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Classical Armenian

Introduction – Part 1: External History, Writing System

Roadmap

- External history of Armenian
- Periodization: Old, Middle, Modern Armenian
- Earliest sources; important dates
- The Armenian alphabet
- Early writing

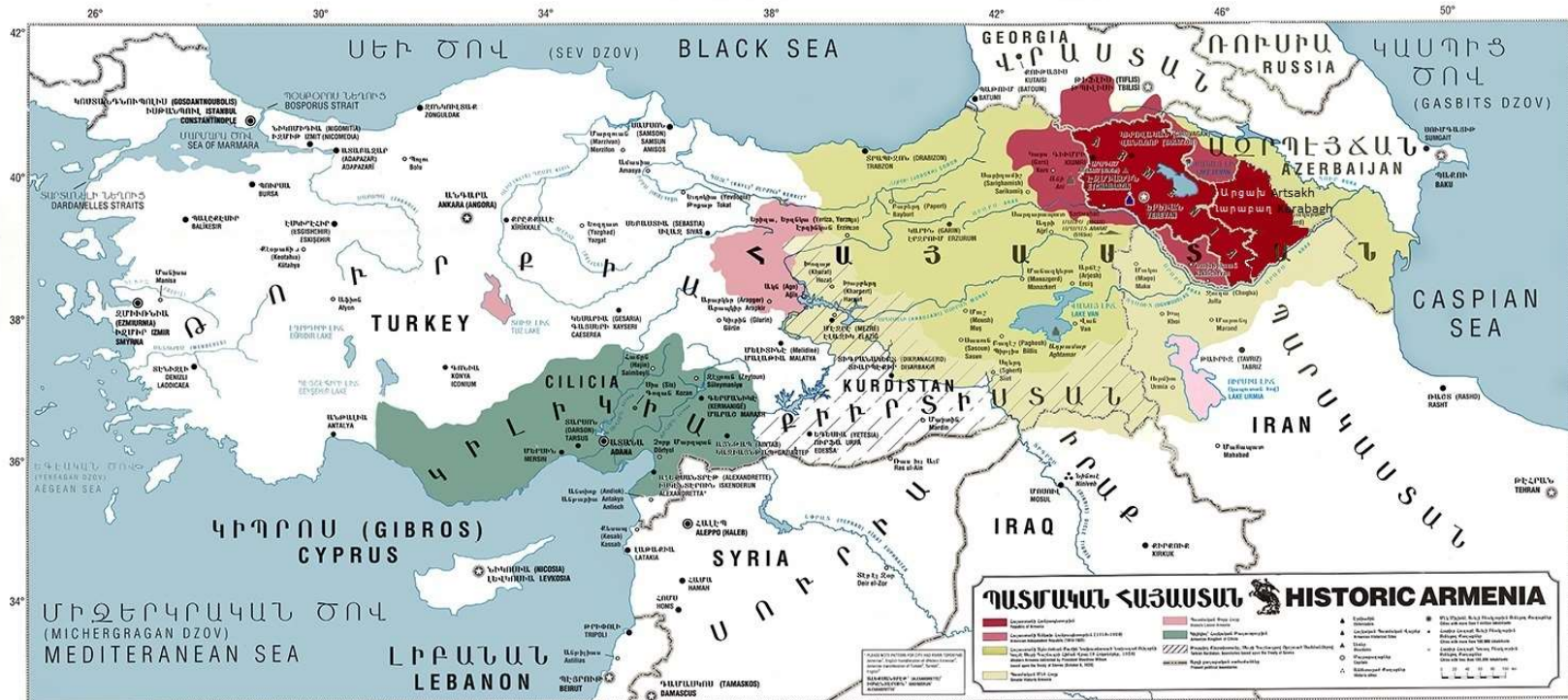
External history of Armenian

- When the Armenians enter history in the middle of the 1st millennium BC, they are settled in the highlands of **eastern Anatolia** and the **southern Caucasus**.
- During the later 1st millennium AD, Armenian communities spread south and west along the Byzantine-Arab frontier, reaching the Mediterranean in Cilicia (now in southeastern Turkey).

External history of Armenian

- Armenians have also been present for centuries in
 - Iran (e.g. Tabriz, Tehran) and
 - the Levant (e.g. Jerusalem);
 - throughout Anatolia (e.g. Constantinople/Istanbul) and
 - the Caucasus (e.g. Tiflis/Tbilisi);
 - in Crimea;
 - and in Eastern Europe (Romania, Poland).

Historical Armenian lands



Map by Peter Zaven Mahakian

 Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)
www.armenianchurch-ed.net

Map by Peter Z. Mahakian, <http://diocesanministries.us/get-involved/armenian-genocide-centennial/banners/>

Modern Armenia and its neighbors



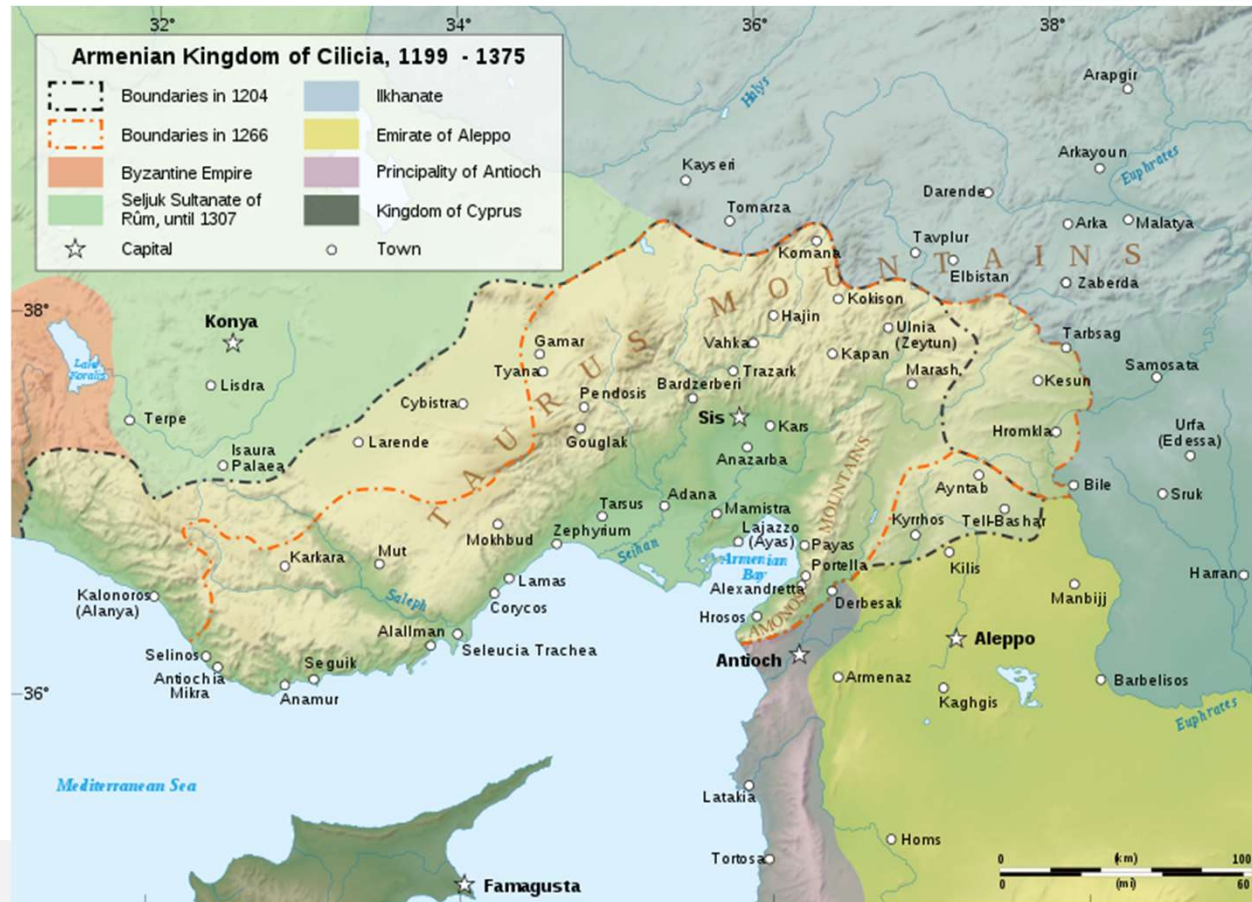
Periodization: Old and Middle Armenian

- **Old or Classical Armenian:** *grabar* “(classical) written language” of the Bible and other works of the *oskedar* “Golden Age” (5th-6th c. AD)
- Standardized, no detectable dialectal variation (possibly *tʻaršamim* vs. *tʻaramim* ‘wither’, with different outcomes of the cluster **rs*)
- **Middle Armenian:** best known from the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia (1198-1375 AD), whose society and culture was much influenced by the Western Crusaders.

Major centers of ancient Armenia



Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, 1198–1375

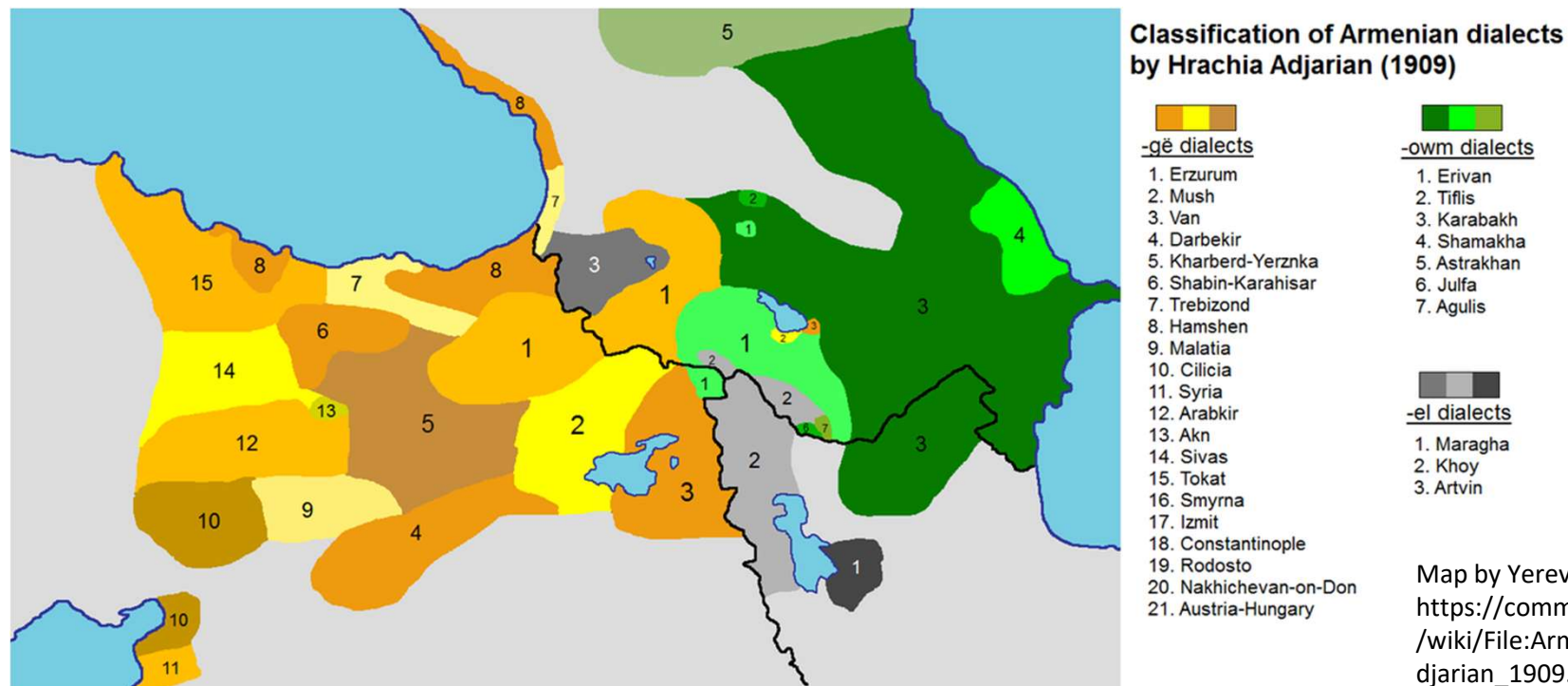


Map by Sémhur,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cilician_Armenia-en.svg
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Periodization: Modern Armenian

- **Modern Armenian** dialects are conventionally divided into Eastern (Russian Empire, Persia) and Western (Ottoman Empire). Two standards emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century: an eastern in Tiflis (Tbilisi) and Yerevan, and a western in Constantinople.
- Standard **Eastern Armenian** is the official language of today's Republic of Armenia.
- **Western Armenian** was largely wiped out in its native territory in 1915, but continues to be spoken in the diaspora (USA, France, Lebanon, etc.).

Armenian dialects in 1915



Map by Yerevanci,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Armenian_dialects,_Adjarian_1909.png
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Earliest sources: Herodotus

- Hdt. VII.73: Οἱ δὲ Φρύγες, ὡς Μακεδόνες λέγουσι, ἐκαλέοντο Βρίγες χρόνον ὅσον Εὐρωπῆιοι ἐόντες σύνοικοι ἦσαν Μακεδόσι, μεταβάντες δὲ ἐς τὴν Ἀσίην ἅμα τῇ χώρῃ καὶ τὸ οὖνομα μετέβαλον ἐς Φρύγας. **Ἀρμένιοι δὲ κατάπερ Φρύγες ἐσεσάχατο, ἐόντες Φρυγῶν ἄποικοι.** Τούτων συναμφοτέρων ἦρχε Ἀρτόχμης, Δαρείου ἔχων θυγατέρα.
- “As the Macedonians say, these Phrygians were called Briges as long as they dwelt in Europe, where they were neighbours of the Macedonians; but when they changed their home to Asia, they changed their name also and were called Phrygians. **The Armenians, who are settlers from Phrygia, were armed like the Phrygians.** Both these together had as their commander Artochmes, who had married a daughter of Darius.”

Earliest sources: Bisutun inscription (ca. 515)

- DB 1.12ff. *imā dahyāva , tayā manā patiyāiša, vašnā Auramazdāha adamšām xšāyaθiya āham: Pārsa, Ūja, Bābiruš, Aθurā, Arbāya, Mudrāya, tayai drayahyā, Sparda, Yauna, Māda, **Armina**, Katpatuka, Parθava, Zranka, Haraiva, Uvārāzmī, Bāxtriš, Suguda, Gandāra, Saka, θataguš, Harauvatiš, Maka, fraharavam dahyāva tišraščā vīθaticā*
- “These are the countries which fell to my lot; by the favour of Ahura Mazda I was their king: Persia, Elam, Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, (the people) who (dwell) by the sea, Lydia, Ionia, Media, **Armenia**, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactria, Sogdiana, Gandara, Scythia, Sattagydia, Arachosia, (and) Maka, all round twenty-three countries.”

Earliest sources: Bisutun

- Armenians serve Darius to put down rebellions in the area:
- DB 2.29ff. *ṭāti Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya Dādršiš nāma **Arminiya** manā bandaka, avam adam frāišayam Arminam avaθāšaiy aθaham: paraidiy kāra haya hamičiya manā nai gaubatai avam jadi*
- “Proclaims Darius the king: (There is) an **Armenian**, Dādrshi by name, my vassal – him I sent to Armenia. Thus I said to him: 'Go forth, (there is) an army which (is) rebellious (and) does not call itself mine – defeat it'.”

Some important dates in ancient Armenian history

- **Persian dynasties:** Achaemenids (530-330 BC), Seleucids (323-250 BC, i.e. after Alexander the Great), Arsacids (Parthians, 250 BC-226 AD in Persia, 54 AD-428 AD in Armenia), Sasanids (226-651 AD)
- **314/315 (301?):** King Tiridates (Trdat) III, adoption of Christianity
- **387:** Armenia divided between Roman and Persian Empires (Theodosius [379-395], Šapur III [383-387]); larger part goes to Persia
- **404 (406/7?):** Invention of the alphabet by Mesrop Maštoc^c
- **451:** Yazdgerd II (438-457) increases Persian pressure on Armenians to convert to Mazdaism. Armenian revolt led by Vardan Mamikonian. Battle of Avarayr secures religious freedom for the Armenians.

The Armenian alphabet

- Traditionally ascribed to **Mesrop Maštoc'** (404 AD); invented for evangelization
- Originally contained 36 letters; two more added around the 10th c.: Օ /o/ for monophthongized /aw/ and Ֆ /f/ for loanwords.
- Only capital letters used at first (*erkat'agir* 'iron script'); minuscules after 12th c.
- Nearly phonemic, i.e. one-to-one relation between phoneme and symbol (exception: նԼ <ow> /u/ after Gk. ou).
- Earliest specimens of the script are inscriptions in stone (church of Tekor) and on mosaic pavements (excavated in Jerusalem).

Ա	ա	ayb	a	1	Ժ	ժ	že	ž	10	Ճ	ճ	čē	č	100	Ռ	ռ	ra	ř	1000
Բ	բ	ben	b	2	Ի	ի	ini	i	20	Մ	մ	men	m	200	Ս	ս	sē	s	2000
Գ	գ	gim	g	3	Լ	լ	liwn	l	30	Յ	յ	yi	y	300	Վ	վ	vew	v	3000
Դ	դ	da	d	4	Խ	խ	xē	x	40	Ն	ն	now	n	400	Տ	տ	tiwn	t	4000
Ե	ե	ech'	e	5	Ծ	ծ	ca	c	50	Զ	զ	ša	š	500	Ր	ր	rē	r	5000
Զ	զ	za	z	6	Կ	կ	ken	k	60	Ո	ո	o	o	600	Յ	ց	c'o	c'	6000
Է	է	ē	ē	7	Հ	հ	ho	h	70	Չ	չ	č'a	č'	700	Ի	լ	hiwn	w	7000
Ը	ը	ət', et'	ə	8	Ձ	ձ	ja	j	80	Պ	պ	pē	p	800	Փ	փ	p'iwr	p'	8000
Թ	թ	t'o	t'	9	Ղ	ղ	lat	l	90	Ջ	ջ	jē	j	900	Ք	ք	k'ē	k'	9000
															Օ	օ	ō	ô	10000
															Ֆ	ֆ	fē	f	20000

Origins of the Armenian alphabet

- Greek alphabet most probably used as model:
- writing from left to right;
- order of letters follows that of the Greek alphabet;

a	b	g	d	e	z	ê	ə	t'	ž	i	l	x	c	k	h	j	ł
α	β	γ	δ	ε	ζ	η		θ		ι				κ			λ
č	m	y	n	š	o	č'	p	ǰ	ř	s	v	t	r	c'	w	p'	k'
	μ		ν	ξ	ο		π		ρ	σ		τ			υ	φ	χ;

Origins of the Armenian alphabet

- Greek alphabet most probably used as model:
 - some letters correspond in form to that of the Greek cursive, e.g. Ք for *b* like Gk. β;
 - use of digraph ու for /u/ as in Greek <ou>;
 - use of letters as symbols for numbers as in Greek (similarly Gothic, Coptic, Georgian).
- For most signs, no corresponding forms: Mesrop's invention

Transliteration systems

- Some authors transcribe ռԼ as *u*. Others (including us) write *ow* to maintain a one-to-one correspondence.

	Hübschmann, Schmitt	Meillet, Jensen	Kölligan – Kim
Է	<i>ê</i>	<i>ē</i>	<i>ē</i>
Օ	<i>ô</i>	<i>ō</i>	<i>ō</i>
Ռ	<i>ṛ</i>	<i>ṛ</i>	<i>ṛ</i>
Գ	<i>c'</i>	<i>ç</i>	<i>c'</i>
Հ	<i>č'</i>	<i>č</i>	<i>č'</i>

A note on pronunciation

- The traditional pronunciation of Classical Armenian (as maintained by the Armenian churches) reflects several postclassical sound changes.
- Both this and the reconstructed classical pronunciation are allowable.

	classical	traditional
<i>ekētec'i</i> 'church'	[ekete 'tʰi]	[jekeye 'tʰi]
<i>otn</i> 'foot'	['otən]	['votən]
<i>caneay</i> 'I recognized'	[tsa 'nɛaj]	[tsa 'nja]
<i>loys</i> 'light'	[lojs]	[lujs]
<i>Yovhannēs</i> 'John'	[jowan 'nes]	[hova 'nes]

Early writing



- Inscriptions in Armenia and Jerusalem (6th c.+)
- e.g. Musrara, Jerusalem, 350 m north of the Damascus Gate; found in a rectangular room with an apse at the east end

Photo by Dickran Kouymjian

Early writing

ՎԱՍՆ ՅԻՇԱՏԱԿԻ ԵՒ ՓՐԿՈՒԹԵԱՆ
vasn **yišatak-i** **ew** **p'rkowt'e-an**
for memory-GEN.SG and salvation-GEN.SG

ԱՄԵՆԱՅՆ ՀԱՅՈՑ ՁՈՐՈՑ ՁԱՆՈՒԱՆՍ
amenayn **Hay-oc'** **z-or-oc'** **z-anowan-s**
all Armenian-GEN.PL ACC-rel-GEN.PL ACC-name-acc.pl

Տ(Է)Ր ԳԻՏԷ
T(ē)r **git-ē**
Lord know-3SG.IND.PRS

“For the memory and salvation of all Armenians whose names the Lord knows.” (cf. Greenwood 2004: 89-90).

Early writing

- Church of St. Sargis in Tekor (Kars, Turkey; 5th c., demolished 1960s)



Early writing

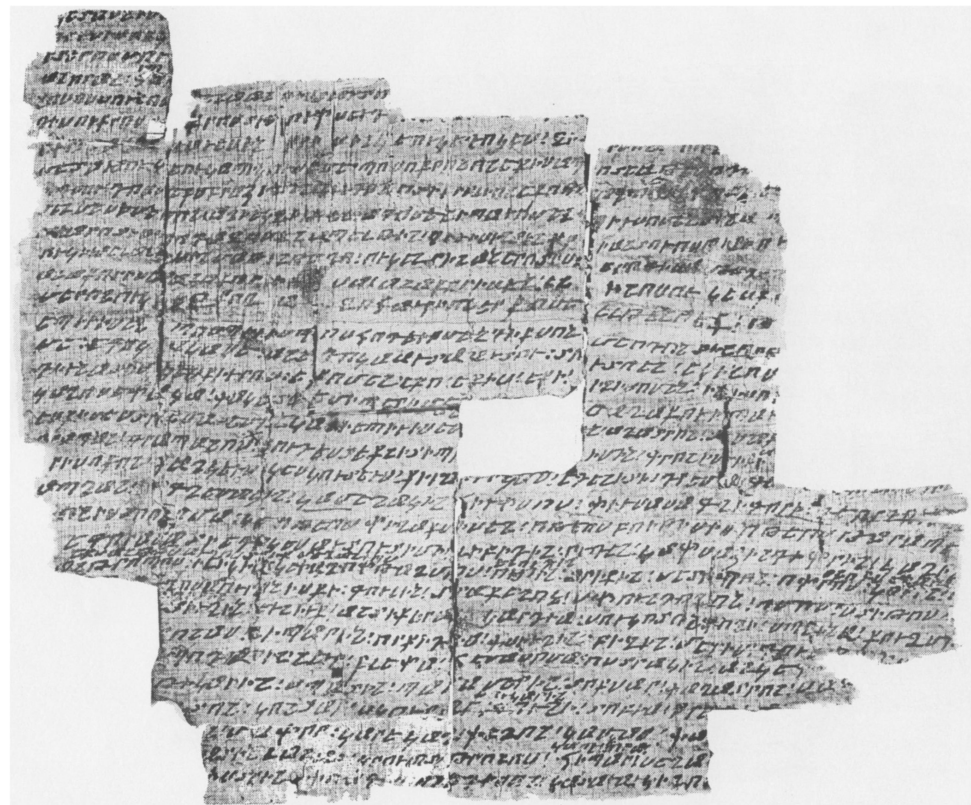
Sahak Kamsarakan **šine-ac'** **z-ays** **vkayaran**
S. K. build-3SG.AOR ACC-DEM martyrium
srb-oy **Sargs-i** **y-iwr** **barexawsowt'iwn-Ø**
holy-GEN.SG Sargis-GEN.SG prp-his intercession-ACC.SG
ew **bolor** **azg-i-s** **ew** **amowsn-i** **ew** **ordek-ac'**
and all family-GEN.SG-DEM and wife-GEN.SG and son-GEN.PL
ew **sirel-e-ac'**
and love-PST.PTCP-GEN.PL

“Sahak Kamsarakan built this martyrium of Saint Sargis for his intercession and of his whole family and wife and children and loved ones.” (cf. Greenwood 2004: 79-80).

Early writing

- Fascinating evidence for early Armenian literacy: a Greek papyrus in Armenian script from Egypt, probably 5th-7th c. (Clackson 2000)
- Contains conversational phrases, basic verb conjugations, and word lists; hence a sort of “phrasebook” for resident Armenians, suggesting rapid spread of the alphabet after its creation in c. 404

Photo source: Clackson 2000:226



Early writing

...]ԴԻՍՈՒԽՐՈՍՏ[...]ԽՐՈՍՏԻՍՈՒՓՍԵԲԴ[Ո]

...]dis ow xrost[o] xrostis ow p'sewd[o]

ψεύδεις οὐ χρεστ[ῶ] χρεστεῖς οὐ ψεύδω

“You [lie], I do not know. You owe, [I] do not lie.” (l. 6)

ԵՊԻԲԻՍԵԼՊՈՒՊԻԲԻՍՊՈՒՅՈՂԵԲՈՍԵԼԴԻՔՍՈՆՍԵՈՂՈՆՏԻՆ

epiwiseṇ pos piwis pos hodewomen dik'son me odon tin

ἐποίησεν. πῶς ποιεῖς πῶς ὁδεύομεν δεῖξόν μοι ὁδὸν τήν

“He made. How do you make? Where do we go? Show me the road.” (l. 15)

շնորհակալութիւն

Thank you for your attention!