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Narekatsi Professor of Armenian Studies
UCLA

“The works of St. Gregory of Narek are central to the theological learning of the Armenian Apostolic Church and to its worship, yet their content is extremely sophisticated and their language can be very difficult. The festal hymns, though often seemingly light in style, are in fact particularly dense and bristle with philological problems. Professor Terian’s work is more than a monument of meticulous scholarship. It elucidates the hymns for the first time and with a precision and insight far beyond any study ever done before; all subsequent work on Narekats’i will be measured by its high standard. That standard is unlikely to be equaled, much less superseded.”

— James R. Russell
Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies
Harvard University

“Abraham Terian is to be congratulated on this magnificent, ground-breaking volume of precise and elegant translations, richly annotated in succinct, highly informative footnotes and short introductions to each of the works. Terian’s volume is a precious gift, worthy of the learned monk whose work it is no exaggeration to describe as an act of Divine grace. It is thanks to the efforts and the very considerable talent of authors like Abraham Terian that St. Gregory of Narek is gradually becoming the universally accessible mystical poet and theologian that his Armenian oeuvre proclaims.”

— Theo Maarten van Lint
Calouste Gulbenkian Professor of
Armenian Studies
University of Oxford

Abraham Terian

The Festal Works of St. Gregory of Narek

Annotated Translation of the
Odes, Litanies, and Encomia

A PUEBLO BOOK

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For Maestro Haig Utidjian

*“Gathered we all in the holy, universal, apostolic church,
we earthlings in circles, sing there in many groups,
praising with the myriads of spiritual beings, angelic;
we join the circles of the luminous kind.”*

St. Gregory of Narek
 (“Litany for the Church and the Ark of the Lord”)

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Preface

On April 12, 2015, Pope Francis officially declared St. Gregory of Narek a Doctor of the Universal Church, after an earlier pronouncement he made on February 21. Western followers of the papal declaration suddenly found themselves desirous to learn more about the tenth-century Armenian saint and his works. In general, the popular and scholarly appreciation of Gregory of Narek hinges on his book of penitential prayers, titled *Book of Lamentation* (*Matean Oghbergut'ean*). To many who are familiar with it, it is unlike anything one has ever read in the mystical tradition. Fortunately, the book is available in some Western-language translations.

The same could not be said about the present collection of his works, comprised of all his writings in the genres of odes, litanies, and encomia, presented here for the first time in translation. With the exception of some of his odes, these have long been neglected even in Armenian studies in favor of his *magnum opus*, the celebrated prayer book.

By all literary considerations, Gregory of Narek is the first great poet in Armenian literature. Some would even claim that he is the most outstanding figure in the Armenian literary heritage. Even his prose writings reflect a profound poetic talent, rich in imagination and inspiring. As in all areas of artistic endeavor, so in literature, an important criterion for measuring greatness is originality, especially in thought—even though texts do not exist without other texts. His creative and alliterative use of language has a gripping effect even when incomprehensible to readers or hearers of the classical text. His use of compound words in novel form is deeply impressive, neologisms of his creation that open new vistas

of thought. Moreover, overlapping thoughts, multiple at times and as though conceived simultaneously, combine reality and imagination in a unique way. Interesting as his thoughts are, they often create a degree of incomprehension on the part of readers—even for those well acquainted with his language. Some of his lines are quite enigmatic, but not exegetically impenetrable, as I have tried to demonstrate in this book.

As a teacher of Armenian theology and patristics at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary for more than a decade, I often had to translate excerpts from medieval sources for my students. Thus began the present translation. Were it not for the constant interest of students and others distantly following some of my presentations, however, this work would not have been completed. Among those following from a distance yet very closely, was Maestro Haig Utidjian of Charles University in Prague. Were it not for his keen, constant, and multifaceted interest in the odes, his penetrating questions and scholarly curiosity in what another person working on the same difficult texts has come to observe, this book would have remained as meager handouts. I therefore dedicate this book to him, with gratitude for all his suggestions.

I take this opportunity to express thanks to the Patriarchate of Catholic Armenians for sponsoring the two most significant conferences on St. Gregory of Narek thus far: the first in Rome (2005) and the second in Kaslik, Lebanon (2009). These international conferences, ably organized by Professors J.-P. Mahé of Paris and L. B. Zekiyán of Venice (whom Pope Francis has since appointed Apostolic Administrator *sede plena* of the Archeparchy of Armenians in Istanbul, elevating him to the office of archbishop), exemplify the best of recent “Narekean” scholarship—all the more so with the publication of the conference papers in two volumes.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my daughter Sonia for editing the translated encomia. Surely, no words are sufficient to thank my dear wife, Sara, my critical reader for fifty years. She waited many a long hour, patiently, putting much “on hold” while I was “praying” with Narekats’i.

At the 2014 annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) in San Diego, CA, I asked Mr. Hans Christoffersen of Liturgical Press if

the present book would be of interest to the editors. His personal interest was nearly immediate. Providentially, the editorial decision coincided with the papal pronouncement. My deep gratitude is hereby expressed to all decision makers and editors at the esteemed press; and, yes, humbly to His Holiness.

Abraham Terian
April 24, 2015

Introduction

A tenth-century author, Gregory of Narek (ca. 945–1003) is rightly considered the best representative of medieval Armenian spirituality. He is often acclaimed as the foremost Armenian writer and one of the greatest Christian mystics of all time. These acclamations rest primarily on his well-known prayer book, the *Book of Lamentation* (*Մանկան Ողբերգութեան*, *Matean Oghbergut'ean*), the product of the closing years of his life and reflecting the height of his spiritual and literary attainment.¹ By contrast, the works included in this volume belong to the beginning of his literary career and are less known. With the exception of the odes, they do not always reflect the quality of his later writings; nonetheless, they are literary gems that deserve not only scholarly attention but also lay readers' appreciation. While not literarily as advanced as his later works, they are no less significant in determining the shape of their respective genres within the Armenian literary heritage—be they odes, litanies, or encomia. They are highly important works for the study of medieval Armenian lyric poetry and of the liturgical creativity of the time.

Unlike his mournful, penitential prayers, a celebratory mood permeates these works. As his colophons indicate (see "Appendices" at the end of this volume), the *Encomium on the Holy Cross* and the *Encomium on the Holy Virgin*, along with the *History of the Holy Cross of Aparank'*, were commissioned works as was his earlier *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. He must have attained substantial recognition for his literary ability early in life in order to have been asked

¹ The year of his death has been traditionally associated with the year of the book's completion; he died probably not long thereafter.

to produce these compositions. In his prayer book, he alludes to his festive works collectively as “ardently joyous praises”: “But now, since I have entreated with many ardently joyous praises that are not written in this mode (i.e., as penitential prayers in the *Book of Lamentation*), hear them all, O compassionate One, along with these words” (Prayer 34.10.18–20).² He refers to two of them by title: to the *Encomium on the Holy Virgin* in Prayer 80.1.20–21, an intercessory prayer addressed to her; and to the *Encomium on the Holy Apostles* in Prayer 82.1.6–11.

Gregory was born in ca. 945, the third and youngest son of Khosrov, later bishop of the Province of Andzewats‘ik’ and author of two liturgical texts: *Exposition of the Daily Office* and *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* (d. ca. 960).³ As a widower in ca. 950, Khosrov received episcopal ordination and turned his two younger sons, Yovhannēs and Grigor, over to the care of a paternal cousin of his late wife—the abbot Anania of Narek, who had established the monastery in 935.⁴ The elder son, Sahak, stayed with Khosrov as

² «Այլ արդ, քանզի բազմաբ պաղատեցայ դրուատաբ խանդաղատականաբ, որ ոչ է գրեալ ի յայս կարգ ձայնի, լնր, բարեգութ, ըստ սմին բանի այնս ամենայնի»։ A. and J.-P. Mahé think the author is referring to his other meditative prayers—written but not included in the prayer book—so as not to let it grow out of proportion; *Paroles à Dieu de Grégoire de Narek: Introduction, traduction et notes* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 181n415. Other translators miss the allusion to previously written works.

³ Text in *Matenagirk’ Hayots’* (Armenian Classical Authors [sic], Z. Yeghavian, gen. ed. [Antelias: Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 2003–]; hereafter abbr. *MH*) 10:35–227; English version, *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy by Xosrov Anjewanac’i: Translated with an Introduction*, trans. S. P. Crowe, Armenian Church Classics (New York: St. Vartan Press, 1991).

⁴ The monastic community at Narek was probably one of several reestablished communities that had fled maltreatment in Byzantine Cappadocia during the Byzantine-Abbasid conflicts of 934–944 and the ensuing Byzantine expansionism (J.-M. Thierry, *Le couvent arménien d’Hořomos*, *Matériaux pour l’archéologie arménienne* 2 [Leuven: Peeters, 1980], 1–2; Thierry, *Monument arméniens du Vaspurakan*, *Bibliothèque archéologique et historique* 129 [Paris: Libr. orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1989], 82). This led to ever-increasing imperial demands for confession of Chalcedonian “orthodoxy” in the territories that came under Byzantine control. Consequently, there was a proliferation of relocated and new monasteries in the eastern part of Armenia. The historian Step‘anos Asoghik of Tarōn (d. ca. 1015) lists Narek among them (*History*, 3.7,

his assistant. Gregory spent his entire adult life at the monastery of Narek, not far from the southernmost shore of Lake Van, in what was the province of Rēshtunik' within the kingdom of Vaspurakan.⁵ Consequently, in Armenian he is invariably called Narekats'i, after the place with which he is always associated (this loconym will be used every now and then as a cognomen).⁶

Most of what is known with certainty about Gregory's life is gleaned from his four colophons, three of which are appended to his own writings and one to that of his father. A translation of these is provided as appendices in this volume, along with his first, brief biography by Nersēs of Lambron (1153–1198; bishop of Tarsus from 1175), gleaned from the same colophons.⁷ Nersēs shows

in *MH* 15:750–52). The tenth century also saw the establishment of the two great monasteries in northern Armenia, those of Haghbat and Sanahin. For more, see K. Maksoudian, "A Note on the Monasteries Founded during the Reign of King Abas I Bagratuni," *Revue des études arméniennes* 22 (1990–1991): 203–15; A. and J.-P. Mahé, *Grégoire de Narek. Tragédie. Matean otbergut'ean. Le Livre de Lamentation. Introduction, traduction et notes*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 584 / Subsidia 106 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 8–33; and Z. Pogossian, "The Foundation of the Monastery of Sevan: A Case Study on Monasteries, Economy and Political Power in IX-X Century Armenia," in *Le Valli dei Monaci: Atti del III Convegno Internazionale di Studio "De Re Monastica," Roma-Subiaco, 17-19 maggio, 2010*, vol. 1, ed. L. E. Pani (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2012), 181–215.

⁵ For a detailed, architectural description of the monastery with its residential caves, see A. Hakobyan, "Surb Grigor Narekats'u chgnaranē" («Սուրբ Գրիգոր Նարեկացու ձգնարանը» / "The Hermitage of Saint Gregory of Narek"), *Վարձաբ (Vardzk' or Duty of Soul [sic])*, 5/1 (2012): 21–32. For a mythic story about Gregory climbing the steep cliff in the background of the site, see P. M. Khach'atryan, *Grigor Narekats'in ev hay mijndarē* (Գրիգոր Նարեկացիի եվ հայ միջնադարը / *Gregory of Narek and the Armenian Middle Ages*), vol. 1 (Ējmiatsin: Mother See Press, 1996), 56–57.

⁶ For a comprehensive introduction, see A. Terian, "Gregory of Narek," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Patristics*, ed. K. Parry (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 278–92; H. Tamrazyan, "La vie de saint Grégoire de Narek," in *Saint Grégoire de Narek, théologien et mystique*, ed. J.-P. Mahé and B. L. Zekiyani, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 275 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2006), 33–47; and A. and J.-P. Mahé's introduction to the prayer book, *Paroles à Dieu*, 3–29.

⁷ Nersēs's colophonic biography of the saint became the basis for the hagiographies found in the *synaxaria*, the *Yaysmawurk'*; see Th. Dasnabédian,

profound appreciation for Gregory's prayers, which seem to have been popularized during the pontificate of Nersēs's great uncle, Catholicos Nersēs IV of Klay (in office 1166–1173), known as Shnorhali ("the Gracious").⁸ No medieval Armenian writer was more influenced by Gregory than Catholicos Nersēs, who may well have been instrumental in having certain of our author's prayers, odes, and litanies incorporated in liturgical books.⁹

Further autobiographical remarks may be gleaned from the *Book of Lamentation*, where Gregory remarks about his family in Prayer 51.1.9–14. When contemplating Psalm 146:3, on not putting one's trust in human beings, to whom it is but vain to cry out, he refers rhetorically to his brother(s) and parents: "To a blood brother, who

La Mère de Dieu: Études sur l'Assomption et sur l'image de la très-sainte Mère de Dieu (Antélias, LB: Catholicossat Arménien de Cilicie, 1995), 365–68, for a translation of the hagiography in the *Synaxarion* of Gregory of Khlat' (d. 1426). As a saint of the Armenian Church and man of letters, Gregory of Narek is commemorated with the "Holy Translators" of the fifth century, on the second Saturday in October.

⁸ Recognized for his passionate, ecclesiastical writings in several genres and for his pioneering ecumenical endeavors. See A. Terian, "To Byzantium with Love: The Overtures of Saint Nerses the Gracious," in *Armenian Cilicia*, ed. R. G. Hovannisian and S. Payaslian, UCLA Armenian Culture and History Series: Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces 7 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2008), 131–51; I. Augé, *Églises en dialogue: Arméniens et Byzantins dans la seconde moitié du XII^e siècle*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 633, Subsidia 124 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011).

⁹ Only two passing references to Gregory of Narek are found in earlier sources: in a eulogy of 1105 by Vardan Haykazn, "Tagh gerezmanakan vashn p'okhman eraneal ev surb Kat'oghikosin Hayots' Grigori Vkayasiri" («Տաղ գերեզմանական վասն փոխման երանեալ եւ սուրբ կաթողիկոսին Հայոց Գրիգորի Վկայասիրի» / "Eulogy on the Death of the Blessed and Holy Catholicos of the Armenians Gregory the Martyrophile") (Matenadaran M2496, fol. 326r); and in the *Chronicle* of Matthew of Edessa (d. ca. 1140) (Ժամանակագրութիւն / *Zhamanakagrut'iwon*; published under the title Պատմութիւն / *Patmut'iwon* / *History* [Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1869], 215, in Pt. 2, written no later than 1125); English version, *Armenia and the Crusades, 10th to 12th Centuries: The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, trans. A. E. Dostourian (Belmont, MA: NAASR, and Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993). Both sources cited by Khach'atryan, *Grigor Narekats'in ev hay mijnadareč*, 20.

is himself longing for serenity? To my earthly father, whose care diminished with his dwindling days? To my mother, who suffered labor pains, whose compassion ceased with her departure from this life?" In his colophon to the prayer book, however, Gregory expresses deep gratitude to his brother Yovhannēs, who succeeded Anania as abbot of Narek (see "Appendix A 4"). His gratitude to the abbot Anania is equally profound, as another colophon shows. Gregory describes him as "the spiritual and intellectual philosopher much renowned for his pious life ("Appendix A 3").¹⁰ The abbot's surviving works bear witness to this.¹¹ Elsewhere Gregory refers to himself as a teacher, using the Hebrew equivalent of the title, *rabbi* (Prayer 72.4). In his usual, self-deprecating way, however, he acknowledges: "For though I was indeed called by some of the highest names, yet the worst aspects of these define me" (Prayer 56.1.57–58). In his *Discourse* (*Ճսոյն, Կիտի*), he states: "I was dropped in the womb of the church; and being nursed with milk from her spiritual breasts, I was honored as a priest in her great house, and was privileged to partake of her old and new treasures, albeit unworthily" (MH 10:1041).¹²

¹⁰ Elsewhere, see *Prayer* 28.6 and the *Eulogy* most likely written in praise of Anania (MH 10:1103–05).

¹¹ The range of Anania's extant works is impressive (MH 10:309–657, inclusive of the introductions by T'amrazyan and Bozoyan). Collectively, they have a curricular character, revealing much of the content of his teaching. They include hortatory discourses: on the priesthood, humility, transience (in verse), and careful administration of the sacraments; treatises: on penitence with tears (in prosaic verse), moralia, and arithmology or number-mysticism; polemical diatribes: on the Dyophysites and others; a panegyric in praise of the universal church, which a later subtitle appropriates for Ējmiatsin (attributed to Anania of Sanahin [d. ca. 1070] in later manuscripts); and a brief, coerced denunciation of the T'ondrakeans, an antihierarchical movement (most probably Monothelite Eutychians rooted in Hesychastic notions of "theosis" and mysticism, and carried away with their understanding of *Theandrikos* in Pseudo-Dionysius [*Ep.* iv], hence their name; see also n82, and "Appendix C" [S7] for a verbal jab at believers in the doctrine of "theosis").

¹² Because so little is known about his life, there have been numerous attempts to fill the gaps between the few facts gathered from his writings. Myths about his saintly life became commonplace and numerous miracles were attributed to him over the years. These myths were gathered by A. T. Ghanalanyan, in

Gregory's theological education is amply displayed in this sample of his writings and amplified with deeper mysticism in his later works.¹³ Composed as liturgical works for the various Dominical and related feasts, following a long-established liturgical calendar,¹⁴ these poetic writings—the odes, especially—have attracted considerable interest over the years by enthusiasts of lyrical verse and narrative in medieval Armenian literature. Yet no scholar has hitherto done justice to these works in their liturgical and theological context, where they rightly belong and from where they derive their true meaning. Nor have these works in their entirety been translated to any language. Found in a number of separate editions, only recently were these works in different genres brought together in a single volume, first in 2003 in the *Antelias Millennial Edition* (edited by Archbishop Zareh Aznavorian), and more recently in the *Matenagirk' Hayots'* series (*MH 12*), the textual basis of the translations provided here.

his *Avandapatum* (*Ավանդատայրացում / Mythology*) (Erevan, AM: Academy of Sciences, 1969), and summed up by Khach'atryan, *Grigor Narekats'in ev hay mijnadarë*, 178–236.

¹³ On the curriculum at Narek and the works of the abbot Anania, as well as the influence of Gregory's father, Khosrov, see Terian, "Gregory of Narek," 278–92; cf. H. H. T'amrazyan, *Anania Narekats'i, Kyank'ë ev matenagrut'yunë* (*Անանիս Նարեկացի, կեսանքը եւ մասնենագրութեանը / Anania of Narek: His Life and Works*) (Erevan, AM: Arm. Academy of Sciences, 1986), 293–95, on the influence of Pseudo-Dionysian mystical theology on Gregory; T'amrazyan, *Grigor Narekats'in ev Norplatonakanut'yunë* (*Գրիգոր Նարեկացին եւ Նորպլատոնականութեանը / G. N. and Neoplatonism*) (Erevan, AM: Nairi, 2004), 21–34; T'amrazyan, "Dionisios Areopagats'in ev Grigor Narekats'in" («Դիոնիսիոս Արեոպագոսին եւ Գրիգոր Նարեկացին» / Dionysius the Areopagite and Grigor Narekats'i) *Banber Matenadaran* 21 (2014): 15–34. S. La Porta sees no clear terminological indications of a direct Dionysian influence in Gregory's works, "Two Visions of Mysticism: The Corpus Dionysiacum and the Book of Lamentation," in *Saint Grégoire de Narek et la liturgie de l'Église. Colloque international organisé par le Patriarcat Arménien Catholique à l'Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik (USEK), Liban. Actes publiés*, ed. J.-P. Mahé, P. Rouhana, and B. L. Zekiyian, *Revue Théologique de Kaslik* 3–4 (Kaslik, LB: Faculté Pontificale de Théologie / Université Saint-Esprit, 2009–2010), 243–57.

¹⁴ Structured around the five main feasts of the early church: those of Epiphany, Easter, Transfiguration, Assumption of Mary, and Exaltation of the Cross.

Until this translation, the texts of many of the odes were considered too corrupted to be comprehensible, and, as evidenced by earlier translations, in many instances they were misunderstood. These texts and the other writings translated here open a new chapter in the study and appreciation of Gregory's use of symbolism, drawn from the Scriptures and the natural world around him. The way he brings the theology of these symbols to bear on his sacramental theology in the prayer book, and liturgical theology in these writings, remains to be studied. The same could be said of his poetical-theological method in both the prayer book and these writings.

The Festal Works

Speaking of the symbolism of the church, Catholicos Yovhan of Ōdzun (in office 717–728) declares: “The joyous feasts therein point to the earnest of the hoped-for joy of those who see God; they reflect the all-around beauty and the rejoicing in heaven. As it is written: ‘Everlasting joy is upon their heads’” (Isa 35:10; 61:7 LXX and Arm.).¹⁵ Accordingly, these surviving liturgical samples of odes and litanies offer glimpses into the “heavenly” experience of the festive community, in worship at Narek. Such jubilation emanates from the faith of those celebrating; it reflects the doctrinal perspectives not only of the author but also of the community, with our author as a major contributor to its joyousness. Moreover, these compositions are literary works meant for public worship by a community that must have been musically oriented. A number of the festal works contain lines that clearly indicate active communal participation in song and recitation;¹⁶ some of these lines are quoted below.

¹⁵ «Իսկ տանք ցնծութեան, որ ի սմա՝ առհաւատչեայ յուսացեալ ուրախութեան զԱստուած տեսողացն, եւ յերկնայինս գեղապարտութեան եւ խնդութեան տայ գտարացոյց, ըստ գրեցելումն, թէ՛ ‘Ուրախութիւն յաւիտենից ի վերայ գլխոց նոցա՝» “*Char' erkrord yekeghets'i*” («Ճառ երկրորդ յեկեղեցի», “Second Homily on the Church”) 33 (full text in *MH* 7:95–104).

¹⁶ See, e.g., 2, lines 67–68; 2A, lines 25–27; 7, lines 105–6; 11, lines 1–3, 11–12; 16, lines 75–76, 109–10, 118–19; Suppl. 2.4, lines 23–24; Suppl. 2.5, lines 48–52,

Like other Armenian fathers of the church, Gregory loved to employ a great variety of images drawn from the Bible; no other father, however, juxtaposed as many images in his thoughts as Gregory did. Consequently, familiarity with the contents of the Bible, its imagery, and the medieval history of interpretation of at least its most striking parts, is a requisite to understanding his works.¹⁷ A deep misunderstanding of the odes and most of the author's other writings prevails in "Narekean" scholarship since the middle of the twentieth century—for lack of biblical and medieval theological awareness in Soviet Armenian scholarship devoted to our author.¹⁸ Consequently, absurdities abound in secular interpretations of the odes and of much else by Gregory. These I find unnecessary to recount in this introduction.¹⁹ There are, to be sure,

57–58, 100–104 (with relics of the apostles); *Encomium on the Holy Virgin* A 6–8 (= B 3.10–12); *Encomium on the Holy Apostles* 12.55. He even contemplates heavenly participants in these celebrations; e.g., 4A, line 16; 7, lines 28–29; 10, lines 10–14; 14, lines 145–46. Some of these passages are excerpted below, in block quotes.

¹⁷ There was a mode of biblical reading in his time—an inherited understanding of the text. There was the literal or historical meaning and the spiritual or allegorical meaning. The latter meaning, on which our author dwells, did not negate the literal reading of the historical parts but served to validate it, and vice versa.

¹⁸ M. Mkryan, *Grigor Narekats'i* (Erevan, AM: Erevani Hamalsarani Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1955), 140–68; V. Geworgyan, *Grigor Narekats'i: Matyan Oghbergut'ean, Tagher* (Գրիգոր Նարեկացի, Մատյան ողբերգութեան, Տաղեր / *Grigor Narekats'i: Tragedy Book, Poems [sic]*) (Erevan, AM: Zangak-97, 2007), 430–31, and others fail to discern the religious pervasiveness throughout the odes.

¹⁹ This is not the place to provide a history of scholarship on Gregory of Narek. Suffice it to point to the relatively recent publications which began to appear since 2003, when Armenians everywhere commemorated the millennium of Gregory's death. Two volumes of published papers from international conferences devoted to our author must be singled out: J.-P. Mahé and B. L. Zekiyán, eds., *Saint Grégoire de Narek, Théologien et Mystique*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 275 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2006); and J.-P. Mahé, P. Rouhana, and B. L. Zekiyán, eds., *Saint Grégoire de Narek et la liturgie de l'Église. Colloque international organisé par le Patriarcat Arménien Catholique à l'Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik (USEK), Liban. Actes publiés. Revue Théologique de Kaslik* 3–4 (Kaslik, LB: Faculté Pontificale de Théologie / Université Saint-Esprit, 2009–2010).

some traces of pre-Christian mythical elements in his poetry. They are, however, extremely rare and come in a Christianized form.²⁰

Apart from the scattered individual odes in translation, cited at the end of the respective odes rendered in this volume, mention must be made of translations of Gregory's collected odes. Mkhit'aryan's work, which also has the classical text en-face, antedates K'yoshkeryan's edition and thus lacks the contribution made by her textual analysis. Although he shows awareness of eleven manuscripts at the Matenadaran, which he lists at the end of his introduction, the text he provides is simply that of the nineteenth-century Venetian editions.²¹ His arrangement of the odes is unsystematic and the Eastern Armenian translation poorer than the wanting text. So too is Geworgyan's translation, provided at the end of his Eastern Armenian translation of the *Book of Lamentation*.²² It abounds with absurdities indicative of misunderstanding the text. French translations do not fare better. Godel follows Mkhit'aryan in nearly every respect, following his sequence of the odes for the most part. Godel's French translation, however, in its guise of dynamism, distorts further Mkhit'aryan's flawed translation, on which it relies rather heavily. It is curious that Godel omits

²⁰ In 14A, "Ode for the Church," lines 5 and 10 (seeing the vulnerability of the infant Jesus as that of a reed, and the eyes of the Virgin as suns; both images evoke the myth of the birth of the god Vahagn (cf. Khorenats'i, *History*, 1.31). J.-P. Mahé, "Echos mythologiques et poésie orale dans l'oeuvre de Grigor Narekac'i," *Revue des études arméniennes* 17 (1983): 249–78, singles out Prayers 12.3 (an invocation of divine protection on doors and windows against demons), 26.2 (a traditional single-rhymed lament), 66.6 (a spell to neutralize a wolf-like monster) and 92.2 (the significations of the flat wooden gong of the caller to prayer—the *zhamahar*—among which Mahé sees the club with which the storm-god hammers the mythical dragon). Mahé's first example is actually a meditation on Exod 12:1-13, the smearing of the door frames with blood during Passover; the second is pointless apart from drawing attention to the rhyme; the third is on warding off Satan or demons in general, not an incantation; and his last example, a stretch drawn from a simple comparison based on the wooden church bell as a symbol of the cross.

²¹ Note his A (1804), B (1827), and C (1840); A. Mkhit'aryan, *Grigor Narekats'i: Tagher (Գրիգոր Նարեկացի, Տաղեր / Grigor Narekats'i: Odes)* (Erevan, AM: Haypethrat, 1957), 40.

²² *Grigor Narekats'i: Matyan Oghbergut'ean, Tagher*, 403–29.

12A, “Ode for the Church,” possibly because of the difficulty of the text through which Mkhit’aryan navigates rather incoherently.²³ Moreover, Godel punctuates his translation of the odes with translation of several prayers from the *Book of Lamentation*, selections that have no thematic coherence with the odes.²⁴ Equally amiss is Marcel’s earlier translation of the odes.²⁵

There are no systematic studies of either the litanies or the encomia of our author, and only rarely may a study of an individual litany or an encomium be found. Of the latter, Dasnabédian’s meritorious work on the *Encomium on the Holy Virgin* deserves special mention here.²⁶ No less noteworthy is Archbishop Pogharian’s Western-Armenian translation of the encomia, inclusive of the *History of the Holy Cross of Aparank’*, with which the encomia begin.²⁷

The Odes

Little is known about the formation of the Armenian Church’s hymnal, the *Sharaknots’*,²⁸ prior to the substantial additions and

²³ Mkhit’aryan, *Grigor Narekats’i: Tagher*, 107, 109.

²⁴ V. Godel, *Grégoire de Narek: Odes et Lamentations*, Orphée, Deuxième série 211 (Paris: La Difference, 1995), 19, 29, 37, 49, 69, 81, 91, 105, 113.

²⁵ L.-P. Marcel, *Grégoire de Narek et l’ancienne poésie arménienne* (Paris: Editions des Cahiers du Sud, 1953), 45–85.

²⁶ Th. Dasnabédian, *Le Panégyrique de la Sainte Mère de Dieu de Grigor Narekac’i: Introduction, traduction, commentaire* (Antélias, LB: Catholicosats Arménien de Cilicie, 1995). For her other studies on Mary in the Armenian tradition, see the bibliography.

²⁷ *Grigor Narekats’i: Nerboghner* (Գրիգոր Նարեկացի. Ներբողներ / *Grigor Narekats’i: Encomia*), trans. N. Pogharian (Bogharian / Tsovakan), (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1995).

²⁸ There is no evidence from before the eleventh century for the use of the word *sharakan*, q.v. in H. Achařyan, *Hayeren armatakan bařaran* (Հայերէն արմատական բառարան / *Armenian Etymological Dictionary*), 4 vols. (Erevan, AM: State University, 1971–1979), 3:501–2. Etymologically, the word refers to the arrangement of the hymns in eight tones or melodies, introduced in the eighth century by Bishop Step’anos of Siwnik’, influenced by the eightfold division of Byzantine chants called the *oktoechos*; see M. D. Findikyan, *The Commentary on the Armenian Daily Office by Bishop Step’anos Siwnec’i (d. 735): Critical Edition and Translation with Textual and Liturgical Analysis*, *Orientalia*

likely revisions of the twelfth century—when scores of hymns composed in verse by the aforementioned Catholicos Nersēs Shnorhali (and some by his kin) were added.²⁹ The same could be said about

Christiana Analecta 270 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2004), 40–57; Findikyan, “An Armenian Funeral Prayer Attributed to Bishop Step’anos of Siwnik’ and the Prayer for the Blessing of Water,” in *Synaxis Katholikē: Beiträge zu Gottesdienst und Geschichte der fünf altkirchlichen Patriarchate für Heinzgerd Brakmann zum 70.*, ed. Geburstag, D. Atanassova, and T. Chronz, 2 vols., Orientalia—patristica—oecumenica 6 (Münster and Wien: LIT Verlag, 2014) 1:197–212, citing A. S. Arevshatyan, “L’identité de Step’anos Siwnec’i,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 30 (2005): 401–10. Some authorial names associated with the earlier *sharakans* are highly questionable. The various lists of traditionally recognized authors, drawn since the thirteenth century, have been compiled by H. S. Anasian, in *MH* 8:13–24.

²⁹ F. C. Conybeare’s comments in “The Hymnal of the Armenian Church,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 7 (January 1906): 285–92, repr. in Conybeare, *The Armenian Church: Heritage and Identity*, ed. V. N. Nersessian (New York: St. Vartan Press, 2001), 858–63, are limited to the findings of N. Ter-Mikaëlian, *Das armenische hymnarium: Studien zu seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1905), esp. pp. 34–47. The latter’s observations are based strictly on the unique, tripartite division of manuscript 202 of the Viennese Mkhit’arists, described as preserving the old hymnal in its first part, copied in 1312 with the distinct additions of the twelfth century in the second part, and the later additions in the third part penned by a different hand in 1617. Conybeare remarks about the “older Hymnal”: “There were no special canons for the Sunday of Lent, nor were any commemorations attached to the Saturdays preceding them, nor hymns given for the saints concerned. . . . Between Easter and Pentecost there were only the series of Easter hymns in the eight tones or melodies. There was no special canon for Easter Day. . . . Important feasts, like Pentecost, Transfiguration and the Assumption, have but one canon, that is one day, instead of several, allotted to them. The older Hymnal had no canons or feasts of the Birth of Mary and of her Parents. It also had but one canon for the Birth of St. John Baptist, viz. No. 78; and no separate canon (24) for the glorification of the Seventy-two Apostles. . . . St. Hripsime was lauded, but St. Gregory [the Illuminator] and his kin and descendants received scant notice in the old hymnals” (p. 862). Looking at Gregory’s odes and the poetic parts of his litanies and encomia vis-à-vis these remarks can be instructive. For a construct of the canons in the light of 130 manuscripts of the *Sharaknots’* at San Lazzaro, see S. Chemchemian (Jemjemian), “*Dzeragir Sharaknots’nerë ew anonts’ kanonnerë*” («Չերագիր Շարակնոտները և անոնց կանոնները» / “Manuscripts of the *Sharaknots’* and Their Canons”), *Bazmavêp* 127 (1969): 193–209, 305–12.

the formation of the *Tagharan*, the collection of hymnic odes to which Gregory of Narek is a major contributor and which underwent editorial work in the same Cilician period.³⁰ These compositions have to be seen as songs of praise, complementary to the canonical hymns for the mostly Dominical and Marian feasts, adding to the festive spirit of the days of celebration. Their early liturgical use, however, remains uncertain. To the end of this period of editorial activity belongs also the formation of the *Gandzaran*,³¹ the collection of litanic compositions, a genre of which Gregory is the progenitor; more on this below.

During these editorial activities, especially those entailing the formation of the *Tagharan* and the *Gandzaran*, there appears to have been considerable duplication of contents and interchangeable and inconsistent use of terms tagged to the individual compositions within each of the two collections. The word *tagh* was used mostly for versed odes of several verses and at times for detached verses, and *gandz* for the more litanic compositions in free verse and irregular lines. A third word, *meghedi*,³² a term used mostly for short melismatic pieces such as those sung during the Preparation of the Gifts during the Divine Liturgy, appears in the titles of odes of varying length.

The word *tagh*, however, generally translated “ode,” is never used by Gregory with reference to his odes.³³ Literally, the word

³⁰ On the editorial stages of the *Sharaknots'* and the formation of the *Tagharan* and the *Gandzaran*, see the collected studies by N. Tsovakan (Bogharian / Pogharian), *Vanatur. Banasirakan yōduatsneru zhoghovatsoy* (Վանատուրն. Բանասիրական յօդուատներու ժողովածոյ / Greeter: Collected Philological Articles) (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1993), 246–50 on the *Sharaknots'*; 136–41 on early odes where he attributes certain of Gregory's odes to Step'anos of Siwnik'; and 226–29, 277–80 on the *Gandzaran*. An Armenian system of musical notation known as “*khaz*” is attested in this period. Expressed with marks or neumes, over and after vowels, this old notation still resists deciphering.

³¹ The compilation was further shaped in the fifteenth century—after Matt'ēos *vardapet* of Jugha (d. ca. 1412) had added his canticles (*meghedik'*) and litanic compositions (*gandzk'*); Tsovakan, *Vanatur*, 277–80.

³² From Gk. *melos*, *melōdia*, variously applied to odes by later authors in the *Tagharan* and the *Gandzaran*.

³³ M. Mkryan, *Grigor Narekats'i*, 140–41. Also of later, editorial origin, is the use of the term «Մեղեդի» (*Meghedi*), on which see the introduction to 14A

means “song”; just as *Tagharan* stands for a collection of such compositions, “a song-book.” Two synonyms predate the word *tagh*: they are *erg* (“song”) and *k’ert’uats* (“poem”). Achařyan observes that the word *tagh* does not occur in the literature of the Armenian Golden Age (fifth century), and the examples he gives of its early usage are from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries.³⁴ In one of Gregory’s two acrostic odes (4A; cf. 4B), now titled «Տաղ Սրբոց Քառասնից եւ այլ վկայից» (“*Tagh Srbots’ K’arasnits’ ew ayl vkayits’*” / “Ode for the Forty and Other Holy Martyrs”), the initial letters of the lines read ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻ Ե ԵՐԳՍ ԱՅՍ (*GRIGORI ERGS AYS* / “This Song Is by Grigor”). Similarly, he uses the word *erg* when labeling his acrostic compositions in a predominantly litanic form (hence my and others’ calling them “litanies”); only one of them he labels *gandz*.³⁵ Moreover, he uses the word *gandz* as the initial word of nearly all his acrostic compositions in this genre (nos. 2, 9, 10, 13–16, and Suppl. 2.5), becoming its progenitor—all the more so as others after him began their litanic compositions imitatively with the same word, *gandz* (on which more will be said below, under the subheading “Litanies”). Thus *erg* (“song”) is his common designation for poetic compositions, be they odes or litanies. As for *meghedi*, generally translated “canticle” in the lexica, it appears in only two titles of Gregory’s odes (5B and 14A Var.), where it is clearly an editorial input. These three literary terms

(Variant), “Canticle for the Nativity”; also V. Dewrikan’s “Introduction” to the *Gandzaran*, especially in *MH* 13.1:18.

³⁴ Achařyan, *Hayeren armatakan bařaran*, 4:362. He compares the word with Greek *thalia* (“festal cheer” or, according to him, “wedding song”) and Old Persian *dalash* or *dalan* (“sound” or “voice”).

³⁵ Six litanies have the same acrostic structure, with the same letters, ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻ ԵՐԳ: nos. 2, 9, 10, 13, 14, and 15, to which the modified ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻ ԵԶԳ of litanies 16 and Suppl. 2.5 has to be added (see discussion below). No. 7 has Ի ԶԱՅՆՆ ԵՐԳ, and no. 11, ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻ ԳԱՆԶ. No. 12 is the only nonacrostic litany. By contrast, only two odes are in acrostic form: 4A reads ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻ Ե ԵՐԳՍ ԱՅՍ, and the “Alternate,” 4B has Ի ԶԱՆԱՍՈՒՆ ՎԿԱՅՍՆ (cf. Suppl. 3.1, for an ode with the repeated letter «Կ»). Moreover, Grigor inserts two acrostic compositions in his encomia: alphabetic in *Encomium on the Holy Cross*, and onomastic (ԳՐԻԳՈՐ) in *Encomium on the Holy Virgin*. Furthermore, he has a nonacrostic poem inserted in *Encomium on the Holy Apostles*.

were variously and inconsistently applied in the Cilician period to various hymnic compositions by different authors, and their inconsistent use in later manuscripts continued in the printed editions.

Gregory was fortunate to have had the good company of talented monks at Narek. The historian Step'anos Asoghik of Tarōn (d. ca. 1015), who was educated at the same monastery, mentions the presence of “multitalented, highly accomplished singers and literary scholars” residing there.³⁶ Gregory was one of them. Those singers and scholars at Narek, a place of charismatic mysticism not unlike hesychasm, were theologically informed, and their worship was guided and shaped by centuries of psalmodic traditions and more.³⁷ They were earnest about the psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles recommended by St. Paul to the churches of Corinth (1 Cor 14:26), Ephesus (Eph 5:19), and Colosse (Col 3:16). They experienced regularly the spirit into which one must be absorbed in order to understand and sing them properly; they were imbued with the spirit of the psalmodic chants sung to free melodies and the praises that followed—some conceivably of their own composition.³⁸

Illustrative of the singing at Narek are the opening lines of 12, “Litany for the Church and the Ark of the Lord”:

Gathered we all in the holy, universal, apostolic church,
we earthlings in circles, sing there in many groups,
praising with the myriads of spiritual beings, angelic;
we join the circles of the luminous kind.

So also 14, “Litany for the Assumption of the Most Blessed Holy Bearer of God,” lines 6–8:

³⁶ «բազմազարդ պաշտանապայծառ երգեցողովք եւ գրական գիտաւորովք»; *History*, 3.7, in *MH* 15:751.27.

³⁷ See above, n28, on the traditional melodies categorized into eight tones or modes, influenced by the eightfold division of Byzantine chants called the *oktoechos*.

³⁸ Descriptive of this is Gregory's comment after alluding to Ps 96 (95 LXX):12-13, on nature praising God, in *Encomium on the Holy Cross*, A 10–12, 40 (B 11–13, 53), where he seems to convey some of its “applied theology”; cf. *Encomium on the Holy Virgin*, A 6–8, 36 (B 3.10–12, [4.13], 13.36).

With encomia of praise and the singing of the “Thrice Holy,”
with ceaseless voice, celebrating in concert,
we sing to you, most blessed of women.

And again, in Suppl. 2.4, “Ode for the Coming of the Holy Spirit,”
lines 1–4:

With melodious voice (and) sweet sound
We sing to you in seraphic tongue,
O union of Three Persons in the Godhead,
One Divinity, of the same nature.³⁹

A favorite literary form, and a convenient mnemonic device in recitation or singing, is the “chain verse” in which the last word of one line becomes the first word of the next line. Several of Gregory’s odes are composed with this poetic technique (3A, 5A, 5B, 5B Var., 5C, 6A). A related form utilized a word in each first part of a line from the second part of the preceding line (employed in part in 13A; both forms employed in 15A).

It is not at all surprising that certain features of odes, litanies, and encomia overlap, making the genres somewhat blurry at times

³⁹ Cf. 1A, line 76: “Good news shall we sing always.” 8A, lines 70–72: “To you who ascended to your holy sanctuary / We sing with the sound of the trumpet, / Along with the seraphim, to you, O thrice holy.” 9A, line 17: “That by your will I may sing songs of praise to you who are the Existent.” Suppl. 1, lines 63–65: “And the children of New Sion / Sing a new song, saying: / Glory to the all-powerful resurrection of Christ.”

Noteworthy is the author’s infrequent use of the first-person singular pronoun (9A, lines 13–18; 11, lines 118–19; 15A, lines 1, 7–8, 11–12; *History of the Holy Cross of Aparank’*, 6.28; *Encomium on the Holy Cross*, B 52; *Encomium on the Holy Virgin*, A 6, 93–94 [B 3.10, 25.93–97]; *Encomium on the Holy Apostles*, 1.4, 2.8, 16.76, 18.86; *Encomium on St. James of Nisibis*, 2.8, 14.40, 30.104), in contrast to his frequent use of “I” in the *Book of Lamentation*, where he places himself in nearly every biblical picture he describes; see A. Terian, “Narekac’i: The Exegete in His Exegesis,” in *Saint Grégoire de Narek et la liturgie de l’Église. Colloque international organisé par le Patriarcat Arménien Catholique à l’Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik (USEK), Liban. Actes publiés*, ed. J.-P. Mahé, P. Rouhana, and B. L. Zekiyian, *Revue Théologique de Kaslik* 3–4 (Kaslik, LB: Faculté Pontificale de Théologie / Université Saint-Esprit, 2009–2010), 213–28.

but not unrecognizable. After all, odes also fall into a more general category of praise. Moreover, there are two whole acrostic litanies embedded in the encomia and meant to be more pronounced in their manner of recitation—indeed chanted or sung. One such alphabetic acrostic litany in the *Encomium on the Holy Cross* is introduced with these words (quoted above): “As for us, to the measure of our ability, we shall sing in laudation of the life-giving sign of the divine cross, with the clarity of a gifted voice . . .” (A 40 = B 8.53). In the *Encomium on the Holy Virgin*, he introduces three paragraphs that begin with the words “Blessed are you” with these words: “Those who behold with their non-physical eyes and who sing blessings with pleasing and melodious voices, bless you perpetually . . .” (A 36 = B 13.36). And again, when introducing an onomastic acrostic litany which spells his name: “And beneath this ornate arch we will honor you . . .” (A 74 = B 22.84). Similarly, he inserts an ode in the *Encomium on the Holy Apostles* (13.64–66).

Obviously, some of the odes were used—with or without adaptation—for feasts other than those for which they were originally composed. This practice seems to have necessitated certain adaptations witnessed in the manuscripts with their abundant variants. It is not difficult to observe, on theological grounds, how a nativity ode could be used for a Marian feast and become a Marian ode in the process; or for a Marian ode to become an ode for the feast of the church or be used for a church dedication—underscoring the theological commonality between Mariology and ecclesiology. Just as clearly, one could see how an ode for the Forty Martyrs of Sebastia could be used for commemorating other martyrs. Repeated musical adaptations are among other contributing factors to the range of the odes’ variants. The odes’ broad popularity seems to have compounded their textual problems, with stretched melismata giving rise to shorter versions.⁴⁰

Several stanzas from Gregory’s various odes are utilized as “variables,” known as *Patshachk’* (“Propers” in the Divine Liturgy), for selection—among others—as befits the significant feast day,

⁴⁰ For this keen observation and for details on all musical aspects of the odes, their neumatic notation in the manuscripts, etc., I am deeply indebted to H. Utidjian.

and sung as a *meghedi* during the *Prothesis* (the Preparation of the Gifts for the Eucharist). Some of these were translated into English by Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan: “Variables of the Divine Liturgy Proper to Various Feast Days,” in his first English edition of the Armenian Divine Liturgy and revised by him in subsequent editions.⁴¹ The following are the utilized stanzas, in the order of the “Propers”:

- Proper 1. For Ordinary Sundays (among the options).
(a) 15A, “Ode for the Holy Cross,” lines 1–4.
(b) 10B, “Antiphon,” lines 1–2.
6c, “Ode for the Resurrection,” lines 1–6.
- Proper 10. For the Transfiguration.
13A, “Ode for the Transfiguration,” lines 1–4.
- Proper 11. For the Feast of the Church.
Suppl. 2.2, “Ode for the Holy Cross,” lines 1–4.
6B, “Antiphon,” lines 1–8, 15–18.⁴²
- Proper 12. For the Marian Feasts (among the options).
14A, “Ode for the Church,” lines 9–10.
- Proper 13. For the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.
(a) 15A, “Ode for the Holy Cross,” lines 1–4.
(b) Suppl. 2.2, “Ode for the Holy Cross,” lines 7–16.

There are extant melodies, transcribed during the nineteenth century, for some five or six of the odes. These melodies are associated with the remnants of the oral tradition of the time and in some cases are particularly likely to represent relatively recent compositional activity on the part of church musicians, rather than reflecting aspects of the neumatic notation found in the medieval

⁴¹ Tiran Nersoyan, ed. and trans., *Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church*, rev. 5th ed. (London: Saint Sarkis Church, 1984), 141–84, without the Arm. Text; (first published [New York: The Delphic Press], 129–211, including the Arm. Text).

⁴² In the following order of lines: 1–6, 15–16, 7–8, 17–18.

codices. This, of course, need not reduce their musical value.⁴³ The odes for which melodies exist are: “*Hawun, hawun*” (10B, “Antiphon”); “*Gohar vardēn vař áreal*” (13A, “Ode for the Transfiguration”); “*Ach’k’n tsov i tsov*” (14A Var., “Ode for the Church”); “*Yes dzayn zařiwtsun asem*” (15A, “Ode for the Holy Cross”); “*Sayln ayn ijanēr*” (Suppl. 1, “Ode for the Resurrection”); and “*Hawik mi paytsař*” (Suppl. 2.2, “Ode for the Holy Cross,” the authorship of which is occasionally questioned).

The Litanies

Conforming to a literary form or genre, the composition known as *k’aroz* (from Syriac *karuzútha*) or *gandz* (from Gregory’s contribution to the genre) is an array of litanic and para-litanic prayers, distinct from litanies or bidding prayers recited by deacons during the Liturgy of the Hours—from which it derives.⁴⁴ In general, and as seen in the author’s litanies, the composition consists of linked prayers that begin with confessional statements and invocation addressed to the Triune God, followed by occasional reference to the commemoration of the feast (whether Dominical or Marian), and followed by petitionary prayers of intercession. The recollection of the festal occasion often partakes of the nature of a prayerful homily, addressed not so much to the congregation as to God and punctuated with refrains addressed to God. In their present form, Gregory’s works in this genre show an evolution that seems to have preserved the traditional *k’aroz* with addenda, transformed into a chain of prayers including diaconal bidding with a standardized couplet of the collect (“To commit ourselves and one another / to

⁴³ H. Utidjian, “Poezie a hudba sv. Řehoře z Nareku jako zrcadlo arménské historie v druhém tisíciletí” (“The poetry and music of St. Gregory of Narek as a mirror of Armenian history over the second millennium”), *Parrésia* 8 (2014): 311–70 (in Czech). I am grateful to the author for providing this abstract.

⁴⁴ For an early form of *k’aroz* in Armenian, see that of Catholicos Yovhan of Ōdzun (in office 717–728), which is a morning prayer without further litanic development (text in *MH* 7:110).

the almighty Lord God, we pray”⁴⁵ or an equivalent by Gregory beginning with the letter «ը» to yield the acrostic «երգ» [*erg*, “song”]). The petitionary prayer—whether as part of the larger prayer or as its sequel—progresses from the general to the specific, asking blessings for the church patriarch and bishops, priests and *vardapets* or Doctors of the Church, deacons and the rest of the clergy to the least of the clerical officers, the king, princes, military commanders and their troops, and believers in general. The ascription, or the concluding litany of the saints, follows a long-established order invoking (1) the Blessed Virgin Mary, (2) St. John the Baptist, (3) St. Stephen the Protomartyr, (4) the Apostles and the Prophets, (5) St. Gregory the Illuminator, who sometimes precedes the Apostles and the Prophets, and (6) the martyrs with the ascetics collectively.⁴⁶

The author’s calling the litanic compositions *erg* (“song”) in his acrostic arrangements⁴⁷ distinguishes them from the usual litanies

⁴⁵ K’yoshkeryan comments on this traditional collect, referred to as “K’aroz *Zatgats’*” («Քարոզ Չատկաց» / “Passover Collect”) and questionably attributed to St. Basil of Caesarea, as the archetype of the distinctive collect(s) by Gregory of Narek; *Grigor Narekats’i: Tagher ev Gandzer*, hereafter abbr. *TG* (*Գրիգոր Նարեկացի. Տաղեր եւ Գանձեր / Grigor Narekats’i: Odes and Litanies*) (Erevan, AM: Arm. Academy of Sciences, 1981), 25–27.

⁴⁶ The commemoration was limited to the first three named saints in the early church, after whom the three apses of the church were named, the main apse always for the Holy Mother of God. See M. Örmanian, *Tsisakan baġaran* (*Ծիսակալան քառաքան / Liturgical Dictionary*), English version, *A Dictionary of the Armenian Church*, trans. B. Norehad (New York: St. Vartan Press, 1984), 134. Gregory’s father, Khosrov, comments on the litany of the saints within the litany of intercessions (the Diptychs), in his *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, §114, where the *lemma* reads: “Let there be commemoration of the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, Saint Stephen. Let there be commemoration of the Holy Apostles, prophets, martyrs, Peter, Paul, and all the saints. Let there be commemoration of the holy patriarchs, blessed Saint Gregory and all the holy orthodox bishops and priests and all the clergy of the church. Let there be commemoration of men and women who with faith have fallen asleep in Christ.” Cited by K’yoshkeryan, *TG*, 26; cf. Cowe, *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, 185, 187.

⁴⁷ Six litanies have the same acrostic structure, with the same letters, ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻ ԵՐԳ: nos. 2, 9, 10, 13, 14, and 15, to which the modified

known as *k'aroz*—a common term in the *Breviary* (*Zhamagirk'*) where it is also used as a rubric for litanic parts; e.g., diaconal proclamations, whether short or long with appropriate responses, priestly prayers, and melodic invocations. While in such usages the term *k'aroz* leaves no doubt about its Syriac origin, the origin of the designation *gandz* for litanic arrangements such as Gregory's—and of the derivative *Gandzaran* for a collection of such compositions—calls for further philological and literary-historical analysis.⁴⁸

Although the word *gandz* brings to mind the Old Persian word *ganz* (meaning “song”)⁴⁹ and the common Semitic term *knz* (variously borrowed term, meaning “treasure”),⁵⁰ a cursory analysis of the form of these compositions yields sufficient reason to associate the Armenian development of the genre and its appellation with Gregory himself. Nearly all of his litanies begin with the word *gandz*, except for nos. 7 (the only acrostic litany without his name), 11 (the only such litany among the acrostic litanies with his name), and 12 (the only nonacrostic litany). His predilection for the opening word *gandz* is invariably bound to his name, as he begins

ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻ ԵԶԳ of litanies 16 and Suppl. 2.5 has to be added (see discussion below). No. 7 has Ի ՁԱՅՆՆ ԵՐԳ, and no. 11, ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻ ԳԱՆԶ. No. 12 is the only nonacrostic litany. By contrast, only two odes are in acrostic form: 4A reads ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻ Ե ԵՐԳՍ ԱՅՍ, and its “Alternate,” 4B, has Ի ԶԱՌԱՍՈՒՆ ՎԿԱՅՍՆ (cf. Suppl. 3.1, for an ode with the repeated letter «Կ»). Moreover, Grigor inserts two acrostic compositions in his encomia: alphabetic in *Encomium on the Holy Cross*, and onomastic (ԳՐԻԳՈՐ) in *Encomium on the Holy Virgin*. Furthermore, he has a nonacrostic poem inserted in *Encomium on the Holy Apostles*.

⁴⁸ Gēorg of Skewra (d. 1301), who was instrumental in the expansion of the *Gandzaran*, calls each of his own litanies *K'aroz*; Tsovakian, *Vanatur*, 226–29.

⁴⁹ See «Գաւն» in Achařyan, *Hayeren armatakan bařaran*, 1:517; see also Mkryan, *Grigor Narekats'i*, 139.

⁵⁰ Cf. Syr. *geza* or *gaza*, lit., “treasury” (as in Gk. *thēsauros*); a word applied to the large collection of hymns and anthems proper to the feast days in the East Syrian (Nestorian) tradition; Assyrian Church of the East, *East Syrian Daily Offices, Translated from the Syriac* . . . , trans. A. J. Maclean (London: Rivington, Percival & Co., 1894; repr. Farnborough Hants, UK: Gregg, 1969; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), xi. Notwithstanding the equivalence of Arm. *gandz* to Syr. *geza* or *gaza*, both linguistically and liturgically, the Armenian usage of the term owes to Gregory.

acrostically with the letter “G” (Գ). Moreover, his initial word constitutes an expression of his profound appreciation of the subject on which he is writing, coupled with the fact that he often begins with doctrinal statements on the Holy Trinity as revealed in Jesus Christ—whose coming the Blessed Virgin made possible. It is the rich theology of this revealed mystery that is expressed in the word *gandz*, truly “a treasure within a treasure.” Since most of these compositions begin doxologically with this word, and since compositions were better known by their opening words than by their respective titles, the word *gandzaran* became descriptive of the primary collection to which Gregory was the major contributor. His compositions were a prized part of the collection, and they inspired several subsequent authors to begin not a few of their respective contributions similarly with the word *gandz*.⁵¹ Thus, Gregory’s indubitable stamp remains on the collection as a whole.⁵² There is no evidence of this nomenclature of the form, or of the genre as we know it in Armenian, before him.⁵³

Older litanies are generally comprised of instructive remarks about the respective feasts and are informed by the early narrative of the celebrated events. In composing them Gregory drew from a stock of homilies for the liturgical year, woven around the life of Christ.⁵⁴ This wealth in the native language was amassed over a period of five centuries, beginning with early translations and

⁵¹ Such as by Nersēs Shnorhali, Mkhit’ar of Ayrivank’, et al. Later contributors to the genre dwelt more on its “memorializing” aspect and turned it to a funerary litany.

⁵² A. S. Arevshatyan, “Le genre du K’aroz (sermon melodisé) dans le chant sacré arménien,” *Revue des études arméniennes* 24 (1993): 129–51; Arevshatyan, «Գաւձ» (“Gandz”), in *K’ristonya Hayastan*, ed. A. Ghazaryan et al., (Erevan, AM: Haykakan Hanragitarani Glkhavor Khmbagrut’yun, 2002), 190–91.

⁵³ A. and J.-P. Mahé conclude: “Transformé en un long panégyrique narratif sur le sens et l’origine de la fête, le kérygme devient ‘trésor’ *ganj*, mot par lequel commence obligatoirement le texte. Il est exécuté sous forme d’arioso, avec la dernière strophe détachée sous forme d’antienne”; *Grégoire de Narek. Tragédie*, 47–48. For more on the *Gandzaran*, see Dewrikan’s “Introduction” to the critical text, in *MH* 13.1:9–25.

⁵⁴ On the ante-Nicaean development of the liturgical year, see T. J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 2nd, emended ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 5–13.

native works.⁵⁵ Of the latter kind, the earliest are Yeghishē Vardapet's homilies on the baptism of Jesus, the transfiguration, and those on the passion according to St. John—for the Holy Week,⁵⁶ and Mambre Vertsanogh's homilies on the birth and baptism of Jesus, two on the raising of Lazarus, and two on the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday;⁵⁷ all from the fifth century. Of no less

⁵⁵ Of translated works, the most cherished include those of the Cappadocian Fathers, Cyril of Jerusalem, Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom (included under his name are some of the homilies of Severian of Gabala), Epiphanius of Cyprus, Evagrius of Pontus, Philoxenus of Mabbug or Hierapolis, and most important for Gregory's poetic inspiration, works by Ephrem the Syrian.

⁵⁶ *MH* 1:960–1052; 6:999–1005 («Ի մկրտութիւնն Քրիստոսի», «Ի Թաբոր Լերին յայտնութիւնն Տեանն առ Պետրոսեանց», «Վարդապետութիւնն ըստ Յովհաննու Սիրելոյ ի չարչարանս Տեանն»). For an English translation, see R. W. Thomson, *A Homily on the Passion of Christ Attributed to Elishē*, Eastern Christian Texts in Translation 5 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000). Cf. Catholicos Yovhan Mandakuni's (in office 478–490) homily “*I Surb Errordut’iwonn ew i Tsnundn K’ristosi Astutsoy Meroy*” («Ի Սուրբ Երրորդութիւնն եւ ի Ծնունդն Քրիստոսի Աստուծոյ Մերոյ» / “On the Holy Trinity and the Birth of Christ Our God”), *MH* 1:1274–75; Catholicos Yovhannēs Gabeghean’s (in office 557–574) “*I Yaytnut’iwonn K’ristosi*” («Ի Յայտնութիւնն Քրիստոսի» / “On the Manifestation of Christ”), *MH* 3:453–455; Bishop Movsēs Siwnets’i’s (d. 731) “*Yaghags Vardavařin khorhrdoy*” («Յաղագս Վարդավառին խորհրդոյ» / “On the Mystery of the Transfiguration”), *MH* 4:429–36. For an English translation of Gabeghean’s homily, see L. Frivold, *The Incarnation: A Study of the Doctrine of the Incarnation in the Armenian Church in the 5th and 6th Centuries according to the Book of Letters* (Oslo-Bergen-Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1981), 114–20.

⁵⁷ *Chark’* (Ճառք): “*I yarut’iwonn Ghazaru*” («Ի յարութիւնն Ղազարու» / “On the Resurrection of Lazarus”); “*Vasn yarut’ean Ghazaru yawur Shabat’u*” («Վասն յարութեան Ղազարու յաւոր Շաբաթու» / “On the Resurrection of Lazarus on the Sabbath Day”); “*I metsi awur galstean Tearn Meroy Yisusi K’ristosi yErusaghēm*” («Ի մեծի աւոր զալստեան Տեանն Մերոյ Յիսուսի Քրիստոսի յԵրուսաղէս», “On the Great Day of Our Lord Jesus Christ’s Coming to Jerusalem”); “*Yaghags ekaworut’ean P’rkch’in yErusaghēm*” («Յաղագս եկաւորութեան Փրկչին յԵրուսաղէս» / “On the Savior’s Arrival in Jerusalem”); “*I tsnundn P’rkch’in . . . ut’ awurn, ayd ē mkrut’iwon*” («Ի ծնունդն Փրկչին . . . ութ աւորն, այդ է մկրտութիւնն» / “On the Savior’s Birth . . . to the Eighth Day, That Is the Circumcision”); one or the other of the two similarly titled homilies could be a later attribution), *MH* 1:1095–1136; cf. Catholicos Sahak of Dzorop’or’s (in office 677–703) “*Chaf’ yArmaueneats’*” («Ճառ յԱրմաւենեացն Աւր» / “Homily on Palm Sunday”), *MH* 5:1287–92.

significance are the several homilies on the life of Christ by Catholicos Zak'aria of Dzag (in office 854–876), especially those on the passion, and his homilies on the Blessed Virgin Mary—from the annunciation to her assumption.⁵⁸ And of the many Bible commentaries of Armenian authorship known to our author,⁵⁹ special mention must be made of Bishop Step'anos of Siwnik's (d. 735) commentaries *On the First Vision of Ezekiel* and *On the Four Gospels*.⁶⁰ Of course, the interconnectedness of the various literatures of the Christian East should not be discounted, thanks to early translations.

The word “litany” comes from the Greek *litaneia*, “entreaty”; it is liturgically defined as a series of prayers with stases. These follow the instructive remarks about the respective feast, with proper biddings or calls to penitence and participation and concluding prayers of intercession in formulaic acclamations and invocations of the saints—foremost of whom are the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, and Stephen the Protomartyr. Acclamations also include invocation of the particular saint(s) being commemorated, with the usual petition for their intercession with the Lord on behalf of the worshipers.⁶¹ Since most of the litanies here presented pertain to

⁵⁸ *MH* 9:26–356 (Համբ). On the earlier history of the Assumption of Mary in the Armenian Church, see M. van Esbroeck, *Aux origines de la Dormition de la Vierge: Études historiques sur les traditions orientales*, Collected Studies Series: CS 472 (Brookfield, VT: Variorum-Ashgate, 1995).

⁵⁹ For a list of a hundred commentaries, see E. Petrosyan and A. Ter-Step'anyan, *S. Grk'i Hayeren Meknut'yunneri Matenagitut'yun* (*Մ. Գրքի հայերեն մեկնությունների մասննսագիրություն / Bibliology of the Armenian Commentaries on the Holy Bible*), *Hayastani Astuacashnch'ayin Ĕnkerut'yun*, *Astuacashnch'akan Matenashar* 2 ([Erevan, AM]: *Hayastani Astuacashnch'ayin Ĕnkerut'yun*, 2002). For more titles, see my “Review” in *St. Nersess Theological Review* 8 (2003): 141–43.

⁶⁰ *Patchak' ew t'eladrut'awn afaji teslean Ezekieli* (*Պատճառք եւ թելարդրութիւնս ւնաջի տեւեաւն Եզկիէլի / Reason for and Interpretation of the First Vision of Ezekiel*), *MH* 6:130–55; *Karcharawot meknut'awn Ch'orits' Awetaranch'ats'n K'ristosi* (*Կարճատատ մեկնություն Չորից Աւետարանչացս Քրիստոսի / A Short Commentary on the Four Gospels of Christ*), 156–248; see also his “On the Holy Cross” and “Ode to the Holy Cross” («Բ Սուրբ Խաչն», «Տաղ Սուրբ Խաչին»), 594–97.

⁶¹ Although in his prayer book the author has several prayers pleading the intercession of the saints, none has the structure of formulaic litanies (e.g., Prayers 31, 70, 71, 82, 86, 87, 91).

Dominical feasts, they culminate with the invocation of the principal saints just named. These formulaic commendations and invocations have acquired a canonical place in the daily offices of the liturgy, with the priestly prayer, acclamation, or ascription reserved for the one most senior in rank among the assembled clergy. Their repetition at the conclusion of the morning prayers on the feast day marks the end of the liturgy for all pre-feast celebrations (*nakhatōn* or *nakhatōnak*).

Gregory's litanies provide an early attestation to a standardized usage, but not in every respect of the formulaic acclamations, such as in the prayer for bishops, priests, and deacons or other ministers of the church, and for kings and princes.⁶² There is also a degree of inconsistency in the invocation of the principal saints.⁶³

We now turn to a philological problem in two thematically related, acrostic litanies: 16, "Litany for All the Holy Apostles," lines 100–104, and Suppl. 2.5, "Litany for All the Apostles and Hierarchs," lines 94–98. The acrostic reading of the paragraph initials yields ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻ ԵԶԳ in one and ԳՐԻԳՈՐ ԵԶԳ in the other.⁶⁴ K'yoshkeryan leaves the problem of ԵԶԳ unresolved even when she discusses at length the corresponding lines in the various litanies, the part known as "collect" or *k'aroz*.⁶⁵ It could neither be

⁶² See the following litanies: 2, lines 77–80; 7, lines 120–28; 9, lines 84–89; 10, lines 107–12; 11, lines 120–25; 12, lines 99–100 (most concise petition); 13, lines 115–18; 14, lines 95–106 (no mention of king or princes); 15, lines 43–47; 16, lines 89–97; and Suppl. 2.5, lines 70–80. Cf. Khosrov, *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, §108: "For priests, kings, princes, peoples, travellers, and those engaged in wars with barbarians" (see Cowe, 181).

⁶³ See the following litanies where all four of the main saints are named: 2, lines 95–103; 7, lines 108–15; 9, lines 115–23; 10, lines 119–26; 11, lines 142–49; 12, lines 109–15; 13, lines 130–38; 14, lines 132–47; 15, lines 70–82; and the invocation of Mary only, in 16, lines 104–21; and Suppl. 2.5, lines 98–110. Cf. the slightly varying lines of prayer for the dead in the litanies: 2, lines 87–88; 7, lines 132–33; 10, lines 113–14; 14, lines 126–27; Suppl. 2.5, lines 97–98; and the identical lines of prayer in 9, lines 106–7; 11, lines 128–29; 12, lines 103–4; 13, lines 122–23; 15, lines 64–65; and 16, lines 98–99.

⁶⁴ *TG* 219–25 and 244–47; *MH* 12:722–26 and 743–45.

⁶⁵ Although K'yoshkeryan devotes several pages to discussing this part of the litany (the "collect") in its various forms as *k'aroz*, she fails to address the

read as ԵՐԳ nor explained away as a recurring scribal error in both litanies since it is woven into the fabric of the text, thus:

Եւ եւս առաւել

Զյորդորումն սիրոյ եւ զգործս բարեաց պարգեւել մեզ, խնդրեմք:

Զանձինս մեր եւ զմիմեանս

Տեառն Աստուծոյ ամենակալի յանձն արասցուք, խնդրեմք:

Գովեալ . . . / Գերագոյն . . .

The nonword եզգ (*ezg*), hence unaccounted for in the lexica, results from a formulaic substitution beginning with the letter «Զ» for the less familiar lines by Gregory, which must have begun with the letter «Ե». The substitution here and in the thematically related litany (Suppl. 2.5) is of the more common and familiar collect (Զանձինս մեր եւ զմիմեանս . . .) for the less familiar collects used by the author (Բոսել վերստին . . . 2, line 91; 10, line 17; Բոսել զմարմինս մեր . . . 9, line 110; 14, line 130; 15, line 68; Բամեա զամենեսեան . . . 7, line 136).

The word *p'okh* («փոխ») is a problematic rubric in both the odes and the litanies. Usually found as a rubric in the margin and sometimes indicated with just the letter “Փ” («Փ»), the word generally means change. It appears, however, in four different kinds of usage or context and with possibly as many different meanings.⁶⁶ The first of these, and the only usage of its kind, is in the first ode (1A) where the word recurs with every other stanza in the most

problem at hand; *TG*, 23–30. There seems to be an attempt in the *MH* edition to gloss over the problem by referring to the reading as ԵՐԳ, when it is not (see the *apparatus*, 722; cf. the *apparatus*, 743).

⁶⁶ The *Nor bargirk' haykazeen lezui* (Նոր բարգիրք հայկապեան լեզուի / *New Dictionary of the Armenian Language*), ed. G. Awetik'ian, et al., 2 vols. (Venice: S. Ghazar, 1836), gives the following meanings under «Փոխ. գ.»: (արմատ Փոխելոյ, Փոփոխելոյ.) Στίχος, Versus, ἀντίφωνον, -νία, antiphona, responsio, և այլն. Փոփոխ սաղմոսերգութիւն տուն առ տուն. փոխաձայնութիւն. և Բոն սկիզբն սաղմոսի յետ կցուրդի. և Մասն այսր և այնր աւետարանի կամ գրութի ինչ կարդալի ըստ բաշխման ի վերայ ութ ձայնից (2:945).

likely sense of antiphon: a part to be chanted or sung in response.⁶⁷ The second kind of usage of the word is found in three odes (3A, 5A, and Suppl. 2.4) where it occurs but once in each, presumably to indicate change in melody, thus serving to mark a section that is musically distinct. That this is the word's likely sense in these instances is further suggested—if not indicated—by its third kind of usage, found in the litanies. The following litanies have the concluding intercessory petition marked with the word *p'okh*: 7, 9, 10, 11, and 15 (absent in litanies 2, 12, 13, 14, 16, and Suppl. 2.5). In these five instances the word marks a transitional point, indicating a change in the music to which the ensuing section is recited. Some such change is followed liturgically to this day. Whereas the litanic recitation—including the collect—is a diaconal part with responses by the people, or at least by all the clerks, the concluding ascription (*maght'ank'*) is intoned by the officiating senior member of the celebrants, and that with a different melody. Thus, in these instances the word indicates also change in assignment. Fourth, the word is used as title to an otherwise untitled, partial, or modified ode (4B, 6B, 8C, 10B, Suppl. 2.3 [2B] and Suppl. 3.3 Var. [2B Var.]). In such instances it seems to indicate an “alternate” ode, possibly of later adaptation for the particular feast. Textually abridged texts, indeed, fragments thereof, appear to have been used for especially melismatic musical settings. The loss of the rubric in certain odes and litanies could well be the result, at least in part, of growing scribal tendency to omit marginal marks perhaps because of the scribe's thorough familiarity with the liturgical text at hand. Surely, something of the scribal/liturgical understanding of the word *p'okh* has been lost to us,⁶⁸ not to mention the original melodies of the odes.

⁶⁷ The antiphons are responses sung by a cantor or a choir, or the whole congregation. They are not to be confused with the congregational responses in traditional Western worship.

⁶⁸ In similar compositions by other authors in the *Gandzaran*, one finds the rubric «Յորդորակ» (*Yordorak*) in lieu of *P'okh*, which may well have originally carried an injunction to sing at a faster tempo and in a less melismatic manner; see Dewrikan's “Introduction” to the *Gandzaran*, esp. in *MH* 13.1:17–18.

The Encomia

The panegyric tradition in Armenian literature is conspicuous, having its first and foremost example in Koriwn's *Life of Mashtots'*, the progenitor of literacy in the native language at the turn of the fifth century.⁶⁹ Equally important are the several encomia on the Holy Cross and the Theotokos; e.g., "Praise to the Holy Bearer of God and Ever-Virgin Mary" by Bishop Petros of Siwnik' (d. 557)⁷⁰ and Dawit' of Nergin's (d. ca. 660) "Encomium to the God-receiving Holy Cross."⁷¹ Other encomia by these same titles belong to several other authors, among them T'ëodoros K'rt'enawor (d. ca. 675), known for his "Encomium to the God-receiving Holy Cross" and "Praise to the Holy Bearer of God and Ever-Virgin Mary."⁷² With the translation of a wide range of patristic literature, the tradition spread rapidly—as seen in the panegyrics on St. Gregory the Illuminator.⁷³

⁶⁹ A. Terian, "Koriwn's *Life of Mashtots'* as an Encomium," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 3 (1987–1988): 1–14.

⁷⁰ "Govest i S. Astuatsatsinn ew i Misht Koysn Mariam" («Գովեստ ի Ս. Աստուածածինն եւ ի Միշտ Կոյսն Մարիամ»), *MH* 3:389–95; for an English translation, see E. G. Mathews, Jr., "Petros Siwnec'i, Praise to the Holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary," *St. Nersess Theological Review* 12 (2007): 57–81. Cf. Petros's "*Harts'munk' yaghags marmnaworut'eann Tearn*" («Հարցմունք յաղագս մարմնաւորութեանն Տեանն» / "Questions [and Answers] on the Incarnation of the Lord") addressed to Prince Vach'akan of Caucasian Albania, *MH* 3: 396–405.

⁷¹ "*Nerboghean i Surb Khach'n Astuatsënkal*" («Ներբողեան ի Սուրբ Խաչն Աստուածընկալ»), *MH* 6:1020–29; wrongly attributed to David the Invincible Philosopher, see the English version "'An Encomium of the Holy Cross of God' by David the Invincible Philosopher," trans. H. Nersoyan, in *David Anhaght', the 'Invincible' Philosopher*, ed. A. K. Sanjian, *Studies in Near Eastern Culture and Society* 7 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 81–100.

⁷² "*Nerboghean i Surb Khach'n Astuatsënkal*" («Ներբողեան ի Սուրբ Խաչն Աստուածընկալ»), *MH* 5:1250–57; "*Govest i Surb Astuatsatsinn ew i Misht Koysn Mariam*" («Գովեստ ի Սուրբ Աստուածածինն եւ ի Միշտ Կոյսն Մարիամ»), *MH* 5: 1258–69.

⁷³ A. Terian, *Patriotism and Piety in Armenian Christianity: The Early Panegyrics on St. Gregory*, AVANT: Treasures of the Armenian Christian Tradition 2 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005).

To these familiar encomia Gregory adds his own. At the conclusion of the *History of the Holy Cross of Aparank'* (*Պատմութիւն Ասարանից Սուրբ Խաչիւ, Patmut' iwn Aparanits' Surb Khach'in*), itself a historical encomium in which he tells how a relic of the true cross was brought to the monastery of Aparank' in the District of Mokk' (Gk. Moxoënē; Syr. Bēth Moksāyē, in the Khizan region near Lake Van),⁷⁴ he introduces two of his better known encomia: the *Encomium on the Holy Cross* (*Ներբողի Սուրբ Խաչիւ, Nerbogh i Surb Khach'n*) and the *Encomium on the Blessed Virgin* (*Ներբողի Սուրբ Կոյսն, Nerbogh i Surb Koysn*).

We shall thus begin to bring together, following this historical account, an assortment of some short compositions in writing. First, on the very same, divinely ordained, life-giving cross; and after that, by the will of the Existent whose essence is inexpressible, to offer with joyous lips our gratitude as a fragrant offering, a fruit that is pleasing, to Our Holy Lady and Bearer of God. (26.142)

He goes on to establish a thematic connection between this account and the *Encomium on the Holy Cross*, its sequel, and to connect the latter with the whole encomiastic tradition of exalting the cross, considering his own work as continuous with that tradition.⁷⁵

But, for now, let us recall the meaningful words of those who before us were trained by the Spirit and led by Wisdom from on high, who celebrated beforehand this magnificent and deep mystery in groups (and) with wonderful words. So, let us also, in tune with the resonance of the wisdom granted to us by the One who gives powerful words from on high, chant loudly this melodious praise to the sign of the cross, written anew with fairly new expressions of praise in (this) newly arranged encomium. (26.143–44)

⁷⁴ On the historicity, see the first note to the translation. On the historiographical decline into rhetorical and formal affectation in this period, see J. D. C. Frendo, "History and Panegyric in the Age of Heraclius: The Literary Background to the Composition of the *Histories* of Theophilact Simocatta," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 42 (1988): 143–56.

⁷⁵ See the introduction to 15, "Litany for the Holy Cross."

He makes a further connection, in the colophon at the end of the *Encomium on the Blessed Virgin*, indicating that all three works were written for the bishop of the district, Step'anos. He refers to them as "my small book of little significance" ("Appendix A 3").

His two other encomia, *Encomium on the Holy Apostles* (Ներբող ի Սուրբ Առաքյալսն, *Nerboğh i Surb A'ak'ealsn*) and *Encomium on St. James of Nisibis* (Ներբող ի Սուրբն Յակոբ Մծբնայ, *Nerboğh i Surbn Yakob Mtsbnay*) are invariably related, just as 16, "Litany for All the Apostles," and Suppl. 2.5, "Litany for All the Apostles and Hierarchs," are related. These encomia have acquired lengthy subtitles in the course of their transmission: *An encomium recited in praise of the full circle of the twelve apostles, who are first in honor among the prominent heads, and to the seventy-two holy disciples of Christ; and To the great and blessed St. James, patriarch of the city of Nisibis, bishop and overseer of the ancient and heaven-like see*, besides its full, redundant title (*Encomium on Saint James of Nisibis: A Discourse of Praise*). This is not the place to detail the significance of St. James for the Armenian Church,⁷⁶ where he is the embodiment of the Syrian vestiges in early Armenian Christianity. Suffice to say that he is made a cousin of St. Gregory the Illuminator, as our author points to this kinship: "Progeny from unclean, barbaric parents and close, blood-relative of our blessed Illuminator, the son of his progenitor's sister" (21.67 and note there).

Complementing these two encomia is the "Litany for St. Gregory the Illuminator" (11), which in technical terms is an encomiastic litany, composed in onomastic acrostic reading ԳՐԻԳՈՐԻ ԳԱՆԶ ("A Litany by Grigor"). Most of its components are characteristic of encomium, replete with a rhetorician's *topoi*.

In his prayer book the author refers to only two of his encomia: the *Encomium on the Blessed Virgin* (Prayer 80.1.20–21) and the *Encomium on the Holy Apostles* (Prayer 82.1.6–11). Nevertheless, his encomiastic works are not to be limited to the proper encomia grouped here, for odes are considered a form of praise as well, and no less so the major parts of his litanies. His "praise" cuts across all three genres of writings presented here. In fact, Gregory's writings help illustrate the historical transformation of genres.

⁷⁶ See the first note to the translation of the encomium.

Gregory's Other Writings

When considering the other works of Gregory, his *magnum opus* commands greater attention. The mystic soliloquies that characterize his *Book of Lamentation* (*Մանկան Ողբերգութեան*, *Matean Oghbergut'ean*),⁷⁷ essentially penitential prayers written near the end of his life, could well be classified among the very best of ancient Christian meditative literature. It was completed in 1002, with the help of his older brother John, then abbot of Narek (text in *MH* 12:49–605).⁷⁸ The soliloquies appear to be an embodiment of the spirituality prevalent at Narek, mingled with the author's own spirituality. The prayers, each prefaced with the words "Speaking with God from the depths of the heart" and called a *Ban*, a unit of thought, are thematically grouped and follow an inherent and broad outline in three major divisions.⁷⁹

As for Gregory's works pertaining to biblical literature, they cover texts in which mystics find fertile ground for contemplation.

⁷⁷ So titled by the author in *Prayers* 2.2; 9.1; 53.2; 70.3; 71.5; 88.2.

⁷⁸ The best translation in any language is that of A. and J.-P. Mahé, *Grégoire de Narek. Tragédie. Matean oghbergut'ean. Le Livre de Lamentation. Introduction, traduction et notes*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 584 / Subsidia 106 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000); A. and J.-P. Mahé, *Paroles à Dieu de Grégoire de Narek. Introduction, traduction et notes* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007); the English reader will most certainly appreciate T. J. Samuelian's dynamic translation, *Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart: The Armenian Prayer Book of St. Gregory of Narek*, 2nd ed. (Erevan, AM: Vem Press, 2001).

⁷⁹ For a detailed outline of the prayers, see Mahé, *Paroles à Dieu*, 483–86. Throughout, his heart aches as it is repeatedly made aware of the sin within. Nothing else could calm his fears other than a cry to God for mercy. As sin has affected his entire body, soul, and mind, he calls on God to accept his supplication. He offers himself completely: his body a broken censer in which the soul abides like a feeble spark, and his mind, or the words that proceed from the depth of his heart, the incense ascending to God. Aware that no other gift would be acceptable to God but the entire self, he grieves because of its utter inadequacy. Yet he discerns grace and is certain that God is merciful to those who truly repent, like the penitent souls throughout sacred history. From somewhere deep down in the mystic recesses of his heart, he longs to be released from troubles and grief that consume his soul. Above all else he wants to be restored as were "the prodigal son" and "the prostitute," images of his soul, lost and regained.

There are four titles to consider, beginning with the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* (*Մեկնութիւն Երգոց Երգոյն Սոդոմոնի*, *Meknut'awn Ergots' Ergoyn Soghomoni*), his only complete biblical commentary (text in *MH* 12: 760–883). The colophon, dated AD 977, informs that he wrote it at the request of Prince Gurgēn Artsruni (coreigned as king of Vaspurakan with his brothers, 977–1003). Like all medieval commentators on the book, Gregory, with some nuances of his own, understood the text as an allegory of the love between God and his people or between Christ and his church.⁸⁰ The *Commentary on Job*: ‘Who is This . . . ?’ (*Մեկնութիւն «Ով է Դա»-ի*, *Meknut'awn “Ov ē Da”i*) is but a partial commentary, on chapters 38–39, the first of two theophanic discourses comprising the epilogue of Job, beginning with the words “Who is this . . . ?” (38:2; text in *MH* 12: 885–910). The *Discourse*, “Look Within Yourself: Perhaps There Is a Secret Word in Your Wayward Heart” (*Հատ. «Տալեաց յսննն քն, գուցէ լինիցի քան ծածուկ ի սրտի քն անսարէն»*, *Chaf. “Hayeats' yandzn k'o, guts'ē linit's'i ban tsatsuk i srti k'o anawrēn”*) is as much a treatise of mystical theology as it is a homily on Deut 15:9 with moral exhortation (text in *MH* 10:1040–72). The last, *Commentary by the Holy Teachers of the Church on “The Lord’s Prayer”* (*Մեկնութիւն սրբոց վարդապետաց եկեղեցոյ սրարեալ ի «Տալի մեր, որ յերկինս»-ն*, *Meknut'awn srbots' vardapetats' ekeghets'oy arareal i “Hayr mer, or yerkins”n*), is a sentence-by-sentence commentary on Matt 6:9–13, with some repeated lemmata indicating a chain of quotations or catenae, compiled from anonymous fathers (text in *MH* 10:1106–10).

Most of the remaining four works of Gregory are part of a rich tradition of admonitory or cautionary literature in Armenian.⁸¹

⁸⁰ English translation, R. R. Ervine, *The Blessing of Blessings: Gregory of Narek’s Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Cistercian Studies 215 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2007); French translation, L. Pétrossian, *Grégoire de Narek: Commentaire sur le Cantique des Cantiques*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 285 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2010).

⁸¹ With the exception of the *Letter to the Admirable and Prominent Congregation of Kchaw*, their authorship was suspect for a long time. With H. T’amrazyan’s and H. Gh. Mirzoyan’s sound methods of authentication, however, the question of authorship has been settled for good. See Tamrazyan’s “Introduction” to these works in *MH* 10:1017–39, and Mirzoyan’s *Narekats’ iagitakan hetazotut’yunner* (*Նարեկացիստիկոսական հետազոտություններ*, *Studies on*

A Word of Advice on the Orthodox Faith and the Pure and Virtuous Life (Բան խրատու վասն ողիղ հաստոյն և մարտր վարուց անստիճանութեան, *Ban khratu vasn ughigh hawatoyñ ew mak'ur varuts' arak'inut'ean*) urges, through seventy-six mandates, steadfastness in the faith and practice of Christian living (text in *MH* 12:1022–84). The *Letter to the Admirable and Prominent Congregation of Kchaw* (Թողոթ ի հոյակապ և յականաւոր ուխտն Կճաւայ, *T'ught' i hoyakap ew yakanawor ukhtn Kchaway*) was sent to the abbot of a neighboring monastic community to caution about the T'ontrakeans, the antihierarchical movement of the time, accused of sweeping yet vague heresies (text in *MH* 12:1087–89). This denunciatory letter, probably intended to distance the monastery of Narek from suspicions of heresy, has to be considered alongside the apparently coerced *Letter* by the abbot Anania.⁸² The *Order and Rules of Prayer* (Կարգ և կանոն աղաթից, *Karg ew kanon aghawt'its'*) was written at the request of an anonymous monk. The treatise emphasizes appropriate demeanor for methodical prayer in private and during the liturgy of the hours (text in *MH* 10:1081–94). The *Eulogy for Vardapets and Wise Priests* (Վարդապետաց և իմաստն քահանայից լուսնաւոր քան, *Vardapetats' ew imastun k'ahanayits'*

Narekats'i and Related Subjects) (Erevan, AM: Erevan State University, 2010), 163–211. The latter focuses on Gregory's distinct language with its peculiar vocabulary, listing scores of words which occur only in the works of Gregory and his father Khosrov, and others which occur only in the works of Gregory and his mentor Anania.

⁸² Cf. Anania of Narek's letter, most likely addressed to Catholicos Khach'ik of Rshunik' (in office 972–992), a nephew of Catholicos Anania of Mokk' (in office 943–965) who was most obstinately bent against Gregory's father, Khosrov, and the abbot Anania (*MH* 10:649–57). There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of this document sent "to the one who is 'just' unjustly and 'familiar' with the unfamiliar, an estranged relative (or, sibling), and who—being lord (or, master, used epithetically for bishops and other hierarchs) from birth to old age—does not recognize a servant's good deeds or faithful service." Moreover, in closing, the abbot reminds of his earlier, now lost, treatise against the T'ontrakeans, which apparently was not enough to dispel suspicions (see above, n11, and "Appendix C" §7). For a discussion, see Terian, "Gregory of Narek," 283–86.

vakhchani ban) mourns the passing of an unnamed monastic teacher, probably the abbot Anania of Narek. It seems to have been used to eulogize later *vardapets* and priests—as the redacted title suggests (text in *MH* 10:1103–05).

Text and Translation

A fairly reliable critical text—albeit eclectic—of the odes and litanies (*Tagher ev Gandzer*, abbr. *TG*) was prepared more than thirty years ago by Armine K'yoshkeryan.⁸³ The text edited by her has been endorsed and adopted, under the title of *Gandztetr* (*Booklet of Gandz*) and with a revised introduction by her (Armēnuhi K'eoshkērian), as part of volume 12 of the ongoing Armenian Classical Authors series, *Matenagirk' Hayots'* (pp. 609–745; abbr. *MH*). Hrach'eay T'amrazyan (T'amrazian), the editor of the serial volume comprised of works by Gregory of Narek, however, does not follow K'yoshkeryan's text-critical method as he edits the rest of the works in the volume. Instead, he provides good diplomatic texts of the various other works by the author, with the best of the Matenadaran manuscripts collated against the received texts,⁸⁴ which are conspicuously used as the base text. Far more noteworthy are the texts of the encomia (pp. 913–1005), where the editor has brought to light two manuscripts (more on these below) that provide different recensions or variant versions (Arm. *tarberak*) of the long-known encomia on the Holy Cross and the Blessed Virgin Mary. With such classification of the two manuscripts the need for interpretive criticism of variant readings is set aside.

⁸³ Bringing together 11 litanies and 27 odes, covering some 18 feasts. For a full reference to K'yoshkeryan's 1981 edition, see above, n45.

⁸⁴ Most of Gregory's works were edited by G. Awetik'ean, *Writings of Gregory, Monk of the Monastery of Narek* (Գրիգորի Նարեկայ վանից վանականի Մատենագրութիւնք / *Grigori Narekay vanits' vanakani Matenagrut'iwunk'*), 2 vols. (vol. 2: *The Second Volume of Discourses by Our Holy Father St. Gregory of Narek* [Սրբոյ հորն մերոյ Գրիգորի Նարեկացոյ երկրորդ մատենան ձառնից / *Srboyn hōrn meroy Grigori Narekats'woy erkrord matean chatits'*]) (Venice: Vans Srboyn Ghazaru, 1827).

Accordingly, no effort is made to emend even obvious corruptions in one recension or the other, which are given back to back instead of being placed in parallel columns for quick comparison.

Thus, K'yoshkeryan's edition of the odes and litanies stands out as the only critical text in the volume. Yet her edition suffers at times from superimposed literary categorizations and applications of literary forms that do not seem to be original to the author. For example, the two odes for the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (4A and B) are divided into quatrains, where a division to couplets would have been more in keeping with the lost original. Moreover, her hypothesis that odes and litanies were composed together as sets for particular feasts, or that there was a litany for every ode and vice versa, cannot be substantiated. The manuscript evidence is mixed, there being all sorts of compilations: some manuscripts with odes and litanies for various feasts entered after each other, some with odes only, but many more where the first half has just odes and the second just litanies—i.e., not paired but separately.

Variants of hitherto known odes are apt to be found in manuscripts outside the Matenadaran.⁸⁵ In his *Grand Catalogue of St. James Manuscripts*, the late Archbishop N. Pogharian published an ode by our author which is unaccounted for in the collected and published odes, as well as a variant version of another, familiar ode (see Suppl. 3.1 and 2).⁸⁶ The first of these odes is found in volume 1 of the *Catalogue* (pp. 378–79), an ode on the birth and baptism of Jesus, in a *Gandzaran* of 1575, copied at T'eghway Vank' in Soghats Giwgh, in Khat' (J135, fol. 98r–101r). Though the ode in question is altogether unique in that the lines begin with the letter “Կ” (“K”),

⁸⁵ H. Utidjian is currently studying several of the Venetian and Viennese Mekhitharists' manuscripts of Narekats'i, where he has found more variant versions of certain odes. There is much to look forward to in his critical work and forthcoming edition of the texts of the odes; the firstfruits have just appeared: “On the Early Venetian Manuscripts of the ‘Ode of the Little Cart,’” *Parrésia* 7 (2013): 205–28; “On the Printed Sources of the ‘Ode of the Little Cart,’” *Parrésia* 7 (2013): 185–203; “Textual Observations on St. Gregory of Narek's ‘Ode of the Little Cart,’” *Banber Matenadarani* 21 (2014): 487–502.

⁸⁶ N. Pogharian, *Grand Catalogue of St. James Manuscripts*, 11 vols. (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1966–1991), 1:378–79, 10:592.

its authorship cannot be doubted on the grounds of compositional uniqueness alone. There are several one-of-a-kind odes by Gregory; moreover, the literary form employed here is seen also among his prayers (5.3). In the rich *Gandzaran* where it is found, it is designated for the fifth day of the feast of the Theophany and preceded by another of his well-known odes, 2A, "Ode for the Nativity." The second ode is found in volume 10 of the *Catalogue* (p. 592). It is a variant of 6c, "Ode for the Resurrection," preserved under the same title in an undated *Miscellany* (18) at Sts. James in Jerusalem (J3578, p. 198). It is preceded by two of the author's odes: 15A, "Ode for the Holy Cross"; and 10B, "Alternate" Ode for the Church.⁸⁷

K'yoshkeryan's edition of the collected odes and litanies remains—its shortcomings notwithstanding—the best and most reliable text of the compilation as a whole, even as it has been replicated with minor errors in volume 12 of the *MH* edition. In certain cases, however, the *Gandzaran* text of certain compositions, as edited by Dewrikian (*MH* 13.1–2), is to be preferred. Any text-critical consideration of the odes will necessarily have to employ scansion, since the author adheres to rules of syllabic meter. Unfortunately,

⁸⁷ Of no less significance is the fourteenth-century *Gandzaran* of Jerusalem (J2015), copied possibly in Erzenka in 1387. Of note in the latter collection is another variant of 6c, "Ode for the Resurrection," published in 1974 by Pogharian in his *Catalogue* of the St. James manuscripts (7.41–42). A closer look at the text published by the late archbishop shows its superiority over the text edited by K'yoshkeryan; it also underscores the preferred readings of several other manuscripts at her disposal and makes one wonder about her preference for inferior readings garnered from M2029, a late seventeenth-century manuscript (dated 1696; K'yoshkeryan's E). Similarly, one finds the equivalent of another (third) variant to 14A ("Ode for the Church") and 14A Variant ("Canticle for the Nativity / Ode for the Church") in the critical apparatus provided by her (pp. 120–25). Moreover, in the text of Suppl. 2.1, "Praise for the Temple of Solomon," there are some readings that are preferable to those in Suppl. 2.1 Variant, "Ode for the Church and the Holy Temple," and vice versa. With some conjecture, one could reconstruct a whole new "Praise" by utilizing the best elements from either of the two extant versions of this poem. But such a reconstruction runs the risk of improving on what might have been there originally.

K'eoshkeryan fails in this respect. She eliminates the *shěwa* (𐎱) from most syllables, thus disturbing what might have been the original rhythm,⁸⁸ whereas the *Gandzaran*, concerned with the recitative chanting of the text, abounds in these vocalized half-vowels and generally yields preferred readings. A number of fourteenth-century manuscripts of the *Gandzaran* contain most of the odes and litanies. The most significant among them are M7782, M3503, P Arm. 79⁸⁹ and 80, and V2070. As expected, adherence to the predominant syllabic meter helps determine authentic readings in these and other witnesses.⁹⁰

As stated briefly, the *MH* edition of the *encomia* introduces a new recension (A) of the *Encomium on the Holy Cross*, and another, new recension (A) of the *Encomium on the Holy Virgin*, with the familiar colophon following. Each of the hitherto known recensions of the two *encomia* is dubbed as recension B. The editor's assumption is that the text of recension A, based on two older manuscripts containing the two *encomia* (M5365 and M5558), surpasses the previously known text of recension B, which is reprinted from the earlier Venice edition(s) with section numbers added to it—as customarily provided in the *MH* series. While this assumption may be warranted, the editor makes no effort at emending obvious corruptions in the two recensions, each in the light of the other—not even between the two manuscripts of recension A. In recension A of *Encomium on the Holy Cross*, the first manuscript (M5365) is given the *siglum* A, and the second (M5558) the *siglum* B. For the *Encomium on the Holy Virgin* and its colophon, however, the *sigla* attached to the respective manuscripts are reversed: the second (M5558) is given the *siglum* A, and the first (M5365) the *siglum* B, thus creating a degree of confusion. Both recensions of the respective *encomia* suffer equally from a degree of corruption and show

⁸⁸ In general, it may be fair to point out that her edition is very useful and reliable when taken with the critical apparatus, but the text she has arrived at in the main body of the page reflects choices that may be objectionable at times.

⁸⁹ An older part of this manuscript is a *Tagharan* of 1241, the earliest witness of the odes.

⁹⁰ For a fuller list of manuscripts, albeit still incomplete, see Dewrikan's "Introduction" to the *Gandzaran* (*MH* 13.1:24–25).

some early editorial reworking, taking the history of the transmission of the text into murkier waters. Although the recensions do not differ vastly from each other, each recension is here translated separately, with the annotation repeated for readers' convenience.

Biblical references in the *MH* edition are often inaccurate and certainly incomplete. For this reason I have refrained from pointing out the erroneous and/or overlooked instances. It is possible that I too may have missed registering some of the more distant echoes of allusions to Scripture in these works; those recognized I have cited in the notes. Understandably, some secondary and at times tertiary biblical allusions are interpretatively appended to the primary passages. Readers who are interested in Gregory's use of Scripture in these compositions may wish to consult the "Scripture Index" at the end of this volume.

I have used the *MH* edition of Gregory's works with considerable caution, at times preferring readings from the *apparatus criticus*. All such departures from the given text are acknowledged in the notes. Throughout the translation I have maintained the textual line divisions of the poems. The *MH* edition came in handy for its further division of the text into numbered sections. Although not all section divisions are at logical points, I have followed them for convenience in the course of translating and cross-referencing, also to provide the critical reader precise reference to the text, should one want to check it at any point. As for the variant versions or the recensions of the encomia on the Holy Cross and the Blessed Virgin Mary, I have cross-referenced their section enumerations in order to make up for the inconvenience of not having the recensions side by side, in parallel columns. Several section divisions in the *MH* edition of the encomia distort the implicit sense of the narrative. I have not noted any of the misplaced divisions, allowing the editor's delineations to stand.

Gregory's language, however beautiful, is complex and not easy to translate—especially by one unfamiliar with medieval theology. His thought patterns are not necessarily unique to him; they belong to the thought-world of medieval mysticism that thrived on certain biblical passages and on their common interpretations. Yet unlike most medieval mystics, Gregory's thoughts are born within the folia of Scripture in its entirety, and in his native tongue.

More often than not, he combines meanings from a variety of passages, entwining them into a single thought—as if he has the full canon of Scripture in mind when contemplating only a small part. Thus, familiarity with Scripture is yet another prerequisite to understanding him and to carrying the full semantic load of his sentences. Sensitivity to poetic forms is yet another prerequisite, especially when translating his odes and litanies, and sensitivity is needed no less when translating the narrative text of his panegyrics. There is a sacredness in his narrative that cannot and should not be breached. Giving true equivalence to his words is a must.

The literary beauty of the odes has attracted several translators in the last century, rendering certain of them into various languages—some quite freely at that. Where such translations exist in English, French, or modern Armenian (Eastern and/or Western), I have indicated them in the last footnote of the respective odes.*

In Gregory's festal works, one could hear the echo of the solemn chant, the whisper of the impassioned petition, and the recitative of the sublime creed in nearly every ode, litany, and encomium.

* *Nota bene*: The present book was in press when I became aware of A. and J.-P. Mahé's meritorious translation: *Trésor des Fêtes, Hymnes et Odes de Grégoire de Narek*, Les Œuvres de Saint Grégoire de Narek 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014).

Odes and Litanies

1A

Ode for the Blessing of Water by Grigor of Narek

(MH 12:623–626 [13:51–54] / TG 66–71)

In the *Tagharan*, the collection of ancient odes used as hymns, this ode is referred to as “*Tagh Zarmanali*” (“Ode of Marvel”). It is structured in five unequal parts of anaphoric lines beginning with the repeated word *awetis* (աւետիս, “good news”), set apart by stanzas marked with the word *p’okh* (փոխ) for antiphonal responses. The same structure persists with some distortions in the *Gandzaran*, the multiauthor collection of festal odes and litanies, where the ode is at times attributed to St. Nersēs Shnorhali.¹

(1) Lines 1–12 emphasize the incarnation, “the great mystery” now revealed. Thus, the first stanza that follows highlights the Annunciation to Mary (lines 13–20).

(2) Lines 21–28 contemplate the restoration anticipated since the fall of Adam, the effects of which extend to deterioration in the natural world. Hence, the message of the second stanza is aimed at nature (lines 29–36).

(3) Lines 37–40 sum up the role of John the Baptist, to whom the third stanza is dedicated (lines 41–49).

(4) Lines 50–59 focus on the Jordan River, followed by the fourth stanza, which draws attention to the tradition about the river retreating or parting at the time of Christ’s baptism (lines 60–66).

¹ In a fourteenth-century *Gandzaran* penned at Ts’ipnavank’ on the island of Artskē in Lake Van (M5328), the attribution is to Narekats’i.

(5) Lines 67–77 conclude with the universal implications of the redemption ushered in by Christ’s appearance.

A further structure is seen in the length of the lines: all anaphoric lines have seven syllables; all other lines have eight syllables, with a break or caesura separating the last four syllables throughout (excepting lines 8 and 38).²

There probably was an earlier litany (*k’aroz* or *gandz*) by the author for the Blessing of Water,³ distinct from the “Litany for the Holy Nativity” which follows. All were composed for the feast of the Theophany or the Baptism of Christ, a feast that also embraces the Nativity in Armenian observance.

Good news! The hidden mystery
of that great mystery has been revealed to us.⁴
Good news! The Father’s Light has dawned
from the very bosom of his being.⁵
5 Good news! God has been revealed
to us of earthly substance.
Good news! The Archangel Gabriel
has been sent forth
Good news to announce to the holy one,
10 daughter of David the king:⁶
“Good news to you, Mary,
rejoice, be glad, the Lord is with you.”⁷

² Read զՏէրն (*zTērn*), following the variant reading of C in the apparatus, instead of ըզՏէրըն (*ēzTērēn*) at line 55 (wrongly numbered 56 in the *MH* edition—mistaken enumeration there as of line 45).

³ See the litany for this feast preserved in the *Gandzaran* (*MH* 13:46–50). Its nonacrostic arrangement and *p’okh* section (marked for recitative change) are comparable to those of 12, “Litany for the Church and the Ark of the Lord” attributed to Narekats’i.

⁴ Echoing Rom 16:25-26; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 1:9; 3:9; Col 1:26-27; 1 Tim 3:16.

⁵ Allusion to John 1:4, 9, 14, 18. On the “dawn” motif in the odes, see the introduction to 6c, “Ode for the Resurrection.”

⁶ Owing to the apocryphal Infancy Gospels, where Mary is said to be descended from David; not so in the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew (1:16) and Luke (3:23). See *The Armenian Gospel of the Infancy* (4:2-3), trans. A. Terian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16–17.

⁷ Amplifying Luke 1:28.

Good news to you, Mother of the Lord,
Antiphon Resembling the seraphim, the cherubim enthroned,
15 Close to the superior, Triune Light;
Soaring high with the sun's light,⁸
The kind that beams down to myriads,
Radiant, streaking,
Beaconing a secret path
20 To one unfamiliar with the way.

Good news to the house of Adam:
the curse of sin has been erased today.⁹
Good news to the patriarchs:
behold, they saw the One they desired.¹⁰
25 Good news to the prophets:
the Law has been fulfilled today.¹¹
Good news to you, Bethlehem,
land of Judah, house of Ephrathah.¹²

Good news to trees, blossoms,
Antiphon (Plants) in full bloom, leafy branches,
Beautiful in color, fruitful,
Pleasing to the eye, sweet in taste,
Delightful in fragrance; bouquets of mixed flowers,
Roses with petals arranged radially,
35 Leaves spread out, shining like gold,
Thick in foliage and verdant.¹³

Good news! The great Forerunner John
bowed down in worship.¹⁴

⁸ Allusion to Rev 12:1.

⁹ Allusion to Gen 3:14-19; cf. 7, "Litany for St. John the Baptist," lines 89, 95; Suppl. 3.1, "Ode <for the Theophany>," lines 67-68.

¹⁰ Allusion to John 8:56.

¹¹ Allusion to Gal 4:4; cf. Luke 24:44.

¹² Allusion to Mic 5:2; cf. Matt 2:6.

¹³ Much of the vocabulary of these lines recurs in 13A, "Ode for the Transfiguration," lines 10-14.

¹⁴ Allusion to Luke 1:39-45, Mary's visit to Elizabeth.

40 Good news! Elizabeth, the mother of John,
held him in her lap.

Good news did John announce
Antiphon At the abundant fountains, the many brooks.¹⁵
The gurgling waters burgeoned with laughter,
They streamed in swollen torrents,¹⁶
45 *In a powerful rush, in a gurgling flow,*
Spilling over the fine sand,
Undulating, filling every crevice,
Rising high, piling up and flowing,
Hastening into the waters of the Jordan.

50 Good news to you, Jordan,
for Christ is coming to be baptized in you.
Good news to you, Forerunner,
a voice calling in the desert.¹⁷
“Good news to me, John,
55 for my hand shall consecrate the Lord.
Good news to me, the summoner
of the pure bride of the holy Groom.¹⁸
I am the proclaimer of the good news:
stay not away from the wedding.”

60 Good news to the Jordan,
Antiphon Falling deep and rising high as a mount,
Its surging stream backing up,
Blazing, conflagrant mountains,¹⁹

¹⁵ Drawing on John 3:23.

¹⁶ The line enumeration of the text in the *MH* edition skips a line at this juncture, affecting the enumeration of the remaining lines.

¹⁷ Allusion to Matt 3:3 and parallels (Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4-6); cf. Isa 40:3.

¹⁸ Allusion to John 3:29; cf. Matt 9:14-15. The words put in the Baptist's mouth resemble the public announcements of a town crier.

¹⁹ The fire imagery here is associated with the descent of the Spirit at the time of Jesus' baptism (Matt 3:16 and parallels), similar to the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:3). The latter feast in Judaism commemorates the giving of the Law on Sinai, as God descended on the burning mountain (Exod 19:18).

65 *Widening flare the parting of the deep sea;
It changed course quickly, turning upon itself,
Retreating hurriedly upon seeing (him).²⁰*

 Good news to the universe
 did the Father declare today from above;
70 Good news to the sons of men:
 the Son is coming to be baptized today.
 Good news to earthly beings:
 they beheld the Spirit in the form of a dove.
 Good news have been revealed today:
75 the mystery of the Holy Trinity.²¹
 Good news shall we sing always.
 Blessed be Christ forever.²²

²⁰ The common and still prevalent claim that the waters of the Jordan retreated or reversed course at the time of Christ's baptism is based on a borrowing from the story of the Israelites' crossing of the river under Joshua's leadership (Josh 3:14-17). The stanza draws on Old Testament imagery, including the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea (Exod 14:21-22). The river's rapid drop to substantial depths was well known in antiquity. Cf. Ps 114:3-6 (113:3-6 LXX) and Prayer 63.1.12-19, reflecting on the retreat of the Red Sea and of the Jordan.

²¹ The presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit at the time of Christ's baptism, as often depicted in iconography drawing upon the Gospel pericopes (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:31-34). For a comparable revelation of the Trinity on Mount Tabor, see 13, "Litany for the Transfiguration," lines 72-76, 95-100. For the author's amplification of the trinitarian doctrine of the Nicene Creed, see Prayer 34.3-9; cf. 28.9; 44.1.

²² For French translations of this ode, see L.-P. Marcel, *Grégoire de Narek et l'ancienne poésie arménienne* (Paris: Editions des Cahiers du Sud, 1953), 49-52; and V. Godel, *Grégoire de Narek: Odes et Lamentations, Orphée, Deuxième série* 211 (Paris: La Difference, 1995), 57, 59, 61. For Eastern Arm. translations, see A. Mkhit'aryan, *Grigor Narekats'i: Tagher (Գրիգոր Նարեկացի, Տաղեր / Grigor Narekats'i: Odes)* (Erevan, AM: Haypethrat, 1957), 73, 75, 77; V. Geworgyan, *Grigor Narekats'i: Matyan Oghbergut'ean, Tagher (Գրիգոր Նարեկացի, Մատյան ողբերգություններ, Տաղեր / Grigor Narekats'i: Tragedy Book, Poems [sic])* (Erevan, AM: Zangak-97, 2007), 408-10.