

Armenian Philology in the Modern Era

From Manuscript to Digital Text

Edited by

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With the Collaboration of

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The Editing of Christian Apocrypha in Armenian: Should We Turn Over a New Leaf?

Valentina Calzolari

1 Christian Apocryphal Literature: Between Traditional Interpretations and New Directions of Research

Christian apocryphal literature in Armenian language constitutes a field of study that remains largely unexplored. After the first studies, carried out predominantly by the Mekhitarist Fathers between the end of nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, last decades have witnessed a new impulse to this vast domain of research. A great deal of work, however, remains to be done, especially in the domain of philology, as we will try to show below. Before presenting the *status quaestionis* it is necessary to set the limits of this survey. First of all, it is important to make some preliminary observations in order to define what “Christian apocrypha” are.

1.1 *Closing of the Canon and Christian Apocryphal Literature*

The notion of apocrypha is closely related to the constitution of the canon of the New Testament books, which was the result of a long process of selection that each eastern and western Christian community elaborated in its own way.¹ Although it is difficult to say anything more specific concerning the various phases of this development, by the fourth century there seems to be a consensus about the contours of the New Testament collection in most Christian

This chapter is dedicated to the memory of Dom Louis Leloir.

1 Concerning the formation of the New Testament canon, see the classical and still fundamental work of Zahn 1888–1898, 1890–1892, as well as Metzger 1987. Among the most recent scholarship are worth mentioning the studies collected by Aragione et al. 2005; Auwers & De Jonge 2003; McDonald 2007; Norelli 2004. See also Bovon & Norelli 1994, 525–540; Le Boulluec 2004.

communities,² with the exception of some texts which remain of uncertain status, such as the *Apocalypse of John*, and certain Epistles.³

The closing of the canon caused very old texts, which until then were regarded with authority, to take second place or, in certain cases, to be rejected. For instance, this is the case of the *Acts of Paul* (second century) or the *Gospel of Peter*.⁴ As soon as the works of the canonical collection imposed their authority as the only authentic accounts of the words of Christ and early Christianity, apocryphal texts started to be progressively disregarded, being considered either forgeries, questionable or even heretical products.⁵ Even though the term “apocrypha” is well attested before the fixing of the canon,⁶ it becomes charged with a pejorative character and an ideological connotation only after the closing of the New Testament canon.⁷

This hostile attitude towards apocryphal literature had consequences for the textual transmission of these works.⁸ Without the protection of the ecclesiastical institution, i.e. without being fixed by ecclesiastical usage that could guarantee these texts some form of stability,⁹ certain apocrypha simply

2 By the end of the second century a canon of the four Gospels already existed. On the Gospels, see Koester 1989, 361–381; Koester 1990; Stanton 1997; Stanton 2003.

3 Jakab 2004. On the transmission and the status of the *Apocalypse of John* in Armenia, see Murad 1911.

4 Junod 1988.

5 On this point, see for instance Eusebius of Caesarea's testimony. In his *Ecclesiastical History* III, 25, Eusebius makes a distinction among books “commonly accepted” (the tetrad of the Gospels, the *Acts of the Apostles*, the *Epistles of Paul*, the *First Epistle of Peter* and the *First Epistle of John*); the books “disputed” but accepted by the majority of Churches (*Epistle of James*, *Epistle of Judah*, *Second Letter of Peter*, *Second and Third Letter of John*); the “illegitimate” books (gr. *vôðα*), sometimes read in the Churches (the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Acts of Paul*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Didache*, and, for some, also the *Gospel of the Hebrews*; the *Apocalypse of John* would belong, according to some, to the category of inauthentic books, for others to that of received books); the “fictions of heretics”, which are “in disagreement with the veritable orthodoxy” and which one has to “reject as entirely absurd and impious” (the “*Acts of Andrew and John* and the other apostles”, the *Gospels of Peter*, *Thomas*, *Matthias*); see Baum 1997; Kalin 2002; Le Boulluec 2002.

6 In the *Gospel of Thomas*, for instance, the Greek expression *logoi apocryphoi* refers to Jesus' “secret” or “hidden words”: see Kaestli 2007^{2b}.

7 On the history of the term “apocrypha”, see Mimouni 2002, 13–17. On the word “canonical”, see Metzger 1987, 289–293.

8 We can find witnesses in the Fathers of the Church. For an overview, see Junod & Kaestli 1982.

9 See Junod 1991, 404.

disappeared,¹⁰ or survived only in a fragmentary form.¹¹ Furthermore, other texts became subject to the opprobrium of censorship, thus being corrected to such an extent that it is now difficult to recover their primitive content. Alterations can also be the result of copyists who, without any intention to modify the text, nevertheless departed from it, often aiming at ameliorating their exemplar by making it clearer or more responsive to the audience's expectations.

This program of "purging" or, more simply, reworking of these texts did not take place in a homogeneous way among the different communities.¹² As a matter of fact, the ancient oriental versions,¹³ including the Armenian ones, sometimes preserve a state of the text that is closer to the original than that preserved in the Greek manuscripts.¹⁴ Thus, the ancient translations constitute first class witnesses for the reconstruction of the primitive text.

1.2 *Is it Possible to Speak of Christian Apocryphal Literature after the Fourth Century?*

The above observations invite us to briefly go back to the definition of the term "apocrypha". Traditionally only those works that were not retained in the process of selection that led to the formation and closing of the New Testament canon are considered to be apocryphal. Consequently, here, only works preceding the fourth century have been included in this group. Other approaches go as far as to establish a relationship of constitutive dependence between canonical works and apocryphal works, and believe these latter, in addition

10 This is the case of the *Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* mentioned by Origen and other Church Fathers.

11 See *Gospel of the Nazarenes*, *Gospel of the Hebrews*, *Gospel of the Ebionites*, in use in Judeo-Christian milieus.

12 The role played by monastic circles in the preservation of apocryphal works was very important: see Bovon 1981, 157. On the diffusion in private circles, see also Lequeux 2007.

13 Without opening the question of the New Testament canon in the East, it is worth mentioning that certain oriental Churches, and especially the Ethiopian Church, granted a greater honour to certain books considered apocryphal by the Greek and Latin Churches: see Piovanelli 1993. For some time, the Armenian Church, as well as the Syriac Church, considered canonical the *Apocryphal Correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians*: see Hovhannessian 2000.

14 This is the case of encratite passages of the *Martyrdom of Andrew*, which were lost in Greek, but which we were able to recover thanks to the Armenian version: Calzolari 2000; Prieur 1989, 265–270, 321–326; see also Calzolari 1998. On the Armenian *Acts of Andrew* and the *Acts of Andrew and Matthew*, see also Leloir 1975–1976; Leloir 1978; Leloir 1986 & 1992, 191–265; Leloir 1991.

to titles and specific terms, actually borrow their literary models from the New Testament sources. Furthermore, the very aim of apocrypha, according to this New Testament-centred viewpoint, was to compete with works already canonized or on the way to being canonized. This New Testament point of view of apocryphal literature leads its partisans to consider the apocrypha, in their genesis and development, as fundamentally depending on the normative *corpus*.¹⁵

While from a theological perspective it is possible to explain the concept of “apocryphal” as supposing that of “canonical”,¹⁶ a historical approach cannot admit Schneemelcher’s hypothesis, i.e. that apocrypha were produced in order to imitate, complete, correct, or compete with canonical writings – with the exception of a very small number of texts.¹⁷ Accepting such a hypothesis would signify neglecting the extreme diversity of apocryphal traditions, disregarding their origins and the circumstances of their transmission.

The use of the criterion of form is equally misleading. A number of apocrypha bearing the titles, often in themselves secondary – such as “Gospel”, “Acts”, or “Apocalypse” actually differ, on a formal level, from the New Testament works with the same titles. Additionally, certain titles may add further confusion to the general picture. The most obvious example is *The Ascension of Isaiah*, the title of which might lead one to expect an Old Testament apocryphon, while its content is undoubtedly Christian.¹⁸

In addition, the fourth century chronological limit is also questionable, for it does not take into consideration the creation and transmission of apocryphal books among the different western and eastern communities in later epochs. Many texts presenting features in common with the most ancient apocrypha were in fact compiled after the canon was closed.

This fundamental criticism of W. Schneemelcher’s position was formulated by É. Junod who, in 1983, proposed the following formula:

Textes anonymes ou pseudépigraphes d'origine chrétienne qui entretiennent un rapport avec les livres du Nouveau Testament et aussi de l'Ancien Testament parce qu'ils sont consacrés à des événements racontés ou évoqués dans ces livres ou parce qu'ils sont consacrés à des événements qui se situent dans le prolongement d'événements racontés ou évoqués dans ces livres; parce qu'ils sont centrés sur des personnages

15 See Hennecke & Schneemelcher 1959³, 6.

16 For a theological understanding on these two concepts, see Gisel 1996; Mimouni 2002.

17 See Junod 1991, 404.

18 On *Ascension of Isaiah*, see Norelli 1994.

apparaissant dans ces livres, parce que leur genre littéraire s'apparente à ceux d'écrits bibliques.¹⁹

In reaction to this criticism, in the new edition of his work, published in 1987, Schneemelcher softened his 1959 definition,²⁰ but maintained the fourth century chronological criterion and concerned himself with establishing a precise demarcation between apocryphal and hagiographical works – a question that remains highly complex today. According to Schneemelcher only the texts excluded from the canon and earlier than its closing can be called apocryphal.

In opposition to the argument of the chronological limit as well as that of the interdependence between the literary models of the canonical works and the apocryphal works, in 1992 Junod again stressed the artificial character of the designation “New Testament apocrypha” and proposed to substitute it with the formula “Ancient Christian apocrypha”,²¹ which we adopt here.²²

In a certain academic tradition, the title “New Testament apocrypha” actually not only refers to the primacy granted to the canon as central element for determining analysis and comprehension of apocryphal texts, but also suggests that next to the self-contained New Testament *corpus* there is a corresponding unified category of parallel texts, which can be put together in one circumscribed and homogenous *corpus*, open to be studied in itself.²³ On the contrary, because of its flexible nature, apocryphal literature is not at all suited for the constitution of closed collections. In fact, as already stressed, every apocryphal text is the product of its epoch and place of origin. These works

19 Junod 1983, 412.

20 Schneemelcher 1987⁵, 52.

21 Junod 1992. On the topic, see also Bovon 1983; Kaestli 2007^{2a}; Nicklas 2007; Picard 1999; Rordorf 1993.

22 This is the formula chosen by the Association pour l'Étude de la Littérature Apocryphe Chrétienne (AELAC), whose aim is to promote the knowledge of apocryphal literature by means of editions, translations, and commentaries of apocrypha, including writings written after the fourth century.

23 One of the first collections was prepared by Fabricius (Fabricius 1703), who gathered a large number of apocryphal texts grouping them according to the categories of the New Testament works (Gospels, Acts, Epistles, Apocalypses) and choosing titles that underlined the link between apocryphal writings and canonical works. Although Fabricius' aim was to put works considered dangerous from a doctrinal point of view in a better light, he nevertheless acknowledged them to be of interest as documents for the knowledge of heretical movements in Antiquity. Besides ideological intentions, Fabricius' collection had the merit of considering apocryphal texts as an object of study. On this topic, see Poupon 1981; Picard 1990.

may have complex connections not only with the New Testament and with other apocryphal texts, but also with many other ones. They may be contemporary with them, or precede them, while their origins may be Christian, and sometimes Jewish or even pagan.²⁴ Only an approach that takes into account the diversity of these factors and their interactions allows us to understand these texts in their own context and nature. This is all the more so, especially in view of what they can still teach us about the memory of Christian origins as each community pictured it at different moments of its own history.²⁵

2 The Christian Apocrypha in Armenian

We should stress that the chronological criterion adopted by Schneemelcher, the limitations of which were noted above, would oblige us to exclude all apocryphal literature in Armenian language from the field of Christian apocrypha. After all, the Armenian alphabet was invented only at the beginning of the fifth century. However, Armenians took a keen interest in apocryphal literature from the beginning of the fifth century, translating from Greek and Syriac,²⁶ and creating their own versions. To exclude this body of work by applying Schneemelcher's chronological criterion would seriously distort the overall picture of the field.

Although we do not intend to offer an exhaustive list of apocryphal Christian works written in Armenian here,²⁷ first of all it is important to recall that Armenians manifested much interest in the *apostolic* traditions. Almost all the most ancient apocryphal Acts (second – third century) were known and translated, at least partially.²⁸ The text that has often been preferred is the final section of such Acts, i.e. the *Martyrdom* (or the *Dormition*, in the case of the *Acts of John*), because being shorter it was easier to exploit them for liturgical purposes. This was certainly well suited to be read on the day of the commemoration of each apostle. Therefore, in Armenian we have at our disposal

24 The *Acts of Andrew*, just to make an example, have been influenced by hermetism, middle-Platonism, and other texts of the pagan Greek literature, while Scriptural allusions are rare: see Junod 1992, 41–43; Prieur 1989, 372–379, 409–412, *et passim*. It is Flamion 1911, 145–177 who was able to identify the influence of philosophical texts on the *Acts of Andrew*, and Festugière 1954, 227–231, who showed the influence of the hermetic literature.

25 See Introduction to Bovon & Geoltrain 1997; Bovon 1981.

26 On the Armenian translations from Syriac, see Calzolari 2005b.

27 A list of Armenian apocrypha, with a bibliography can be found in Anasyan 1959, 903–913; Voicu 1983; see also Voicu 2000 and different entries in Geerard 1992.

28 *Acts of Andrew*, *Acts of John*, *Acts of Thomas*, *Acts of Paul*, *Acts of Peter*.

the translation of the *Martyrdom of Andrew*, the *Martyrdom of Thomas*, the *Martyrdom of Paul*, the *Martyrdom of Peter*, as well as the *Dormition of John*. The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and the apocryphal *Correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians*, which were two sections of the *Acts of Paul*, were also translated. Of the apostolic traditions, the *Acts of Andrew and Mathew* and the *Acts of Thomas*, were translated from Syriac; the *Acts of John by Prochorus* and the *Acts of Peter and Paul*, from Greek. Several *Lists of Apostles* and other later *Histories*, such as the *History of the preaching of James the Minor* in Spain, or the *History of James and John* were also translated. Texts dealing with the apostolic founders of the Armenian Church occupy a special, prominent place: Thaddaeus (and his pupil Sanduxt²⁹) and Bartholomew, which seem to have been compiled directly in Armenian.²⁹ Closely connected with the Thaddaeus cycle, the legend of king Abgar of Edessa also found an important place in the ancient Armenian literature, probably already in the fifth century.

Among the apocrypha related to Jesus' coming to earth and passion, the Armenian tradition preserves the works that deal with Jesus' birth and infancy, such as the translation of the Greek *Protoevangelium of James* (whose real title we now know was *Nativity of Mary*)³⁰ and the late *Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus*, which exists only in Armenian.³¹ The Passion cycle includes first of all the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (or *Acts of Pilate*), as well as the *Letter of Pilate* (i.e. the *Anaphora Pilati*, followed by the *Paradosis Pilati*).³²

The Marian cycle includes, among others, the *Dormition*,³³ the *Epistle of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite to Titus*,³⁴ the *Apocalypse of Mary*,³⁵ as well as other *Panegyrics* and *Homilies*.³⁶ In addition to the *Apocalypse of Mary*, the apocalyptic genre includes the *Apocalypse of Paul*,³⁷ and an apocryphal *Apocalypse of John*.³⁸ Among the epistles, undoubtedly the most important are those that form the *Correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians*, which, for a certain period of time, must have been canonical in Armenian, under the influence of the Syriac canon.³⁹

29 Calzolari 2011a, 43–44, 106, 120–121.

30 De Strycker 1961.

31 Peeters 1914, who supposed a Syriac origin.

32 Tayec'i 1898, 313–345; Conybeare 1896; see also below, note 105, 107 and 108.

33 Vetter 1902.

34 Vetter 1887; edition in Sruanjteanc' 1874.

35 Tayec'i 1898, 383–401 (versions A and B); Tayec'i 1898, 402–417 (versions C, D, E, F, G).

36 On the apocrypha of the Virgin, see Dasnabedian 1997–1998.

37 Leloir 1980; Vetter 1906b; Vetter 1907; Rosenstiehl 1984.

38 Indicated in Rosenstiehl 1984.

39 See above, note 13.

Although the list given here is not exhaustive, it leads us to formulate a first *desideratum*, i.e. the preparation of a *Clavis Apocryphorum Armeniacorum*, whose data would complete those contained in Maurice Geerard's *Clavis Apocryphorum Novi Testamenti*.⁴⁰

The wealth of works translated into or written directly in Armenian represents an impressive fact and raises a question which goes beyond the limits of this presentation: why did Armenians concerned themselves with uncanonical literature, even though their literature began after the closing of the canon? Certainly there are many answers possible: different text most likely responded to different needs, which can only be clarified, if at all, by specific studies.⁴¹ In general, the Armenian Church did not adopt a normative attitude towards this literature, as the absence of canonical decisions implicitly shows. As observed by M. Stone, the Armenian lists of canonical and uncanonical works actually have to be considered as reflecting a scholarly interest rather than the issue of normative decisions: "la tradition érudite arménienne accorde un plus grand intérêt aux listes canoniques que ne le fait la loi canonique arménienne. [...] Ces listes n'ont été compilées ni en fonction du contenu de manuscrits bibliques arméniens ni en fonction de l'usage arménien des Écritures [...]".⁴²

A philological inquiry into the conditions of transmission of apocryphal works may also yield useful information as to how Armenians regarded this literature in ancient and medieval times.

3 Collections of Apocryphal Texts

The main manuscript collections preserving apocryphal texts are those belonging to the category of *čarəntirs* ("chosen-discourses" or "choice of discourses"), in other words medieval compilations containing biblical readings, panegyrics, saints' martyrdoms and lives, including the ancient versions of apocryphal texts.⁴³ In the thirteenth century the versions of the texts contained in

⁴⁰ Geerard 1992.

⁴¹ Calzolari Bouvier 1999a.

⁴² Stone 2005, 289–290. On the connections of canonical and uncanonical works, see also below.

⁴³ Compiled and arranged by Gregory the Martyrophile in the eleventh century, they include several ancient versions, especially of apocryphal works. On the collections of Armenian manuscripts, see B. Coulie's chapter on "Collections and Catalogues of Armenian Manuscripts" in this same volume.

the *čarəntirs* contributed towards the formation of the Armenian Synaxarion.⁴⁴ Channelled by the compendia preserved in the Synaxarion, apocryphal works have often fuelled Armenians' devotion and gained their own place in the celebrations scheduled in the Armenian Church's liturgical calendar.

Some of the manuscripts preserving apocryphal works have already been described and studied. This is the case of manuscripts 110, 120, and 121 of the Bibliothèque nationale de France,⁴⁵ and manuscripts 941, 993, 1524, and 7729 of the Matenadaran in Erevan.⁴⁶ Additionally, many observations on these collections of manuscripts were published by Dom L. Leloir in his introduction to the second volume of his translations of apocryphal writings on the apostles, to which we shall return later. In particular Leloir studied the *čarəntirs* reflecting the ancient collection of the *tōnakan* of Makenoc', which dates back to the eighth century.⁴⁷

In the introductory pages of the same work, Leloir mentioned several unedited manuscripts, which he identified thanks to the catalogues of the manuscript collections of Venice, Vienna, Paris,⁴⁸ and Erevan. As far as the Matenadaran manuscripts are concerned, Leloir was able to exploit only the old catalogue that appeared in two volumes in 1965 and 1970. This is an abridged index, in which apocryphal works are often hidden behind the simple marker *Vark* 'Life', *Vkayabanut'wnk* 'Martyrdoms' or *Patmut'wnk' srboč* 'Histories of Saints', or are not mentioned at all. This very succinct information can be completed thanks to the full description of the collections of *čarəntirs* compiled by M. Ter-Movsisyan,⁴⁹ still unpublished.⁵⁰ The catalogue gives a detailed description of the main *čarəntir* manuscripts (ca. fifty) not only of Erevan, but also of Jerusalem, Venice, Vienna, and Paris. A survey of the manu-

44 On the Armenian Synaxarion, see Adontz 1924; Akinean 1957; Avdalbegyan 1982; Der Nersessian 1950; Mécérian 1953; Peeters 1911; Sarkissian 1949; Zanetti 1987.

45 Muyldermans 1961; Muyldermans 1964.

46 Zanetti & van Esbroeck 1977; van Esbroeck 1984a; van Esbroeck 1984b; Matevosyan 1969; Calzolari Bouvier 1999b (offering a list of the apocryphal works contained in MSS 941 and 1524).

47 On this collection, see van Esbroeck 1984a; van Esbroeck 1984b.

48 His data are based on Macler 1908, for at that time the new catalogue by Kévorkian & Ter-Stépanyan 1998 was not published yet.

49 Ter-Movsisyan s.d. Other useful information can be found in the thematic catalogue of the *Lives* and *Martyrdoms of Saints*, which is entitled *Vark'–Vkayabanut'wnk*. It is organized alphabetically by the saints' names. The catalogue of *čarəntirs* by Xačikian, Lalafaryan & Melik'-Baxšyan 1945 is also useful.

50 According to some information received orally during a research stay at the Matenadaran, Ter-Movsisyan worked on this catalogue from the end of the nineteenth century until 1939, the year of his death.

scripts described by Ter-Movsisyan allowed us to establish that the indications given are sometimes imprecise. Thus, inspection of each manuscript remains indispensable. As we pointed out in an article published in 1999, until the publication of the detailed catalogue of the manuscripts of the Matenadaran is completed, it would be useful to compile a thematic list of the apocryphal texts described in the catalogue of Ter-Movsisyan, after the necessary verifications.⁵¹ This is a long-term enterprise, the success of which depends upon teamwork, i.e. on collaboration with specialists of the Matenadaran who could undertake their research *in situ* on an ongoing basis. The realization of such a project remains a desideratum.

It is also important to stress that the lack of exhaustive descriptions of the manuscripts of the Matenadaran deprives us not only of the knowledge of witnesses which could prove more trustworthy than those known so far, but also of unedited texts. For instance, B. Outtier recently identified two unedited apocryphal narratives: the *Dialogue of the Paralytic with Christ*,⁵² and another text belonging to the cycle of Abgar.⁵³ By means of an investigation *in situ*, we ourselves were also able to identify an unedited text on saint Thecla.⁵⁴

4 The Scholarly Work of the Mekhitarist Fathers in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

The first and, in most cases, the only editions of Christian apocryphal texts in Armenian language are due to the Mekhitarist Fathers of Venice, starting from the end of the nineteenth century. In that epoch the rediscovery of texts of the Christian apocryphal literature fell within the enterprise of valorisation of the patrimony of the past, which characterized the scholarly activity of the Mekhitarists at the time of the *Zart'ōnk'* (Awakening), that is of Armenian Romanticism. This activity contributed to the process of the formation of the Armenian nation. It is therefore not surprising that among the works they published first, there are apocryphal writings dealing with the tradition of the apostolic origins of the Armenian Church. In 1853, in volume 8 of the collection of the *Sop'erk' Haykakank'* [Armenian Writings], Father Ališan edited the Thaddaeus cycle, which includes the *Martyrdom of the Apostle Thaddaeus and his disciple Sandukht* (Sanduxt') – as well as its abridged version (*History of*

51 Calzolari Bouvier 1999b.

52 Outtier 1997; Outtier 2005.

53 Outtier 1999.

54 Calzolari 1996–1997.

Thaddaeus and Sandukht) –, a *Passion of Sandukht*, and the narration of the discovery of the relics of Thaddaeus and his disciples, including Sandukht.⁵⁵ The following year (1854), in the same collection of the *Sop'erk'*, we find the edition of the *Martyrdom of Bartholomew*. In 1868 Father Ališan also edited the *Letter of Abgar* attributed to Labubna, i.e. the Armenian translation of the Syriac *Doctrine of Addai*, which is also associated with the cycle of Thaddaeus.⁵⁶ In the same year a second edition of the *Letter* appeared in Jerusalem.

In 1874 Father Ališan edited the collection of the *Vark' ew vkayabanut' iwnk' srhoc'* [Saints' Lives and Martyrdoms] in two volumes, which, alongside hagiographical works, also included such apocryphal writings as the *Martyrdom of St. Timothy the Apostle*, the *Martyrdom of St. Titus the Apostle*, the *Martyrdom of St. Bartholomew the Apostle*, and the *Life of St. Thecla*, the disciple of the Apostle Paul.⁵⁷ The borders between hagiographical literature and apocryphal literature are currently being debated; the association of apocryphal and hagiographical texts is thus not surprising in a collection published in 1874.

It is only in 1898 that a work entirely dedicated to Christian apocrypha appeared with the title of *Ankanon girk' nor ktakaranac'* [Uncanonical Books of the New Testament].⁵⁸ This work was the second volume of the series *T'angaran haykakan hin ew nor dprut'eanc'* [Museum of Ancient and New Armenian Literature], which was preceded by the publication of the *Ankanon girk' hin ktakaranac'* [Uncanonical Books of the Old Testament], in 1896.⁵⁹ In 1904 a third volume dedicated to the apostolic legends was published, the *Ankanon girk' arak'elakank'* [Uncanonical Books on the Apostles], edited by Father K'. Č'arak'ean.⁶⁰

The publications of these collections explicitly dedicated to *ankanon* “non canonical” books was an important step in the history of the studies on apocryphal literature. In fact, for the first time in the field of Armenian studies, it specifies apocryphal literature as a distinct field of study. To realize the significance of such an observation one may note that in 1991 É. Junod published an article entitled: “La littérature apocryphe chrétienne constitue-t-elle un objet d'études?”,⁶¹ in which the author offered observations about the development of the studies on apocryphal literature as an independent field.

55 [Ališan] 1853.

56 [Ališan] 1868b.

57 [Ališan] 1874.

58 Tayec'i 1898.

59 Yovsēp'eanc' 1896.

60 Č'arak'ean 1904.

61 Junod 1991.

Having established this preliminary clarification, it is worth examining the borders of the *corpus* of apocryphal texts published in Venice in order to see more clearly which texts have been chosen and in which order were they published. We shall note that the two volumes of Christian *ankanon* [uncanonical] writings begin with the accounts of the infancy of Mary and Jesus and continue with the cycle of Pilate, i.e. with narratives that are close to the genre of the canonical Gospels. The last part consists of other works on the Virgin, i.e. the *Apocalypse* (or *Vision of the Theotokos*) and the *Dormition*, viz. texts that complement the narrative of the birth of Mary. Finally, the second volume dedicated to the Christian apocrypha includes the writings on the apostles, i.e. texts similar to the canonical Acts. Thus, the order of the New Testament writings seems to underlie the order chosen by the Mekhitarist Fathers. The Mekhitarists thus followed a trend evident in the first collection of apocryphal texts, edited in 1703 by Johannes Fabricius.⁶² From then onwards, up to the most recent period, collections of apocryphal texts usually follow the plan of the New Testament. This choice implicitly presupposes that, as a clearly defined collection of canonical texts exists, in the same way a parallel category of texts that could be grouped into a circumscribed and homogenous group should exist as well. This approach, as we have seen, is misleading.

In the two volumes of the *Ankanon girk'*, we may also note a second criterion, i.e. a thematic grouping organized around the figures of Jesus, Mary, the individual Apostles and, finally, the lists of Apostles. Among the writings on the apostles, along with the most ancient apocryphal texts, we sometimes find the abridged versions of the apocryphal stories preserved in the Synaxarion. Later texts, such as the account of the discovery and the translation of the relics of Thomas to Armenia (tenth century) have also been added. The edifying purpose of this interest in the apostolic figures is probably the basis for such an enlarged choice of texts.⁶³ Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the contours of the apocryphal collections stemming from the Mekhitarist printing house in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is determined by an enlarged notion of apocrypha, which is less rigid than that of Schneemelcher.

4.1 *The Editions of Paul Vetter*

If the Mekhitarists' editions had unparalleled merits for the preservation of apocryphal texts, they also had an involuntary dissuasive effect. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the German scholar P. Vetter had also begun a project of edition of apocryphal texts, basing his editions essentially on

62 See note 23.

63 Leloir 1986 & 1992, vol. 2, xxxvi.

manuscripts of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Unlike the *Ankanon girk'* collections,⁶⁴ Vetter's volumes were enriched by the translations and, sometimes, the Greek retroversions of the Armenian works.⁶⁵ As explicitly stated in the 1906 edition of the *Acts of Peter and Paul*, Vetter considered it useless to continue his editorial work, having heard about the parallel enterprise begun by the Mekhitarists.⁶⁶

5 Translations

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, few texts were translated. The following translations may be mentioned (the list is not exhaustive):

- the abridged French translation of the *Letter of Abgar* by J.-B. Émine, which appeared in V. Langlois' *Collection des historiens arméniens*;⁶⁷
- the French translation of the *Letter of Abgar* by Ł. Ališan;⁶⁸
- the English translation of the *Martyrdom of Thaddaeus* and the *Martyrdom of Bartholomew* by S.C. Malan;⁶⁹
- the German translation of the *Passion of Sandukht* by M. Schmid;⁷⁰
- the German translation of the *Epistle of the Pseudo-Dionysius to Titus*, the *Dormition of Mary*, the short recension of the *Acts of Peter and Paul*, and the *Apocalypse of Paul* by P. Vetter;⁷¹
- the English translation of the *Acts of Thecla*⁷² and the first six chapters of the *Infancy Gospel* by F.C. Conybeare;⁷³
- the Latin translation of the *Protoevangelium of James* by H. Quecke, the *Martyrdom of Bartholomew* by G. Moesinger, and the *Dormition of John* by J. Catergian;⁷⁴
- the French translation of the *Book of the Infancy* by P. Peeters;⁷⁵

64 But see Issaverdens 1901.

65 Vetter 1887; Vetter 1890; Vetter 1894; Vetter 1901a–b; Vetter 1902; Vetter 1903; Vetter 1905; Vetter 1906a–b; Vetter 1907.

66 Vetter 1906a, 162.

67 Émine 1867.

68 [Ališan] 1868b.

69 Malan 1868; see also below, note 81.

70 Schmid 1901.

71 Vetter 1887; Vetter 1902; Vetter 1906a; 1906b; Vetter 1907.

72 Conybeare 1894 (1896²); see also Calzolari forthcoming for the Italian translation.

73 Conybeare 1897.

74 De Strycker 1961; Moesinger 1877; Catergian 1877.

75 Peeters 1914; see also below, note 82.

- the French translation of the apocryphal *Correspondence between Paul and the Corinthians* by A. Carrière and S. Berger;⁷⁶ this text was also translated into German by Vetter.⁷⁷

During the '80s of last century, an important scientific and editorial enterprise resulted in the publication of two tomes containing the French translation by L. Leloir of the writings edited in the collection of the *Ankanon girk' arak'elakank'*. The two volumes appeared in the collection of the *Corpus Christianorum. Series Apocryphorum*, sponsored by the Association pour l'Étude de la Littérature Apocryphe Chrétienne (AELAC) and contributed to fostering new interest for Christian apocryphal literature in Armenian language. Within the domain of translations and, once more, following an enterprise sponsored by the AELAC, it is also important to mention the recent publication of two volumes of the *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade.⁷⁸ For the first time, Armenian texts entered this prestigious collection: the *Dialogue of the Paralytic with Jesus*, translated by B. Outtier,⁷⁹ and the *Martyrdom of Thaddaeus and Sandukht*, translated by the present writer.⁸⁰ Additionally, the paperback collection of the AELAC ("Apocryphes") now hosts an Armenian volume dedicated to the stories of the apocryphal cycle of Thaddaeus and Bartholomew.⁸¹ In the English-speaking world, the publication of the English translation of the Armenian *Infancy Gospel* and the *Protoevangelium of James* by A. Terian should be mentioned.⁸²

6 Critical Works Carried Out Since the End of the Twentieth Century

Dom Leloir' translations went together with an important critical work that formed a necessary preliminary to the enterprise of editing Christian apocryphal texts sponsored by the AELAC. In the "Avertissement au lecteur" of the first two volumes of translations one reads:

76 Carrière & Berger 1891.

77 Vetter 1890; see more recently Hovhannessian 2000 (English translation).

78 Bovon & Geoltrain 1997; Geoltrain & Kaestli 2005.

79 Outtier 2005.

80 Calzolari 2005c.

81 Calzolari 2011a.

82 Terian 2008.

La présente publication doit permettre aux savants qui ne lisent pas l'arménien d'avoir accès dès maintenant à ces documents. De plus cette version française va amorcer et stimuler une entreprise d'édition critique. [...] La traduction de Dom Louis Leloir comble une grave lacune, puisque l'édition de Chérubin Tchérakian n'a jamais été traduite dans une langue moderne. Elle s'impose d'autant plus que ces documents arméniens, jusqu'ici négligés, jouent un rôle considérable dans l'histoire de la tradition des légendes relatives aux apôtres. Pour ne prendre qu'un exemple, c'est la version arménienne qui permet de reconstituer la forme primitive du *Martyre d'André* que corrigent tous les témoins grecs en leurs diverses recensions.

To each translation a list of unedited manuscripts was added and, in some cases, an evaluation of the critical value of the Armenian witness for the establishment of the original Greek or Syriac text. Introductions of historical-literary nature are generally brief, with some exceptions. Thus, in the introduction to the translation of the *Acts of Andrew and Matthew* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*, Dom Leloir set forth the results of previous research concerning the theological orientation of these writings.⁸³ This double approach, at the same time philological and historical-literary, has characterized more recent works on apocryphal literature. We may mention the works of M. van Esbroeck on the traditions of the Virgin, as well as on the Apostles Thaddaeus and Bartholomew;⁸⁴ those of T^c. Dasnabedean on the Marian traditions,⁸⁵ of B. Outtier on the *Evangelium Nicodemi*,⁸⁶ and, more recently, of A. Terian and I. Dorfmann-Lazarev on the *Gospel of the Infancy*.⁸⁷ The author of the present article has worked on the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and the *Wonders of Thecla*,⁸⁸

83 Voir Leloir 1975–1976; Leloir 1978; Leloir 1980. Other studies by Leloir of philological, but also historical and theological nature appeared independently in several specialized journals: Leloir 1991; Leloir 1993.

84 Van Esbroeck 1962; van Esbroeck 1972; van Esbroeck 1983a; van Esbroeck 1983b; van Esbroeck [1988]; van Esbroeck 1995.

85 Dasnabedean 1997–1998.

86 Outtier 2010.

87 Terian 2008; Dorfmann-Lazarev 2010.

88 Calzolari 1996; Calzolari 1996–1997; Calzolari 1997b; Calzolari 1997c; Calzolari 2005a. A new critical edition, with an Italian translation and a study of the development of the cult and the literary legend of St. Thecla from the fifth until the fourteenth century is presented in Calzolari forthcoming.

the *Martyrdom of Paul*,⁸⁹ the *Martyrdom of Andrew*,⁹⁰ the *Martyrdom* and the *Discovery of the relics of Thaddaeus*,⁹¹ the *Martyrdom* and the *Discovery of the relics of Bartholomew by Maroutha*,⁹² and, secondarily, the *Recognitions* of pseudo-Clement,⁹³ the *Martyrdom of Philip*,⁹⁴ and the *Infancy Gospel*.⁹⁵ Here the importance of the study of apocryphal texts as useful sources for a better understanding of the history of ancient Armenian Christianity should also be stressed.⁹⁶ For example, the Armenian translations of the *Martyrdom of Philip* and of the apocryphal texts about Andrew offer interesting evidence concerning the diffusion of encratite practices and doctrines in Armenia, in particular as preached by Eustathius of Sebaste, whose doctrine was condemned by the Armenian Church.⁹⁷

7 The Editorial Methods and Practices Adopted by the Mekhitarist Fathers

The editorial methods and practices adopted by the Mekhitarist Fathers are based on principles that are very easy to sum up: the choice of a base manuscript, called the *bnagir*, and the conservative editing of a single MS text (best text method); the preparation of a very succinct apparatus offering imprecise indications of readings of auxiliary manuscripts (*ōrinak m̄* “an exemplar”, *miws ōrinak* “another exemplar”); and a study almost exclusively of the manuscripts of the easily accessible Venice collections.⁹⁸ Among the favoured manuscripts, it is clear that priority was granted to V653, which is a copy of the famous homiliary of Muš, compiled in the nineteenth century by Father B.V. Sarghissian. Even though the *tōnakan* of Muš is undoubtedly notable for its age

89 Calzolari 2004a; Calzolari 2007. A new critical edition, with Italian translation and a comparative study of the Armenian with the Greek text and the other translations, is to be found in Calzolari forthcoming.

90 Calzolari 1998; Calzolari 2000.

91 Calzolari 1997a; Calzolari 2010; Calzolari 2011a.

92 Calzolari 2010; Calzolari 2011a.

93 Calzolari 1993.

94 Calzolari 2004b; Calzolari 2013.

95 Calzolari 2011b.

96 On the relations between apocrypha and historiography, see Calzolari 1997c; Calzolari 2005a; Calzolari 2010; Calzolari 2011a.

97 Concerning apocryphal texts as sources for the history of encratism in Armenia, see above, note 14; see also Calzolari 2004b; Calzolari 2013; Leloir 1978.

98 See also the following paragraph.

and history, it does not always represent the best critical witness, as we have already been able to verify while studying the *Martyrdom of Andrew*, the *Acts of Thecla* and the *Martyrdom of Paul*.⁹⁹

8 Editing Apocryphal Texts: Should We Turn over a New Leaf?¹⁰⁰

Even though the enterprise of the Mekhitarist Fathers does not meet the rigorous requirements of modern textual criticism, their pioneering work was immense and saved a whole corpus of Armenian literature from oblivion. Nonetheless, today these texts should be re-edited using modern principles of text edition.

A study of the textual traditions that characterize Christian apocryphal texts shows the difficulties that editors often have to face. Sometimes such difficulties can be compared to those faced by editors of Medieval texts and stem from the conditions of transmission that are typical of apocryphal texts. The lack of institutional supervision, which we have mentioned earlier – a supervision that was in contrast sometimes applied to canonical texts, concerning which not even a jot could be changed –, allowed extremely unstable transmission of western and oriental apocryphal texts. Confronted with the “movable” nature of this literature, an editor of texts should not ignore the recent results of the “Nouvelle critique littéraire”, and especially its new approaches to such concepts as “text”, “author”, “authority”, and “authorship”.¹⁰¹

Often, apocryphal writings have developed multiple textual forms through processes of abridgement, expansion, paraphrase and other editorial rewritings. It is essential to appreciate their textual fluidity, for which the fixity of the printed page is a poor representation.¹⁰² This phenomenon may also be observed in the transmission of other medieval texts, whose inner instability has been called “variance” by Bernard Cerquiglini.¹⁰³

Which attitude should be embraced when confronting such reworkings? How should such texts be edited? At least two approaches are possible. We can

99 Calzolari 1998; Calzolari 2004a.

100 This paragraph summarizes some of the observations already published in Calzolari 2007.

101 In French: “text”, “auteur”, “autorité”, “auctorialité”.

102 Calzolari 2007, 150.

103 In the case of medieval works this variety was due, among other reasons, to the “appropriation joyeuse par la langue maternelle (le vulgaire)” of the writing, which appears by means of meticulous variants or phenomena of macroscopic rewriting: Cerquiglini 1989, 57, developing the concept of “mouvance” formulated by Zumthor 1972.

aspire to identify and edit only the most primitive version of the text. However, if we choose not to edit later reworkings, we deprive ourselves of important witnesses to the transmission history and the reception of the text, as well as of their implications for our understanding of the history of Christianity. On the other hand, we can regard each recension as an interesting witness and decide to edit as many stages of the text as is feasible. However, the number of recensions and their textual variants will sometimes make the inclusion of an apparatus impractical.

Should we edit each recension independently? This is the option sometimes adopted by the Mekhitarists. In the case of the *Martyrdom of Philip* and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, two recensions have been published on the same page, one above the other.¹⁰⁴ In the case of the *Anaphora Pilati*, the Mekhitarists adopted the principle of synoptic columns.¹⁰⁵ This is the system we adopted for the final section of the Armenian *Martyrdom of Paul*, which is known in multiple families of manuscripts in different, interpolated forms. The Mekhitarist Fathers have sometimes chosen to publish different recensions of a given text one after the other: e.g. the *Apocalypse of Paul* (four recensions),¹⁰⁶ the *Protevangeliem of James* (three recensions),¹⁰⁷ and the *Infancy Gospel* (two recensions).¹⁰⁸ In itself, a separate edition could be a diplomatic (diplomatic-interpretative) one, and on this topic it is worth recalling Cerquiglini's *caveat* about what he called "tentation fac-similaire".¹⁰⁹ This option corresponds to a stepping away from interpretation and choice, which should be the foundations of an edition.¹¹⁰ A critical edition gives us the benefit of the editor's skill and learning; but on the other hand, not every text is transmitted in such a way that a critical edition can be presented.

A century later, in order to solve such editorial issues, are we better equipped than the scholars who lived between the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century? Without entering in the current debate between supporters and opponents of the "New Philology", we quote once more the words of Cerquiglini and thus recall his exhortation to "tourner la page", not only in a metaphorical, but also in a concrete sense of the term. Cerquiglini suggested turning to computer tools, which with their memory and resources might be

104 Ć'rak'ean 1904, 300–320; Tayec'i 1898, 313–345, esp. 315–332.

105 Tayec'i 1898, 359–378.

106 Ć'rak'ean 1904, 62–84, 85–100 (two texts, one above the other), 101–109.

107 Tayec'i 1898, 237–250, 250–264, 264–267.

108 Tayec'i 1898, 1–126, 127–235.

109 Cerquiglini 1989, 43.

110 Cerquiglini 1989, 43 *et passim*.

more capable of reproducing the variability of medieval works. In particular, Cerquiglini suggested turning to what he called “disposition écranique”, which would allow visualizing the different textual forms of a given text by means of several, simultaneous screens, as well as consulting data belonging to different groups in a collective action, by means of windows. This operation would be feasible thanks to the huge possibilities of data storage and the varied possibilities of presentation. Cerquiglini also stressed the benefit of exploiting zoom effects, immediate approaches, moves in the text(s). These are all actions able once more to show the dynamic nature of a continuously evolving writing.¹¹¹ Could this approach prove fruitful also in the case of apocryphal literature? Is Armenian philology ready to face the challenges of the new digital epoch? This is a good question and the beginning of a new page of history to write in the third millennium.

Translated from the French by Emilio Bonfiglio

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¹¹¹ Cerquiglini 1989, 112–116.

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