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EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA AND MOSES KHORENATSI: Justification of The Royal Authority in The Christian Hellenism*

Abstract

Hellenistic Christianity sought to synthesize core biblical teachings with Hellenistic values across various realms, including theology, philosophy, politics, law, religion, and culture. It created new identities on individual, collective, and even imperial levels of socialization. Scholars argue that prominent rulers and religious leaders played a crucial role in this process.

This paper examines similar cases in the context of the Late Roman Empire and Greater Armenia, focusing on the reigns of Constantine the Great (306-337) and Tiridates III (298-330). Despite their differences, they share common features across various aspects of social policy, particularly in religious affairs. The conversion to Christianity opened new perspectives for both Rome and Armenia.

This paper explores these transformations through the narratives of two distinguished intellectuals: Eusebius of Caesarea and Moses Khorenatsi. The former was a close companion of Constantine; the latter, who lived more than a century later, sought to understand and justify the actions of King Tiridates. Eusebius employed an apologetic approach, while Khorenatsi adopted a historical description and interpretation. Both authors, however, drew upon Hellenistic social theory combined with biblical wisdom. According to this synthesis, the Roman Empire reached its zenith under Constantine's wise leadership, and his new capital, Constantinople, embodied this ideal. Greater Armenia, conversely, followed a

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different trajectory: after Tiridates, it gradually declined into decay and disintegration. Nevertheless, even under these dire circumstances, a path to redemption emerged.

According to Khorenatsi, such a possibility could only become reality through the creation of a new elite forged in a new national culture and educational system. With this vision, the author revisited the fundamental concept of his teacher, St. Mesrop Mashtots.

Key words - Christian Hellenism, Late Roman Empire, Constantine the Great, conversion to Christianity, Constantinople, Greater Armenia, Tiridates III, proclamation of Christianity as state religion, Eusebius of Caesarea, Movses Khorenatsi.

Ալբերտ Ա. Ստեփանյան

Դաստիարակության գիտական գործակչություն

ԵՎՍԵԲԻՈՍ ԿԵՍԱՐԱՑԻ ԵՎ ՄՈՎՍԵՍ ԽՈՐԵՆԱՑԻ. թագավորական իշխանության հիմնավորումը քրիստոնեական հելլենիզմի ծիրում

Ամփոփում

Հելլենիստական քրիստոնեությունը խնդիր ուներ հարակարգելու աստվածաշնչյան և հելլենիստական հիմնարար արժեքները՝ կրոնախոսության, իմաստասիրության, իրավունքի, քաղաքականության և մշակույթի այլևայլ տիրույթներում: Միտված էր ձևավորելու ինքնության նոր ձևեր՝ անհատական, հանրութային և (անգամ) տերունական մակարդակներում: Համոզմունք կա, որ նման տեղաշարժերի պարագային հույժ էական էր արքայական և կրոնական հեղինակությունների դերակատարությունը: Ներկայացվող հոդվածը սատարում է այս մոտեցումը Ուշ հռոմեական տերության և Մեծ Հայքի օրինակով՝ ուշադրություն սևերելով Կոնստանտին Մեծի (306-337) և Տրդատ Գ-ի (298-330) դարաշրջանի վրա: Չնայած այս գահակաների տարրերություններին՝ ակնառու էին նաև նրանց ընդհանրական գծերը. դրանք նախ և առաջ վերաբերում էին քրիստոնեության Դարձի հանգամանքներին:

Դարձ, որը նոր հեռանկարներ ուրվագծեց ինչպես Հռոմի, այնպես էլ Մեծ Հաքի համար:

Հիշյալ տեղաշարժերը հոդվածում դիտարկվում են երկու ականավոր մտավորականների գրույթի լույսով՝ Եվսեբիոս Կեսարացու և Մովսես Խորենացու: Մեկը Կոնստանտինի սերտ գործակիցն էր, մյուսը, որ ապրում էր ավելի քան հարյուր տարի անց, նպատակ ուներ օրինականացնելու Տրդատ արքայի գործունեությունը: Մեկը որդեգրել էր գրույթի ջատագովական ոճը, մյուսը՝ պատմական նկարագրությունը և խորքային ներհայացը: Հանդերձ այդու՝ երկու հեղինակներն էլ մեկնարկում են հելլենիստական ընկերային տեսությունից՝ շաղախված աստվածաշնչյան իմաստնությամբ: Համաձայն այս համադրության՝ Հռոմեական տերությունը հասել էր իր բարձրակետին ընդ իշխանությամբ Կոնստանտին Մեծի, և նրա հիմնած նոր մայրաքաղաքը, Կոնստանտինապոլիսը, մարմնավորում էր հենց այդ գաղափարը: Այլ էր հայոց պարագան. Տրդատ Գ-ից հետո այն բռնեց աստիճանական անկման և քայլայման ուղին: Սակայն ուրվագծվում էր նրա վերականգնման հնարավորությունը՝ պայմանով, որ կծնավորվի ազգային նոր ընտրախավ՝ դաստիարակված ազգային նոր մշակույթի և դպրոցի ծիրում: Աստ Խորենացին վերադառնում էր իր ուսուցչի՝ Սր. Մաշտոցի հիմնագաղափարին:

Բանալի բառեր – Քրիստոնեական հելլենիզմ, Ուշ հռոմեական տերություն, Կոնստանտին Մեծ, Նիկեյան համաժողով, դարձ ի քրիստոնեություն, Կոնստանդնապոլիս, Մեծ Հայք, Տրդատ Գ, քրիստոնեության հոչակումը պետական կրոն, Եվսեբիոս Կեսարացի, Մովսես Խորենացի:

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ЕВСЕВИЙ КЕСАРИЙСКИЙ И МОВСЕС ХОРЕНАЦИ: обоснование царской власти в рамках христианского эллинизма

Резюме

Эллинистическое христианство имело целью синтезировать основополагающие библейские и эллинистические ценности в рамках теологии, философии, политики, права и культуры. Оно образовывало новые формы идентичности на индивидуальном, коллективном и (даже) имперском уровнях социализации. Исследователи уверены, что при подобных сдвигах были значительные креативные импульсы, идущие от выдающихся царей и религиозных лидеров. Предлагаемая статья апробирует данное понимание на примере Поздней Римской империи и Великой Армении, концентрируя внимание на эпоху Константина Великого (306-337) и Трдата III (298-330). Несмотря на разность их методов управления, весьма значимы и их общности, которые касаются в первую очередь к их обращению к христианству. Обращение, которое открывало новые перспективы как для Рима, так и Армении.

Эти перемены рассматриваются в свете нарративов двух выдающихся интеллектуалов – Евсевия Кесарийского и Мовсеса Хоренаци. Первый был сподвижником Константина, второй, живущий более чем на столетие позже, стремился понять и оправдать деяния царя Трдата. Первый придерживался апологетическому стилю изложения, второй – историческому описанию и пониманию. При этом оба автора исходят из эллинистической социальной теории в сочетании с библейской мудростью. Согласно этому сочетанию, Римская империя достигла апогея своего развития при мудром правлении Константина, и его новый столичный город Константинополь, был воплощением этой идеи. Иным был путь Великой Армении: после Трдата она постепенно склонилась к упадку и разложению. Однако в этих крайних условиях намечался путь к спасению: согласно Хоренаци, такая возможность могла бы стать реальностью только при наличии новой элиты, сформировавшейся в горниле новой национальной культуры и системы образования. Этим утверждением автор возвращался к основополагающей идее своего учителя Св. Месропа Маштоца.

Ключевые слова - христианский эллинизм, Поздняя Римская империя, Константин Великий, обращение к христианству, Константинополь, Великая

Армения, Трдат III, провозглашение христианства государственной религией, Евсевий Кесарийский, Мовсес Хоренаци.

Introduction

The theoretical justification of royal authority in early Christian societies is the main focus of this study, illustrated by examples from the Late Roman Empire and Greater Armenia.¹ For this purpose, the eras of Constantine I and Tiridates III are analyzed through the works of two prominent intellectuals of the 4th and 5th centuries, Eusebius of Caesarea and Moses Khorenatsi.

Eusebius of Caesarea was a notable Christian theologian, historian, apologist, and exegetist. His numerous works are considered influential in shaping Eastern Christian thought and the Creed of belief. Primarily, his works include “Ecclesiastical History,” “Chronicon,” and “Preparation for Euangelia.” The primary focus of the present study is the “Life of Constantine” by the same author, which traditional scholarship regards as a secondary work.

However, we follow scholars who see it as an essential narrative that highlights the ideological shifts of Constantine’s era. It is recognized as a complex textual entity that combines elements of encomium, biography, and history. These elements require different approaches to describe, interpret, and understand historical events. As a result, integrating these layers into a clear narrative presents obvious challenges. Nonetheless, this work plays a key role in reestablishing and enhancing royal authority in late antique Christian society. It illustrates the transformation of Hellenistic ideas under new spiritual and ideological conditions.

In this context, we also aim to discuss royal power in Greater Armenia during the 4th century and highlight the reign of Tiridates III and his descendants. For this purpose, we find it relevant to illustrate the Armenian experience through the example of “History of the Armenians” by Moses Khorenatsi, an influential historian and thinker of the 5th century. Drawing on numerous and diverse sources, his narrative concludes by covering the history of Armenians and neighboring nations from the Great Flood to his time. The role of prominent (or corrupt) royal figures is essential to understanding both the past and present, as seen by Khorenatsi.

The comparison between the two authors is also justified because Eusebius’ works were well-known in Greater Armenia; they were also translated,

¹ Scholars believed that Eusebius of Caesarea introduced “political Hellenism into Christian speculation” (Dvornik, 1966, 611-618).

interpreted, and utilized for theoretical, theological, and political purposes.² We believe that, in this case, the shift of royal authority and state sovereignty can be viewed from a new perspective and explained in a relevant way.

In Eusebius' view, four key aspects of society and royal authority are essential: space, time, spirituality, and eternity.³ Generally, they are interconnected, and their separation is somewhat arbitrary. Together, they represent a set of core values *from both heaven and earth*. According to Eusebius, Emperor Constantine understood this throughout his life. However, early in his career, he was still a pagan focused on bodily perceptions.

1.2 The space dimension and Political Power

The relative stability of the Roman Empire began to weaken clearly in the 3rd century. This decline reached its peak in the second half of the century, affecting all significant aspects of social life, including administration, legislation, economy, religion, culture, and moral values. The Roman elite sought to establish a new social order through military means, believing the army was the Empire's most effective force. However, this was an illusion: various army groups and their commanders were mainly interested in their own power, influence, and wealth.

This led to ongoing conflicts and destruction, prompting a new generation of elites to consider systematically rebuilding the Empire. This idea was driven by Diocletian and his close circle (284-305), who introduced the system of *dominate*—the rule of a master. It replaced the system of *principate*—the rule of a first citizen—and created a new imperial order based on the complete centralization of the ruling bureaucracy (the tetrarchy), which gained control over all aspects of social life—from the economy and government to the military, religion, and moral standards. The experiment ultimately failed, and scholars attribute this failure to the lack of a spiritual foundation capable of resolving internal contradictions within the imperial system⁴.

² Moreover, some essential works of Eusebius have been preserved in the Armenian version and translated into modern languages, considering the Latin, Greek, and Syriac fragments. First of all, this includes his “Ecclesiastical History” and “Chro-nicle” (Zarbanalean, 1889, 434).

³ These aspects stem from Eusebius's descriptions of Constantine's actions across various fields of imperial politics: religion, administration, army, court organization, and more. Only by describing his role as a “political theologian” can we uncover the deeper layers of his interpretation of the Emperor's Christian reformation. This interpretation was based on combining biblical and Hellenistic ideas about the nature of royal authority (Davin Singh, 2015, 132-139).

⁴ About the failure of Diocletian's political, military, and administrative regime (tetrarchy), see Kulikowski (2016, 219-228).

After Diocletian, the Empire fell into chaos, and its territory continued to break apart. The effort to establish lasting peace and reunify the Empire on a new foundation troubled many, especially those competing for power. It also concerned Constantine, the son of Constantius, who was the junior co-ruler (caesar) of Maximian, governing the western part of the Empire as an equal to Diocletian (augustus). Constantine was destined to play a key role in the new unification process.

This highlights one of the main themes of "Vita Constantini" by Eusebius. The reason for writing this work was the Emperor's death; the author chose to compile the key events of his life, blending factual retrospection with philosophical, theological, legal, and moral ideas (presentism). All these approaches relate to the spatial issue in Eusebius' narrative, which, in a close discussion, reveals two opposing extremes: on one side, the broader (imperial) focus, and on the other, the local (pointal) focus⁵.

In fact, Constantine commenced the process of restoring the Empire, still influenced by his father. Eusebius believes that he was equipped with the physical, spiritual, and intellectual qualities needed to meet this historical challenge: "In handsome physique and bodily height, no other could match him; in physical strength, he far surpassed his peers, even enough to instill fear; he took pride in moral qualities over physical strength, prioritizing his soul with self-control and distinguishing himself through his rhetorical education, natural shrewdness, and divine wisdom." (VC, I, 19, 2). In other words, Constantine was working under God's guidance, even if he did not yet realize it.

The restoration of the Empire mainly involved the western provinces, from Britain to the Rhine and Italy. Eusebius views this as a crucial moment in the fight for Italy and North Africa. Constantine's rival, Maxentius, was recognized and declared emperor by the Senate and the Praetorian Guard of the City. He aimed to revive Rome's glorious past under his leadership. However, behind this propaganda was his tyrannical nature. Additionally, Eusebius compares Maxentius to the Persian king Xerxes I, who is described as barbaric, cruel, and egotistical, and who planned to enslave Greece in 480 BC. (VC, I, 37,2 – 38, 1, 3; cf Ecc. Hist., IX, 9, 3).⁶ This enables the author to portray Constantine as the liberator of

⁵ Both approaches have been built around the concept of Christian oecumenism, emphasizing the idea of an inseparable unity of the two spatial dimensions. Scholars also trace their causal and typological connection through time: in both cases, specific points get listed in serial order (διαδοχή; Johnson, 2019, 194-197).

⁶ In primary source texts, Maxentius is depicted as the embodiment of evil. Constantine, on the other hand, is portrayed as a hero destined to vanquish evil. The conflict between the hero and anti-hero is illustrated with elements of mystic ritual. After the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, when Maxentius's body was recovered from the Tiber River, Constantine beheaded the corpse. He then paraded it through the streets

the Empire from evil: “The Emperor, however, dear to God, certainly did not neglect his responsibilities; but, doing all the things opposite to those crimes committed shortly before by the savagery of the tyrants, he was superior to every enemy and foe” (Euseb., VC, III, 1, 1).

This clash reached its peak at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge on October 28, 312. On the southern and northern banks of the Tiber River, Maxentius's and Constantine's troops faced each other. Maxentius had a clear numerical advantage, and Constantine was uncertain about victory. However, he experienced a divine vision: when he looked at the sun, he saw a Cross of Light in the sky with a Greek inscription - “*Ἐν Τούτῳ Νίκα*” (Euseb., VC, I, 18, 3; cf. Eccl. Hist., IX, 2; cf. Lact., DMP, 44-45). It was translated into Latin as “*In hoc signo vinces*”. Lactantius recounted this miraculous event, while Eusebius added a new element, emphasizing that on the morning of the Battle day, the sun's rays revealed the staurogram of Christ on the hanging banner—*chi-rho* (Euseb., VC, IV, 29-31). Constantine defeated his opponent and achieved victory under God's guidance. A significant change also occurred: the emperor's material sword symbolically transformed into the spiritual sign of Christianity, the Cross. According to Eusebius, this event changed Constantine's attitude toward Christianity, leading him to end the persecution initiated by Diocletian. This happened in 312 and paved the way for the Edict of Milan in 313, which tolerated Christianity and recognized its rights alongside the Empire's other religions⁷.

The integration of the Empire's physical space is believed to have been completed in 324 with Constantine's victory over his co-ruler Licinius. Their open rivalry began in 316 and, after various ups and downs, culminated in the battle at Chrysopolis, near Chalcedon, on September 18: “Thus one side advanced confidently in a great throng of gods and with a large military force, protected by shapes of dead people in lifeless images. The other, meanwhile, girt with the armor of true religion, set up against the multitude of his enemies the saving and life-giving sign as a scarer and repellent of evils. For a while, he exercised restraint, and was at first sparing, so that, because of the treaty he had made, he should not be first to initiate hostilities” (Euseb., II, 16, 2). The victory marked the end of the Empire's overall reunification. At this point, Constantine (and his family) became the sole ruler of the Mediterranean Ecumene. The era of military emperors and tetrarchs had come to an end.

of Rome (Euseb., VC, 29-30). Afterwards, the head was sent to Africa (Carthage) to free the land from the anti-hero's witchcraft (Odahl, 1996, 108-110).

⁷ We have no document under this title. The Edict was actually extracted from the letter of Constantine's co-ruler, Licinius, to the governors of the eastern provinces and later received official status (Firth, 1905, 106-111; Potter, 2013, 146).

The process of integrating the Empire gained momentum. It focused on two specific areas in space — Nicaea and Constantinople — primarily on the religious, legal, and administrative aspects of society. Nicaea was the site of the First Ecumenical Council, held in 325. Led by Constantine, it brought together 318 church fathers from various Christian communities in the East and West. In the main issues, the Council's agenda covered matters related to faith and church organization, usually categorized as: a. disputes over key aspects of faith and [additional categories], b. fighting heresies (notably Arianism), c. affirming core beliefs and creating the Creed of Belief, d. establishing rules for personal conduct among spiritual leaders and their congregations, e. forming the holy hierarchy and linking it to royal authority⁸.

The central element of the discussions was, indeed, the Creed of Belief, which mainly influenced the other aspects and outcomes of the Council. It read: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things both visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only begotten, that is from the substance of the Father; God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; 'through whom all things came into being' (John 1.3; 1 Cor 8:6), both things in heaven and things on earth [...]'" (Ayres, 2004, 85-88; Edwards, 2021, 155-156).

Before the Council, Constantine visually demonstrated the Emperor's vital role as a bridge between the divine and earthly hierarchies. From a formal standpoint, this conflicted with the fact that he had not yet been officially baptized. In his farewell speech to the bishops, the Emperor emphasized: "They should avoid contentious disputes. They should not be envious if any among the bishops had a reputation for the word of wisdom, but regard the benefit of one man's skill as common to all. Those who were more proficient should not despise those of modest gifts, for it is for God to decide who are on a true reckoning of proficiency. To the weaker ones, appropriate concessions should be made, since perfection is always rare" (Euseb., VC, IV, 21, 1).

The other point-integration model represents Constantinople, the Empire's new capital, which Constantine planned and refounded between 324 and 337 in place of old Byzantium. It was located at the border between East and West, where water, earth, and air converge. On May 11, 330, it was consecrated as Nova Roma. Primary sources describe the city's architectural splendor, blending Classical and Christian styles in the Augustaeum (Square), Curia (Senate), Great Palace (of the Emperor), Praetorium (Lawcourt), Constantine's Forum, Hippodrome, City Walls,

⁸ On the details of the organization of the Council, see Firth (1905, 223-236; Cf. Lyman, 2021, 12-14).

Golden Gates, a second Curia with the Emperor's statue in the solar image, and many more.

In reality, however, the picture was not so idealistic: "When Constantine died in 337, the city was not much more than a monstrous construction site in which only a few new buildings had been completed, among them the first nucleus of the Great Palace with the Hippodrome, and the centres of his imperial cult, namely the Forum, the Capitol, and his mausoleum. It took forty more years until the new part of the city was filled with houses, a water supply line was in operation, and the colonnaded streets had reached the city walls in the west. And what is most important: no major church was built in the city during Constantine's reign. The so-called "Old Church" in the city centre, today known as Saint Eirene, existed already before the city was refounded" (Berger, 2020, 13; Dagron, 1974, 392-394).

The new capital was envisioned as a place of social well-being and justice. Eusebius describes its central essence as follows: "Being full of the breath of God divine wisdom, which he reckoned city bearing his own name should display, he saw fit to purge it of all idol-worship, so that nowhere in it appeared those images of the supposed gods which are worshipped in temples, nor altars foul with bloody slaughter, nor sacrifice offered as holocaust in fire, nor feasts of demons, nor any of the other customs of the superstitious" (Euseb., VC, III, 48, 2). It was believed that power impulses reached from the imperial court to the far corners of the Empire.

In both cases of point-integration, Eusebius describes a pure model of social solidarity that guides the profane social body (the flock) toward welfare under God's rule. Notably, the solar image of the Emperor also incorporates symbolic aspects of Christ, to whom the City was dedicated (Euseb., VC, III, 51, 2). The spaces of Nicaea and Constantinople were built around this idea of identity⁹.

The overall and point models of spatial integration complemented each other in terms of power, social, religious, and cultural ideas and intentions.

1.3 The time dimension and axiology of history

Three aspects of world history are fundamental in Eusebius's narrative: long-term, middle-term, and short-term durations. They are critical in his key works — notably the "Chronicon," "Ecclesiastical History," and "Life of

⁹ Undoubtedly, in this case also, we have an idealized version of reality. Scholars pay attention to the fact that Constantine's son, Constantius, began to push *the rather oppressive memory of his father* into the background by making Constantinople a new, Christian capital (Dagron, 1974, 86-89).

Constantine.” All three aspects exist under God’s unchanging Eternity, which shapes their core content and progression. In the face of Eternity, the separate parts of historical time are connected in a unified movement with shared direction, content, and logic.

The Chronicon holds a vital place among the author’s works, including historical, martyrological, apologetic, dogmatic, and exegetical texts. It offers a view of world history based on a systematic chronology derived from the narrative traditions of advanced nations such as the Chaldeans, Assyrians, Hebrews, Medians, Lydians, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, and others. It covers humanity’s past from the Flood to the author’s present time. The starting point depicts the destruction of the old world, filled with crimes and sins (Euseb., Chron., 7, 31-35, 10, 48-52, 25, 9-10, etc.). The endpoint reaches up to 325, the year of the Council of Nicaea.

However, in Eusebius’s narrative, besides the natural progression of history from the past to the present, there is also a significant intellectual movement going from the present back to the past. An advanced reader seeks to understand history through the lenses of theology, politics, and morality within Christian axiology. More deeply, this reflects Eusebius’s view that Christianity is the peak of human achievement.

In this regard, scholars view Eusebius as an advocate of Byzantine imperial eschatology, connecting his experience with biblical prophecies, especially those of Daniel and Isaiah, and finding them to be embodied in Constantine’s religious and state policy. They trace Eusebius’s origins to both the first court theologian and the founder of Byzantine political philosophy (Hollerich, 1990, 312-314; Bonura, 2021, 510-515).

This also demonstrates the structure of the *historical present*, modified by the Emperor’s decisive steps to ensure a decent life for the people. Scholars describe this as *benevolence* rooted in traditional Hellenistic and Christian values. They highlight the following key reforms across various aspects of state policy: a. the introduction of a gold currency (solidus) to stabilize the economy, b. the reconstruction of the army, dividing it into mobile and immobile (castle) units to enhance professionalism, c. the reorganization of local administration to focus tribunes’ power on civic affairs and transfer military responsibilities to comes, d. the management of food distribution to the city’s indigent citizens.¹⁰

However, between these points of time measurement, there is a middle period that the author discusses in his next work, the Ecclesiastical History. It focuses on Christ’s earthly life and the history of Christianity from the apostolic era

¹⁰ It provides grounds to argue that Constantine the Great combined different power models, tested in Rome from the time of Augustus’ principate (Burckhardt, 1949, 236-253; King, 2017, 57-60).

to Constantine's reign, covering its spread, martyrdoms, persecutions, and resistance.

Once again, the advanced intellectual view moves in different directions: one from the past to the present, and the other, through verse (intellectual retrospection), from the present back to the middle past. Here too, the present overshadows the past, revolving around the image of the ideal ruler, regarded as the embodiment of virtue and the model others followed.

We can infer that, according to Eusebius, the course of world history follows a cycle, centered on the idea of movement “from chaos to chaos.” The first point was the Flood, symbolizing the destruction of the material world created by corrupt humanity; the second was associated with intense persecutions of Christians under Nero, Severus, and especially Diocletian.¹¹

However, the crisis was not insoluble: Constantine showed that divine Providence had prepared a bright future for humanity. He needed to bring God's Will into earthly life to accomplish this. Through many wars and destructions, spiritual and moral degradation, the Emperor found the way to Christianity. He built his capital, Constantinople, as the earthly symbol of social justice, generosity, and kindness (Jones, 1964, 83-84).

In other words, the world achieved completion by merging its spatial and temporal dimensions—a chronotopic reality influenced by divine Eternity. This was first revealed in human life as a complex of moral and legal values. The Emperor served as a mediator between Eternity and time, through whom God maintained His ongoing presence in the world. At this point, Hellenistic and Christian ideas of royal authority again appeared to run parallel to one another. Indeed, Eusebius' narrative shows Constantine's traits sharing similarities with Alexander the Great, emphasizing that he even surpassed him: “[...] our Emperor began where the Macedonian ended, and doubled in time the length of his life, and trebled the size of the Empire he acquired” (Euseb., VC, I, 8, 1). His creative experience can be summarized with the following conclusions:

1. The subjugation of the entire Roman Empire to his authority (through military clashes, defeating Maxentius in the West in 312 and Licinius in the East in 324) secured Constantine an absolute position. Numerous wars also accomplished this in the East and West, against traditional enemies (especially Sasanian Persia) and barbaric nations along the Rhine-Danube line, including the Franks, Almani, Goths, Sarmats, and others. In Hellenistic political wisdom, this activity would

¹¹ All this period and its specific fragments could be explained on the model of plague described in *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius (DeVore, 2020, 19-27). However, another approach emphasizes the features of crisis and frames this period as the triumph of imperial Rome (Kulikowski, 2016, 19-29).

have been described as gaining territory by spear ($\chiώρα$ δορίκτητος). In Constantine's case, his sword was transformed into the holy Cross.

2. This aimed to overcome chaos and establish social order. As a result, the emperor was given the title of a liberator (*σωτήρ*): “While the Emperor was doing so much to build up and honor the Church of God, and was performing all that would bring the Saviour’s teaching into good repute, he did not neglect secular affairs. But in those also was persistently providing repeated and continuous good works of every kind for all the inhabitants of every province alike” (Euseb., VC, IV, 1, 1). This peace-bringing activity led to a new title that reflected his connection with divine justice. To his subjects, he was seen as the embodiment of law (*νόμος ἔμψυχος*) in line with the Hellenistic tradition.

3. Moreover, the emperor was believed to embody God's presence on earth as His image (εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ). This title reflected the emperor's divine appearance in Hellenistic political thought (ἐπιφάνεια; Goodenough, 1928, 63-69). Through legal and canonical decisions, the emperor guided the development of social unity in both secular and religious spheres: "As a loyal and good servant, he would perform this and announce it, openly calling himself a slave and confessing himself a servant of the All-sovereign, while God in recompense was close at hand to make him Lord and Despot, the only Conqueror among the Emperors of all time to remain Irresistible and Unconquered, Ever-conquering and always brilliant with triumphs over enemies, so great an Emperor as none remembers ever was before in reports of those of old, so Godbeloved and Thriceblessed, so truly pious and complete in happiness, that with utter ease he governed more nations than those before him, and kept his dominion unimpaired to the very end" (Euseb., VC, I, 6, 1)¹².

4. Constantine's creative efforts resulted in a new model of imperial identity centered on reshaping the political and legal community within the framework of *God's covenant*. Although it was only the first step in this process, imperial propaganda quickly presented it as a finished achievement. The new capital, Constantinople, was viewed as a visual symbol of this idea. At its core, the City's design featured the image of Christ and His earthly representation in the face of the Emperor. In other words, Constantinople was planned as both the political and religious hub of the rebuilt Empire.

¹² For the same purpose, the author also compares Constantine with biblical Moses (Euseb., *VC*, I, 12, 3; 20, 5; 38, 2; Cf. Hollerich, 1984, 80-95).

2. Moses Khorenatsi: the anatomy of royal authority

The narrative of Khorenatsi belongs to the genre of pure history. However, it contains layers of myth, epic storytelling, rational thought, and metaphysical insights, all intertwined with elements of political theory, praise, hagiography, and hermeneutics. This embeds the author's ideas—and the entire concept of royal authority—in different historical contexts, requiring effort to uncover its fragments through research. Therefore, it's important to emphasize the overall course of history rather than its specific details. This deductive approach underscores the main point of our analysis of the issue at hand. One methodological note is also relevant: similar to Eusebius' model of historical perspective, Khorenatsi's approach involves a dual consideration—moving from the past to the present, and, through storytelling, from the present back to the past. As in the case of Eusebius, this intellectual retrospection is intended to uncover the past in light of the present. This perspective offers a comprehensive understanding of historical events and their significance.

It should be noted that this experience was considered realistic because the efforts of the intellectual elite would demonstrate effectiveness; otherwise, the retrospective would have been pointless.¹³ Further, his history proved Khorenatsi's hopes to be correct: he participated in the intellectual process in Armenian and was well-acquainted with its resources.

2.1. The opposite poles of social axiology

Khorenatsi identifies one of the main problems in his *History of the Armenians* as a challenge of linking local (Armenian) history with the global historical dimension.¹⁴ He cites the biblical story of the world's recreation to address this. The focus is on the mythos of human generation reaching to Lamech, when evil gradually began to dominate humanity (Khor., I, 1, 4). It highlights the Lord's decision to cleanse the corrupt second generation of humanity with the Word Flood.

Khorenatsi used this story to connect Armenian history with the universal narrative tradition of the Bible. He introduces Noha's sons, who helped the forefather restore the world order after the Flood—Sem, Ham, and Yapheth. The

¹³ About the high effectiveness of the work of the Armenian intellectuals of the 5th century see Arakelyan (1959, 246-259).

¹⁴ Scholars find that Khorenatsi follows the chronological experience of Eusebius, who determined the exact dates of the most important biblical events (Sargsyan, 1986, 32-33).

author believes that Armenians are descendants of Yapheth because one of his descendants, Hayk, is destined to become the founder of Armenia. Hayk's descendants spread across the country and established an ideal social, moral, religious, and legal order among the early population (Khor., I, 5, 27-37). The situation continued until the time of Ara the Handsome, a ruler who fell in a war defending his land against Assyrian invasion under Queen Semiramis (Khor., I, 15, 2-16). Based on Khorenatsi's ideas, one can argue that the Armenian social community emerged after the great cosmic catastrophe, with the advent of the third generation of humankind.

Another global catastrophe is mirrored at the end of Khorenatsi's historical narrative, constituting the essence of his renowned "Lament". In the form of a systematic description, it depicts the collapse of Armenia, beginning from natural conditions to social structure, legal and moral values. Together with the previous world collapse, it composed a global temporal eon—from chaos to chaos—well known in the mythological, theological, and philosophical traditions of the ancient and early Medieval (Christian) Near East and East Mediterranean, especially Greece (Stepanyan, 2009, 181-196).

a. The country's corrupted natural conditions. The first episode: "The winds bring snowstorms, scorching heat, and pestilence; the clouds bring thunder and hail; the rains are unseasonal and ineffective; the air is very cold and causes frost, the rising of the waters is useless, and their receding is intolerable. The earth is barren of fruit, and living creatures do not multiply, but there are earthquakes and tremors" (Khor., III, 68, 40). The goal of this description is to show an effort to shift from a local (Armenian) disaster to a cosmic-level catastrophe. To support this idea, the author cites Philo of Alexandria (Philo, Op. Mundi, XIX, 58).

It comprises the *second episode* of the natural collapse, emphasizing that the cosmic rhythm of time has been broken: "Spring has become dry, summer very rainy, autumn like winter, and winter has become very icy, tempestuous and extended" (Khor., III, 68, 39)¹⁵. The *third episode* unfolds the social outcomes of the natural corruption: "There is exile abroad for the nobility and innumerable outrages for the common people. Cities are corrupted and fortresses destroyed; towns are ruined and buildings burned. There are famines without end and every kind of illness and death. Piety has been forgotten and expectation is for hell" (Khor., III, 68, 40). The author's conclusion sounds reasonable: the Lord has abandoned Armenians for their crimes and sins.

¹⁵ Certainly, we cite these episodes not for their textual effects but for their semantic importance, as they emphasize their emotional impact on an advanced reader. Scholars even argue that the perception of catastrophe forms a specific layer of the Armenian worldview system, which also includes "une poétique de la catastrophe" (Beledian, 1995, 137-142).

In contrast to this, the author describes Armenia in the *History* as a country with a “temperate climate” and “flowering meadows and plains,” with “purity of the air, cleanliness of flowing streams, and gurgling fast rivers,” as well as “rich soil, plentiful water, and fertility” (Khor., I, 16, 2, III, 59, 2). The author believes that the creative efforts of great leaders can enhance and develop these qualities. Scholars see the best example of this in his description of the “beautiful estate” of Eruand the Middle: “It is pleasant for me also to speak about the beautiful estate (dastakert) of Eruandakert, which the same Eruand designed with lovely and charming constructions. He filled the center of the great valley with inhabitants and radiant buildings, bright as the pupil of an eye. Around the inhabited area were arranged fragrant flower beds, much like the circle of the eye surrounding the pupil. A multitude of vineyards resembled the beautiful crescent of thick lashes; on the northern side, its curved form truly imitated the arching brows of charming maidens. The levelness of the fields on the south side resembled the smoothness of beautiful cheeks. The river, with its high banks, resembled a mouth with two lips. Such was the beauty of the site that looked with an unblinking eye, you might say, up to the heights of the royal residence, a truly fertile and royal estate” (Khor., II, 42, 2-4)¹⁶.

To emphasize the role of human impact in improving natural conditions, Khorenatsi introduces a new dimension to the country, defined in the phrase “borders, where Armenian is spoken” (Khor., II, 8, 5). In other words, the “temperate climate” also requires consideration of ethnic and cultural factors.

According to Khorenatsi's broad view, Armenian history extends from ancient times to the 5th century, positioned between the biblical and local Armenian poles of catastrophe. Influenced by Greco-Hellenistic understanding, dating back to Aristotle, the author depicts history as a plot with three clearly defined phases: beginning, development, and end (Aristot., Poet., 1452b, 9-13).¹⁷ This is reflected in the structure of the History of Armenians by Khorenatsi, which consists of three books: “Genealogy of Greater Armenia”, “The Middle History of Our Ancestors”, and “Conclusion [of the History] of Our Fatherland”.

b. *the corrupt social conditions of the country*. Along with the plot conception, another approach of Khorenatsi reveals elements of the human-

¹⁶ All this passage is founded on the concept of the deep anthropomorphic completeness of forms of esthetic harmony: Cf. Stepanyan, A. A. *Development of Historical Thought in Ancient Armenia*, pp. 145-146.

¹⁷ This structure guaranteed the movement of the tragic narrative through pathos, peripeteia, to recognition (comprehension; Belfiore, 2016, 158-162). This understanding has been recognized as the fundamental element of modern historical narrative (White, 1984, 14-17).

centered essence of history, balancing somatic, affective, and rational elements.¹⁸ They are parallel to the previous tripartite narrative structure: beginning—childhood, development—manhood, end—senility. It comprises the background against which history obtains axiology and direction of movement.

The collapse in the Lament by Khorenatsi is portrayed through three social anti-estates that exist outside of real historical time. In this regard, the author even avoids using verb tenses¹⁹.

The *first anti-estate* reveals the anti-intellect personified in teachers, monks, bishops, and students: “lovers of honor rather than lovers of God”, “lovers of commerce and buffoonery”, “lazy to study and eager to teach”. However, the lowest level of corruption is found among teachers (archpriests) who have become “[...] wolves, tearing their own flocks” (Khor., III, 68, 30-33).

In contrast to these corrupted images, in the text of his *History*, Khorenatsi paints portraits of Armenian clergy personifying the intellectual and spiritual mean: Gregory the Illuminator, Nerses the Great, Sahak Partev. In this view, the image of Gregory is the most characteristic: “From the eastern regions of our land, he arose as a true dawn, a spiritual ray of the divine sun, an escape from the profound evil of idolatry, the source of spiritual prosperity [...]” (Khor., II, 19, 9).

The *second anti-estate* is embodied in the anti-affective principle and represents soldiers, princes, and judges. They are described as “wicked, false, boasters, hating weapons, cowards, and lovers of ease”, “rebellious companions of thieves”, “inhuman, false and deceitful”.

However, in the *History*, the author depicts idealized images of the Armenian elite, including princes Smbat Bagratuni, Erachnavu Andzavatsi, Otay Amatuni, and others. They excel in body, soul, and intellect. Responsibility, fidelity, courage, justice, magnanimity, and benevolence set them apart from other members of the Armenian elite. In this context, the image of Prince Smbat Bagratuni appears particularly notable: as the nurse of Artashes the Middle, he saved his life after the massacre of the royal family, raised him, and supported him in regaining the ancestral throne. “Agile of person and body, he was also prudent in everything. He was gifted with success in battle more than anyone else” (Khor., II, 52, 2). Erachnavu: “[...] he was a select man, modest in everything as well as being proper concerning desires of the flesh” (Khor., II, 62, 11). Otay Amatuni: “He was truly a patient, modest man who was also very wise, for although he did not know

¹⁸ This understanding is generated from the basic idea of Aristotle that man is a political animal, and the forms of his state organization are living organisms (Aristot., Pol., 1253a, 20-25; Cf. Roar Anfinsen, 2015, 146-147).

¹⁹ This is evident in the Armenian version. (Sargsyan, 2006, 128-130). In other words, the two poles of chaos are beyond the frame of time, while history develops within it (Stepanyan, 2022, 100-114).

the truth about God, nonetheless he recognized the falseness of the idols" (Khor., II, 82, 4). All these righteous representatives of the elite fulfill their duties and faithfully serve the throne²⁰.

The third anti-estate is represented by the absolute somatic principle, composed of the laity. Its description is brief but very precise: "[...] arrogant, insubordinate, blusterers, loafers, topers, drunkards, pernicious, they flee their patrimonies" (Khor., III, 68, 34). Like the other anti-estates, its members have lost the noble feelings of love and shame.

Regarding the harmony among the laity, Khorenatsi describes it in the context of King Vagharsak Arsacid's reforms, who "[...] ordered that the townspeople be more highly estimated and honored than the peasants and the peasants should respect the townspeople like princes. But the townspeople were not to vaunt themselves too much over the peasants but to live on brotherly terms, [...] for the sake of harmony and life without rancor, which are the causes of prosperity and peace and similar blessings" (Khor., II, 8, 41).

2.2 The image of kings

We believe this topic should be emphasized because of its importance to our title. Indeed, at the top of the Armenian corrupted social pyramid, Khorenatsi sees the kings who represent the worst kind of moral decline: "[...] they are cruel and evil-doers, imposing heavy and burdensome commands and giving intolerable orders" (Khor., III, 42). These traits are mainly embodied in the figures of Artavazd I, Ervand the Middle, Artavazd the Last, Tiran I, and others. Artavazd I: "He displayed no other [noteworthy] deed of valor or bravery and spent his time eating and drinking. He roamed around in the marshes, in reedy and rocky places, looking after wild asses and swine [to hunt]. Having no concern for wisdom, bravery, or a good reputation, [Artavazd] truly was a servant and enslaved person to his stomach [...]" (Khor., II, 22, 4). Eruand the Middle, a tyrannic and cowardly ruler hated by the elite: "He gave even more generous gifts and distributed treasures to them (princes) one by one; but the more he gave, the more hateful he became. Everyone knew that he was not giving out of generosity but from fear [of abandonment]" (Khor., II, 45, 5). Artavazd the Last, who "[...] was deranged from birth onward and [eventually] died of it" (Khor., II, 61, 11). Tiran I: "[The sources] do not relate any very great deeds about him, only that he faithfully served the

²⁰ Along with Otay, Khorenatsi mentions other eminent princes, who stayed faithful to the throne in the critical days of history, particularly Artavazd Mandakuni and Tachat Ashotsan. The king generously rewarded them.

Romans. He lived in peace, occupied with hunting and amusements.” (Khor., II, 62, 2)²¹.

In the text of the *History*, the author, on the other hand, creates portraits of kings who embody moderate emotional qualities, inspire acts of bravery and courage, and demonstrate wisdom in developing and implementing innovative solutions. In this regard, the image of Tigran Eruandean appears expository: “He was just and fair in every judgment, and he considered all the circumstances of each case impartially. He neither envied the noble nor despised the humble, but cared for everyone equally” (Khor., I, 24, 13- 14). The same is true for Vagharshak Arsacid, Artashes the Middle, Tiridates the Great, and others (Khor., II, 3, 20, II, 56, 2-5)²².

Let us remember that Khorenatsi highlights these and other well-developed qualities of great kings to emphasize the central role of royal authority in unifying Armenian society. In developing this idea, Khorenatsi mentions two aspects of ideal royal power: on the one hand, it involves “valor and bravery,” and on the other, “wisdom and institutions” (Khor., II, 1, 2)²³.

Based on this, it becomes clear that, despite their diversity, the leading figures in Armenian history also share key similarities. These relate to their roles in politics, administration, culture, economics, religion, military affairs, and social relations. The common traits have been discussed in the cases of Ethnarch Hayk, Vagharshak Arsacid, Artashes the Middle, and Tiridates the Great. Now, our task is to recall their experiences to complete the topic. All of them begin their activities in chaotic conditions and must overcome these challenges through decisive actions and reforms. This involves categorizing the activities of these historical figures around the following main points.

They threaten or reaffirm control over Armenia through military force or soft power, thus justifying their dominance. Hayk: After his great victory over the Babylonian tyrant Bel, members of his clan spread across the land of Ararad (inhabited by few people), giving rise to Armenia: “This Hayk, son of T'orgom, son of T'iras, son of Gomer, son of Japheth, was the ancestor of the Armenians [...]”. His descendants “began to multiply and fill the country” (Khor., I, 12, 36). As a result, the country was named after him— Hayk. King Vagharshak revived Armenia after the influence of Haykids had waned: “[...] was a valiant and prudent

²¹ In short, the images of all these kings are composed on the deficiency of moral and legal, governing and military qualities.

²² In detail, this aspect is discussed in Stepanyan, A. A. (2022). *Some Aspects of Historical Time and Narrative Fiction in the History of the Armenians by Moses Xorenac'i*, 105-106.

²³ These were thought to be the main elements of the Hellenistic royal authority, uniting the two sides of its activity, practical and decision-making. They were recognized as the principal conditions of the *theatre of power* (Morgan, 2017, 37).

man. He extended his authority over his own territories; and as far as he was able, established order in the way of life of the country" (Khor., II, 3, 2). Artashes the Middle was destined to reconquer his ancestral homeland after the massacre of his royal family. This effort was continued through his reforms to introduce new sciences and technologies, leading to the kingdom's prosperity: "[...] in the time of Artashe's there was no unworked ground in the land of the Armenians, neither in mountains nor plains, because of the [extensive] cultivation of the land" (Khor., II, 52, 5). Tiridates the Great: "As for Trdat, he quickly engaged in many battles, first in Armenia and then in Persia, gaining the victory with his own hand" (Khor., II, 82, 9). Afterward, he took steps to strengthen Armenian society around his rule: "[...] the ability to conquer with a persuasive or forceful word was bestowed on the king to a greater extent, for his actions never departed from the faith" (Khor., II, 92, 3).

These aspects of the activities of prominent Armenian leaders include the dominance and legitimacy of central authority. We have already discussed them in terms of Hellenistic political wisdom and described them as: 1. expressions of the land's subjugation to the king's power—by his spear—which established his absolute authority over it; 2. at the same time, these aspects suggest the presence of other shared features of royal authority—especially charisma and responsibility; 3. therefore, kings also came to be seen as carriers of divine will and ultimate justice in their country; 4. his understanding provided momentum for consolidation, which implied social complementarity: each estate participated according to its social role, based on partnership, compromise, and persuasion.

Like Constantine the Great, Tiridates III expanded these traditional Hellenistic roles in accordance with Christian ideals: "After believing in Christ, he [Tiridates the Great], gleaming with all virtue, increasingly focused on deeds and words concerning [serving the cause of] Christ, frightening and convincing the grandee naxarars, and with them the whole host of common folk truly to be Christ's [followers] so that the deeds of all might testify to the faith (Khor., II, 92, 6). One crucial difference should be noted: Tiridates did not build (or reconstruct) a new Christian capital for Greater Armenia to establish a new relationship between the political and religious branches of power. Instead, he built the new spiritual center, Echmiadzin, on the territory of the old capital, Vagharsahpat. Undoubtedly, it did not serve as the local (Armenian) version of Constantinople.²⁴ Typologically, it

²⁴ Meanwhile, Khorenatsi attributes this event solely to climate change: "In that period, it happened that the sun was in Ares, and there were hot, pestilential winds accompanied by a stench. Those residing in Artashat were unable to bear it, and they willingly agreed to move" (Khor., III, 8, 6). Perhaps the king's motivation was essential: he did not share the Armenian Church's orthodox theology and policy, which

reflected the experience of Christian Rome, with a perspective of weak political power and growing religious influence.

It should be noted that King Tiridates' successor, Khosrov Kotak (330-338), established a new capital for Greater Armenia, Duin. However, he only moved his court to this hillock (Khor., III, 8. 2). The religious center remained in Echmiadzin. This demonstrated the spatial (and fundamental) divergence of the two branches of power, which would become most evident in the following decades.²⁵

3. Semantics of the recovery

All that has been said demonstrates that intellectual reflection is also vital to Khorenatsi's writing. In short, the *Lament* is not the final part of the *History of the Armenians*; it calls for an effort to connect the meaningful parts of the narrative in hindsight. Therefore, let us again underline the importance of an analytical perspective from an advanced reader.

3.1. Moral perspectives in history

The approach of an advanced reader involves a hypertextual understanding of Khorenatsi's narrative. From his active reverse perspective, the extreme qualities of natural conditions and social estates engage in dialogue with their representations in the text, suggesting ways to lessen (or even overcome) their effects. In other words, everything depends on the reader's knowledge and interpretative skills. In this context, it is worth noting that some prominent Armenian rulers had close ties with leading historians of their time, including Vagharsnak Arshak – Mar Aba Catina; Tiridates the Great – Agathangelus; and Sahak Bagratuni (Chancellor) – Moses Khorenatsi. If this idea is correct, it must be acknowledged that Khorenatsi should also be considered an advanced reader.

Consequently, to better understand his work, we must recognize that the distribution of essential social and moral qualities is uneven throughout history. These qualities are primarily emphasized in the first book, "Genealogy of Greater Armenia." All Armenian leaders are Haykids, descendants of the Ethnarch,

led to resistance from some powerful grandees and the people. It was also true in the royal court (Suhodolskaya, 2020, 8-10).

²⁵ Scholars find that they tried to maintain a *soft policy* both in domestic and foreign policy, while their opponents adhered to a "black-and-white" stance (Redgate, 2000, 120-122).

depicted as ideal rulers because they act under divine guidance. The most notable are King Paruyr Skayordi, Aram, Eruand I, and Tigran I. However, this pattern ends with King Vahe, who is killed by Alexander the Great. The second book, "The Middle History of Our Ancestors," shows a mix of virtues and vices. It features ideal kings, such as Vagharsk Arsacid, Tigran II, Artashes the Middle, and Tiridates the Great, alongside flawed kings, including Artavazd I, Eruand the Middle, Artavazd II, Tiran I, and others. In the third book, "Conclusion of [the History] of Our Fatherland", the narrative combines virtue and weakness. Yet, now virtuous leaders of the Christian church, descendants of Gregory the Illuminator—such as Yusik I, Nerses the Great, Yusik II, and Sahak Partev—are prominent. In this regard, the image of Nerses the Great is quite characteristic: "He held an assembly of bishops and laity and established mercy by canonical regulation, pulling up the root of cruelty, which was the natural custom in our country". As a result, "After that, one could see our land as a well-mannered, civilized place, rather than a land of uncivilized barbarians". (Khor., III, 20, 4,13).

The kings represent the weaker side, including Tiran II, Arshak II, and Pap. Even King Vramshapur, renowned for his gentleness and balance, cannot alter the prevailing view of decline (Garsoian, 1997, 84-86). This situation further worsened Greater Armenia's international reputation, especially after its division between the Roman and Sasanian Empires in 387. As a result, the Arsacid dynasty collapsed in 428, reducing Armenia to a provincial status.

3.2. Hypertextual effort to escape the vices of decline

In this part of the investigation, we seek to examine the potential influence of moral poles in overcoming the chaos described in the Lament. In short, we aim to explore Khorenatsi's reverse perspective, revealing two layers. One focuses on the so-called technical interpretation of the text, relying on *external* (Classical and Hellenistic) wisdom, while the other involves an understanding based on *internal* (Christian) wisdom.²⁶ We identify them with Aristotle and the biblical prophet Jeremiah.²⁷ It is worth noting that this combination was influenced by Neoplatonic Christianity, which developed in Armenia under the influence of Cappadocian theology (Stepanyan, 2024, pp. 87-88).

²⁶ About the external (or outer) and internal (or subtle) narratives in medieval Armenian authors, see in detail Erna Shirinyan, "External and Subtle Writings [Արնապին և նորոգ զուսում]", *Ashtanak*, 2, pp.15-45.

²⁷ Aristotle is only implied, while Jeremiah is mentioned in the text of the Lament (Khor., III, 68,28). Both authors were translated into Armenian in the 5th century. As a member of the second generation of Mashtots's disciples, Khorenatsi was well capable of participating in the translation of Aristotle.

The experience of biblical prophets is seen as a blueprint for reform, aiming to transform Jewish communal life from mere thoughts and feelings to actions that promote justice and cooperation. The first essential step in this process was to identify the opposite qualities of each social group—kings, nobles, judges, priests, students, women, and commoners. It was believed that through these efforts, a path to divine salvation could be opened. Meanwhile, Classical Greek social philosophy was more specific, clear, and logical²⁸. It describes a three-part structure in every quality unit: two extremes—deficiency and excess (έλειψις καὶ ύπερβολή)—and the mean (μέσον) (Aristot., EN, 1180b 10-35). The theory originated with the Sophists and was further developed by Aristotle. Achieving virtue and harmony required mental, emotional, and intentional efforts, beginning with individuals and families, and extending to the city-state (polis). The mean across all these levels was associated with happiness, the goal of both individual and communal life.

This “practical” approach dominates Khorenatsi’s writing, involving the discussion of his History as a unified whole, where the historical narrative and the ahistorical lament are interconnected. It aims to demonstrate why a particular mean can degenerate into vices and, conversely, why vices can evolve into a mean. This strategy offers ways to improve the country’s natural conditions, elevate the character of kings, the elite, the clergy, and the laity, and enrich the land with sciences and arts, transforming it into a refined space known in Armenian as *atsu*—a well-cultivated field or garden. Khorenatsi believed this restoration project would be initially achievable on an intellectual level and later implemented in practice.

According to this approach, the prosperity of Christian Armenia seemed to depend on its potential future. It was necessary to develop a new national elite that was educated through the national school system to achieve this. At this point in the discussion, we encounter the main idea of the blessed Mesrop Mashtots, who envisioned Armenia’s future by creating the new script and educational system. This was also true for Khorenatsi and his generation. They received their primary instruction in Armenian exegetical schools and then continued their education abroad at prominent centers in Egypt, Antioch, Athens, Constantinople, and Caesarea. Khorenatsi believes that future prosperity will be achieved through their efforts, as Armenia advances to the next stage of its development, combining the status of a political nation with God’s covenant (Stepanyan, 2021, p. 189).

²⁸ (Laetsch, 1940, 251-255).

Epilogue

Two paradigms of justifying royal authority have been compared in this investigation to discuss issues of social consolidation in early Christian societies. It focuses on the experiences of the Roman Empire and Greater Armenia, reflecting the views of two 4th and 5th-century intellectuals, Eusebius of Caesarea and Moses Khorenatsi.

Eusebius's justification reflects the changes in the Empire during the reign of Constantine the Great. In his works, he considers various aspects of the process from theological, philosophical, historical, legal, axiological, and psychological perspectives. In this context, the following works by the author are especially significant: "Ecclesiastical History," "Chronicon," and "Life of Constantine." These works form a cohesive narrative with a clear idea and purpose, structured according to spatial and temporal coordinates. They explore various dimensions, from the local to the global and the cosmic. The most significant point of this chronotope is the new capital, Constantinople, built by the Emperor as the center of the Christian world. In Eusebius's mind, it symbolized the new era of history following the overall destruction. In this process of global importance, the figure of Constantine the Great is depicted with extraordinary significance and symbolism, elevating him to a level akin to that of *the apostles*. The king is viewed as the creator of a new world of prosperity and benevolence. In this vein, he also shares some principal features with Hellenistic rulers, continuing the tradition that dates back to the era of Alexander the Great.

Eusebius's experience influenced Khorenatsi, but Khorenatsi developed his own view of Christian renewal, grounded in the experience of Greater Armenia under Tiridates III. His concept is primarily historical, rooted in Armenian past events, and centered around the idea of the global eon – "from chaos to chaos." This emphasizes the importance of Khorenatsi's main work, "History of the Armenians," which begins with the Flood and ends with the social decline of his days. The final point is reflected in his well-known *Lament*, which portrays Armenia's degradation, from natural conditions to social classes. Despite the biblical prophets, Khorenatsi sees this degradation as quite measurable. Following Aristotle, he identifies two opposite poles of vice (deficiency and excess), which can be transformed into a balanced virtue (the mean) through the intellectual and deliberate efforts (*deeds of valor and wisdom*) of notable historical figures. The author outlines the first step in this process, suggesting that his *advanced readers* can analyze history in retrospect, moving from the present back to the past. He hopes this will encourage them to juxtapose the vices in the *Lament* with the virtues shown in the *History*. This will outline a way out of degrading situations

and develop specific action plans. For this purpose, suitable figures are required in all areas of national life.

At the beginning of the 5th century, St. Mesrop Mashtots recognized the importance of this task as he invented the new Armenian script and established a network of national schools. He believed that only through educational efforts could Armenians achieve the same success as Constantine did in his Christian empire.

Another, more daring suggestion could be made: Khorenatsi saw in his own name, Moses, a symbol of destiny. While the biblical prophet led his people to salvation in actual space and time, the Armenian historian hoped to achieve the same purpose within narrative space and time.²⁹

Ալբերտ Ա. Ստեփանյան – գիտական հետաքրքրությունների շրջանակում են անտիկ շրջանի և վաղ միջնադարի հայոց պատմության հիմնահարցերը:

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²⁹ In short, a name is a meaningful standard (guise, prosopon) applied to a *face*. Memory operates between these poles, understandable within the social and cultural context (Anderson, 2007, 84-87). In our case, it concerns biblical memory, which Eusebius had already used to legitimize the Christian image of Constantine, through the deeds of Moses.

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