as a bridge to Classical Armenian.

In the next chapter, we will find purism cloaked in the discourse of cultural nationalism as language comes to be conceived first and foremost as a symbol of a new ‘national’ identity. Under the influence of this new global movement, we will see cultural nationalists rearticulate and reinterpret the work of the Mekhitarist Congregation, adopt the purified vernacular as a ‘national’ print language and transform archaizing purism from a pedagogical practice into a ‘national’ duty.

## Chapter 2

### Purity and Patriotism: Cultural Nationalism and the Making of a ‘National’ Language (c. 1830-c. 1860)

#### Introduction

Tsolag was at his wits’ end. At every turn, few of his fellow Armenians in the Ottoman capital were speaking the way he thought they should be. It was 1880. Of course, he knew that many still considered religion to be enough to anchor their Armenian identity, but language was just as—if not more—important. Intellectuals had been saying so for forty years already. Times had changed, so, he wondered, why hadn’t the people around him? Walking around the markets, stopping into coffeehouses and poking his head into workshops, Tsolag still overheard Armenians—young and old, schooled and unschooled—choosing to speak any language but the national language. If on the rare occasion he overheard Armenian, it was nothing akin to the carefully engineered print-language used in books and newspapers but the same old ‘jargon,’ laden with the Turkish borrowings, that had been heard in the capital for centuries. Writers and teachers, students and craftsmen, no one around him seemed to show any interest in according Armenian the proper respect or in upholding the importance of ‘purity.’ “Simply put, we just don’t like it,” he admitted. In desperation, he penned a breathless letter-to-the-editor, in which he pleaded with readers to feel a sense of duty toward the Armenian language and to protect its ‘purity.’<sup>1</sup>

Pleas like Tsolag’s were far from rare in the second half of the nineteenth century. This chapter explores the historical moment in which we see the emergence of language as the ultimate marker of Armenian identity and of purism as a national duty. I position this emergence within the

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<sup>1</sup> This vignette was developed from rare candid comments about spoken language practices in the Ottoman capital found in Յոսլլ, “Ազգային լեզու,” *Մասիս* 29, no. 2768 (1880): 2-3.

rise of national movements around the world and identify confessional fragmentation as a local reason for the reception of a cultural nationalist ideology among the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia in the 1840s. The chapter continues by discussing the centrality of the concept of a ‘national language’ within the Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalist movement and the newfound symbolic value it held as a preserver of Armenianness. I also underscore the ambiguity of this concept in the discourse of Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalists and the general ambivalence toward vernacularization among intellectuals at this time. I argue that this ambivalence is rooted in their cultivation of Classical Armenian as a source of national dignity, distinctiveness and authenticity within the movement and their use of the classical language to combat pervasive negative attitudes toward Armenian old and new. The chapter concludes by exploring the intensification of archaizing purism within the context of the movement and illustrates how this approach to the vernacular-based print-language, while intended to be an antidote to these negative attitudes, ultimately served as an obstacle to the spread of cultural nationalist ideals.

### **The Ideology of Cultural Nationalism: The Conceptual Building Blocks**

This chapter is not the place to review the extensive body of work in nationalism studies or to intervene directly into still-active debates in the field. Instead, the sections below seek to draw on insights from nationalism studies to expose this period as an era of cultural-nationalist fervor among the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia, to understand how approaches to language and purism were transformed by the ideology of cultural nationalism and to illustrate how these approaches were both part of a larger global movement and driven by local forces. It thus presents an admittedly incomplete picture of the movement, leaving many of its other facets for future researchers to explore.

To avoid any misunderstanding in my use of the slippery and polysemic terms “national” and “nationalism,” a few general precisions regarding the Ottoman Armenian case are in order before we proceed. First, the Ottoman Armenian national project during this period was an exclusively *cultural* nationalist project. This means that its leaders did not take as their focus political independence or the creation of a state but rather the creation of something more amorphous: a national community.<sup>2</sup> To foster a sense of identity and belonging within national communities in the making, leaders at the forefront of cultural nationalist movements concentrate first and foremost on promoting, in the words of John Hutchinson, “a national language, literature and the arts, educational activities and economic self-help.”<sup>3</sup> These social movements play out within states but can operate largely independently of state institutions. Similarly, they can simultaneously be part of larger political nationalist movements or be distinct from them, preceding them and laying the groundwork for political nationalist work to come. It is this latter case that we find in the Ottoman Armenian context.

Second, Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalism was an ethnic form of nationalism. Unlike other multi-ethnic empires at this time, there was no push in the Ottoman Empire to cultivate a civic form of nationalism until the final decades of the Empire when we see an attempt to transcend ethnic and religious backgrounds and instill a shared sense of Ottoman identity in all subjects.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For excellent overviews of cultural nationalism, see Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006); John Hutchinson, “Cultural Nationalism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, ed. John Breuilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 75-94 and Eric Taylor Woods, “Cultural Nationalism,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, eds. David Inglis and Anna-Mari Almila (London: SAGE Publications, 2016), 429-441.

<sup>3</sup> Hutchinson, “Cultural Nationalism,” 75.

<sup>4</sup> Howard Eissenstat, “Modernization, Imperial Nationalism, and the Ethnicization of Confessional Identity in the Late Ottoman Empire,” in *Nationalizing Empires*, eds. Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2015), 454-455.

This means that Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalists at this time were in no way attempting to resist Ottoman rule in their formation of a national community. Instead, they were seeking to form a national community with its own ethno-cultural consciousness *within* the Empire. As we will see further along, the administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire allowed for a great deal of autonomy in communal management for the Empire's non-Muslim subjects, who were organized administratively in religious communities. An ethnic model of nationhood was indeed fostered by this structure, and, once national thought began to take hold, intellectuals began seeing their *confessional* communities in *national* terms. This particularity of Ottoman governance helps to explain the complete lack of Ottoman state intervention in any of the debates over language that we will see in this chapter or in any of the chapters to come. Whereas other empires at this time attempted to impose state languages on all subjects to promote imperial cohesion, this kind of state-led linguistic program of Turkification is entirely absent in the Ottoman realm in the mid-nineteenth century. As such, Ottoman Armenian intellectuals were largely left alone to do as they pleased as in the domain of language.

Third, the Ottoman Armenian national community was at once socially constructed in the nineteenth century and deeply rooted in older forms of collective identity. Armenians are one of Anthony D. Smith's classic examples of an *ethnie*, or a pre-modern ethnic community "with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures [that has] an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity."<sup>5</sup> We saw a manifestation of this concept in the previous chapter among the Mekhitarists, who strove to cultivate a pre-national form of unity and collective identity by drawing an ethnic identity rooted in a common descent from Hayk. Often strengthened by a common religious tradition, the *ethnie* can provide a historical foundation—whether factual,

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1986), 32.

fictional or somewhere in between—atop which nationalists can construct their modern national communities.<sup>6</sup> As Smith notes, it is not uncommon for modern national communities built atop *ethnies* to reach “back into the ethnic past to obtain the *authentic* materials and ethos for a distinct modern nation.”<sup>7</sup> As we will explore further along, Classical Armenian was one of those “authentic materials” that the Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalist movement drew from the *ethnie*, creating an added tension for supporters of vernacularization and helping to explain the logic of archaizing purism within the movement.

### **The Ottoman Armenian Cultural Nationalist Movement**

As the dynamics of Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalism in the early to mid-nineteenth century have received little scholarly attention, a sketch of the phases, actors and ideals of the movement is needed before situating the role of language and purism within it. This historiographic black hole has led to the general scholarly preconception that Ottoman Armenian national thought began in earnest with the rise of the Armenian revolutionary movement in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>8</sup> The few studies that have *mentioned* earlier periods have casually pointed without substantiation to the Tanzimat as a cause for what is still often and uncritically termed “national reawakening” in Armenian studies scholarship.<sup>9</sup> Declared in 1839, the Tanzimat has traditionally been seen as

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the connection between religion and national identity, see Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 12. Italics in the source.

<sup>8</sup> Following Joep Leerssen, I consider national thought to be “a way of seeing human society primarily as consisting of discrete, different nations, each with an obvious right to exist and to command loyalty, each characterized and set apart unambiguously by its own separate identity and culture.” Leerssen, *National Thought*, 15.

<sup>9</sup> The term “national awakening” (զարթոյմ) can still be seen in scholarly and non-scholarly writing today and is commonly used seemingly without an awareness of its function as a nationalist construct. Nationalists often misleadingly use the idiom of “revival,” “regeneration,” and “reawakening” to legitimize their movement and mobilize supporters. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), 48-49. It should be

marking the start of a fateful encounter with the “modernity” of European ideas, the beginning of an Ottoman reform period and a gradual process of bureaucratic Westernization. While it had long been considered a point of social rupture in Ottoman history, recent scholarship has shown this idea to be built on exaggerations, stressing the socio-political continuities pre- and post-Tanzimat.<sup>10</sup> This study adds to recent scholarship by proposing a new continuity that has direct bearing on the development of cultural nationalism.

### ***From Enlightenment Patriotism to Cultural Nationalism***

The roots of mid-nineteenth-century cultural nationalist thought among the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia can be found not in the Tanzimat declaration but rather in a little-known early-nineteenth-century movement called Enlightenment patriotism. Though nation-focused discussions indeed became more pervasive among Ottoman Armenians in the early years of the Tanzimat period and may have been accelerated by the inferiority complex that its promulgation produced among elites across communities within the Empire, as early as the 1810s, we see the stirrings of a national project in the discourse of the laymen who established the Arsharounik Association.<sup>11</sup>

In the articulation of the goals of their association, we find heretofore rarely expressed ideas—ideas absent from the discourse of the Mekhitarist monks themselves, namely that love of homeland (հայրենասիրութիւն) should be a prized ideal, that Ottoman Armenians should follow

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noted that the term զարթօնք was *not* used by cultural nationalists during the period under review in this chapter and appears to have gained currency only in the twentieth century.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Dzovinar Derderian, “Nation-Making and the Language of Colonialism: Voices from Ottoman Van in Armenian Print Media and Handwritten Petitions (1820s to 1870s)” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2019), 11-12.

<sup>11</sup> On this internalized sense of inferiority, see Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 769.

in the “enlightened” (ընդարձակ) and “patriotic” (ազգասեր) examples of figures from classical antiquity and that the educated members of a society had a moral and social responsibility to devote themselves to the “common good.”<sup>12</sup> These ideas are hallmarks of Enlightenment patriotism, a movement that had taken hold across Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> While in Europe this movement also manifested in a resistance to absolutism and a drive to cultivate supra-regional civic allegiances to a state, Ottoman Armenian Enlightenment patriots left political elements to one side and focused instead on the social, namely on practical initiatives for the “public good” that would improve their society through acts of philanthropy.<sup>14</sup> “It is a social virtue to be in the habit of doing useful deeds both for society and for the individual,” we read in a Mekhitarist schoolbook published in 1819.<sup>15</sup> For the members of the Arsharounik Association and others like them, these useful deeds included funding schools, hospitals and, most importantly for our purposes, publications. It is in one of these publications that we find the clearest expression of the kind of social change that Ottoman Armenian Enlightenment patriots sought to prompt. “Now all European nations are following the path [of the ancient Romans] and out of a good kind of envy, not wanting to be subordinate to one another, they are enlightening themselves and glorifying themselves day by day...,” wrote Hagop Duz in 1813, emphasizing that Armenians too

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<sup>12</sup> For an expression of this Ottoman Armenian Enlightenment patriotism, see Մ. Տ. [Մկրտիչ Տիւրք], “Բանասիրականք,” 14-16. See also the letters sent to the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice by members of the association in the mid-1810s cited in Սարգիսեան, *Երկհարիւրամեայ զրականական գործունէութիւն*, 25-28.

<sup>13</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, 75-81; Juliane Engelhardt, “Patriotism, Nationalism and Modernity: The Patriotic Societies in the Danish Conglomerate State, 1769-1814,” *Nations and Nationalism* 13, no. 2 (2007): 205-223; and Maurizio Viroli, *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 95-160.

<sup>14</sup> Miroslav Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining their Formation*, trans. Karolina Graham (London and New York: Verso, 2015), 49-50 and Siegfried Weichlein, “Cosmopolitanism, Patriotism, Nationalism,” in *Unity and Diversity in European Culture, c. 1800*, eds. Tim Blanning and Hagen Schulze (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 79-80.

<sup>15</sup> Աղաչքաղեան, *Բնական օրէնք*, 150. This quote comes from a schoolbook written by a Mekhitarist monk. Here, in question-and-answer format, the writer explains in simple terms the tenets of Enlightenment patriotism.

had had “patriotic” figures in their own past. “From now on, let’s try to change ourselves as a group, so that through our example the nation [ազգ] can change, too. First, let’s be patriotic [ազգասէր], so that the nation can be patriotic, too...through our example, we can teach the nation sweet love of homeland [հայրենասիրութիւն].”<sup>16</sup> These ideas were entirely new.

These ideas continued to circulate—albeit sporadically and in the small intellectual circles of the day—in the late 1810s, 1820s and 1830s, particularly through the publications of the Mekhitarists of Venice and Vienna.<sup>17</sup> During this period, terms used in Enlightenment patriotic discourse—especially “patriotic” (ազգասէր) and “love of homeland” (հայրենասիրութիւն)—slowly began to transform and take on new meanings under the influence of the new national intellectual current of the day.<sup>18</sup> It is critical to emphasize that in Enlightenment patriotic discourse these terms were *not* imbued with any of the Romantic notions of nationhood we will see in this chapter nor were they intended to kindle any kind of ‘national’ consciousness.<sup>19</sup> To Enlightenment patriots, being patriotic and loving a homeland meant, in their own words, a devotion to cultivating a “community of citizens who are united by sweet brotherly love and mutual essential needs.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> [Թակոբ Տիւզ], “Բանասիրականք,” 7-8. This article was republished in 1851, illustrating how cultural nationalists reinterpreted the work of Enlightenment patriots and framed it in national terms as a forerunner to their own work. See “Ազգային յառաջադիմութիւն. ուսումնասիրութեան եւ ընթերցասիրութեան վրայ,” *Բանասէր* 1, no. 4 (1851): 161-168. The Arsharounik Association also sponsored a book in which episodes of patriotism in European and Armenian history were explored. This book is the most developed expression of Ottoman Armenian Enlightenment patriotism. See [Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան], *Ազգասէր* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1815).

<sup>17</sup> For a rare glimpse into this period in Armenian intellectual history, see Marc Nichanian, *Mourning Philology: Art and Religion at the Margins of the Ottoman Empire*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian and Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 66-105. For echoes of these sentiments before the 1840s, see Յովնանեան, *Վարժութիւն մանկանց*, 147-182 and Փեշտրմալճեան, *Կրթութիւն քաղաքավարութեան*, 122-136.

<sup>18</sup> In addition to “love of homeland,” the term հայրենասիրութիւն can also be translated as “patriotism,” “love of country,” “love of fatherland” or “love of patria.”

<sup>19</sup> It is not entirely clear what Ottoman Armenian Enlightenment patriots meant by ‘homeland’ or ‘society.’ Hroch notes that in European cases, too, the concept of “homeland” was also ill-defined. It would take a national movement for the concept to become more solidified. Hroch, *European Nations*, 50.

<sup>20</sup> Աղայրաղեան, *Բնական օրէնք*, 149.

They were not, in other words, striving to “regenerate the nation’s cultural and social fabric,” though they did inadvertently constitute, as Anthony Smith identifies for Enlightenment patriots more generally, “a first stage in the development of a sense of national identity, even if it was to take a later historicist movement of nationalism to bring this process to fruition.”<sup>21</sup> Their goals were humbler.

Traveling further back in time, an additional pre-Tanzimat basis for the cultural nationalist movement can be found in the historical and philological work of the Mekhitarist Congregation in the eighteenth century. As we saw in the previous chapter, their work did not spring from an ethos of Enlightenment patriotism but intersected with it in the early nineteenth century. Looking retrospectively at their body of work through the prism of cultural nationalism, we can see it as constituting Phase A of Miroslav Hroch’s periodization of national movements.<sup>22</sup> Hroch has dubbed Phase A the “scholarly phase” and has characterized it as a period of “passionate concern on the part of a group of individuals, usually intellectuals, for the study of the language, the culture [and] the history” of the nation-to-be.<sup>23</sup> Joep Leerssen has gone further to identify a common feature of Phase A in national movements worldwide, one that defines the work of the Mekhitarist Congregation in its first century in existence: the drive to inventory and salvage.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 144. Italics in the source.

<sup>22</sup> This periodization was first developed in Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 22-24.

<sup>23</sup> Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival*, 22 and Miroslav Hroch, *In the National Interest: Demands and Goals of European National Movements of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Robin Cassling (Prague: Charles University, 2000), 13.

<sup>24</sup> Joep Leerssen, “Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture,” *Nations and Nationalism* 12, no. 4 (2006): 570.

This Phase A drive to salvage Classical Armenian and offer an inventory of it through dictionaries and grammar books provided the physical and conceptual resources that the cultural nationalist intellectuals whom we will meet in this chapter drew on and reinterpreted in national terms in Phase B: the period of national agitation. In this process, the humanist *ad fontes* orientation of the Mekhitarists was recast as a “return to the *national* sources” in Phase B and can be understood as part of the “great linguistic and textual inventory project” that has often preceded direct national agitation in European national movements.<sup>25</sup> Phase B is characterized by “a group of patriots (usually from the educated ranks) [who] strove to persuade members of the non-dominant ethnic group that they were actually members of a nation with a value of its own.”<sup>26</sup> Unlike the gestational Phase A in which the number of actors was relatively small and the work of raising a sense of cultural consciousness limited, Phase B is characterized by a widening of participation and an attempt to instrumentalize a broader range of “cultural traditions and elements such as languages” to build a national community.<sup>27</sup> This chapter deals with this complicated process, specifically the initial sub-phase of Phase B in which, rather than prompting a groundswell of enthusiasm, “the agitation of patriots [does] not yet provoke any notable interest among those they [are] trying to persuade.”<sup>28</sup>

### ***Ottoman Armenian Confessional Strife and the National Movement***

What prompted this shift from Phase A to Phase B in the Ottoman Armenian cultural national movement? As we see in national movements around the world, the factors that lead to this shift

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<sup>25</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, 199.

<sup>26</sup> Hroch, *In the National Interest*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, 164.

<sup>28</sup> Hroch, *In the National Interest*, 13.

are often both transnational and local. Transnationally, we see an awareness among Ottoman Armenian intellectuals of the rise of national movements in Europe, which spark a feeling of ‘belatedness’ and a drive to keep pace with their European contemporaries, which we will return to further along. By the 1840s, however, many European national movements had been in full swing for a few decades, which leads us to a critical question that sheds light on internal Ottoman Armenian social dynamics at the time: Why did Phase B gain momentum around 1840?

The answer to this question is rooted in two local factors: Ottoman Armenian confessional strife and the search for a new source of communal identity around 1840. As Hroch has noted, a common spur for the transition from Phase A to Phase B is an internal “need for some kind of new group solidarity” in periods of “social, intellectual, and sometimes even political and moral, crisis.”<sup>29</sup> In these uncertain historical moments, cultural nationalism offers groups “new maps of identity...that claim to combine the virtues of historical tradition and modern progress at times of crisis when established practices and identities were shaken.”<sup>30</sup> This crisis of identity comes to a head for Ottoman Armenian intellectuals in the 1840s. Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalists during this period were not dealing with a *tabula rasa* in terms of Armenian collective identity. As we saw above, pre-national forms of Armenian collective identity were ethno-confessional and largely based on belonging to a single, autocephalous Armenian Church where, as Razmik Panossian notes, “ethnicity, religion and church completely overlapped.”<sup>31</sup> By the eighteenth

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<sup>29</sup> Hroch, *In the National Interest*, 86.

<sup>30</sup> Hutchinson, “Cultural Nationalism,” 86.

<sup>31</sup> Razmik Panossian, “The Past as Nation: Three Dimensions of Armenian Identity,” *Geopolitics* 7, no. 2 (2002): 128. For a surveys of Armenian identity over the centuries, see Theo Maarten van Lint, “The Formation of Armenian Identity in the First Millennium,” *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1-3 (2009): 251-278 and A. E. Redgate, “Myth and Reality: Armenian Identity in the Early Middle Ages,” *National Identities* 9, no. 4 (2007): 281-306.

century, however, Ottoman Armenians belonged to both the Apostolic and Catholic Churches. This split caused a great deal of tension and animosity throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but some within the ecclesiastical hierarchies had held out hope that Catholic Armenians would return to the “Mother Church” and that all Armenians would be reunited once again, keeping the viability of a religiously based identity alive.<sup>32</sup> By the 1830s, however, not only do we see *not* see this reconciliation but instead we see an intensification of confessional divisions among Armenians and their institutionalization within the Ottoman bureaucracy, causing anxiety within the intelligentsia over the future of Armenian identity.<sup>33</sup>

The institutionalization of confessional divisions at this time had to do with the particular system of imperial administration within the Ottoman Empire. Much of the work of defining Armenians in relation to other religious communities had been done through the millet system, a system of governance through which the Ottoman state granted a certain degree of autonomy to non-Muslim groups in the management of their communal affairs.<sup>34</sup> Though when, how and where the millet system functioned are still debated, it has been commonly understood in the Armenian context as giving the head of the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate in Constantinople control over the sacred and profane affairs of all Armenians within the Empire.<sup>35</sup> This distinctly Ottoman system institutionally reinforced a longstanding ethnoreligious identity by treating Ottoman

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<sup>32</sup> Salim Dermarkar, *Arméniens et catholiques, de l’émancipation au schisme : une identité contrariée au temps de l’éveil des nationalités (1809-1888)* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2022), 76-83 and Leon Arpee, *The Armenian Awakening: A History of the Armenian Church, 1820-1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1909), 39-40.

<sup>33</sup> Aral, *Arméniens catholiques*, 94-98, 176-192.

<sup>34</sup> Maurits H. van den Boogert, “Millets: Past and Present,” in *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, eds. Anh Nga Longva and Anne Sofie Roald (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 27-45.

<sup>35</sup> Aylin Koçunyan, “Les contours juridiques et sociaux des Arméniens apostoliques dans l’Empire ottoman, 1856-1923,” in *Minorités en Méditerranée au XIXe siècle: identités, identifications, circulations*, eds. Valérie Assan, Bernard Heyberger and Jakob Vogel (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2019), 198-199.

Armenians as a single religious community.<sup>36</sup> Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Catholic Armenians were still under the authority of the Armenian Apostolic Patriarch and thus, by contemporaneous definitions, still considered Armenian.<sup>37</sup> In 1831, however, the Ottoman government officially recognized Catholic Armenians as a separate millet, which necessitated, among other things, a rethinking and re-articulation of Armenian identity.<sup>38</sup> This institutionalization of religious fragmentation was further compounded by the arrival of American Protestant missionaries in the mid-1830s, the conversion of a small number of Armenians to Evangelical Christianity in the 1840s and the official recognition of a Protestant millet in 1850.<sup>39</sup>

At this time of confessional fragmentation, a sense of Armenian identity centered around the Armenian Apostolic Church was no longer a viable way to unify Ottoman Armenians. Instead, intellectuals slowly began to embrace the ideology of nationalism that was circulating elsewhere in the world at that time and got down to business crafting a new ‘national’ identity that took language rather than confession as its point of unity. “All compatriots [սոցալիստ] must learn the Armenian language [հայկական լեզուն],” one writer emphasized in 1849, “so that, at least through it, there can be a link of unity among them all, no matter their location, spoken language [ճանկական լեզու], or religious doctrine which have separated them from one another.”<sup>40</sup> With language as this new link and marker of a non-confessional Armenian identity, no longer would a

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<sup>36</sup> Panossian, “The Past as Nation,” 128.

<sup>37</sup> Charles A. Frazee, “The Formation of the Armenian Catholic Community in the Ottoman Empire,” *Eastern Churches Review* 7, no. 2 (1975): 152-153.

<sup>38</sup> Aral, *Arméniens catholiques*, 176-177.

<sup>39</sup> Leon Arpee, *A Century of Armenian Protestantism, 1846-1946* (New York: Armenian Missionary Association of America, 1946), 41-43.

<sup>40</sup> Հ. Ղ. Մ. [Ղեկունի Ալիշան], “Լեզուսոցալիստութիւն,” *Բարձրագոյն* 7, no. 19 (1849): 297.

Catholic Armenian or Evangelical Armenian by definition be ‘lost’ to the national community simply by virtue of their belonging to a different confessional group. Though religion was by no means toppled as a pillar of Armenianness in the mid-nineteenth century, it was now no longer the sole pillar of collective identity. Within the cultural nationalist movement, this attempt to pivot from an ethno-*religiously* imagined community to an ethno-*nationally* imagined community bound together by a common language expanded—at least theoretically—the limits of the would-be national community beyond members of the Armenian Apostolic Church and created a unifying force that had the potential to transcend the confessional divisions that characterized the period.<sup>41</sup> The particularly *Ottoman* Armenian dynamics at play here can help us explain why a cultural nationalist movement among Russian Armenians did not gain momentum concurrently, as theirs was prompted and guided by a different set of socio-cultural dynamics.<sup>42</sup> The particularly Armenian issue of confessionalization at this time can also help explain why the timing of the advent of the Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalist movement differed from that of the movements of other communities within the Empire.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> It is crucial to note that despite this shift in thinking about Armenian identity, there was still a great deal of discrimination, suspicion and persecution of Catholic Armenians and Protestant Armenians by Apostolic Armenians. By no means was confessional harmony a feature of this period, but the markers of identity at a theoretical level were indeed shifting.

<sup>42</sup> On mid-nineteenth century nation-building among Armenians in the Russian Empire, see Lisa Khachaturian, *Cultivating Nationhood in Imperial Russia: The Periodical Press and the Formation of a Modern Armenian Identity* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> C.f., for example, Aron Rodrigue, “The Beginnings of Westernization and Community Reform among Istanbul’s Jewry, 1854–65,” in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Levy (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), 439-456 and Dimitris Kamouzis, “Elites and the Formation of National Identity: The Case of the Greek Orthodox *millet* (mid-nineteenth century to 1922),” in *State-Nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Turkey: Orthodox and Muslims, 1830-1945*, eds. Benjamin C. Fortna, Stefanos Katsikas, Dimitris Kamouzis, et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 13-46.

### ***Who Were the Cultural Nationalists and What Drove Them?***

The leaders of Phase B of the Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalist movement were made up of figures belonging to all three of these confessions. While existing scholarship has superficially portrayed this period in Ottoman Armenian history as a flexing of secular power, we see Apostolic, Catholic and Protestant clergymen and laypeople involved in the movement, all espousing similar principles and using similar means to disseminate them. Although they were certainly not homogenous in their worldviews, the various factions of the cultural nationalist intelligentsia were united in their acceptance of national thought, namely the general belief in the “national community” as the preeminent unit of group solidarity and in the need for would-be members of that community to change their ideals and behaviors, particularly in the domain of language.

It is essential to note that, although more numerous and socially diverse than the figures we met in Phase A, the group that led Phase B was still relatively small. In the 1840s, the number of writers espousing a cultural nationalist ideology and dictating the course and discourse of the movement was—to offer a generous estimate—no more than one hundred people concentrated in the urban print centers of Venice, Vienna, Constantinople and Smyrna. As we saw in the last chapter, religious figures had long been at the forefront of all aspects of Armenian intellectual life. But by the 1840s, we see a weakening of the monopoly of church institutions and clergymen over intellectual production and the rise of a group of urban young men concentrated in urban print centers. Like their religious counterparts, these young men wore multiple hats as teachers, writers, translators and newspaper editors and used their various roles to spread the ideals of the movement.

Some had studied medicine or agronomy in Europe, but many others had received a limited education in the Ottoman Empire and should not be mistaken for scholars.<sup>44</sup>

While their number does slowly rise with each passing decade, it is critical to keep the size of this coterie in mind when we consider further along the difficulty these figures encountered in spreading their new ideas about language among the wider population. Wildly outnumbered and often quite young, their number, inexperience and precarious positions of social power also help us put their loud, bold and ambitious demands for social change into perspective and, in recognizing their limited reach, temper our assumptions about what they could have realistically achieved. While they exhibited a great deal of vigor, dedication and enthusiasm for their national project in the abstract, they ultimately had little power to put in place the infrastructural building blocks, namely schools and other literacy programs, to foster such dramatic social change on a grand scale.

What precisely were the new ideas that these figures aimed to spread? At the heart of their project, we find two main concepts: national progress (ազգային յառաջդիմութիւն) and national enlightenment (ազգային լուսաւորութիւն). Ottoman Armenian intellectuals of the period were fixated on these concepts, transforming them into ideals and devising ways to mobilize the populace in pursuit of them. In this quest, they tasked themselves with instilling three main values in the national-community-to-be: love of nation (ազգասիրութիւն), love of reading (ընթերցասիրութիւն) and love of learning (ուսումնասիրութիւն). It was the adoption of these values by all segments of society, as the logic went, that would lead to national progress and enlightenment and allow the nation to shed the “ignorance” that much of the intelligentsia saw as

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<sup>44</sup> For biographical sketches of a handful of these lay intellectuals, see James Etmekjian, *The French Influence on the Western Armenian Renaissance, 1843–1915* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1964), 94-114.

holding it back.<sup>45</sup> While, in the previous chapter, we saw Injijian and the members of the Arsharounik Association encourage a love of reading and a love of learning for the self and the common good, in this chapter we see these values transformed and given new meaning to serve the national community first and foremost.

Of course, the ideals and values that shaped the discourse and practice of Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalists did not originate within the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia itself. Rather, these ideals and values were part of the global, nation-focused zeitgeist of the nineteenth century. By the 1840s, there was a sub-set of the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia that was in awe of the political, social and cultural might of Western Europe and saw it as offering the ultimate socio-cultural model to follow in improving their own society. Viewing Western Europe as a beacon of progress and enlightenment, Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalists set about borrowing and disseminating ideals they had read about or seen firsthand on stays in France and Italy. In this process of adoption and adaptation, they compared themselves to Western Europeans to no end, and these comparisons produced an overwhelming sense of what Gregory Jusdanis has called “belatedness,” a feeling of being behind that he identifies as having been a driving force in the emergence of national movements around the world.<sup>46</sup> “Why don’t we want to wake up, get out and see what old nations have done and what today’s nations are doing?...Let’s try to change ourselves so that we resemble them,” we read in the writing of the Enlightenment patriot Hagop Duz already in 1813.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> For ways that the intelligentsia used translations of popular European literature to kindle a love of reading, see Jennifer Manoukian, “Literary Translation and the Expansion of the Ottoman Armenian Reading Public, 1853-1884,” *Book History* 25, no. 1 (2022): 128-171.

<sup>46</sup> Gregory Jusdanis, *The Necessary Nation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 102-133.

<sup>47</sup> [ԅակոբ Տիւզ], “Բանասիրականք,” 6.

The frequency and urgency with which this idea is expressed only intensifies in the 1840s. During this decade, we see active explorations in the Ottoman Armenian press into how practically to “stir the spirit of love of nation so that it would, through education, skill and knowledge, be equal to that which has blossomed in other nations.”<sup>48</sup> Similarly, we see almost procedural descriptions for the public of how to demonstrate love of nation and explanations as to why such demonstrations were now of such vital importance.<sup>49</sup> Taking its cues from the so-called “civilized nations,” the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia uniformly defined its constellation of nation-related terms based on contemporaneous Western European definitions. We see this phenomenon first and foremost in the changes in the definition of the term for nation (ազգ), a polysemic word in use for more than a millennium that was imbued with contemporaneous European conceptions of nationhood during this period.<sup>50</sup> In their reliance on Western European definitions, frameworks and ideals to shape the Ottoman Armenian national community, Ottoman Armenian intellectuals were one of the geographically peripheral nodes in what Joep Leerssen sees as a nineteenth-century “Europe-wide circulation of [national] ideas and a Europe-wide network of intellectuals” engaged in the spread of these ideas.<sup>51</sup>

While Ottoman Armenian intellectuals enthusiastically received and unabashedly subscribed to these imported models emitted by their European counterparts, they did not frame them as

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<sup>48</sup> Հ. Բ. Ե. [Բառնարաս Եսայեան], “Ազգասիրութեան յորդոր,” *Բազմաալէպ* 4, no. 16 (1846): 241.

<sup>49</sup> As one example, see Հ. Ղ. Ս. [Ղեւնդ Ալիշան], “Ազգասիրութիւն,” part 2, *Բազմաալէպ* 7, no. 9 (1849): 129-134.

<sup>50</sup> The terms ազգ (nation) and ազգայնութիւն or ազգութիւն (nationality) were used with overwhelming frequency throughout this period. It is important to note that “nation” is an emic translation, supported by the fact that writers during this period would often put the French *nation* and *nationalité* in parentheses beside these Armenian terms. See, for example, “Հայութիւն եւ կրօնափոխութիւն,” *Ծաղիկ* 3, no. 94 (1864): 254. For the most thoughtful meditation on the semantic shift in the term ազգ, see Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility*, 349-366.

<sup>51</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, 20.

imported. Instead, they consciously linked them to particular periods in the history of the Armenian *ethnie* as a way to endow them with the authenticity that historical rootedness signified within the movement. Time and again, we read intellectuals lamenting the “ignorance” of modern-day Armenians in comparison not only with Western Europe but with their ancient “forebears” (նախնիք): “How the hearts of patriotic [սոցալստեր] people ache when they hear stories of our nation in the earliest times, of how it shone in science, languages, trade and other fields. Why is [the nation] so behind now? Why does it not reclaim [this expertise]? Why is it not equal to well-educated [բարեկիրթ] nations in their spirit of learning and why does it not follow in their good examples?” one intellectual wrote in desperation in 1843.<sup>52</sup> With this historical framing, the social changes that the intelligentsia was demanding of the populace were presented less like a social rupture and more like a reclaiming of cultural patrimony that would help the new national community relive their “glorious” past.<sup>53</sup>

In the process of disseminating these ideas and mobilizing the populace to participate in the new national community, few tools were as functionally and symbolically essential as a ‘national language.’ In the sections that follow, we will examine the ideological significance of language within the cultural nationalist movement and explore how the movement created new expectations for language and how it should be used.

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<sup>52</sup> “Յայտարարութիւն,” Հայրենաստեր 1, no. 1 (1843): 1.

<sup>53</sup> In a clear expression of the attempt to inscribe these ideals into the ethnic past and forge historical continuity, we read an intellectual lament the following in 1847: “How can we be sure that we are the true [հարստաւ] children of our noble forefathers [նախահայրք]? How can foreign nations call us Aramian [a name for the Armenian *ethnie*] when not even a hint of Aram’s love of homeland [հայրենասիրութիւն] and love of learning can be seen among us?” Cited in Աճեմյան, *Գրական արևմտահայերենի ձևափոխումը*, 116. It was very common in this period for cultural nationalists to draw on the ‘forefathers’ or ‘forebears’ to lament the differences between Armenians past and present.

## Reluctant Votes for Vernacularization

The championing of vernacular languages is a hallmark of national movement the world over. The dependence on vernacular languages within national movements is a reflection, as Joshua Fishman notes, “of the need of these elites to communicate with, organize, and activate...still predominantly illiterate populations.”<sup>54</sup> In order to plant roots and grow, cultural nationalist movements depend on an engaged populace and need large swaths of a population to not only subscribe to the ideals of the movement but also to further them. This deliberate turn toward the public helps us to see why a vernacular-based print-language gained champions in this period and why it took on new functions in Ottoman Armenian print culture. While in the previous chapter, we saw its uses confined to schoolbooks and other teaching tools, by the 1840s its uses had expanded to a wider diversity of newspapers as well as books for public instruction in hopes of introducing children and adults alike to the ideals of the national movement and to encourage their participation in the life of the national community.<sup>55</sup>

It was because of this deliberate shift in audience—a shift dictated by the ambitions of cultural nationalist project and importance of the public (հասարակութիւն) in its realization—that the ability to *reach* a large number of readers became more important than ever before. As we have seen, until this period, Classical Armenian had dominated in print and, as knowledge consumption and production had been seen largely as the realm of educated elites, its predominance had gone uncontested. By the 1840s, however, these long prevalent attitudes no longer supported the new vision of the intelligentsia or the ideals it espoused: “From the beginning,

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<sup>54</sup> Joshua A. Fishman, *Language and Nationalism: Two Integrative Essays* (Rowley: Newbury House Publishers, 1973), 41.

<sup>55</sup> For a bibliography of Armenian-language newspapers, see Մ. Ա. Բաբլոյան, *Հայ պարբերական մամուլը. Մասնենագիտական համահավաք ցուցակ (1794-1980)* (Yerevan: Հայկական ՍԱՀ ԳԱ հրատարակչություն, 1986).

there has been no progressive [յառաջադիմ] nation in the world that has attained progress in a language other than the language of ordinary conversation,” one writer mused in 1854, expressing support for vernacularization.<sup>56</sup> Others noted how the continued predominance of a largely incomprehensible print language ran counter to the goal of spreading love of learning, “putting knowledge under lock and key so that the poor and the ignorant cannot taste it.”<sup>57</sup> While there were still certainly advocates in the 1840s and 1850s of using a simple form of Classical Armenian to address the public, many cultural nationalists considered this idea a pipe dream.<sup>58</sup> Not only was it a “nearly dead, forgotten language unknown to the general public,” many intellectuals argued, but its grammar—so distinct from the grammar of many spoken varieties of Armenian—was difficult to master in a short period of time.<sup>59</sup> With the vast majority of the Ottoman Armenian population illiterate, needing to *teach* Classical Armenian was a daunting prospect that the intelligentsia saw as posing an unnecessary obstacle to the quick attainment of progress and enlightenment: “Until that point [of widespread mastery of Classical Armenian] is reached, minds would remain blind. Wouldn’t it be a pity for this generation to be born blind and to die blind?”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, some intellectuals believed that the predominance of Classical Armenian in print was leading members of the would-be national community to turn to other languages entirely, a notion

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<sup>56</sup> Յակոբ Ա. Տիվիթնեան, *Յառաջադիմութիւն սզգային դաստիարակութեան* (Constantinople: n.p., 1854), 16.

<sup>57</sup> “Յայտարարութիւն,” *Շտեմարան պիտանի գիտելեաց* 1, no. 1 (1839): 1.

<sup>58</sup> Not all intellectuals agreed with the expansion of a vernacular form or with its legitimacy as a print-language. For a contemporaneous description of the debate, see “Ազգային լեզուն պահելու վրայ,” *Բազմակէտ* 1, no. 5 (1843), 78-79. For descriptions of this period in linguistic history, see Աճառյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2, 504-568 and Աճեմյան, *Գրական արևմտահայերենի ձևափոխումը*, 102-168. For a sketch of this debate in French, see Nichanian, *Âges et usages*, 323-330.

<sup>59</sup> Գ. [Գրիգոր] Օտեան, *Առաջարկութիւն աշխարհաբար լեզուի վրա* [sic] (Constantinople: Յ. Միւհէնտիսեան տպարանը, 1851), 3-4.

<sup>60</sup> Օտեան, *Առաջարկութիւն*, 5.

that struck fear in the hearts of cultural nationalists for reasons we will explore below.<sup>61</sup> Expanding the functions of the vernacular-based print-language was thus a way to address these concerns.

While vernacularization is often regarded in Armenian historiography as a weapon of reformists against their conservative foes, it should be made clear that using a vernacular-based form of Armenian in print was no intellectual's first choice. It was seen by the vast majority of the intelligentsia at this time—no matter their liberal or conservative leanings—as an unfortunate necessity.<sup>62</sup> “What Armenian does not want to hear their nation speak Classical Armenian [գրաբան]?” wrote Nahabed Rousinian, one of the staunchest advocates for the expansion of the vernacular-based print-language, in 1853. “But what progressive person wants to deceive themselves with false hope in the impossible?”<sup>63</sup> It is therefore critical to note that the purified vernacular was furthered *not* because it was considered in any way superior to the classical language but rather because it was considered an easier and quicker way to reach the public and swiftly realize the goals of the cultural nationalist movement. If the general public was unable to understand the written language, it was argued at the time, “expecting progress from them [was] useless.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Տիվիթճեան, *Յառաջադիմութիւն ազգային դաստիարակութեան*, 15-16.

<sup>62</sup> The editor of *Մասիս*, a long-running newspaper founded in 1852 and often heralded as a vehicle for the spread of Modern Armenian, cautioned readers in 1892 who—having already lost a sense of the linguistic ethos of the mid-nineteenth century—saw him as a liberator of the language from Classical Armenian: “Yes, dear friend, I have been a defender of Modern Armenian [աշխարհաբանեան] out of necessity, but I have been a lover of the language of our forebears [նախնիք] since childhood...” Կ. Ս. Իւթիւնեան, “Աշխարհաբանեան թէ գրաբանեան,” *Մասիս* 41, no. 3963 (1892): 130.

<sup>63</sup> [Նահապետ Ռուսինեան], *Ուղղախօսութիւն արդիի հայ յեզուին* (Constantinople: Յ. Միւհէնտիսեան տպարան, 1853), Թ. Other reformist lay intellectuals of the time exhibited a similar respect for Classical Armenian. See Օտեան, *Առաջարկութիւն*, 4-5 and Ն. [Նիկողայոս] Մ. Չորայեան, *Ընթերցասիրութիւն կամ գիրք կարդալու միջոցաւ մտաւորական մշակութեան հասնելու օգտակար խորատներ* (Constantinople: Ի տպարանի Յովհաննու Միւհէնտիսեան, 1852), 255-256.

<sup>64</sup> [Ռուսինեան], *Ուղղախօսութիւն*, Բ.

But herein lies one of the fundamental paradoxes of the cultural nationalist movement. All while advocating for vernacularization, cultural nationalists were also cultivating Classical Armenian as a source of national dignity, authenticity and distinctiveness. Within the movement, Classical Armenian was a source of պարծանք, a mainstay of the discourse that referred at once to pride, worth, honor, renown, or as I will translate it throughout this chapter, a reason to boast. Cultural nationalist intellectuals were in perpetual search of reasons to boast about the Armenian nation, often reaching far back into history to find them. Boasting was used to court two distinct groups and convince them of the distinctiveness and dignity of the Armenian national community: Europeans and prospective members of the national community. Whether real or imagined, it is clear that much of the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia felt the presence of a European gaze on them and the need to prove their ‘civilization.’<sup>65</sup> But so too did the intelligentsia feel the need to cultivate elements about which to boast in order to persuade prospective members of the nation-to-be that the Armenian national community was worth belonging to. In this pursuit, for reasons that will become clearer below, Classical Armenian became one of the primary resources used by cultural nationalist intellectuals to boast about Armenianness.

Given the function of Classical Armenian within the cultural nationalist movement, the general reluctance to completely abandon the classical language is understandable. But already by 1840s, the utility and popularity of the vernacular-based print language was undeniable. Even ardent proponents of Classical Armenian began using it, albeit begrudgingly.<sup>66</sup> The noted monk-intellectual Arsen Bagratuni wrote candidly about his concerns over such dramatic changes in

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<sup>65</sup> See, for example, “Մէկ ազգի մը լուսաւորութեան...” *Արշարդյս արարաստեան* 1, no. 26 (1841): 2.

<sup>66</sup> For one expression of this reluctance, see “Աշխարհաբառ լեզուն ծաղկեցընելու վրայ,” *Մասնաց աղանի* 2, no. 2 (1856): 26.

writing practices and their possible consequences for Classical Armenian in 1846: “I fear that in no time it will lose its honorable name, because disproportionately more vernacular than Classical Armenian books and other writings are coming out now and, in particular, they are more widely read. This means that the learned of the nation are also abandoning their language and conforming to the uneducated [նաւիկ] for the sake of utility.”<sup>67</sup> These comments were, in essence, a swan song for the Mekhitarist project.

The function of Classical Armenian within the cultural nationalist movement can also help us explain the intensification of archaizing purism in this period. While, in the previous chapter, archaizing purism was first and foremost a teaching tool, here it takes on new significance as a way to ‘nationalize’ the print-language and infuse it with the dignity, authenticity and distinctiveness that Classical Armenian represented. “The basis of the vernacular language [աշխարհաբան լեզու] of our nation is Classical Armenian and the irregularity and insipidity of our vernacular language today are due to the foreign words in it,” we read in from 1855. “Therefore, anyone who wants to help purify and beautify it only needs to remove from it the foreign and illegitimate [խրթ] words and styles and, as much as possible, replace them with classical words and styles to bring the language we use closer to the original language of our blessed forebears [մեր երանաշնորհ նախնեաց բուն լեզու].”<sup>68</sup> Given the focus on the public, it may seem counterintuitive that cultural nationalists actively worked to draw the vernacular-based print-language closer to a classical language incomprehensible to that very public. But the ideological function of Classical Armenian within the cultural nationalist movement helps put this

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<sup>67</sup> Հ. Արս. Բ [Արսէն Բագրատունի], “Հայերէն գրաբան լեզուի յստակութեան վրայ,” *Բագրատունի* 4, no. 13 (1846): 196. Ironically, Bagratuni expressed this concern in the very language form he feared.

<sup>68</sup> “Ազգային,” *Մասիս* 4, no. 157 (1855): 3.

choice in perspective and allows us to see how the print-language was a compromise between Classical Armenian and spoken language (նախօրէն), a compromise that would uphold the venerable position of Classical Armenian as a symbolic resource within the cultural-nationalist movement while at the same time creating a quasi-vernacular medium that could facilitate the spread love of learning, love of reading and love of nation within the public to ultimately achieve national progress and enlightenment.<sup>69</sup>

### **Advancing the Concept of a National Language**

This linguistic tug-of-war created uncertainty over what should constitute the ‘national language’ within the Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalist movement. The concept of a ‘national language’ emerges for the first time during this period and quickly gains traction among the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia. A national language is, of course, not a given but rather one of many discursive constructs cultivated as part of the project of nation-building.<sup>70</sup> It is only through “a complex process of cultural innovation, involving hard ideological labor, careful propaganda, and a creative imagination” that national languages emerge and come to be perceived as the truest and most authentic expressions of national identity.<sup>71</sup> If a national language should be the truest and most authentic expression of national identity, intellectuals wondered, should we not hold up Classical Armenian as our national language? But if we are to be considered ‘civilized’ and ‘modern’ on the world’s stage, should we not hold up our vernacular-based print-language instead? The intelligentsia was caught between these two questions for more than twenty years and their

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<sup>69</sup> Օտեւան, *Առաջարկություններ*, 11.

<sup>70</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 54.

<sup>71</sup> Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, “Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation,” in *Becoming National: A Reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7.

uncertainty is reflected in the ambiguous and inconsistent ways the term ‘national language’ is used throughout this period.

The concept of a ‘national’ language first emerged in Europe in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>72</sup> While we certainly found Mekhitar and his followers in the previous chapter using language as a force for unity, their conceptualization of language was quite different from what we find in the mid-nineteenth century. While like in Phase A of many national movements, the Mekhitarists celebrated, defended and “improved” language, they did not view it as an expression of a ‘national’ character or demand that Armenians love it, as we see in Phase B.<sup>73</sup> In short, early Mekhitarist and Enlightenment patriotic work were not imbued with the Romantic notions that dominate conceptions of language during this national phase. These conceptions revolve most significantly around the idea that language conveyed the enduring and authentic “spirit” of a nation. By the mid-nineteenth century, this idea had taken hold across Western Europe and beyond, permeating the thought and practice of the period.<sup>74</sup> Under the influence of this ideology, we find language no longer merely a tool for communication but rather an object of awareness, the preeminent marker of national belonging and the basis of identity for national communities.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Otto Dann, “The Invention of National Languages,” in *Unity and Diversity in European Culture, c. 1800*, eds. Tim Blanning and Hagen Schulze (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 131.

<sup>73</sup> Hroch, *In the National Interest*, 71 and Leerssen, *National Thought*, 140.

<sup>74</sup> On the origins of national thought, see Umut Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (London: Palgrave, 2017), 11-18 and Erica Benner, “Nationalism: Intellectual Origins,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, ed. John Breuilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 36-55.

<sup>75</sup> For more on the impact of “national language” on identity formation in Europe, see Anne-Marie Thiesse, *The Creation of National Identities: Europe, 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, trans. Brian McNeil (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022), 49-60; Brian Vick, “Language and Nation: National Identity and the Civic-Ethnic Typology,” in *What Is a Nation? Europe, 1789-1914*, eds. Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 155-170; and John E. Joseph, *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 92-131.

Keen observers of Western Europe, it is no surprise that we hear echoes of these Romantic notions that language is “the main sign of nationality [ազգութիւն]” and “each nation is distinguished by its own language” in Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalist discourse.<sup>76</sup> In the 1820s and 1830s, we sporadically read in the work of certain Ottoman Armenian writers calls to use the ‘national language’ (read: Classical Armenian) as an expression of love of nation.<sup>77</sup> But it was only in the 1840s that the Armenian language became an ideologically charged pillar of the cultural nationalist movement and that all respectable members of the new national community were expected to show their love of nation through a more careful and deliberate use of the national language. This new national duty manifested in two ways: (1) those who already knew a form of Armenian needed to expunge Turkish lexical borrowings from it, replacing them with Classical Armenian equivalents and (2) those who did *not* know any form of Armenian needed to learn one—precisely which one was rarely specified—and use it as their home language.<sup>78</sup>

As the ideology of purism was now tied to a movement that saw language as the ultimate expression of national character, the targeting of Turkish words that we saw in the previous chapter became much more systematic and the hostility to borrowings much fiercer. By the 1840s, rare were publications that included any kind of unselfconscious borrowings from Turkish.<sup>79</sup> The

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<sup>76</sup> “Ազգային լեզուն պահելու վրայ,” <sup>77</sup> and “Ազգային,” *Հայաստան* 1, no. 5 (1846): 2. For more contemporaneous expressions of language as the foremost identity marker, see Անեմյան, *Գրական արևմտահայերենի ձևավորումը*, 108-111.

<sup>77</sup> Յովնանեան, *Վարժություն մանկանց*, 175-182 and Փեշարմապեան, *Կրթություն քաղաքավարության*, 122-136.

<sup>78</sup> “Աշխարհաբառ լեզուի վրայ,” *Բազմավեպ* 1, no. 7 (1843): 109-111. The intelligentsia hoped that “purified” written language would, in time, become a model for spoken language. In this period there was a sense that only the learned spoke “a pure vernacular that did not use any Turkish words.” See *Ջրասարան մանկանց*, [2].

<sup>79</sup> One of the final examples of a book that includes unselfconscious and unmarked borrowings from Turkish, in the style of many of the Mekhitarists’ early purified vernacular materials, was published in 1834 and helps illustrate the 1830s as the transitional period in terms of purism between Phase A and Phase B of the national movement. *Քեղեցիկ զբոսարան* (Ortaköy: Ի սպարանի Պօղոսի արապեան սպուշեխցւոյ, 1834). The author dubs this variety լեզու կոստանդնուպօլտյ, or the ‘language of Constantinople.’

*symbolic* function of language, in other words, now far outweighed the *communicative* functions of language and all ideas needed to be passed through the filter of purism and have their familiar borrowings strained before being put to print. In this way, the ethos of cultural nationalism transformed once ordinary and unremarkable features of language use into the foremost markers of “laziness” and “carelessness” as well as a general “hatred of the nation.”<sup>80</sup> The reading public was inundated with appeals to use ‘pure’ Armenian and those who continued to use Turkish borrowings were now lambasted for “demolishing the foundation of their nationality [ազգութիւն].”<sup>81</sup>

Purism, in other words, was now a national duty. Stigmatizing and removing “non-national” elements from written language—the form over which cultural nationalists had the most control—was thus a way to distance the national community in the making from these negative qualities and embody a love of nation. Purity of language also became a way to project an air of “civilization” *à l’européenne*. In this way, it also allowed the intelligentsia to perform their progress and enlightenment and prove to themselves and to the—real or imagined—European gaze that Armenians were on the path to becoming a ‘civilized nation.’<sup>82</sup> Projecting these ideals back into the past, the examples of the “forebears” were commonly evoked as models to emulate as, in the cultural nationalist retelling of history, they had the utmost respect for their “mother tongue” and took the utmost care in maintaining its purity.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Չօրայեան, *Ընթերցասիրութիւն*, 252, 259.

<sup>81</sup> “Յառաջադիմութիւն ազգային,” *Արշարոյս սրարատեան* 5, no. 217 (1844): 3-4.

<sup>82</sup> Պօղոս Յովնանեան, *Մարդկային լեզուին սկզբան, հանգամանաց, միտջեան ու բաժանման եւ ազգային լեզուաց վրայ քննական տեսութիւն մը* (Vienna: Պաշտպան Ս. Աստուածածնի վանքը, 1857), 115-116.

<sup>83</sup> Յովնանեան, *Մարդկային լեզուին սկզբան*, 125-126.

The same ideas about language that led to calls for linguistic purity also manifested in initiatives designed to force a shift in the long-standing language practices of non-Armenophone Armenians. Illustrating both the acceptance of Romantic conceptions of language and nationhood and the preoccupation with a European gaze, one writer noted with dismay that European travelers in the Ottoman Empire have noticed and are pained by the fact that “some of us are on the verge of forgetting the Armenian language.”<sup>84</sup> Similarly, another writer claimed that the same travelers would often insist that “Armenians are practically Turks” because “in many cities Armenians do not know any Armenian and generally speak Turkish.”<sup>85</sup> To assert their distinctiveness to the foreign gaze and “boast” about their nation, the author argued that Armenians needed to know Armenian, which, for him and others, had become “the main sign of establishing their Armenianness [հայ ըլլալ].”<sup>86</sup> It is in the 1840s that we start to see this national-language discourse put into practice in Armenian communities that had spoken Arabic, Kurdish and Turkish for centuries in hopes of having them conform to the new language ideology of the day.<sup>87</sup> Framed as having “lost” or “forgotten their mother tongue,” the children in pockets of these communities were sporadically targets of educational programs that sought to imprint on them the new badge of identity and teach them to exemplify the ideals of the cultural nationalist movement.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> “Ազգային լեզուն՝ ազգային յառաջադիմութեան գլխաւոր միջոցն է,” part 1, *Երոսյու* 3, no. 17 (1849): 68.

<sup>85</sup> “Ազգային,” *Հայաստան* 1, no. 5 (1846): 2.

<sup>86</sup> “Ազգային,” *Հայաստան* 1, no. 5 (1846): 2.

<sup>87</sup> While cultural nationalists spared no harsh word for bilingual Armenians who *chose* not to use Armenian, they mostly expressed pity toward long-standing non-Armenophone communities. See, for example, “Յորդոր վերձանութեան լրագրաց,” *Արշաղոյս արարատեան* 8, no. 305 (1848): 3.

<sup>88</sup> For more on these initiatives, see Manoukian, “Cultural Nationalism,” 364-371.

It is important to emphasize that cultural nationalists were not trying to impose monolingualism on Ottoman Armenians. During this period, they readily acknowledged the indispensability of Ottoman and European languages for the prosperity of the would-be national community and explicitly encouraged multilingualism. Acquiring European languages—especially French, “the universal language of civilized nations”—was seen as a means of accessing the knowledge needed to spur national progress.<sup>89</sup> French was also described as “the one and only path through which to communicate with educated nations [կրթեալ ազգեր] and for us to convey their knowledge to our nation, through which we too can enter the ranks of the educated nations.”<sup>90</sup> Turkish, on the other hand, was the language of state power and was considered essential in everyday life and for business within the Empire.<sup>91</sup> Contrasting sharply with perceptions of Turkish among Armenians in the post-Ottoman period, the idea that “the Turkish language is the most important and necessary for us after our mother tongue” was quite commonplace in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>92</sup> This urging to continue using and acquiring other languages existed with the caveat, however, that the “national language” should not only be *included* in every Armenian’s linguistic repertoire but that it should also occupy a preeminent position.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Paschal Aucher, *Dictionnaire abrégé français-arménien*, vol. 1 (Venice: Imprimerie de l’Académie arménienne de S. Lazare de Venise, 1812), 3.

<sup>90</sup> “Լեզուազգետներուն պարտականութիւնը,” *Երեսակ* 4, no. 37 (1858): 16.

<sup>91</sup> These were intra-imperial perceptions. See Strauss, “Language and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire,” 115-142 and Laurent Mignon, “French in Ottoman Turkey: ‘The Language of the Afflicted Peoples?’” in *European Francophonie: The Social, Political and Cultural History of an International Prestige Language*, eds. Vladislav Rjéoutski, Gesine Argent and Derek Offord (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), 405-434.

<sup>92</sup> “Տանկերէն լեզուն...” *Մասիս* 11, no. 521 (1862): 4. See also Պօղոս Յովնանեան, *Առաջնորդ դաստիարակութեան առանձինն ծնողաց հասնար* (Vienna: Մխիթարեանց տպարան, 1862), 63.

<sup>93</sup> Բժշկեան, *Հնոսություն մանկանց*, 31-32; Յովնանեան, *Վարժություն մանկանց*, 179-180; Հ. Ղ. Մ. [Ղեւոնդ Ալիշան], “Լեզուագիտութիւն,” 292; and “Ազգային լեզուն ազգային յառաջադիմութեան գլխաւոր միջոցն է,” part 3, *Երոսպա* 3, no. 20 (1849): 80.

## National Language and the Fear of Assimilation

The cultural-nationalist approach to language was predicated on the idea that knowledge and use of the national language could transmit or preserve a sense of Armenianness and ward off the disappearance of the nation. It was for this reason that knowing Armenian came to be considered an obligation for all members of the would-be national community during this period, no matter their confession. With language seen as evidence of nationality (ազգութիւն), intellectuals reasoned that knowing and using Armenian was a way for each Armenian to do his or her part in ensuring that the Armenian *ethnie* would endure in its new national form: “What preserves the existence of a nation?” a writer asked in 1849. “Only its language. After religion, religious forms and practices, customs and tastes change, nationality [ազգայնութիւն] can still remain as long as the language remains. But after the language is lost, the stuff of the nation is gone, erased and left without a trace.”<sup>94</sup>

As language was conceived as the very stuff of the nation, rejecting it by using borrowings or adopting other languages entirely became tantamount to treachery and was seen as putting the very survival of the national community in jeopardy.<sup>95</sup> Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalist intellectuals, like their counterparts elsewhere in the world, were terrified of the “death” of the nation and saw reticence to use the national language as leading straight to its demise.<sup>96</sup> They often

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<sup>94</sup> “Ազգային լեզուն՝ ազգային յանաջադիմութեան գլխաւոր միջոցն է,” part 1, 68. Nearly the exact same idea is expressed in “Ազգային լեզուն պահելու համար,” 76. It comes as no surprise that some of the most vocal proponents of language as a marker of national identity were monks from the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Congregation. According to earlier definitions of Armenian identity, they were outside the bounds of Armenianness because of their ‘abandonment’ of the Armenian Apostolic Church. This language-based definition—at least theoretically—allowed them to be considered equally Armenian.

<sup>95</sup> “Յանաջադիմութիւն ազգային,” 3-4.

<sup>96</sup> Hroch, *In the National Interest*, 88-89.

wielded shame in hopes of fostering its use and changing language practices.<sup>97</sup> “Not knowing one’s language is a great misfortune; not wanting to know it is inexcusable negligence; but knowing it and not wanting to speak it is unhuman and nation-hating,” we read in 1852.<sup>98</sup> Following this logic, the preference for and reliance on languages other than Armenian now came to be seen as a symbol of the precarity of the national community in the making and leading directly to assimilation into other national communities.

Assimilation was a source of great anxiety for the Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalist intelligentsia. Assimilation in the form of a willing distancing from Armenian identity was not new to the nineteenth century and had often gone hand in hand with conversion to Islam or Catholicism.<sup>99</sup> Since the early 1700s, conversion to Catholicism in particular had been particularly disquieting for the Apostolic ecclesiastical hierarchy, as it was seen as a direct route to assimilation and the loss of an Armenian identity.<sup>100</sup> As we have seen many times over in this chapter, the cultural nationalist movement imbued existing phenomena with new meaning; in this case, assimilation, once unfortunate but unremarkable, now become a representation of a national community in decline. Furthermore, as Leerssen notes, from in a national context, “to lose one’s national identity was to lose one’s soul; to be true to one’s national identity became, more than

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<sup>97</sup> In the 1840s and 1850s, it was very common to read that it was dishonorable or “shameful [սւժօթ] for anyone not to know their mother tongue and an outrage to be able to learn and to choose not to.” Հ. Ղ. Մ. [Դեռնդ Ալիշան], “Լեզուսզիտութիւն,” 296.

<sup>98</sup> Չօրայեան, *Ընթերցասիրտութիւն*, 252.

<sup>99</sup> The decision to convert was many times more for socioeconomic mobility than spiritual reasons. See Elyse Semerdjian, “Armenian Women, Legal Bargaining, and Gendered Politics of Conversion in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Aleppo,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 12, no. 1 (2016): 9. For a non-alarmist account of cultural assimilation on the eve of Phase B of the cultural nationalist movement, see Դուկաս Ինճինեան, *Հնասխօսութիւն սշխարհագրական հարաստաննայց սշխարհի*, vol. 1 (Venice: Ի տպարանի սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1835), 368-371.

<sup>100</sup> Aral, *Arméniens catholiques*, 119.

ever before, a moral, ethical duty.”<sup>101</sup> The first step on the path to assimilation, as the new thinking went, was not using Armenian, as the intelligentsia believed strongly in the idea that those who did not know “the language of their nation” would “have the same ideas as the nation whose language they [spoke].”<sup>102</sup>

This anxiety was fueled by concerns about the contemporaneous—and largely eager—assimilation of Catholic Armenians both within the Ottoman Empire and beyond it. By the 1840s, many Catholic Armenians in Eastern Europe had assimilated into Latin Catholic communities, adopted local languages and, in the case of Armenians in Transylvania, had adopted a Hungarian national consciousness.<sup>103</sup> During this period, Armenians in Eastern Europe were used as a cautionary tale to illustrate what would happen if Ottoman Armenians did not strive “to preserve and advance the national language.”<sup>104</sup> In the same period, we see similar concerns about Catholic Armenians in Smyrna and Constantinople. Since the eighteenth century, some Catholic Armenians, “no longer desiring to be considered Armenian,” had been joining the Latin rite, insinuating themselves into local Levantine Latin Catholic communities and adopting languages

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<sup>101</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, 112.

<sup>102</sup> Հ. Ղ. Մ. [Ղեւոնդ Ալիշան], “Ազգասիրութիւն,” part 2, 130.

<sup>103</sup> Judit Pál, “Armenians in Transylvania: From Settlement to Integration,” in *Far Away from Mount Ararat: Armenian Culture in the Carpathian Basin*, eds. Bálint Kovács and Emese Pál (Budapest: National Széchényi Library, 2013), 15-16. This assimilation process had begun centuries earlier in other parts of Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland. See Aral, *Arméniens catholiques*, 287-314.

<sup>104</sup> Յովնանեան, *Մարդկային լեզուին սկզբան*, 136-138.

other than Armenian as their dominant modes of communication—much to the chagrin of the intelligentsia.<sup>105 106</sup>

This social reality—one in which the eager shedding of Armenian and the use of Turkish borrowings among Armenian speakers were pervasive—was a cause for tremendous distress among the intelligentsia because of its implications for achieving the ideals of the cultural nationalist movement: “If we want national progress for the whole nation,” we read in 1849, “we cannot succeed without our Armenian national language.”<sup>107</sup> In order to succeed, however, the intelligentsia needed to address head-on one of the major obstacles to the spread of the national language: negative attitudes toward Armenian.

### **Negative Attitudes Toward the National Language**

Throughout this period, we read with startling frequency about the preference among Ottoman Armenians for Turkish, French, Greek, Italian—any language but the national language. In this new national climate, this preference, once of little concern, was now the ultimate expression of “disdain” (սքանախախտ) for the nation and an existential problem in need of a

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<sup>105</sup> Aral, *Arméniens catholiques*, 216-217. There were Latinizing and Armenizing factions within nineteenth-century Armenian Catholicism. Latinizers were known for their vehement rejection of Armenianness, including language. Leaders of the Armenizing faction, the Mekhitarists worked tirelessly to push back against this trend among Latinizers, particularly through their schoolbooks. “Smart people should not renounce their nation and language. Not knowing their language is shameful. Renouncing their nation is foolish,” we find in a reading passage in a children’s alphabet primer. See *Նոր այբբենարան եւ հեղեղէն հայերէն շխալ հեղել սորվելու* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1850), 76. On these factions, see Dermarkar, *Arméniens et catholiques*, 143 and passim.

<sup>106</sup> Levantine is an etic term to describe Catholics of European extraction (French, Italian, etc.) who lived in urban Ottoman centers, particularly Constantinople and Smyrna. In the mid-nineteenth century, Catholic Armenians who aspired to assimilate into this group called themselves Franks, and in Constantinople also, *pérotés* (բերտօղ) in reference to the city’s European district, Pera, where many Levantines lived. Տիվիթնեան, *Յառաջադիմունքիս*, 16 and Marie-Carmen Smyrnelis, “Les Arméniens catholiques de Smyrne aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles,” *Revue du monde arménien moderne et contemporain* 2 (1995-1996): 25-44. Demotic Greek was known as the *lingua franca* among Levantines, but it remains to be determined the extent to which it was adopted by Catholics shedding their Armenian identities. See Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Les Levantins : Cadres de vie et identités d’un groupe ethno-confessionnel de l’Empire ottoman au ‘long’ 19e siècle*, trans. Jean-François de Andria (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 2007), 336-338.

<sup>107</sup> “Ազգային լեզուն՝ ազգային յառաջադիմութեան գլխաւոր միջոցն է,” part 1, 68.

solution. As early as the late eighteenth century, concerns about a general lack of knowledge and interest in Armenian and about “the taste for the foreign becoming sweeter” begin to surface in print.<sup>108</sup> As one Mekhitarist monk put it in 1810, Armenians “do not know their language like they know other languages.”<sup>109</sup> By the 1840s, appeals like Tsolag’s start appearing regularly in the press in hopes of showing Ottoman Armenians the error of their ways and of convincing them to treat their national language with respect not only by using it but by *treasuring* it.<sup>110</sup> But what were the perceptions of Armenian that necessitated this linguistic PR campaign in the first place?<sup>111</sup>

First and foremost, most consistently referenced at this time was Armenian’s lack of utility, in both its classical and spoken forms. Armenian was largely a communal language and had few uses outside the scholarly and domestic spheres. “Knowing the language of the capital or of the empire is necessary,” one intellectual reported hearing in 1843. “What benefit is there in knowing Armenian?”<sup>112</sup> For those with money on the mind, Armenian was considered useless in helping them make a living and, thus, had little worth.<sup>113</sup> This lack of utility led certain parents to opt out of Armenian education and to teach their children more widely used languages from childhood to

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<sup>108</sup> Cited in Ճեմնեմեան, “Սուրբ Ղազարի տպարանին ծնունդը,” part 2, 265. See also Իննինեան, *Եղանակ քիզանդեան բազմալէպ 1815*, 114.

<sup>109</sup> Աւգերեան, *Դեղ կենսաց*, 312.

<sup>110</sup> These texts often enumerate the benefits of learning Armenian and refute many of the commonly cited arguments against its use. See, for example, Մ. Ա. Ճաֆնաֆեան, “Հայերէն խօսելուն հարկաւորութիւնը ու օգուտը,” *Հայաստան* 3, no. 35-140 (1849): 1-2; “Ազգային լեզուն ազգային յառաջադիմութեան գլխաւոր միջոցն է,” part 4, *Երոսպա* 3, no. 22 (1849): 88; and Հ. Ղ. Մ. [Բեւոնդ Ալիշան], “Լեզուագիտութիւն,” 296-298.

<sup>111</sup> For one of the most succinct summaries of these perceptions, see “Խորհրդածութիւնք ազգային լեզուի վրայ,” part 5, *Երոսպա* 6, no. 25 (1852): 98.

<sup>112</sup> “Ազգային լեզուն պահելու վրայ,” 77.

<sup>113</sup> “Ազգային լեզուն՝ ազգային յառաջադիմութեան գլխաւոր միջոցն է,” part 1, 68.

help their economic prospects.<sup>114</sup> As Armenian language-education at this time was focused exclusively on the grammar of Classical Armenian, many parents did not see the value or necessity in sending their children to school to study a “dead and pointless” language for years on end.<sup>115</sup> After all, they argued, learning “the nominative and the genitive do not fill the belly.”<sup>116</sup> This reasoning was a source of particular frustration for cultural nationalists and proved difficult to counter.

Second, and relatedly, Armenian was considered a language of political weakness, social inferiority and femininity. Sociolinguistic research shows us that there is nothing *inherent* in the structures of a language that makes one superior to another; attitudes about a language are, in fact, proxies for attitudes about the social group with which a language is associated.<sup>117</sup> In the Ottoman period, Armenian was not the language of the dominant social group nor was it associated with any of the trappings of political might. Time and again, Armenian was disparaged for not being the language of a king or a kingdom, grounds for certain Ottomans Armenians to dismiss it as weak and unimportant.<sup>118</sup> So too was Armenian perceived as a language of a people that was “neither educated, nor rich, nor formidable,” which led the multilingual and upwardly mobile to

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<sup>114</sup> “Ազգային լեզուն ազգային յառաջադիմութեան գլխաւոր միջոցն է,” part 3, 80 and Տիգրան Հ. Թ. Սաւալան, *Կենսագրական յուշեր* (Cairo: Տպագրութիւն Ս. Դարբինեան, 1900), 40. Sanjian describes a similar preference for foreign-language education among parents in Ottoman Aleppo and Jerusalem. Avedis K. Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 83, 90.

<sup>115</sup> Յովնանեան, *Վարժութիւն մանկանց*, 179.

<sup>116</sup> *Յայտարարութիւն ազգային նենարանի սրբոյ Երուսաղէմի որ յԻւսթիւսար* (Constantinople: Տպագրեալ ի նենարանի, 1840), 9.

<sup>117</sup> Milroy, “Sociolinguistics and Ideologies in Language History,” 572-575.

<sup>118</sup> See, for example, “Ազգասէր մարդ չկայ,” *Միտլթիւն* 1, no. 17 (1860): 133.

emulate the linguistic behavior of groups with greater social cachet.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, as a language of the domestic sphere, Armenian was also seen as the province of children and women, who were still very much considered the weaker sex in the nineteenth century.<sup>120</sup> Alongside this gender dimension, a class dimension can also be discerned. Armenian was spoken much more readily by Armenians in the eastern provinces of the Empire, who were making their way to the capital in larger numbers in the early to mid-nineteenth century and bringing their language practices with them. To urbanites, Armenian came to be associated with these servants, porters and other labor migrants, exacerbating the perception of the language and its speakers more generally as lowly, pitiable and generally lacking prestige.<sup>121</sup> For these reasons, many multilingual Ottoman Armenians saw other languages as more fitting of the social stature they either possessed or aspired to possess.

Finally, the perceived lowliness and inferiority of Armenian—particularly spoken Armenian—was compounded by the perception that it was not a complete, fully fledged or self-sufficient language because of its reliance on borrowings. By the mid-nineteenth century, speaking a borrowing-laden form of Armenian had become a source of embarrassment in certain circles.<sup>122</sup> But while cultural nationalists were self-conscious of borrowings for national reasons, self-consciousness beyond the intelligentsia stemmed from a much more practical social concern:

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<sup>119</sup> “Ազգային,” *Հայաստան* 1, no. 5 (1846): 2. The social cachet of Turkish, in particular, may have also been a factor in the language’s adoption by Armenian converts to Catholicism as a way to differentiate themselves from members of the Armenian Apostolic Church and to mark their—actual or aspirational—social ascent.

<sup>120</sup> Ճաֆնաֆեան, “Հայերէն խօսելուն հարկաւորութիւնը ու օգուտը,” 2 and Լեւոն Մկրտիչեան, “Անտարբերութիւն դէպի մայրենի լեզուն,” *Ծաղիկ* 2, no. 3 (1891): 26.

<sup>121</sup> See, for example,” Հ. Ղ. Մ. [Հայր Ղեւոնդ Ալիշան], “Ազգասիրութիւն,” part 2, 130; “Խորհրդածութիւնք ազգային լեզուի վրայ,” part 4, *Երոսպա* 6, no. 22 (1852): 87-88; and “Կեաւոր եւ պօքնի,” *Յաներժստարս* 1, no. 12 (1862): 97-98.

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, “Ազգային լեզուն պահելու վրայ,” 80.

ridicule by their fellow Ottoman subjects.<sup>123</sup> As one writer noted in 1829, “Oftentimes we have seen and we know that foreign nations ridicule us when, as we are speaking, we mix words from their languages into our speech. They make fun of us by saying, ‘What a shame you made an effort to speak Armenian, when much of what you were saying we understood!’”<sup>124</sup> Many Ottoman Armenians likely reasoned that the safest way to escape the mockery of their fellow Ottoman subjects was to avoid using Armenian altogether.

But this avoidance did not serve the cultural nationalist movement. In order to dispel these prevailing attitudes toward Armenian and remove barriers to its use, we find cultural nationalists in this period actively working to raise the status of contemporaneous forms of Armenian in the eyes of Armenians themselves. While they could do little to increase its social utility, they targeted their efforts toward raising its prestige and removing grounds for ridicule, seeking to turn it into a medium of expression that Armenians would be eager and proud to use. In a word, they sought to prompt a fundamental shift in language attitudes and counter the preconception that nineteenth-century Armenian was, in the words of one writer, “weak, ugly, undignified, impoverished, and in a word, a black stain on the face of an ancient nation.”<sup>125</sup> Their tool in this project was Classical Armenian.

### **Classical Armenian as a Source of National Dignity**

Within the cultural nationalist movement, Classical Armenian was cultivated as a preeminent source of national dignity, distinctiveness and authenticity. Authenticity is a key concept within national movements on the whole and is tethered to the historicist framework out of which cultural

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<sup>123</sup> Ճաֆնաֆեան, “Հայերէն խօսելուն հարկաւորութիւնը ու օգուտը,” 1.

<sup>124</sup> Փեշտըմպալեան, *Կրթութիւն քաղաքակրթութեան*, 131.

<sup>125</sup> Այսընեան, *Քննական քերականութիւն*, 261. This book is composed of a preface and grammar section, each paginated separately. In this chapter, all references are to the preface unless otherwise indicated.

nationalism emerged as a social and intellectual movement. Joep Leerssen identifies “the historicist belief that all culture must be seen as an organic tradition linking generations across centuries” as one of the major conceptual novelties of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and as having direct bearing on the development of national thought in Europe.<sup>126</sup> In Europe and beyond, nationalists went in search of a history for their modern nations, crafted one that was long and proud, and worked to spread a historical consciousness in the nation-to-be.<sup>127</sup> Anthony Smith has called this broader phenomenon the creation of a “usable past,” emphasizing the extent to which nationalist intellectuals have appropriated and reinterpreted history to address modern needs and concerns.<sup>128</sup>

Like humanists in European national movements, the Mekhitarists also began developing many of the major themes that would later be taken up by national movements.<sup>129</sup> Some of the most significant themes for our purposes are the figures of the ‘forebears’ and the focus on Classical Armenian. While their work, as Khachig Tölölyan has aptly noted, “gave the Armenian people the luxury of a textual continuity,” the Mekhitarists had not claimed to offer these texts, the people who wrote them or the language they were written in as sources of authenticity for the

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<sup>126</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, 126.

<sup>127</sup> John Hutchinson, “Myth against Myth: The Nation as Ethnic Overlay,” in *History and National Destiny: Ethnosymbolism and its Critics*, eds. Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 112-113 and Stefan Berger, “Introduction: Towards a Global History of National Historiographies,” in *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective*, ed. Stefan Berger (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1.

<sup>128</sup> Anthony Smith, “The ‘Golden Age’ and National Renewal,” in *Myths and Nationhood*, eds. Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin (New York: Routledge, 1997), 37-39.

<sup>129</sup> Berger, “Introduction: Towards a Global History of National Historiographies,” 4.

eighteenth-century Armenian.<sup>130</sup> It was only in the national period, under the influence of Romantic thought, that these themes were coopted as national patrimony, framed as specimens of national authenticity and cultivated as sources of national dignity.

Reinterpreting the work of the Mekhitarists, cultural nationalists made use of Classical Armenian and the figures of the ‘forebears’ in their campaign to change attitudes about Armenian and encourage its use in the nineteenth century. In so doing, they developed two narratives about the language in hopes of raising the prestige of all forms of Armenian, past and present. These narratives were crafted to give Armenians a reason to ‘boast’ about their ‘national language’ and engender a sense of belonging to the nation-in-the-making. “For the philologist, knowing and using the national language is the first thing to boast about. For any urbanite, being embarrassed about using the language of their nation is the first thing to be embarrassed about,” we read in 1843, highlighting the disconnect between the intelligentsia and the general public.<sup>131</sup> These narratives were an attempt to close this gap, lead Armenians to accept the ‘national language’ and convince them of how fortunate they would indeed be to call themselves members of the Armenian national community.<sup>132</sup>

First, cultural nationalists developed the narrative that Classical Armenian was a divine language. Asserting the divinity of a ‘national language’ was a common trope in national

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<sup>130</sup> Khachig Tölölyan, “Textual Nation: Poetry and Nationalism in Armenian Political Culture,” in *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 98.

<sup>131</sup> “Ազգային լեզուն պահելու համար,” 80.

<sup>132</sup> “Ազգային,” Հայաստան 1, no. 5 (1846): 2. In a very clear attempt to convince the skeptical or indifferent of the worthiness of Armenian national belonging, we read the following from 1849: “If you were nationless, which nation would you want to be from?...I do not doubt that you would want to be from the nation of Armenia. Why?... Because in it you will find such ancient reasons to boast, such ancient nobility, such episodes before which empire and other fleeting glories seem like nothing.” See [Ղևոնդ Ալիշան], “Ազգասիրություն,” part 1, *Բազմալեզու* 7, no. 7 (1849): 100.

movements, lending an aura of distinctiveness and dignity to a language and national community in the making.<sup>133</sup> In the previous chapter, we read Mekhitar assert that Classical Armenian was a post-Babelian language. In this period, cultural nationalists doubled down on its supposed primordiality by advancing the idea that Classical Armenian was the ‘original’ language of God, Adam and Noah and the only language spoken on Earth before the confusion of tongues at Babel.<sup>134</sup> In this way, Classical Armenian was treated as “singular special gift...bestowed by providence through which [the nation] can boast and find comfort.”<sup>135</sup> Through this logic, mid-nineteenth-century Armenians were put forth as the bearers of the ‘original’ language, an idea that was repeated with gusto throughout this period and treated as a feather in the cap of the Armenian national community.<sup>136</sup>

Second, cultural nationalists developed the narrative that Classical Armenian was the product of a Golden Age in Armenian history and was thus the most authentic form of the Armenian language. A Golden Age is a common nationalist construct that serves “to re-establish roots and continuity, as well as authenticity and dignity, among a population that is being formed into a nation, and thereby to act as a guide and model for national destiny.”<sup>137</sup> In the Armenian

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<sup>133</sup> Anthony D. Smith, “Biblical Beliefs in the Shaping of Modern Nations,” *Nations and Nationalism* 21, no. 3 (2015): 403-422.

<sup>134</sup> Բժշկեան, <մտորթին մանկանց, 25-26; “Հայոց լեզուին հնութիւնը,” *Բազմալէս* 2, no. 21 (1844): 335-336; and Մանուէլ Բաջունի, <նախօսութիւն Հայաստանի (Venice: Ի տպարանի սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1855), 232-233. Robert Thomson notes that there is no evidence of this claim being made in early Armenian writing. Robert W. Thomson, “The Armenian Image in Classical Texts,” in *The Armenian Image in History and Literature*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1981), 25.

<sup>135</sup> “Ազգային,” *Հայաստան* 1, no. 5 (1846): 2.

<sup>136</sup> This myth appears to have originated with, or at least to have been popularized by, Mikayel Chamchian in the 1780s. See Nichanian, “Enlightenment and Historical Thought,” 106, footnote 51 and Panossian, “The Past as Nation,” 127-128.

<sup>137</sup> Smith, “Golden Age,” 59. On the Mekhitarist interest in ‘Golden Age’ Classical Armenian during this period, see Գրիգորիս Գալեմբարեան, *Ոսկեդարեան եւ ոչ-ոսկեդարեան հայերէնի խնդիրը* (Constantinople: n.p, 1903), 15-33

context, cultural nationalist intellectuals turned their Golden Age into a period of intellectual effervescence and told nineteenth-century Armenians that they were heirs to this ‘glorious’ past.<sup>138</sup> For their own purposes, they also turned their Golden Age into a period of linguistic homogeneity, claiming that all Armenians at that time knew Classical Armenian and that, as their heirs, they should follow in their example.<sup>139</sup> Centered—albeit vaguely—in the fifth century of the common era, the Golden Age was cultivated around the invention of the Armenian alphabet and the first examples of written expression in the new alphabet.<sup>140</sup> Many of these texts were included in the ‘forebear canon’ we saw in the previous chapter.<sup>141</sup> As the language of expression of the ‘forebears,’ Classical Armenian saw its status rise by association.<sup>142</sup>

In cultivating Classical Armenian as a source of national dignity, the intelligentsia was also acting, once again, in response to a—real or aspirational—European gaze. The intelligentsia’s

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and Հ. Գ. Մ., “Հ. Յովսէփ Վ. Գաթրոնեան. դասական հայերէնի գոյիչը,” *Հանդէս ամսօրեայ* 46, no. 1-2 (1932): 53-62.

<sup>138</sup> Յովնանեան, *Մարդկային լեզուին սկզբան*, 88-94. However, as Nina Garsoïan rightly notes, “it is difficult to view the fifth or sixth centuries as a ‘Golden Age,’ or to speak from a political or even doctrinal point of view of a single, centralized Armenia in this early period of its Christian history.” See Nina Garsoïan, *Interregnum: Introduction to a Study on the Formation of Armenian Identity (ca 600-750)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), xi.

<sup>139</sup> Յովնանեան, *Մարդկային լեզուին սկզբան*, 88-94. Though they did not know it at the time, Classical Armenian had been based on just one variety of Armenian out of many, was engineered by a small group of literati and was unlikely to have been spoken in the fifth century. See Joseph J. S. Weitenberg, “The Language of Mesrop: l’arménien classique pour lui-même?” in *Armenia and the Bible*, ed. Christoph Burchard (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 221-222, 228-230.

<sup>140</sup> The Viennese Mekhitarists were particularly interested in cultivating a ‘Golden Age’ for Classical Armenian. See Ներսէս Ալիւնեան, *Դասական հայերէնը եւ Վիեննական Մխիթարեան դպրոցը* (Vienna: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1932). For a summary of this study in German, Ալիւնեան, *Դասական հայերէնը*, 365-387.

<sup>141</sup> Achemyan shows us the frequency with which many of the works of the ‘forebear canon’ were reprinted in the first four decades of the nineteenth century, illustrating what Leerssen has identified as an early aspect in the cultivation of culture in national movements: the (re)publication of older literary texts. Աննայան, *Գրական արևմտահայերէնի ձևափոխումը*, 34-35 and Leerssen, “Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture,” 572.

<sup>142</sup> The figure of the Holy Translator (սուրբ թարգմանիչ) also begins to be cultivated as a subset of the ‘forebears’ at this time. Գարրիէլ Աւետիքեան, Խաչատուր Միրմէլեան and Մկրտիչ Աւգերեան, *Նոր բարոյիչ հայկազնան լեզուի* (Venice: Ի տպարանի ի սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1836), 9.

awareness of the growing interest in comparative philology in nineteenth-century Europe and, in particular, in the ancient languages of the Near East, was also likely a factor in the decision to elevate Classical Armenian in the cultural nationalist movement. In 1845, we read one intellectual discuss how it would be much easier to borrow words from other modern languages but since Classical Armenian was “what makes us a nation and is rightly a way to boast in front of foreigners,” neologisms needed to be coined carefully and in accordance with classical norms so as not to “corrupt and disturb the language.”<sup>143</sup> Notably, this European interest was also used as a way to shame Armenians for their negative attitudes toward Armenian in hopes of prompting a change and raising the prestige of the language within the would-be national community. Time and again, we read intellectuals, particular Mekhitarists, note in dismay the differences in attitudes toward Armenian between European Orientalists and Armenians themselves, leading one to lament in 1858 that “the day will come when Europeans will give more respect to our language [than we do].”<sup>144</sup> These articles often read like implicit exhortations to emulate the ‘refined tastes’ of Europeans by learning the “national language” and seeing it as a point of pride.<sup>145</sup>

The discursive function of Classical Armenian as a source of national dignity and authenticity in the cultural nationalist movement can help us understand why intellectuals universally took an archaizing purist approach to the vernacular-based print-language. This is to that topic that we turn in the final section of the chapter.

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<sup>143</sup> “Նորահնար բաներու վրայ,” *Բազմալէկ* 3, no. 17 (1845): 268.

<sup>144</sup> “Զանի մը խօսք ի մուսու նորոյ ամին,” *Բազմալէկ* 16, no. 1 (1858): 6. For an exploration of the connections between the Mekhitarists of Venice and European Orientalists, see Mesrop Djanachian, “Les Arménistes et les Mékhitaristes,” in *Armeniaca : mélanges d'études arméniennes* (Venice: Île de Saint Lazare: 1969), 383-445.

<sup>145</sup> “Հայերէնագէտ Եւրոպացիք,” *Բազմալէկ* 3, no. 4 (1845): 59-62.

## Archaizing as an Antidote and Obstacle

Archaizing purism can be understood as yet another tool in the campaign to overcome negative attitudes toward Armenian. It addressed head-on the belief that spoken Armenian lacked its own resources and was forever dependent on borrowings from other languages. In reaction, cultural nationalists opened before Ottoman Armenians the stores of Classical Armenian and sought to endow mid-nineteenth-century Armenian—particularly the vernacular-based print language—with prestige and authenticity by drawing it closer to the classical language. Bringing nineteenth-century language practices closer to Classical Armenian through archaizing purism thus offered the best of both worlds for the intelligentsia: “Classical Armenian [գրաբար] would remain in its position of respect and nobility,” as one writer put it in 1843, “and spoken Armenian [աշխարհաբար] would be ennobled.”<sup>146</sup> Ultimately, through archaizing, they hoped to give Ottoman Armenians a reason to respect a form of nineteenth-century Armenian.

In the previous chapter, we saw archaizing purism used selectively and as a practical pedagogical tool to acquaint students with Classical Armenian. In this chapter, we see the same archaizing purist orientation as language becomes more intimately intertwined with the concept of nationhood and a new understanding of archaizing as Armenizing and authenticating emerges. For nationalists, the pursuit of authenticity entails paring away the “accretions of the ages” to reveal a “true,” “original” and ultimately “pure” self.<sup>147</sup> With differentiation of the utmost importance in national movements, linguistic commonalities with neighboring groups become cause for concern. As we know, this concern can morph into an obsession with rooting out and expunging “non-

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<sup>146</sup> “Ազգային լեզուն պահելու վրայ,” 79.

<sup>147</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 32.

national” words as a way to draw boundaries between groups and demonstrate their uniqueness.<sup>148</sup> Purism has also commonly been used as an antidote to a language’s lack of prestige and a way to distance a group from “an embarrassing vernacular.”<sup>149</sup> It is, after all, as Thomas notes “shame, insecurity and a collective inferiority complex about the blemishes and inadequacies of the national language [that provide] the motivation for linguistic purism in the first place.”<sup>150</sup> In this way, purism is just another tool in the nationalist toolkit, one of many ways to forge the sense of national distinctiveness and dignity so integral to the overarching goals of any national project.

Seeing Classical Armenian, like cultural nationalists did, as the basis, root and source of all nineteenth-century varieties of Armenian can help us understand another dimension of the logic of archaizing purism.<sup>151</sup> In this period, these forms were in no way considered separate or distinct languages but rather corrupted and degenerate forms that had deviated from Classical Armenian over the centuries. While this idea—as we will see in the next chapter—would be contested later in the century, there was little debate at the time about this relationship or the need for an archaizing approach to help lead modern forms of Armenian back “into the bosom of Classical Armenian.”<sup>152</sup> “A child is nourished by its mother’s milk,” a writer noted in 1861. “Our new language cannot be nourished in any other way.”<sup>153</sup> In this way, archaizing purism was conceived during this period

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<sup>148</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 39.

<sup>149</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 56, 132.

<sup>150</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 45.

<sup>151</sup> See, for example, Չօրայեան, *Ընթերցասիրութիւն*, 256.

<sup>152</sup> Օտեան, *Առաջարկութիւն*, 11.

<sup>153</sup> Խորէն Գալֆայեան, *Արշակ երկրորդ* (Theodosia: Ի Խալիպեան տպարանի, 1861), 5.

not only as a way of Armenizing but as a way of correcting modern usage against the classical ideal.

Given these prevailing attitudes toward Classical Armenian among the intelligentsia, it comes as no surprise that archaizing purism was the sole approach to purism in the mid-nineteenth century. Having established reasons for the predominance of archaizing purism during this period, how can we see its intensification in the print media of the period and what challenges did it create within the cultural nationalist movement? This intensification can be seen most clearly when we examine edits made to new editions of texts originally published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Let us take, for example, Minas Pjshgian's 1817 translation of *Robinson Crusoe*.<sup>154</sup> A product of its period, his translation was peppered with a number of Turkish borrowings, most notably the names of countries and demonyms. While, in 1817, these words were considered sufficiently 'pure' to print, when the translation was republished forty-one years later in 1858, we find that, without comment, the editor had replaced these borrowings with archaized alternatives created based on the norms of Classical Armenian.<sup>155</sup> We see similar editing practices in the 1859 republication of a popular Civil Armenian text, first published in 1757.<sup>156</sup> It is important to note that the borrowings in this text remained in the 1787, 1820 and 1844 editions of the book, suggesting the intensification of archaizing purism in the 1850s, in particular.

A challenge of this near universal reliance on Classical Armenian words and phrases to replace familiar Turkish borrowings—one that goes largely unmentioned in the discourse of the

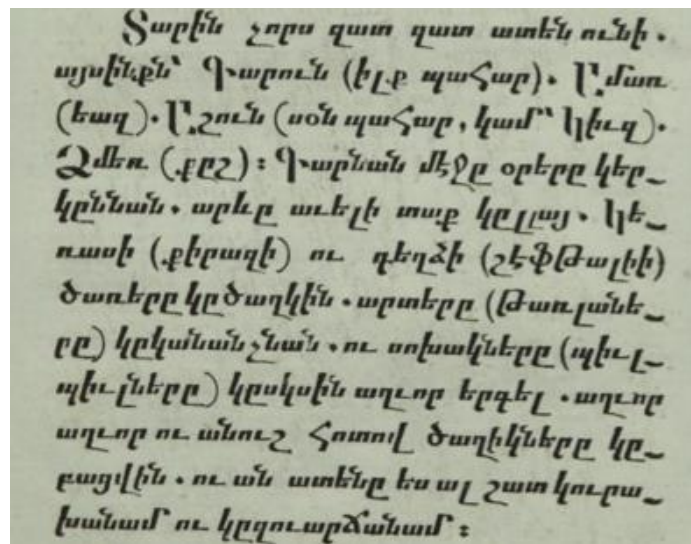
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<sup>154</sup> *Պատմություն վարուց Ռուսլենսոնին Քոլիզոէ 'ի իրաստ եւ 'ի կրթութիւն մանկանց*, trans. Մինաս Բժշկեան (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1817).

<sup>155</sup> *Պատմություն Ռուսլենսոնի Քոլիզոէ*, trans. Մինաս Բժշկեան (Venice: Ի Սուրբ Ղազար, 1858). For example, we find Գաղղիացի instead of Փրանսրզ, Անգղիա instead of Ինկիլթեռա and Գերմանիա instead of Նէմցեստան.

<sup>156</sup> Յակոբ Կոստանդնուպոլսոյ [Նախան], *Չէն հոգևոր* (Constantinople: Ի տպարանի Յովհաննու Միւհենդիսեան, 1859).

period—is that it rendered the print-language difficult to understand for many readers. In the early decades of the movement, we do consistently see writers and newspaper editors use particular strategies to teach readers the classical words being integrated into the print-language, acknowledging their lack of familiarity to many readers. A continuation of the Mekhitarist publications we saw in the previous chapter, the most common strategy, used in both books and newspapers, was to include the classical word in-text accompanied by its definition in Armeno-Turkish in parentheses beside it. The following is a typical example from an 1825 primer.<sup>157</sup>



**Figure 1: Example of Armeno-Turkish glosses in a purified-vernacular book from 1825.**

In a fewer number of cases, we see Armeno-Turkish to Classical Armenian glossaries included at the end of books or footnotes with definitions in Armeno-Turkish at the bottom of the page.<sup>158</sup> The reason for these methods most often went unexplained, particularly after they become

<sup>157</sup> Սկիզբն ընթերցանության հայկական տարից, 20.

<sup>158</sup> For an example of a stand-alone glossary, see Փեշարմալեան, *Քերական լեզուագիտության*. For examples of in-text glossaries, see *Զրուարան մանկանց*, 255-288 and Մէլոյ ս'Օսպինիէ [Merle D'Aubigné], *Պատմության վերջաստաներորդ դարու բարեկարգությանն ՚ի Գերմանիա*, vol. 1 (Smyrna: Ի տպարանի Կուլիէմոս Կրիֆֆիթի, 1846), 573-590. For examples of footnotes, see early issues of *Շտեմարան պիտանի գիտելաց* and *Բագմալէս*, among others. By the mid-1840s, these methods had largely fallen out of fashion in favor of in-text parentheses.

conventions in the 1840s.<sup>159</sup> In a rare explanation of these puristic practices from 1838, the American editor of an Armenian-language missionary newspaper offers us a glimpse into his rationale for his archaizing purist approach to the print-language and its connection to the cultural nationalist movement: “The readers of this Magazine will be assisted in approximating every month to a better acquaintance with their own language, and we shall thus contribute our feeble aid in gradually bringing back to use so far as necessary the original language of the children of [Hayk].”<sup>160</sup> While often painted as entirely distinct in their thinking from Armenian Apostolic and Armenian Catholic intellectuals, early American Protestant missionaries involved in publishing also enthusiastically subscribed to the prevailing purist norms, exhibited reverence for Classical Armenian, promulgated a “national language” discourse and disseminated these ideas in their publications beginning in the mid-1830s.<sup>161</sup> Here we see not only the familiar notion of the inauthenticity of borrowings and the improvement of language through purism but also the idea that archaizing purism was used in pursuit of imprinting the ‘language of the forebears’ onto the new print-language.<sup>162</sup>

We can also see the abundance of Classical Armenian dictionaries and grammars published in the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s as part of the same pedagogical project to introduce the public to

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<sup>159</sup> For one of the few later commentaries on the reasoning behind this strategy, namely to spread love of reading, see “Ներածութիւն,” *Մեղն* 3, no. 3 (1859): 19. This writer is clear that the goal was not to include the Turkish glosses indefinitely, only until readers grew familiar with the Classical Armenian equivalents.

<sup>160</sup> Cited in Barbara J. Merguerian, “The Missionary Armenian Language Press of Smyrna, 1833-1853,” in *Armenian Smyrna/Izmir: The Aegean Communities*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2012), 140.

<sup>161</sup> These shared norms are attributable to the reliance of American missionaries on local Armenian translators to compose their missionary publications. For a description of the translation process and working relationship between one missionary and his Armenian translators in the late 1830s and early 1840s, see John B. Adger, *My Life and Times, 1810-1899* (Richmond: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1899), 97-104.

<sup>162</sup> For contemporaneous discussion of the need to “improve” or “correct” through Classical Armenian, see Խ. Ս. Էփրզեան, “Հայոց լեզուի վրայ,” *Հայրենասէր* 1, no. 8 (1843): 1-3.

the unfamiliar language now imbued with tremendous symbolic value.<sup>163</sup> In addition to showing the central place of Classical Armenian and the concept of a national language to the cultural-nationalist movement, these publications can also be seen as instruments of purism and highlight the commonly held idea among the intelligentsia that teaching Classical Armenian and creating resources to acquire it would lead to purity for all forms of Armenian and prestige for the national community. As one writer noted in 1847,

The true patriot will have understood very well that the more books there are that teach the national language [Classical Armenian] well, the more fundamental, established and internal the glimmer of the nation will be. Only through it will our nation be considered not like Aesop's crow, adorned with peacock feathers and disgraceful, but rather as having achieved and added, through its efforts, to its particular, ancestral [հայրենական] and glorious glimmer.<sup>164</sup>

Lexicographers during this period were often explicit in their hope of spreading love of nation through their dictionaries. From their perspective, spreading love of nation meant not only instilling an awareness of Classical Armenian but also raising the prestige of modern varieties through archaizing purism and curbing the preference for other languages. In the preface to his 1838 dictionary, one lexicographer noted specifically that he took care to compose a dictionary in Classical Armenian to encourage Armenian use among the “children of the nation” who “in recent times have shown more of an eagerness and inclination to study Turkish than their original, ancestral language [հայրենական ընդիլ բարբառ].”<sup>165</sup> Dictionaries, in other words, were practical purist tools of the cultural nationalist movement intended to help members of the national

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<sup>163</sup> For an in-depth look at the major Classical Armenian grammars of the mid-nineteenth century, see Ջահուկյան, *Գրաբարի քերականության պատմություն*, 390-533. For a list of dictionaries published during this period, see Gabriella Uluhogian, *Bibliography of Armenian Dictionaries* (Bologna: Patron Editore, 1987).

<sup>164</sup> “Դպրատանց տղոց համար,” *Բազմալէս* 5, no. 2 (1847): 29-30.

<sup>165</sup> Յակովբոս Պոյանեան, *Համառոտ բարբառն ի հայէ ի տանիկ*, vol. 1 (Vienna: ի տպարանի Մխիթարեանց, 1838), [3].

community “easily and effortlessly study their ancestral language [հայրենի բարբառ]” and immediately apply their knowledge of Classical Armenian to purifying written and spoken Armenian in the modern day.<sup>166</sup>

While we know little about the impact of these methods and teaching tools on spoken language, there is evidence to suggest that the archaizing purist approach to the national print-language impeded comprehension for many readers in the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s. These difficulties were undoubtedly magnified for those outside the printing centers for whom both the grammatical basis *and* the archaized lexicon would have been unfamiliar. Despite their loud calls for “national progress” and “enlightenment,” most intellectuals in the period were unmoved by the linguistic challenges of their own making that prevented the realization of these ideals.<sup>167</sup> While these challenges were only sporadically mentioned, writers and newspaper editors were certainly aware of the limitations of the vernacular-based print-language. For example, after one reader from Aleppo wrote a letter to the editor of a Smyrnan newspaper complaining that people in his city had trouble understanding the language form used in the newspaper, the editor acknowledged that the print-language “appeared to be like Chinese” to many outside urban printing centers, but he did not change his practices.<sup>168</sup> He was not alone in prioritizing purity over comprehension. A decade earlier, a newspaper editor in Constantinople expressed a similar sentiment laced with the urban elitism of the age: “It is true that the provincial languages of Armenia differ from the language and

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<sup>166</sup> Եփրեմ Չազրճեան, *Նոր բարբառաբան համառօտ հայերէն-տսնկերէն* (Vienna: Ի վանս պաշտպան Ս. Աստուածաձնի, 1850), [1].

<sup>167</sup> One of the very rare exceptions can be found in the short-lived, Smyrna-based newspaper *Յակըժսիսիս* (1862). The newspaper was almost entirely composed in purified print-language but, as the editor explained, it included short sections in each issue in the spoken language of Smyrna—complete with familiar borrowings—so that all readers, no matter their educational background, could understand them. “Կարենի ծանուցում,” *Յակըժսիսիս* 1, no. 3 (1862): 17-18.

<sup>168</sup> Գրիգոր Զիլինկիրեան, “Հայերուն ընթերցասիրութեան վիճակը,” *Ծաղիկ* 1, no. 23 (1862): 180.

writing style of Constantinople. Perhaps the people who live there do not understand our writing. But this does not mean that we should use their every style and word confusedly and establish Babelian writing, which would be understandable in the provinces but would remain entirely obscure to others...”<sup>169</sup>

This insistence on archaizing purism led certain readers and writers to do precisely what the intelligentsia had wanted the would-be national community to avoid: to rely on languages other than Armenian. There is evidence that during this period many turned to Armeno-Turkish books and newspapers for the sake of intelligibility. This was a linguistic reality that American missionaries noticed right away. In his letters, John B. Adger, a missionary from South Carolina, wrote in 1839 that it is “a lamentable truth that the large majority of those who can read in Smyrna would more readily comprehend tolerable Turkish than good [i.e. pure] Armenian.”<sup>170</sup> As Masayuki Ueno’s work has shown, there is some indication that bilingual Armenians bought Armeno-Turkish newspapers in larger numbers than those in the vernacular-based print-language because the former replicated their speech more closely.<sup>171</sup> Reading in Armeno-Turkish, therefore, helped to avoid the obstacles to communication that the ‘national’ print language posed, easing rather than hampering the spread of information. Similarly, one writer justified his use of Armeno-Turkish by alluding precisely to this problem. He wrote in 1855 that “in order to understand a book written in [the vernacular-based print-language] one needs to take on the burden of learning

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<sup>169</sup> “Ազգային դպրութիւն. լեզուի եւ գրութեան վրայ,” *Բանասէր* 1, no. 10 (1851): 453.

<sup>170</sup> Correspondence from John B. Adger to Rev. H. A. Homes, February 1839, MS 1209.03.01, Box 24/02, Folder 8, Adger Family Papers, 1796-1893, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina, United States.

<sup>171</sup> Masayuki Ueno, “One Script, Two Languages: Garabed Panosian and His Armeno-Turkish Newspapers in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 52, no. 4 (2016): 611.

[Classical Armenian].”<sup>172</sup> These sociolinguistic realities raise fascinating questions about whether the ‘non-national’ Armeno-Turkish was, in fact, more effective in spreading the ideals of the national movement in the mid-nineteenth century. While the intelligentsia had striven to forge a print language that would facilitate the spread of love of learning, love of reading and love of nation in their quest for national progress and enlightenment, what they had succeeded in creating through their approach to purism was a burden to much of the public they had sought to mobilize.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored the impact of the Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalist movement on the emergence of new ideas and ideologies about language in the mid-nineteenth century. In particular, I examined the transnational and local factors that contributed to the centering of language as the ultimate symbol of a new ‘national’ identity and of Classical Armenian within the national movement. In turn, I looked at how this reliance on Classical Armenian created a tension among cultural nationalists and complicated their approach to vernacularization. I showed, in particular, how Classical Armenian was framed as a source of national authenticity and was wielded as a tool to counter negative perceptions of Armenian beyond the intelligentsia. I also highlighted how this centering of Classical Armenian resulted in the intensification of an archaizing purist approach to the vernacular-based print-language, which expanded during this period and was used as the medium of newspapers and books for public instruction. I ended by exploring the obstacle that archaizing purism posed to the cultural nationalist movement, as its reliance on Classical Armenian worked against attempts to galvanize the public as a national community and to spread new ideals within it. In the next chapter, we will

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<sup>172</sup> Յովսէփ Վարդանեան, *Թարիխի Նաբօլոն Պօնաքարթէ ինքերայօրու սիպիի Յրանսս*, vol. 1 (Constantinople: Միւհէնսիսեան Յօհաննէսին թասպխանէսի, 1855), Ժ, quoted in English translation in Aslanian, “Prepared in the Language,” 67.

enter a new sociolinguistic paradigm in which the very basis of the authority of Classical Armenian will begin to shift. This shift will transform approaches to the print-language and will slowly lead to its legitimization as a distinct and separate language in its own right: Modern Armenian.

## Chapter 3

### Purity and Philology: Linguistic Myth-Busting and the Rise of Modern Armenian (c. 1860-c. 1890)

#### Introduction

Between June 1873 and March 1874, an eager crowd of Armenian teachers and writers, priests and editors, artists and students gathered more than a dozen times at a church hall in the Galata district of Constantinople. As speakers and spectators, they had come to take part in the very first Teachers' Assembly (Վարժապետական ժողով).<sup>1</sup> Organized by the Educational Council of the Armenian National Administration, this Assembly was created in hopes of standardizing the curriculum and teaching methods in Armenian schools throughout the Ottoman Empire and remedying the disorder that characterized Armenian education at the time.<sup>2</sup> One of the top items on the agenda was determining the future of Classical Armenian instruction in Armenian primary schools, a thorny and contentious issue that became the focus of the Assembly's discussions and awoke fierce emotions in speakers and spectators alike.<sup>3</sup>

Among the speakers was a 21-year-old named Minas Cheraz, who came to each meeting ready for a fight.<sup>4</sup> An up-and-coming intellectual and teacher in schools across the capital, Cheraz was the Assembly's sole advocate for removing Classical Armenian grammar instruction from primary schools. In its place, he proposed teaching the grammar of Modern Armenian (արդի

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<sup>1</sup> Մինաս Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն. վարժապետական ժողովի մէջ խօսուած նամեր* (Constantinople: Արամեան տպագրութիւն, 1876), ԻԴ-ԻԵ.

<sup>2</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, ԺԷ-ԺԹ.

<sup>3</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, ԻՉ-ԻԸ.

<sup>4</sup> On the life and work of Minas Cheraz (1852-1929), see Արշակ Ալպոյանեան, *Մինաս Չերազ. իր կեանքը և գործը իր ճամնայ յոբելեանին առթիւ* (Cairo: Տպարան Յարէթ-Պարտասար, 1927).

հայերէն), a term that had begun to be used in this period to refer to the vernacular-based print-language.<sup>5</sup> Drawing on insights from the comparative-philological research of the day, his views were not well received. While all speakers were united in their desire to define a path for Ottoman Armenian education, they did not agree on where this path should lead, particularly in the realm of Armenian language education. According to Cheraz’s own account of the proceedings, his fellow educators tried their hardest to silence him.<sup>6</sup> The few that came to his defense did so only in the press, where the mudslinging and language debates flared with new intensity.<sup>7</sup>

While advocates of Classical Armenian continued to cling tightly to the same worldviews and accompanying language ideologies we saw in the previous chapter, the tenor of Modern Armenian’s defense was changing by the 1870s. At the thirteenth session of the Assembly, Cheraz closed his address with the following reproach, offering us a glimpse into the new conceptualizations of spoken language taking root at this time. Addressing the crowd, he raged:

You want to enliven a dead language. This is your first folly. You want to kill a living language. This is your second folly...You scorn the people’s language [ժողովրդային լեզու]. We will not. Our banner reads: “Everything for the people and everything with the people.” Since 1860, the people have formed an assembly not a flock. Armenians, like all constitutional nations, will henceforth reign as a people. The laborer with his vote is just as worthy of respect as the sovereign with his scepter...You scorn the people’s language. We will worship it. We will reform it. We will make it sublime.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The term աշխարհաբար continues to be used throughout this period as well as a new synonymous variation: աշխարհիկ լեզու. This form is also called նորոգեալ լեզու (renewed language), արդի գրաւոր հայերէն (modern written Armenian) and արդի ազգային լեզու (modern national language), among others.

<sup>6</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակութիւն*, ԼԱ-ԼԵ.

<sup>7</sup> According to one supporter, hundreds spoke out against Cheraz. Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակութիւն*, Է. Cheraz responded to his supporters and detractors in a series of letters, which were collected and published in Մինաս Չերազ, *Գրիչ եւ սուր*, vol. 1 (Constantinople: Արամեան տպագրութիւն, 1881). The second volume does not appear to have ever been published.

<sup>8</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակութիւն*, 184-185. Suffrage was restricted only to certain men at this time.

This chapter unravels these new lines of argumentation, proposes causes for their emergence and examines their impact on new approaches to purism. I argue that Cheraz and his like-minded contemporaries were emboldened to challenge the social primacy of Classical Armenian through a confluence of socio-political forces operating at the global, imperial and community levels. I begin by briefly positioning these discussions within the era of reform and regulation in the Ottoman Empire in the mid-nineteenth century. I continue by calling attention to a major global paradigm shift in the study of language in the mid-nineteenth century, which resulted in a newfound interest in and valorization of spoken language among philologists. I show how a group of Ottoman Armenian intellectuals latched onto these scholarly ideas and made use of the latest research in comparative philology to interrogate the long-held beliefs that undergirded the supremacy of Classical Armenian and, by extension, the archaizing purist approach to the modern language. Specifically, I focus on how Euro-American linguistic thought, approaches and methodologies armed this sub-set of the Ottoman-Armenian intelligentsia with arguments to expose as myths three long-dominant beliefs about Classical Armenian. I see this new intervention as leading to a fundamental reassessment of the position of Classical Armenian in Ottoman Armenian society and as helping to foster new attitudes toward Modern Armenian.

As not all Ottoman Armenian intellectuals subscribed to these new currents in philological thought, I end by looking at how the socio-cultural forces above manifested in two competing approaches to “cultivating” and “purifying” the modern language. On the one hand, we see a grammatically archaized version of Modern Armenian become more prevalent among intellectuals who continued to believe in the primacy of Classical Armenian. On the other hand, bolstered by the movements above and by parallel trends in Romantic thought, we also see attempts to give value to the “language of the people.” The “language of the people” was an ill-defined concept at

this time and most often referred not to the borrowing-laden speech of the vast majority of the populace but to the usage of urban writers, who believed that it was their own “educated speech” that should constitute the model for the purest and most proper form of Modern Armenian for all others to follow.

### **A Climate of Reform and Regulation in the Ottoman Empire**

The reception of new ideas about language and a general interest in creating and regulating a modern form of Armenian should be understood within the larger socio-political ethos of reform and regulation in the Ottoman Empire in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Ottoman era of reform is traditionally seen as having begun with the Supreme Edict of Gülhane (Hatt-ı Şerif-i Gülhane) in 1839, which ushered in a period known as the Tanzimat, or Reorganization. At the imperial level, these reforms were largely bureaucratic and administrative and did not immediately prompt fundamental social change for individual Ottoman subjects, whether urban nor rural. In 1856, the Ottoman state mandated a new set of reforms—this time, within the Armenian, Rum and Jewish *millet*s in particular—in hopes of systematizing, centralizing and institutionalizing imperial administration. These imperial reforms, codified in an edict called the Islâhat Fermânı, required that each *millet* draft a set of regulations that would govern its internal community organization and management.<sup>9</sup> At the time, the edict was seen, at least by some Ottoman Armenian thinkers, as the start of concerted efforts to bring order to various

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the constitutional experiences of Ottoman Armenians, Ottoman Rum and Ottoman Jews in comparative perspective, see Aylin Koçunyan, *Negotiating the Ottoman Constitution, 1839-1876* (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 104-148. For an English translation of the edict, see “Sultan Abdülmecid’s *Islâhat Fermânı* Reaffirming the Privileges and Immunities of the Non-Muslim Communities,” in *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, vol. 1, ed. J. C. Hurewitz (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), 315-318.

aspects of community life.<sup>10</sup> The regulations it mandated are commonly referred to as the Armenian National Constitution and were accepted by the Sublime Porte in 1863.<sup>11</sup>

The Armenian National Constitution brought into being a National Administration (Ազգային վարչություն) made up of a series of quasi-participatory assemblies and specialized regulatory bodies to manage a range of community affairs.<sup>12</sup> But, at a time when constitutional rule was having a moment on the world's stage and becoming a symbol of modernity, the Constitution served more than just a practical purpose.<sup>13</sup> It also, as we can glean from Cheraz's statement above, helped in Ottoman Armenian self-fashioning, allowing the elite to no longer see themselves as ruled by the Church but instead as one of many constitutional nations ruling themselves. Following Richard Antaramian's cautioning, however, we should be wary of seeing the ratification of the Constitution as a profound social rupture for Ottomans Armenians or of treating it as a "key component of Armenian national identity formation" beyond a small, politically engaged sliver of the populace.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Ազգային յառաջդիմութեան գործը," *Մասիս* 14, no. 691 (1865): 2.

<sup>11</sup> Aylin Koçunyan, "“Long Live Sultan Abdülaziz, Long Live the Nation, Long Live the Constitution,”" in *Constitutionalism, Legitimacy, and Power: Nineteenth-Century Experiences*, eds. Kelly L. Grotke and Markus J. Prutsch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 189-210. For the published version of the Constitution, see *Ազգային սահմանադրություն հայոց. նիզամնամէի միլլէթի էրմէնիան* (Constantinople: Ի սպարանի Յ. Միւհէնսիսեան, 1863). For an English translation of the Constitution, see H. F. B. Lynch, *Armenia: Travels and Studies*, vol. 2 (London and New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), 445-467.

<sup>12</sup> Masayuki Ueno, "An Experiment in Political Participation: Istanbul Armenians in the 1860s and 1870s," in *Human Mobility and Multiethnic Coexistence in Middle Eastern Urban Societies 2: Tehran, Cairo, Istanbul, Aleppo, and Beirut*, ed. Hidemitsu Kuroki (Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 2018), 89-102.

<sup>13</sup> Varak Ketsemanian, "The Armenian Constitutional Order in the Late Ottoman Empire: From Reform to Crisis" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> Richard E. Antaramian, *Brokers of Faith, Brokers of Empire: Armenians and the Politics of Reform in the Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 34.

In the same way, we should be wary of assuming that the Constitution prompted any kind of immediate change in attitudes or purist approaches toward Modern Armenian. It did not. What this era of reform did indeed do was connect the act of regulation to the concept of modernity. The Constitution sought to regulate communal governance and turn Ottoman Armenians into a “modern” national community. In the same spirit, the tools of codification (grammar books, dictionaries, style guides, etc.) that emerged during this period sought to regulate language in hopes of turning Ottoman Armenians into a “modern” national community with a modern national language to boot. As Robert Cooper has noted, “to plan language is to plan society.”<sup>15</sup> This kind of planning is precisely what Ottoman Armenian intellectuals were in the midst of carrying out in various social realms at this time. After more than two decades of circular debates about the print-language, this era of increased regulation and reform gave an added spur to regulate the language on a grander scale, kindling a more widespread desire and sense of urgency to plan Modern Armenian. It also brought about more active—though ultimately still disjointed and thwarted—work toward standardizing it, regulating it and inaugurating it as a “modern national language.”<sup>16</sup>

In this period, a codified, modern language was a symbol of national progress for Ottoman Armenian intellectuals. A language was a mirror of the national community itself, or so the thinking went. Thus, if a nation’s language was in a state of anarchy, so too was the nation that used it.<sup>17</sup> At this time, a regulated modern language was framed more and more as a compass and a reason for the progress of European nation-states; similarly, the *lack* of a regulated modern

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<sup>15</sup> Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change*, 182.

<sup>16</sup> This work included a variety of short-lived informal initiatives and formal institutions, such as associations and regulatory bodies within the National Administration as well as salons and publications. Some even went as far as to propose a language academy for Modern Armenian, styled after the Académie française. The leaders of these initiatives all strove to take language planning and elaboration into their own hands but were ultimately ineffectual.

<sup>17</sup> Մինաս Չերազ, *Գրական փորձեր* (Constantinople: Արամեան տպագրութիւն, 1874), ԼԹ.

language was identified as a cause for the perceived stagnation and ineptitude of the Armenian national community in achieving national progress.<sup>18</sup> “How much respectability can a language without a grammar book have before Europeans?” one grammarian mused in 1864. “Since a language that does not have a grammar book means that it does not have established rules, it is truly deprived of the respect of being called educated [կրթեալ].”<sup>19</sup> This anxiety over being perceived as modern and civilized by Europeans, while not the main motivating factor for language planning and regulation among Ottoman Armenians, does reoccur consistently in the 1860s and 1870s.

It must be underscored, however, that these codification attempts should be seen as *attempts* not as successes. Already in the 1840s and 1850s there were sporadic, largely unheeded calls to standardize a modern form of Armenian by creating grammar books and dictionaries.<sup>20</sup> But without a widespread change in status and agreement among elites over the expansion in function for a language, grammar books and dictionaries typically gain little traction and have little impact on usage.<sup>21</sup> Throughout this period, ardent defenders of Classical Armenian, who saw Modern

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<sup>18</sup> “Արդի հայերէն լեզու,” *Արեւելեան մամուլ* 1, no. 3 (1871): 103-104 and Սրբուհի Տիւսար, *Աշխարհաբար հայ լեզուն* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Յովսէփայ Գալաֆեան, 1880), 8-9.

<sup>19</sup> Մ. Տ. Քիրեճճեան, *Հայերէն քերականութիւն աշխարհաբար լեզուի նախակրթական դպրոցաց համար* (Constantinople: Ի տպարանի Յարութիւն Մինասեան, 1864), Է.

<sup>20</sup> For early calls from 1843 and 1853, see “Ազգային լեզուն պահելու վրայ,” 79-80 and [Ռուսինեան], *Ուղղակիօսութիւն*, Գ-Ե. Rusinian is an exception in that he published a grammar for a modern form of Armenian in 1853, but the backlash against the creative license he took in the grammar itself was too fierce for it to gain traction.

<sup>21</sup> Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change*, 183-184. He makes this argument for language planning more broadly. Two student grammars of Modern Armenian were published in 1864 and 1868. Likely because of school language policies that favored Classical Armenian instruction, these books only saw one edition, suggesting that they did not receive much traction at the time. Մ. Տ. Քիրեճճեան, *Հայերէն քերականութիւն աշխարհաբար լեզուի նախակրթական դպրոցաց համար* (Constantinople: Ի տպարանի Յարութիւն Մինասեան, 1864) and Ստեփան Պ. Պօղոս Փափագեանց, *Նոր դասագիրք քերականութեան հայերէն գրաբար եւ աշխարհաբար լեզուաց* (Constantinople: Ի տպարանի Յ. Միւհենտիսեան, 1868).

Armenian as illegitimate, immature and impossible to regulate, were still in fighting form.<sup>22</sup> For them, a dictionary and grammar book of Modern Armenian would have been considered the final blow to Classical Armenian.<sup>23</sup> In the 1860s, they were still too numerous, possessed too much social capital and had few compelling reasons to willingly accept this blow. It would not be until the 1890s that their voices would be drowned out. Only then would codification through a series of student grammar books and dictionaries begin in earnest and be incontrovertibly oriented toward creating a modern standard language.<sup>24</sup> It was the seeds for this work that were planted in this period.

How did such dramatic change come to pass? Why did attitudes toward Classical Armenian and Modern Armenian change in the final decades of the nineteenth century? How was the spell of Classical Armenian broken to make way for Modern Armenian to be considered a separate language in its own right? In addition to the imperial and community dynamics that fostered interest in regulation in the second half of the nineteenth century, major changes were also afoot in the study of language, changes that reframed how Classical Armenian was regarded. It is to this topic that we now turn our attention.

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Չերազ, *Գրական փորձեր*, ԾԴ.

<sup>23</sup> Այսրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 303. This book is composed of a preface and grammar section, each paginated separately. In this chapter, all references are to the preface unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>24</sup> These student grammars include works by Puzant Bozajian, Zabel Donelian, Smpad Tavtian and A. G. Bedigian, among others. Perhaps one of the most telltale signs of the triumph of Modern Armenian is seeing the long-time staunch defender of Classical Armenian and writer of a popular Classical Armenian textbook series, Madatia Karakashian, make the transition to publishing a Modern Armenian grammar textbook in 1888. See Ա. Մ. Գարագաշեան, *Աշխարհաբար քերականություն կամ քերականություն արդի հայերէնի* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Յ. Գալաֆեան, 1888).

## A Global Paradigm Shift in the Study of Language

This Ottoman Armenian transformation was guided in large part by a major global epistemological shift in the scholarly study of language that began to cast modern, spoken languages in a new light. In this section, I show how Ottoman Armenian intellectuals used new theories, methodologies and trends in linguistic thought to dispel long-held myths about Classical Armenian and give new value to the concept of a *modern* Armenian. This new linguistic paradigm was primed by the reformist push within the Ottoman Empire, which allowed it take root more swiftly and come to have a major impact on changing both attitudes toward Modern Armenian and approaches to purism.

The nineteenth century was a period of tremendous dynamism in the global study of language. Since the European Renaissance, languages had been widely seen—in Europe and elsewhere—as divine creations with a perfected, ‘original’ and unchanging form.<sup>25</sup> In Chapter 1, we saw these ideas expressed by Mekhitar and his congregation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the scientific revolution, which revealed the ever-changing nature of the universe, began to affect how European intellectuals saw the origins of language and their kinship to one another.<sup>26</sup> The application of scientific models, as well as historicist approaches, to the study of language pervaded nineteenth-century linguistic thought.<sup>27</sup> One of the most significant manifestations of these scientific and historicist models and approaches was the Indo-European hypothesis, which led European thinkers

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<sup>25</sup> John E. Joseph, “Popular and Scientific Beliefs about Language Status: An Historical Sketch,” in *Status and Function of Languages and Language Varieties*, ed. Ulrich Ammon (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 250.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph, “Popular and Scientific Beliefs,” 251-252.

<sup>27</sup> Anna Morpurgo Davies, *History of Linguistics, Volume IV: Nineteenth-Century Linguistics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 83-97.

to start seeing language as inherently in flux and as a worthy object of historical study.<sup>28</sup> Out of this new hypothesis emerged the discipline of comparative historical philology, which, fueled by a Romantic cultural ethos, took a newfound interest in studying change in languages over time and establishing their genealogies and historical relationships.<sup>29</sup> This pursuit ultimately sought to reconstruct the *Ursprache*, or the “original language” and supposed source for all Indo-European languages.<sup>30</sup>

For our purposes, the most significant aspect of nineteenth-century comparative historical philology was the newfound focus on modern spoken languages as an object of scientific analysis.<sup>31</sup> Initially valued for their potential utility in reconstructing the *Ursprache*, modern spoken languages became of even greater interest in the second half of the nineteenth century when comparative historical philology splintered off into new more specialized disciplines, including linguistics and dialectology.<sup>32</sup> It was the work of the philologists, linguists and dialectologists at *this* juncture that came to influence Ottoman Armenian intellectuals most directly. In the second half of the nineteenth century, we start to see the questioning of language attitudes that had subordinated the spoken to the written, attitudes that had long dominated among Europeans and

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<sup>28</sup> For the impact of this hypothesis on the field of comparative historical philology in Europe, see Haruko Momma, *From Philology to English Studies: Language and Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 28-59.

<sup>29</sup> Comparative historical philology is akin to what is today called historical linguistics. The term “philology” in the nineteenth century was notoriously polysemic. At that time, it encompassed three main areas of inquiry: “(1) textual philology (including classical and biblical studies, ‘oriental’ literatures such as those in Sanskrit and Arabic, and medieval and modern European writings); (2) theories of the origin and nature of language; and (3) comparative study of the structures and historical evolution of languages and of language families.” Turner, *Philology*, x.

<sup>30</sup> Pieter A. M. Seuren, *Western Linguistics: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 80-81.

<sup>31</sup> R. H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 1997), 210.

<sup>32</sup> Hackert, *The Emergence of the English Native Speaker*, 164-166; Turner, *Philology*, 248-249; and Raymond Hickey, “Dialectology, Philology, and Historical Linguistics,” in *The Handbook of Dialectology*, eds. Charles Boberg, John Nerbonne and Dominic Watt (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 23-38.

Ottoman Armenians alike.<sup>33</sup> All of a sudden, written languages previously seen as divine and imbued with historical and religious significance were, as Benedict Anderson notes, “forced to mingle on equal ontological footing with a motley plebeian crowd of vernacular rivals.” This was because, as he continues, “if all languages now shared a common (intra-) mundane status, then all were in principle equally worthy of study and admiration.”<sup>34</sup> The notion that the “primacy of the written word” could be superseded prompted a groundbreaking shift that, as we will see, had far-reaching effects in scholarly and non-scholarly realms.<sup>35</sup>

This new linguistic paradigm made its way into the consciousness of Ottoman Armenian intellectuals through three main channels. First and foremost, we find the towering figure of Arsen Aydenian. A Viennese Mekhitarist monk, educator and philologist, Aydenian was by far the most influential conduit for disseminating these new ideas among Ottoman Armenians and prompting a fundamental epistemological shift in perceptions of Modern Armenian. His trailblazing 1866 study, which formed the basis for much of the argumentation that would be repeated by advocates of Modern Armenian in the Empire and beyond for decades to come, consisted of a grammar of Modern Armenian prefaced by a more than 300-page study chronicling the history of spoken Armenian from the fifth century to the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup> It was clearly influenced, as we will see, by new approaches to language in circulation among German-speaking philologists at that time.

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<sup>33</sup> Joop van der Horst, “The End of the Standard Language: The Rise and Fall of a European Language Culture,” in *The Tyranny of Writing: Ideologies of the Written Word*, eds. Constanze Weth and Kasper Juffermans (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 52-54.

<sup>34</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 70-71.

<sup>35</sup> van Rooy, *Language or Dialect?*, 228.

<sup>36</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*.

His study is a quintessential example of national philology, a distinct mode of the discipline whereby philological methods were used to examine the historical phases of a single “national” language.<sup>37</sup> It is not rare for philologists to play a pivotal role in national movements, excavating and reinterpreting the past—linguistic and otherwise—for contemporary purposes.<sup>38</sup> Aydenian served precisely this role for this new period in the Ottoman Armenian cultural nationalist movement. Steeped in the theories and methods of comparative historical philology, he—like other national, vernacular and “living” philologists of the second half of the nineteenth century—turned his philological gaze away from the classical language and toward spoken forms, tracing their development over time. In this way, he compared, historicized and valorized spoken Armenian to a degree that had never before been attempted.<sup>39</sup> Not only did he give spoken Armenian a history and trace its origins to the very beginning of “national history,” but in so doing he also endowed Modern Armenian with a sense of legitimacy to exist in its own right. This radical act, as Achemyan rightly notes, represented an “unprecedented step in the theoretical defense of the new language’s position.”<sup>40</sup> His work opened the floodgates to challenge dominant myths about Classical Armenian and served as the scholarly foundation upon which Ottoman Armenian intellectuals built their arguments for seeing Modern Armenian as separate language, latching onto

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<sup>37</sup> Momma, *From Philology to English Studies*, 65-68, 95.

<sup>38</sup> See Dirk van Hulle and Joep Leerssen, eds., *Editing the Nation’s Memory: Textual Scholarship and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008). As a later Armenian philologist wrote, one of the goals of using methods from comparative philology to study Armenian was the opportunity to “compose an originally Armenian proto-condition [հայաբուն նախափինակ] from an Armenian proto-language.” Սերովրէ Տէրվիշեան, *Հնդեւրոպական նախափինակ* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Նշան Կ. Պերպլերեան, 1885), Ե.

<sup>39</sup> The Venetian Mekhitarists had long been pioneers in Classical Armenian philology, but, unlike many of his fellow Mekhitarists, Aydenian believed that the time for reviving Classical Armenian had passed. Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականութիւն*, 294.

<sup>40</sup> Աճեմյան, *Գրական արևմտահայերենի ձևափոխումը*, 11-12.

his new theories with gusto, running with them and expanding on them as new research in philology, linguistics and dialectology emerged over the course of the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s.<sup>41</sup>

Secondly, this new linguistic paradigm was introduced to Ottoman Armenian intellectuals through the work of Russian-Armenian philologists, many—but not all—of whom were trained at Russian institutes and faculties of Oriental Studies.<sup>42</sup> In the first half of the nineteenth century, these figures had drawn the ire of much of the Russian Armenian intellectual elite for, among other things, their support of the expansion of Modern Armenian and their direct countering of the primacy of Classical Armenian. In the 1860s, we start to see Ottoman Armenian intellectuals mention these figures with more frequency, framing them as kindred spirits who shared a similar plight and struggle against “backward” ideas and approaches.<sup>43</sup> It is through the scholarship of these Russian Armenian philologists, shaped by the German philological tradition that dominated in Russian institutes at the time, that the new valorization of spoken language started to take hold among their sympathetic counterparts in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>44</sup> Consistently referenced, quoted and at times republished were the work of Stepannos Nazariants (1812-1879), Kerovbe Patkanian (Patkanoff) (1833-1889) and Mikayel Nalbandian (1829-1866), who, like Aydenian, took varieties of spoken Armenian as their objects of inquiry and used the latest philological methods to uncover

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<sup>41</sup> Early-twentieth-century grammarians of the modern language would remember him as a pioneer in conceiving of Modern Armenian as a distinct language. See, for example, the dedication in Սմբատ Գալթեան, *Նոր քերականություն արդի հայերէնի* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Վ. Մինասեան, 1907), in which Aydenian is hailed the “founder of Modern Armenian [աշխարհաբար] grammar.”

<sup>42</sup> Many trained at the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages in Moscow, also called the Լազարեան ճեմարան. See Stephen Badalyan Riegg, *Russia’s Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2020), 52-62.

<sup>43</sup> For example, see Գրիգոր Չիլինկիրեան, “Հիւսիսափայլի դասապարտութիւնը,” *Ծաղիկ* 2, no. 39 (1862): 324-326 and “Պ. Միքայել Նալբանդեան,” *Մեղմ* 4, no. 117 (1860): 258-259.

<sup>44</sup> On German philological thought in Russia, see Tuska Benes, *In Babel’s Shadow: Language, Philology, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 88-92.

lost elements of “national” culture hidden within them, paying little heed to the old linguistic paradigm.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, these new ideas entered through multilingual Ottoman Armenians who, keeping abreast of the latest trends in Europe and the United States, read the works of Euro-American comparative philologists and linguists in their original languages, particularly those of Abel Hovelacque, Friedrich Max Müller and William Dwight Whitney. While groundbreaking research did indeed come out of France, Britain, the United States and Russia, the center of philological inquiry in the mid-nineteenth century, and the model for all others in their approaches, was Germanophone Europe.<sup>46</sup> Aydenian and his fellow Viennese Mekhitarists were rare among Ottoman Armenian intellectuals in their mastery of German and their familiarity with the Germanic cultural sphere. While they could not access German-language scholarship directly, Ottoman Armenian intellectuals kept up to date with the latest in philological thought through French translations. French translation was also the medium through which they read much of the philological work of Russian-Armenian philologists, who often published their research in Russian.<sup>47</sup> While the work of specific Euro-American thinkers is sometimes directly cited, more often than not their ideas make their way into the writings of Ottoman Armenians without any reference to their work or to any broader contemporaneous cultural currents.

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<sup>45</sup> Due in part to Russian imperial priorities, Russian Armenian philologists had begun ethnographic work among Armenians in the Caucasus already by the 1850s and thus saw much earlier than their Ottoman Armenian counterparts the value in spoken varieties of Armenian. See Khachaturian, *Cultivating Nationhood in Imperial Russia*, 190-195.

<sup>46</sup> Tuska Benes, “Philology, Language, and the Constitution of Meaning and Human Communities,” in *The Cambridge History of Modern European Thought*, vol. 1, eds. Warren Breckman and Peter E. Gordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 332.

<sup>47</sup> In the transmission of this work, we sometimes see the intermediary roles of European philologists, who would translate from Russian into French, which would then be read in French or translated into Armenian. One such case is Évariste Prud’homme’s 1871 French translation of M. K. Patkanoff’s Russian-language study of Armenian, which was translated partially from French into Modern Armenian by Krikor Mserian. See “Խուճարկութիւն հայ լեզուի կազմութեան վրայ,” *Մշակոթիւն* 3 (1881): 3-24.

This new valorization of spoken language was by no means quickly accepted by all segments of the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia. Given the long-standing supremacy of Classical Armenian and, as we saw in the previous chapter, its position and uses within the cultural nationalist movement, old views were bound to die hard. As Krikor Odian, an early advocate of standardizing Modern Armenian, wrote to Minas Cheraz in 1876, “Many preconceptions have been dispelled since [1851], but the preconception about Classical Armenian still remains standing.”<sup>48</sup> It is a clash of linguistic paradigms that we find in this period within the ranks of the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia: one continued to rely on the long-dominant, well-worn claims about Classical Armenian that we saw in the previous chapter while the other used new linguistic theories to paint as behind the times those who continued to champion Classical Armenian and uphold long-held perceptions about Modern Armenian that had kept it subordinate. Coopting these new ideas and methodologies for their own ends beginning in the 1860s, this segment of the intelligentsia gained new lines of argumentation that helped them to invent new defenses for Modern Armenian. These defenses slowly corroded the assumptions that had long undergirded the primacy of Classical Armenian and the universal acceptance of an archaizing purist approach to the modern language.

Below we will explore new perspectives on the three major claims about Classical Armenian that were introduced in the previous chapter as undergirding the cultural-nationalist movement. Here I will show how, in this period, the pro-Modern Armenian segment of the intelligentsia used new ideas in linguistic thought to not only free itself of the power of these claims but to expose them as myths, humbling Classical Armenian and helping to install Modern

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<sup>48</sup> Odian’s letter is cited in Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, Է-Ը.

Armenian beside it as a legitimate written form. As Richard Watts has argued, myths are the foundations upon which language ideologies lie.<sup>49</sup> Debunking them is, thus, a powerful act that opens space for new perceptions and ideologies to form. After so many decades of repeating the same counter-arguments and making little headway, it was wielding these new ideas in linguistic thought that finally succeeded in contesting the supremacy of Classical Armenian once and for all, overturning the myths that sustained its preeminence and emboldening Ottoman Armenian intellectuals to no longer feel compelled to, in the words of one writer, “kneel before the altar of Classical Armenian [զոռնց լեզուն].”<sup>50</sup> It thus prompted a reassessment of the origin, history and internal composition of the Armenian language and allowed the language debate to take new directions.

### ***Classical Armenian is Not a Divine Language***

One of the most dominant and long-standing myths that eroded during this period was that Classical Armenian was a divine, God-given language. As we saw in the previous chapter, this myth provided one of the discursive foundations for the prestige campaign of the cultural nationalist movement and was cultivated as a source of national dignity. The Indo-European hypothesis, however, turned arguments in favor of the uniqueness and divinity of individual languages on their heads. By the mid-1860s, the idea that Classical Armenian was the original language of God, that it was spoken by Adam in the Garden of Eden and that it was passed down to the mythical Armenian progenitor Hayk through Noah’s son Japheth now seemed laughable to some, almost embarrassing. This change came with a growing awareness of the decades of comparative historical philological research that identified similarities between Classical

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<sup>49</sup> Richard J. Watts, *Language Myths and the History of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21-23.

<sup>50</sup> Մատթեոս Մամուրեան (Վրոյր), *Երկեր* (Antelias: Տպարան Կիլիկիոյ Կաթողիկոսութեան, 1990), 369.

Armenian and other Indo-European languages and shed new light on the origins of languages and their relationships to one another.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, given its significance within the cultural-nationalist movement, this myth in particular was quite stubborn and its endurance exposes most clearly the fault line between factions of the intelligentsia who continued to see the story as religious-historical truth and those who had begun to see it as a myth with no value before modern science. Nevertheless, some in the second camp were sympathetic to the major rupture that this new shift prompted: “Who wants to abandon the beautiful dream that Hayk spoke Classical Armenian?” Cheraz admitted in a vulnerable moment.<sup>52</sup> It is critical to underline that grappling with these new ideas in linguistic thought took place at the level of the intelligentsia; as Cheraz notes, the general population continued to subscribe to this myth into the 1870s as they had little familiarity with the realm of comparative philology and thus little reason to challenge it.<sup>53</sup>

The interrogation of this myth about Classical Armenian was part of a larger questioning in European thought of *language generally* as a product of the divine. Citing a series of European philosophers and philologists including Kant, Hegel, Bacon, Herder and Rousseau, among others, one Ottoman Armenian intellectual asserts that God never had any direct influence on the structure

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<sup>51</sup> We see Aydenian, for example, wrestle with these new ideas, noting how comparative philology was showing new links between distant “nations that were entirely foreign from one another.” Այսրընեսան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 61. By 1885, another Viennese Mekhitarist philologist notes, referencing the work of “foreign” philologists who studied Armenian, that it had become an “undeniable reality” that Armenian was an Indo-European “daughter language.” Տերվիշեան, *Հնդեվրոպական նախապետ*, Բ.

<sup>52</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 104.

<sup>53</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 104. The French Orientalist Édouard Dulaurier writes that many Armenians believed that the Bible stated that Noah spoke Classical Armenian and that this myth was religious truth. Illiterate and unversed in Classical Armenian, few non-Protestant lay Armenians had the skills to read the Bible in the nineteenth century. Édouard Dulaurier, “Les études arméniennes. leur état actuel,” *Բազմալից* 41, no. 3 (1873): 258.

of human language, despite what the Bible may say.<sup>54</sup> In this way, the human as agent took center stage.<sup>55</sup> While these ideas had been circulating among European intellectuals for more than a century, they became part of the public discourse and came to the attention of many Ottoman Armenian intellectuals largely after the 1859 publication of Darwin's *On The Origin of Species*. This book sent shockwaves around the world and led philologists to a final reckoning with the assumption that language was God-given.<sup>56</sup> Like their counterparts around the world so too did Ottoman Armenian intellectuals wrestle with the ramifications, linguistic and otherwise, of Darwinian theory.<sup>57</sup> Unsurprisingly, not all intellectuals greeted his theories enthusiastically, nor did they even regard them as particularly compelling. In at least one case from 1865, we find an Ottoman Armenian writer choosing to continue adhering to his long-held belief in Armenian descent through Noah, dismissing as ludicrous Darwin's claim that humans could have evolved from "monkeys."<sup>58</sup> Despite being initially unsettling, as we proceed further into the 1870s and 1880s, it becomes more and more common for Darwin's theories, interpreted through the research of comparative philologists, to be accepted by the sub-set of the intelligentsia open to them and to play a role in overturning the long-held beliefs grounded in the Bible and the forebear canon,

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<sup>54</sup> Գրիգոր Ստերեան [Սիւնի], "Լեզուի վրայ," part 3, *Արեւելեան մասնույ* 3, no. 10 (1873): 446. For another perspective on this topic, see [Անտոն Մատաթիա Գարազաշեան], "Լեզու ու առանձին մեր հայերէն լեզուն," *Աղբ* 1, no. 4 (1860): 29-30.

<sup>55</sup> Տէրվիշեան, *Հնդեդոսոսական նախալեզու*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Hackert, *The Emergence of the English Native Speaker*, 58 and Roy Harris and Talbot J. Taylor, *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought I: The Western Tradition from Socrates to Saussure* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 186-187.

<sup>57</sup> See, for comparison, Marwa Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860-1950* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

<sup>58</sup> "Հայք 'ի Տաճկաստան," *Մասիս* 14, no. 698 (1865): 2.

particularly the origin myths chronicled in the history of the “forebear” historian Movses Khorenatsi.<sup>59</sup>

Like other myths that had undergirded the cultural-nationalist movement since the 1840s, this myth had grown stale and outdated to some by the 1870s and was no longer seen as functional. This change comes through clearly in the debates at the Teachers’ Assembly where Cheraz argued against perpetuating what he saw as the exaggerated, religiously based claims about Classical Armenian and Armenian national identity that had long dominated: “We must love [Classical Armenian], not because it is the best language [ընտրագոյն լեզու] in the world but because it is ours. We must respect our ancient literature, not as the richest of all but as particular to the Armenian nation...Our nation is not the first on the face of the earth, but we must love it first, because it is what gave us life.”<sup>60</sup> Guided by these principles, he advocated against giving Armenian children an education that was based in chauvinism, arguing that when students learned that their teachers had deceived them through exaggeration, they would “throw off national sentiment as lies.”<sup>61</sup> Notably, Cheraz’s detractors did not defend the *cogency* of the divine myth of descent for Classical Armenian but maintained that instilling love of nation required exaggeration of this sort.<sup>62</sup> This particular approach to love of nation, characteristic of the early cultural nationalist movement, was on the decline by this time and, by some accounts, had already become outdated by the mid-1860s, due in part to advances in comparative philology.<sup>63</sup> Calling on

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<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Իտորէն Գալֆայեան [Նար-Պէյ], *Ուսումնական միութիւն հայոց. աստեամբաստութիւն ի հանդէս բացման հայկազեան կանաչին* (Constantinople: Ի սպարանի Մասիս լրագրոց, 1877), 7.

<sup>60</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակութիւն*, ԻԹ-Լ.

<sup>61</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակութիւն*, Լ.

<sup>62</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակութիւն*, Լ-ԼԱ.

<sup>63</sup> Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականութիւն*, 279-280, footnote 12.

Armenians to approach Classical Armenian with a more scholarly eye unclouded by the myths of yore, the head of a short-lived Ottoman Armenian philological society, Khoren (Nar-Bey) Kalfayan, offers us a glimpse into the impact of the scholarly discipline on this change: “While we are sitting around pointlessly boasting about our antiquity [հնաւանդ սնապարծութիւն] and content in considering [Classical Armenian] the language of Adam, Bopp, Petermann, Max Müller, Böttiger, Windischmann and others are studying and determining its classification and origins, thanks to comparative philology....”<sup>64</sup> These Germanophone philologists had taken an interest in Classical Armenian to better understand change with the Indo-European language family.<sup>65</sup> But Kalfayan called on Armenians to see value in their work not for its implications for Indo-European studies but for national ends: to become better acquainted with “the secrets in the derivation and composition of our language’s structure and words.”<sup>66</sup>

It is commonly assumed that secularization led to a distancing from these myths and the Ottoman Armenian entry into a new linguistic paradigm. It is crucial to note, however, that neither the Ottoman Armenian intellectuals—no matter if they were pro-Modern Armenian, pro-Classical Armenian or somewhere in between—nor the European philologists whose work they relied on were atheist, agnostic or areligious people. The birth of the discipline of comparative historical philology itself was not entirely disassociated from the realm of religion. As Stephen Alter has noted, “comparative philology perpetuated aspects of a traditional, Bible-based view of the history

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<sup>64</sup> Գալֆայեան, *Ուսումնական միությունը հայոց*, 5.

<sup>65</sup> For an overview of the work of European philologists who studied varieties of Armenian, see *Ուսումնասիրությունը հայ լեզուի եւ մատենագրության յարեւմուտս (ԺԴ-ԺԹ դար)* (Venice: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1895).

<sup>66</sup> Գալֆայեան, *Ուսումնական միությունը հայոց*, 5.

of languages,” but wrapped them in the new cloak of science.<sup>67</sup> Still operating within the logic of a Bible-based view, the search for the *Ursprache*, for example, was not simply a scholarly exercise but a search for the “primordial tongues” of Babel that would help reconstruct the original, pristine language of God.<sup>68</sup> While philologists gradually moved away from this pursuit in the second half of the nineteenth century, European philologists continued to grapple with the role of the divine, particularly in determining the origin of speech.<sup>69</sup>

Religious persuasions or even affiliations with religious orders among Ottoman Armenians did not automatically mean a clinging to the former paradigm. Aydenian himself was a monk who later became the abbot of the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Congregation in Vienna and many of the most accomplished Armenian philologists in the final decades of the century were Armenian Catholic clergymen. In the case of Aydenian, his religious convictions did not keep him from producing groundbreaking philological research or from declaring, for instance, that it is “an antiquated eastern conception that the letter is sacred and that the book should speak in the (old) sacred language.”<sup>70</sup> An Ottoman Armenian society without religion would have been inconceivable at this time and in no way were reformers advocating for such a change. Many did work, however, to confine Classical Armenian to the church and to subvert a religious-based idealization of the language, which had made any critique of its position in society taboo. This

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<sup>67</sup> Stephen G. Alter, *Darwinism and the Linguistic Image: Language, Race, and Natural Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 7-8.

<sup>68</sup> Benes, *In Babel's Shadow*, 11.

<sup>69</sup> We see this wrestling, for example, in the oeuvre of Friedrich Max Müller, whose linguistic work led him to more theological explorations. See Lourens P. van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Müller: A Life Devoted to the Humanities* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002), 241-242.

<sup>70</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 300. Parentheses in the source.

desacralization slowly but surely cleared the path for the expansion and valorization of Modern Armenian. “No language is holy; no language is unholy” became one of the refrains of the era.<sup>71</sup>

### ***Classical Armenian is Not the Direct Source of Modern Armenian***

The idea that modern varieties of Armenian were simply corrupted forms of Classical Armenian also begins to come apart at the seams during this period.<sup>72</sup> This new framing, which became a mainstay of the discourse of the form’s advocates, can be traced directly back to the work of Arsen Aydenian. One of the main purposes of his study was to show that Classical Armenian was not the direct source of spoken varieties of Armenian in the nineteenth century and to highlight that spoken and classical (written) Armenian had always been distinct varieties, inhabiting their own separate planes and having their own separate functions and historical trajectories.<sup>73</sup> This novel theory had major implications for how Modern Armenian was viewed as it undermined the long dominant conceptualization that the modern was inherently deviant and therefore unsuitable for serious written expression. Two main notions in nineteenth century linguistic thought allowed this new understanding of Modern Armenian to come into being: the notion that languages are by nature ever-changing and the notion that there was a fundamental difference between spoken and written language.

By the mid-nineteenth century, change was seen as one of the most essential qualities of language.<sup>74</sup> Philologists regarded language change as a natural law, which contrasted sharply with

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<sup>71</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 71. Or, more dramatically, in the words of Cheraz: “You call Classical Armenian a ‘holy language.’ Forgive me, but, as a child of the nineteenth century, I do not understand what you mean by ‘holy’ and ‘unholy’ languages.” Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 144.

<sup>72</sup> Aydenian identifies the corruption of modern forms of Armenian as a common claim made by detractors of a vernacular-based print-language. Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 272.

<sup>73</sup> Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 47-48, 120, 273.

<sup>74</sup> Hackert, *The Emergence of the English Native Speaker*, 167.

the view characteristic in the previous paradigm in which change was synonymous with corruption and decline. This new organicist conception of language was rooted in German Romanticism and the idea that languages passed through the phases of birth, life and death.<sup>75</sup> This natural law of language was integrated into the discourse of pro-Modern Armenian intellectuals, though not without resistance from pro-Classical Armenian intellectuals.<sup>76</sup> Aydenian, in particular, attempted to address this resistance by sober-mindedly explaining the universality of natural law: “It would be very surprising and strange indeed,” he wrote, “if the Armenian language went against this general, universal law.”<sup>77</sup> Classical Armenian could not, in other words, be an exception to natural law, defy the lifecycle of a language and be eternal, as much as its advocates would have liked it.<sup>78</sup>

Approaching languages as growing and changing organisms was reinforced and shifted under the influence of Darwinian theory. After the publication of *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, it became even more common the world over to conceive of languages as organisms, now subject to the laws of evolution.<sup>79</sup> Though Darwin had in fact written very little about language in his study, it nevertheless elicited numerous responses and debates in the world of comparative philology.<sup>80</sup> Particularly influential were the responses of August Schleicher in 1863 and public

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<sup>75</sup> Turner, *Philology*, 242-243; Lia Formigari, *A History of Language Philosophies*, trans. Gabriel Poole (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), 137; and Konrad Koerner, “August Schleicher and Linguistic Science in the Second Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century,” in *Practicing Linguistic Historiography: Selected Essays*, ed. Konrad Koerner (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1989), 350, 354-355.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Բիւզանդ Բէշեան [Արամազդ], “Հայ լեզուն. պաշտպանութիւն աշխարհաբարի,” *Մասիս* 30, no. 2809 (1881): 2 and Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակութիւն*, 97.

<sup>77</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականութիւն*, 272.

<sup>78</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականութիւն*, 31, 138. Intellectuals later latch on to this idea about the “natural course of languages” (լեզուաց բնական ընթացք). See, for example, Բիւզանդ Բէշեան [Արամազդ], “Լեզուի խնդիրն. պաշտպանութիւն աշխարհաբարի,” part 1, *Մասիս* 30, no. 2836 (1881): 2.

<sup>79</sup> Formigari, *A History of Language Philosophies*, 144.

<sup>80</sup> Alter, *Darwinism and the Linguistic Image*, 52.

lectures by Müller and Whitney in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>81</sup> It was in this cultural climate that we see Ottoman Armenian intellectuals make use of the ‘language as organism’ concept more readily, pushing back against the prized principle of fixity in language and using the work of these theorists and others in their defense of Modern Armenian.<sup>82</sup> Those who subscribed to the former paradigm were now accused of transgressing the laws of nature by giving value to a static and unchanging language form like Classical Armenian and clinging to a belief in the divine origin of language.<sup>83</sup> As the inevitability of change was now a given, it also became easier to dismiss one of the main delegitimizing claims about Modern Armenian: that it was not suited to replace Classical Armenian as the primary written form of Armenian because it was ever-changing.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the inevitability of change became inscribed into the terms used to describe the newly crafted phases of Armenian. Like his fellow European philologists had done for other languages, Aydenian created periods for Armenian, overlaying the common tripartite *old/ancient*, *middle* and *modern/new* framework onto the history of the language. Defenders of Modern Armenian used this philological periodization to legitimize the existence of a *modern* Armenian and accuse those who resisted it as ignoring “first-rate European linguists.”<sup>84</sup> Out of this schema, the concept of “classical” language, akin to Greek and Latin, begins to gain more traction for Armenian.<sup>85</sup> By the end of the century, once the concept of

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<sup>81</sup> Harris and Taylor, *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought*, 186. Both Müller and Whitney gained a wide readership through their public lectures, entitled, respectively, *Lectures on the Science of Language* and *The Life and Growth of Language*. Both were published in English and widely translated. It is like because of this popularity that Ottoman Armenian intellectuals came to know their work. See Turner, *Philology*, 244-253.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Յ. Ա. Բ., “Գրաբար թէ աշխարհաբար,” *Արեւելեան մամուլ* 6, no. 11 (1876): 418.

<sup>83</sup> Գրիգոր Մսերեան [Միւնի], “Յոյս հանդէսն եւ լեզուի խնդիրը,” *Արեւելեան մամուլ* 5, no. 12 (1875): 467-470 and “Լեզուի խնդիրը,” part 5, *Արեւելեան մամուլ* 7, no. 7 (1877): 276-277.

<sup>84</sup> Բէշեան [Արամազդ], “Լեզուի խնդիրն. պաշտպանութիւնն աշխարհաբարի,” part 1, 2.

<sup>85</sup> Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականութիւն*, 254.

“modern” Armenian becomes uncontested, its rival would settle definitively into its status as a “classical” (դասական) language, a status that endures to this day.

What evidence did Aydenian use to craft these periods and expose the enduring historical distinction between written and spoken language? Here Aydenian used the forebear canon—the most revered corpus of Classical Armenian texts—in a novel way. While until this point the forebear canon had been seen exclusively as examples of the ‘purest’ Classical Armenian, Aydenian approached it differently, mining it for lexical and grammatical deviations from the Classical Armenian norm.<sup>86</sup> He then interpreted these deviations as evidence of the spoken varieties of Armenian used by the forebears in their everyday lives, traces of which they had inadvertently let slip into their Classical Armenian prose as early as the fifth century CE.<sup>87</sup> Beyond simply showcasing the antiquity of spoken Armenian, Aydenian took this argument one step further by highlighting how certain nineteenth-century lexical and grammatical forms in common parlance—denounced at the time as corrupt and degenerate because of their deviation from the Classical Armenian norm—had in fact a long history as they were similar or identical to words and forms he had found in the earliest Armenian texts.<sup>88</sup> This was the language form, he argued, from which modern forms of Armenian has descended: the *spoken language* of the forebears (նախնեաց ռամկորէն).

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<sup>86</sup> Watts has called such instances examples of “inscribed orality” and described their use by philologists to reconstruct historical speech through written texts. Watts, *Language Myths*, 57-59.

<sup>87</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 52-53, 128-129. This approach is taken up by Cheraz, who makes similar claims about the work of other ‘forebear’ writers. Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 111-113.

<sup>88</sup> He also refers to նախնեաց ռամկորէն as ստորին դարուց ռամկորէն (spoken language of the low centuries) and հին աշխարհաբար (old vernacular). Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 121, 156. These include words like ամէն, շատ, հերիք, դուրս, աւելի, among others. Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 63-65.

This discovery pointed to a fundamental difference between spoken and written language that grew more defined in the world of comparative philology in the second half of the nineteenth century. In this new linguistic paradigm, long-cherished ideals of stability and unity in language gave way to the recognition of its inherent variability and multiplicity. For the first time, it was acknowledged that all language communities had variation within them and that such variation was not an aberration.<sup>89</sup> This idea was radical in Ottoman Armenian intellectual circles. As we saw in the previous chapter, the reigning assumption was that, until the twelfth century, all Armenians lived in a geographically confined area and *spoke* a “purely Armenian” language that later became known as “Classical Armenian.”<sup>90</sup> After this period, so the thinking went, Armenians began to migrate and out of this migration emerged regional spoken varieties. These spoken varieties were seen as corruptions and deviations from Classical Armenian, understood to be a result of the carelessness and ignorance of speakers.<sup>91</sup> Linguistic thought had drifted away from these ideas by the mid-nineteenth century and upheld that linguistic heterogeneity—historical and contemporary—was bound to exist in all groups, particularly those that were geographically dispersed.<sup>92</sup>

Aligned with this new approach, Aydenian argued that, even at a time of relative geographic proximity in the fifth century, the spoken form that had become the basis for Classical

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<sup>89</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 160; Մատթեոս Մամուրեան [Վրոյր], *Հայկական նամականի* (Smyrna: Տպագրություն Տեղեան, 1872), 138; and Hackert, *The Emergence of the English Native Speaker*, 113.

<sup>90</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 106-107 and Այտրնեան, *Բնական քերականություն*, 29.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, Յովնանեան, *Մարդկային լեզուին սկզբան*, 85-90. This book was published just eight years earlier by a fellow member of Aydenian’s congregation and is part of an entirely different linguistic paradigm.

<sup>92</sup> Stephen G. Alter, *William Dwight Whitney and the Science of Language* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 261.

Armenian was just *one of many* contemporaneous spoken forms of Armenian.<sup>93</sup> As defenders of Modern Armenian would frequently repeat, Classical Armenian was not inherently superior to other fifth-century spoken varieties of Armenian; it just happened to have had the good fortune of being chosen, written, cultivated and elevated.<sup>94</sup> In a sharp reversal, in the mid-nineteenth century, spoken language came to be seen as the *source* of classical languages, which had then undergone a high degree of cultivation by writers in the process of literarization and codification.<sup>95</sup> The selection of the spoken form was seen as largely arbitrary. “What is Classical Armenian, if not the spoken language [աշխարհաբար] that our forebears considered the best for cultivation, separated from the rest and made worthy of noble and literary honor?” asked one Ottoman Armenian writer in 1881.<sup>96</sup>

Bolstered by the arbitrariness surrounding the choice of what would come to be revered as a written language or derided as a spoken dialect, this reframing of Classical Armenian quickly gained traction among the pro-Modern Armenian members of the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia.<sup>97</sup> In this dynamic, they found the justification to champion modern spoken forms, regarding them as the legacy of equally ancient, equally legitimate and equally pure spoken forms that had simply not been elevated through writing: “We can insist without hesitation that our modern language [արդի աշխարհիկ լեզու] was born of old provincial dialects [հին գաւառական

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<sup>93</sup> The existence of Armenian dialect diversity in the fifth century has been a topic of debate for more than a century. Historical linguists today have still not reached a consensus. On the debate, see, for example, Աճառյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2, 114-141.

<sup>94</sup> “Լեզուի խնդիրը,” part 4, *Արեւելեան մասուլ* 7, no. 5 (1877): 192.

<sup>95</sup> Hackert, *The Emergence of the English Native Speaker*, 132.

<sup>96</sup> Զէշեան [Արամազդ], “Հայ լեզուն. պաշտպանութիւն աշխարհաբարի,” 2.

<sup>97</sup> This sense of arbitrariness is developed in the work of August Schleicher and William Dwight Whitney, in particular. Van Rooy, *Language or Dialect?*, 225-228.

բարբառ],” one writer asserted in 1877. “...It is a great mistake to consider the dialects to be corrupt and vulgar forms of the old written language [գրական հին լեզու],” he continued. “Quite to the contrary, the old classical language [հին դասական լեզու] remained fixed and the new modern dialects are newer forms of the old.”<sup>98</sup> Exposing this interplay created a historical precedent and revealed the possibility for Modern Armenian to follow in the same path as Classical Armenian. Like their “forebears” had done for Classical Armenian, nineteenth-century Armenians could choose one spoken variety, now legitimated by a historical pedigree, and cultivate it as a modern standard language.

As Ottoman Armenian intellectuals began applying the newfound distinction between spoken language and written language to the past, the concept of linguistic heterogeneity also helped to debunk the long-standing myth of fifth-century linguistic unity and secure a foothold for Modern Armenian. Myths of linguistic unity or homogeneity are overwhelmingly common in nation-building projects as they foster the idea of a single, shared, uniform language across all members in the past as a basis for a shared sense of national unity in the present.<sup>99</sup> Even before the advent of the cultural-nationalist movement, the distinction between written and spoken language forms was often ill-defined.<sup>100</sup> It was only in the mid-nineteenth century that a sense of diglossia came into being, clearly distinguishing spoken from written Armenian from the very beginning of the written record. “Already from the fourth and fifth centuries, or earlier,” Aydenian wrote in 1866, “Armenia had essentially two distinct varieties of language, like we do today:...a written

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<sup>98</sup> “Լեզուի խնդիրը,” part 4, 192-193.

<sup>99</sup> Watts, *Language Myths*, 116.

<sup>100</sup> In Classical Armenian grammar books, for example, grammarians would typically begin formulaically by informing readers that the book they were about to begin would teach them to write and speak correctly, neglecting the fact that—as Aydenian and others note—Classical Armenian had not been a spoken language since the twelfth century, even then was used only by a small literate minority and only in particular social circumstances.

variety [գրաւորական] and a popular variety [ժողովրդական].”<sup>101</sup> Radical in its claim, Aydenian’s work put forth the idea that these forms had always coexisted and had always had different uses: Classical Armenian had always been a royal, scholarly and school language of writing while spoken varieties had always been used in the home and family, differing grammatically and at times lexically from Classical Armenian and from one another by region.<sup>102</sup> Shedding Classical Armenian as the basis, root and source of Modern Armenian and finding equally ancient roots elsewhere in spoken forms fundamentally undermined the claim that all modern varieties of Armenian were degenerate because of their deviation from written models.<sup>103</sup> From a pro-Modern Armenian perspective, no longer could restoring linguistic unity and pushing Classical Armenian forward as an example of such unity be used to subordinate Modern Armenian, because it had never existed in the first place. No longer could modern spoken forms of Armenian be denigrated for their variation because that variation had existed all along.<sup>104</sup> “The impartial truth is,” Cheraz declared at the Teachers’ Assembly, “...that Armenia has never had linguistic unity, not in the present and not in the past.”<sup>105</sup> In a cultural ethos in which historical rootedness continued to offer legitimacy, these new theories could not be easily ignored and slowly but surely prompted a major shift in perceptions of Modern Armenian. By the 1880s, the myth had been largely

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<sup>101</sup> Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 120. It is unclear how he can make this claim for the fourth century, which predates the start of the Armenian written record.

<sup>102</sup> Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 45-48.

<sup>103</sup> Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 251.

<sup>104</sup> Here Cheraz cites the French Orientalist Édouard Dulaurier who is said to have written that “the truth must be confessed that Classical Armenian was never spoken!” Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 110.

<sup>105</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 106.

dispelled and, in its place, rose the following refrain: Modern Armenian is not a corruption of Classical Armenian; Modern Armenian is descended from ancient *spoken* varieties of Armenian.

### ***Classical Armenian is Not a Paragon of Purity***

Last but not least, comparative philological research definitively undermined the idea that Classical Armenian was the ultimate paragon of linguistic purity. As we saw in the previous chapter, the myth of purity was premised on the idea that the divine Classical Armenian was passed down from God to the mythical Armenian progenitor Hayk through Noah's son Japheth and was put to writing fully intact by the Holy Translators in the fifth century. Comparative philologists, who had no stake in the perpetuation of this origin story, swiftly undercut the perceived purity of Classical Armenian by exposing its lexical, grammatical and phonological similarities to other Indo-European languages. Demolishing one of the foundations on which the supremacy of Classical Armenian was based, these discoveries helped strengthen the position of pro-Modern Armenian intellectuals not only clearing the way for Modern Armenian to become more widely valued but also for varieties *other than* Classical Armenian to be seen as possible sources of enrichment for the modern language.

For more than a century, a minority of Ottoman Armenian intellectuals, especially the Mekhitarists, had been aware of the impact of certain languages, particularly Greek and Syriac, on the earliest Classical Armenian texts. Apart from the near-universal condemnation of the Hellenizing school, direct borrowings from or grammatical similarities to these languages did not pose any major problem. Some saw these parallels as chance similarities, not borrowings, and did not spill much ink over them. Others recognized these similarities as borrowings and found creative ways to justify them, especially by framing them as the products of the erudition of the

“forebears” who used them to “elevate” the language.<sup>106</sup> Even among staunch advocates of Modern Armenian there was generally a permissive attitude toward borrowings in Classical Armenian. Not only were there rarely calls for the eradication of these ancient lexical and structural borrowings, they were often portrayed in a positive light and framed as a noble attempt to “follow the language or literature of more advanced nations” and help Classical Armenian develop.<sup>107</sup> In other words, there was a growing awareness that, as Aydenian puts it in 1866, “our ancestors did not loathe foreign words nearly as much as we do today.”<sup>108</sup>

Among advocates of Modern Armenian, the abundance of lexical borrowings in Classical Armenian—as revealed through sustained philological inquiry in the second half of the nineteenth century—did, however, come to represent a contradiction. As we saw in the previous chapter, the existence of lexical borrowings was used as a way to delegitimize modern forms of Armenian. But if Classical Armenian was full of borrowings itself, how could advocates of Classical Armenian in good conscience malign modern forms of Armenian? In this period, the existence of borrowings in Classical Armenian, though rarely challenged, became much more widely discussed and took on new significance as reformists began to use the ‘impurity’ of Classical Armenian as a way to knock it off its pedestal.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, philological research began to advance the notion that language contact was ubiquitous and pervasive and that linguistic purity in and of itself was a myth.<sup>109</sup> In place of understanding the “mixing of language” as part of a divine punishment

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<sup>106</sup> Հ. Արս. Բ [Արսէն Բագրատունի], “Հայերէն գրաբառ լեզուի յստակութեան վրայ,” 201.

<sup>107</sup> Գրիգոր Մսերեան [Սիւնի], “Լեզուի վրայ,” part 2, *Արեւելեան մասնու* 3, no. 1 (1873): 15.

<sup>108</sup> Այսընեան, *Քննական քերականութիւն*, 334 (pagination of the grammar section).

<sup>109</sup> Davies, *History of Linguistics*, 289-290.

and an illustration of bad morals, language contact started to be explained more and more like it is explained today as a predictable by-product of historical, social and political factors, such as migrations, conquests and cultural contact.<sup>110</sup> We read Ottoman Armenian intellectuals grapple with the idea that no language can ever be truly “pure” and that the history of languages are connected to the history of their speakers but stop short of accepting this notion wholeheartedly or allowing it to reverse how they saw Turkish lexical borrowings in spoken Armenian.<sup>111</sup> This new approach to language contact could have led them to fundamentally question or abandon their purist language ideology and accept into the print-language the range of Turkish and other borrowings used in spoken Armenian. Among late nineteenth-century Greek speakers, for example, a written form called demotic, which incorporated many Turkish lexical borrowings from spoken language, was put forth as a legitimate written form at this time, setting itself in opposition to their own purified intermediate print-language, *katharévousa*.<sup>112</sup> Unlike many other late nineteenth-century intellectuals around the world, Ottoman Armenian intellectuals never called for a movement to “write as you speak” or, as Anderson puts it, for “the print elevation of languages [the populace] had humbly spoken all along” precisely because of their continued disdain for Turkish borrowings.<sup>113</sup> Instead, despite these new currents in linguistic thought, we see Ottoman Armenian intellectuals uphold the idea central to the cultural-nationalist movement that contact with Turkish meant contamination. Even Aydenian could not prevent his national gaze

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<sup>110</sup> Ana Deumert, “Language, Culture, and Society,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Linguistics*, ed. Keith Allan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 661-663.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Յ. Ա. Բ., “Գրաբար թէ աշխարհաբար,” 418 and Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 165-166.

<sup>112</sup> Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece*, 203-240.

<sup>113</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 80.

from clouding his philological gaze, putting a value judgment on modern borrowings, and “foreign” influence more generally, and denouncing them as a major impediment to progress.<sup>114</sup>

The fixation on the ‘impurity’ of Classical Armenian that we see in the discourse of advocates of Modern Armenian was, therefore, not used as a way to justify the entry of modern-day Turkish lexical borrowings into Modern Armenian. It was used instead as a way to expose the hypocrisy of their ideological foes and to defend themselves against claims that—because Modern Armenian was said to be calqued on Turkish grammar and syntax—that it was “foreign” and thus could never be considered a modern national language.<sup>115</sup> In short, these thinkers used the existence of structural ‘impurities’ in Classical Armenian as a way to justify them in Modern Armenian.<sup>116</sup> Showing the various phases of Persian, Syriac, Greek and Latin influence on Classical Armenian, one thinker portrayed Turkish influence as simply the latest in a long line of influences, concluding that, “From this perspective, Modern Armenian [աշխարհաբար] is less guilty than Classical Armenian. We ask, then: What right do we have to disdain Modern Armenian for its Turkicisms?”<sup>117</sup> In an unexpected twist, some went as far as to argue for the *superiority* of Modern Armenian because, unlike Classical Armenian, which was criticized for relying on “1001 languages,” Modern Armenian only relied on one: Turkish.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 223.

<sup>115</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 117-119, 154-158. The architects of the modern standard *believed* that spoken Armenian syntax was calqued on Turkish, but more research needs to be done to determine if that belief has any basis. Linguists like Hratchia Adjarian have their doubts. See Hratchia Adjarian, *Classification des dialectes arméniens* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1909), 8.

<sup>116</sup> Արփիար Արփիարեան, “Ազգային տեսություն,” *Մասիս* 39, no. 3944 (1890): 332.

<sup>117</sup> Քէչեան [Արամազդ], “Լեզուի խնդիրն. պաշտպանություն աշխարհաբարի,” part 1, 2, footnote 1.

<sup>118</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 121.

As Classical Armenian now no longer inhabited a sacred realm of purity, more space was opened up for Modern Armenian to be seen as a *modern national language*. In the 1870s and 1880s, it became increasingly common for advocates of Modern Armenian to encourage writers to take ownership of spoken language and accept it, not for what it was then but for what—with their help—it could become. Aydenian anticipated this trend in 1866, writing that

Modern Armenian [արդի հայերէն կամ աշխարհաբար] is *our* language, especially when it is our hand that purifies it and eliminates its disdainful (foreign) parts and gives it a proper form...Shame on those who have said that the language is new to Armenians, that it is illegitimate or lowly...The fact that it is ours is enough of a reason to respect and love a small or lowly thing. Odysseus loved his island of Ithaca not because it was big and not because it was beautiful but simply because it was his. In this new world, we should not consider it offensive then to have a new cultivated language, one that is still in an amorphous, imperfect and uncultivated state...<sup>119</sup>

The “cultivation” of Modern Armenian, which contained within it the drive to purify, became the main focus of intellectuals in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. As the thinking went, it was only through cultivation that Modern Armenian could become a fully-fledged written language that was both functional and *seen as functional* in all social domains. Advocates for the cultivation of Modern Armenian liked to remind advocates of Classical Armenian that the classical language too “had not been born a perfect language” but instead had been actively crafted by writers and translators when making its own transition from a spoken to a written language in the fifth century.<sup>120</sup> Now it was time for a modern form of the language to make the same transition, ushering in “a notable period in the history of New Armenian.”<sup>121</sup> In the final section of the chapter,

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<sup>119</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 308. Emphasis in the source.

<sup>120</sup> Քէշեան [Արամազդ], “Հայ լեզուն. պաշտպանություն աշխարհաբարի,” 2-3.

<sup>121</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 236.

we will explore two divergent perspectives on the cultivation of Modern Armenian and its slow and contentious transformation in the *modern national language*.

### **How to “Cultivate” Modern Armenian: Two Perspectives**

Of course, not all Ottoman Armenian intellectuals agreed on the form the modern language should take nor did all immediately subscribe to the new linguistic paradigm shaped by advances in comparative philology. The coexistence of defenders of both paradigms resulted in the same tired debates over the merits of Classical and Modern Armenian reoccurring into the 1880s. These debates do, however, peter out over the course of this decade as the defenders of Modern Armenian, drawing strength from the “general evolutionary laws in the formation and popularization of new languages” and examples of the struggles between other “old and new languages,” grew progressively more confident in the inevitability of their triumph and began seeing their opponents’ resistance as futile.<sup>122</sup> While defenders of the old paradigm and Classical Armenian’s position within it did not immediately dwindle or disappear, their views no longer resonated as they once had and were progressively drowned out by louder and more numerous opposing voices, who mocked them as stubborn and absurd for reviving an old issue that “had long been resolved both in the field of philology and for learned [բանագետ] Armenians” and for continuing to cling to their “prejudices” despite the “sounding of the trumpets of knowledge.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> “Խուլզարկութիւն հայ լեզուի կազմութեան վրայ,” 4-5. The most notable debates in the 1880s sprouted up between two dictionary writers, Mesrob Noubarian and an eccentric ex-Mekhitarist monk who went by the name of Néandre de Byzance (Նորայր Բիւզանդացի), as well as two young intellectuals writing under the pseudonyms Anahid (Zabel Khanjian, later known as Sibyl, Zabel Donelian and Zabel Asadour) and Aramazt (Puzant Kechian). On the latter debate, see Ա. Մ. Մինասյան, *Միայի* (Yerevan: Երևանի համալսարանի հրատարակչություն, 1980), 58-62.

<sup>123</sup> Շահնուր [Մատթէոս Մամուրեան], “Թղթակցութիւն,” *Արեւելեան մամուլ* 11, no. 2 (1881): 70 and Մսերեան [Միւնի], “Լեզուի վրայ,” part 3, 443. For other expressions of this debate in the late 1870s and early 1880s, see Բիւզանդ Զէչեան [Արամազդ], “Լեզուի խնդիրն. պաշտպանութիւն աշխարհաբարի,” part 2, *Մասիս* 30, no. 2839 (1881): 2-4; “Լեզուի խնդիրը,” part 1, *Արեւելեան մամուլ* 7, no. 2 (1877): 74-77; and Յ. Ա. Բ., “Գրաբառ թէ աշխարհաբառ,” 416-421.

In a grand expression of the role of philological research in their sense of righteousness and an illustration of the militaristic imagery common in depictions of this debate, we read the following in 1877:

Let [the pro-Classical Armenian newspaper] *Arshalouys* [*Araradian*] be certain that even the corporal of its army cannot intimidate us because our army is the whole of the Armenian people with its living spoken language [կենդանի աշխարհիկ լեզու]; because our general is knowledge and truth; and because our guide is a legion of erudite and learned Armenian and foreign savants and scholars who, although they have already broken and shattered the chain of prejudice through which a dead language is defended as a living language and as the only language of ancient Armenia, they will never have any influence on *Arshalouys* or others like it.”<sup>124</sup>

As has been well documented, “few standard languages have emerged in the absence of at least a moderately fought *questione della lingua*.”<sup>125</sup> Many modern languages with classical varieties have been the subject of similarly long and fierce debates, the quintessential examples being Renaissance-era struggles between advocates of Latin and advocates of emerging Romance languages based on European vernaculars.<sup>126</sup> In Armenian historiography, this phase has been termed the “language struggle” (լեզուսպայքար) or “writing struggle” (գրասպայքար).<sup>127</sup> While typically framed as an ordinary battle between defenders of Classical Armenian (գրասարեւան) and defenders of Modern Armenian (աշխարհասարեւան) for the supremacy of their respective form, I argue that the dynamic was not so simple. Once the inevitability of a modern written language was recognized in the 1860s, the struggle between these two sides continued within the modern language itself as each side attempted to cultivate it in its preferred way. This period of

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<sup>124</sup> “Լեզուի խնդիրը,” part 1, 74.

<sup>125</sup> Joseph, *Eloquence and Power*, 60.

<sup>126</sup> Burke, *Languages and Communities*, 94-95.

<sup>127</sup> Աճառյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2, 504-568. Adjarian sees this language struggle as beginning in the 1850s and lasting until the 1890s.

active cultivation of Modern Armenian gave rise to an increased concern for purism, which—as Thomas notes—is often at its most intense during the planning of standard languages.<sup>128</sup>

Until this point, we have treated Modern Armenian as a monolith, but, amid the general variation and irregularity that characterized Modern Armenian during this period, we find the coexistence of two competing approaches to cultivating and purifying the written language. Particular to the different segments of the intelligentsia at odds with each other, each approach was, as always, colored by the world views and ideologies of its architects and offers us insight into social dynamics and intellectual currents of the time. The cultivation of Modern Armenian should be seen as an exercise in at once resisting and permitting language contact. While these segments did not always agree on *how* and *what* to purify, they were united in their conviction that lexical borrowings from Turkish had no place in the modern written language.<sup>129</sup> It was their permissiveness to *structural* borrowings (i.e., grammatical and syntactical) from Turkish where their approaches differed and that were of greatest concern during this period. Let us first take a look at the approach to cultivation taken by defenders of Classical Armenian who sought to archaize the structures of Modern Armenian as a form of de-Turkification.

### **Archaizing the Structures of Modern Armenian**

In the second half of the nineteenth century, it was a widely accepted and undisputed fact that the print-language had come into being under the influence of two languages: Classical Armenian in its lexicon and Turkish in some of its grammatical structures, turns of phrase and morphology.<sup>130</sup> The first was due to the waves of lexical purification that we saw in Chapters 1

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<sup>128</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 134.

<sup>129</sup> Այստեղեան, *Զննական քերականություն*, 267.

<sup>130</sup> Ա. Մ. Գ. [Անտոն Մատաթիա Գարագաշեան], “Բանասիրական,” *Մասիս* 11, no. 564 (1862): 3. Aydenian argued that the spoken Armenian of Constantinople was precisely the opposite: Armenian in its grammar and Turkish

and 2 and the second was due to the regional dialect of Armenian on which the print language was structurally based. In his study, Aydenian calls the regional dialect of Constantinople and Asia Minor *dialect group two* and identifies sustained “foreign influence” as one of its most defining features.<sup>131</sup> He goes as far as to propose that the spoken Armenian in this region had more “foreignisms” (օտարութիւն) than any other known language, except perhaps Maltese, noting that its contemporaneous speakers had borrowed from Turkish all but the most basic words, including nouns, adjectives, verbs, conjunctions and numbers.<sup>132</sup> Given this basis, “it is undeniable,” Aydenian wrote in 1866, “that in modern, written, renewed Armenian, the influence of the Turkish language has remained rooted.”<sup>133</sup> Donning his philologist’s cap, he was careful to indicate that it was entirely normal for neighboring languages to borrow from one another and, given its status as a socially dominant language of state power, it was entirely unremarkable that Turkish came to influence spoken Armenian.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, donning his nationalist’s cap, Aydenian made clear that the regional dialect of Constantinople could only succeed in becoming a modern written standard once it shed its “foreign” words, forms, meanings and styles and regain its “national character” (ազգային նկարագիր).<sup>135</sup>

Other intellectuals shared this opinion wholeheartedly and saw structural de-Turkification as essential to the cultivation of Modern Armenian. One reaction to these perceived grammatical

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in its lexicon. Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 233. What he describes is essentially what linguists have called a “contact language.” See Matras, *Language Contact*, 331-332.

<sup>131</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 176.

<sup>132</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 231-232.

<sup>133</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 270.

<sup>134</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 235, 270.

<sup>135</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 236.

and syntactical similarities with Turkish came in the form of *structural archaizing* to a degree that had not been seen in the preceding period. “When we are writing in Modern Armenian [աշխարհաբար], we try to have the Classical Armenian spirit reign more than the Turkish one,” one practitioner wrote in 1862.<sup>136</sup> Intellectuals who took this approach to Modern Armenian considered its structural similarities to Turkish to be one of the form’s major deficiencies. Long used to undermine and delegitimize spoken forms of Armenian, this argument was premised on the idea that traces of language contact highlighted the absence of national sentiment within the national community, the loss of political autonomy, a reigning state of subjugation and “national misery.”<sup>137</sup> These intellectuals, in other words, would have much preferred to use Classical Armenian. However, in the mid-nineteenth century when the need for a modern language became more pressing, they found themselves confronted with the need to use the modern language themselves.<sup>138</sup> We can see their structurally archaized form of Modern Armenian as Classical Armenian’s last stand and later a consolation prize of their own making.

By its practitioners, this form of Modern Armenian was simply referred to as “Modern Armenian” (աշխարհաբար/արդի հայերէն) or as “Modern Armenian modeled on Classical Armenian” (գրաբարակերպ աշխարհաբար). By its detractors, however, terms used to describe it were intended to be more pejorative and call attention to its relationship to an earlier linguistic paradigm. These include “Modern Armenian addicted to Classical Armenian” (գրաբարամոլ աշխարհաբար), “Modern Armenian addicted to the antiquated” (հնամոլ աշխարհաբար) and

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<sup>136</sup> Ա. Մ. Գ. [Անտոն Մատաթիա Գարագաշեան], “Բանասիրական,” 3.

<sup>137</sup> On Turkish influence as grounds for delegitimization, see Այսընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 266 and Չերազ, *Գրիչ եւ սուր*, 96-97.

<sup>138</sup> One of the last gasps of Classical Armenian came in 1886 with a short-lived journal entitled *Ճաշակ ոսկերէն դպրութեան*, conceived by two of the staunchest advocates of Classical Armenian: Andon Madatia Karakashian and Hagop Kourken.

“Modern Armenian mixed with Classical Armenian” (գրաբարախառն աշխարհաբար).<sup>139</sup> This written variety was characterized by verb forms common in spoken language alongside Classical Armenian adverbs, prepositions, pronouns, plural markers and case endings.<sup>140</sup> While the focus in this period was largely on grammar, we do also see attention paid to archaizing spelling and stigmatizing lexical holdouts from the spoken variety of Constantinople that had continued to be used by some in print.<sup>141</sup> Spelling, which had been wildly inconsistent, slowly became regularized during this period to adhere to classical norms.<sup>142</sup> Below we find the same text in the two competing forms of Modern Armenian, which more vividly illustrates some of these differences.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> After this style of Modern Armenian fell out of fashion in the late 1880s, it continued to be derided by future generations of intellectuals for reasons that will become clearer in the next chapter. Writers in the 1890s and early 1900s called it “devoid of simplicity, naturalism, populism, identity,” “strangely macaronic” and saw it as having impeded “the path of progress for a language.” In a word, it did not age well. See Գառնիկ Ֆնտրլեան, “Արեւմտեան աշխարհաբարին ընթացքը դարուս մէջ,” part 1, *Մասիս* 41, no. 3967 (1892): 197; Արշակ Չօպանեան, “Արդի հայերէնը,” *Անսահիտ* 4, no. 5 (1902): 93; and Յովհաննէս Գազանեան, “Արդի հայերէնը եւ իր շրջափոխութեան օրէնքը,” *Մասիս* 55, no. 46 (1907): 924.

<sup>140</sup> It is important to note that this archaized form was not standardized, and these classical features could appear in any combination with forms more characteristic of spoken language. This form is reminiscent of what Watts calls ‘polite language’ in the history of English, an eighteenth-century written form that “used ornate syntactic structures of the classical languages Latin and Greek and a Latinate vocabulary.” Watts, *Language Myths*, 210.

<sup>141</sup> Writers at the time often targeted the same words and their pronunciation-based spellings, including իրեք (երեք), անկան (անկանջ), մենծ (մեծ), եվէթք (աւելի), բայլիք (բանալի), ծուն (ծին), etc., and emphasized that they had no place in the modern written language. For more examples, see Աննայան, *Գրական արեւմտահայերէնի ձևափոխումը*, 174-175 and Զիլեմեան, *Հայերէն քերականութիւն աշխարհաբար լեզուի*, ԺԱ. Aydenian emphasizes that many of these words had a long history of use in spoken Armenian. Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականութիւն*, 238, footnote 2.

<sup>142</sup> In this period, we see, for example, -ոյ become -ոյ with more consistency.

<sup>143</sup> Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականութիւն*, 248.

Վ'օգտէ որ դուն հիմակու  
 հիմայ ծուռը շտկես . մէկալ  
 պէտքի կտորները կրնայ ըլ-  
 լալ որ ինքը մինակ ալ կա-  
 րենայ ճարել :

Անանկ ուժով էր , կ'ըսեն ,  
 որ մէկ ձեռքով ալ մինակ  
 ծառեր չէ՝ հապա քարեր ալ  
 ճղքելու հերիք էր :

Անանկ ազուոր լուսնկայ  
 մ'ալ ելած էր որ , գիտես  
 որ արեւ էր ծաթեր :

Թէ որ ամէն ի ժիր ասանկ  
 չըլլալու բաներու վրայ պա-  
 րապ տեղ մտմտալով ատեն  
 կորսնցընես նէ , ձեռքդ ալ  
 բան չի վաստակիր միտքդ ալ :

Ետքի հեղուն գրած գիրս  
 առեր են նէ՝ եւելզք խնտու՞մ  
 են իմացեր <sup>18</sup> . ինչու որ մեր  
 աս դիրը քաշած խեղճու-

Բաւական որ դուն առ  
 այժմ սխալն ուղղես . իսկ  
 միւս հարկաւոր մասերը կա-  
 րելի է թէ նաեւ ինքն առան-  
 ձին կարող ըլլայ յարմարել :

Վ'ըսեն թէ այնչափ զօրաւ  
 որ էր , որ նաեւ մէկ ձեռքը  
 չէ թէ ծառեր միայն , պլ  
 քարեր ալ ճեղքելու բաւ-  
 ական էր :

Այնպէս գեղեցիկ լուսին  
 մ'ալ ելած էր , որ կարծես  
 թէ արեգակ ծագած էր :

Եթէ միշտ այսպիսի ուն-  
 կարելի բաներու վրայ վայ-  
 րապար մտածելով ժամանակ  
 կորսնցընես , ոչ ձեռքդ շահ  
 մը կը շահի եւ ոչ միտքդ :

Վերջին տնգամուտն գրած  
 նամակս ընդունելով՝ մեծա-  
 պէս ուրախացեր են . վասն-  
 զի ստոյգ կամ սուտ լրերուն

Figure 2: Example of two contemporaneous forms of Modern Armenian c. 1866.

As is often the case, a language tug-of-war is rarely ever only about language. By creating this structurally archaized form of Modern Armenian, practitioners were attempting to preserve as much of the social status quo as possible in the face of change. In this way, those who continued to believe that Classical Armenian was an essential pillar of nationhood; that it had the power to unite the scattered national community and spread love of nation; that abandoning it would be an affront to the Church and tantamount to a death sentence for the nation; that it would mean the critical loss of a source of religious sentiment, knowledge and national genius as well as a reason to boast on the world’s stage need not fully compromise these beliefs by transitioning to a new written language as elements of the *former* written language would still be literally inscribed in it.<sup>144</sup> It can, thus, be seen as emerging in protest to attempts to subordinate Classical Armenian and

<sup>144</sup> For a selection of these perspectives, see Յ. Ա. Բ., “Գրարաւ թէ աշխարհարաւ,” 417; “Լեզուի խնդիրը,” part 1, 75-76; “Ա. Մ. Գարագաշեանի յօդուածը,” *Մասիս* 23, no. 1595 (1874): 3; and Նորայր Ն. Բիւզանդացի, “Բառգիրքներու առթիւ,” *Մասիս* 34, no. 3795 (1885): 341.

in defense of the former linguistic paradigm in which there had always been a clear division between spoken and written language and in which written language was seen more, as Mackridge has noted for an similarly archaized form of nineteenth-century Greek, “a noble edifice rather than as an efficient vehicle of communication.”<sup>145</sup> Similarly demonstrative of the logic of the former paradigm, archaizing grammar was also seen as a way to add elegance to Modern Armenian, strengthening it and making it more beautiful through an association with the “richness” of Classical Armenian.<sup>146</sup>

From the early 1860s to the late 1880s, this structurally archaized form of Modern Armenian was used in all kinds of print media and predominated among a powerful faction of the Ottoman Armenian community leadership. It was indeed the form of Modern Armenian used to render the Armenian National Constitution and to draft all the reports and minutes published by the National Administration during this period.<sup>147</sup> It is likely no coincidence that this form emerged *alongside* the National Administration at a time when there was a need for an “enhanced” form of Armenian imbued at once with a sense of modernity, officialdom, erudition and national distinctiveness that prevailing forms were not seen as able to provide.<sup>148</sup> For the figures within this

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<sup>145</sup> Peter Mackridge, “A Language in the Image of the Nation: Modern Greek and Some Parallel Cases,” in *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, and the Uses of the Past (1797-1896)*, eds. Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 184. Grammatical archaisms, especially classical case endings, continued to be used as flourishes—albeit much more sparingly—into the twentieth century and, by some, up to the present day.

<sup>146</sup> Փափագեանց, *Նոր դասագիրք*, 16 and Ռեթեու Յ. Պերպերեան, *Դպրոց եւ դպրութիւն. կրթական եւ գրական նիւթեր* (Vienna: Միխայիլեան տպարան, 1907), 270.

<sup>147</sup> For the finalized version of the Constitution, published bilingually alongside Armeno-Turkish, see *Ազգային սահմանադրութիւն հայոց. նիզամնամէի միլլէթի էրմէնիան* (Constantinople: Ի տպարանի Յ. Միւհէնտիսեան, 1863). For a collection of published meeting minutes, see *Առնենագրութիւն երեսփոխանական ընդհանուր ժողովոյ* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Յ. Միւհէնտիսեան, 1870).

<sup>148</sup> Certain Ottoman Armenian intellectuals clung to Classical Armenian and archaized Modern Armenian to show their erudition, as Classical Armenian required years of formal study. According to one grammarian, certain intellectuals were reluctant to use Aydenian’s grammar in the 1860s and 1870s, for example, likely out of concern

faction, many of whom continued to subscribe to the old paradigm in which the classical still embodied prestige and nationality, an archaized form of Modern Armenian checked both boxes. Due to its connection to the National Administration, this form of the modern language also came to be seen as prestigious and was used by writers not necessarily for the ideological reasons that led to its emergence but simply because it offered an air of erudition and gravitas. We can see this idea clearly when we consider the writers who transitioned to an archaized form after using a grammatically *un*-archaized form in the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>149</sup>

Some—but not all—of the most prolific practitioners of this archaized form were educators in urban schools.<sup>150</sup> Because of the power of the teacher in shaping Modern Armenian usage in the classroom, this archaized form of Modern Armenian gained a following among their students and transcended generation, perpetuating its use among certain Ottoman Armenians born in the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s.<sup>151</sup> The fact that Armenian students were only instructed in Classical Armenian grammar in school and were given classicized models of Modern Armenian in their textbooks could have also dovetailed with their teachers’ encouragement, sustaining this form into the 1880s

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that using its ‘popular’ forms would make them appear uneducated. See Չապլի Տօնէլեան, *Գործնական քերականություն արդի աշխարհաբարի* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Յ. Մատթէոսեան, 1897), 2.

<sup>149</sup> Compare, for example, Hovhannes Hisarian’s 1851 novel *Խոսքով ու Մաքրուհի*, published in serialized form in the journal *Բանասեր*, with his 1867 novel *Ներն կամ կատարած աշխարհի* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Արամեան, 1867).

<sup>150</sup> Major figures include Reteos Berberian, Hagop Kourken and Madatia Karakashian. See Հրանտ Ասատուր, *Գինաստուերներ* (Constantinople: Ա. Քէշիշեան որդի, 1921), 239. Cheraz claims that, by the 1870s, few were “sincere and unselfish advocates of Classical Armenian,” but rather continued to defend it because they made their living through teaching and writing textbooks in that form of the language. Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, ԻՉ-ԻԷ.

<sup>151</sup> For example, Zarouhi Kalemkarian (b. 1874) writes of the influence of her teacher Hagop Kourken in instilling in her a reverence for Classical Armenian and encouraging her to write in the form. The same goes for the influence of Khachadour Missakian on his students Zabel Asadour (b. 1863) and Vahram Torkomian (b. 1858). See Չարուհի Գալմբեարեան, *Կեսեքիս ճամբէն* (Antelias: Տպարան Կաթողիկոսութեան Կիլիկիոյ, 1952), 50; Մինասյան, *Միպիլ*, 61; and Վահրամ Թորգոմեան, *Անցուկը մոռցուկ* (Istanbul: Aras Yayincılık, 2020), 135-138. Under the influence of their teachers, all three wrote their first literary pieces in Classical Armenian before transitioning to an un-archaized Modern Armenian by the turn of the century.

among a new generation. One of the most fervent practitioners of structural archaizing was Andon Madatia Karakashian, who cornered the school textbook market in the 1860s and 1870s in subjects as wide-ranging as philosophy, logic, astronomy, geography and Classical Armenian grammar. According to his contemporaries, “there was no city or remote corner of a province where his textbooks were not read.”<sup>152</sup> The archaized grammar used in these textbooks and those by his contemporaries likely served as models for students who took up writing, thereby serving as a means of propagation. He and others also advocated for classroom activities in which the teacher would have students translate from classical to modern Armenian so that “little by little the *Armenian qualities* [հայկաբանութիւն] of Classical Armenian would be transferred to Modern Armenian [աշխարհաբար] and, through them, the recent monstrous Turkicisms [տաճկաբանութիւն] would gradually be removed from writing and speech.”<sup>153</sup>

### ***Structural De-Turkification: Purist Hypervigilance Gone Wrong?***

The structural archaizing in this chapter and the lexical archaizing we saw in the previous chapters shared the same nationally based logic and objective: to undo traces of Turkish language contact and to Armenize the print language by infusing it with the “purest,” “most authentic,” and most “original” Armenian language.<sup>154</sup> This view, of course, paid little heed to the new philological approaches to spoken language, to the reframing of language contact as ubiquitous and especially to the debunking of Classical Armenian as the source of Modern Armenian. It was, in other words, firmly ensconced in the old paradigm. The following idea was thus common throughout the 1860s,

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<sup>152</sup> Cited in Հրայիկ Շաքարյան, *Ա. Մ. Գարսագաշյանի աշխարհայացքը* (Yerevan: Երևանի պետական համալսարանի հրատարակչություն, 1962), 34.

<sup>153</sup> Ա. Ա. Սուրեն, *Նոր քերականություն գործնական* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Արամեան, 1874), Բ. Emphasis in the source.

<sup>154</sup> For a more technical look at structural de-Turkification, with examples, see Յակոբ Ծ. Սիրունի, *Պոլիս եւ իր դերը*, vol. 4 (Antelias: Տպարան Կաթողիկոսութեան հայոց մեծի տանն Կիլիկիոյ, 1988), 33-39.

1870s and into the 1880s and was used to justify the archaizing purist approach to the modern language:

It is clear that our spoken Armenian of Constantinople [Պոլսոյ ռամկորէն] in and of itself is very impoverished with regard to its own particular styles, especially if we take away structures similar to Turkish, which cannot typically pass unnoticed into the written language without giving it a different appearance. Under the influence of Classical Armenian, the new written language has more or less been kept from the danger of such an onslaught by instead introducing corresponding classical words and sayings and, in this way, purifying it, ennobling it and enriching it at the same time.<sup>155</sup>

This approach to cultivation can thus be understood as a more intensified attempt to remove any remaining traces of Turkish from Modern Armenian. With the lexicon already largely distanced from Turkish by the 1860s, attention turned to less eye-catching and more embedded structural examples of language contact.<sup>156</sup> Pro-Classical Armenian intellectuals at the time were particularly anxious about the entry into Modern Armenian of *expressions* and *turns of phrase* (what were called collectively *նճեր*, or “styles”) that were patterned on Turkish expressions and turns of phrase, many of which were so common in spoken Armenian that many speakers did not even know of their ‘foreign’ origins.<sup>157</sup> Contact linguists have called this common phenomenon in the language practices of bilinguals *structural borrowing*, *pattern replication* and *grammatical calquing*, among other terms.<sup>158</sup> Unlike the *literary calques* from Latin and Greek that we saw in Chapter 1 that were created to expand the range of expression of a language and were used primarily in writing, these calques from Turkish were what George Thomas calls *vernacular*

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<sup>155</sup> Պէրպլերեան, *Դպրոց եւ դպրութիւն*, 275.

<sup>156</sup> Այսընեան, *Զննակաւն քերականութիւն*, 239-240.

<sup>157</sup> On this lack of awareness, see, for example, Հ. Գ. Այվ. [Գաբրիէլ Այվազովսքի], “Մեր աշխարհաբարտին մէջ մտած քանի մը օտարազգի մասնիկներու վրայ. կոր, մի,” *Բազմալէս* 5, no. 11 (1847): 165-168.

<sup>158</sup> Matras, *Language Contact*, 209-253.

*calques*, which arose spontaneously as a result of interaction between Armenian and Turkish speakers and became part of everyday speech.<sup>159</sup> As a result, these expressions and turns of phrase were pervasive in spoken language and thus seen by purists as particularly pernicious. These vernacular calques had been targeted for corrupting the ‘Armenian style’ (հայկական ոճ) already in the 1840s and 1850s and isolated attempts had been made by individual writers to discourage their use, but it was only in the 1860s that, driven by the spirit of reform and regulation within the Empire, a concerted effort to stigmatize them and model a type of writing that expelled them gained momentum. Inaugurating the new structurally archaized form of Modern Armenian, Karakashian noted in 1862 that

We try as much as possible to be wary of Turkish influence. As we have said and as is clear to everyone, our spoken Armenian [աշխարհաբար], especially in the region of Constantinople, has been seized by Turkish influence to such a degree that the majority of our commonly spoken Armenian and writings are nothing but Turkish translations in all their turns of phrase. We are striving to cure Modern Armenian [աշխարհաբար] of this disease, because this element has not only made our language vulgar [զոտեղիկ] but heavy and difficult to pronounce.<sup>160</sup>

The ‘cure’ for Karakashian and his like-minded contemporaries was to turn to Classical Armenian to replace these expressions, acknowledging that many were ingrained and difficult to uproot entirely.<sup>161</sup> They, nevertheless, made use of Classical Armenian turns of phrase and structures extensively in their Modern Armenian to offset this perceived Turkish influence. For

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<sup>159</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 72.

<sup>160</sup> Ա. Մ. Գ. [Անտոն Մատաթիա Գարագաշեան], “Բանասիրական,” 4.

<sup>161</sup> Aydenian lists a selection of Classical Armenian turns of phrase that entered Modern Armenian at this time. Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 326 (pagination of the grammar section). Adjarian builds on this list in Աճառյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2, 479. Many of these phrases remain to this day in the Western Armenian written standard, including ի նպաստ, շնորհիւ, պատճառաւ, ընդհակառակ, առ այժմ and հետզհետէ. Many of the turns of phrase that Aydenian identifies as Turkish calques, however, were ultimately not replaced and are still used in Western Armenian today, including փախուստ տալ, ծեծ ուտել, ականջ կախել and երես առնել. Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 319 (pagination of the grammar section).

example, a particular sense of anxiety could be felt surrounding the prevalence of Turkish-style postpositions in Modern Armenian, prompting an increased use of *prepositions*, which predominated in Classical Armenian.<sup>162</sup> During this period, in the name of cultivation, we also see the removal of the widely used particles կոր and եղեր and with them useful distinctions in spoken Armenian. Examples of the creativity and innovation of multilingual speakers that resulted in entirely new communicative structures, these particles were used to convey progressive tenses and reported speech, respectively, and likely represent instances of structural influence where speakers created new meanings in Armenian based on those that they heard in Turkish. While in the 1840s and 1850s at least one writer argued that these particles allowed for more precision in meaning and constituted one of the “riches” of the Turkish language, he was in the minority and they did not survive in print beyond the mid-century.<sup>163</sup> Though Classical Armenian had no way to convey these ideas grammatically, purist concerns ultimately won out over utility and they were stigmatized and barred entry to the print language. Attempts were also made in this period to eradicate semantic calques, or instances where an Armenian word acquired an additional meaning through contact with Turkish.<sup>164</sup> These elements had not been the direct target of purification in

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<sup>162</sup> Սիրունի, *Պոլիս եւ իր դերը*, vol. 4, 33. For a comparison of postposition usage in Modern Armenian and Turkish, which often take the same grammatical case, see Այսրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 122-124 (pagination of the grammar section). As examples, he cites քաղքին առջեւ and *şehirin yönü* (genitive, *in front of the city*) and քեզմէ յսուսջ and *senden evvel* (ablative, *before you*).

<sup>163</sup> [Այվազովսքի], “Մեր աշխարհաբարոն մէջ,” 165-168; “Աշխարհաբար լեզուին քանի մը բառերուն վրայ քննություն,” *Մասնաց աղանի* 2, no. 8 (1856): 195-196; and Elias Riggs, *A Brief Grammar of the Modern Armenian Language as Spoken in Constantinople and Asia Minor* (Smyrna: W. Griffitt, 1847), 46-47. They correspond to the Turkish *-yor* and *-mıs*. These particles were widely used in early purified vernacular texts and could still be seen in print in the 1840s and 1850s, despite a growing stigma. After the 1860s, they were only seen in print when rendering spoken language, often satirically. While they did not make it into the standard, these particles can still be heard today in colloquial Western Armenian.

<sup>164</sup> Aydenian lists a handful of semantic calques, including քաշել (for նկարել, under the influence of *çekmek*), առնել (for գնել, under the influence of *almak*) and երկաթ (for խարիսխ, under the influence of *demir*). Այսրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 328-330 (pagination of the grammar section). See also Անառայան, *Հայոց լեզվի սլաոնություն*, vol. 2, 293-295.

preceding periods and represent a clear intensification of the de-Turkification campaign for Modern Armenian.

As is common in purification campaigns around the world, purists—especially those versed in the stigmatized language—often *perceive* language contact where it is not there. This misidentification leads to the stigmatization of words and grammatical structures that had, in fact, existed before contact between the languages began.<sup>165</sup> We find manifestations of this tendency throughout the period among both sets of cultivators, who were rarely trained philologists and had little knowledge of the history of Armenian to determine with certainty which elements were the result of language contact and which were not.<sup>166</sup> Driven more by feelings than by facts, their heightened sensitivity to forms that, in the words of one writer, had even a “whiff of Turkish” (թուրքերէնի հոս) led them to stigmatize as Turkish structural similarities and morphological features that had been used in spoken forms of Armenian before contact with Turkish speakers began.<sup>167</sup>

More scholarly-minded intellectuals like Aydenian cautioned against this quickness to condemn and excise, alerting readers to the dangers of seeing mere similarities as Turkicisms.<sup>168</sup> Like contact linguists today, Aydenian knew that, while it is certainly possible for multilingual speakers to overlay the structure of one of their languages onto another, Turkish influence should

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<sup>165</sup> Langer and Nesse, “Linguistic Purism,” 615.

<sup>166</sup> In a small number of cases, this dilettantism also facilitated the entry into the standard of terms that were, according to Adjarian, Turkish or Turkic borrowings, including սուրճակ (bag), ելակ (strawberry) and երշիկ (sausage). See Աճարյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2, 275-279.

<sup>167</sup> Ա. Մ. Գ. [Անտոն Մատաթիա Գարագաշեան], “Բանասիրական,” 4.

<sup>168</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 241-242, 267. Cheraz echoes this idea. Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 158-159.

not be read into all similarities with Armenian.<sup>169</sup> One of the few to have indeed studied the history of Armenian, Aydenian pointed out the influence of Persian on the lexicon of both Turkish and Armenian as a reason for lexical similarities, giving the example of the shared word նշան/nişan (sign).<sup>170</sup> At the structural level, he drew on his research into spoken Armenian through the ages to illustrate that certain grammatical and morphological features perceived as Turkish in the modern day had long been attested in oral tradition.<sup>171</sup> He honed in particularly on two features that were the subject of the purist gaze in the mid-nineteenth century and that were subsequently removed from the written language: նէ and -նիս/-նիդ/-նին.<sup>172</sup> The former conveyed a hypothetical or conditional mood while the latter were plural possessive affixes. For purists, the issue was that neither of the forms existed in Classical Armenian, leading them to conclude that they were “Tatar language forms” and, therefore, impermissible in writing.<sup>173</sup> Notably, neither form bore any resemblance to their perceived Turkish sources. Instead, the purists were likely made uneasy by the similar placement of these features in the sentence and within the word itself.<sup>174</sup> While purists treated them as instances of contact-induced grammatical replication, Aydenian noted that the

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<sup>169</sup> Lars Johanson, *Structural Factors in Turkic Language Contacts*, trans. Vanessa Karam (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2002), 84. Johanson suggests that Turkish influence may be at play in *reinforcing* the use of similar structures and increasing the frequency of their use but not in creating them. On particular structural elements in Armenian, see Johanson, *Structural Factors*, 88, 108, 115.

<sup>170</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 268-269.

<sup>171</sup> Aydenian notes that some expressions that “appear purely Turkish” can be found as early as the fifth century in Classical Armenian, such as ձեռք/ձեռն տալ. Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 319 (pagination of the grammar section).

<sup>172</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 269. Both are attested in Middle Armenian.

<sup>173</sup> Ա. Մ. Գ. [Անտոն Մատաթիա Գարագաշեան], “Բանասիրական,” 4.

<sup>174</sup> For example, like Turkish and unlike Classical Armenian, նէ appears at the end of the clause after the conjugated verb (i.e., gidiyorsa and երթայ նէ). As for -նիս/-նիդ/-նին, they are tagged onto the end of a noun and do not require a possessive pronoun, which was used to show possession in Classical Armenian (i.e., տուներնիս and evlerimiz).

similarities were simply a coincidence and offered evidence of their use in spoken Armenian long before any extensive contact with Turkish speakers had begun.<sup>175</sup>

While the stigmatization of the constructions above and the infusion of certain grammatical archaisms endured to the present day, other instances of attempted stigmatization in the name of cultivation through archaizing did not. For example, throughout this period we see certain writers replace the spoken Armenian plural marker *–(ն)եր* (*-(n)er*) with the classical plural marker *-ք*, likely because of the surface similarity of the former to the Turkish plural marker *-ler*. We also hear scattered calls for the removal of the particle *կը*, a building block of the present and imperfect tenses, surrounded by vague accusations of Turkishness, likely nothing more than a hunch based on its absence from Classical Armenian.<sup>176</sup> Yet again, Aydenian shows a history in spoken Armenian entirely disassociated from Turkish.<sup>177</sup> As these features represented fundamental components of the grammar of the spoken language, they were not easily replaced and stigmatization efforts did not survive past the turn of the century. Stigmatization also did not survive in these two instances because these language features were embraced by a competing group of intellectuals who, for the first time, began to valorize non-classical language forms in the cultivation of Modern Armenian and to acquire newfound influence.

### **Tentatively Embracing the Language of the “People”**

This archaizing approach to cultivating Modern Armenian was countered by a sub-set of Ottoman Armenian intellectuals who *also* believed they were working with the best interest of the

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<sup>175</sup> For a short history of *նէ*, see Այսրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 99-100 (pagination of the grammar section).

<sup>176</sup> As early as 1849, there were discussions about what to do with *կը*. Most concluded that it would be nearly impossible to excise from the modern written language. See, for example, Հ. Գ. Այվ. [Գաբրիել Այվազովսքի], “Ռամկական լեզուին մէջ գործածուած *կը* կամ *կո* մասնրկին վրայ,” *Բազմալէզ* 7, no. 7 (1849): 104-105.

<sup>177</sup> For a short history of *կը*, see Այսրնեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 75-78 (pagination of the grammar section). Aydenian traces its first appearance in writing, as *կու*, to the eleventh century.

national community at heart. This group accused their ideological foes of, through their grammatical archaizing, attempting to “delay the independence and sovereignty of the modern language...forever keeping it under their guardianship.”<sup>178</sup> While both sides agreed on the need to stigmatize and remove many of the grammatical particles above, this group took a much more permissive approach to certain structural similarities to Turkish. This attitude was driven not by any kind of reverence for Turkish but rather by the adoption of a philological trend that gave newfound value to spoken language, tacitly accepting *some* of these similarities as products of “the people.” “Armenized Turkish turns-of-phrase are not sinful,” one grammarian mused in 1893. “The people accepted them, learned them and made them their own by using them.”<sup>179</sup>

This idea and the scholarly current that fostered it also dovetailed with the Romantic idea in vogue that anything “of the people” was worthy of valorization, including their long-derided language forms. As we shall see, the definition of “the people” was not fixed. While in the next chapter, the language “of the people” will come to mean the spoken usage of Armenians in the Ottoman provinces, in this period the language “of the people” denotes solely the spoken language of *educated Armenians* in the urban print centers of Constantinople and Smyrna, who considered their own usage to be the worthiest in the cultivation of Modern Armenian. In this way, we see challenged for the first time the widespread veneration of Classical Armenian and the near universal assumption that the only way to cultivate Modern Armenian was to bring it closer to the classical language. This new approach creates a tentative new expectation that the grammar and lexicon of the modern language should instead follow the usage “of the people.”

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<sup>178</sup> Չերազ, *Գրական փորձեր*, ԾԴ.

<sup>179</sup> Թովմաս Աճեմեան, *Նոր քերականութիւն հայերէն աշխարհաբար լեզուի* (Constantinople: Գրաստուն Պ. Պալեհ, 1893), 11.

In the emergence and defense of this radical new approach in the 1870s and 1880s, the work of Euro-American philologists was, once again, of essential importance. Among advocates of this approach, one of the most recurrent lines of argumentation, drawn from the philological discourse of the period, was based in the development of a dichotomy between Modern Armenian as a “living,” “natural” and spoken language and Classical Armenian as a “dead,” “artificial” and written language.<sup>180</sup> As we have seen, this period brought a greater awareness of the distinction between spoken and written language. Given its newfound importance in linguistic analysis, spoken language came to be seen more and more as an invaluable resource in understanding the history of languages and their speakers.<sup>181</sup> Written languages, on the other hand, came to be seen as inherently static, highly engineered and, through the very act of writing, less likely to change.<sup>182</sup> These qualities made them of little use to philologists interested in tracking diachronic change as, from a comparative philological perspective, they obscured “natural” language.

These theoretical underpinnings not only helped certain Ottoman Armenian intellectuals build an argument for the legitimacy of Modern Armenian more generally but also generated and furthered a new approach to its cultivation where the grip of Classical Armenian on the modern language was loosened. The argument revolved around the “artificiality” of “dead” languages like Classical Armenian.<sup>183</sup> Friedrich Max Müller, an oft-cited philologist among Ottoman Armenian intellectuals, is credited for disseminating the idea that classical languages are by definition

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<sup>180</sup> Framing languages as ‘dead’ and ‘living’ was not new to the nineteenth century. It emerged in Renaissance Italy where it was used by humanists during their own language debates with much the same defamatory intent. See Burke, *Languages and Communities*, 19-20.

<sup>181</sup> Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 210-211.

<sup>182</sup> Hackert, *The Emergence of the English Native Speaker*, 167-168.

<sup>183</sup> For one application of these concepts to Classical Armenian, see Հ. Ս. Ս. [Սերովբե Տէրվիշեան], “Երբ մեռեալ կը համարուի լեզու մը,” *Հանդէս աստօրեայ* 6, no. 1 (1892): 5-6.

artificial because they are highly cultivated; the long-standing supremacy of classical languages amounted to nothing more than tyranny, he argued, as the “real and natural life of language” was to be found in spoken forms.<sup>184</sup> In this new paradigm, writing was seen as inhibiting language from proceeding down its natural course of growth and change.<sup>185</sup> These ideas emerged in a Romantic cultural ethos in which there was a general suspicion about “human tampering with language’s natural state” and much “greater faith [put] in the products of nature than those of culture.”<sup>186</sup> This belief in and focus on spoken language is not specific to Müller and was indeed a premise of linguistic thought in the final quarter of the nineteenth century.

This new valorization of spoken language led a certain group of Ottoman Armenian intellectuals to reassess the conventional archaizing approach to the cultivation of Modern Armenian. If Classical Armenian was not part of “natural life,” they wondered, how could such an artificial language properly “respond to the needs of the mind and heart” in the modern day?<sup>187</sup> More and more in the 1870s and 1880s, we read Classical Armenian dismissed as illegitimate on these grounds. In its place, a hesitant embrace of spoken Armenian emerged. Following what they saw as a hallmark of “modern philology” (սարդի բանաստիճարութիւն), these intellectuals strove to, in the words of one, “respect old languages while giving preference to new ones.”<sup>188</sup> This pledge was complicated by the existence of real and perceived contact features in spoken Armenian. While advocates of this approach were still by no means in favor of lexical borrowings from

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<sup>184</sup> Hackert, *The Emergence of the English Native Speaker*, 137-138 and van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Müller*, 220-221.

<sup>185</sup> van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Müller*, 221.

<sup>186</sup> Joseph, “Popular and Scientific Beliefs about Language Status,” 252.

<sup>187</sup> “Լեզուի խնդիրը,” part 4, 193-194.

<sup>188</sup> “Բառագիրք զաղղիերէն-հայերէն,” *Արեւելեան մասնույ* 9, no. 9 (1879): 220.

Turkish, their deference to the concept of a “natural,” “living” language created a more permissive attitude toward embedded structural borrowings with Turkish, especially semantic calques and morphological features that had long been part of spoken language. In their view, these features were far superior to their foes’ attempts at grammatical archaizing, which not only dismissed modern science but represented an illogical attempt to imprint the grammar of a “dead” language onto a “living” language and force it to deviate from its “natural” course.<sup>189</sup> In moments in which these thinkers wrote more as comparative philologists than as nationalists, they also cited the ubiquity of contact features in the structures of many languages, including Classical Armenian, and framed this contact more as a fortuitous encounter than as a source of contamination.<sup>190</sup> “One must know that it is permissible for all languages to take useful borrowings from other languages,” Cheraz declared before the Teachers’ Assembly in 1873.<sup>191</sup> But, as we will see, this permissiveness had its limits.

To be a living, natural, spoken language also became synonymous at this time with being a “language of the people” (ժողովրդական or ժողովրդեան լեզու), a rhetorical concept that dominated Ottoman Armenian discourse on language in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>192</sup> In a word, a “language of the people,” perpetually ill-defined, encapsulated everything that Classical Armenian was not. In addition to being increasingly seen as dead and artificial,

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<sup>189</sup> Չերազ, *Գրական փորձեր*, ԾԵ. Early twentieth century intellectuals also perceived this period of grammatical archaizing in such a way. See Ա. Խաչատրեան, “Հայ գրական լեզուի խնդիրը,” *Ազատամարտ* 1, no. 37 (1911): 577-580 and Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան, “Լեզուական հարցին շուրջ,” *Ազատամարտ* 1, no. 13 (1911): 1037-1040.

<sup>190</sup> See, for example, Յ. Ա. Բ., “Գրաբար թէ աշխարհաբար,” 418 and Քէչեան [Արամազդ], “Լեզուի խնդիրն. պաշտպանութիւն աշխարհաբարի,” part 1, 2.

<sup>191</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակութիւն*, 157.

<sup>192</sup> For a rare exploration of this concept, see Douglas A. Kibbee, “‘The People’ and their Language in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century French Linguistic Thought,” in *The Emergence of the Modern Language Sciences*, eds. Sheila Embleton, John E. Joseph and Hans-Josef Niederehe (Philadelphia and Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999), 111-123.

Classical Armenian also became increasingly framed as a “noble” and “aristocratic” language. These attributes had taken on negative connotations in the Romantic cultural ethos of the nineteenth century in which the “people” were king.<sup>193</sup> In the Ottoman Armenian context, this concept was powered and championed by the expanding urban middle class. From their perspective, Classical Armenian’s association with “aristocratic tastes” meant that it had no “true relationship to national life” and thus was “unable to satisfy our people’s new desires, new ideas as well as all our new educational and literary needs,” destabilizing the authority of the language and, by extension, of grammatical archaizing.<sup>194</sup>

While languages “of the people” had been given value in various parts of Europe since the early 1800s and had been pillars of certain national movements, this concept only began to appear in Ottoman Armenian discourse in the 1860s, likely fueled by the constitutionalist, demos-focused fervor in the Empire.<sup>195</sup> Its spread was also directly influenced by Aydenian’s work, which did not directly make use of the concept but was nonetheless critical in its development in the 1870s and 1880s. Aydenian’s ostensibly simple discovery of enduring historical diglossia—highlighting Classical Armenian as having always been an exclusively written, learned language and having always coexisted with spoken languages—and his application of the terms *lingua nobilis* and *lingua plebja* [sic] to these forms laid the groundwork for conceptual development in the hands of later thinkers with different ideological agendas.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 210-211.

<sup>194</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակություն*, 93 and “Լեզուի խնդիրը,” part 5, 276.

<sup>195</sup> On the European context, see Hackert, *The Emergence of the English Native Speaker*, 166 and Burke, *Languages and Communities*, 169-170. See the opening vignette of this chapter for this idea articulated at the Teachers’ Assembly.

<sup>196</sup> Այտընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 47-48. These terms are in Latin letters in Aydenian’s book. The latter should read *lingua plebia*.

In Aydenian’s work, these cultivators of Modern Armenian of the 1870s and 1880s found proof that Classical Armenian had never been a spoken language and thus had never been a “language of the people.”<sup>197</sup> In this way, we see the Romantic concept of “the people” overlaid onto the past. “We cannot accept,” one intellectual wrote in 1881, “that our [forebear] writers truly copied down the language of the people [ժողովրդային բարբառ]...the impartial study of Classical Armenian clearly proves to all linguists that such an artificial language could not have been spoken.”<sup>198</sup> By showing that spoken Armenian had an ancient pedigree, Aydenian created the basis for his contemporaries to begin to view their modern spoken language as the heir to the spoken Armenian of the “forebears” rather than the classical language. This was the form, they argued, that had always been “living” and thus more fully expressed “the customs of our people.”<sup>199</sup> For advocates of this view, Aydenian’s uncovering of historical linguistic variation called into question whether the written language of the forebears, Classical Armenian, was indeed the “language of the *ethnie*,” as it had been claimed, or whether the *spoken language* of the forebears from which the modern language was seen to have descended had just as much right to claim this title. From their perspective, this idea was the ultimate blow to claims that Classical Armenian should continue reigning supreme as the preeminent national language and as a major force in the cultivation of Modern Armenian.

If, through his work, Aydenian unveiled a *historical* “language of the people” and provided the theoretical basis for its valorization, what was the *modern* “language of the people” thought to be in the 1870s and 1880s? Adopting wholeheartedly the idea that classical languages were

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<sup>197</sup> Յ. Ա. Բ., “Գրաբառ թէ աշխարհաբառ,” 416-421 and Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակութիւն*, 108-111.

<sup>198</sup> Քէչեան [Արամազդ], “Լեզուի խնդիրն. պաշտպանութիւն աշխարհաբարի,” part 2, 3.

<sup>199</sup> Յ. Ա. Բ., “Գրաբառ թէ աշխարհաբառ,” 418.

artificial and thus could not properly nourish the modern language, this sub-set of the intelligentsia now proclaimed with certainty that Modern Armenian needed to be cultivated *toward* its spoken forms rather than away from them. In 1879, we read the following in reference to the Ottoman Armenian lexicographer Néandre de Byzance:

He is a man of letters who understands comparative philology and the laws of linguistic development. He knows that the sources of the old language are in new spoken dialects [նոր բարբառ] and that in order to study the Armenian language it is not enough to read [forebear writers] like Eznik and Eghishe. Instead, one must step into the lives of the people, study their social relationships, scrutinize their dialects, once considered useless, and—through them—find and purify the veins in the ore of language.<sup>200</sup>

### ***Language of the People, Language of the Urban Educated Writer***

This statement and the general rhetoric of the period leads us to believe that an un-archaized Modern Armenian would rely on the panoply of spoken varieties of ordinary Ottoman Armenians. But its defenders, in fact, continued to denigrate spoken varieties from outside Constantinople and Smyrna and to hold up their own speech as the only model for a Modern Armenian.<sup>201</sup> Given the history of urban centrism that we have seen in previous chapters, this tendency should come as no surprise. These cultivators of Modern Armenian embody an approach to language reform that can be seen in other contexts at this time and has been called *elitist purism*. Coined by George Thomas, elitist purism describes a “negative, proscriptive attitude to substandard and regional use” and the crafting of a written form around the contemporary spoken usage of the elite.<sup>202</sup> It is seen

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<sup>200</sup> “Բառագիրք գաղղիերէն-հայերէն,” 220.

<sup>201</sup> During this period, the form of written Modern Armenian based on educated urban speech started to be called a “regional” language (զաւաստլիզու). It was set in contrast to Classical Armenian and to the multitude of spoken varieties and was equated with the parallel written standard emerging among Armenians in the Russian Empire. “Today it is clear to everyone that the Armenian nation has one old language and many new languages, of which the main ones are called regional.” See “Արդի հայերէն լեզու,” 105.

<sup>202</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 78-79.

particularly in the creation of modern standard languages in response to the disruption of power hierarchies that can result from the expansion of literacy within a populace.<sup>203</sup> It is often the “informally sanctioned” usage of the educated minority that tends to be favored and ultimately form the basis for standard languages.<sup>204</sup> This is precisely what we find in our context.

In the Ottoman Armenian context, this approach came into being in an attempt to reconcile the theoretical with the practical. As much as spoken language was touted as a source of “national riches” (ազգային հարստություն) in theory, in practice actual spoken language—called *նամկորէն*—was only ever referenced by these intellectuals with a sneer of disdain.<sup>205</sup> Their disdain stemmed from its association with the much-maligned figure of the *նամիկ*, or uneducated Armenians both urban or rural, who were the perpetual object of scorn during this period for their indifference to the national project and for thus standing in the way of national progress. These intellectuals took particular issue with their spoken Armenian, which was characterized by its abundance of Turkish lexical borrowings. Just as we have seen in the previous chapter, the print media in this period too was overrun with complaints that about how “the majority of our compatriots speak by mixing Turkish words into their speech.”<sup>206</sup> The “impurities” in the spoken “language of the [majority of] people” caused a great deal of unease among the intelligentsia and led defenders of un-archaizing approaches to cultivating Modern Armenian *away* from ordinary spoken language, despite the Romantic and comparative-philological imperatives to run toward it.

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<sup>203</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 789-790.

<sup>204</sup> Watts, *Language Myths*, 232-234 and Hackert, *The Emergence of the English Native Speaker*, 127.

<sup>205</sup> Քէչեան [Արամազդ], “Լեզուի խնդիրն. պաշտպանություն աշխարհաբարի,” part 2, 3.

<sup>206</sup> See, for example, *Ընտանեկան բարարան տղայոց վարժության համար* (Constantinople: Տպագրություն Ա. Ն. Շահնազարեան, 1870), 5.

They could not yet fathom, as others in Europe at this time had, that “the speech of the peasant or ‘savage’ [was] as interesting as the literary language of Shakespeare or the Bible.”<sup>207</sup> When dealing with ordinary speech, the same thinkers who preached the ubiquity of contact-induced language change abandoned their impartial philological approach and continued to deride Turkish lexical borrowings as corrupt and uncouth. They were—in the end—nation-builders before all else and, as such, could not willingly valorize a spoken form filled with “non-national” elements that, in their eyes, were still markers of ignorance and did not properly represent the ‘spirit of the nation.’

Instead, they saw the usage of contemporary writers—long stripped of its borrowings—as best embodying the spirit of the nation. Regarding themselves as working on behalf of the “people” and as representatives of them, they endowed themselves with the responsibility of cultivating Modern Armenian based on it their own—somewhat imagined and idealized—spoken practices. Aydenian noted that, by 1866, the purified print-language had become a spoken language in educated homes.<sup>208</sup> Although *speaking* the print-language could not have been as prevalent as Aydenian suggests, this kind of purified speech was, nonetheless, aspirationally dubbed the speech of the educated, literate urban middle class and was elevated in an ethos in which education had become an indicator of an individual’s level of ‘civilization.’<sup>209</sup> “To demand that the educated follow the uneducated and to invite us from light into darkness,” one writer commented in 1873, “are to openly transgress the law of progress.”<sup>210</sup> Purporting to take the lead of “the people,” writers

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<sup>207</sup> Hackert, *The Emergence of the English Native Speaker*, 166.

<sup>208</sup> Այտընեան, *Զննական քերականություն*, 246.

<sup>209</sup> As one critic noted disapprovingly, even the most learned experts in Classical Armenian, including priests, used borrowings in their speech. See Գրիգոր Վարդանեան, *Ուղեցոյց մարտր եւ միօրինակ աշխարհաբար գրելու* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Արամեան, 1884), 9.

<sup>210</sup> Մսերեան [Սիւնի], “Լեզուի վրայ,” part 2, 13.

put themselves in charge of making spoken language suitable for the page by “selecting, purifying and ennobling” their usage and offering them a model to follow.<sup>211</sup> We see this approach articulated as early as 1866:

In every nation, there are written and spoken languages, which differ from each other in both style and turn of phrase. The people give the language, but learned and skilled writers polish it according to the progress of knowledge and science. They enrich the language and return it to the people, although these local turns of phrase and the authority of speech still belong to the uneducated [նասիկ], which bear the imprint of their genius or of nature... Wherever there is a writer and good taste, the language is purified and published. Wherever there is not, the language deteriorates with each passing day....<sup>212</sup>

In reality, however, the ordinary uneducated speaker had very little authority in the cultivation of Modern Armenian. Like the previous passage, this passage too shows more of a *grappling* with Romantic thought in the Armenian context than with actual linguistic realities in the 1860s and 1870s. It would take a different intellectual movement, as we will see in the next chapter, to attempt in earnest to endow the uneducated speaker with any kind of linguistic authority. During this period, writers were clearly torn between subscribing to Romantic conceptions of spoken language as the most authentic expression of the nation and their distaste for the “illiterate” class. “Who thinks that the written language [գրական բարբառ] should celebrate illiterate speech [անգրագլտի բարբառ]?” Cheraz wrote in 1874, addressing a pressing anxiety at the time.<sup>213</sup>

Their compromise was to valorize their *own* purified usage and attempt to impose it on others. Many argued that it was the *responsibility* of the educated writer to “expel corrupted words

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<sup>211</sup> Բիւզանդ Մ. Պօզանեան, *Տեսական եւ գործնական քերականութիւն աշխարհիկ լեզուի* (Constantinople: Կեդրոնական գրատուն, 1890), [8]. Thank you to Sebouh Aslanian for scanning this rare book for me on a research trip to Vienna.

<sup>212</sup> Մամուրեան (Վրոյր), *Հայկական նամականի*, 138. This volume was published in 1872, but the letter cited here is dated 1866.

<sup>213</sup> Չերազ, *Գրիչ եւ սուր*, 102. This volume was published in 1881, but the letter cited here is dated 1874.

that stroll around only in the mouths of the uneducated [նամիկ].”<sup>214</sup> This sense of responsibility manifested in a new concerted effort to police ordinary speech in the public and domestic spheres. We can see this effort most clearly in a series of prescriptivist pamphlets published in the 1870s and 1880s that preached the use of “pure” speech and taught “compatriots who speak in an uneducated way [նամկախու]” how to replace their lexical borrowings.<sup>215</sup> These pamphleteers do not appear to have recognized the irony in the need to teach the language of “the people” to the people. As one writer was bold enough to admit, “the people” are masters of language *only to a point*. He balked at the idea that the uneducated would be endowed with the power to “dictate the laws of a language.”<sup>216</sup> “It is the people who little by little are obliged to follow the language polished by the writer,” he, like many of his contemporaries, concluded.<sup>217</sup> It would have been unfathomable at this time to argue otherwise.

As peculiar as it may seem, these writers believed in earnest that their highly cultivated, far-from-ordinary speech constituted a “language of the people,” because they saw their referent as Classical Armenian not as ordinary spoken varieties of Armenian. It was only in contrast to an “artificial,” “aristocratic” and “dead” language that they could call their highly purified usage a “living,” “natural” language of the people. In defense of this idea, they honed in on the spoken basis of their grammar and of certain lexical items particular to the dialect of Constantinople, which—once seen as uncouth for their deviation from Classical Armenian—were now used with

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<sup>214</sup> “Արդի հայերէն լեզու,” 105, footnote 1. The writer here is discussing the responsibility of grammarians in particular, but his sentiments reflect pervasive beliefs about the role of the writer more generally.

<sup>215</sup> See, for example, Յովսէփ Ս. Մալեզեան, *Բարտեար նամկորէնէ ի հայերէն. մարտը աշխարհաբար խօսելու փաստագ ունեցողներուն համար* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Յ. Մարգարեան, 1874), Գ.

<sup>216</sup> Մսերեան [Սիւնի], “Լեզուի վրայ,” part 2, 12.

<sup>217</sup> Գրիգոր Մսերեան [Սիւնի], “Լեզուի վրայ,” part 1, *Արեւելեան մամուլ* 2, no. 12 (1872): 543.

pride and considered examples of the spoken language of the forebears preserved through *oral* rather than written tradition.<sup>218</sup> Just decades earlier, we saw critiques of these words used in print and the idea in circulation that dialect words “could never be considered equal to first-rate classical words.”<sup>219</sup> Characteristic of the old paradigm, no longer will this view predominate. Furthermore, in accepting spoken grammar, they also accepted many structural borrowings and similarities with Turkish, a fact that was rarely emphasized but that can still be seen today in the Western Armenian standard that emerged out of this informal norm.<sup>220</sup>

It is important to emphasize, however, that in practice this approach to the cultivation of Modern Armenian had much more in common with the rival grammatically archaizing approach than its advocates let on. Due to the long-standing archaizing tendency that brought the print-language into being in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that many elements of “educated usage” and archaized usage intersected. For example, these intellectuals too stigmatized many of the same grammatical particles as the archaizers not *directly* because they were Turkish but because they were not considered part of “educated speech.”<sup>221</sup> Like their ideological foes, they also largely championed the archaized forms of words, accepting classical forms rather than form that would have conformed more closely to the spoken usage of “the people.”<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Many of these words entered the standard language, including *սկոսայ*, *սղուոր*, *գէշ*, *պաղ*, *պզտիկ*, *հոս*, *հոն* etc. For others, see Անառնյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2, 564-565.

<sup>219</sup> See, for example, Հ. Արս. Բ [Արսէն Բագրատունի], “Հայերէն գրաբան լեզուի յստակութեան վրայ,” 201. For a similar sentiment, see also “Գրաբան եւ աշխարհաբան լեզուին վրայ,” *Արծուի վասպուրական* 1, no. 1 (1855): 12-16.

<sup>220</sup> See Հայկ Պերպերեան, “Թրքատիպ հայերէնը,” *Անդաստան* 17 (1967-1968): 47-50 and Սիրունի, *Պոլիս եւ իր դերը*, vol. 4, 37-45.

<sup>221</sup> “Արդի հայերէն լեզու,” 105, footnote 1.

<sup>222</sup> Examples include եղբայր rather than the spoken աղբար, մանր rather than the spoken մանսր, կանգնիլ rather than the spoken կայնիլ, etc. See Պերպերեան, *Դպրոց եւ դպրութիւն*, 272. This decision would have lasting effects,

The disconnect between the acceptance of archaized elements and a rhetoric that idealized a language “of the people” did not go unnoticed during the period. Archaizers were quick to frame the contradiction as hypocrisy, highlighting that, while purporting to throw off Classical Armenian as a highly cultivated, “artificial” written language of elites, they were in fact creating their own highly cultivated, “artificial” written language of elites and perpetuating the same linguistic hierarchy against which they had ostensibly been militating.<sup>223</sup> As early as 1866, we read Aydenian emphasize that, due to its basis in the grammar of Constantinople and its classical elements, the grammar and lexicon of Modern Armenian is “a new and unfamiliar language for the uneducated [նաւիկ] in many places.”<sup>224</sup> Just as we saw among cultural nationalists in the previous chapter, these cultivators had little regard for the difficulties they were imposing by creating a modern written standard that differed so fundamentally from the spoken forms of the majority of the uneducated, regionally dispersed Armenian populace.<sup>225</sup> Nor did they widely voice concern over the impediments they were actively putting in the way of expanding literacy in a period in which such expansion was of the essence. Their Modern Armenian was, in other words, just as cultivated, just as artificial and nearly just as unintelligible to “the people” as they had accused Classical Armenian of being, reproducing the same dynamic with a different written form of Armenian.<sup>226</sup>

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changing the pronunciation of these words when more people started learning Armenian through books rather than by ear and fundamentally classicizing spoken language. These word forms continue to be regarded as colloquial to this day.

<sup>223</sup> See, for example, the following comments by the consistently belligerent Néandre de Byzance in Բիւզանդացի, “Բառգիրքներու առթիւ,” 343.

<sup>224</sup> Այտընեան, *Զննական քերականութիւն*, 246-247.

<sup>225</sup> Պէրպլըեան, *Դպրոց և դպրութիւն*, 276.

<sup>226</sup> Manoukian, “Literary Translation and the Expansion of the Ottoman Armenian Reading Public,” 144-149.

This inherent incongruity becomes more widely articulated in the final decade of the nineteenth century as the definition of “the people” begins to shift. “No, the language we write in today (us, you and others) is not the language of the people [ժողովրդին լեզու], if by ‘people’ we mean the illiterate class [անգրագետ դաս] or the uneducated [նամիկ],” Reteos Berberian, a staunch grammatical archaizer, noted in 1892, emphasizing that *no form* of the print-language was “the common way of speaking for the undeveloped and uncultivated class.”<sup>227</sup> He was one of the few to lay bare that Modern Armenian had become like “a second Classical Armenian,” and thus those who had not *studied* the classical language could not readily understand the lexicon and certain aspects of the grammar of the modern language.<sup>228</sup> Addressing champions of the “language of the people,” he vividly exposes the contradiction in the following reflection:

Are the words that were accepted from Classical Armenian in the past common to [the people]? Do they understand the word դասակարգ? Is that their word? Has anyone ever heard արտայայտել uttered by an illiterate person? That is your language, yes, you who are literate and refined and uses a cultivated written language... You and your friends, despite your ardent defenses of the brevity and clarity of the language of the people, use Classical Armenian case endings and conjugations... You use Classical Armenian verbs that are obstacles in the language of our people and for which the people have other words.<sup>229</sup>

In sum, while presenting themselves as defenders of “the people” and expressing a desire for the modern language to glimmer with “various provincial colors,” the prejudice against the uneducated and their speech among all cultivators of Modern Armenian was too strong to be overcome by currents in philological and Romantic thought that valorized spoken language.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Պերպերեան, *Դպրոց եւ դպրութիւն*, 270-271. This volume was published in 1907, but the article cited here is dated 1892.

<sup>228</sup> Պերպերեան, *Դպրոց եւ դպրութիւն*, 274-276.

<sup>229</sup> Պերպերեան, *Դպրոց եւ դպրութիւն*, 271. As examples, he offers the use of խնդրել rather than the spoken ուզել, ուսնիլ rather than սորվիլ, շրջիլ rather than պտտիլ, etc.

<sup>230</sup> “Լեզուի խնդիրը,” part 5, 276.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the impact of comparative philology on generating new ideas about spoken language and linguistic purism among the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia within a broader ethos of reform within the Ottoman Empire. In particular, I investigated how the infusion of new ideas, theories and methodologies from the field of comparative philology in the second half of the nineteenth century led to a fundamental reassessment of the position of Classical Armenian in Ottoman Armenian society. Moreover, I showed how a subset of the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia drew on and reinterpreted the work of Germanophone, Francophone and Anglophone philologists to put a decisive end to a decades-old debate over whether Classical or Modern Armenian should be cultivated as the national language. I also detailed how the application of select theories in Euro-American philology undermined long-standing beliefs that had undergirded the social supremacy of Classical Armenian: (1) that Classical Armenian was a divine language; (2) that Modern Armenian was a corrupted form of Classical Armenian; and (3) that the Classical Armenian lexicon was ‘pure.’ I argued that exposing these beliefs as myths slowly corroded the defenses that had buttressed the preeminence of Classical Armenian and upended the perceptions that had long maintained the subordination of Modern Armenian.

I also detailed two approaches to the “cultivation” of Modern Armenian that were in use between the 1860s and the 1880s. One represents an intensification of the archaizing approach to purism that we saw in previous chapters. Going beyond the lexicon, the practitioners of this approach targeted structural instances of contact with Turkish, whether real or perceived, and archaized the grammar of Modern Armenian. The other represents a new elitist approach to purism and asserted the legitimacy of urban educated usage as a model for the nascent standard. While practitioners of this approach did not replace the archaized lexicon that had been the basis of the

print language for decades, they did make use of the newfound valorization of spoken language to legitimate certain words and grammatical constructions particular to their own spoken variety. This model was put forth as the “language of the people.” Now we turn to the final chapter, which treats a period in which the “language of the people” takes on a new meaning and intellectuals from *outside* urban print centers enter the fray to challenge the idea that the usage of urban writers should be the sole source for the modern standard.

## Chapter 4

### Purity and the People: Folkloristics and Shifting Conceptions of ‘Authentic’ Language (c. 1890-c. 1915)

#### Introduction

In 1901, a committee within the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate of Constantinople came together to address a concern that had long gone unattended.<sup>1</sup> Years earlier, a wealthy Russian-Armenian notable named Hovsep Izmiriants had left in the care of the Patriarchate a sizable endowment, stipulating that the funds be used to encourage Armenian writers to embark on in-depth studies of Armenian literature and history.<sup>2</sup> Since 1887, the endowment had funded the Sahag-Mesrob Writing Contest, awarding prizes to the worthiest researchers to have submitted their work for consideration.<sup>3</sup> Published and unpublished studies arrived each year on a variety of topics from within the Empire and beyond.<sup>4</sup> In 1901, however, the contest committee—made up of some of the most noted writers and educators of the day—required that all studies relate to one topic in particular.<sup>5</sup> The contest committee was interested only in submissions of “useful timber”

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<sup>1</sup> “Պաշտօնական ծանուցում Յովսէփ Իզմիրեանց Գրական Յանձնաժողովոյ,” *Մասիս* 53, no. 46 (1903): 736. While this announcement notes that the committee’s decision was made in 1901, the contest theme does not appear to have been made public until 1903.

<sup>2</sup> *Տեղեկագիր համարատույթեան քաղաքական ժողովոյ առ ազգային ընդհանուր ժողովն 1885-87* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Սահակ Նիկողոսեան, 1887), 17. Half of the endowment was used to support girls’ schools in Erzurum and Moush. The contest was greeted with great enthusiasm by intellectuals, many of whom were rarely compensated for their work. “Օգտակար կտակ մը,” *Մասիս* 35, no. 3807 (1886): 625-626.

<sup>3</sup> For a short history of the endowment and the early years of the contest, see *1900 ընդարձակ օրացոյց ազգային հիւանդանոցի* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Տէր Մինասեան, 1900), 217-219.

<sup>4</sup> Between 1887 and 1900, the contest committee received 73 submissions. See *1900 ընդարձակ օրացոյց*, 219. For descriptions of the submissions for 1887 and 1899, for example, see Գաբրիէլ Նորատունկեան, “Բաշխումն մրցանակաց Իզմիրեանց կտակին,” *Բազմավէպ* 45, no. 3 (1887): 199; and “Տեղեկագիր Յովսէփ-Իզմիրեանց գրական յանձնաժողովոյ,” *Հանդէս ամսօրեայ* 13, no. 9 (1899): 277-281.

<sup>5</sup> For a list of the contest committee members, see “Իզմիրեանց գրական յանձնաժողովէն մրցանակի արժանացող երկերը,” *Բիւրակն* 23, no. 27 (1905): 537.

(օգոսկար սոսաղձ) for the first Modern Armenian explanatory dictionary, a perceived need for students and writers as well as for Ottoman Armenians to be considered a modern national community.<sup>6</sup>

The kind of timber the committee sought to collect represents the radical new approach to purism that we will examine in this chapter. Through the Armenian-language press, the committee put out a call far and wide for studies of the varieties of Armenian spoken across the Empire. Of particular interest were lists of words used in these dialects, valuing for the first time speech that had been unabashedly disparaged in urban intellectual circles for more than a century.<sup>7</sup> Intellectuals from different parts of the Ottoman Empire and beyond responded to this call and took up the task of documenting their own regional varieties of Armenian. When the contest closed in 1905, the committee had received eighteen submissions, representing the Armenian dialects of Kharpert (Harput), Van, Darende (near Malatya), Paghesh (Bitlis), Sepastia (Sivas), Keghi-Kasaba (Kiğı), Hamshen and Constantinople, among others.<sup>8</sup> The results of the contest are emblematic of two additional themes that will be explored in this chapter: the agency of provincial intellectuals in cultivating this new approach to purism and the ambivalence among many segments of the urban intelligentsia toward fully embracing the inclusion of dialect words in Modern Armenian

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<sup>6</sup> “Իզմիրեանց գրական յանձնաժողովէն,” 538. There is some evidence to suggest that the idea to use the contest to amass materials for a Modern Armenian dictionary had been conceived in 1893. “Իզմիրեանց յանձնաժողովին մրցանակաբաշխութիւնը,” *Մանգումէի էֆքեսար* 49, no. 1237 (1905): 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> In this chapter, the term *urban* refers to the print-centers of Constantinople and Smyrna and the term *provincial* refers to all other locales.

<sup>8</sup> For descriptions of each of the submissions, see “Իզմիրեանց յանձնաժողովին մրցանակաբաշխութիւնը,” 2. The committee received 18 submissions: 1 glossary of neologisms; 13 glossaries of Western dialects; 1 glossary of an Eastern dialect; 1 glossary that spanned Eastern and Western dialects; and 2 works that did not address the theme and were thus disqualified.

dictionaries.<sup>9</sup> Tied for first place in the 1905 contest we find studies of the spoken Armenian of Van and the spoken Armenian of Constantinople. In these selections, we catch a glimpse of the lip-service paid to regional varieties throughout this period, the continued role of the urban intellectuals as linguistic gatekeepers and—despite their idealization of the ‘folk’—the persistence of their preference for urban speech.<sup>10</sup>

The contest certainly did not inaugurate this interest in non-classical, non-urban forms of Armenian, but, given the conservatism of the institution, it does underscore the extent to which this interest had become mainstream by 1901. The chapter begins by positioning this contest within its larger intellectual ethos by tracing the slow rise of scholarly and popular interest in ‘uneducated speech’ and provincial varieties of Armenian. I show how this interest emerged out of the reconceptualization of spoken language that we saw in the previous chapter and was spurred by a convergence of both local and global forces. I focus specifically on the increasingly common transnational belief in ‘folk’ culture as the ‘purest’ expression of national identity and the use of ethnographic methods to access it. While this new conceptualization permeated a great many aspects of Ottoman Armenian cultural production, I zero in on its impact on the codification of Modern Armenian and illustrate how, influenced by this global intellectual ethos, provincial intellectuals began framing their own spoken varieties of Armenian as precious ‘authentic’

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<sup>9</sup> In this chapter, I use the terms *provincial* and *provincial intellectual* to convey the strong center-periphery dynamic at the time and reflect how these intellectuals saw themselves: as a distinct group set in opposition to urban intellectuals.

<sup>10</sup> For an announcement of the winners, see “Իզմիրեանց գրական յանձնաժողովէն,” 537-538. Part of the study of the Van dialect was published in 1919. See Չիթունի, *Հայկական խոսքեր եւ ժամանցներ կամ արեւելեան խոսքաշխարհ* (Constantinople: Տպարան Օ. Արզուման, 1919). The study of the Constantinople dialect was never published, and the original manuscript exists under lock and key in the archives of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The Patriarchate has ignored my repeated requests to view it. The introduction to the study was published in the Patriarchate’s organ in 1972. See Մարտիրոս Մինասեան, “Պոլիսի հայեվարը. Բառգիրք պոլսական ռամկօրէնի, աշխատասիրեց Թէոդիկ, 1899-1905,” *Միօն* 46, no. 9-10 (1972): 325-340.

resources for the nascent Western Armenian standard. To this end, I show how they set about collecting and publishing lists of terms found in their own Armenian varieties and advocating for replacing many of the ‘inauthentic’ neologisms and Gallicisms found in urban writing with these ‘pure’ and ‘authentic’ Armenian terms. The chapter ends with a look at the limited impact of this turn to the folk in shaping the standard. I emphasize how provincial terms were ultimately drawn upon only selectively in the burst of dictionaries of Modern Armenian produced in the 1890s and 1900s but were nevertheless of critical discursive significance in the drive to elevate Modern Armenian to the status of a fully-fledged national language and to assert its distinctiveness from Classical Armenian.

### **Where Did the Fascination with the Folk Come From?**

The idealization of the ‘folk’ and the valorization of its oral culture as a national aesthetic represented a new phase in the Ottoman Armenian national movement. Gaining momentum in the 1890s, this focus became an all-encompassing force in Ottoman Armenian intellectual life, overtaking the idealization of the classical, textual and the urban as the main source of national dignity and distinctiveness. This new orientation did not originate within the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia but rather was part and parcel of a larger folk revival taking place in many parts of the world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In Europe, since the late eighteenth century, certain intellectuals had viewed the oral culture of the uneducated, often rural, segments of a population as a vehicle for national ‘self-discovery.’<sup>11</sup>

While in Europe, this interest has its roots in pre-modern colonial encounters and in proto-

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Perraudin and Matthew Campbell, “Introduction,” in *The Voice of the People: Writing the European Folk Revival, 1760-1914*, eds. Matthew Campbell and Michael Perraudin (London and New York: Anthem Press, 2012), 1 and Timothy Baycroft, “Introduction,” in *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1-2.

Romantic thought, it was transformed under the influence of the nineteenth-century Romantic movement, which endowed the study of the folk with new significance as a tool of national legitimization.<sup>12</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century, the study of the folk was renewed as it became institutionalized and integrated into emerging scholarly disciplines, such as folklore studies, anthropology, ethnology and dialectology.<sup>13</sup> The scholarship produced within these early disciplines was, in a word, driven by a “Romantic ideology and [a] scientific methodology.”<sup>14</sup> It is at this historical moment, when interest in the folk begins to be couched in the language of science, that we see ideas and methods from these disciplines make their way into the Ottoman Armenian intellectual sphere and reorient beliefs about people and practices that had long been the object of scorn among urban intellectuals.

These ideas came to the attention of urban and rural Ottoman Armenian intellectuals through three interrelated and interdependent channels. The first and earliest was directly from the work of Romantic thinkers writing in European languages. We see this channel most clearly in the work of a handful of multilingual Venetian Mekhitarist monks who were in close contact with the Romantic ideas of the early to mid-nineteenth century. In response to these new ideas, these monks produced a small body of work that put the focus on the folk and unsystematically documented

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<sup>12</sup> Giuseppe Cocchiara, *The History of Folklore in Europe*, trans. John N. McDaniel (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), 7, 255-256 and Baycroft, “Introduction,” 2.

<sup>13</sup> Cocchiara, *The History of Folklore*, 6-7; Han F. Vermeulen, *Before Boas: The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), xiv; and David Hopkin, “Folklore beyond Nationalism: Identity Politics and Scientific Cultures in a New Discipline,” in *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 388-389.

<sup>14</sup> Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 49.

elements of oral culture long before the burst of interest in the late nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> This early interest produced studies of Armenian communities across the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire as well as those in the Pontus and Poland.<sup>16</sup> In the same vein, we also find a short collection of folk songs transcribed in unspecified spoken varieties of Armenian and translated into English for the British reading public.<sup>17</sup> Illustrating his connection to but not full adherence to European Romantic ideals, the compiler and translator, Ghevont Alishan, expresses his reticence to publish such ‘inelegant’ songs for European eyes; he nevertheless brings himself to do so in hopes of contributing to the already robust Romantic interest in the “Ancient East” and using folklore to draw the Orientalist gaze toward Armenians.<sup>18</sup> Clearly distinct in its motivations, this instinct to collect in the early to mid-nineteenth century should not be misconstrued as indicative of any broad intellectual turn toward the folk among the Ottoman Armenian intelligentsia or of any attempt to use folk culture as a way to cultivate national ‘authenticity.’ Rather, these monks should be seen as isolated harbingers of a way of thinking would only later become pervasive under the influence of other intellectual channels.

The scholarly work of Russian Armenian intellectuals was one of the most influential channels for prompting a valorization of folk culture among Ottoman Armenian intellectuals in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As we saw in the previous chapter, formal training in

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<sup>15</sup> Little has been written about the substantial connection between Mekhitarists and other European intellectuals. For a rare study, see Djanachian, “Les Arménistes et les Mékhitaristes,” 383-445.

<sup>16</sup> Ղուկաս Ինճիճեան, *Հնախօսություն աշխարհագրական հայաստանեայց աշխարհի*, vol. 1 (Venice: Ի տպարանի սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1835); Մինաս Բժշկեան, *Պատմություն Պոնտոսի որ է սեաւ ծով* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1819); and Մինաս Բժշկեան, *Ճանապարհորդություն ՚ի Լեհաստան եւ յայլ կողմանս բնակեալս ՚ի հայկազանց սերելոց ՚ի նախնեաց Անի քաղաքին* (Venice: Ի վանս սրբոյն Ղազարու, 1830). For rare studies of these texts in English, see Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, 83-105.

<sup>17</sup> Leo M. Alishan, ed., *Armenian Popular Songs* (Venice: S. Lazarus, 1852), [2].

<sup>18</sup> Alishan, *Armenian Popular Songs*, [2-3].

philology was much more common among Russian Armenians than among their Ottoman Armenian counterparts. This trend also applies to ethnography and the study of folklore, which had been institutionalized within Russian academia since the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> In Russia, the academic study of folk culture through ethnographic methods was strategically fostered by imperial policy as it allowed officials to learn more about Russia's internal cultural diversity in hopes of integrating the Empire.<sup>20</sup> Many Russian Armenian intellectuals were trained in these institutes of higher learning, where they were exposed to new ideas about the value of folk culture, adopted the dominant approaches and methods of the Russian academic sphere and used them to study rural Armenian life in the Russian Empire and beyond.<sup>21</sup> One of the earliest studies of folk culture was a collection of myths that appeared in 1850 in Moscow; other academic and amateur studies that gave value to folk culture would be published consistently for the rest of the century and would—in concert with other forces—come to profoundly shape the thinking of Armenian intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>22</sup>

The element of their work that had the most transformative impact on Ottoman Armenian thinking on the folk was the notion that oral culture had preserved remnants of an ancient ‘national’

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<sup>19</sup> Tuska Benes, “Comparative Linguistics as Ethnology: In Search of Indo-Germans in Central Asia, 1770-1830,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 124-125 and Vermeulen, *Before Boas*, 408-410.

<sup>20</sup> Khachaturian, *Cultivating Nationhood in Imperial Russia*, 139-140 and Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace*, 58.

<sup>21</sup> Khachaturian, *Cultivating Nationhood in Imperial Russia*, 137-141, 190-203.

<sup>22</sup> Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, 242. For more on the emergence of Russian Armenian ethnography, see Claire Mouradian, “La revue ethnographique arménienne *Azgagrakan Handes*, Chouchi-Tiflis, 1895-1916,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 31, no. 2-3 (1990): 295-316. Starting in the 1870s, we periodically see the work of Russian Armenian intellectuals appear in the Ottoman Armenian press and in book form. For example, starting from its first issue in 1871, the journal *Արեւելիկան մասնույ* published folk poems that Gabriel Patkanian had collected. In the same decade, Mkrtych Emin's *Recherches sur le paganisme arménien* (1864) was translated from French into Armenian by the Ottoman Armenian intellectual Hovhannes Deroyents. See Մկրտիչ Էմինեան, *Հնախօսությունք ի վերայ հայկական հեղանոսությունց* trans. Յովհաննէս Տէրոյենց (Armash: Ի տպարանի Չ. Ս. Աստուածաձնի, 1875).

culture forgotten by urban dwellers. Like European and other Russian intellectuals of their day, Russian Armenian intellectuals framed folk culture as “a sacred tradition, a venerable antiquity, the sublime inheritance of the past.”<sup>23</sup> This approach was new to most Ottoman Armenian intellectuals, who had long been under the influence of Mekhitarist beliefs in the Classical Armenian forebear canon as the ultimate expression of all that was sacred, venerable and sublime within the nation. Certainly, some Ottoman Armenian intellectuals became acquainted with this new conceptualization of the folk as avid readers of European print culture, which abounded with examples of the uses of folklore in the project of nation-building in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But it was a young clergyman-intellectual, Karekin Servantsdians who—with no ethnographic training or knowledge of European languages but with an appetite for Russian Armenian thought—is credited with first cultivating among Ottoman Armenians a taste for the folk, popularizing the documentation of oral culture and inaugurating an “immense auto-ethnographic enterprise which, for some forty years, preoccupied [Ottoman Armenian] intellectuals, sometimes to the exclusion of everything else.”<sup>24</sup> It was his collections of legends, customs, jokes, songs, epics and sayings from the eastern provinces, published in the 1870s and early 1880s, that captured the attention of the urban reading public, which was either willfully ignorant of folk culture or had largely treated it with active disdain.<sup>25</sup> Servantsdians, himself a native of the provincial city of Van, considered this ignorance a cause for concern. If urban Armenians continued to be estranged from the realities of Armenian life in the provinces, he argued, they would never shed the foreign affectations they had assumed or become ‘authentically’

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<sup>23</sup> Cocchiara, *The History of Folklore*, 264.

<sup>24</sup> Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, 51.

<sup>25</sup> His books include *Գրոց բրոց* (1874), *Մանանայ* (1876), *Թորոս աղբար* (1879) and *Հանուլ հոսուլ* (1884).

Armenian. As he wrote in 1879, “My entire wish and endeavor is to acquaint the Armenian with the Armenian, to have the Armenian love the Armenian.”<sup>26</sup> Most notably, his work showed urbanites the kinds of materials to be found in folk culture and prompted them to begin considering folk culture as an illustration of ‘national genius’ rather than a source of embarrassment.<sup>27</sup>

### **Why Did the Fascination with the Folk Take Root When It Did?**

A major socio-political turn within the Ottoman Empire in the late 1870s and 1880s primed the Ottoman Armenian reading public to receive these new ideas and allowed them to permeate intellectual and cultural life. As folklore theorists have noted, the ‘discovery’ and mobilization around “the expressive power of group cultures has almost always occurred at moments of political transformation.”<sup>28</sup> The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 drew more attention than ever before to life in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, which had been caught up in international diplomatic discussions in the aftermath of the conflict. While an initial peace treaty had guaranteed Russian-led reforms and protections for Armenians in this part of the Ottoman Empire, a second treaty essentially nullified the first.<sup>29</sup> Within the context of these treaty negotiations, urban Armenian intellectuals became more aware of the fact that they knew little about Armenian life in this part of the Empire and realized that, having lost hope in international assistance, it would be up to them to enact reforms and prompt social change in the Ottoman East.<sup>30</sup> This campaign of

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<sup>26</sup> Մրուանձտեանց, *Թորոս սղթար*, ԺԱ.

<sup>27</sup> Գրիգոր [Խալաթեանց], “Նիւթերի հայ ազգագրութեան պատմութեան,” *Էմիլեան ազգագրական ժողովածու* 7 (1908): 42-44.

<sup>28</sup> Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem, “Introduction,” in *A Companion to Folklore*, eds. Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem (Malden and Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 42-43.

<sup>30</sup> Hourı Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 6-7. As late as 1868, we find urban Ottoman Armenians using European sources to learn about their rural counterparts. In response to a French source noting that

self-help (ինքնօգնութիւն) manifested in a burst of educational, charitable and self-defense associations, which all put the focus on unity and solidarity with the *people* of the provinces of the empire like never before.<sup>31</sup> This campaign not only opened up opportunities for urban volunteers to be acquainted with provincial life but, given the newfound political significance of the region, also created an appetite for information about it in urban centers. The entanglement of Ottoman and Russian politics in the aftermath of the war also brought Ottoman Armenian and Russian Armenian intellectuals into greater contact and led to a more robust exchange of ideas.<sup>32</sup> Among other areas, this more robust exchange prompted greater awareness among Ottoman Armenian intellectuals of the ethnographic work being done by their Russian Armenian counterparts; it also provided them with the stimulus and methods to follow suit, albeit with less scholarly motivations.<sup>33</sup>

The new significance of the provinces prompted a new turn in the Armenian national movement. This turn was defined by the belief that folk culture was the embodiment of two

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there were 3,400,000 Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, one Armenian in Smyrna was prompted to ask himself the following questions, which highlight the disconnect between urban and rural: “Where are these Armenians? Where are they located? What do we know about them? What information do we have? What kind of condition or situation are they in?” *Քանի մը խօսք մեր ազգին արդի վիճակին վրայ* (Smyrna: Տպագրութիւն Տէւէեան, 1868), 7.

<sup>31</sup> Պօղոսեան, *Պատմութիւն հայ վշակույթային ընկերութիւններու*, vol. 1, 7 and Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace*, 176. For a reflection on the concept of self-help post-war, see S. Etmekjian’s translator’s introduction to Samuel Smiles’ *Self-Help*: Սամուէլ Սմայլս, *Ինքնօգնութիւն*, trans. Ս. Էթմէքճեան (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Ս. Ղ. Պարտիզպանեան եւ ընկեր, 1880), Գ-Ե.

<sup>32</sup> The writer Raffi vividly describes the divisions, prejudices and lack of awareness that abounded between Russian and Ottoman Armenians in Raffi, *Tajkahayk (The Armenian Question)*, trans. Ara Stepan Melkonian (London: Taderon Press, 2008), 16-22. Contact increased particularly as Russian Armenians grew increasingly interested in the socio-political plight of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. See Riegg, *Russia's Entangled Embrace*, 146-156.

<sup>33</sup> For example, we find announcements of the publication of Russian Armenian ethnographic studies published in the Ottoman Armenian press. These include an announcement for a notable guide for ethnographic collection by Գրիգոր Խալաթեանց, *Ծրագիր հայ ազգագրութեան եւ ազգային իրաւաբանական սովորութիւնների* (Moscow: Ջուլյարան եւ տպարան Օ. Օ. Հերբէլ, 1887). The exchange also went both ways. For example, Servantsdiant’s work received much acclaim among Russian Armenian intellectuals and was translated into Russian in the 1880s. See Khachaturian, *Cultivating Nationhood in Imperial Russia*, 196-200.

intertwined concepts that would dominate discourses on cultural expression during this period: national authenticity (հարսագասունութիւն) and national spirit (նգի). Around the world at this time, the search for ‘authenticity’ was a hallmark of modernity and was often a reaction to social transformation.<sup>34</sup> Particularly after the loss—or questioning—of the divine as the sole source of authority, folk culture came to serve as a stand-in in which national ‘authenticity’ and distinctiveness could be found.<sup>35</sup> Urbanites came to see themselves as having strayed from their ‘authentic’ culture and as having been ‘contaminated’ by cultural contact and other trappings of modernity. The folk, in contrast, were framed as unaffected by the corrupting influences of modern cosmopolitan life and thus as having unknowingly preserved age-old customs, traditions and practices that could be drawn upon in the cultivation of an ‘authentic’ national culture.<sup>36</sup>

In this way, oral folk culture also came to be seen as containing within it the spirit of the people, the definition of which had changed radically since the 1870s. In the previous chapter, the spoken and the ‘natural’ had begun to be prioritized over the written and the ‘artificial,’ and ‘the people’ had denoted the urban, educated middle class. In this period, those priorities remain but the “people” come to be understood as the uneducated, especially those “left on the land;” untouched by the “civilization” of written culture, the uneducated folk were—by the logic of the time—now the purveyors of Armenianness in its most ‘authentic’ form.<sup>37</sup> The term used to

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<sup>34</sup> Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*, 25.

<sup>35</sup> Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*, 27. In the scholarly realms, “authenticity” and “national spirit” were treated as themes ripe for scientific inquiry and folklore was collected and examined in hopes of finding evidence that “such a spirit really existed.” Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020), 51-52.

<sup>36</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, 193 and Cocchiara, *The History of Folklore*, 218-219.

<sup>37</sup> Roger D. Abrahams, “Phantoms of Romantic Nationalism in Folkloristics,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 106, vol. 419 (1993): 10, 27 and Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 189. As Dorothy Noyes notes, the “folk” also included “the servant class, the feminine, the domestic” in urban locales. Dorothy Noyes, “The Social Base of Folklore,” in *A Companion to Folklore*, eds. Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem (Malden and Oxford: John

describe the uneducated, *նաւիկ*, had once been tantamount to a slur and had been associated with vulgarity and ignorance among the urban intelligentsia.<sup>38</sup> Now the same figure occupied a preeminent position and was a source of cultural authority, having become a symbol of national purity. In a sharp reversal, urban intellectuals, now concerned about the ‘artificiality’ of their urban culture, not only idealized the uneducated folk but looked to these ‘noble peasants’ to teach them how to remedy their estrangement from ‘authentic’ Armenian culture.<sup>39</sup>

Like other national leaders around the world at this time, Ottoman Armenian intellectuals—urban and provincial alike—mined, inventoried and coopted folk practices in hopes of gleaning from them the most ‘authentic’ and infusing the national culture in-the-making with the true ‘spirit of the people.’<sup>40</sup> As we will see further along, many urban and provincial intellectuals saw the current state of Armenian culture in the 1890s as far too Europeanized and too disconnected from its roots, i.e. the ‘truest’ and ‘purest’ expression of the spirit and creative genius of the Armenian people.<sup>41</sup> In reaction, we see the drive to document a wide variety of folk practices and examples of oral culture, including myths, poems, words, fables, songs, proverbs,

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Wiley & Sons, 2014), 16. We see this understanding of the “folk” in the drive to collect material from women, children and uneducated groups in Constantinople who were seen as bearers of authenticity despite their urban lives. See, for example, Hratchia Adjarian’s collection of lullabys, curses, folktales, songs, children’s games, riddles, etc., gleaned from Armenian homes in Constantinople. According to his introduction, Adjarian began this study in 1890. It was confiscated by Ottoman authorities in 1897, rewritten and published posthumously only in 2009. Հրաչյա Աճառյան, *Պղասահայ անգիրք բանասիրություն* (Yerevan: ԵՊՀ հրատարակչություն, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, *Լուսաորդեակաները ու լուսաորդությունը* (Constantinople: Ի սպարանի Յ. Միւհէնտիսեան, 1858), 10-11.

<sup>39</sup> For a meditation on this estrangement, see, for example, Արփիարեան, “Ազգային տեսություն,” 335.

<sup>40</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, 195 and Leerssen, “Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture,” 570-571. This inventorying is often a reaction to the threat of cultural loss or homogenization. Though the turn to the folk did indeed coincide with a period of emigration and massacre, these factors were not widely cited at the time as motivating Ottoman Armenian ethnographic work.

<sup>41</sup> For more on the global trend of which Ottoman Armenians were a part, see Leerssen, *National Thought*, 192-197.

customs, among others, and to endow them with new national significance.<sup>42</sup> As Roger Abrahams notes, “as with ruins or manuscripts, their lives served as a palimpsest through which the past still might be dimly observed, perhaps even recovered.”<sup>43</sup> Seeing folk practices as fossils or as glimpses into the past helps explain the frenzied collection of materials among intellectuals at this time and their framing as part of an ancient ‘national treasury.’<sup>44</sup> Collecting these materials was tantamount to recovering “lost treasure” for “those upper classes who need a fix of authenticity.”<sup>45</sup> It was this ‘genius’ of the people that was called upon in an attempt to restore cultural purity and shape an urban modernizing society, which had come to be seen as inauthentic and artificial.<sup>46</sup>

It is critical to remember that this view of folk culture and the conceptualization of the folk as a “surviving timeless community” cut off from all cross-cultural contact is nothing more than a romantic ideal based in wishful thinking rather than reality.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, “‘folk’ materials,” as Regina Bendix notes, “constituted a major source for constructing both authentic language and literature.”<sup>48</sup> The practices of the uneducated folk were thought to hold within them the history of

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<sup>42</sup> For a short bibliography of published folklore collections, including those published in the late nineteenth century, see Kevork B. Bardakjian, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 635-640. These collections would later provide materials for the յուշամատենաւն, a genre of memory books composed after the Armenian genocide that reconstructed the details of Armenian village and town life across the Empire.

<sup>43</sup> Abrahams, “Phantoms of Romantic Nationalism in Folkloristics,” 10.

<sup>44</sup> Noyes, “The Social Base of Folklore,” 20-21.

<sup>45</sup> Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*, 54. In the Ottoman Armenian context, this approach has been studied most significantly in the realm of music where folk songs were used to ‘Armenize’ an urban musical tradition that was seen as having become too ‘foreign.’ See, for example, Jacob Olley, “Remembering Armenian Music in Bolis: Komitas Vardapet in Transcultural Perspective,” *Memory Studies* 12, no. 5 (2019): 556-559.

<sup>46</sup> Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*, 16-17.

<sup>47</sup> Leerssen, *National Thought*, 193.

<sup>48</sup> Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*, 67.

the nation and to provide a proper basis for the construction of an authentic national culture.<sup>49</sup> Using them offered a means of accessing authenticity and purity and asserting cultural distinctiveness.<sup>50</sup> It is in this context, then, that we can better understand the impetus of the contest committee to instrumentalize folk culture for their own ends by spurring the collection of words from across the Empire in hopes of forging out of them an ‘authentic’ modern language endowed with the true ‘spirit of the people.’

### **Provincial Intellectuals and ‘Inauthentic’ Armenian**

By the time the contest committee had published its call in 1902, the collection and valorization of words from regional spoken varieties of Armenian had been well underway. The labor of this collection fell, not to urban intellectuals, but to their counterparts living outside major urban print centers who were stepping into the spotlight for the very first time. The category of the “provincial” intellectual was brought into being by advances in education in the mid-nineteenth century, which produced by the 1880s and 1890s a tier of educated writers, teachers and priests who were born, raised and often chose to remain in their native regions. These intellectuals wore their “provincial” identity with pride and had distinctive perspectives that were much sought after by urbanites in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. In the 1880s, many began by articulating the specific concerns of their towns and regions in dispatches published in Constantinople- or Smyrna-based newspapers, whose urban readers were hungry for news about Armenian life in the interior.<sup>51</sup> Emboldened and encouraged by the cultural climate that gave new significance to the provinces in national discourse, provincial intellectuals and their like-minded

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<sup>49</sup> Baycroft, “Introduction,” 4-5.

<sup>50</sup> Baycroft, “Introduction,” 8.

<sup>51</sup> Krikor Beledian, “From Image to Loss: The Writers of Kharpert and Provincial Literature,” in *Armenian Tsopk/Kharpert*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2002), 242-245.

urban counterparts eagerly supplied readers with songs, dialect samples, descriptions of folk customs, and more.<sup>52</sup> As Nichanian notes, albeit somewhat hyperbolically, “between 1880 and 1915, there was not a single schoolteacher in the provinces who did not, in one way or another, make a contribution to the ethnography of his village or native region.”<sup>53</sup>

It is important to note, however, that provincial intellectuals were not singlehandedly responsible for prompting the cultural shift toward valorizing the folk. Urban intellectuals were still the gatekeepers to Armenian intellectual life and, as we saw above, socio-politically primed to encourage and be receptive to the offerings of their provincial counterparts. It was their interest in what provincial intellectuals could provide and in transforming their raw materials into “national culture” that allowed these new ideas about the significance of the folk to spread. We should, thus, see this cultural shift as emerging out of an informal alliance between urban and provincial intellectuals rather than as a movement born entirely of provincial agency and executed exclusively by provincial intellectuals. It is unclear precisely how influential they could have been without the mediation and support of like-minded allies in urban centers who were eager to amplify their voices.<sup>54</sup>

By the mid-1890s, interspersed among the dispatches, fables, proverbs and studies of folk customs sent by provincial intellectuals to urban newspapers were list upon list of words used in their regional varieties of Armenian. In this way, this undertaking was very much an *auto-ethnographic* project with locals of the regions documenting for the first time their long-maligned

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<sup>52</sup> Adjarian notes that ethnographic studies of provincial life “were an ocean that overflowed into newspapers, journals and individual volumes” beginning in the 1880s. Հրաչեայ Աճառեան, *Հայերէն գաւառական բառարան* (Tiflis: Լազարեան ճեմարան արեւելեան լեզուաց, 1913), 7.

<sup>53</sup> Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, 64.

<sup>54</sup> This dynamic is far from unique to the Ottoman Armenian case. See Bauman and Briggs, *Voices of Modernity*, 162.

ways of speaking that neither they nor others had ever deemed worthy of being written or preserved for posterity.<sup>55</sup> The vast majority of these provincial intellectuals were amateurs and autodidacts rather than professional scholars or trained ethnographers. Apart from a small group who followed Euro-American advances in linguistics and dialectology and saw their work as contributing to these disciplines, most of these intellectuals did not approach their task scientifically, systematically or with scholarly objectives.<sup>56</sup>

These intellectuals were in the midst of crafting a new definition of the ‘language of the people.’ In the previous period, this concept denoted the spoken Armenian of urban, educated writers and was set in opposition to Classical Armenian. In this period, this concept denoted the varieties of Armenian spoken by the folk and was set in opposition to the Modern Armenian of urban, educated writers. This shift brought into being an altogether new *ethnographic* conception of purity.<sup>57</sup> A common approach to language planning, ethnographic purism describes “the notion that the rural dialects are somehow purer than city speech” and that intellectuals should look to “folk poetry, proverbs and popular sayings as a source of lexical enrichment.”<sup>58</sup> We see this turn

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<sup>55</sup> Nichanian has applied the term *auto-ethnographic* to work from this period but has used it to describe *Armenians* documenting Armenian culture, broadly defined, in contrast to hypothetical *European Orientalists* documenting Armenian culture. Here I use it in a more specific way to mean Armenians documenting their own regional cultures. C.f. Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, 96-97.

<sup>56</sup> The most scholarly minded among the amateur ethnographers was Hovhannes Kazanjian from Tokat. For an expression of his erudition, see, for example, Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան, “Հայ գաւառաբարբառը,” *Արեւելեան մասնույ* 33, no. 2 (1903): 34-36.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 77-78. Of course, not all Ottoman Armenian intellectuals immediately changed their ways or agreed with endowing the uneducated with authority over ‘proper’ language. Some of the elitist and archaizing purists we met in the previous chapter held firm to their positions and challenged this new approach to purism, while others allowed their views to evolve with the times. For a viewpoint in opposition to ethnographic purism, see Կարապետ Բլթիւնեան, “Լեզուի հեղինակն ու գրագէտն,” in *Պատկեր աշխարհիկ գրականության արեւմտեան հայրոցի վերջ կոյս ժԹ. դարու*, ed. Յակոբ Գուրգէն (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Գ. Պաղտատլեան, 1892), 264-267.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 77.

against urban Armenian and toward an ethnographic purist approach to the Modern Armenian standard encapsulated in the following quote from 1899 by the populist writer and urban ally Arpiar Arpiarian:

Deprived of its land, light and water, the Armenian of Constantinople is a rootless tree that is kept alive by artificial nectar. As much as its fruits may be pretty, they will never have the Armenian flavor and aroma. The Armenian of books, the grammar of Turkish and the influence of French create an un-Armenian Armenian language that one day—albeit very late—will look for life in the soul of the ancestral language [հայրենի լեզու հոգի]...”<sup>59</sup>

We also catch a glimpse here not only of the impact of the turn to the folk on conceptions of ‘authentic’ Armenian but also of the particular targets of ‘inauthenticity’ in urban written usage. The accusation of artificiality once applied to Classical Armenian because of its disconnection from spoken language we now find applied to urban written usage. “A dozen writers do not have the right to tyrannize the language,” wrote Hovhannes Kazanjian, one of the most prolific provincial intellectuals, wrote in 1898; the language, he argued, was no longer “the monopoly of the writer.”<sup>60</sup> This ‘tyranny of the writer’ became all the more concerning around the turn of the century because of its potential impact on the emerging standard. Provincial intellectuals and their like-minded cohort of urban allies assailed and deemed illegitimate, dangerous and inauthentic two main elements of urban written usage: neologisms and Gallicisms.<sup>61</sup>

The use of neologisms (նորարանություն, նորակերտ, նորակազմ, or նորահնար բառ) emerged out of a demand for words that could address “our current need to explain new ideas or

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<sup>59</sup> Արփիար Արփիարեան, “Հայաստան եւ Կ. Պոլիս,” *Նոր կեսնք* 2, no. 12 (1899): 181.

<sup>60</sup> Cited in “Հասկարաղ,” *Բիդսկն* 16, no. 24 (1898): 464.

<sup>61</sup> During this period, the variety of Armenian spoken in the capital once again came under fire as inauthentic for its number of Turkish borrowings. But this time, urban speakers were, in particular, portrayed as ‘corrupting’ the speech of Armenian-speaking migrants who had recently arrived in the capital. In their process of urban assimilation, some would adopt the Turkish words in common parlance and shed the Armenian ones used in their hometowns. For an amusing anecdote featuring a migrant from Palu and various words for chickpeas, Գասպար Պ. Նեմցե, “Գրագետ մ՞ու իր լեզուն,” *Արեւելեան մասնույ* 24, no. 10 (1894): 316.

speak the language of new science.”<sup>62</sup> They consisted both of entirely new words and existing words endowed with new meanings.<sup>63</sup> Neologisms were particularly common in the artistic, literary, scientific and technical domains.<sup>64</sup> These terms were unambiguously the creations of multilingual, urban writers working and publishing in Constantinople, Vienna, Venice, Smyrna and Paris. Literary translations from French, which had been a cultural phenomenon among Ottoman Armenians since the mid-nineteenth century, often gave rise to the need for neologisms.<sup>65</sup> So too did the influx of new ideas and concepts into the Ottoman Armenian cultural and intellectual sphere in the late nineteenth century and the increased desire to express them in Armenian. This brush with the culturally ‘foreign’ and cosmopolitan contributed to the perceived inauthenticity of these terms.

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<sup>62</sup> Նորայր Ն. Բիւզանդացի, “Բառագիրք գաղղիերէն-հայերէն-տաճկերէն,” *Արևելեան մասնույ* 9, no. 6 (1879): 64.

<sup>63</sup> Չուլթակ (violin), դաշնակ (piano), տաքսան (pants) and հեղինակ (author) are cited as words endowed with new modern meanings in the late nineteenth century. Նորայր Ն. Բիւզանդացի, “Բառագիրք գաղղիերէն-հայերէն-տաճկերէն,” 64. This process was not always without debate. In the 1860s, we see discussions in the press over whether the verb մշակել (to cultivate a field) should take on the additional meaning that same verb (to cultivate, *cultiver*) had in English and French: to progress in learning. Ա. Մ. Գ. [Անտոն Մատաթիա Գարագաշեան], “Բանասիրական,” *Մասիս* 11, no. 564 (1862): 4.

<sup>64</sup> As an example of a French-Armenian dictionary with a particularly large number of neologisms, see Emanuel Kaciuni, *Dictionnaire des arts, des sciences et des lettres* (Venice: Imprimerie de St. Lazare, 1891-1892). For glossaries of neologisms for specialized fields like medicine and minerology, see Նազարէժ Տաղաւարեան, *Բառացուցակ ախտանուանց եւ դեղորէից յատկութեանց* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Յ. Մատթէոսեան, 1900) and Երուանդ Փ. Վառնկեան, *Բառգրքոյկ հանքանուանց* (Sivas: Տպագրութիւն Կարիրա Կ. Ա. Պարսամեան, 1914). Like many other Armenian dictionaries and glossaries at this time, both included French equivalents for each entry, hinting at the perceived authority of this language in the intellectual realm.

<sup>65</sup> For example, it was the process of translating Victor Hugo’s *Notre-Dame-de-Paris* from French into Modern Armenian that prompted the translator, Mesrob Noubarian, to compile a bilingual dictionary, for which he created at least 2,000 neologisms. Մերոպ Նուպարեան, “Յայտարարութիւն բառարան ֆրանսերէնէ հայ-աշխարհիկ,” *Արևելեան մասնույ* 13, no. 11 (1883): 525. Throughout this period, we see lexicographers of bilingual dictionaries both invent their own terms for concepts in other languages and/or integrate those coined by earlier lexicographers. Mesrob Noubarian describes the process of building on the work of his lexicographic predecessors in Մերոպ Նուպարեան, *Առձեռն բառարան ֆրանսերէնէ հայ-աշխարհիկ* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Գ. Պաղտատլեան, 1911), Բ.

While certain writers considered neologisms “priceless treasure and riches for the Armenian language,” others put them on par with “barbarisms” or “solecisms,” especially if the neologism duplicated a word with the same meaning already in circulation or if its construction went against Armenian word-building norms.<sup>66</sup> As early as the 1870s, there was a sense among certain urban writers that these a neologism was akin to a “gnawing worm, which alters, corrupts and distorts the most beautiful languages” and thus needed to be controlled.<sup>67</sup> Even advocates and coiners of neologisms themselves were sensitive to avoid inserting “illegitimacy or strangeness” into the language through their invention and use.<sup>68</sup> This sense of illegitimacy and strangeness only intensified in the 1890s with the convergence of the turn to the folk, the contributions of provincial intellectuals, and the active work toward codifying Modern Armenian in dictionaries.<sup>69</sup> In this intellectual atmosphere, neologisms began to be accused more and more often of spoiling “the native [ընդարդյա] qualities” of the language, perverting its character and generally being “against [its] spirit and structure.”<sup>70</sup>

Provincial intellectuals and their allies in urban centers were particularly critical of a certain kind of neologism: the Gallicism (ֆրասսաբանութիւն). Gallicisms were understood broadly and included lexical, syntactical and structural calques from French as well as—less frequently—direct

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<sup>66</sup> Նուպարեան, “Յայտարարութիւն,” 524 and Միհրան Պ. Ասքանազեան, *Գրագիտութիւն տեսական եւ գործնական* (Constantinople, Տպագրութիւն Գ. Պաղտատեան, 1884), 5-10. Intellectuals at this time would often describe a cacophony of neologisms used in print, with each writer using his or her own invention without paying sufficient attention to those already in circulation.

<sup>67</sup> Bedrossian, *New Dictionary Armenian-English*, xii.

<sup>68</sup> Նուպարեան, “Յայտարարութիւն,” 525.

<sup>69</sup> Controversy over neologisms reportedly surged after the publication of two French to Modern Armenian dictionaries in the early to mid-1890s that abounded with neologisms. Միրունի, *Պոլիս եւ իր դերը*, vol. 4, 65-68.

<sup>70</sup> Ասքանազեան, *Գրագիտութիւն*, 8-10.

borrowings.<sup>71</sup> Since the early nineteenth century, French had been perceived as a universal language of culture, “nourishment for all nations and, even more so, for a people like ours who are hungry for knowledge.”<sup>72</sup> Among urban educated Ottoman Armenians, it was the most common European language studied in school, had gained a semi-official function within the Ottoman bureaucracy and was seen as a way to climb the social ladder.<sup>73</sup> This pervasiveness of French within the educated class created a situation in which, as one lexicographer put it, “our compatriots are more familiar with learned words in French than in their ancestral [language].”<sup>74</sup> This new linguistic ecology necessitated the placement of the French term in parentheses beside the Armenian Gallicisms to aid in comprehension, thus replicating with a new language the same dynamic we saw with more familiar Turkicisms less than a half-century earlier.

Although French was widely acknowledged within this social sphere as “the greatest tool of intellectual cultivation,” there was ambivalence about the role it should play in the print language and in the eventual standard.<sup>75</sup> Some of the earliest writers of Modern Armenian in the 1840s and 1850s had accepted French as a model for the language as it expanded into new domains. Given its influence on other developing and aestheticizing languages around the world, they

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<sup>71</sup> For a selection of structural calques from French in Modern Armenian, see Այսրընեան, *Քննական քերականություն*, 330-334 (pagination of the grammar section). Adjarian builds on Aydenian’s list in Անառյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2, 576-579.

<sup>72</sup> Ambroise Calfa, “Dictionnaire arménien-français,” *Մասնաց աղսանի* 4, no. 4 (1858): 88.

<sup>73</sup> Strauss, “Language and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire,” 121-122; Mignon, “French in Ottoman Turkey,” 405-434; and Etmekjian, *The French Influence on the Western Armenian Renaissance*, 162-191. Notably, before it had fully taken hold by the mid-nineteenth century, church officials considered French a language of impiety, associated it with the atheism of Voltaire and, in certain places, resisted its entry into schools. See, for example, Մ. Մ. [Մատթեոս Մամուրեան], “Առաջին յորելեան Ս. Մեսրոպեան վարժարանի Չմիւռնիոյ,” *Արեւելեան մասնույ* 5, no. 11 (1875): 419.

<sup>74</sup> Միմոն Երեմեան, *Պատկերազարդ բառգիրք գործնական գիտությունաց* (Venice: Ս. Ղազար, 1900), [ii].

<sup>75</sup> “Բառագիրք Ֆռանսալոուրբ,” *Երկրագունտ* 3, no. 7 (1885): 322.

considered it normal that Modern Armenian too would bear its imprint.<sup>76</sup> But these writers were nevertheless conscious of the need to walk the fine line between allowing the “natural and elegant forms” of French to enter Modern Armenian and creating a “barbarous mixture.”<sup>77</sup> Some put clear limits on the *kinds* of Gallicisms that could be used in Modern Armenian without endangering the “spirit and purity” of the language.<sup>78</sup> Circulating into the twentieth century was also the idea that Gallicisms could be used as a way to break the hold of both Classical Armenian and Turkish over Modern Armenian while also giving it a “lightness, clarity and elegance.”<sup>79</sup> In other words, while the architects of Modern Armenian were largely closed to vernacular calques from Turkish, many were open to literary calques from French and other European languages.<sup>80</sup> “Doesn’t every language of the people [ժողովրդային բարբառ], when it starts to become a written language [գրական լեզու], need the help of a more cultivated language [մշակվեալ լեզու]?” one writer asked in 1881. “...Our Modern Armenian [աշխարհաբար] has mainly turned to Classical Armenian and now it needs the help of European languages when Classical Armenian, in particular cases, cannot satisfy it.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> In the late nineteenth century, Gallicisms could be found in many emerging standard languages and were especially common as languages were starting to aestheticize and to be used as vehicles for literary expression. For studies on the impact of French on the formation of literary Turkish and literary Russian, Guzine Dino, “L’influence française sur la langue littéraire turque dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle,” *Revue de littérature comparée* 34 (1960): 561-577 and May Smith, *The Influence of French on Eighteenth-Century Literary Russian: Semantic and Phraseological Calques* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006).

<sup>77</sup> “Ազգային դարուրթին,” *Բանաստեղծ* 1, no. 10 (1851): 452.

<sup>78</sup> According to one writer, these acceptable Gallicisms included cultural borrowings like *salon*, *revolver*, *waltz*, *morphine*, *clown*, *asphalte*, etc. Արշակ Չոպանեան, “Արդի հայերէնը,” *Անսահիտ* 4, no. 5 (1902): 100.

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, Չոպանեան, “Արդի հայերէնը,” 98.

<sup>80</sup> As Thomas indicates, literary calques are often “justified as part of the enrichment and intellectualization of a language...[while] vernacular calques may indicate the extent of foreign domination.” Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 72. On the notion of opening and closure in the context of purism, see Thomas, *Linguistic Purism*, 74-75.

<sup>81</sup> Բիւզանդ Զէչեան [Արամազդ], “Լեզուի խնդիրն. պաշտպանութիւն աշխարհաբարի,” part 1, *Մասիս* 30, no. 2836 (1881): 2.

At mid-century, advocates of Classical Armenian had been the loudest critics of the Gallicisms that abounded in the written expression of their fellow urban writers. Targeting syntax in particular, these critics pointed out the similarities between French and Modern Armenian time and again in yet another attempt to delegitimize Modern Armenian as a ‘national’ language.’<sup>82</sup> Some detractors went as far as to call Modern Armenian a Franco-Turkish hybrid and suggested that, in attempting to de-Turkify Modern Armenian, the number of Gallicisms was increasing day by day.<sup>83</sup> Provincial intellectuals and their urban allies also used Gallicisms to underscore the “foreignness” of Modern Armenian but, in harmony with the cultural ethos of their time, tended to focus on the incomprehensibility of Gallicisms to readers outside of urban centers and their inability to “portray the psychology of the majority of the nation with all its hues.”<sup>84</sup> In a paradigm where all that was ‘natural,’ oral and tied to the folk was king, Gallicisms were also seen as ‘inauthentic’ because they were literary creations from the minds of *writers* rather than spontaneous creations from the mouths of the *folk*. Gallicisms and other neologisms, in other

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<sup>82</sup> Advocates of Modern Armenian responded by pointing out that as Classical Armenian was aestheticizing it too had needed to rely on other languages like Greek, Syriac, Arabic and Persian to expand its expressive capabilities. Thus, in their view, relying on French as the ‘cultured’ language of the era to help Modern Armenian aestheticize posed no problem. See, for example, Արփիարեան, “Ազգային տեսութիւն,” 332.

<sup>83</sup> Չապէլ Իսանճեան [Անահիտ], “Հայերէն լեզուն. պաշտպանութիւն գրաբարի,” *Մասիս* 30, no. 2808 (1881): 2 and Նորայր Ն. Բիւզանդացի, “Բառագիրք գաղղիերէն-հայերէն-տանկերէն,” 61, footnote 1. French terms often appeared in parentheses beside newly coined Armenian terms in all kinds of prose. A testament to the widespread knowledge of French among readers, lexicographers note that many readers would more readily recognize the French word than its Armenian equivalent, making the French essential for comprehension. Երեմեան, *Պատկերազարդ բառգիրք*, [ii].

<sup>84</sup> “Օտար բառերու գործածութիւն,” *Արեւելեան մասնու* 32, no. 17 (1902): 723-725 and Դանիէլ Վարուժան, “Հայ լեզուի խնդիրը,” *Ազատամարտ* 1, no. 45 (1911): 705. Part of the latter essay has been translated into French in Nichanian, *Ages et usages*, 407-410. For these writers, Gallicisms also included direct French borrowings.

words, had been created, used and approved by “the first scholars of [the] nation,” whose authority and authenticity had begun to be undermined.<sup>85</sup> As one writer put it in 1911:

The modern written language [արդի գրական լեզու] of Ottoman Armenians is only Armenian in its vocabulary, but French or Turkish from the perspective of style. We write in Armenian, but we think in French or Turkish, abandoning authentic [բուն] Armenian styles and phrases, of which the people [ժողովուրդ] have remained the true guardians.<sup>86</sup>

Provincial intellectuals and their allies in the capital worked in hopes of remedying this state of affairs.

### Provincial Word Lists, National Treasuries and the Standard Language

Infusing the nascent modern standard with these “authentic Armenian styles and phrases” was a pressing concern for intellectuals beginning in the 1890s and extending through to the end of Ottoman Armenian intellectual life in 1915. Around the turn of the century, we see the emergence of a new kind of publication to aid in this pursuit: word lists for regional varieties of Armenian.<sup>87</sup> These publications are akin to the dialect glossaries, dialect dictionaries and dialect atlases being published elsewhere in the world at this time.<sup>88</sup> Among Ottoman Armenians, word

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<sup>85</sup> Bedrossian, *New Dictionary Armenian-English*, xii.

<sup>86</sup> Կ. Յ. Բասմաջեան, “Հայ գրական լեզուի խնդիրը,” *Ազատամարտ* 1, no. 40 (1911): 626.

<sup>87</sup> See, for instance, word lists from Kharpert and Malatya. Աբրահամ Էօքսիզեան, “Գաւառի կեանքէն,” *Ծաղիկ* 1, no. 16 (1895): 580-582 and Կարապետ Պէննէեան and Գրիգոր Խանձեան, *Մարաթիոյ տեղագրական եւ ազգագրական աշխատասիրութիւնը եւ Մարաթիոյ գաւառաբարբառը* (n.p.: Մարաթիոյ կրթասիրաց ընկերութեան հարազատ հատուածի կեդրոնական վարչութեան, n.d.), 147-173. Other lists include a hodge-podge of words from different parts of the Empire. See Խաչատուր Տէր Վարդանեան, “Ժողովրդական բառեր,” *Արեւելեան մասնույ* 25, no. 22 (1895): 702-704 and Ա. Յ. Այվազեան, *Բառանանոյշ* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Յ. Սատթէնսեան, 1899). Word lists were also produced by travelers to particular regions. For one such list, see “Գաւառական բառեր,” *Հանդէս ամսօրեայ* 15, no. 3-4 (1901): 114-119. This list should, however, be approached with caution. One of its contributors, Yervant Odian, later admitted to having made up the provincial words he submitted at a time in his life when he was strapped for cash and was offered money in exchange for words. See Երուանդ Օսեան, *Տասներկու տարի Պոլսէն դուրս, 1896-1908* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Մ. Տէր-Սահակեան, 1922), 241-244.

<sup>88</sup> Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics*, 210; Jacques van Keymeulen, “The Dialect Dictionary,” in *The Handbook of Dialectology*, eds. Charles Boberg, John Nerbonne and Dominic Watt (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 40-41; and Hickey, “Dialectology, Philology and Historical Linguistics,” 30-31.

lists came in the form of individual glossaries, sections in larger ethnographic studies of a region and shorter lists published as newspaper articles. While many newspapers welcomed studies of different aspects of folk culture around this time, one made them its primary focus: the Constantinople-based newspaper *Puragn*. Between late 1897 and late 1900, under the leadership of Agn-born Smpad Tavtian, *Puragn* published a vast array of information about provincial life in different parts of the Empire.<sup>89</sup> While broad in its ethnographic scope, *Puragn* put a special focus on the documentation of provincial speech and called directly on “provincial people of letters” (գաւառացի բանասէր) to give value to and record their varieties of Armenian.<sup>90</sup> Into the 1910s, these students, priests, teachers and other locals heeded this call and others like it to collect and publish “the very best words from their regions.”<sup>91</sup> This newspaper was made up primarily of their submissions and constituted the most concerted effort to bring together these largely disjointed efforts in the Ottoman realm.<sup>92</sup>

As Hratchia Adjarian—one of the few formally trained Ottoman Armenian philologists of the late Ottoman period—notes, most of these collectors were working out of a love of their native variety of Armenian and had little understanding or interest in how their word lists contributed to

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<sup>89</sup> For more on its ethnographic objectives, see “Ազգագրական նիւթերու մշակութիւնը,” *Բիւրասկն* 17, no. 9-10 (1899): 131-133. For a sense of the ethnographic topics broached in the newspaper (with citations), see Մկրտիչ Պոստուրեան, *Հայ մամուլը տասննեւհինգ տարուան մէջ, 1894-1909* (Venice: Սուրբ Ղազար, 1909), 164-176.

<sup>90</sup> Ս. Գ. [Սմբատ Դաւթեան], “Այն ժամանակ «Բիւրասկն» չիկար,” *Բիւրասկն* 17, no. 50-51-52 (1899): 827-828 and Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան, “Բարբառախօսական նօթեր,” *Բիւրասկն* 16, no. 45-46 (1898): 785-788. *Puragn* was often the only place in which samples of certain dialects were published. It later served as an invaluable source base for larger dialectological studies, such as Hratchia Adjarian, *Classification des dialectes arméniens* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1909).

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան, “Հայ գաւառաբարբառը,” *Արեւելեան մամուլ* 33, no. 4 (1903): 81 and Այվազեան, *Բառանոյշ*, Է.

<sup>92</sup> Some of its most frequent contributors hailed from Moush (Muş), Kharpert (Harput), Tokat, Malgara (Malkara) and Van. Armenians in the Russian Empire had many more venues to disseminate this kind of ethnographic information. For a study of one of these publications, see Mouradian, “La revue ethnographique arménienne,” 295-316.

filling gaps in the emerging standard or to rendering it ‘purer’ and more ‘authentic.’<sup>93</sup> It was in the hands of the more scholarly minded intellectuals—both urban and provincial—that their work was coopted for these functions.<sup>94</sup> One of the most pressing functions in the minds of these intellectuals was the creation of a long-awaited Modern Armenian dictionary.<sup>95</sup> What transcended all groups, however, was the notion that provincial speech constituted a “national treasury” (ազգային գանձարան). This metaphor, which was in wide circulation in the 1890s, was not unique to Ottoman Armenians. Indeed, it was a common way around the world at the time to describe all kinds of folk culture in the age of nation-building: a repository from which intellectuals could draw to construct an ‘authentic’ canon of national culture. As folklore scholars have underscored, the first step in this process was “amassing a national ‘treasury’” before “winnowing and disciplining the national cultural wealth.”<sup>96</sup> Though this prism, we can see word lists as part of the process of amassing the treasury and the Modern Armenian dictionaries we will explore in the next section as the result of the process of winnowing and disciplining provincial speech to create the standard.

What was it about provincial speech that made it so widely considered a ‘treasury’? The answer to this question lies in the pervasive new belief that Armenian dialects contained within

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<sup>93</sup> Հրաչեայ Յ. Անտեան, “Բարբառախօսութեան օգուտները եւ մատենախօսական «Եւրոկիոյ գաւառաբարբառ»-ին,” *Բանասէր* 3, no. 2-3 (1901): 76. For a typology of word collectors, see Հ. Ք. Յ., “Քանի մը դիտողութիւն գաւառական բառերու հրատարակութեանց վրայ,” *Հանդէս ամսօրեայ* 15, no. 8 (1901): 238-239.

<sup>94</sup> Among provincial intellectuals Hovhannes Kazanjian (1870-1915), a lawyer and educator from Tokat, stands out as one of the most vocal, prolific and eloquent advocates for the potential of provincial words for the standard language. For more on Kazanjian’s life, see Թէոդիկ, *Անձնուն տարեցոյցը զբօսալի ու պիտանի 1911* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Վ. եւ Հ. Տէր-Ներսէսեան, 1911), 249-250.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, Յ. Մկրտիչեան, “Հայ բառարանի մը պետքը,” *Բիւրակ* 17, no. 8 (1899): 117; Ենովք Արմէն, “Ապագայ բառարանը. թելադրութիւններ,” *Արեւելեան մամուլ* 36, no. 11 (1906): 264; Այվազեան, *Բառանմոյշ*, Ը; and Հ. Ք. Յ., “Քանի մը դիտողութիւն,” 238.

<sup>96</sup> Noyes, “The Social Base of Folklore,” 20. These provincial words were also referred to as “jewels” (զոհար), “pearls” (մարգարիտ) and “riches” (հարստութիւն).

them vestiges of a purportedly ‘pure’ ancient Armenian linguistic past.<sup>97</sup> To be considered part of a provincial (զաւաստական) or dialect (բարբառային) treasury, a word could not (1) be attested in Classical Armenian texts or (2) be borrowed—or at least be *perceived* as having been borrowed—from another language.<sup>98</sup> While most often used in reference to speech from the Ottoman provinces, these adjectives were also at times used to describe *uneducated* urban speech. While only a few decades earlier, these same words would have been considered “corrupt” and “degenerate” because of their absence from Classical Armenian texts, they were now lauded by many—though not all—precisely because of this absence.<sup>99</sup>

In essence, these word lists constituted a parallel linguistic treasury to the long-cherished treasury of the forebear canon. By the 1890s not only were these words conceived of as just as ancient as the words attested in Classical Armenian but, building on the locating of authenticity in spoken language that we saw in the previous chapter, they were now perceived as *even more* ‘authentic’ because of their connection to speech rather than writing. In this way, they were widely considered “creations of the original people’s language [բուն ժողովրդային լեզու],” the words *spoken* rather than *written* in ancient times.<sup>100</sup> Their historical value was particularly potent among

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<sup>97</sup> The potential utility of dialects had been expressed sporadically earlier in the nineteenth century among Ottoman Armenians, often Mekhitarists, who had been aware of the uses of rural speech among European philologists and lexicographers. See, for example, Cirbied, *Grammaire de la langue arménienne*, vol. 2, 740 and Հ. Ղ. Մ. [Ղեւոնդ Այիշան], “Լեզուագիտութիւն,” 297. While these figures may have suspected that, as Aydenian suggested, there were “antiquities” (հնութիւն) to be found in rural speech, they did not undertake the work of collection and analysis at the time. Այտրնեան, *Քննական քերականութիւն*, 70, 175, 221.

<sup>98</sup> Աճառեան, *Հայերէն զաւաստական բառարան*, 4.

<sup>99</sup> Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան, “Աղաւաղեալ բառեր,” part 1, *Մասիս* 50, no. 12 (1901): 180.

<sup>100</sup> Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան, “Լեզուական զոհարներ,” in *Ամենուն տարեցոյցը զքօսայի ու պիտանի 1907*, ed. Թէոդիկ (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Վ. Է. Հ. Տէր-Ներսէսեան, 1907), 163. The reconstruction of historical spoken language (referred to as նախնեաց ռամկօրէն [spoken language of the forebears]; ստորին հայերէն [low Armenian] and միջին հայերէն [Middle Armenian]) also expanded during this time. Building on Aydenian’s work, this research was primarily carried out by German philologists and the Viennese Mekhitarists. See, for example,

the more scholarly minded who, like dialectologists of their day, saw the potential of these words in reconstructing older forms of Armenian, in understanding the relationship between Armenian and other Indo-European languages and in drawing—albeit not always sound—conclusions about the origins and history of the Armenian people.<sup>101</sup> Here the uneducated *ասմիկ*— the more distanced from the “corrupting” influences of literacy, education and written language the better— were seen as the guardians of this ancient national treasure and thus idealized like never before.<sup>102</sup> It was in their speech, in other words, that the echoes of the ancient, pure and authentic Armenian ‘of the people’ could still be heard.<sup>103</sup> Word lists were thus a way to excavate and bring to the attention of the wider national community these precious elements of national culture.

This new historical and national significance of provincial speech helped to dismantle— but not entirely eliminate—the long-dominant prejudice against provincial speech. Certain provincial intellectuals seized the opportunity to elevate perceptions of their usage to be on par with Classical Armenian and urban spoken varieties of Armenian and paint as behind the times those that continued to disdain it. Highlighting the extent to which attitudes toward provincial speech had changed in a matter of decades, we read the following from 1901 from the pen of Hovhannes Kazanjian, a prolific intellectual from Tokat:

They had taught us to scorn the language of the people [ժողովրդի լեզու], to scorn and mock it, by working to forget it as much as possible and to replace it with artificial forms from fake and unnatural writing. Fortunately, now no one is left, we think, who has not understood that in that scorned, mocked, forsaken language of the people there are, it

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Ղևոնդ Յովնանեան, *Հետազոտությունք նասմիկաց ասմկորէնի վրայ* (Vienna: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1897) and Josef Karst, *Historische Grammatik des Kilikisch-Armenischen* (Strassburg: Verlag von Karl J. Trübner, 1901).

<sup>101</sup> [Իսալաթեանց], “Նիւթերի հայ ազգագրութեան պատմութեան,” 46-47 and Անառեան, “Բարբառախօսութեան օգուտները,” 76-82.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, Արփիարեան, “Ազգային տեսութիւն,” 333-334.

<sup>103</sup> Գառնիկ Ֆնտրլեան, “Արեւմտեան աշխարհաբարիւն ընթացքը դարուս մէջ,” part 3, *Մասիս* 41, no. 3969 (1892): 229.

seems, priceless linguistic treasures, infinitely useful literary pearls from the most beautiful and original [բնաստիպ] adornments of our language.<sup>104</sup>

Though certainly not as universal as described above, this shift had indeed occurred by the turn of the century and led to a greater—though still tentative—social openness to considering these words as resources for the emerging standard language. To be clear, no provincial intellectual advocated for replacing the Constantinople variety of Armenian as the *grammatical* foundation for the print language, which was seen as “already consecrated as an exalted written language.”<sup>105</sup> Nor did anyone contest the largely Classical Armenian vocabulary that had been used in the print language for over a century. Furthermore, provincial speech was not valued as contemporary means of written communication nor was there a large-scale drive to preserve them intact, raise them to the level of print languages in prestige or produce literature in them.<sup>106</sup> Instead, with the focus solely on the *words* they could provide, provincial varieties were conceptualized as repositories of authenticity and seen as mines from which to extract only certain elements. Simply put, words from provincial varieties of Armenian were thought of as resources for the standard to be grafted onto the *existing* written usage to expand the expressive capabilities of the emerging standard and to replace ‘inauthentic’ neologisms and Gallicisms but not to undo the classical basis

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<sup>104</sup> Գազանճեան, “Բարբառախօսական նօթեր,” 785-786.

<sup>105</sup> There was a general consensus that the Constantinople variety of Armenian should retain its role as the grammatical basis for the emerging standard. See, for example, Արտաշէս Յարութիւնեան, “Գրական դիմաստուերներ. Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան,” *Արեւելեան մասուլ* 32, no. 17 (1902): 735.

<sup>106</sup> While it should not be seen as a trend, we do find a handful of publications in this period composed in provincial varieties of Armenian, including a play in the dialect of Van and a translation of the Gospel of Mark into the dialect of Zeytoun. See, for example, Ղազար Փշիկեան, “Փոքի՛ ցաւ թէ սրտի ցաւ,” *Ծաղիկ* 1, no. 11-12-13 (1895): 402-411 and *Աւետարան ըստ Մարկոսի. Ձեյթունի գաւառաբարբառով* (Constantinople: Տպարան Ա. Յ. Պոյանեան, 1913). There was also a small number of literary works published with dialect words in urban newspapers, which included glosses for wider intelligibility. See, for example, with words from the dialect of Kharpert, Թլկաստինցի, “Վերջին տեղը,” *Մասիս* 49, no. 29 (1900): 458-460.

of the lexicon already in printed use.<sup>107</sup> While there was more ambivalence among provincial intellectuals about aestheticizing, valorizing and prioritizing *non-classical* words used in educated urban speech over those from provincial dialects, they were also largely not replaced, as we will see further along.<sup>108</sup>

Provincial words were, in short, used to fill gaps not to replace words already in circulation.<sup>109</sup> The first gap was in the Classical Armenian lexicon which, due to the archaizing purist approach in the eighteenth century and much of the nineteenth century, had become the bulk of the Modern Armenian lexicon.<sup>110</sup> Since the 1870s, advocates of Modern Armenian had exposed the limitations of using the stores of Classical Armenian as the be-all-end-all resource for crafting the modern standard. They emphasized that the books on largely religious and historical themes that formed the ‘forebear canon’ made it so that words for all aspects of life had not been recorded in them.<sup>111</sup> In this way, they contained only one a small selection of Armenian words, which had been preserved and passed down not because of their superiority but arbitrarily because of their theme.<sup>112</sup> “For us, the language’s other faces are like America before Columbus,” Minas Cheraz quipped in 1873.<sup>113</sup> There was a sense that Classical Armenian was not enough to build the lexicon

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<sup>107</sup> The image of “grafting” dialect words onto the standard is found in the manifesto of the literary group Mehyan (1914), published in an English translation by G. M. Goshgarian in Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, 269.

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան, “Աղաւաղեալ բառեր,” part 2, *Մասիս* 50, no. 13 (1901): 198-199.

<sup>109</sup> Աճառեան, “Բարբառախօսութեան օգուտները,” 77.

<sup>110</sup> Adjarian, *Classification des dialectes arméniens*, 5.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Գրիգոր Մսերեան [Միւնի], “Լեզուի վրայ,” part 2, 16.

<sup>112</sup> Արփիարեան, “Ազգային տեսութիւն,” 333-334.

<sup>113</sup> Չերազ, *Ազգային դաստիարակութիւն*, 147.

of the modern language.<sup>114</sup> By the 1890s, provincial varieties of Armenian had exposed some of those other faces through equally ancient and ‘authentic’ stores that complemented the forebear canon with words from different domains of life, especially—as we will see—those tied to plants, tools, crafts, agriculture, minerals and rural life.<sup>115</sup> Thus, even many of the most linguistically conservative intellectuals justified the entry of provincial words into Modern Armenian usage if there was no equivalent in Classical Armenian.<sup>116</sup>

The second gap was in urban educated usage. As we saw in the previous chapter, non-classical Armenian words used in educated speech in Constantinople slowly made their way into the print-language in the 1870s and 1880s. Their usage, however, did not encompass all domains of life and urban intellectuals turned to creating neologisms and other calques based on French to make up for what they lacked. Overwhelmingly, as we have seen, provincial intellectuals and their allies in the capital resisted this trend. They advocated not for inventing or importing new terms but for drawing on the bank of ‘authentic’ Armenian terms from provincial speech. As many sympathetic urban writers noted, they had little knowledge of this “inexhaustible mine” of words and were surprised to learn of their existence.<sup>117</sup> It was this lack of awareness and disconnection from ‘authentic’ Armenian life, some argued, that had led urban writers to forge neologisms and Gallicisms in the first place when there were, in fact, synonyms developed in direct contact with

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<sup>114</sup> Գարեգին Սրուանձտեանց, *Մանանայ* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Ե. Մ. Տնտեսեան, 1876), 405.

<sup>115</sup> Այվազեան, *Բառանոց*, 2 and Սրուանձտեանց, *Մանանայ*, 403. For a list of plant names collected in and around Trabzon, for example, see “Հայրուսակ,” *Բազմալէպ* 55, no. 6 (1897): 288-290. This list was submitted as a proposed addendum to the tome of plant names entitled *Հայրուսակ*, published in 1895.

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, Ռուբէն Որբերեան, “Լեզուի խնդիրը,” *Արեւելեան մամուլ* 24, no. 8 (1894): 250.

<sup>117</sup> Գառնիկ Ֆնտրլեան, “Արեւմտեան աշխարհաբարին ընթացքը դարուս մէջ,” part 2, *Մասիս* 41, no. 3968 (1892): 210 and Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան, *Եւրոպայի հայոց զաւարտարարատը* (Vienna: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1899), 2.

“the breath of the Armenian people” to be used.<sup>118</sup> Word lists were an attempt to reveal the “jewels” of this native mine that had been hidden from the view of urbanites and present them as more authentic alternatives to the “artificial” or “foreign” materials in circulation.<sup>119</sup> Why rely on neologisms and Gallicisms, they argued, when there were native, Armenian words that could be used in their stead?

Authenticity of language was a particular concern beginning in the 1880s and 1890s as Modern Armenian began to be aestheticized and used more readily as a language of literary expression.<sup>120</sup> Concern was fueled by an anxiety over creating an essential marker of nationhood in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: a national literature. Discussions of the direction and content of this national literature dovetailed with general discussions of authenticity and often centered on the role of the provincial writer and “folk” material.<sup>121</sup> Many urban writers, so the thinking went, had grown too Europeanized not only in the themes they broached in their literary pieces but also in language they used to write them.<sup>122</sup> In this cultural climate, there was a fear that “slavishly” mimicking French literary tastes and trends as urban writers had done would weaken

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<sup>118</sup> Այվազեան, *Բառանոց*, Է and Վարուժան, “Հայ լեզուի խնդիրը,” 706. Here Varoujan considers poetic language to be the richest source of provincial words.

<sup>119</sup> Գազանճեան, *Եւրոկիոյ հայոց գաւառաբարբառը*, 2-3.

<sup>120</sup> For more on the development of Modern Armenian as a language of literature, see Manoukian, “Literary Translation and the Expansion of the Ottoman Armenian Reading Public,” 128-171. It is not often appreciated that literary expression in a non-classical form of Armenian in the Ottoman Empire had a history of less than fifty years. Even by 1885, Modern Armenian literature, by one estimate, was considered to be in “an embryonic state.” Եղիազար Մուրատեան, *Ծաղիկ արդի հայ մատենագրութեան* (Constantinople: Ի տպարանի Մէնուայր ախպար լրագրոց, 1885), Ը.

<sup>121</sup> See S. Peter Cowe, “Tlgadintsi as Ideologue of the Regional Movement in Armenian Literature,” *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 12 (2001-2003): 31-42 and Beledian, “From Image to Loss,” 239-272.

<sup>122</sup> Ardashes Haroutiunian (1873-1915) is one of the most vocal proponents of a “literature of tomorrow” (վաղուան գրականութիւն) that would be led by provincial writers and strive to endow Armenian literature with authenticity, breaking the “addiction to the foreign” (օտարամոլութիւն) that he saw as pervasive in Armenian literary circles in the capital around the turn of the century. See Beledian, “From Image to Loss,” 248-261.

the national community; in reaction, we find a growing push to turn inward and cultivate a “provincial literature” (զաւասական գրականութիւն) that found inspiration in the “distinct and real [հսկատիպ] qualities of our nationality [ազգութիւն]” and represented the “most noble and most authentic [հարազատ] child of the Armenian mind.”<sup>123</sup> How could Ottoman Armenians develop an authentic national literature, many argued, if the modern print language stifled the authentic voice of the people and was overrun with ‘inauthentic’ forms?<sup>124</sup> How could a national literature come into being when the modern print language was out of touch with the “psychology” (հոգեբանութիւն) of the provinces and was missing words to describe it?<sup>125</sup> How could the modern print language as a medium for literary expression be distanced from “foreign” forms and be given a “pure, national, unique and particular character”?<sup>126</sup>

Many writers wrestled with these questions until the outbreak of World War I and the end of Ottoman Armenian life.<sup>127</sup> To produce a national literature, as the logic went, meant to “recognize the soul of the nation [ցեղին հոգին],” linguistically and otherwise.<sup>128</sup> Those in favor of this perspective framed provincial speech as the ultimate source of enrichment for Armenian

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<sup>123</sup> For a lucid and forceful expression of this fear, Կ. [Արտաշէս Յարութիւնեան], “Ինքնամփոփում,” *Բիւրասկն* 16, no. 47-48 (1898): 823.

<sup>124</sup> Գազանճեան, “Աղաւաղեալ բառեր,” part 2, 199.

<sup>125</sup> Վարուժան, “Հայ լեզուի խնդիրը,” 710.

<sup>126</sup> Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան, “Դիտողութիւններ ժողովրդային բառերու նկատմամբ,” *Արեւելեան մամուլ* 27, no. 17 (1897): 587-588.

<sup>127</sup> In the 1910s, we find writers wrestling with these questions most notably in the newspapers *Ազատամարտ* in 1911 and *Մեհեան* in 1914. See Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, 124-131, 268-270 and Nichanian, *Ages et usages*, 354-369, 407-410.

<sup>128</sup> Արշակ Չօպանեան, preface to Էօրսիւզեան, “Գաւառի կեանքէն,” 580.

literature.<sup>129</sup> In hopes of asserting this distinct literary identity, many were also quick to emphasize that provincial speech contained within it words that were so expressive, so tied to the Armenian “national character” and so rooted in “our history, our customs, our habits” that not even European languages had synonyms for them.<sup>130</sup> In this way, they were attempting to find a foothold for provincial words, aestheticize (գրականացնել) them by using them in print and put them into wider use through literature.<sup>131</sup> But were these hopes for provincial words realized?

### **Dictionaries for the New Standard**

To answer this question, we must examine the dictionaries published around this time and understand the circumstances in which they were produced. One extremely significant but largely unarticulated development of this period was the creation of two standards for Modern Armenian: Eastern Armenian as the written standard for Armenians in the Russian and Persian Empires (արևելեկան հայերէն) and Western Armenian (արեւմտեան հայերէն) as the written standard for Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>132</sup> These forms had been in use as print languages for decades, but it is only in the 1890s that we start to see the conceptualization of Modern Armenian as having two standards, the naming of these branches Eastern and Western and an explosion of dictionaries and grammar books for the two variants.<sup>133</sup> We can attribute this recognition and creation of a new

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<sup>129</sup> Յ. Գ. [Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան], “Ժողովրդային լեզու,” *Մասիս* 45, no. 93 (1897): 1 and Գազանճեան, *Եւրոկիոյ հայոց գաւառաբարբառը*, 3-4.

<sup>130</sup> Յ. Գ. [Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան], “Ժողովրդային լեզու,” 1.

<sup>131</sup> The term գրականացնել can be understood as “to use in writing,” “to make literary” and “to aestheticize.”

<sup>132</sup> The Eastern and Western Armenian designations do appear in the mid-nineteenth century in the writings of American Protestant missionaries, who published in the Ottoman and Russian Empires and required terms to distinguish between the emerging print languages. Until the 1890s, these terms were, however, confined to their English-language writings and equivalents were not used in Armenian. For an early use of these terms, H. G. O. Dwight, *Christianity in Turkey: A Narrative of the Protestant Reformation in the Armenian Church* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1854), vi.

<sup>133</sup> It was more common for *grammarians* to specify the modern variant they were codifying, though rarely in their titles. Dictionaries in the Ottoman period consistently relied on terms like Modern Armenian (արդի հայերէն),

term for the language to greater contact between Armenians in the Russian, Persian and the Ottoman Empires, greater awareness of their respective print languages and greater recognition of the differences between them. As we saw in the previous chapter, codification began only once Classical Armenian was removed as a serious contender for the national print language in the 1890s.<sup>134</sup> The widespread acceptance that Modern Armenian was there to stay opened the floodgates for the production of dictionaries and grammars, which were no longer only composed in opposition to the classical language but rather to those being produced in the Russian Empire for the Eastern standard.<sup>135</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, national movements around the world turned their focus to lexicography and worked to create comprehensive monolingual dictionaries for their ‘national’ languages.<sup>136</sup> Lexicography was not new to the nineteenth century, but the dictionaries from this period, particularly in Europe, differed from those published in earlier periods. Aspiring to include words from all domains of life, from the domestic and artistic to the scientific and political, they were known for “their massive scale, their descriptive and historical

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vernacular (աշխարհիկ/աշխարհաբար) or simply Armenian (հայերէն) in their titles and did not explicitly distinguish between the Eastern and Western variants. It is important to emphasize that the term Western Armenian (արեւմտեան հայերէն) does not predominate or replace the terms above and that today’s term for Western Armenian (արեւմտահայերէն) becomes widespread only in diaspora.

<sup>134</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, before this period, spoken languages were not considered grammatical and thus the word grammar, քերականութիւն, was reserved exclusively for the classical language. By the late 1890s, we see classical grammar books calling themselves as such (գրաբար քերականութիւն) and thus acknowledging the legitimacy of a Modern Armenian grammar.

<sup>135</sup> For an early instance of the conceptualization of a modern *Western* Armenian in Armenian-language sources, see Հ. Յ. Թուխիկեան, “Մատենախօսական. Բիւզանդ Մ. Պօզանեան,” Հանդէս ամսօրեայ 6, no. 5 (1892): 148, footnote 1. Some Ottoman Armenian intellectuals saw the existence of two modern standards as a source of national disunity and criticized Russian Armenian intellectuals for the direct borrowings from German, Georgian, Russian and French that many used in their writing. See, for example, Արշակ Չօպանեան, “Հայ լեզուի խնդիրը,” Ազատամարտ 1, no. 48 (1911): 756; Հրանտ Մամուրեան, “Մուրճ եւ իր լեզուն,” Արեւելեան մամուլ 23, no. 5 (1893): 226-227; and “Ազգային վիճակ. լեզու,” Արեւելեան մամուլ 29, no. 7 (1899): 263.

<sup>136</sup> See Sarah Ogilvie and Gabriella Safran, eds., *The Whole World in a Book: Dictionaries in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

method, and their collaborative working approaches.”<sup>137</sup> It is undoubtedly with an awareness of the role of lexicography in other contemporaneous national projects that we see the contest committee and other intellectuals around the turn of the century call for the creation of a comprehensive monolingual Modern Armenian dictionary for the Armenian national community within the Ottoman Empire.

Since the mid-eighteenth century, the Mekhitarist Congregations in Venice and Vienna had put a selection of monolingual Classical Armenian dictionaries at the disposal of Armenian readers.<sup>138</sup> Their classical dictionaries, like those for classical languages and emerging European vernaculars of their time, did not all aim to be comprehensive; instead, they “endeavored to present a selection of exemplary linguistic forms on the basis of canonical authors from the preceding centuries that gave direction regarding good language use.”<sup>139</sup> By the late nineteenth century, this approach to lexicography was outdated. So too was the focus on classical languages. Instead, the idea that the contemporary usage of different segments of the population should be represented in dictionaries began to gain traction and lexicographers increasingly turned to non-textual sources in the compilation of their dictionaries.<sup>140</sup> While lexicographers of Classical Armenian dictionaries had often included words from the spoken Armenian of Constantinople as glosses in their

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<sup>137</sup> Sarah Ogilvie, “A Nineteenth-Century Garment Throughout: Description, Collaboration, and Thorough Coverage in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1884-1928),” in *The Whole World in a Book: Dictionaries in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Sarah Ogilvie and Gabriella Safran (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 67.

<sup>138</sup> For references to these dictionaries and others, see Gabriella Uluhogian, *Bibliography of Armenian Dictionaries* (Bologna: Patron Editore, 1987).

<sup>139</sup> Rufus H. Gouws, Wolfgang Schweickard and Herbert Ernst Wiegand, “Lexicography through the Ages: From the Early Beginnings to the Electronic Age,” in *Dictionaries: An International Encyclopedia of Lexicography*, supplementary volume, eds. Rufus H. Gouws, Ulrich Heid, Wolfgang Schweickard, et al. (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 2. A quasi-exception is the *Նոր բառգիրք հայկազգեսն լեզուի* (1836-1837), which sought to include all Armenian words used in writing until the thirteenth century and was not limited to the ‘exemplary.’

<sup>140</sup> Gouws, Schweickard and Weigand, “Lexicography through the Ages,” 2-3.

*definitions* to aid in comprehension, this period marks the first time when many—though not all—of these words were not only no longer disparaged as “vulgar” (նամկօրէն or նամիկ) but listed as the headwords and valorized like never before as part of a modern standard.<sup>141</sup>

Modern Armenian lexicography in the Ottoman Empire boomed in the 1890s and early 1900s and resulted in dozens of polyglot and bilingual learner’s dictionaries.<sup>142</sup> As we saw in the previous chapters, since the 1840s, the dictionary had been seen as a prime marker of national progress and periodic calls for the codification of the modern language resounded in the press. Only once the opposing force of Classical Armenian had been neutralized, however, did this codification gain momentum. No longer perceived as a corrupted offshoot of Classical Armenian, Modern Armenian was now a linguistic destination in its own right not merely a bridge to Classical Armenian. During this period, dictionaries into and out of Modern Armenian, French, Turkish and English were published with the most frequency, reflecting the social need for these languages among Ottoman Armenians. Compiling these bilingual dictionaries also exposed for lexicographers the gaps in Modern Armenian and led to many of the neologisms and Gallicisms against which provincial intellectuals protested.<sup>143</sup>

While bilingual dictionaries abounded, only one monolingual dictionary of Modern Armenian was published in Ottoman period. It came from the pen of Constantinople-born

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<sup>141</sup> To be clear, the Turkish borrowings used in the spoken Armenian of Constantinople were categorically excluded but many of its non-classical Armenian words were integrated into the standard. For example, Ambroise Calfa considered սկոյ a “vulgar” word for *tooth* in his 1861 dictionary. Ambroise Calfa, *Dictionnaire arménien-français et français-arménien* (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette, 1861), v. By the 1890s, սկոյ appeared in dictionaries as the standard word for *tooth*.

<sup>142</sup> For citations for all the bilingual and polyglot dictionaries published during this period, see Uluhogian, *Bibliography of Armenian Dictionaries*, 33-69 passim.

<sup>143</sup> For one such account, see Ասատուր, *Դիւստորներնէր*, 193-194. For comments on the difficulty of creating bilingual dictionaries for an emerging standard, see the unpaginated letters from fellow writers and lexicographers printed at the start of Պետրոս Չէքի Կարապետեան, *Մեծ բարասրսն հայերէնէ օսմաներէն* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Վ. Է. Հ. Տէր-Ներսէսեան, 1907).

lexicographer, textbook writer and Armenian-language teacher Simon Kapamajian (c. 1863-c. 1940), who published his *Նոր բառագիրք հայերէն լեզուի* (New Dictionary of the Armenian Language) in 1910.<sup>144</sup> “In the past decade,” he wrote in his preface, “cries of protests have risen from everywhere about the pressing need for a new dictionary...The lack of an Armenian dictionary has been a very sad reality. The present dictionary is an attempt to fill that gap.”<sup>145</sup> In selecting his corpus of words, Kapamajian noted relying on the work of the lexicographers of recent bilingual dictionaries, who together had a tremendous amount of power in determining, codifying and setting the standard lexicon for Western Armenian. Here we see that it was once again urban intellectuals—firmly ensconced in their positions of power as gatekeepers of the standard language—who did the work of “winnowing and disciplining the national cultural wealth” found in the wordlists of provincial intellectuals and made largely arbitrary decisions about what would enter the standard language via dictionaries and what would be barred from it.<sup>146</sup>

Certain urban and provincial intellectuals had high hopes in the 1890s and early 1900s that provincial words would be used to create an ‘authentic’ Western Armenian dictionary and were sometimes collected with the perusal of lexicographers in mind.<sup>147</sup> These words were endowed with the power to aestheticize the emerging standard without compromising its ‘authenticity’ and

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<sup>144</sup> A version of this dictionary won the contest referenced at the start of the chapter in 1905 for the Classical Armenian category, though, as a press release for the contest noted, it also served the modern written language by adding more than 5000 neologisms and provincial words to “the provisions of Classical Armenian.” “Իզմիրեանց յանձնաժողովին մրցանակարաշխութիւնը,” 2.

<sup>145</sup> Մինն Գարամանեան, *Նոր բառագիրք հայերէն լեզուի պատկերասրտ* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Ռ. Սազանեան, 1910), 2. These comments about the absence of a monolingual modern dictionary make it clear that Kapamajian did not consider his pocket-size dictionary with the same title, published in 1892, as having fit the bill.

<sup>146</sup> Noyes, “The Social Base of Folklore,” 20.

<sup>147</sup> See, for example, Մկրտիչեան, “Հայ բառարանի մը պէտքը,” 117 and Ս. Դ. [Սմբատ Դաւթեան], “Այն ժամանակ «Բիւրակն» չիկար,” 827-828.

to draw it closer to the “language of the people.”<sup>148</sup> Attempting to harness the clout of antiquity, some writers even drew parallels—factual, fictional or somewhere in between—to the cultivation of Classical Armenian in the fifth century during which time, they argued, intellectuals “borrowed such beautiful words and styles from different provincial dialects” to form the classical lexicon.<sup>149</sup> Why not follow the same trajectory in the modern day, they argued, to make an even richer modern standard? It could be achieved through an urban and provincial collaboration, some insisted, to create a standard that intellectuals from Constantinople would sketch and that intellectuals from the provinces would enrich.<sup>150</sup> In the end, although the turn to the folk coincided with a formative period in the codification of Western Armenian and had the potential to leave an indelible mark on the standard, these arguments in favor of the utility of provincial speech and the intellectual labor spent amassing thousands upon thousands of words made very little impact on the bilingual and monolingual dictionaries produced in the 1890s and 1900s.

To begin to understand the causes of this limited impact, it is critical to remember that lexicography is an ideologically driven practice. “Dictionaries are not,” as Nils Langer and Agnete Nesse note, “neutrally compiled lists of all existing words but, rather, subjective accounts of what ought to be part of a particular language.”<sup>151</sup> In particular, they are subjective accounts of what *certain people think* ought to be part of a particular standard language and reflect the attitudes of

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<sup>148</sup> Մ. Ս. Գաբրիելյան, *Այնպիսի գաղափարաբարձրը եւ արդի հայերէն լեզուն* (Vienna: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1912), 3-4 and Գազանճեան, “Աղաւաղեալ բառեր,” part 2, 199.

<sup>149</sup> Աճեմեան, *Նոր քերականութիւն հայերէն աշխարհաբար լեզուի*, 8.

<sup>150</sup> Չօպանեան, preface to Էօքսիւզեան, “Գաւառի կեանքէն,” 580.

<sup>151</sup> Langer and Nesse, “Linguistic Purism,” 613.

only certain—often socially powerful—subsets of society.<sup>152</sup> Dictionaries are, in other words, snapshots of their historical moment and profoundly human compilations of the likes, dislikes, attitudes and assumptions of their creators and cultural ethos in which they lived.<sup>153</sup> In the case of the Western Armenian standard, lexicography was overwhelmingly dominated by urban intellectuals who, while commonly sympathetic to the turn toward the folk, had little incentive or motivation to radically alter the written status quo that had been functional for more than a century.

The words that made up the first Modern Armenian dictionaries do not appear very different at first glance from those that make up Classical Armenian dictionaries. When we look closer, however, we see a standard that is indeed, as one writer described it, an amalgam of “our dead and living languages.”<sup>154</sup> Alongside classical words, we find the inclusion of words from urban educated speech, neologisms and, in a limited number of cases, clearly marked words from provincial speech. Despite the theoretical valorization of speech, both urban and rural, the Turkish and other modern borrowings that abounded in spoken language continued to occupy a small place in the standard lexicon, which remains overwhelmingly purist to this day.<sup>155</sup> While all were purist, lexicographers certainly varied in their preferences, with some often drawing more heavily on

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<sup>152</sup> Henry Kahane and Renée Kahane, “The Dictionary as Ideology: Sixteen Case Studies,” in *History, Languages, and Lexicographers*, ed. Ladislav Zgusta (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1992), 20.

<sup>153</sup> Lynda Mugglestone, *Dictionaries: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), xii. Ottoman imperial anxieties about Armenian separatism and the resulting censorship had an impact on the words that could be included in Armenian-language dictionaries in the 1890s and early 1900s. For example, when one lexicographer received the proofs for his French-Armenian dictionary back from the censor, words like *democracy*, *liberation*, *regicide*, *socialism* and *tyranny*, among others, had all been removed and certain definitions had been modified to the point of incomprehensibility. See Մեսրոպ Նուպարեան, “Վերյուշումներ,” *Շանթ* 3, no. 40 (1913): 247-248. This state intervention should be kept in mind when studying dictionaries published during this period.

<sup>154</sup> Letter from Teotig published in *Կարապետեան, Մեծ բառարան հայերէնէ օսմաներէն*, [46].

<sup>155</sup> While standard Western Armenian was very much closed to direct vernacular borrowings from Turkish, a few literary borrowings from European languages did manage to slip through the cracks, including թեյ (tea), հորիզոն (horizon) and հերոս (hero). Աճառյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2, 580-581.

neologisms than others. One lexicographer, for example, used the following ranking system when compiling his French to Modern Armenian dictionary.<sup>156</sup> (1) Use Classical Armenian words attested in the forebear canon as the basis.<sup>157</sup> Then, (2) use “low” (սոսնրին) Armenian words attested in sources written between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries; (3) Use words from contemporary speech, urban and provincial.<sup>158</sup> (4) Use neologisms already in written use.<sup>159</sup> (5) Coin neologisms.<sup>160</sup> While these rankings are not universal, they do give us a sense of the kinds of materials lexicographers had at their disposal and how personal attitudes could influence their inclusion in or exclusion from the standard via dictionaries. They also show us how archaizing, elitist and ethnographic purism—the orientations of the preceding century—each made their mark on the standard lexicon.

In what domains do we see words from provincial speech used in the dictionaries of this period? To be clear, there was never any wholesale adoption of provincial words into the standard lexicon. Instead, we see lexicographers select provincial words only in the event of a gap in written

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<sup>156</sup> Նուպարեան, “Յայտարարութիւն բառարան ֆրանսերէնէ հայ-աշխարհիկ,” 523-525.

<sup>157</sup> These include both classical words that retained their meaning and those that took on new meanings, including պաղպաղակ (old: *crystal*; new: *ice cream*), լուսանկար (old: *luminous*; new: *photograph*) and անսիպ (old: *shapeless*; new: *unpublished*). For others, see Աճառյան, *Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն*, vol. 2, 481-482; Սիրունի, *Պոլիս եւ իր դերը*, vol. 4, 24; and Հրանտ Ն. Թորոսեան, *Արեւմտահայ աշխարհաբարի ծագումը եւ զարգացումը* (Boston: Տպագրութիւն «Պայքար»ի, 1961), 81-82.

<sup>158</sup> Provincial words were often—though not always—marked in dictionaries with a *q.* for գաւառական (provincial), while words from urban speech were not marked. Taken together, these words continue to constitute the distinguishing features between the Eastern and Western Armenian standard lexicons. As some contemporaneous critics noted, there was little rhyme or reason as to why certain words entered the standard from educated spoken language (e.g., ալ rather than այլ; ըլլալ rather than եղանի; իյնալ rather than անկանի, etc.) while others were replaced with or drawn closer to classical forms rarely heard aloud (e.g., եղբայր rather than ախպար; ձիւն rather than ձուն; մայր rather than մար, etc.). Գազանճեան, “Աղաւաղեալ բառեր,” part 2, 198-199.

<sup>159</sup> Neologisms were commonly marked in dictionaries with an asterisk and were coined mostly for scientific, technical and cultural concepts or items, typically from abroad (e.g., թթուածին for oxygen, ճենապակի for chinaware, etc.).

<sup>160</sup> Նուպարեան, “Յայտարարութիւն բառարան ֆրանսերէնէ հայ-աշխարհիկ,” 524-525. In this dictionary, for example, the lexicographer coined between 2,000-3,000 neologisms, though not all of them endured.

or urban spoken usage, especially when a Turkish borrowing predominated in the spoken Armenian of Constantinople for which there was no classical equivalent.<sup>161</sup> Given the long literary tradition of Classical Armenian and the century of use of the Constantinople variety of Armenian as the basis of a print-language, these gaps were not overly abundant. The provincial words included in the standard were thus extremely specialized and uncommon, often disconnected from urban life, and related to agriculture, rural domestic life, botany, minerals, and geography.<sup>162</sup> Despite the framing of provincial wordlists as “timber” for Modern Armenian dictionaries and the labor undertaken on that premise, not a single lexicographer cites drawing on them in the compilation of their dictionaries. If they indeed included provincial words, these lexicographers write of collecting them themselves, relying on terms included in the work of earlier lexicographers or asking specific friends to send them.<sup>163</sup> Contrary to what certain provincial intellectuals and their urban allies had hoped, these terms rarely, if ever, replaced classical terms, neologisms or words from urban spoken usage already in circulation in print.<sup>164</sup> Core vocabulary, in other words,

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<sup>161</sup> For example, the Turkish word for tomato, *domates*, was in common parlance among Armenians in Constantinople and was replaced in the standard by յոլիկ (tomato), a word from Agn (Kemaliye) and Izmit. See Աճառեան, *Հայերէն զուստակսն բառարան*, 431. Dictionaries also sometimes included the word նսկխնձոր for tomato, a calque on the Italian *pomodoro*.

<sup>162</sup> In Kapamajian’s dictionary, we find, for example, the following provincial words: զօլ (cut pieces of leather used to make a certain kind of shoe); յուսայ (a place for storing hay in the winter); հուլ (a piece of iron put in the hole of an axe for stability); and տել (leafy tree branches). For commentary by lexicographers on their use of provincial words, see Նորայր Ն. Բիւզանդացի, “Բառագիրք գաղղիերէն-հայերէն-տաճկերէն,” 64 and V. H. Hagopian, *A Dictionary English-Armenian* (Constantinople: Servitchen Press, 1892), Բ.

<sup>163</sup> Lexicographers often cite their sources, whether they be earlier dictionaries or individual informants. See, for example, Աճառեան, *Հայերէն զուստակսն բառարան*, 18; Գաբամանեան, *Նոր բառագիրք հայերէն լեզուի*, 2; and Եղիա Տէմիրճիպաշեան, *Բառարան ֆրանսերէնէ-հայերէն* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Գ. Պաղտատյեան, 1896), Բ.

<sup>164</sup> There did, however, emerge among a certain set of urban intellectuals an unprecedented backlash against Classical Armenian and a sense that the modern standard was “intoxicated” by it. In the end, however, little was done to remove classical influence and the classical lexicon remained the foundation of the Western Armenian standard lexicon. For an expression of this backlash, see, for example, Ֆնտրլեան “Արեւմտեան աշխարհաբարին ընթացքը դարուս մէջ,” part 3, 228.

remained the same and in their view just as ‘inauthentic’ as before. Their specialized domains meant that, while these terms were indeed listed in dictionaries and “officially” in the standard language, they were rarely *used* and made little mark on common written usage. This phenomenon helps explain why the words found in dictionaries c. 1910 are nearly identical to those used in the print language c. 1840.

### **Lip-Service to Provincial Speech**

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was not uncommon around the world, and even within the Ottoman Empire, for popular, uneducated usage to be taken as the basis of a modern standard language.<sup>165</sup> As much as urban intellectuals may have agreed in theory with the idea that, as one noted in 1892, “it is only the people [ժողովուրդ] who forge the language on the anvil of everyday life,” this is not what we see in practice.<sup>166</sup> We can attribute this disconnect to three social factors: continued prejudice toward the folk among urban elites, the impracticality of change to the print language and the fear of provincial “impurities.”

Much ideological labor had been carried out to try to put provincial dialects on equal footing with the classical language and urban speech and to reframe the uneducated as the only true “authors and lords of the language.”<sup>167</sup> But a standard language represents, before all else, “the codified wishes of the socially dominant,” who continued to be ambivalent about the power

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<sup>165</sup> On this demotic movement among Greek-speakers and Turkish-speakers, see Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece*, 203-240 and Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism*, 56-80. Ottoman Armenian intellectuals were aware of these linguistic movements. See, for example, Մուշեղ Վարդապետ, “Ժողովուրդին լեզուով,” *Մասիս* 50, no. 44 (1901): 691-693 and Ռուբին Որբերեան, “Օսմանեան գրականութիւն. թուրքերէնը պարզել,” *Արևելեան մամուլ* 29, no. 11 (1899): 427-430.

<sup>166</sup> Գրիգոր Զօհրապ, “Մասիս-ի խմբագրութիւնը...,” *Մասիս* 41, no. 3963 (1892): 132.

<sup>167</sup> Արմենակ Ինճեւեան, “Պոլիսի այսօրուան աշխարհաբարը,” *Մասիս* 55, no. 42 (1907): 853.

the uneducated classes should hold in the construction of national culture.<sup>168</sup> “The national significance ascribed to selected representations of folk culture,” as one folklore scholar has put it, “did not mean that the elite would reject their education-based culture for the culture of the uneducated. The educated elite remained distinct from the ‘people’ but identified with the people in the project for a national language and culture.”<sup>169</sup> While there may have been a theoretical embrace of the importance of the folk on the part of the urban elite, in the end there were still lingering prejudices that prevented a wholehearted embrace. It is this ambivalence and unease that we see in the limited impact of provincial speech on the construction of the standard lexicon, a reflection—as all dictionaries are—of the “social and cultural assumptions of the time in which they are written.”<sup>170</sup> This tension is not unique. In the global fascination with the folk, there was often a “bourgeois discomfort at identifying...with folk heritage” and an intransigence among urban elites to cede power to and do away with their disdain for “the lower orders.”<sup>171</sup>

This phenomenon is precisely what we see among the Ottoman Armenian urban elite caught between a global intellectual movement that glorified folk culture and the momentum of decades of deriding it as vulgar and uncivilized. This disdain, in the words of one provincial intellectual writing in 1901, “remained deeply ingrained in the minds of the majority of our old writers and has awoken in them infinite scorn and something like disgust toward modern spoken Armenian [արդի ռամկոթէն հայերէն] and its provincial dialects.”<sup>172</sup> This class-based prejudice

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<sup>168</sup> John Edwards, *Multilingualism* (London: Routledge, 1994), 7.

<sup>169</sup> Pertti Anttonen, “Oral Traditions and the Making of the Finnish Nation,” in *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 340.

<sup>170</sup> Mugglestone, *Dictionaries*, xii.

<sup>171</sup> Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*, 47.

<sup>172</sup> Գազանճեան, “Աղաւաղեալ բառեր,” part 1, 180.

likely renewed with each passing year as more and more migrants from the provinces settled in urban centers and, often impoverished, occupied some of the lowest rungs of society.<sup>173</sup> While the turn toward the folk attempted to shine a spotlight on the benefits of illiteracy in preserving linguistic “treasures,” doing away with the long-standing negative associations with “ignorance” and valorizing the folk was not a quick or easy transformation and ultimately was not universal within the urban elite where negative perceptions, now expressed a bit more delicately than in decades past, continued to reign. Maintaining established power structures, linguistic preferences continued to be for the “educated and cultivated language of the literate class [գրական դասուն կիրթ եւ մշակեալ լեզուն],” as one grammarian put it, and the urban intelligentsia, including lexicographers, made few compromises to inscribe a valorization of the folk into the standard language.<sup>174</sup> Until the end of the Ottoman period, provincial intellectuals and their urban allies continued to insist that, although Modern Armenian had finally been “freed from the yoke of Classical Armenian and was preceding and developing in a rational direction” sufficient room was still not being given to the “original dialect elements [բարբառային բնիկ սարր].”<sup>175</sup> The language of the urban writer, thus, prevailed.

The length of time that the Constantinople variety of Armenian had been used as the basis of the print language was also a factor in the maintenance of the norm and the exclusion of provincial words from the Western Armenian standard. With such a long history, the print-

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<sup>173</sup> It is important to remember that lexicographers shared the urban landscape with speakers of provincial dialects, who worked as porters and other laborers in neighborhoods across the capital in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On these porters, see Vazken Khatchig Davidian, “The Figure of the *Bantoukhd Hamal* of Constantinople: Late Nineteenth-Century Representations of Migrant Workers from Ottoman Armenian” (Ph.D. dissertation, Birkbeck College, University of London, 2019), 59-65.

<sup>174</sup> Բիւզանդ Մ. Պօզանեան, *Տեսական եւ գործնական քերականություն հայերէն աշխարհաբար լեզուի* (Constantinople: Տպագրութիւն Ն. Ճ. Արամեան, 1898), [3].

<sup>175</sup> Յ. Գ. [Յովհաննէս Գազանեան], “Լեզուական հարցին շուրջ,” *Ազատամարտ* 2, no. 13 (1911): 1038.

language largely had what it needed already. This is illustrative more of a reticence to change than antipathy toward the folk. Among all intellectuals, there was an acceptance of the fact that “the Ottoman Armenian [Թրքահայ] has only one written language: the written vernacular of Constantinople [Պոլսոյ գրական աշխարհաբար],” we read in 1911.<sup>176</sup> With a critical mass of intellectuals in urban centers, an informal norm had been established and in circulation throughout the Empire. Almost a century into its use as a print language, it would have been atypical—though not entirely impossible—to see such a dramatic change in written norms take place. As sociolinguists have noted, “if a recognized elite already exists with a characteristic variety of language, their norm will almost inevitably prevail.”<sup>177</sup> While provincial intellectuals do indeed emerge during this period, Constantinople was still the center of Ottoman Armenian intellectual life and urban intellectuals reaped the benefits of their predecessors having set the course for the standard, continuing their hegemony and coasting with the momentum of historical precedent. This urban norm, disconnected from provincial speech, continued to dominate not because it was superior but, quite simply, because the Mekhitarists happened to have chosen it as the basis for their print-language more than a century earlier, certainly with no sense that they were setting the groundwork for a standard language.

Another Mekhitarist-inaugurated preoccupation overshadowed all discussions of provincial words during this time and contributed to a reticence to include them in the Modern Armenian standard: purity. Purity and authenticity went hand in hand for urban intellectuals, including lexicographers. Many expressed concerns about the “purity” of words found in

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<sup>176</sup> Գագիկ Օզանեան, “Հայ գրական լեզուի խնդիրը,” *Ազատամարտ* 1, no. 41 (1911): 644.

<sup>177</sup> Einar Haugen, *Language Conflict and Language Planning: The Case of Modern Norwegian* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 18.

provincial dialects and feared that, in the words of one writer, “fake jewels exist alongside exquisite ones.”<sup>178</sup> As we have seen, varieties of Armenian spoken outside the capital were initially conceptualized as perfectly pure specimens of ancient language, unspoiled by foreign influence. But upon closer examination, it became clear that provincial dialects were not air-tight repositories of ancient Armenian from which to extract ‘pure’ Armenian words but rather affected by language contact over the centuries just like all other language varieties and had indeed been “nourished by many foreign and vulgar elements [օսարսնի եւ զոնհիկ սարր].”<sup>179</sup> Debates over the etymologies of words documented in glossaries raged in the press. These debates often ended in condemning certain words as Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish or Persian, and thus—in their thinking—impure.<sup>180</sup> This fact shattered the veneer of the folk and raised questions about whether provincial speech was indeed the ‘treasury’ of ‘authentic’ Armenian it had been framed and about whether provincial intellectuals were in fact “accepting and celebrating false gems.”<sup>181</sup> It also raised questions about whether the addition of these words would contaminate the standard. Some writers proposed thinking of dialects like a mine and called on people to, using the metaphor of the miner, to “purify ore from foreign materials and extract pure metal.”<sup>182</sup> There was a sense that dialects needed to be closely studied and etymologies verified before they could be considered for the standard.<sup>183</sup> Determining etymologies, however, with confidence was a nearly insurmountable task

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<sup>178</sup> “Ազգային վիճակ. լեզու,” 261, footnote 1.

<sup>179</sup> Յ. Գ. [Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան], “Ժողովրդային լեզու,” 1 and “Ազգային վիճակ. լեզու,” 259.

<sup>180</sup> Some word collectors attempted etymological work themselves and cordoned off words they suspected were “foreign” in separate parts of their word lists. See, for example, Այվազեան, *Բառսանոյշ*, 40-42.

<sup>181</sup> “Ազգային վիճակ. լեզու,” 259.

<sup>182</sup> Յ. Գ. [Յովհաննէս Գազանճեան], “Ժողովրդային լեզու,” 1.

<sup>183</sup> Աճառեան, “Բարբառախօսութեան օգուտները,” 77 and Գազանճեան, “Դիտողութիւններ ժողովրդային բառերու նկատմամբ,” 590-591.

to this largely untrained group of intellectuals and lexicographers.<sup>184</sup> In the end, anxieties and suspicions about hidden impurities, especially about “words dressed in Armenian clothes,” likely deterred lexicographers from drawing on words from provincial speech in the making of the Western Armenian standard.<sup>185</sup> After the decades of work undertaken to purify the Constantinople variety of Armenian, it was too risky to potentially introduce new ‘contaminants’ from other varieties of the language.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the impact of the global turn toward the folk on Ottoman Armenian culture and examined its impact on the development of ethnographic purism. I also shined a spotlight on a new group of provincial intellectuals on the margins of power, who believed strongly in drawing the modern language closer to the dozens of varieties spoken across the Ottoman Empire. I chronicled their work to collect ‘authentic’ words in wordlists as possible resources for the emerging standard in hopes of replacing inauthentic urban elements, like neologisms and Gallicisms. I ended by examining the impact of this movement on the first dictionaries of Western Armenian and determined that its impact was limited to specialized terminology that filled gaps in classical and urban spoken usage. Despite boisterous calls to integrate words from provincial dialects, the Classical Armenian words that had been used in the print language throughout the nineteenth century—remnants of the once predominant language attitude that prized the classical over the spoken—were retained because of continued urban

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<sup>184</sup> Among European philologists, determining the origins of lexical borrowings in Classical Armenian was the subject of multiple scholarly investigations during this period. It is unclear the extent to which amateur philologists were aware of these scholarly debates or if they had read the translations of some of these studies undertaken by the Viennese Mekhitarist monk, Hagovpos Dashian. See, most notably, a compilation of studies in translation on Syriac, Arabic and Greek borrowings by Heinrich Hübschmann and Carl Brockelmann in *Ուսումնասիրությունք հայերէնի փոխառեալ բառից*, trans. Յակովբոս Տաշեան (Vienna: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1894).

<sup>185</sup> “Իզմիրեանց յանձնաժողովին մրցանակաբաշխութիւնը,” 2.

prejudices, long-standing use and fears of impurity. We will now turn to the epilogue in which we will briefly explore the post-Ottoman expansion of the Western Armenian standard.

## Epilogue

### The Post-Ottoman Expansion of Western Armenian and the Purist Ideology

#### Introduction

In both scholarly opinion and popular discourse, the Armenian genocide of 1915 is considered the beginning of the end for Western Armenian. The language is commonly portrayed as having lived its heyday in the Ottoman Empire before its speakers were either killed or scattered around the world. Although, as this study has shown, the standard language known today as Western Armenian had indeed become a print language and the primary means of *written* expression by the late nineteenth century, the reality was that few *spoke* it during the Ottoman period.<sup>1</sup> The abundance of Ottoman-era printed materials in Western Armenian obscures this reality, conceals the incomprehensibility of the print-language to much of the population and leads to the misconception in circulation today that Western Armenian was the spoken language of Ottoman Armenians as a whole. The spread of Western Armenian as a spoken language is thus, contrary to popular belief, not a nineteenth-century story set in the Ottoman Empire but a twentieth-century story set in the Armenian diaspora.

Much to the dismay of many intellectuals, most Ottoman Armenians—even many of the most educated among them—were largely indifferent to the decades-long pleas to use Armenian in daily life and/or to purify the Armenian they spoke.<sup>2</sup> “It is true that in the past thirty to forty years, our written language [գրական աշխարհաբան] has been cleansed of foreign words,” one

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<sup>1</sup> The future Patriarch Malachia Ormanian highlights this dichotomy in 1893 when he writes of a multitude of spoken dialects alongside a single print language “that no one anywhere speaks, except sometimes when a literary person is giving a speech on stage.” Մաղաքիա Օրմանեան, “Լեզուարնական,” *Մասիս* 42, no. 3978 (1893): 82-83.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Լեւոն Մկրտիչեան, “Անտարբերութիւն դէպի մայրենի լեզուն,” *Ծաղիկ* 2, no. 3 (1891): 26-27. Among the many rare sociolinguistic tidbits in this article, the writer reveals that not even in the editorial offices of certain Armenian-language newspapers in Constantinople was any form of Armenian—let alone the standard—spoken c. 1890.

writer noted in 1880. “But our spoken language [խօսակա՛ն աշխարհաբար] has hardly taken a step.”<sup>3</sup> As much as purity of spoken language represented a vague ideal, there was an understanding of just how difficult it would be to change spoken language practices on a grand scale and a general sense that spoken and written language need not be one and the same. As such, these pleas never went as far as to call for the eradication of spoken forms of Armenian or for the imposition of standard Western Armenian in their place.<sup>4</sup> As a result, up until the end of the Ottoman period, the vast majority of the Ottoman Armenian population continued to use as their spoken medium of expression Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic or any one of the dozens of grammatically divergent, borrowing-laden regional dialects.<sup>5</sup> Given that exposure to Western Armenian came from school and printed materials at this time, it was out of reach for the illiterate population, especially for those in older generations and in far-flung corners of the Empire without access to formal Armenian-language education. Even among those who spoke a form of Armenian, the often stark differences between Western Armenian and the spoken regional dialects created an obstacle to easy acquisition, necessitating individual study at the very least.<sup>6</sup> These social factors made the

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<sup>3</sup> Յոթակ, “Ազգային լեզու,” *Մասիս* 29, no. 2768 (1880): 3.

<sup>4</sup> While dialects were spared, Ottoman Armenian intellectuals did, however, continue to focus on eradicating non-Armenian language practices. See Manoukian, “Cultural Nationalism,” 370-371. Nevertheless, for some urban intellectuals in the final decades of the Ottoman period, there was indeed a vague hope that the written language would “slip into every social class” and have a ‘cultivating’ (read: purist) influence on all varieties of spoken Armenian. For the articulation of one such hope, see [Մամուրեան], “Ազգային վիճակ. լեզու,” 261.

<sup>5</sup> For a sense of the diversity and geographic distribution of spoken forms of Armenian c. 1914, see the dialect map in Robert H. Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 226-227. On non-Armenian language practices on the eve of the genocide, see Բիւզանդ Բէշեան, “Բարոյական նշանակութիւն Մեսրոպեան տատերու,” *Բիւզանդիան* 17, no. 5168 (1913): 1. Thank you to Armen Manuk-Khaloyan for sending me this source.

<sup>6</sup> As Hovhannes Kazanjian succinctly puts it, “For the majority of students from the provinces, as well as for students from Turcophone centers, a grammar book is an essential need to study the written language [գրական լեզու]. But from other points of view, it is also no less needed for students in other places. The written language, which is cultivated under the pens of writers, certainly differs to a degree from real spoken language [խօսուած լեզու].” Յովհ[աննէս] Գազանճեան, “Արդի հայերէնը եւ իր շրջափոխութեան օրէնքը,” *Մասիս* 55, no. 46 (1907): 926.

widespread expansion of Western Armenian into the realm of the spoken nearly impossible in the Ottoman period, with the exception of the most educated *and* most ideologically committed of speakers.<sup>7</sup>

It is impossible to know what would have become of Western Armenian if Ottoman Armenians had not experienced the unmooring human loss and social rupture of genocide. What we do know is that, until the arrests and deportations began in the spring of 1915, Ottoman Armenian intellectuals were planning a future for Western Armenian within the Ottoman Empire. From their perspective, the standard language had not reached its final, perfected form or its ultimate scope.<sup>8</sup> On the eve of the genocide, writers were considering the possibility of fusing Eastern and Western Armenian to create a single national standard.<sup>9</sup> Teachers were developing new pedagogical strategies to teach Western Armenian to Turkish-speaking Armenian children.<sup>10</sup> Aesthetes were extolling the power of dialect words in Western Armenian literary expression.<sup>11</sup> In a word, the story of Western Armenian had only just begun in 1915. Debilitating all aspects of

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<sup>7</sup> Illustrating the rarity of ‘pure speech,’ we read the following complaint c. 1930: “We all know people by the thousands who think they speak Armenian. But how many hundreds are there around us who are speakers of *pure and authentic* Armenian...Armenian men and women today—it is a sad and lamentable thing to confess— almost do not speak even Armenian, or they speak it very poorly and spoil it with detestable mixtures of foreign and especially *Turkish* elements.” Հայ գնդունի, “Հայերէն կը խօսի՞ք,” *Տեղեկատու Մուրաստ-Ռափայէլեան նախկին աշակերտաց միութեան* 1, no. 2 (1930): 19-20. Italics in the source.

<sup>8</sup> Highlighting the standard as a work-in-progress, we read the following from a Viennese Mekhitarist monk in 1911: “We hope our Armenian can have the richness of Classical Armenian, the clarity of French, the depth of German, the musicality of Italian, the concision of English, the majesty of Latin and the nuance of Greek.” See Գարրիէլ Մէնէվիշեան, “Արդի հայերէնի անցեալը, ներկան ու ապագան,” in *Յուշարձան գրական ժողովածոյ* (Vienna: Մխիթարեան տպարան, 1911), 274.

<sup>9</sup> This possibility was the topic of a months-long discussion among Ottoman and Russian Armenian intellectuals. The discussion was prompted by a series of questions posed in “Ազատամարտի հարցերը,” *Ազատամարտ* 1, no. 30 (1911): 480.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Ճէսի Մաթեոսեան, “Մայրենի լեզուի ուսուցումը թրքախօս հայ վարժարաններու մէջ,” *Լոյս* 1, no. 11-12 (1914): 1-6.

<sup>11</sup> This poetic reevaluation was championed by the short-lived literary group Mehyan (1914). See Nichanian, *Âges et usages*, 358-369 and Nichanian, *Mourning Philology*, 265-270.

Armenian life, the Armenian genocide cut short this linguistic project in-progress and drove the language into new geographic and social contexts across the Armenian diaspora.

### **Western Armenian in Diaspora**

It was, however, in this unlikeliest of periods, in one of the darkest hours in Armenian history, that a new chapter opened for Western Armenian. In the post-genocide period, among the surviving remnants of the Ottoman Armenian population, a new diaspora leadership managed to usher Western Armenian into a new phase in its history in which the written and the spoken converged like never before. Through their purposeful and persistent intervention, this diverse group of writers, educators and priests managed to accomplish what their Ottoman-era predecessors had failed to do: to spread Western Armenian as a spoken language. Drawing on the grammars and dictionaries produced during the Ottoman period, these diaspora thinkers froze these works-in-progress in time, sacralized them and held them up as the ultimate expression of purity and authenticity. In diaspora, the Ottoman-era debates around what should be part of standard Western Armenian were no longer relevant or as compelling as they had once been. These texts, considered incomplete and aspirational by their creators, were now considered the be-all and end-all resources for Western Armenian. Furthermore, as part of a lost world, they also gained added significance and legitimacy through their association with the pre-genocide past. Due to their reliance on these texts as sources of absolute linguistic authority, for the first time on a grand scale, words and grammatical forms that had largely been confined to written usage, ones that had been decried as artificial, unnatural, overly classical or had even been subject to debate in the Ottoman period, became—and continue to be—integral parts of the Western Armenian spoken in the post-

Ottoman diaspora and made to seem as if they had been part of spoken language from time immemorial.<sup>12</sup>

In this way, the Armenian genocide did not kill Western Armenian; it gave it life. By transforming Western Armenian from a print language into a spoken language, diaspora leaders paradoxically fulfilled the linguistic aspirations of the language's Ottoman-era architects and made their ideal a reality. By sacralizing their works-in-progress and using them as models for how the new spoken language should be, diaspora leaders brought the decades-long processes of vernacularization and standardization to a decisive end. While Ottoman-era linguistic practices were not immediately overridden, the outward-facing, formal, quasi-official spoken *and* written language of the Armenian diaspora became Western Armenian.

How did diaspora leaders carry out this transformation? And what was it about the post-genocide condition that allowed them to find more success than their Ottoman-era predecessors? In the 1920s and 1930s, post-Ottoman Armenian diaspora leaders around the world—albeit often vaguely and without always putting their words into action—emphasized Armenian-language use as a way protect against cultural assimilation in their new host countries.<sup>13</sup> If language instruction did take shape, these programs were often informal, small scale and were *in addition to* the public education system of the host country.<sup>14</sup> In these locales, subsequent generations of Armenians

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<sup>12</sup> One example is the word թէյ, which Adjarian notes was not used in any spoken variety of Armenian in the Ottoman period. Armenian speakers, he emphasizes, relied on the Turkish, Persian and Russian borrowing չայ. Now, the former serves as the word in common parlance among Western Armenian speakers for *tea*. Հրաչեայ Աճառեան, Հայերէն սրմաստակաւն բառարան (Yerevan: Հրատարակութիւն ՀԽՍՀ պետական համալսարանի, 1926), 181.

<sup>13</sup> For a general look at twentieth-century Armenian diaspora leaders and institutions, see Khachig Tölölyan, “Elites and Institutions in the Armenian Transnation,” *Diaspora* 9, no. 1 (2000): 107-136.

<sup>14</sup> For example, in the absence of Armenian schools in southern Ontario in the 1930s and 1940s, Armenian men of the immigrant generation went from house to house to teach the new generation how to read and write in Armenian. See Isabel Kaprielian-Churchill, *Like Our Mountains: A History of Armenians in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 432. Here and elsewhere in discussions about Armenian in post-Ottoman diaspora communities there is rarely ever mention of the variety of Armenian being spoken or taught.

often shifted away from the language practices of the immigrant generation and adopted the dominant language of the host country as their primary means of communication.<sup>15</sup> It was only in the Armenian communities of the eastern Mediterranean, however, that these calls went beyond empty rhetoric and were put into action on a grand scale. Consequently, diaspora leaders in this region managed to create the communal infrastructure needed to change centuries-old language practices and turn linguistically diverse post-Ottoman refugee children into the first generation of Western Armenian speakers.

Certain socio-political forces in the eastern Mediterranean countries in which Armenian refugees found themselves—most notably Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq—and dynamics within their populations facilitated this radical shift in spoken language practices.<sup>16</sup> First, there was a substantial degree of communal autonomy granted by the post-war regimes in these countries that created inward-facing communities and allowed diaspora leaders to guide internal dynamics without substantial governmental intervention, particularly in the realm of education.<sup>17</sup> A carryover from the Ottoman millet system of communal governance, they were left alone to pursue their own social agendas with relative autonomy, especially in the first decades after their arrival *en masse*.<sup>18</sup> These clear communal boundaries and decentralized state systems created an

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<sup>15</sup> Early Armenian Americans are a prime example of this linguistic phenomenon. See Anny Bakalian, *Armenian Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 251-268.

<sup>16</sup> Smaller communities in Mandate Palestine and Cyprus also underwent the same dialect leveling and language shift at this time. For an overview of these communities and others in the region, see Ara Sanjian, “The Armenian Minority Experience in the Modern Arab World,” *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 3, no. 1 (2001): 149-179. It is important to note that post-genocide refugees often encountered centuries-old, Arabic-speaking Armenian communities upon their arrival in Syria, Lebanon, Mandate Palestine and elsewhere. For the numbers of both groups in Syria and Lebanon in the early 1920s, see Nicola Migliorino, *(Re)constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria: Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the State in the Aftermath of a Refugee Crisis* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 32-34. The sociolinguistic dynamics between these groups post-genocide is a topic ripe for exploration.

<sup>17</sup> Migliorino, *(Re)constructing Armenia*, 47-49, 73.

<sup>18</sup> Sanjian, “The Armenian Minority Experience,” 154-161.

environment in which the pressures to integrate into the host society were not nearly as strong as elsewhere in the diaspora at this time. Such a combination provided unparalleled power to diaspora leaders to go about making such a radical change to language practices and led to a shift like nowhere else in the diaspora.

Second are the sheer numbers and geographically concentrated makeup of the communities. By the mid-1920s, there were roughly 100,000 Armenian refugees in what is now Syria, 50,000 in Lebanon, 40,000 in Egypt and 25,000 in Iraq.<sup>19</sup> The concentration of these post-genocide populations in the same cities, if not the very same neighborhoods, allowed intellectuals to model their desired language practices and monitor, police and ultimately exercise more control over the practices of these refugees more than their predecessors had been able to do in the geographically scattered communities across the Ottoman Empire. Relatedly, the Armenian refugees that came to populate the eastern Mediterranean were regionally diverse, tracing their origins to different cities, towns and villages across the Ottoman Empire.<sup>20</sup> This regional diversity, density and close proximity in diaspora created a practical reason for the spread of Western Armenian as a spoken language: the need for an Armenian *lingua franca* to transcend the linguistic and dialect diversity that the refugee population represented.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Richard G. Hovannisian, "The Ebb and Flow of the Armenian Minority in the Arab Middle East," *Middle East Journal* 28, no. 1 (1974): 20. These numbers are, of course, estimates but have been generally accepted by subsequent researchers.

<sup>20</sup> Vahé Tachjian, "Des camps de réfugiés aux quartiers urbains : processus et enjeux," in *Les Arméniens 1917-1939: la quête d'un refuge*, eds. Raymond Kévorkian, Lévon Nordiguian and Vahé Tachjian (Paris: Réunions des musées nationaux, 2007), 121-123.

<sup>21</sup> Studies and memoirs rarely delve into the linguistic diversity of this early diaspora period or comment on the differences in spoken forms of Armenian between refugees from different regions now sharing the same communities, likely 1) because of the banality of the topic and 2) as a way to deemphasize divisions among Armenians in this period of national identity construction. For a rare mention of incomprehension in post-genocide France between Armenian refugees from Stanoz, near Ankara, and Bardizag, near Constantinople, see Martine Hovanessian, *Le lien communautaire : trois générations d'Arméniens* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), 60.

## Language, Purism and National Reconstruction

This linguistic transformation was undergirded by the tremendous ideological importance that diaspora leaders assigned to language in the post-genocide project of national reconstruction.<sup>22</sup> As part of this project, diaspora leaders sought to craft a new-and-improved Armenian out of the surviving remnants of the population and strengthen markers of Armenian identity to foster national cohesion.<sup>23</sup> In this new diasporic context, language once again was conceived as the ultimate marker of national identity and the question of how the New Armenian should speak came under close scrutiny.<sup>24</sup> “Bad Armenians who are ignorant and unaware of Armenian and who have no reverence for it cannot be exemplary people,” one intellectual wrote plainly in 1930.<sup>25</sup> In this atmosphere, diverse, often borrowing-laden Armenian dialects—let alone the monolingual use of Turkish, Kurdish or Arabic—had no place in the diaspora leadership’s conception of the New Armenian. This diversity of “non-national” language practices needed, in their estimation, to be homogenized and replaced with a single, “purely” Armenian form. Enter Western Armenian, the all-encompassing spoken and written language for the New Armenian.

Western Armenian had two primary draws for the diaspora leadership: one practical and one ideological. Practically, it was already standardized, used in print and came with an abundance of instructional materials for students, including dozens of Ottoman-era grammar books and dictionaries. Ideologically, Western Armenian aligned perfectly with the diaspora leadership’s

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<sup>22</sup> On general post-genocide reconstruction in Syria and Lebanon, see Migliorino, *(Re)constructing Armenia*, 45-87.

<sup>23</sup> On the New Armenian, see Vahé Tachjian, “L’usage du turc et le renouveau identitaire chez les Arméniens du Liban et de Syrie dans les années 1920–1930,” in *Les Arméniens du Liban: Cent ans de présence*, eds. Christine Babikian Assaf, Carla Eddé, Lévon Nordiguian, et al. (Beirut: Presses de l’Université Saint-Joseph, 2017), 76-77.

<sup>24</sup> Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (London: Hurst & Company, 2006), 299-300.

<sup>25</sup> “Լեզուի սեր,” *Տեղեկատու Մուրատ-Ռափայելյանն նախկին աշակերտաց միութեան* 1, no. 5 (1930): 106.

larger goal of eliminating all traces of the Ottoman past among survivors of the Armenian genocide and stripping them of their ties to any “non-national” cultural practices.<sup>26</sup> As the Western Armenian standard had been born of the same ideology, built on a foundation of anti-Turkish purism, and had thus already been denuded of the “non-national” loanwords used aloud, it was in essence ready-made for this new social context in which anything and everything Turkish became harshly stigmatized. Much more ideologically charged than ever before, using Turkish and Turkish borrowings did not merely show a lack of “national spirit,” as it had in Ottoman times.<sup>27</sup> In the post-Ottoman diaspora, using Turkish and Turkish borrowings came to constitute the ultimate insult to the memory of the victims of the Armenian genocide. No matter how prevalent these borrowings were or how many Armenians still used Turkish exclusively, the Turkish language in the post-Ottoman Armenian imaginary became inextricably linked to the perpetrators of the genocide and framed a mark of the yoke of centuries of servitude.<sup>28</sup> Making a clean break with the Ottoman past, the New Armenian—the diaspora leadership hoped—would make the choice to remove this yoke and wholeheartedly embrace the Armenian language, using it aloud in its most purified form as a tribute to their slain relatives and as a symbol of national triumph after near annihilation.<sup>29</sup> “Speaking Armenian purely...is, in our opinion, such an imperative,” we read in 1930, “...If you do not speak Armenian this way, make an effort and practice!”<sup>30</sup> With purity

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<sup>26</sup> Tachjian, “L’usage du turc,” 63-65. This attempted erasure of Ottoman-era tastes and practices has been best documented in the realm of music. See, for example, Sylvia A. Alajaji, “Exilic Becomings: Post-Genocide Armenian Music in Lebanon,” *Ethnomusicology* 57, no. 2 (2013): 236-260.

<sup>27</sup> On the origins of this ideology in the 1840s, see Manoukian, “Cultural Nationalism,” 359-376.

<sup>28</sup> Arda Jebejian, “Patterns of Language Use among Armenians in Beirut in the Last 95 Years,” *Haigazian Armenological Review* 31, no. 1 (2011): 459.

<sup>29</sup> Tachjian, “L’usage du turc,” 65, 70-71.

<sup>30</sup> Հայ գնդունի, “Հայերէն կը խօսի՞ք,” 20-21.

already inscribed into it, Western Armenian as a spoken language thus became a quintessential trait of the New Armenian and a cornerstone in the project of national reconstruction.

It was this moral obligation, this tethering of the use of Armenian in its ‘purest’ form to national survival, that likely led many Armenian refugees to heed the call of intellectuals rather than ignore it, as most of their ancestors had in the Ottoman period. In this time of uncertainty, rupture and social breakdown, after the loss of their homes, families and all they had known, and in a moment of national rebuilding in the wake of a catastrophe collectively experienced, it is not surprising that there was more of a willingness to come together and communally subscribe to such a radical new approach to something as deeply personal and ingrained as language. It was likely the precarity of this social situation, amid lives already in flux, that fostered such dramatic linguistic change and cultivated such a widespread unshakeable attachment to the “national language” that had proved impossible during the Ottoman period. Invested with tremendous ideological significance and intimately intertwined with new concepts like “preservation of the nation” (ազգասպահպանում) and “preservation of Armenian identity” (հայասպահպանում), Western Armenian managed to counterbalance its lack of utility—a common complaint in the Ottoman period—and garner like never before enthusiastic, ideologically invested speakers who were eager to do their part in the project of national reconstruction.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> On these concepts, see Simon Payaslian, “Diasporan Subalternities: The Armenian Community in Syria,” *Diaspora* 16, no. 1-2 (2007): 102-103. In reality, these concepts had little to do with “preserving” Ottoman-era practices of the refugee generation and much more to do with upholding the new cultural markers of the New Armenian, as conceived by the new diaspora leadership. The passage of time has obscured this important detail and led to the misconception that Western Armenian was merely “revived” or “perpetuated” as a spoken language in diaspora. This conceals the work of diaspora leaders in *creating* these speakers in the first place.

Both the mechanics of Western Armenian and the moral obligation to speak it were instilled most notably through the Armenian school.<sup>32</sup> As such, we can see post-genocide Armenian schools in the eastern Mediterranean as powerful vehicles in crafting the New Armenian and in spreading standard Western Armenian as a spoken language. Indispensable to this project of national reconstruction, schools sprouted up across the region in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s and were widely considered to be “the only salvation for the Armenian nation.”<sup>33</sup> These schools served many of the tens of thousands of refugee children living in various parts of the region by the early 1920s.<sup>34</sup> Many of the children who attended these schools in the 1920s had been orphaned during the genocide and/or had spent years living in Turkish-speaking, Kurdish-speaking or Arabic-speaking Muslim households; during this time, many had lost knowledge of any form of Armenian, if they had indeed spoken one in their families before the genocide.<sup>35</sup>

Among the children who survived the deportations with family members, Western Armenian was certainly not their household language.<sup>36</sup> While these household languages—

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<sup>32</sup> In the words of one pedagogue c. 1934, “In our schools, our children learn only one living language: Armenian. They are being prepared to think in Armenian, speak in Armenian and act in Armenian in the future.” Ք. Կոստանդնուս, “Օտար լեզուներու ուսուցման հարցը,” *Հայ դպրոց* 1, no. 7-8 (1934): 186.

<sup>33</sup> Jebejian, “Patterns of Language Use,” 459. In Syria alone, 38 Armenian schools were founded between 1920 and 1939. On post-war Armenian education in Syria and Lebanon, see Migliorino, *(Re)constructing Armenia*, 70-75. Here and elsewhere in the region, Armenian schools were run by different bodies, including churches, political parties, compatriotic unions, benevolent societies, individual benefactors and international aid organizations.

<sup>34</sup> On refugee settlement, Vahé Tachjian, “L’établissement définitif des réfugiés arméniens au Liban dans les années 1920 et 1930,” in *Armenians of Lebanon: From Past Princesses and Refugees to Present-Day Community*, ed. Aïda Boudjikianian (Beirut: Haigazian University/The Armenian Heritage Press, 2009), 59.

<sup>35</sup> On orphan collection, schooling and relief work by one benevolent society, see Raymond H. Kévorkian and Vahé Tachjian, *The Armenian General Benevolent Union: One Hundred Years of History*, vol. 1, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (Cairo, Paris and New York: AGBU Central Board, 2006), 78-86, 144-162.

<sup>36</sup> Many refugees in Syria and Lebanon were from the towns and villages of Cilicia, a region in which Armenians had been monolingual Turkish speakers for centuries. These language practices endured, particularly among older generations, until at least the 1960s but not without resistance and stigmatization by diaspora leaders. See Tachjian, “L’usage du turc,” 62-63. According to one report from 1938, 90% of Armenian schoolchildren in Lebanon hailed from families originally from Cilicia and the majority were Turkish-speaking. As we read, it was not uncommon to

whether Armenian dialects or Turkish, Kurdish or Arabic—were used as the medium of instruction in the earliest grades in Ottoman-era Armenian schools, they could no longer be used in these post-genocide schools, as no one dialect could be understood universally by the children from regionally diverse backgrounds who now shared the same classrooms.<sup>37</sup> Ottoman-era linguistic diversity must have been, in other words, on full display in the post-genocide classroom, a setting in which the need for a lingua franca was likely at its most palpable. Western Armenian quickly became this *school* language, the glue that held Armenians from different cultural, regional and linguistic backgrounds together and represented a point of unity amid this diversity. This meant that, among the first generation of students, the school language and home language were often quite different, creating families in which grandparents, parents and children may have had distinct language practices.<sup>38</sup> No matter their own language practices, however, some—though not all— parents were ideologically invested in national reconstruction and heartily encouraged their children’s acquisition of the Western Armenian that they, depending on their regional and socio-economic profile, likely had not had access to as children.<sup>39</sup>

By the 1950s, diaspora leaders in the eastern Mediterranean, especially in Syria and Lebanon, had succeeded in shifting the language practices of the first generation educated in

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find children born in Lebanon who “still continue to speak Turkish and curse it in.” See Վ. Գեորգեան, “Լիբանահայ կրթական գործը,” *Հայ դպրոց* 1, no. 1 (1938): 61-62.

<sup>37</sup> On the issue of language in the late Ottoman Armenian classroom, Մարգարեան, “Մայրենի լեզուի դասաւանդութիւնը,” *Հայ դպրոց* 1, no. 1 (1914): 23-26.

<sup>38</sup> For portraits of this kind of intra-family linguistic diversity, see Jebejian, “Patterns of Language Use,” 458-463. For a contemporaneous plea to use Armenian outside of school, see “Լեզուի սէր,” 106.

<sup>39</sup> Pedagogical journals in the 1920s and 1930s, such as the Alexandria-based *Հայ դպրոց*, included columns directly addressing parents. These columns attempted to convince parents of the value of an Armenian education and to combat views that would keep the New Armenian from emerging within their children’s generation. How Ottoman-born Armenian adults acquired standard Western Armenian, if at all, remains to be explored.

diaspora.<sup>40</sup> These young adults now had as their main language of expression—not the Armenian dialects or Turkish, Kurdish or Arabic of the preceding generation—but rather Western Armenian. “Representatives of the ideology of national renewal,” these young adults turned what had been primarily a school language in their youth into a home language within their own young families, making a pivotal leap that has had a profound impact on the trajectory of Western Armenian as a spoken language to this day.<sup>41</sup> Aided by demographic and infrastructural growth, Western Armenian reached a critical mass of speakers in mid-twentieth eastern Mediterranean.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, this first diaspora-educated generation not only used Western Armenian in their homes and communities but also assumed the mantle of the previous generation, doubling down on the importance of language to national survival and perpetuating the ideology of purism.<sup>43</sup> From among this generation emerged the writers, editors, teachers and other thinkers who turned Western Armenian into a marker of an Armenian *diaspora* identity, transformed Beirut into the vibrant Western Armenian intellectual, cultural and literary center that it became in the mid-twentieth century and, through new schools, passed down Western Armenian as a spoken language to subsequent generations.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> On the Lebanese case, see Anaïd Donabédian, “Cent ans après, l’arménien occidental au Liban. vernaculaire et littérature au carrefour des enjeux identitaires,” in *Les Arméniens du Liban: Cent ans de présence*, eds. Christine Babikian Assaf, Carla Eddé, Lévon Nordiguian, et al. (Beirut: Presses de l’Université Saint-Joseph, 2017), 241.

<sup>41</sup> Tachjian, “L’usage du turc,” 78.

<sup>42</sup> On Armenian infrastructural growth in Syria and Lebanon mid-century, see Migliorino, *(Re)constructing Armenia*, 113-126. By 1953, there were 60 Armenian schools in Lebanon alone. As Marc Nichanian noted in the 1990s, there had never been more speakers and writers of Western Armenian than there had been in the twentieth century. Marc Nichanian, “États de la langue arménienne,” in *La langue arménienne : défis et enjeux*, eds. Khatoune Témisjian, Anna-Maria Folco and Nourhan Ouzounian (Montreal: Centre de langues patrimoniales, 1995), 110-111.

<sup>43</sup> On the intellectual work of this generation, see Talar Chahinian, *Stateless: The Politics of the Armenian Language in Exile* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2023), 165-217.

<sup>44</sup> On the role of language in the creation of an Armenian diasporic identity distinct from a Soviet Armenian identity, see Talar Chahinian, “The Making of a Diasporic Literary Center: Post WWII Armenian Intellectual Life in Beirut,” in *Les Arméniens du Liban: Cent ans de présence*, eds. Christine Babikian Assaf, Carla Eddé, Lévon Nordiguian, et

## Speaking Western Armenian Outside the Eastern Mediterranean

This burst of linguistic effervescence, however, did not last long. Due to economic instability and political unrest in the eastern Mediterranean, most notably the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), many within these three generations of Western Armenian speakers were forced to find new homes abroad in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>45</sup> Often, they settled in already-established, diaspora communities around the world, replenishing them in numbers and in cultural vigor. But, although by this time Western Armenian had become the main vehicle of communication within the communities they were leaving, the ones they were entering in the United States, Canada, France, Argentina and elsewhere had by and large shifted from their Ottoman-era language practices to the dominant language of their new countries.<sup>46</sup> In this way, the arrival of these Western Armenian speakers had a profound impact on the spread of Western Armenian as a spoken language in mid- to late-twentieth-century Armenian communities worldwide. These immigrants not only brought their language practices but also their attitudes about language as a cornerstone of identity and their beliefs in the importance of the Armenian

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al. (Beirut: Presses de l'Université Saint-Joseph, 2017), 281-299 and Chahinian, *Stateless*, 165-187. For the names of notable mid-twentieth intellectuals educated in the 1920s and 1930s, see Tachjian, "L'usage du turc," 78, footnote 39.

<sup>45</sup> Sossie Kasbarian, "The Armenian Middle East: Boundaries, Pathways and Horizons," in *Routledge Handbook on Middle Eastern Diasporas* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 409. It is important to note that Western Armenian language use today in the eastern Mediterranean is not the same as it was in the mid-twentieth century. Out-migration, coupled with other social and educational policy changes, have created new patterns of language use among younger generations. See, for example, Arda Jebejian, "Changing Ideologies and Extralinguistic Determinants in Language Maintenance and Shift among Ethnic Diaspora Armenians in Beirut" (Ed.D. dissertation, University of Leicester, 2007). As Donabédian has argued, however, Western Armenian is still a spoken language in Lebanon and, despite the fervor surrounding its endangerment elsewhere, is not in decline in this region. Donabédian, "Cent ans après," 243-249.

<sup>46</sup> As Donabédian notes, the use of Western Armenian as a spoken language in Syria and Lebanon was—and remains to this day—a rarity in the worldwide Armenian diaspora. Anaïd Donabédian, "Middle East and Beyond—Western Armenian at the Crossroads: A Sociological and Typological Sketch," in *Linguistic Minorities in Turkey and Turkic-Speaking Minorities of the Periphery*, ed. Christiane Bulut (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 94.

school in instilling them both.<sup>47</sup> Often within only a few years of their arrival, these newcomers advocated for the creation of Armenian schools, fundraised to open them and became the teachers and decision-makers within them.<sup>48</sup>

Just as they had been in the eastern Mediterranean, these schools were conceived as the disseminators of Western Armenian among yet another generation.<sup>49</sup> Under their influence, they ushered the language into the second phase of its existence as a spoken language, stirring up interest and spreading linguistic knowledge in learners who had descended from earlier waves of immigration.<sup>50</sup> In this way, the diaspora communities of the eastern Mediterranean were an incubator, a source and a nucleus for Western Armenian as a spoken language, whose members, as a result of out-migration, managed to geographically spread the language as a spoken tongue. They continue to be at the helm of Western Armenian education and cultural production in diaspora communities around the world to this day.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> For an expression of this clash of ideologies in the United States, see Bakalian, *Armenian Americans*, 251-253. As Talar Chahinian details, some intellectuals in mid-twentieth-century Beirut went as far as to conceive of Western Armenian as a “symbolic territory” or a “homeland in exile.” See Chahinian, *Stateless*, 176, 191.

<sup>48</sup> For example, on the impact of this migration on Armenian day schools in United States and France, see Talar Chahinian and Anny Bakalian, “Language in Armenian American Communities: Western Armenian and Efforts for Preservation,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* no. 237 (2016): 47, 52 and Anaïd Donabédian and Anke al-Bataineh, *L’arménien occidental en France : dynamiques actuelles* (Paris: INALCO Presses, 2014), 3-4.

<sup>49</sup> This attempted dissemination has, of course, been with varying degrees of success. These newcomers commonly draw on the same pedagogical strategies used in their home countries, which are often not suited to their new host society and to new generations of students living in different social realities with different pressures and ideologies. On these challenges in Los Angeles, see Shushan Karapetian, “Opportunities and Challenges of Institutionalizing a Pluricentric Diasporic Language: The Case of Armenian in Los Angeles,” *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Language Education: From Innovation to Program Building*, eds. Olga E. Kagan, Maria M. Carreira and Claire Hitchens Chik (New York: Routledge, 2017), 145-160.

<sup>50</sup> My own Western Armenian skills are, in fact, thanks to one of these teachers, as are the skills of many other “new speakers” who chose to learn Western Armenian in adulthood. See Jennifer Manoukian, “In Search of Linguistic Legitimacy: Western Armenian and the New Speaker,” in *Language and Globalization: An Autoethnographic Approach*, ed. Maryam Borjian (New York: Routledge, 2017), 195-206.

<sup>51</sup> Hagop Gulludjian, “Language Vitality through ‘Creative Literacy,’” in *Western Armenian in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Challenges and New Approaches*, eds. Bedross Der Matossian and Barlow Der Mugardechian (Fresno: The Press at California State University, Fresno, 2018), 107-108.

This spread of Western Armenian as a spoken language, however, certainly had ramifications for Ottoman-era spoken language practices. In this way, it is more accurate to say that the Armenian genocide of 1915 was the beginning of the end for Armenian *dialects* and the centuries-old use of Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic among Armenians.<sup>52</sup> In the final decades of the Ottoman period, certain intellectuals had begun to see the standard as an enemy to Armenian dialects, which were being “disdained, abandoned, changed and lost” under its influence.<sup>53</sup> Some Ottoman-era teachers of Western Armenian in the provinces reflected with regret on their role in driving “many provincial words into oblivion.”<sup>54</sup> This loss only intensified and accelerated in the post-Ottoman diaspora. Falling victim to the drive to homogenize, collapse difference and create a New Armenian in the post-genocide period, all the decades of work spent valorizing provincial speech that we saw in the final decades of the Ottoman period were tossed aside in favor of championing Western Armenian as *the* language of the Armenian diaspora in all domains of life.

While Western Armenian did indeed gain speakers like never before in the mid-twentieth century, this does not mean that all Ottoman-era language practices were immediately abandoned upon exposure to it.<sup>55</sup> It also does not mean that speakers universally began speaking the standard

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<sup>52</sup> While survivors of the Armenian genocide indeed took these language practices with them to their new homes in far-flung corners of the world and likely used them in private, they often did not survive more than a generation after immigration. For exceptions to this rule and an account of Ottoman-era Armenian dialects surfacing in a Western Armenian classroom in Los Angeles c. 2010, see Gulludjian, “Language Vitality,” 113, footnote 20.

<sup>53</sup> Գազանճեան, *Եւրոկիոյ հայոց գաւառաբարբառը*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Cited in [Դաւթեան], “Այն ժամանակ «Բիւրակն» շիկար,” 827.

<sup>55</sup> Active and passive understandings of Ottoman-era varieties and languages continue around the world—albeit limitedly—in private to this day. For example, more than a century after the genocide, speakers of Turkish can still be found in Lebanon and Armenia. See Tachjian, “L’usage du turc,” 79-80 and David Leupold, “Collectivities beyond National Frontiers? The Micro-Narrative of a Turkophone Armenian Family,” in *Die Türkei im Spannungsfeld von Kollektivismus und Diversität*, eds. Burcu Doğramacı, Yavuz Köse, Kerem Öktem, et al. (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016), 157-177.

*exactly as it is written* in every social situation. What the introduction of Western Armenian as a spoken language did do was bring about new expectations for formal speech. Although the grammar of the standard is widely accepted, one register of the standard upholds the purist ideal in terms of borrowings while another register takes a more permissive approach to borrowings and a handful of stigmatized grammatical features.<sup>56</sup> The first can be heard to this day in spaces like schools, community presentations, televised news programs and other public-facing events. Depending on the speaker's preferences, education level, interlocutor and social situation, it can also be heard in conversation. The second register is pervasive in casual situations, particularly in families and among friends as well as in comedy and more and more on social media.<sup>57</sup> This variety is replete with often the very same Turkish borrowings used by the speakers' Ottoman-era ancestors but banished from the written standard in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and peppered more recent borrowings from the language(s) of the speakers' host societies.<sup>58</sup>

It is critical to remember that speaking 'purely' is and has always been an ideal, one that all are expected to strive for but that only the most motivated will attain. It is an "assurance of social recognition more than a communicative necessity."<sup>59</sup> As one scholar has aptly noted,

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<sup>56</sup> For rare studies of spoken Western Armenian, see Anaïd Donabédian, "Les 'turcismes' dans le lexique de l'arménien occidental parlé : approche typologique et fonctionnelle," in *Contact des Langues II. Les mots voyageurs et l'Orient*, eds. Michel Bozdémir and Sonel Bosnalı (Istanbul: Bogaziçi University Press, 2006), 239–256; Anaïd Donabédian, "Tabou linguistique en arménien occidental : 'gor' progressif est-il 'turc' ?" in *Langues de diaspora, langues en contact*, ed. Anaïd Donabédian (Paris: Ophrys, 2001), 201-210; and Anaïd Donabédian, "Cent ans après," 235-261.

<sup>57</sup> As Sylvia Kasparian notes, this register is also unconsciously used among even the staunchest of self-proclaimed purists. See Sylvia Kasparian, "Langues et identités des Arméniens de la diaspora. États des lieux," *Hommes et migrations* no. 1265 (2007): 184.

<sup>58</sup> Jennifer Manoukian, "That's Not Armenian! Encounters with Language Purists Past and Present," *h-pem* (5 August 2022), <https://www.h-pem.com/en/submissions/2022/08/05/thats-not-armenian-encounters-with-language-purists-past-and-present/54>.

<sup>59</sup> Donabédian, "Cent ans après," 252.

when one hears pure Armenian speech, one can be sure that the speaker has made a mental note at some time, if not just then, to purify his or her speech and discover the Armenian equivalents of the more commonly used foreign phrases.<sup>60</sup>

While students who learn Western Armenian in the classroom may come to speak this ideal, those who are exposed to Armenian at home or in other casual settings will have different registers to draw upon depending on the social context. These registers, however, are not given equal value and can be distinguished by the presence or absence of borrowings.<sup>61</sup> Although change is an inherent feature of any spoken language, any change to spoken Western Armenian, particularly as it pertains to language contact, is a source of tremendous anxiety for speakers. This attitude generates a very complicated relationship to loanwords. In reaction, today's diaspora leaders, along with speakers themselves, have attempted the self-defeating task of applying the ideology of purism that brought *written* Western Armenian into being to their *spoken* Western Armenian in hopes of "preserving" the language in its most "authentic," pre-genocide form. Paradoxically, though not unsurprisingly, the model for an "authentic" Western Armenian today is the form that was rarely spoken in this imagined period of authenticity.

### **The Lingering Ramifications of a Centuries-Old Ideology**

Beyond the language itself, this ideology of purism is one of the most enduring and transformational legacies of the Ottoman era. Having been reinforced by new waves of diaspora leaders and forcefully applied to spoken language only in the diaspora, this ideology has expanded and taken on a life of its own in the twentieth century, embedding itself deeply in the minds of

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<sup>60</sup> Susan Paul Pattie, *Faith in History: Armenians Rebuilding Community* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 203.

<sup>61</sup> Sylvia Kasparian, "For a Multilingual Approach in Teaching Modern Western Armenian in Diaspora Communities," in *Western Armenian in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Challenges and New Approaches*, eds. Bedross Der Matossian and Barlow Der Mugerdechian (Fresno: The Press at California State University, Fresno, 2018), 94.

Western Armenian speakers, even those with limited levels of proficiency in the language.<sup>62</sup> In the post-genocide period, an explicitly purist campaign and the attempted convergence of written and spoken language managed to instill an ever-present concern for and anxiety about purity in subsequent generations. There is now a sense of deference to a formal, classically inspired kind of language, an unease about borrowings and a relentless obsession with separating the “pure” from the “impure.”

The expansion of the ideology of purism into the realm of the spoken has had a major impact on the practices of speakers.<sup>63</sup> In essence, overlaying an ideology initially conceived for written language onto spoken language has created an unattainable, illusory model for ‘proper’ speech, leading speakers to evaluate their own speech and especially the speech of others against what has been a largely *written* norm. The perpetuation of this ideology ignores the inherent geographical, social and situational variability of spoken language.<sup>64</sup> It also ignores what languages inevitably do: change. This ideology disregards the historical reality that there has always been language contact.<sup>65</sup> Unfettered by the rules and regulations that governed written language, the lexicon of spoken forms of Armenian has throughout the ages been defined by its

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<sup>62</sup> Anke al-Bataineh, Kayane Yoghoutjian and Samuel Chakmakjian, “Can Western Armenian Pedagogy Be Decolonial? Training Heritage Language Teachers in Social Justice-Based Language Pedagogy,” in *Transforming World Language Teaching and Teacher Education for Equity and Justice*, eds. Beth Wassell and Cassandra Glynn (Bristol and Jackson: Multilingual Matters, 2022), 149. The writers include a telling example of an Armenian heritage speaker in Boston who is able to recall and point out a purist rule in conversation but can no longer use the language itself.

<sup>63</sup> Anaïd Donabédian is one of the few scholars to have identified and reflected on the dynamics of the purist language ideology in the modern day, particularly in Lebanon. See Donabédian, “Cent ans après,” 253-259.

<sup>64</sup> Milroy and Milroy, *Authority in Language*, 47.

<sup>65</sup> As one example, we read the following discussion of language contact from the mid-1860s: “There is nowhere on the face of this earth where Armenians have lived and where foreign feet have not also set foot. Therefore, there is no corner where the Armenian language has preserved its original, pure, exquisite and natural qualities, supposing that the Persian, Greek, Georgian and others had not given us new words and styles from the start.” [Մամուրեան], *Հայկական նամակաւոր*, 138.

freedom to change, swelling and shrinking in time with social and political changes in lives of their speakers. Expecting multilingual Western Armenian speakers to pretend “as though they knew no other language, avoiding all loanwords and contact influences” is not only self-defeating but ahistorical.<sup>66</sup> This relatively new trend has erased awareness of the older history of borrowings in spoken Armenian and has vilified and turned into a cause for reproach what had long been ordinary.<sup>67</sup>

There is little awareness that purist speech has always been an aberration, that the descendants of Ottoman Armenians today are being expected to speak an air-tight, purist language of books in a way that few among their ancestors had ever spoken. Many contemporary speakers are made to feel shame and guilt for their borrowing-laden Western Armenian and for not living up to what has historically been nothing more than an aspiration of the intelligentsia. It is quite common today to hear speakers apologize for using borrowings and speak self-consciously, hyperaware of this ideology and how not living up to may lead them to be perceived as a “bad Armenians” who are shirking their moral obligation.<sup>68</sup> The concern felt today is a direct result of the ideology of purism fashioned in the Ottoman period, inscribed into the vernacular-based print language from the start and reinforced by generations of intellectuals in diaspora. This is not, however, merely a case of the imposition of the ideals of the few onto the practices of the many.

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<sup>66</sup> Al-Bataineh, Yoghoutjian and Chakmakjian, “Can Western Armenian Pedagogy Be Decolonial?,” 148-149. As Sylvia Kasparian has noted, the “the monolingual, monocultural Armenian is a myth and does not exist in diaspora.” Kasparian, “Langues et identités,” 180.

<sup>67</sup> This ideology has particularly dire consequences for the large number of diasporans today who have not had the opportunity to be formally educated in Armenian. Already lacking confidence in their language skills, they choose to abandon it altogether after being told one too many times that the words they have learned at home from their parents and grandparents are “not Armenian.”

<sup>68</sup> On Armenian as a moral obligation, see Shushan Karapetian, “The Changing Role of Language in the Construction of Armenian Identity among the (American) Diaspora,” in *Reflections of Armenian Identity in History and Historiography*, eds. Hourii Berberian and Touraj Daryaei (Irvine: UCI Jordan Center for Persian Studies, 2018), 185-187.

These intellectuals succeeded in leading many speakers to internalize and perpetuate these ideals, no matter how much they are at odds with their own spoken practices or how much cognitive dissonance they generate.<sup>69</sup>

In other words, whether in the pre- or post-genocide period, Armenian intellectuals have consistently looked to written sources as models for proper language and constructed ideologies that have maintained gaps between spoken and written language and resisted any form of language contact. Through the power of this ideology and the post-genocide conceptualization of purism as essential for national survival, they have made many speakers insecure about actual spoken language use. This insecurity speaks directly to one of the challenges facing the modern-day Western Armenian revitalization efforts. Since Western Armenian was classified as “definitely endangered” by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2010, direct attention has been focused on practical strategies to revitalize it.<sup>70</sup> As part of these efforts, groups of scholars, educators and language activists in Armenian communities around the world have begun to call into question ideologies and pedagogical styles that are no longer serving the changing profile of Western Armenian speakers in the twentieth century and that are inhibiting the use of language.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Jennifer Manoukian, “The Legacy of Turkish in the Armenian Diaspora,” *Jadaliyya* (3 October 2014), <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/31293>.

<sup>70</sup> Hratch Tchilingirian, “Western Armenian in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Issues of ‘Thinking’ and ‘Creating’ in Armenian,” in *Western Armenian in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Challenges and New Approaches*, eds. Bedross Der Matossian and Barlow Der Mugrdchian (Fresno: The Press at California State University, Fresno, 2018), 1-10.

<sup>71</sup> Most of these revitalization initiatives draw on critical institutional, moral and financial support from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation’s Armenian Communities Department. On language ideologies, see Karapetian, “The Changing Role of Language,” 181-188. On new pedagogical approaches, see Al-Bataineh, Yoghoutjian and Chakmakjian, “Can Western Armenian Pedagogy Be Decolonial?,” 138-157; and chapters by Ani Garmiryan, Jesse Siragan Arlen, Shushan Karapetian, Sylvia Kasparian and Hagop Gulludjian in Bedross Der Matossian and Barlow Der Mugrdchian, eds., *Western Armenian in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Challenges and New Approaches* (Fresno: The Press at California State University, Fresno, 2018).

What have been missing from these discussions are investigations into the stifling effects of purism on Western Armenian language use in the modern day. Already in the late Ottoman period, there was a sense that an extreme obsession with purity could prove fatal to Western Armenian: “A language should always be kept open to all outside influences,” Arshag Chobanian wrote in 1901. “It should glean and adopt from them everything that adds new richness, new power and new hues to the language.”<sup>72</sup> Now once again, just as in Chobanian’s time and in the post-genocide period, Armenian intellectuals find themselves in a position of trying to create Western Armenian speakers. Now just as then, Armenian intellectuals are in the position to decide which ideals to maintain and which to shed in this act of creation. Should the New Armenian of the twenty-first century continue to hold purist ideals dear? Is the sense of moral duty that helped instill these ideals in the post-genocide period still leading speakers to the language, as it once had, or is it pushing them away?<sup>73</sup> Is the purist language ideology driving Western Armenian into a post-vernacular state in which its “symbolic value is privileged over its principal role as a medium of communication?”<sup>74</sup> Is it leading speakers to the conclusion that Western Armenian is a “sacred object” to be venerated but not used?<sup>75</sup> The revitalization campaign ultimately provides the opportunity to consider these questions and ask whether upholding an ideology of purism, born of

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<sup>72</sup> Չօպանեան, “Արդի հայերէնը,” 101.

<sup>73</sup> On the detrimental effects of purism on language communities, Nancy C. Dorian, “Purism vs. Compromise in Language Revitalization and Language Revival,” *Language in Society* 23, no. 4 (1994): 479-494 and Claude Hagège, *On the Death and Life of Languages*, trans. Jody Gladding (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 162-168.

<sup>74</sup> Karapetian, “The Changing Role of Language,” 181. To be sure, Karapetian argues that this post-vernacularity applies to the use of both Eastern and Western Armenian in diaspora. On the concept of post-vernacularity, see Jeffrey Shandler, *Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

<sup>75</sup> Gulludjian, “Language Vitality,” 106.

another time and another place, is indeed serving a positive and productive function in this day and age.

Post-Ottoman Armenian diaspora communities today still exist very much within the national paradigm we saw introduced in the 1840s. In this paradigm, the loss of a national language means the loss of national identity. In this paradigm, questioning a purist language ideology and opening the floodgates to “non-national” elements is sure to bring up quite a bit of emotion and encounter quite a bit of resistance. But if the ultimate objective is ensuring the vitality of Western Armenian, it is worth considering whether current ideologies are in fact doing more harm than good by resisting long-standing spoken practices and continuing to strive for what has always been an ideal.

This study has underscored the engineered nature of the Western Armenian standard and exposed as recent and manmade ideologies that have been assumed to be ancient and quasi-divine. Recognizing standard languages and the ideologies that undergird their use as constructions, shaped by the opinions of individual people and having emerged based on the concerns of particular eras, can help modern-day revitalizers of Western Armenian more easily see themselves as the next architects in a long line of architects of the language and, with historical precedent, be less reticent of intervention and change. These ideologies, in other words, need not seem off limits, as they can be deconstructed just as they had once been constructed. This perspective can endow revitalizers with the agency to leave their own mark on the Western Armenian standard and remake forms and ideologies to align with the needs of the modern day.

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