Jews in Armenian Apocalyptic Traditions of the 12th century: a Fictional Community or New Encounters?

In the monotheistic traditions of the medieval Eastern Mediterranean eschatological texts, i.e., compositions whose declared purpose was to foretell events that heralded the End of the World, could become a medium of polemics and propaganda. The targets of denigration could range from kings and emperors to entire communities, particularly if those were believed to represent competing or antagonistic positions on religion, politics or other spheres of life. End-time adversaries from one perspective could be the heroes from the point of view of a different community and its narratives. Apocalyptic texts transmitted in Armenian, either composed in that language or translations, are no exception. A significant number of such sources exists, of which some have been published, even if rarely in a critical form, while others are still available only in manuscripts. This type of texts can provide interesting and at times unique pieces of information on perceptions of other linguistic, cultural and religious communities with whom the Armenians came into contact. In this paper I will explore the image of the Jews and the functions ascribed to them in Armenian apocalyptic narratives, focusing especially on the 12th century texts composed in the Cilician environment.

Definitions of Terms and the Historical Context

In this paper the terms “apocalyptic” and “eschatology/eschatological” will be used interchangeably to refer to texts and traditions that narrate earthly events leading to the Second coming of Jesus and the End of Times. None of the sources to be presented deal with other-worldly journeys, the fate of the soul after death or personal eschatology. Thus, they belong to the category of the so-called “historical apocalypses”.¹ As such, they allude to historical events in the form of vaticinia ex eventu, followed by predictions of the future, even though it is not always easy to draw the line between the two parts. This latter section includes a narrative on the Antichrist – a personalised end-time anti-hero – which usually describes his birth,

his physical appearance and his deeds, always imagined as taking place on earth and mingled with earthly politics. Recent or contemporary events may find a reflection also in this “prophetic section,” thus, complicating the division of the texts into any neat portions: that about the past and that about the future. The Jews appear in the presumed prophetic section, usually as a group and always associated with the origin and deeds of the Antichrist.

Recent scholarship has emphasised that the 11th and 12th centuries marked a period of increased production of eschatological narratives in Armenian.² Written accounts that have come down to us range from self-standing textual units with the specific purpose of describing the End-time events³ to chronicles, historiographic compositions and poetry cast in an eschatological framework or tending to ascribe eschatological significance to occurrences or natural phenomena.⁴ Prophecies and/or independent apocalyptic text-blocks were incorporated or alluded to in a variety of source types.⁵ Among traditional explanations for this heightened interest in eschatology the loss of the Kingdoms of the Bagratunis and Arcrunis of Greater Armenia in the first half of the 11th century and the Seljuq conquest of Anatolia in its latter part, especially after the Battle of Manazkert (Manzikert) in 1071, loom

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³ Such as the Sermo de Antichristo and the Prophecies of Agaton. Cf. notes 13 and 15 for further information.

⁴ The most representative compositions of this genre from this time-period that cast historical events in an eschatological framework are the 11th century (second half) Aristakēs Lastivertc'i [Aristakēs of Lastivert], Patmut'iwn [History]. Ed. K. Yuzbaşyan. (Yerevan, 1963) and the 12th century (finished around 1138) Matt'ēos Uřhayec'i [Matthew of Edessa], Žamanagrut'iwn [Chronicle]. Ed. M. Melik-Adamyan and N. Ter-Mik'ayelyan, trans. to modern Armenian with comments H. Bart'ikyan. (Yerevan, 1991) [henceforth: ME, Chronicle].

large. But even before these events, the anxiety about the year 1000 – the Millennium of the Resurrection – provided an impetus for prophetic pronouncements independent of political turmoil. Warnings about the End were often coupled with a call for repentance and the eschatological enemy – often the Muslims – were depicted as instruments of God’s wrath sent to punish the Armenians for their sins. It has been proposed that the dehumanisation and eschatologisation of the Muslims in general and the Seljuqs in particular were aimed at masking a modus vivendi that had been achieved in Asia Minor and elsewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean between the Christian Armenian and Muslim populations, in the 12th and 13th centuries, in an attempt to draw clearer cultural and behavioural boundaries. Besides these concerns, many of the apocalyptic texts had another political agenda: to foretell the renewal of an independent Armenian kingdom.

The critical approach to the sources, as well as the juxtaposition of conclusions based on the study of historiography, art history, architecture, poetry and epigraphy have borne significant results in understanding Christian-Muslim relations in medieval Asia Minor, particularly between the Armenians and the Muslims. It would be fruitful to assess the validity of this model within more narrowly defined time-periods and specific geographical contexts in order to further nuance our understanding of perceptions and actual interactions between the Armenians and the Muslims, the latter represented by more than one linguistic community or political allegiance. One could hypothesise a priori that there must have been regional differences and, for example, an Armenian/Armenians living in the second half of the 11th century, in the semi-independent south-western enclave of Tarōn ruled by the pro-Byzantine Toرمikan-Mamikonean nobility had a different experience and, consequently, a different perception of the Muslims than someone in the northern district of Širak, where the nostalgia and idealisation of the recently suppressed Bagratuni rule, as well as resentments against the Byzantine Empire for the conquest of Ani in 1045 and the ousting of the last Bagratuni King Gagik II, must have been significant at least among

6 These are discussed in more detail in Pogossian, “The Last Roman Emperor” and La Porta, “Conflicted Coexistence.”
7 For example, both the First and the Second Prophecy of Kozein cite the Millennium of the Resurrection as the date when Satan would be set free. ME, Chronicle, 62. Of these, the Second Prophecy was later up-dated to include references to 12th-century events, including the conquest of Edessa by Nur ad-Din Zengi.
8 Andrews, Prolegomena to a Critical Edition, 166 – 182. She assumes that the Armenians had closer ties and a more complex relationship with Chalcedonian Greeks – whom they also viewed as religious adversaries – than the Muslims, a point that is not entirely persuasive in light of Armenians’ five centuries of interaction with the Muslims. La Porta, “Conflicted Coexistence,” provides a general overview of recent scholarship on various aspects of that interaction expressed in art, architecture, poetry and linguistics. See also the important contribution of J. Russell, “The Credal Poem Hawatov Xostovanıım (“I Confess in Faith”) of St. Nersês the Graceful,” in Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam. Eds J.J. Van Ginkel, H.L. Murre – van den Berg, T. M. van Lint. (Leuven-Paris-Dudely, MA, 2005), 185 – 236.
some of the citizens. If one adds variations of points of view due to the social class or urban versus rural background of persons involved, then the picture must have been invariably more complex. Therefore, it would be methodologically mistaken to talk of an abstract Armenian or Armenians, as well as a Muslim or Muslims if we remember, again, the incredible variation of linguistic and cultural factors in the complex patchwork of the Muslim polities in the 11th to 13th centuries Asia Minor.

Despite these reservations, it has been possible to historically contextualise and offer plausible explanations for the reasons that made eschatological interpretations appealing to 11th and 12th century authors when reacting to Seljuq advances and settlement in Greater Armenia and beyond. They are often treated as just another Muslim group set on a military conquest. The same cannot be said about the adherents of the other Monotheistic religion – the Jews – whose presence and function in the 12th century Armenian apocalyptic sources has not been addressed. Certainly, the latter were a usual target of Christian polemic since the first century of the Common Era.\(^9\) In fact, they appear as one of the most significant foes in a variety of scenarios within a wide spectrum of Christian apocalyptic texts. Thus, presumably one should not be surprised to encounter them in Armenian compositions of this genre too. However, their presence is particularly intriguing in a cluster of eschatological texts written or re-edited in the 12th century in the Cilician milieu where the Armenians had moved in large numbers since the middle of the 11th century.\(^10\) Moreover, the Jews

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\(^10\) What had started as a spontaneous and gradual process of Armenian immigration westward was precipitated after the Battle of Manazkert (Manzikert) in 1071. A massive movement of Armenians first to Cappadocia and then to Cilicia ensued after that date, followed by their exertion of military and political control on what were *de jure* Byzantine territories. However, some Armenian nobles had exchanged their ancestral lands with those in the Empire already in the second half of the tenth and the first half of the 11th century. With time members of the old Armenian nobility and newly emerging lords controlled various locations such as Sebastea, Caesarea, Melitene, Tzamandos, Edessa and An-
are subject to too similar a treatment in these texts for this to be accidental. The interest in the fate of the Jews at the End of Times, as these sources transmit, has not attracted scholarly attention thus far. The aim of this study, therefore, is to start filling this gap. I will explore the functional purpose of evoking the Jews or of being Jewish in some Armenian apocalyptic narratives in two ways. The bulk of the investigation will be dedicated to a source-critical analysis. This will allow to position these Armenian compositions in a wider context of apocalyptic traditions of diverse Christian cultures and languages, especially those that show thematic affinities with the texts at hand. Not only, such an exploration will reveal the impact of certain apocalyptic traditions from neighbouring cultures on Armenian texts of the same genre, and their modification to suit the needs of each text and its purpose. Not least, the paper will identify some unpublished texts, original Armenian compositions or translations and situate them within Armenian apocalyptic traditions. The source-critical approach allows only a partial explanation of the function of the Jews and their fate at the End of the World in the Armenian texts to be presented here. Thus, a second goal of the paper is to explore the 12th-century political, religious and intellectual climate as another path to understanding the sources and their content. I will hypothesise that some historical factors, such as the possibility of real encounters and interactions between (at least some) Armenians and Jews in the 12th century, particularly in the Cilician context, may have been one of the reasons for a renewed interest in the people who held fast to the First Alliance and whose presence must have been accounted for in the Armenian end-time speculations. The limitations of space will allow only a brief survey of this last aspect rather than an exhaustive study.

Presentation of the Texts

Five texts that make up a cluster will be considered in this paper. First, I will analyse the *Vision of St. Nersēs* (VN) incorporated in his presumably 10th century *Life*.¹¹ Section. In the 11th century one of the most powerful Armenian rulers in the region was a Chalcedonian prince Philaretos Brachamios. In the 12th century the strongest Armenian lords in Cilicia included the Hetumids and the Rubenids. The latter acquired a royal status in 1198 when Prince Lewon II Rubenid was crowned as King Lewon I, recognised both by the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, as well as the Byzantine Empire. Cf. G. Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens entre Grecs, Musulmans et Croisés*. 2 vols. (Lisbon, 2003) for the most recent analysis and history of the Armenians in that region up to the crowning of Lewon.

¹¹ For a long time the *Life of St. Nersēs* was accessible only in its short version published as Patmutʿiwn srboyn Nersisi Partʿewi [History of St. Nersēs Partʿew]. *Sopʿerku hayakakank* Vol. 6 (Venice-St. Lazzaro, 1835). Its editor utilised, among others, a ms copied in 1131, as per the colophon reproduced on p. 143. Recently the longer version of the *Life* was published. Even if the latter is not a critical edition strictly speaking, it provides a list of all identified manuscripts containing the *Life*, as well as a critical apparatus which indicates the variant readings of the oldest known manuscripts or publications. Cf. Mesropay Ėricʿu Vayocʿjorecʿwoy Patmutʿiwn srboyn Nersisi Hayocʿ Hayrapeti [History of
ond, an anonymous *Sermo de Antichristo* (SA) attributed to Epiphanius of Salamis and composed some time between 1125 and 1144 will be considered.\(^2\) Third, I will look at a 12th-century composition extant in at least three recensions, ascribed to an unknown author Agat’on or Agadron and conventionally entitled the *Prophecies of Agaton* (PA). It has not received an adequate edition thus far.\(^3\) The fourth text is a *Counsel* written in 1212 by the renowned theologian Vardan Aygekc’i who relied on a number of eschatological traditions.\(^4\) Finally, a different text with which PA shares many details will be the focus of attention, especially considering its presumed an-

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St. Nersès Patriarch of the Armenians by Priest Mesrop Vayoc’jorec’i], Ed. G. Tër-Vardanean. Matenagirk’ hayoc’ / Armenian Classical Authors. Vol. 11. (Antelias, 2010), 631–741 [Henceforth: LN]. Any manuscript referred to in this paper will be cited according to the conventions of the Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes (AIEA) available at http://aiea.fltr.ucl.ac.be/aiea_fr/SIGLE_FR.htm, i.e. a capital letter indicating the location or name of the library followed by the number of the manuscript according to the given library’s cataloguing system. The following *sigla* appear in this work: J = Jerusalem, the Library of the Armenian Patriarchate; M = Matenadaran, Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan, Armenia; P = Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale; V = Venice, Library of the Melchitarist Congregation of St. Lazzaro.

\(^2\) *Sermo de Antichristo*. Introduzione, testo critico, versione latina en note a cura di G. Frasson. *Biblioteca Armenica* 2. (Venice, 1976) [Henceforth: SA]. Frasson dated the final edition of the text to between 1113 and 1149 in Ibid LIV, but I have suggested elsewhere that 1125 and 1144 are more convincing termini. Cf. Pogossian, “The Last Roman Emperor,” 483–484.

\(^3\) Only a portion of the *Prophecies* was published in Y. Aweg, “Agat’on kam Agadron” [Agat’on or Agadron], *Bazmavêp* (1913): 396–400. Its oral and written sources, are discussed in Hovhannisyan, *Episodes*, vol. 1, 33–57, and B. Sargsian, *Usunmasiru’iwmk’ hin ktkarani anvawer groc’ vray* [Studies on the apocryphal literature of the Old Testament] (Venice-St. Lazzaro, 1898) 177–219. I will consistently spell Agat’on as Agaton in this paper for simplicity’s sake, as well as use PA for abbreviating the title. A list of 23 manuscripts and their division into three recensions has been available since the monumental publication by H. Anasyan, *Haykakan matenagrut’yun* [Armenian Bibliography], Vol. 1. (Yerevan, 1959), cols. 144–149. Anasyan indicated the existence of three recensions, pointing out their main differences. Other variations between the recensions have emerged from my further study of the manuscript tradition which will be discussed in a future publication. Some information can be found in Pogossian, “The Last Roman Emperor,” 479–497. The oldest extant manuscript of the *Prophecies of Agaton* is M1382 dated to 1219, but it is unfortunately badly damaged. I will therefore use M3839 (14th c.) which represents the same text-type and is fully legible. My earlier indication in Pogossian, “The Last Roman Emperor,” 480 that the earliest extant manuscript of PA is V207 (dated to 1288 the latest) should now be corrected. There are important textual differences between V207 and the recension represented by M1382 and M3839. A discussion of their relationship will take me far beyond this paper. I will therefore use only M3839 (representing the oldest available text-type) version for the purposes of this article.

\(^4\) This text is also unpublished. I have had access to parts of the transcription of the *Counsel* based on J936 thanks to my colleague Dr. Sergio La Porta whom I wish to thank warmly. Cf. also his article “Vardan Aygekc’i’s Counsel and the Medieval Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition,” in *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition*, 504–537. I thank Dr. La Porta again for having made his article available to me before publication. The full title of the treatise is *Concerning the birth of the Antichrist and the bitter time that will be; and concerning his destruction*. I will consistently refer to it as VC or Counsel. Information on the manuscript and the date 1212 of the text’s composition are discussed in La Porta, “Vardan Aygekc’i,” 504.
tiquity. The latter is sometimes attributed to the same mysterious Agat’on or Agadron (as in M641 or M2116) as the Prophecies of Agaton, at other times to Agat’angel (as in M8387, M6961) and Agat’ang (as in M2004). It has never been published. The original (pseudo) attribution may have been to Agatangel, aspiring to appropriate the name of one of the most revered Armenian authors, i.e. Agat’angels. In the present work I will consistently refer to this text as Agatangel On the End of the World. This seemingly older composition has never attracted scholarly attention.

The Vision of St. Nersēs

The earliest manuscript witness to the textual cluster described above is that of the Life of St. Nersēs which includes the Vision of St. Nersēs (VN). It will therefore be described first. Moreover, I will dedicate more space to the presentation of this text since virtually no study or description of it is available in a Western language.

St. Nersēs was one of the most revered catholicoi of the Armenian Church, whose reforms in the 4th century were fundamental for shaping some of her institutions and traditions. His name was also closely associated with the anti-Arian Nicene orthodoxy and thus, inextricably linked to the perceived purity of the doctrine of the Armenian Church. The Life of St. Nersēs has survived in numerous manuscript versions, while the Vision itself, circulating also independently of the Life, was subject to continuous up-dates. It would therefore be difficult to suggest any absolute date for the Vision – a common problem when dealing with apocalyptic texts – since a full review of the surviving manuscript witnesses is bound to reveal versions

15 This un-known author Agatangel and the text On the End of the World is briefly described in Anasyan, Armenian Bibliography, cols. 149 – 151, who rightly suggests not to confuse it with Agaton/Agadron of PA. Anasyan does not discuss the relationship of the two texts. He identified 7 manuscripts with this text, while my further research has raised that number to 14.

16 This is itself a pseudonym for the author of a complex work with numerous recensions and translations into various languages, which recounts the history of the conversion of Armenia by St. Gregory the Illuminator and King Trdat. The date of the extant Armenian version of this History of the Armenians is generally accepted as 460’s. Agat’angels, Patmut’iwn hayoc’ [History of the Armenians]. Crit. ed. G. Ter-Mkrtchian and S. Kananian’, transl. to modern Armenian A. Ter-Levondyan. (Yerevan, 1983). English translation, Agathangelos History of the Armenians. Trans. and commentary R. Thomson. (Albany, 1976).


18 A list of 111 manuscripts with a full or a partial text of the Life can be found in LN, 638 – 662. No list of mss which contain only the Vision is available.
relevant to periods ranging from the 11th century to the Mongol conquests and later. One version was even translated also into Latin, probably in the 13th century.\(^{19}\)

According to the colophon attached to the *Life* it was compiled in 967 by an otherwise unknown priest Mesrop from the village of Holoc‘munk’ in the region of Vayoc’ Jor.\(^{20}\) Nothing else is known about this Mesrop. Nor is his commissioner – Vahan Mamikonean whom Mesrop had baptised according to the colophon – identified. Vahan seems to have resided in the region of Taron and obviously belonged to the Mamikonean noble clan. Mesrop’s colophon implies that the *Life* included a *Vision of St. Nersès* already in 967, if that is, indeed the date of its composition, but one would never know what was its exact content unless an autograph manuscript were to be found. The *Life of St. Nersès* is based on information about the Saint scattered in the 5th century *History of the Armenians* attributed to one Pawstos Buzand, but also in other, later traditions, both written and oral.\(^{21}\) Mesrop himself cites his source as from “the Eastern Books of the *Paralipomena of the Histories of the Armenians*.”\(^{22}\) No critical study of LN’s sources is currently available.

Unabashed propaganda for the Mamikonean noble clan pervades the *Life*. This comes as no surprise given its presumed commissioner’s origin but is rather unexpected in light of the date of the colophon by Mesrop. The Mamikoneans were one of the most influential aristocratic clans in Late Antique Armenia and played a pivotal role in its political and religious affairs until a failed rebellion against the Abbasid overlords in 774/5.\(^{23}\) They traditionally held the office of the *sparapet*, i.e. the

\(^{19}\) Published in A. Pertusi, *La fine di Bisanzio e fine del mondo. Significato e ruolo storico delle profezie sulla caduta di Costantinopoli in Oriente e in Occidente.* (Roma: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1988), 130–135. The Latin version has numerous divergences from the Armenian text.


\(^{21}\) For problems of attribution of this *History* to one Pawstos Buzand cf. *The Epic Histories Attributed to Pawstos Buzand (Buzandaran Patmut’iwn’)*. Trans. and comments by N. Garsoian (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 11. The Armenian edition used here is: Pawstosi Biwzand‘cwoy Patmut’iwn heyoc’ [*History of the Armenians of Pawstos Biwzandac’i*]. (Yerevan, 1987). [Henceforth: PB, all citations will be made to book and chapter numbers]. Garsoian suggests that ‘Buzand’ stands for the Persian word *bowzand* and is part of the title rather than the name of its author. I use the traditional appellation for convenience’s sake, even if I am aware of the problems inherent in this choice.

\(^{22}\) LN, 740: կիրառելու գրական ժամանակաշրջանի պատմութեանց. Tër-Vardanyan mentions also Movsēs Xorenaci’i (dated to 5th or each of the subsequent three centuries) as one of LN’s sources and marks that LN has also significant differences compared to Pawstos and Movsēs Xorenaci’i. Cf. LN, 632. A detailed source-critical study of the *Life* would be a worthy undertaking.

commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the Armenian Kingdom during the Arša-
kuni rule, as well as after its abolition in 428. Their power base was in the territory of
Tarōn/Turuberan, north-west of Lake Van, stretching from the river Melragett to the
river Aracani (or Upper Euphrates) and delimited by the Taurus mountains in the
south. During the Arab domination of Greater Armenia the Mamikoneans – usually
adopting a pro-Byzantine political orientation – engaged in a power struggle for
dominance over Armenian territories and lesser nobility with another potent family –
the Bagratunis, the latter pursuing a pro-Arab policy. The Mamikoneans eventually
lost, since their fortunes were particularly hard hit after the defeat at the battle of
Bagrewandi in 774/5. From this fateful event they never fully recovered and the ter-
ritory of Tarōn gradually fell under Bagratuni rule, with a near-total control achieved
probably by the 850’s. A century later, however, the Bagratunis themselves ceded
Tarōn to the Byzantine Empire. The process of annexation took years and was com-
pleted in 966. This would mean that at the presumed time of Mesrop’s compilation
Tarōn neither belonged to the Mamikoneans, nor was it even under Armenian sover-
eignty. This context must be taken into consideration when exploring the function
and the intended audience of this text. It is possible that the new Byzantine rule
in Tarōn revived a nostalgic harking back to the “olden days” when the “glorious Ma-
mikoneans” ruled the land. Hence, the pro-Mamikonean bias of the Life and the Vi-
sion of St. Nersēs.

The pro-Mamikonean discourse in the Life is fitted into a prophetic and eschato-
logical framework whose main elements are based on yet another Vision, this time
ascribed to St. Sahak (d. 438), the last catholicos from the line of St. Gregory the Il-
luminator and the son of St. Nersēs. The Vision of St. Sahak, which is dated variously
either slightly before 700 or around 500, in fact, prophesied that the Armenian
royal Aršakuni dynasty and the line of catholicoi from the house of St. Gregory
the Illuminator would soon disappear. However, at the End of Times both the king-

Mamikonean, The History of Tarōn. Historical investigation, Critical translation, and Historical and
Textual Commentaries by L. Avdoyan. (Atlanta, 1993), esp. 27 – 29 and Idem, “Feudal Histories: Pay-
ing Court to the Mamikonians and Bagratunis of Taron,” in Armenian Baghesh/Bitlis and Taron/Mush.
Ed. R. Hovannisian. (Costa Mesa, 2001), 71 – 90.
24 For a geographical description of Tarōn see R. H. Hewsen, “The Historical Geography of Baghesh/
Bitlis and Taron/Mush,” in Armenian Baghesh/Bitlis and Taron/Mush, 41 – 58. Part of the Taurus
mountains in Tarōn were known as Sasun and gave this name also to the adjacent region.
25 For an overview of the Bagratuni-Mamikonean rivalry and its expression in written sources, espe-
26 “Tesil Sahakay Part’ewi” [Vision of Sahak Part’ew], Bazmavėp 89 (1932): 18 – 19. The impact of
this eschatological motif on the apocalyptic texts from the Cilician period is discussed in Pogossian,
“The Last Roman Emperor.” The Vision of St. Sahak has been dated to just before 700 by N. Akinean,
that it was an integral part of the History of Lazar P’arpect’i where it is found today, and not a later
interpolation. This would make the date of its composition around 500. G. Muradyan, “Sahaki tesile
ship and the office of the catholicos would be renewed respectively by an off-spring from the royal Aršakuni clan and a catholicos from St. Gregory the Illuminator’s progeny. Taking this scheme for granted, the Life of St. Nersēs emphasises time and again that the Mamikoneans were heirs of both the Aršakunis and the Gregorids. Not only, a renewal of the royal and priestly offices, according to this text, would necessarily include also the office of the sparapet, the hereditary privilege of the Mamikoneans. To this end, the Life posits a genealogy, not found in any other Armenian source, according to which St. Nersēs, before his sacerdotal ordination, was married to a Mamikonean princess – Sanduxt – who gave birth to their son Sahak (the future catholicos to whom the Vision of St. Sahak is ascribed) and died three years after the marriage.²⁷ Nersēs himself is told to be the cousin of his contemporary Armenian King Aršak, which would make him an Aršakuni on his maternal side.²⁸ In one shot, then, Mesrop Vayoc’jorec’i or his source(s) made the Mamikoneans the greatest potential beneficiaries of an end-time scenario conceived in terms expounded in the Vision of St. Sahak. The praise for the Mamikoneans, their bravery and constant reminders that they were blood relations of the royal Aršakunis run through the Life and are very likely based on oral traditions and legends on the Mamikonean family and their illustrious deeds that lingered on long after their loss of power in Tarōn.²⁹ The Life’s genealogy implies that both the royal and the highest priestly offices just before the End of Times would be occupied by men who were the blood relations of the Mamikoneans.

With virtually no information on the Mamikoneans in the 10th century Tarōn, it is extremely complicated to place the Life of St. Nersēs with its unconcealed pro-Mamikonean bias into a proper historical context.³⁰ One could imagine such a discourse more easily in the decades just before 774/5 when the power struggle between the Mamikoneans and the Bagratunis was at its height. In a similar spirit but promoting the interests of the rival Bagratunis, the historian Łewond cites a prophecy pronounced by an un-named monk who foresaw the re-establishment of the Armenian kingship. Łewond implicitly associates the royal revival with the Bagratuni prince Smbat, without making a direct claim, however.³¹ Thus, it is possible that the Life

²⁷LN, 670.
²⁸Ibid. Nersēs is Aršak’s father’s sister’s son / ռաշքատրիկը հայրեի սուն։
²⁹LN, 671, 672, 673, 709, 737 (on the latter page, the Mamikoneans are the beneficiaries of a special blessing by Nersēs). Individual Mamikonean princes are also singled out for their bravery in war and their loyalty to the Aršakuni kings, Ibid 700, 706–707, 734. That legends on the Mamikoneans persisted in the region of Tarōn can be inferred also from [Ps.]Yovhan Mamikonean which took its final shape, according to Avdoyan, in the 10th century but which is replete with centuries-old tales on the valiant deeds of warriors from the Mamikonean stock.
³⁰This is noted also by Tēr-Vardanean in LN, 632.
³¹Patmut’iwn Lewonday meci vardapeti hayoc’, or yalags Mahmeti ew zkni norin, tē orpēs ew kam orov awrinakaw tirec’in tizerac’, ews arawel tē hayoc’ ayzis [History of Łewond the great vardapat
of St. Nersēs preserves traces of a ‘textual contest’ between the two noble clans going back to the 8th century and to their political efforts to gain the upper hand in ruling the Armenian lands on the basis of the Vision of St. Sahak, a hypothesis that requires further substantiation.

It has been suggested that the junior branches of the Mamikoneans survived in the mountainous parts of Tarōn – Sasun – whence they re-emerged as the T’ōrniikeans at the beginning of the 11th century and created an independent enclave against the Seljuq expansion as well as that of Philaretos Brachamios. The latter was an Armenian Chalcedonian military man at the service of the Byzantines, who controlled large territories encompassing Cilicia, northern Syria, and south-western Armenia. The Mamikonean revival of the 11th century is yet another plausible context where the Life fits but this hypothesis needs substantiation too.

The Life of St. Nersēs includes two brief prophetic pronouncements by the Saint before the actual extended Vision. Among these the first is a curse on the Aršakuni royal house and a prophecy of their future doom. Here the eschatological connotations are related to the fate of the dynasty at an eventual Second Coming. It foretells...
the end of the Aršakunis, not the imminent End of the World. The second curse on the Aršakunis has a different eschatological perspective, comparable to the Vision of St. Sahak, where it is told that God will turn His back on the Aršakunis “until the approaching of the impure one of the desert” which seemingly means that the Aršakuni’s fall from grace will end at that point. It is presumed that the “approaching of the impure one of the desert” would signal the End of the World, but the text does not make this point explicit beyond the Biblical allusion to Dan. 9.27 or Mat. 24.15. Finally, Nersēs pronounces his eschatological Vision just before his death caused by poisoning at the order of the Aršakuni King Pap.

We do not know when the Vision was incorporated into the Life of Nersēs. While it is possible that Yovsēp Holoc’mec’i included an earlier form of it in his composition already in 967, what we have today is a later rendition consisting of diverse textual layers of different dates. On the one hand, it contains an ex eventu prophecy which must have been formulated not long after the Byzantine-Sasanian wars of the seventh century, involving the capture and the return of the True Cross to Jerusalem, followed by the Muslim conquest of the Holy City. The text contains explicit references to these events. On the other hand, the earliest known manuscript of the Vision dated to 1131 reflects the 11th century events, such as the Seljuq conquest of territories in Greater Armenia. Moreover, it knows also about the first Crusade and the “Frankish” capture of Jerusalem in 1099. As a result of constant re-writing and additions of narrative units that betray different historical periods and, at times, opposing points of view on the same events, both the Life and the Vision put together contrasting pieces of information. A case in point is the combination of a pro-Byzantine perspective, possibly reflecting the mood of the nobility in the 11th century Tarōn and their hopes of the liberation of Greater Armenia with the help of the (Last?) East-

33 LN, 693–694. LN’s prophecy is a slightly expanded version of the curse on King Aršak found in PB 4.15. This was occasioned by Aršak’s assassination of his cousin Gnel in order to possess his wife. 34 LN, 703: “Քարելու թագավորութիւնդ գազատ Արշակունեաց / ու քարելու թագավորութիւնդ գազատ Արշակունեաց / the kingship will be lifted from the nation of the Aršakuni ... and the Lord will turn his face from your nation until the approaching of the impure one of the desert.” The prophecy is briefly repeated again just before the Vision, LN, 718. VS, 19 includes a restorative messianic note too: “Արշակունեաց / near the appearance of the impure one from the desert there will rise again a king from the nation of the Aršakuni.” The second curse of Nersēs does not have verbatim parallels in PB, even though the latter describes Nersēs’ chastisement of Aršak for the city he founded – Aršakawan – and its dissolute mores. The “impure one of the desert” is a literal translation of պղծոյն անապատի / βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως which could be rendered more generically as the abomination of desolation, found in Dan. 9.27 or Mat. 24.15 (itself citing Dan. 9.27). This designation was often applied to the Antichrist or an Antichrist-like figure. Cf. B. McGinn, Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil. (New York, 2000), 40–41; 62–63 the use of the term in Hippolytus
35 LN, 718–732.
36 Ibid, 713.
ern Roman Emperor, with a layer of open anti-Byzantine hostility. Despite these complexities, the Vision must be considered in this study because it presents the earliest physical (manuscript) witness to a particular tradition of onomastics on the Antichrist and his parents that are repeated also in later Cilician texts.

**Sermo de Antichristo, the Prophecies of Agaton and Agatangel On the End of the World**

The *Sermo de Antichristo* (SA) has been edited with ample commentary by G. Frasson while the *Prophecies of Agaton* (PA) is available only partially and in a less than reliable publication. The last text, Agatangel *On the End of the World*, is extant only in manuscript form and has not been addressed in secondary literature. While Frasson’s edition and his erudite analysis and comments are of great benefit to any scholar interested in apocalyptic traditions, it is not a critical edition. The editor himself noted that a more thorough search in manuscript catalogues was bound to reveal other witnesses. A study of the manuscript tradition of SA could allow more refined conclusions as to its diffusion and popularity. Both SA and PA are dated to the 12th century in their present form. Agatangel, on the other hand, defies any easy periodisation given that its “historical” portion is opaque; either obvious or hidden allusions to actual events are hard to discern. While for SA the termini 1125–1144 seem plausible, it is not possible to provide a more precise dating for PA than the 12th century, most likely before its last decade. At this point I would not venture even into a relative dating of the two texts but rather consider them roughly contemporary. Agatangel seems to be an earlier text for reasons outlined below. However, while there are some textual similarities between SA, PA and Agatangel, they do not necessarily depend on each other in any direction, but likely stem from similar written or oral sources and traditions. Textual affinities exist also between these texts and VN, but it

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37 Hovhannissyan, *Episodes*, vol. 1, 47–48 and Pogossian, “The Last Roman Emperor,” passim for these aspects. The pro-Byzantine attitude could also be a part of coming into terms with the loss of the Armenian territories, starting with that of Tarōn, by creating positive legends about Byzantine emperors, particularly about Basil II, emphasising his ties to Armenia and the Armenian Orthodoxy and, eventually, legitimating him as the “father of the Armenians.” On legends about Basil II as reported in ME which possibly preserve information and attitudes from the now lost 11th century *History* of Yakob Sanahineci, cf. Andrews, *Prolegomena*, 142–148.

38 Cf. note 13 and 14 for publication information.

39 Frasson in SA, XIV fn 9. Frasson used only two mss for his edition.

must be noted that SA is the one that is most closely related to VN.\textsuperscript{41} Similarly, PA and Agatangel share many more common details than any of the other texts. It has been suggested that despite their final Cilician redaction, both SA and PA include large text-blocks that were composed earlier, particularly in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century. Thus, similar to VN and any apocalyptic text generally speaking, SA and PA contain several identifiable layers, each expressing diverse points of view on the End-time events and actors. For example, like VN, these Cilician texts also merge a sympathetic attitude towards the Byzantine Empire as one favoured and protected by God, with a later, negative interpretation of its rule after the Empire’s expansion in the East and annexation of Armenian territories, with ensuing intra-religious conflicts. These components are then exacerbated due to eschatological speculations tied to the Seljuq conquests.\textsuperscript{42} This disapproving stance of Armenian authors towards Byzantium – who probably reflect the general mood of the end of the 11\textsuperscript{th} century – was most fervent after the Battle of Manazkert (Manzikert) in 1071. PA and SA also incorporate local traditions from various regions of Greater Armenia, such as Taròn, or more specifically Sasun, Mananali and the cities of Ani and of Karin/Theodosiopolis in their narrative.\textsuperscript{43} Thus, while the final redaction of the texts must have been achieved in the Cilician milieu and clearly reflect knowledge of the success of the First Crusade, they contain earlier information that represents diverse points of view on the 11\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th} century political events. Unfortunately, such clear allusion to real historical events are absent in Agatangel.

The main premise of the political eschatology in SA and PA is inspired by the Vision of St. Sahak and the Vision of St. Nersès. SA and PA, each in its own way, provide details of how the predictions of Sahak and Nersès will actually materialise. They explain the process through which Kingship will be renewed by an off-spring of the first Christian Arşakuni King Trdat and the catholicosate by the progeny from the line of St. Gregory the Illuminator.\textsuperscript{44} These predictions are described in the first – historical – part of the narratives. Significantly, in these texts a new element is introduced: the renewals will happen with the help of a Roman Emperor. While the Roman Emperor in the earlier versions may have referred to the Byzantine Emperor, the Cilician redactions of SA and PA imply that the Last redeemer king was the Western Roman – Frank – Emperor, even though both texts maintain a certain ambiguity in the use of the term “Roman.” However, in PA the first in a series of messianic Roman Emperors is described in terms reminiscent of a Crusader leader. The

\textsuperscript{41} As regards the relationship between SA and VN, Frasson, in SA, LXVII-LXIX, concludes that it cannot be reduced to a simple dependence in any direction, but that they rely on a common pool of traditions. A complete investigation of the complexities of these texts’ relationship to each other cannot be accomplished here. I will only analyse those portions which are relevant to the Jews.


\textsuperscript{43} Pogossian, “The Last Roman Emperor,” 494 – 495.

\textsuperscript{44} These prophecies became a part of royal ideology in Armenian Cilicia, as expressed in the Letter of Love and Concord.
historical portion of both texts is built around the rule of Roman Emperors and Armenian kings, or one King as in PA, including their cyclical victories against such enemies as the pagans or the infidel, i.e. the Muslims. While it is clear that a Western Roman Emperor(s) is bestowed with the role of the eschatological “saviour king” of all the Christians in general and the Armenians in particular, the Armenian King(s) never appear in a subordinate role, but rather act as the Emperor’s ally, his “brother in arms,” the ruler of an Armenian Kingdom which is depicted as the Eastern superpower.⁴⁵

As mentioned earlier, despite numerous common themes, it is not easy to pinpoint direct textual dependence and its direction between SA, PA and Agatangel. Their audiences are also different. On the level of the final redaction the first two express the aspirations of the Armenian rulers of Cilicia, particularly the Rubenids, who wished to emphasise their connection to the perceived glorious Armenian past and its royal dynasties. SA also stresses the idea of a strong and independent Armenian Church. As I have discussed elsewhere, contrary to SA, PA is less interested in the ecclesiastical sphere and seems less concerned with the hierarchy of the Church.⁴⁶ It appears to have been the more popular of the two texts, not only based on the amount of manuscripts that have survived, but also the testimony of William of Rubruck from 1250.⁴⁷ Despite these differences, the three texts relied on a common set of ideas and descriptions of eschatological scenarios. This is especially apparent in their prophetic sections where the deeds of the Antichrist are described. And this will be the focus of our attention below.

The Counsel of Vardan Aygekc‘i

The Counsel on the End of Days by Vardan Aygekc‘i (VC) is the only composition discussed here that has a date – 1212 – and an identified author – the renowned theologian who lived during one of the most significant periods of Cilician Armenian history (1170 – 1235). As a consequence, we can also propose more plausible hypothesis as to its purpose, biases and intended audience. The Counsel is actually a homily included in a series of moral and paraenetic treatises written for a junior member of the royal Rubenid dynasty – Paltin. Vardan states that the purpose of his work is to set forth the various features of the Antichrist in order to prepare the present generation for the latter’s imminent appearance. Vardan ascribes to the royal ideology of the Rubenids in Cilicia who emphasised their connection to earlier Armenian royal

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⁴⁵ All these motifs are discussed in Pogossian, “The Last Roman Emperor,” 492–493.
⁴⁶ Ibid.
dynasties and promoted the coronation of Lewon (in 1198) as the renewal of the Armenian kingship and the fulfilment of the previous prophecies. However, Vardan’s most crucial concern seems to be the elevation of the institution of the Church and its teaching as the ultimate guarantee of salvation, especially by means of identifying and defeating the Antichrist. Several pieces of information on the Antichrist that are found in VN, SA, PA and Agatangel On the End of the World are known also to Vardan who cites the Vision of St. Nersēs explicitly. He sometimes indicates that he is relying on more than one source on the Antichrist or his deeds. He, thus, seems, to be commenting and synthesising knowledge on the Antichrist accumulated before him. Therefore, his narrative can serve as a concluding text in the current investigation, indicating that traditions appearing in spurious or pseudonymous texts had acquired a certain canonicity to be accepted by a learned doctor in his own treatise on the End-time enemy.

Peoples of the End-Time: Eschatological Enemies

A number of peoples – real or fantastic – come under attack in our texts: Muslims, Jews, Romans (Western or Byzantines) but also Armenians whose sins were thought to have caused a disastrous chain of events. Among eschatological adversaries diverse groups of Muslims are presented as the most fearful military threat. Only Agatangel On the End of the World lacks any mention of either the Muslims or the Armenians.

In the Vision of St. Nersēs the appellations used to identify the Muslims include the “Ismaelites” and the “Nation of the Archers.” The latter presumably refers to the Seljuqs. We also meet “pagans” – a generic term of abuse that is difficult to assign to any particular group. Then, there are the “Greeks,” that is the Byzantines, who are reproached for their oppression of the Armenian Church. SA has more variations when referring to the Muslims, such as “Xuzik’ who are the T’urk’，“ the “Arabs who are the Tajiks,” Elamites and Persians, the “Nation of the Archers,” “K’urdistanis,” the “infidel nation of K’am,” the “sons of Hagar,” and the “T’urk’estanis.” There is ample criticism of Byzantines also throughout this text. PA does not lag behind in labelling either. Here too the eschatological enemies include the “Nation of the Archers,” the “Nation of Ismael,” the “sons of Ismael and the Nation of Hagar” who are described as worshippers of pagan deities. Both SA and PA include the episode of the invasion of the twenty two (or twenty four) “unclean nations” enclosed

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48 The sources of Vardan, as well as his audience and the presumed agenda of the homily are discussed in La Porta, “Vardan Aygek’ı,” passim.
49 LN, 718–719.
50 SA, 12; 14; 16; 20; 32; 46; 104; 108. See also Frasson’s comments on these peoples in Ibid, 182–184.
51 M3839 fols. 201, 208, 209, etc.
behind the Gates of Alexander the Great. In the *Counsel of Vardan* Muslims are considered to be the forerunners of the Antichrist and are described as “the lawless sons of Hagar and other nations who are the disciples of the demoniac Mohammad, and [his] cursed father Satan.” Moreover, their subdual by a king modelled on Lewon I is cited as one of his greatest virtues.

In all the texts Muslims are presented in the historical portion of the apocalyptic narratives as a powerful military enemy, something that echoes other types of written sources too. Jews, on the other hand, appear in the prophetic section and are closely related to the *Life* and deeds of the Antichrist. Thus, we meet them first as the tribe of Dan, whence the Antichrist will be born. Later, they become the followers and, subsequently, the opponents of the Antichrist. There are significant textual and conceptual parallels in all the texts presented here. Some of the information is found only in these Armenian sources, even though it probably does not originate with these texts.

**The Jewish Antichrist**

Let us first look at the Antichrist’s genealogy as it appears in the distinct narratives before analysing the affinities between these textual witnesses. There are several common pieces of information in all of them as can be easily gleaned from the quotations below.

**Vision of Nersēs**

Now do not think that he is Satan or a demon from his army: no, but a human with a corrupted mind from the tribe of Dan. And he is born from the village of K’orazin, from the Nation of Israēl. And his father’s name is Hrovmaley and his mother’s Neriminē and his name is Hra-

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52 In SA the “unclean nations” episode is included twice, once in the historical portion of the text on p. 18 (without a list of names) and a second time in the eschatological section on pp. 106–108. For Frasson’s comments on the ethnonyms, as well as other related texts and traditions cf. 189–191 and 292–301. For PA cf. M3839 fol. 209.


55 Compare 2 Tim 3.8.

56 When not citing the Armenian text directly, I will spell the names of the three cities as Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capharnaum, instead of their transcription from the Armenian variants.

57 Variants: Հռոմելայ / Hromel, Hromayel.

58 Vartians: Հռոմայել / Neiminē, Melitinē, Nelitinē.
sim. And he is born from virgins and he comes to Byzandion and earns a great name according to the greatness of the Greeks.\textsuperscript{59}

Prophecies of Agaton

Whence or from which people is he? [He is] from Pontus, whence [came] Pilate. There is a woman from the nation of Dan whence Ahithophel originated, from the tribe of Judas Iscariot the traitor. [The physiognomy of the woman is described]. She will be the companion of a Greek Roman tradesman who is a eunuch\textsuperscript{60} according to the tradition of the Romans. And he will fight to soil the woman but is notable to. But they mingle with each other and commit the wicked deed [of] adultery. And the woman becomes pregnant from his filthy disease and her virginity is spoiled from the seed of Satan. And at that time she flees to the country of Arabia, to the city of K’orazin. And there that woman spawns the soldier of Satan the wicked Antichrist. For this reason the Lord\textsuperscript{61} raises three ‘woes’ to them: since he is born in Arabia which is K’orazin and is nourished in Egypt which is Bet’saida and reigns in Ka’arnaum which is Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{62}

Sermo de Antichristo

... and the evil Antichrist is born from the Nation of Dan in K’urazin, from a wicked and adulterous father and a fornicating mother who will lie about themselves as being virgins. These are their names. His father’s [is] Hromelay and his mother’s Melitineay, and his Hrasim.\textsuperscript{63,64,65}

\textsuperscript{59} LN, 722. Արդ մի կարծիցեք, թէ սատանայ էն ակ ամ դեւ իզ աւրաց նորա. ոչ, այլ մարդ ապականեալ մտաւքի տոհմէն Դանայ, և նուն Կուրազին և իբ Իսրայէլի Իսկարիովտացոյ մատնչին։ … Սա կացցէ յարբանեկութիւ նվ աճառականիյ ունիհ ոռոմի և լինի (որդի նորա) ներքին, ըստ աւրինակին հոռոմին։ Եւ նա մարտից էա պականել զկին և ոչ կարէ այլ խառնինը նդ իրեար ևի միջի նոցա ոճիրս գործի շնութիւնևա ռնու կին յղութիւն իպ եղծա խտէ նորա։ … Այն ծնանի պարտավորութիւնը փաստացիութիւն մորմուն։ ... Սարաջ րաբրագնացուն տղաու անուամբ ըստ մեծութեան Յունաց ևի քանի 214/ որդի նորա։ Մելիտինեա։ Եւ այսպիսի հիմնավորություններ: Եթե նուն թաղմուց ապական զկին եղծա խտէ նորա։ \textsuperscript{60} The text is emended here based on other manuscripts, i.e. instead of “his son is a eunuch”, it should be “who is a eunuch”.

\textsuperscript{61} Here the name of Nersès is added, which must be a scribal error and is not supported by other ms witnesses.

\textsuperscript{62} The text is based on M3839 fol. 213 – 214. Պետրոս ու համ տր ունակությունն է։ Ոչ վորճած պատասխան վերածման երկիր։ … Հոմելայ համառում լուրջ գայ իԲ իւզանդիոն և մեծանայ անուամբ ըստ մեծութեան Յունաց.

\textsuperscript{63} Variant: Հռովմէլա/Hromelay.

\textsuperscript{64} Variant: Մելիտինեա/Melitinean.

\textsuperscript{65} SA 88 – 90. The text is that of the L recension, but no major differences appear between the two recensions in this location, apart from orthographic differences in proper names. "... Ժառանգ իմ երկիր սարաջ, յարբանեկութիւ նվ Արաբիա, իբ Եգիպտոս և իբ Կափառում և իբ Երուսաղէմ. Երեկության ամ որդի սեռությունը իբ Կափառում և բարելար երկիր։ ... Սարաջ իսուսուն առանց եզրակերպության։ Համառում լուրջ գայ իԲ իւզանդիոն և մեծանայ անուամբ ըստ մեծութեան Յունաց. ... Հոմելայ համառում լուրջ գայ իԲ իւզանդիոն և մեծանայ անուամբ ըստ մեծութեան Յունաց: Words in ( ) are variants not supported by other ms witnesses as discussed in notes 60 and 61, and are most likely secondary readings.
Vardan Aygekci’s Counsel

And she will be from the tribe of Dan, and a soldier, seeing her, desires her with a sick evil love and takes her as his wife. And she will be a virgin and the man happens to be effeminate, week and an eunuch66 and cannot unite effectively with the woman in marriage. And the woman becomes pregnant when she [is] soiled with him but she remains a virgin.

But the saints also make the Antichrist’s name known in diverse ways, just as St. Nersēs says that “his name is Hayyim and his father’s Homelas and his mother’s Meletine.” And that “he is born in Korazin and raised in Bet-sayida, on which our lord said ‘woe’, and sits as king in Kap’arnaum, about which Jesus Christ said: “You, Kap’arnaum will descend upon hell.”67

Many pieces of this information are common to the genre of medieval “biographies” of the Antichrist and could be based on a number of texts and traditions preserved in different languages. Here I suggest that an important and possibly a much earlier witness to these notices is a hitherto virtually unknown anonymous text: Agatangel On the End of the World. Before arguing for the various points, let us look at the relevant excerpt from Agatangel.68

Thus, the cursed son of Satan appears from the nation of Pontus, whence Pilate [originated].69 And that woman is from the tribe of Dan whence Ahithophel was and Judas Iscariot [came] from it (?) [too].70 His father [is] a Hellene from the house of the Greeks.

66 The word for “eunuch” used by Vardan - չէզոք – can also mean ‘neutral’ and is different from the more usual term employed in the other texts which is ներքին.

67 The transcription based on J936 has been kindly provided by Dr. La Porta. Here too I have capitalised the proper names and standardised the punctuation. “...ենում. նու մաքք. Թվերի և դիմուկ մատյանը գտնել են այս իրավունք իր տեսության, այնուհետև նու էջ և նու ենումը հետ առաջ գտնել. եջ էում. նու էում և այս իրավունք երկիր մատյանից ներքին. ենում. երկիր և դիմուկ մատյանից հայրը հատկացնել. ենում. երկման պատեր ստանել. յուրաքանչյուր նա այդ բնականությունը ստացնել են իր հայրը և այս իրավունք հայրը հանել. իբր այսից ստանել իսպահապատ. ենում. նու էջ և այս բնականությունը ստացնել. եջ էում. նու էջ. իբր այսից ստանել իսպահապատ. ենում. նու էջ և այս բնականությունը ստացնել. եջ էում. նու էջ. իբր այսից ստանել իսպահապատ. ենում. նու էջ և այս բնականությունը ստաց

68 All citations from Agatangel are based on M641. This is a manuscript of miscellaneous works copied in the 16th century. When necessary I will correct the text of M641 against other witnesses, especially M2004 and M3837, representing two other recensions. Any emendations will be noted.

69 Here apparently a text-block is missing because the next sentence jumps immediately to the genealogy of Antichrist’s mother abruptly, without a logical transition. From what follows, it seems that the region of Pontus is more likely to be associated with the Antichrist’s Greek father. The tradition that Pontius Pilate came from Pontus is found in Movsēs Xorenac’i, Patmut’iwn hayoc’ [History of the Armenians] (Yerevan, 1991), 2.15.

70 The Armenian ի նորքին “from him” or “from it” could refer both to the tribe of Dan and to Ahithophel.
This [woman] will be the companion of a tradesman and [he] will wish to discharge on the woman but will not be able to because he is a eunuch and does not have a man's faculty. And they mingle with each other through adultery and perform numerous wicked [deeds]. And the woman becomes pregnant from the seed of Satan. And when she conceives, he tare of bitterness, then, being afraid of her acquaintances and relatives she goes as a fugitive to the city of K'orazin. And staying there, the wicked woman spawns the son, the soldier of Satan. His father’s name is Hromella and his mother’s Meliton and his name [is] Hrasim, according to the prophecy which says: “They wished to make Hrasim, the son of Horomelay, their king.”

For this reason the Lord raises a ‘woe’ saying: “Woe is thee K’orazin, woe is thee Bet-sayiday and thee Kap’ainaum, which has been raised to heaven but will descend upon hell.” Because the cursed one is born in K’orazin, grows up in Bet’sayiday and reigns in Kap’arnayum, the wicked one.

All the texts above agree that the Antichrist originates from the tribe of Dan, and all but VN specify that it was his mother’s tribe. Except for PA, all the other texts know that her name is Nerlime/Meletine/Meliton, the three being variants/corruptions of an un-identifiable original. They also agree that the Antichrist’s father’s name is Hró (v)melay, while that of the Antichrist is Hrasim. VC claims that he found this information in the Vision of St. Nersés. Moreover, the texts share a number of other notices, such as knowledge of and a polemic against the virginity or false virginity of either the Antichrist’s mother alone or both of his parents, and that his conception was in some way the result of improper sexual conduct. They are aware of the ‘three woes’ tradition (based on Mat. 11.21, 23; Luke 10.13, 15) interpreted as referring to crucial points in the Life and deeds of the Antichrist. PA and Agatangel also agree that his father was a Greek/Roman merchant.

That the Antichrist’s mother comes from the tribe of Dan became a rather diffused topos since Irenaeus of Lyon in the 2nd century, who likely relied on earlier Christian and Jewish exegetical traditions about this tribe, using them to his own

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71 A reference to Is 8.6.
ends. The same genealogy was accepted by other Christian authors, among whom Hippolytus deserves a special mention for his systematisation of the notion of the Antichrist as the negative mirror image of Christ, something apparent also in the Armenian texts at hand. The typology of the Jewish Antichrist from the tribe of Dan proposed by Irenaeus and reiterated by Hippolytus was not, of course, the only one developed in the Patristic period or later, since parallel ideas of an Antichrist as Nero redivivus, thus connected to the Roman Emperorship, or an arch-heretic, continued to generate reflections by medieval authors. In this context, the interpretation of Dan 7.20–24 as referring to the break up of the Roman Empire into ten units/kingdoms which would be eventually subdued by the Antichrist, who sometimes is

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74 Hippolytus, De Christo et Antichristo (in Rizzi-Potestà, Anticristo 1, 126 – 128, §§14.1 – 15.1). It is not the place here to enter into a discussion about the authenticity or the authorship of various works attributed to Hippolytus, as well as the problem of his origin being Rome or somewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the Armenian manuscripts the latter is usually identified as Hippolytus of Bosra. For an overview cf. the “Introduction” of Manlio Simonetti in Ippolito, Contra Noetum. Ed. M. Simonetti (Bologna, 2000). On the significance of Irenaean and Hippolytus for introducing concepts that left a long-lasting impact on the Christian conceptions of the Antichrist, cf. McGinn, Antichrist, 58–63. While the author of De Christo et Antichristo has traditionally been called Hippolytus, whatever his real identity, there is another work on the End of the World attributed to him – De consummatione mundi – but which is clearly not authentic. The confusion of the authors is due to numerous similarities between the two texts and massive borrowings from Hippolytus in Ps.-Hippolytus. I will refer to the author of this work as Ps.-Hippolytus, as is common convention.

told to rule in Constantinople, was another popular apocalyptic motif. In the Armenian texts explored here several currents about the Antichrist are juxtaposed. On the one hand, they are influenced by the Irenaeo-Hippolytan notion of the “Antichrist from the tribe of Dan” and born of false virgin(s), imitating the real Christ in order to lead people astray. Agatangel, VN, SA, PA and VC repudiate the virginity of the Antichrist’s mother or of both parents, as well as cast a shadow on his conception. They charge his parents with disgraceful sexual conduct or even blame Satan who – one is tempted to sarcastically add “miraculously” – impregnated his mother, in perfect, but theologically problematic, contrast to Christ’s Divine conception and birth from the Virgin. Yet, even if Adversus Haereses of Irenaeus and possibly also De Christo et Antichristo of Hippolytus were translated into Armenian, it is not necessary to posit these texts as the direct sources of any of the narratives discussed here. For a Medieval author the Antichrist’s origin from the tribe of Dan was a piece of information to be taken for granted, even thought there were critiques of this view too. Among those that adopted the Dan tradition the Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius was probably one of the most widely diffused in almost all Christian languages and, in

76 Frasson in SA, 281 comments on the topicality of this passage in apocalyptic texts and cites, among others, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Ps.-Hippolytus, Tertullian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Sibylline Oracles and, last but not least, the Vision of St. Nersēs.

77 I fully agree with Frasson’s comments on the sources of SA, which can be extended to the other texts presented in this paper. He rightly notes that information about the Antichrist may have its origin in the Patristic sources such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Cyril of Jerusalem and Ephraem Syrus, but they are repeated in later Medieval texts too, such as Ps.-Ephraem (edited by Kaspari and, later, Verhelst, not the Homily edited by Beck), Ps.-Methodius, Adso of Montier-en-Der and the Vision of St. Nersēs. Frasson, then, suggests that these later texts are more likely to have been known to the author of SA who also seems to be more familiar with the so-called ‘Eastern’ sources. Cf. SA, LV. For the Armenian translation of Irenaeus, cf. Irenaeus, Gegen die Häretiker. Buch IV und V in armenischer Version entdeckt. Ed. K. Ter-Mekertschian (Leipzig, 1910). It is not clear whether Hippolytus De Christo et Antichristo was translated into Armenian. There are numerous mss which contain a text on the End of the World ascribed to Hippolytus and one must fully review these mss before any conclusions. My own very limited research in manuscript catalogues has demonstrated that in most cases we are dealing with De consummatione mundi of Ps.-Hippolytus.

78 In the 6th century Andreas of Caesarea in his Commentary on the Revelation of John accepts the origin from Dan. The text consulted is in L’Anticristo 2, 189. This Commentary was translated into Armenian by Nersēs of Lambron in 1179. For a study of this translation cf. Nerses of Lambron Commentary on the Revelation of Saint John. Translation of the Armenian text, Notes and Introduction by R. W. Thomson (Leuven-Paris-Dudley, MA, 2007). For criticism of the Dan tradition, see, for example, Gerhoch of Reichenberg in L’Anticristo 2, 393 – 399. La Porta, “Vardan Aygekci,” 511 also notes Ps.-Ephraem’s Homily On the End of Days, a text sometimes ascribed to Isidore of Seville, where the tribe of Dan and the ‘false virginity’ of Antichrist’s mother are mentioned. From the two publications of the Homily I have had access to the text in C. P. Caspari, Briefe, Abhandlungen und Predigten. Aus den zwei letzten Jahrhunderten des Kirchlichen Altertums und dem Anfang des Mittelalters (Brussels, 1964), 208 – 220, 215 for the origin from the tribe of Dan through “ex inmunda vel turpissima virgine.” These motifs and sources are discussed also in J.-M. Rosenstiehl, “Armenian Witnesses of Three Eschatological Motifs,” in The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition, 254 – 282.
turn, influenced a cluster of texts dependent on it.\textsuperscript{79} On the other hand, another text attributed to Hippolytus and preserved in numerous Armenian manuscripts, i.e. \textit{De consummatione mundi} of Ps.-Hippolytus, seems to have had a rather significant and barely examined influence on the Armenian apocalyptic traditions in general, and on VN, SA, PA and VC, but especially Agatangel.\textsuperscript{80} A number of elements in Agatangel follow Ps.-Hippolytus notions about the Antichrist and his deeds; it is not implausible that Agatangel was the link between Ps.-Hippolytus and the later Armenian apocalyptic texts. For example, Ps.-Hippolytus not only affirms the origin of the Antichrist’s mother as the tribe of Dan, but is one of those texts that confuse the Antichrist with Satan and, subsequently, is at pains to explain this relationship.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius}. Ed. G. J. Reinink. \textit{Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium}. Vols 540 and 541. (Louvain, 1993), XIV.5 – 6 where other Syriac sources that rely on this tradition are identified, such as Jacob of Edessa’s \textit{Scholion} on Gen. 49.17. Reinink thinks that Ps.-Methodius’ source was Hippolytus’ \textit{De Christo et Antichristo} which was fully translated into Syriac. There is no critical edition or an adequate study of Ps.-Methodius’ Armenian translation. The only published version is an excerpt included in the 13\textsuperscript{th}-century historian Step'annos Örbelean, \textit{Patmuit'n nahangin Sisakan} [History of the Region of Sisakan]. (Tiflis/Tbilisi: 1910), 144 – 157, where the translation from Greek is ascribed to Bishop Step'annos Siwnec’i (8\textsuperscript{th} century). There was possibly more than one translation of this text. Cf. M. Stone, “The Document called Question,” in \textit{La Diffusione dell’eredità classica nell’età tardoantica e medievale: Il Romanzo di Alessandro e altri scritti}. Eds R. B. Finazzi and A. Valvo. (Alessandria, 1998), 295 – 300.

\textsuperscript{80} The only publication of the Armenian version of this text is partial and is ascribed to Hippolytus: “Éranelyon Hippolitay episkoposi, asac’eal vasn kataraci aḵaxiris ew vasn neirin. ev miws angam galstean K’ristosi Astucoy meroy margareut’eian [Of the blessed Bishop Hippolytus On the End of the world and on the Antichrist and on a Prophecy about the Second Coming of Christ our God], in \textit{Analecta Sacra Spicilegio Solesmensi}. Vol. 2. Ed. J. B. Pitra (Typis Tusculanis, 1884), 270 – 273. Excerpts are reproduced also in Sargisean, \textit{Studies on apocryphal literature}, 194 – 212, who rightly pointed out the impact of this treatise on several apocalyptic texts preserved in Armenian. But also Sargisean discusses this text as one by Hippolytus of Bosra. Frasseto, who did not know of the existence of the Armenian version of Ps.-Hippolytus, notes the affinities between SA and Ps.-Hippolytus and, again, emphasised the common intellectual background of both texts rather than direct borrowings. Cf. SA, LVII. In all Armenian manuscript catalogues, the work is, indeed, ascribed to Hippolytus. Thus, any attempt to explore the Armenian versions of Hippolytus’ \textit{De Christo et Antichristo} as well as \textit{De consummatione mundi} of Ps.-Hippolytus must take this into consideration. The Greek version of \textit{De consummatione mundi} is published in \textit{Hippolys kleinere exegetische und homiletische Schriften}. Ed. H. Achelis. Leipzig: 1897, 289 – 309. I would like to thank Gaṅik Harutyunyan from the Matenadaran (Yerevan) for his help in identifying some of the manuscripts with the text of \textit{De consummatione mundi} currently held at this institution.

\textsuperscript{81} The association of, or, sometimes, confusion between the Antichrist and Satan/Devil/Beliar seems to have been a Palestinian-Mesopotamian tradition. Some of the authors who subscribed or tried to explain this view include Ps.-Hippolytus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Macarius of Magnesia, Theodoret of Cyrus, Andreas of Caesarea, the \textit{Andreas Salos Apocalypse}, and the Greek \textit{Daniel Apocalypse}. For the relevant texts, with pertinent introductions and detailed notes, Rizzi-Potestà, \textit{L’Anticristo} 2, 101 – 153; and L. Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse. Greek Text, Translation and Commentary,” \textit{Dumbarton Oaks Papers} 28 (1974): 197 – 261. For analysis of the problematic theological implications of this view, cf. Badilita, \textit{Métamorphoses}, 356 – 364, where he emphasises the significance of
Similarly, all the Armenian texts considered here try to harmonise or contradict the Satanic origin of the Antichrist with the Dan tradition. The latter, theologically problematic, notion must have been widespread but obviously not quite accepted, since the *Vision of St. Nersēs* actually tried to negate it. On the other hand, Agatangela and PA have no problem in stating that the Antichrist was actually conceived from the seed of Satan and is “his son.” SA holds that his advent “is according to the power of Satan,” who with his hosts “had been united to him since childhood.” On another occasion Satan is called “his father.”

According to Vardan Aygekc’i Satan will make the Antichrist “his instrument.” Even the *Vision of St. Nersēs* which warns against those who confuse the Antichrist – a human being from the tribe of Dan – with Satan, maintains a layer of information, appearing earlier in the text, which affirms that the Antichrist’s “advent is according to the power of Satan.” Another important affinity between Ps.-Hippolytus and the later Armenian texts, again possibly mediated through Agatangel, is the change of behaviour that characterises the Antichrist. First, he is gentle, kind, just and merciful, but when he acquires power (in some texts becomes king), he reveals his real nature as being mean, angry, unjust and ruthless. Furthermore, traces of another Antichrist-type anti-hero survive in all the texts, that which ties the career of the Antichrist with the Roman (i.e. Byzantine) Capital and/or the Court. Agatangel emphasises the Antichrist’s achievements and success in “Byzandion.” Here not only does he learn “the false doctrines and the magical [arts] of the Hellenes in the Athenian language” but is also allowed free access to the royal and other noble households. PA abbreviates this information by generically indicating that he will rule in “Byzandion which is Constantinople.” For VN he will “achieve a great name according to the greatness of the Greeks.” Agatangel, SA and VC recount his military prowess and rise to power.

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the theme in Cyril of Jerusalem, as well as its appearance in Jerôme, Ps.-Hippolytus and the Greek *Apocalypse of Daniel.*

82 SA, 92: “ընտսաբռ են ուսաու պատմությունը Սատանայի լուսաբռ / his advent is also according to the power of Satan”; on p. 102 there is an episode where Beliar and his companions are told to have entered the Antichrist and dwelt in him. This is reminiscent of the Ascension of Isaiah where Nero/Antichrist is told to be the incarnation of Beliar (*apud* Badilita, *Métemorphoses*, 358), on p. 122 Satan is called Antichrist’s father. 83 La Porta, “Vardan Aygekc’i,” 514 where sources with similar wording, such as Cyril of Jerusalem and Ephraem, are indicated.

84 LN, 720–721, which is close to SA, 92.

85 Potestà-Rizzi, *L’Anticristo* 2, 114–115 for this feature which they find to be innovative in Ps.-Hippolytus.

86 M641 fols 236 r-v.

87 M3839 fol.215.

88 LN, 722.

89 SA, 92 says that he will be in the “royal army.” In VC he is told to be exalted by people who will desire to make him “king of this world.” La Porta, “Vardan Aygekc’i,” 515. In Agatangel M641, fols 236v-237r his rise to power is described.
The reference to the so-called eschatological ‘woes’ is found in slightly different forms in our texts. According to Reinink the association of Mat. 11.21–23 and Luke 10.13–15 with the Antichrist’s “Biography” appears for the first time in the Apocalypse of Ps.-Methodius, even though he does not exclude the possibility of an earlier exegetical tradition upon which Ps.-Methodius relied.\(^9\) In view of the Armenian texts’ affinities with concepts and information stemming from Agatangel, I would hypothesise that this motif too goes back to it and to a different pool of traditions rather than Ps.-Methodius and the latter’s cluster. At this point it is not possible to determine whether Agatangel itself depends on Ps.-Methodius or on a common source, possibly shared knowledge of Biblical exegesis of the relevant verses. While Ps.-Methodius does not elaborate on the reasons for why or how the three cities are associated with the Antichrist, Agatangel’s corresponding narrative is more elaborate. It is clarified that the Antichrist was born in Chorazin because his mother fled there when she became pregnant, for fear of her relatives. Moreover, the horrendous aspect of her new-born son seems to be the implicit reason why she moves again and settles in Bethsaida. The reader thus is informed why he was raised in Bethsaida which, as a consequence, deserved a ‘woe’ too. It is at this juncture that Agatangel explains also the Antichrist’s connection to Constantinople. He was taken there along with his mother as a prisoner of war by the Emperor Tēodos (Theodosius) who invaded “Arabia.”\(^9\) PA and Agatangel present identical information in this regard.\(^2\) Vardan Aygekc’i also knew this narrative unit but did not provide the exact name of the Emperor. Interestingly, this motif is employed in another composition preserved in Armenian, the Vision of Enoch the Just.\(^3\) The latter, however, does not belong to the same cluster of texts as those under consideration here.

The piece of information that is unique to all these Armenian texts is the names of the Antichrist and his parents. However, they are not mentioned in PA which comes as a surprise in light of numerous verbatim correspondences between Agatangel and PA. This highlights the fact that the latter – or at least any of its extant versions – could not have been the source of VN or SA. Yet, since it is likely that notions about the Antichrist circulated also orally, one cannot indicate Agatangel as the single source of knowledge for VN and SA. In any case, either orally or through writing, ideas found in Agatangel seem to have been widely known not only to the 12th cen-

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\(^1\) M641, fol. 236r. The identification of the messianically-coloured Byzantine Emperors in the historical portion of Agatangel must wait a future exploration.

\(^2\) M3839, fol. 215. There are some differences, however. In PA Bethsaida is associated with Egypt, even if later when talking about the invasion of Emperor Tēodos (Theodosius) it is told to be in “Arabia.”

tury Cilician authors or redactors, but possibly even earlier in Greater Armenia where the *Vision of St. Nersēs* originated. The names of the Antichrist and his father are explained only in Agatangel by the Biblical verse Is 8.6–7: “and they wished to make a king for themselves ḫrasim, the son of Ḥ(o)romelay.” Here Agatangel relies on Biblical exegesis attested also by Hyppolitus. The latter too cites Is 8.6 and considers Rasson/Rezin (i.e. ḫrasim of the Armenian texts) as a type of Antichrist. It is also noteworthy that a similar-sounding form of the name Ṛomelay/Armilus was that of the anti-Messiah in medieval Jewish apocalyptic texts. Thus, while the citation of Is 8.6–7 indicates the type of Biblical commentary tapped into when shaping a “Biography” of the Antichrist, the use of the name Ṛomelay for the Antichrist’s father may have given further complexity to the understanding of these Biblical verses in an eschatological context. The name possibly alluded to and attempted to refute a Jewish anti-Christian eschatological motif, i.e. that of the anti-Messiah Armilus with its Roman associations. No convincing hypothesis has been proposed for the name of the Antichrist’s mother thus far.

An anti-Jewish eschatological interpretation of Biblical stories, possibly a counter-exegesis, seems to be the basis of another piece of information on the Antichrist’s Jewish ancestry both in PA and Agatangel. The tribe of Dan is told to be that of Ahithophel and of Judas Iscariot. Here Ahithophel is quite surprising since he is not a usually-mentioned villain in eschatological texts. However, these two personae share some common features and negative connotations in the Bible. Ahithophel was King David’s treacherous adviser who instigated the latter’s son to rebellion.

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94 M641, fol. 235v. Hippolytus’ text in Potestà-Rizzi, *L’Anticristo I*, 175 (§57.1). This excerpt is analysed in detail by Rosenstiehl, “Armenian Witnesses,” 254–263. The author relies on M706 for his transcription of the text. I have not seen this manuscript, but from Rosenstiehl’s discussion it is apparent that the text is a version of Agatangel. Rosenstiehl demonstrates that the use of this verse indicates an earlier layer of Biblical exegesis employed in this text. It implies a procedure of interpreting the Biblical past as a pattern for eschatological events. Frasson in SA, 272–276 indicates Hippolytus as the source of traditions which considered Rasin/Rezin as a type of Antichrist.


96 Frasson, SA 270–271 suggests that Melitine is the *lectio facilior* and may be a reference to the toponym Melitenē, while Nerlimine is the correct variant and represents a corruption of “Nero”. I agree with La Porta, “Vardan Aygek’çi,” 516–517 that the derivation of Nerlimine from Nero is “tortured”. Rosenstiehl, “Armenian Witnesses,” 261–262 reconstructs the name as a corruption of ‘Abaddōn, Arm. Աղբադոն [Albadon], a transcription from Hebrew and signifying ‘Destroyer’ found in Rev. 9.11. He thinks that the process of name-giving must have been similar to what is found in the Greek *Apocalypse of Daniel* (Potestà-Rizzi, *L’Anticristo* 2, 230, § 11) where the word Ճուխնա (injustice) becomes the name Աճուխը for the Antichrist’s mother. While the process of name-giving may have been as described by Rosenstiehl, graphically the corruption of Աղբադոն [Albadon] to Մելիտոն/Մելիտինէ or Ներմիղինէ is not easy to explain.
and eventually committed suicide. Similarly, Judas Iscariot also betrayed his teacher and ended his life in the same manner: suicide. Evoking the figure of Ahithophel may represent yet another level of polemics. In fact, in the Mishna Ahithophel, along with Balaam, Gehazi and Doeg, is one of the four individuals who will be excluded from what is reserved for Israel in the future, i.e. the afterlife or the “World to Come.” Scholars of Judaism have clarified that “Balaam” may have functioned as a code-name for an apostle, possibly Peter. But even more significantly, the Babylonian Talmud (b Berakhot 17a-b) replaces Balaam with Jesus. This not only associated the Christian Messiah with bad company but denied him, and possibly his followers, the possibility of an afterlife. Agatangel’s approach represents a diametrically opposite association of Ahithophel to the tribe of Dan and, consequently, to the Antichrist. Thus, Agatangel or his source, possibly represented or maintained the vestiges of a polemical response to the Talmudic invocation of Ahithophel and Jesus, conveying the message that Ahithophel was related to a false messiah, i.e. the Antichrist, refuting squarely the Berakhot story. The inclusion of Judas Iscariot into the same party of villains issuing from the tribe of Dan served an identical purpose, given Judas’ brilliant career in such Jewish anti-Christian counter-historical texts as Sefer Toledot Yeshu. Moreover, Judas Iscariot is mentioned also in Greek, Latin and Armenian versions of Ps.-Methodius as belonging to the tribe of Dan. But the negative associations do not end here. Agat’angel and PA manage to twist the Antichrist’s Roman – paternal – lineage too. The text is garbled in this location but implies that his father’s homeland was Pontus, “thence Pontius Pilate” heralded. Thus, yet another ambiguous, if not negative, Biblical persona was numbered among the ancestor of the Antichrist.

The above discussion reveals that rather than simple borrowings, the Armenian apocalyptic texts from the Cilician period exemplify what has been generally noticed for this kind of sources. Namely, that they emerged from a complex process of text-creation involving the adoption of motifs and narrative units from more than one genre, some of which could have circulated also orally. In no case there is enough evidence to postulate direct textual dependence. Rather, all these texts seem to rely on a pool of common knowledge, possibly diffused through Agatangel, itself very much a product of Hippolytan and Ps.-Hippolytan Antichrist traditions.

97 2 Sam 16–17.
98 Mt 26.14–6, 27.5; Mk 14.10, 14.43; Lk 22.3–4, 22.47–48; Jn 13.18, 18.2–5.
100 R. T. Herford, Christianity in Talmud and Midrash (London, 1903), 70–71 even though the identification of Ahitopel as a type of Peter is considered hypothetical.
102 Apud Frasson in SA, 267.
103 Cf. note 69 for a possible source of this conjunction.
Thus far I have assumed that Agatangel predates PA and all the other texts without supporting this claim, something that needs to be addressed presently. There are numerous and rather large identical text-blocks in PA and Agatangel. In some locations, all of which cannot be presented here, the differences between the two boil down to *variae lectiones*. No wonder, then, that both texts were ascribed to the same or a similar-sounding author in the manuscripts. However, PA has also significantly modified and up-dated whatever primary material it shares with Agatangel in order to reflect the 12th century Armenian Cilician context and concerns. Most significantly, PA’s main purpose is to legitimise the Armenian-(Western) Roman alliance and posit the Western Romans as the ultimate saviours of the Armenians. This mission would culminate, according to PA, in the re-establishment of an independent Armenian King before the End of Times. It also includes regional Armenian traditions of armed resistance for various causes – here coloured apocalyptically – into its general narrative. Agatangel, on the contrary, is not at all concerned with Armenia. Its dominant subjects are the career of the Antichrist which is told on the background of a succession of Byzantine Emperors and a rather long text-block concerned with the Jews. It is possible that even the sequence of Byzantine emperors, including the theme of the Abdication of the Last Emperor on the Golgotha, is a later textual layer, added to a narrative which was concerned exclusively with the Antichrist in an a-historical and anti-Jewish vein, pieced together from a diversity of Biblical exegeses and counter-exegeses.¹⁰⁴ The anti-Jewish polemic is carried out by exploiting the notion of a Jewish Antichrist, evident from his origin from the tribe of Dan, and the initial positive attitude and interaction of the Jews with this pseudo-messiah. These are some of the most compelling reasons for assigning Agatangel chronological precedence. While one can easily explain the additions in PA as the result of up-dating and Armenianising Agatangel, there is no reason why an Armenian author would reshape PA as to purge it of any references to things Armenian. As mentioned above the anti-Jewish polemic is a major component of Agatangel. A further study of this text will surely enable one to date it with more precision, as well as shed light on the original language of its composition and contextualise its anti-Jewish discourse. It must be emphasised that while the Muslims appear in all the later texts as military adversaries and oppressors, Agatangel does not mention them at all. In order to avoid the danger of *argumentum e silentio*, Agatangel cannot be dated to the pre-Islamic period based on this claim alone, but one must necessarily consider this factor in an eventual attempt to establish temporal *termini* of this source. What is clear is that a text focused on the Byzantine Empire and the Jews without any concern for Armenia or the Armenians probably did not originate in

¹⁰⁴ The historical section of Agatangel bears conceptual and textual affinities with the *Tiburtine Sibyl*. In Pogossian, “The Last Roman Emperor,” 496 I had noted a possible relationship between the *Tiburtine Sibyl* and PA. It is now evident that Agatangel relies on the same traditions. Thus, a future study should look also at the relationship between Agatangel and the *Tiburtine Sibyl*, more specifically the latter’s part known as the *Vaticinium of Constans*, as well as Ps.-Methodius.
the Armenian milieu or in the Armenian language. When and from what language it was translated, remains uncertain. What can be proposed is a relative chronology to work with. It is reasonably certain that Agatangel precedes PA. It is likely that also VN’s source of information on the name of the Antichrist and his parents is Agatangel. SA’s debt to Agatangel is not as blunt as that of PA, but SA too knows the same traditions on the Antichrist whose earliest witness is Agatangel. Vardan Aygekc‘i, the author of the Counsel, could well have had access to more than one source as he himself indicates. Of course, Agatangel was not these texts’ only source on the Antichrist and his deeds, but it was one of the most influential. Based on this, I will explore which elements of Agatangel’s anti-Jewish polemic were absorbed in the later texts and try to contextualise this later re-use, without trying to propose here an in-depth study of Agatangel itself.

Rehabilitating the Jews’ Salvific Function at the End of Times through Martyrdom

Once the Jewish origin of the Antichrist through his mother is established, four out of five texts follow this up by developing the theme of the false messiah recognised by the Jews, as well as those “weak in faith,” and a persecutor of the Christians.¹⁰⁵ This basic narrative unit is embellished in Agatangel, SA, PA and VC with various details. However, all of them agree that the Jews will first support the Antichrist but later repent and convert. As a result they will be martyred by him.

¹⁰⁵ This, of course, was a common theme in what one may call apocalyptic texts’ polemic with each other. That the Christian messiah Jesus was a false one from a Jewish point of view or that after the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Jesus anyone recognised by the Jews to be the Messiah would immediately acquire the label of anti-Messiah or Antichrist in the Christian context, are topics that have been long explored by scholars. From a large literature on the subject, I have found the following few studies especially illuminating: R. Bauckham, “Jews and Jewish Christians in the Land of Israel at the Time of the Bar Kochba War, with Special Reference to the Apocalypse of Peter,” in Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity. Eds. G. Stanton and G.G. Stroumsa (Cambridge, 1998), 228–238, esp. 233 on Christian perceptions of a False Messiah and his promise to built the Third Temple in the second century CE; for the same time-period and always exploring the problem of the true vs the false messiah during the Bar Kochba revolt cf. M. Goodman, “Messianism and Politics in the Land of Israel,” in Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity. Eds M. Bockmuehl and J. Carleton Paget (London, 2007), 149–157; N. de Lange, “Jewish and Christian Messianic Hopes in Pre-Islamic Byzantium,” in Ibid, 274–284; an insightful discussion of the concept of the Messiah during the early Islamic conquests is found in G. Stroumsa, “False Prophet, False Messiah and the Religious Scene in Seventh Century Jerusalem,” in Ibid, 285–296; and an admirable effort to contextualise especially 7th century Jewish and Christian eschatological sources within contemporary historical events in L. Greisiger, Messias, Endkaiser, Antichrist. Politische Apokalyptik unter Juden und Christen des Nahen Ostens am Vorabend der arabischen Eroberung. (Ph.D. Dissertation. Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, 2011).
From among the four later texts, the *Vision of St. Nersēs* contains the least amount of information on the Jews. Besides the origin of the Antichrist, the only other reference to the people of the First Covenant is to generically accuse them of expecting a false messiah: "the impious one will [appear] for the admonition of the Jews, since they too in fact expect the one who leads astray."\(^{106}\) To be fair, VN has the most succinct text on the Antichrist compared to the others in all respects, not only with regards to the Jews. Thus, it is impossible to know whether its author had more extensive information on the connection of the Jews with the Antichrist which he did not find useful for his purposes or whether his source was already a trimmed version of a text like Agatangel, which maintained only the most essential facts of the eschatological adversary. While the genealogy and the name of the Antichrist and his parents seem to indicate that VN knew traditions stemming from Agatangel, one cannot know whether this knowledge was based on the reading of the same source as well or whether it was orally transmitted and easily available to a curious author.

The Jewish theme and the anti-Jewish polemic is a major topic in Agatangel and occupies a dominant place in its entire narrative. Here the reasons for the appearance of the Antichrist are spelled out more specifically and encapsulate the two most significant arguments brought against the Jews by numerous Christian authors: he appears "on account of the impious and apostate nation of the Jews who did not believe the testimony of the prophets and did not confess the Word God born from the Virgin."\(^{107}\) The sequence of Agatangel's narrative on the Jews is as follows.

\(^{106}\) LN, 721: եւ Պիղծն այն իբըանութիւն Հրէիցն, զի եւ նոքա իսկ ակն ունին մոլորեցուցչին.

\(^{107}\) M641 fol. 238r: վասն Պեղծ ևո ւրացող հրէից ազգին զի ոչ հաւատացին վկայութեան մարգարէիցն ևո չխ ոստովանեցան զծնեալ բաննա ստուածիկ ուսէն.
Once the Antichrist acquires the royal power he reveals his evil nature and declares himself to be “Christ.” It must be assumed that here as well as further in the text when recounting the Antichrist’s deeds, the word “Christ” is applied as a title, standing for “Messiah” rather than the name – as in Jesus Christ. This may be a preliminary indication that the text was translated from Greek where “Christ” maintained its pre-Christian significance of the “anointed one”. He then goes to Jerusalem and sits “in the Temple of Solomon” calling everyone to come and worship him. The Jewish tribes, especially that of Dan, flock to him. The latter proclaim him to be “the Christ and the saviour of the world … the King of Israel.” It is noteworthy that the narrative sets to explain the Jewish point of view, even if its author had to comply with the long and old tradition that Jews took the Antichrist – a false Messiah – to be the true one. Thus, despite obvious and vicious polemical tropes, the author also seems to wish to justify the Jewish support and acceptance of the Antichrist based on their history of persecution at the hands of the “foreign nations and pagans.”

In fact, the Jews implore the Antichrist with tears and lamentations: “Save us from our enemies and deliver us from all the hated [ones]. And put to shame those who oppressed us …” Nowhere in this mini apologetic is it implied that the complaints or the lamentations of the Jews were insincere or that they deserved their sorry lot. The dialogue does not leave the impression of being an artificially constructed conversation, similar to what is often found in disputation literature (altercatio), which, admittedly may be due to the literary skills of the author rather than his allegiance.

108 M641 fol. 237v: ես եմ լրածու, որ իջի երկնիցևմ արմնացայ իկ ուսէնև կի կեցուցանել զաշխարհ / I am Christ who descended from heaven, became incarnated from the virgin and came to save the world.

109 Apparently a reference to 2 Thess 2.4 where the “opposer” will sit in the Temple of God. For later Christian authors this would signify a Church, as, for example, in PA.

110 The reference to the Temple of Solomon is quite astonishing for a medieval text and can only be explained by positing a much earlier source. Consistent with this, the theme of the construction of the “Third Temple” by the false Jewish Messiah is absent in Agatangel. It does appear in PA.

111 M641 fol. 238v: ազգաց օտարաց և հեթանոսաց / I am Christ who descended from heaven, became incarnated from the virgin and came to save the world.

112 M641 fol. 238v: թագաւորնի սրայէլի դու ես քրիստոս փրկիչ աշխարհի դու ես քրիստոս փրկիչ աշխարհի թագաւոր

113 M641 fol. 238v: փրկեայ զւեզ իձ եռաց թշնամեաց մերոց և ատել [ե] ապրեցոյ զմեզ

Jews are presented as genuinely grieving for their unjust treatment and, thus, appear to be implicitly justified for believing in a ‘saviour’ who promises to deliver them from their current afflictions. Despite this, the reader is reminded that the Jews will follow the Antichrist because “those gone astray expect the one who has gone astray.” The Antichrist then launches his persecution of the Christians after which there follow tremendous natural disasters and tribulations. Jews again plead with the Antichrist to deliver them from this new agony. At this point he performs miracles, which are naturally false ones, but which convince the Jews of his greatness and power. The Lord sends Enoch and Elijah in order to console the persecuted. These Biblical figures are, of course, familiar actors in many Christian apocalyptic texts. In Agatangelt hey foreshadow the fate of the Jews as a collective entity. Enoch and Elijah appear as individual Jews who accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah and are then executed by the Antichrist. For this purpose, the text inserts another dialogue, this time between the Antichrist and the two Prophets about the latter’s exact genealogy and a discussion of the correct interpretation of the Biblical prophecies about the Messiah. Elijah, as an Israelite, is singled out to affirm Jesus’ redemptive mission in whom all the prophecies were fulfilled. The Antichrist retorts that this is a lie and not supported by “your laws.” Not only, it is implied that he is aware of Jewish anti-Jesus traditions, when he states: “there is a multitude [of those] who say that he [Jesus] was a deceiver and one who led [people] astray. For this reason they denied and crucified him.” However, since Enoch and Elijah do not change their opinion, even when the Antichrist offers them riches and honours, they are put to the sword. Yet, even this extreme measure does not convince the Jews of their error, but they accept the mark of the Antichrist on their forehead.

115 M641 fol. 239r: “փիփիրքմանք փրկություն այլը ստիպված,” however M2004 fol. 118r has the variant: “փիփիրքմանք փրկություն այլը ստիպված / since those gone mad expect a mad one.” The version փիփիրքմանք and related փրկություն are probably corruptions of փիփիրքմանք(f)/փրկություն attested in Š: M3839 fol. 216: “փիփիրքմանք փրկություն այլը ստիպված / since those gone astray worship the one gone astray” and V207 fol.75v “փիփիրքմանք փրկություն այլը ստիպված / since those gone astray worship the one gone astray”, as well as VC in La Porta, “Vardan Aygekc’i” 518: “փիփիրքմանք փրկություն այլը ստիպված / those who have gone astray expect the one who has gone astray.” La Porta suggests that the statement may be based on 2 Tim 3.13.

116 M641 fol. 240r-241v.

117 The descent of the “two witnesses” is based on Rev. 11.3–7. They were identified with Enoch and Elijah already in the 2nd century Apocalypse of Peter and became an important topos in many later apocalyptic texts. Hippolytus seems to be the first to suggest that Enoch and Elijah will be martyred by the Antichrist. Rizzi-Potestà, L’Anticristo 1, 509–510 note 71.

118 There are no exact references to any specific Biblical proof-texts or verses, but a rather general appeal to “the Prophets.”

119 M641 fol. 241v: “այլը ստիպված / you have no testimony from your laws.” But the word փիփիրքմանք / law can be translated also as “religion.”

120 M641 fol. 242r: ապագար այլը ստիպված, փիփիրքմանք փրկություն, փրկություն այլը ստիպված, փրկություն այլը ստիպված.
and the right hand out of fear. At this point the text is rather brief and without persuasive explanations states that the Jews, having seen the torments of those who did not accept the Antichrist, started doubting him. Eventually they themselves oppose the Antichrist and boldly speak against him, presented in the form of yet another dramatic dialogue. They now declare him to be a false messiah and are, therefore, put to the sword: “and ... they joined the ranks of the martyrs whose names were written in the book of life.” The total number is given as 144 thousand canonised since the Revelation of John.

From among the later texts the closest parallels can be detected between Agatangel and PA, but the latter is much more abbreviated. It has no dialogues which deprive this text of the complexity and dramatic effects that characterise Agatangel. PA is not concerned with the problem of distinguishing the true messiah from a false one. Nor does it employ such disputation techniques as evoking the common Scripture but interpreting it differently. The narrative moves in a rather linear manner. After having become “king” in “Byzandion,” the Antichrist goes to Jerusalem and declares his intention to “gather the dispersed of Israel” and re-build Jerusalem. He sits in “the Church of God” and declares himself to be “Christ born of a virgin.” The localisation of the Antichrist in the “church of God” rather than the “Temple of Solomon” as in Agatangel, speaks again for the latter’s archaic models. In PA too all the tribes of Israel, but especially that of Dan, worship the Antichrist. In contrast to Agatangel, however, there are no dialogues between the Jews and the Antichrist along themes commonly found in Christian adversus judaeos texts. Reflections on the condition of the Jews that one finds in Agatangel are absent in PA. In the latter the confrontation of the Jews with the Antichrist is reduced to an accusatory speech by the Jews against the eschatological villain with a finale, that too similar to Agatangel, of their confession of Jesus as the Messiah:

If you are Christ son of God who descended from heaven and was born of the Holy Virgin Mary, give us bread and water to eat and drink and we will believe you, since, behold, we are perishing. But if you cannot give us that which we ask, you are not Christ, but a deceiver and false liar. And there is no truth in you. And you are the true Antichrist and soldier of Satan, since he did not remain in truthfulness. Whereas Christ was the one who came and took a body from the holy and immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God. And for thirty years God trod the earth as a human. He resurrected the dead, illuminated the blind, chased the demons and with five loaves fed the five thousand, and issued water from the rock for the twelve tribes and our fathers drank and he fed them with the heaven-sent bread. But our fathers were deceived and raised him to the cross. He was placed in the grave but resurrected from the dead. And he ascended to heaven and he

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122 M641, fol. 244r: երկրիտի իՔ րիստոս, խառնելով իդ ասս մարտիրոսաց, որոց անուանքն գրեցանիդ պրութիւն կենաց. Rev 7.4, although the Armenian Bible has իդ կենաց.
123 Rev 7.4.
124 M3839 fol. 216.
Such an affront could not but raise the ire of the Antichrist who orders that the 144 thousand Jews be executed. The descent of Enoch and Elijah follows the martyrdom of the Jews. Their mission is to console the Christians who remained true to their faith despite tribulations and persecutions.

While SA’s core narrative on the Jews is similar to that of Agatangel and PA, it also has some differences compared to both texts. While in Agatangel the Antichrist is told to become learned in Hellenic, i.e. pagan philosophy, in SA he “reads the law of Moses” and himself preaches that “Christ is to come.” Upon hearing this, the Jews “gladly accept him.” On the other hand, the Antichrist also blasphemes “the crucified one,” preaches that the “redemption of Israel is near,” that the Lord will build Jerusalem and gather the dispersed Israelites. But, as the author reassures, this cannot be the Christ, he is simply the Antichrist accepted by the Jews. A unique piece of information is introduced in SA, according to which the Jews “give him silver and gold” for sponsoring his military career in the royal army. When he reaches Constantinople, he continues to surround himself with Jews, but an element of a negatively coloured ambiguity is added when we learn that he acts as a “Christian among the Christians and as a missive of the Jews among the latter.” At this stage the Antichrist does not dare to call himself Christ. This situation changes after the division of the Roman Empire into ten kingdoms and the seizure of power by the Antichrist. Upon subduing “the city,” presumably Constantinople, he hurriedly goes to Judaea with his “Greek army” and settles in Capharnaum, in direct

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125 M3839 fol. 219–220: երբ դու ես Քրիստոս որդին Աստուծոյ, որ ի երեսնայ ժամանակ Այն հացվեալ Աստուածածնմ երկնից բերեր ես Մարիամայ Աստուածածնն, ռազմական հրաշալում մեր արբին եւ մեր արքս մեկնատեղեալ հացիւն կերակրեալ ոչ կարես տալ զոր խնդրեալ ոչ ես դու քրիստոսն այլ մոլորեցուցիչ եւ խաբեբայ սուտ։ Եւ ոչ գոյի քեզ ճշմարիտութիւն։ Եւ ես դու ճշմարիտ Նեռն ևզ ավրական սատանայի, որ ին իճ շմարտութէանո չե կաց։ Իսկ Քրիստոսն այն է, որ եկւ ևէ առ մարմնւ իս ուրբ ևյ անարատ կուսէն Մ արիամայ Աստուածածն։ Եւ երեսնամ ժամանակ շրջեցաւ յաշխարհի Աստուած իբրև զմարդ։ Զմեռեալս յարոյց, զկոյրս լուսաւորեաց, զդեւս հալածեաց, ևի հինգ նկանակէն զհինգ հազարս կերակրեաց ևիր իմէն բժ-ան ազգին ջուր բղխեաց, ևհ արքս մեր արբին ևե րկնատեղեաց հացիւն կերակրեալ զնոսա։ Ի սկ հայրքն մեր խաբեցան ևհ անին զնա իխ աչ էվանդուցիչ ևյա աղտեղի ևա ւտարացեալ իկ ենացն աստուծոյ։

126 SA, 90. I have kept “Christ” in my translation, but the text could be translated also as “the Messiah is to come.”

127 This implies that Jerusalem was destroyed.

128 SA, 92.

129 The Antichrist here may be intended as a negative version of what happens when boundaries between religious communities break down. Intriguingly, the expression is reminiscent of Col. 3.11.

130 SA, 94.
reference to the “three woes” tradition. Only at this point he calls himself Christ. The twelve tribes of Israel flock to him from wherever they are. But in SA other nations join them, such as “the sons of Hagar, the Persians, the T'urk'estanis and the K'urds.” The persecution of Christians and tribulations follow, as a result of which Enoch and Elijah descend from heaven in order to console the oppressed and preach about “Christ, the crucified God.” The mission of Enoch and Elijah extends to the Jews whom they are able to convert after three and a half years of preaching. In SA the preaching and conversions performed by Enoch and Elijah are paralleled by that of an Armenian prelate, one from the “race of St. Gregory the Illuminator” – Aristakēs – who wanders in the East and consoles the true believers, exhorting them to resist until the Second coming. He is executed by the “leaders of the impious one.” The narrative returns to the preaching of Enoch and Elijah among the Jews. They manage to move the twelve tribes of Israel to tears who “will raise their voices in unison crying out, ‘we believe in Jesus Christ whom our fathers crucified. He is God and the Son of God. And the one who shamelessly boasts, he is a false Christ and a deceiver and his disciples and prophets are false. Thus, we sinned [against] our God of Israel and his son Jesus Christ since we accepted the wicked one without knowing. But now we recognise our true Lord Jesus Christ and believe in him so that he may redeem us, as well as our fathers, remembering the blessed covenant with them’.” Predictably, the converted Jews are persecuted: twelve thousand from each tribe, i.e. 144 thousand martyrs “baptised with their blood in the death of Christ for the sake of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” In this text the execution of Enoch and Elijah occurs after the conversion and the martyrdom of the Jews.

Finally, the Counsel of Vardan is aware of a variety of motifs. For example, Vardan adopts the tradition of the Antichrist’s military elevation to the rank of a general like SA. But in contrast to SA, the Jews are not involved in this process. Both in SA and VC the Antichrist is told to follow or teach the Mosaic law. In both texts only after the Antichrist goes from Constantinople to Jerusalem does he call himself Christ. He sits “in the Church of God” and makes himself worshipped as God. The Jews flock to him with joy and accept him as the Messiah. Here Vardan’s text diverges from the others as he inserts an address made by the Jews to the Antichrist. The latter rejoice in having received “Christ among us” and bemoan their ancestors who did not witness this momentous event. The persecution and the trials of the Christians as well as the descent of Enoch and Elijah are also included in the Counsel. The conversion of

131 Ibid, 100.
132 Ibid, 104.
133 Ibid, 106.
135 Ibid, 114.
137 Ibid, 128.
the Jews is linked to the preaching of Enoch and Elijah.¹³ As a learned churchman, Vardan naturally emphasises the significance of the Scripture and its interpretation. When the Jews realise their error in following the false Christ and that of their fathers in having crucified the real one, they “take the divinely inspired¹³ writings of the Prophets and go in front of him and reproach him with accusations and declare him to be false and the son of perdition and the dwelling of Satan and severely rebuke him.”¹⁴⁰ Then they are martyred. But Vardan is the only one to cite specifically Rev. 7:4–8 in relation to their martyrdom, even if all the texts ultimately rely on this tradition.

The “Jewish followers of the Antichrist” is one of the common themes found in apocalyptic texts. However, their eventual conversion and martyrdom is less frequently added. Rather, the motif of the “conversion of the Jews” is one that occurs frequently in the disputation literature.¹⁴¹ Considering the use and reuse of text-blocks from this genre in others, as well as the permeability of boundaries in open texts like these apocalyptic ones, it is not unusual to find this topos in an eschatological context. Still, one may cite other apocalyptic texts that set the Jewish support of the Antichrist in a similar frame as that found in SA, PA and VC. The earliest Christian eschatological text to explore the topos of the conversion of the Jews is the Commentary on the Revelation of Victorinus of Petovium who, in turn, influenced Commodianus.¹⁴² The motif appears also in an anonymous Syriac Sermon on the End of Days ascribed to Ephraem Syrus, to be dated to the seventh century. Here too the initial Jewish support is followed by their denial of the Antichrist and their acceptance of the “crucified one” as the Christ. However, the martyrdom of the Jews is not specifically mentioned, even though it is implied: the Antichrist orders to execute anyone who denies him.¹⁴³ The description of the interaction between

¹³ J936 fol. 278–279.
¹⁹ The Armenian word աստուծաշունչ is the same used for the Bible, thus, Vardan eloquently employs a term which is both technical and, at the same time, implies divine origin.
¹⁴⁰ J936 fol. 280: առնուն զաստուածաշունչ գիրս մարգարէիցն եւ գան առաջի նորա պարսաւանօք նախատեն զնա եւ սուտ եւ որդի կորսեան եւ բնակարան սատանայիք արոզեն զնա եւ չարաչար յանդիմանեն.
¹⁴² The relevant texts and commentaries in L’Anticristo 1, 370–415.
the Jews and the Antichist in Agatangel, but extensively abbreviated in the other texts, is reminiscent of a similar narrative block in the Greek *Apocalypse of Daniel*, where the Jews complain to the Antichist about their oppression by the Christians and, subsequently, assist the Antichist in becoming King. However, in the Greek *Apocalypse of Daniel* nothing is said about the Jews’ eventual conversion or martyrdom. Another text that touches on the problem of the Jews at the End of days along similar lines is the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse*.¹ It includes a singular explanation of the gathering of the Jews in Jerusalem, after they have been “deceived” by the Antichrist: God will allow this to happen so that Jews no longer have an excuse for their non-belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Once they have been assembled in their “native city” they must necessarily believe in Jesus as the Messiah, but, in fact, they do not, according to this Apocalypse. However, the text admits, like Agatangel, that the condition of the Jews under the rule of the gentiles was that of “living in ... distress and in ... ridicule” and their gathering in Jerusalem would signify liberation “from their slavery and their yoke.”¹⁴⁵ Both texts seem to at least attempt to provide an explanation for the Jewish support of the Antichrist. Yet, the *Andreas Salos Apocalypse* ends its explanation of the Jewish position on the End-time gathering in Jerusalem rather abruptly and moves on to another topic of discussion, that of the Great Church, i.e. Haghia Sophia in Constantinople, and its fate.

Sure enough, there may be other apocalyptic texts published or not with an analogous narrative sequence on Jews and the Antichist. Thus, the Armenian texts, starting with Agatangel and moving on to the later ones such as PA, SA and VC cannot be considered as revolutionary. The variations on the theme of the Jews in each composition must be due both to the interests of its final compiler, and those of his commissioner or audience. It is evident that none of the Cilician apocalypses share the keen interest in the main themes of Jewish-Christian polemic preserved in Agatangel. Thus, their conviction that the Jews will convert before the Second coming, whatever their ultimate written or oral source may have been, could well have served a paraplectic and didactic purpose, directed at the members of the authors’ community – presumably Armenians belonging to the Gregorian Church – against temptations to join the Imperial, Chalcedonian Church, or even worse, convert to Islam.¹⁴⁶ If this is the case, then the “Jews” served as a positive rhetorical devise: even those who previously denied Christ will finally realise their error and accept martyrdom. The author’s community, therefore, should remain firm in its ancestral beliefs regardless of external factors. Other specific interests of the authors – or their audience – may be revealed as well. For example, SA is concerned with the actions of the Jews as financiers of the Antichrist in Constantinople. This may be a thinly concealed criticism of the corrupt politics in the Capital, with no bearing on the historical realities

¹⁴⁴ Rydén, “The Andreas Salos Apocalypse.”
¹⁴⁶ Cases of conversion and attitudes to it are discussed succinctly in La Porta, “Conflicted Coexistence.”
of the Jews there. Vardan Aygekc’i, on the other hand, emphasises the role of the common Scripture (maintained from Agatangel) in understanding the truth of Jesus’ messianic significance. This is understandable given his stance as a scholar – a vardapet – of the Armenian Church.

But beyond source-critical and rhetorical effects, do these text have a further connection to the contemporary reality? Did their authors or audiences have any contact or direct experiences of Jews and Judaism? These questions can be answered only partially. Let us look again at the historical and geographical context of Cilicia in the late 11th and 12th century in search of a plausible answer at least to some of them.

Armenians and Jews in Cilicia: Did Real Encounters Take Place?

Four out of five apocalyptic texts explored in this paper – VN, PA, SA and VC – were the product of at least a century of re-writing and a final re-editing in the Cilician period. Except for VC we do not know who their authors were and can only guess as to their audiences. In the forms that they are accessible to us, the text of VN seems to have been the least heavily redacted in the Cilician post-Crusade context. The dominant portion of its narrative is best explained as a product of the second half of the 11th century, expressing eschatological speculations associated with the advance and settlement of the Seljuqs in Asia Minor, as well as certain meteorological events of the time. Only one sentence – the liberation of Jerusalem by the “Franks” – can be firmly assigned to a later redaction, obviously performed after 1099. Life of St. Nersēs, into which VN was inserted, was created in the region of Tarōn as discussed above and the Vision too could have been penned in that same area. Thus, except for that one phrase, VN does not express an identifiably Cilician perspective on the events of the End-time. This text, as mentioned above, exhibits the least interest in the Jews and their function in a world history that is bound to come to an end. The same cannot be said about PA, SA and VC all of which are products of the 12th or, in the case of VC, early 13th century, Cilician Armenian milieu. It is these texts that seem to be concerned with the Jews and their fate at the End of world history. Thus, it is legitimate to ask whether this interest in or concern with the people who followed the religion of the First Alliance had anything to do with possible real encounters between Armenians and Jews in the Cilician milieu.

Of course, the Jewish culture and various Jewish traditions were known to the Armenians, especially the learned clergy, since their conversion to Christianity. Throughout centuries a great number of texts, among which not least the Old Testa-

\[147\] For the problem of contextualising anti-Jewish polemic within a verifiable historical reality cf, for example, Déroche, “Forms and Functions.”
ment, but also various apocrypha or pseudepigrapha of Jewish origin were translated into Armenian and many cultural elements of Jewish provenance were absorbed into the Armenian Church. Some Biblical books, such as the Maccabees, became so thoroughly absorbed as to become a model of action and explanation of historical events of great portent. The idea of a “homeland” or a “nation” itself, as elaborated upon in the historian Movsès Xorenac’i – the Father of Armenian historiography – is heavily influenced by Philo and thus, bears a Hellenistic Jewish stamp. Besides, the procedure of explaining contemporary events in terms of the Old Testament and thus associating the Armenian history with that of the Hebrews is a common feature of the Armenian historical writing. The ultimate result of such a paradigm was to claim that the Armenian people were the “Chosen of God” or the Verus Israel. It has been noted, however, that Jewish traditions reached the Armenian learned culture usually through the mediation of Greek and Syriac Christianities. There is little evidence that any of the translations were made directly from Hebrew, rather than Greek or Syriac. Yet, the fifth century History attributed to Pawstos Buzand mentions deportations of families, among which Jews, from Armenian cities to Persia by Šapuh II in the second half of the fourth century. Motifs in the Armenian Tradition

148 Numerous publications of Michael Stone have been fundamental in illuminating these issues. Not all the works can be listed here, but the following collected volumes give a good deal of information: M. Stone, Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha with Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition (Leiden, 1991) and Idem, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and Armenian Studies. 2 vols. (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 144 and 145) (Leuven-Paris-Dudley (MA), 2006).


hotly debated, also mentions Jews in Armenia. Moreover, some Armenian noble dynasties, particularly the Bagratuni (884 – 1045 as the royal dynasty) claimed their ancestry from King David, even though the historical accuracy of this claim is highly questionable.\textsuperscript{154} However, there is little written evidence of sustained direct interactions between Armenians and Jews in the middle ages and thorough knowledge of each others’ contemporary cultures, despite the finds of a 13\textsuperscript{th} century Jewish cemetery in the historical district of Siwnik.\textsuperscript{155} On the other hand, there are certain historical moments when the Armenian sources seem to be more concerned with the Jews – not the Biblical figures but supposedly a living community or individuals – and in anti-Jewish discourse than at other times. An in-depth exploration into this subject is bound to yield fruitful results. Here one can bring forth a couple of such examples. One time-period worth a note is the years immediately following the Islamic conquests in the Near East. Not unlike other Eastern Christians, a seventh century source attributed to Bishop Sebēos sets the rise of Islam in an eschatological scheme of world history and specifically blames the Jews for their collaboration with the new and awesome power emerging from the Arabian desert.\textsuperscript{156} This accusation is repeated by another historian – Lewond.\textsuperscript{157} In the latter part of the ninth century the anti-Jewish tendencies resurface again with a greater intensity, particularly in Biblical

that the urban way of life was a rather ‘alien’ form in the Armenian society, implying that there was little contact between the multi-ethnic and multi-religious urban dwellers and the majority, i.e. the rural population. The make-up of the rural population in Greater Armenia must have been also diverse at diverse points of history. It is noteworthy that the only archaeological evidence of a Jewish settlement in Armenia (from the 13\textsuperscript{th} century) comes from a rural context, thus contesting the suggestion that Jews must necessarily be associated with an urban environment. Cf. D. Amit, “Report of the Survey of a Medieval Jewish Cemetery in Eghegis, Vayots Dzor Region, Armenia,” \textit{Journal of Jewish Studies} 53/1 (2002): 66 – 106 and (2006): 99 – 135. But even if Armenians and Jews met in the cities, such as in 7\textsuperscript{th} century Duin, where a multi-ethnic and multi-religious population is attested by Ibn Maslama (\textit{apud} Garsoian, “The Medieval Armenian City,” 81, fn 99), the Armenian written sources do not talk about such encounters. Admittedly, however, this topic has received very little attention and could benefit from an in-depth exploration into the sources.

\textsuperscript{154} The source evidence is presented in J. Neusner, “The Jews in Pagan Armenia,” \textit{Journal of the Oriental Society} 84/3 (1964): 230 – 240, who takes the information in the sources as reliable, but see the remarks of Stone, “The Transmission and Reception,” 89. Cf. also A. Topchyan, “Jews in Ancient Armenia,” \textit{Le Muséon} 120/3 – 4 (2007): 435 – 476. The tradition of the Jewish origin of the Bagratunis is attested in Movsès Xorenac’i (dated variably between 5\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} centuries) and Yovhannēs Draxana-kertc’i (10\textsuperscript{th} century).

\textsuperscript{155} Amit, “Report of the Survey.”


\textsuperscript{157} Cf. note 31 on the date and recent research on Lewond. \textit{History of Lewond}, 735 – 736 on the Jews as “insinuators” of the Muslims.
commentaries. This is true for a *Commentary on the Gospel of John* by Nonnus of Nisibis translated into Armenian from Arabic at the behest of the Princess Mariam (daughter of King Ashot I) probably before 884 and a native-Armenian Commentary on the *Book of Proverbs* composed by Hamam Arewlec’i also in the second half of the ninth century. The anti-Jewish discourse in these commentaries has been interpreted by modern scholars as a covert criticism of Islam or as an attack on the Chalcedonian doctrinal position which was rebuked for representing a Jewish point of view on Jesus. Of course, such topical references to the Jews – blaming them for diffusing doctrinally problematic ideas or siding with the enemy – were well-established *topoi* in Christian anti-Judaic discourse. Moreover, the modern historians’ interpretation of the “Jew” as a simple term of abuse which in reality referred to one’s “real” adversaries, such as the Muslims, has been explored even if not universally accepted.

Some Armenian practices too, such as that of *matla* or animal immolation, were contested on the basis of being a ‘judaising’ ritual. As for references to “real” Jews, the evidence is rather sparse also from the Cilician period and appears in rhetorically charged settings. The *Chronicle* of Matthew of Edessa describes the controversy about the date of Easter in 1007 that broke out between Greeks and Armenians, where a Jew from Cyprus – Musi [Moses] – “skilled in the calendar” took a determining role. According to Matthew, Emperor Basil II first invited a number of renowned Armenian scholars (*vardapets*), among whom the foremost Samuël Kamrjajorec’i, for a disputation with their Greek colleagues in order to solve the problem. When the Armenians came out victorious, the Greek “wise men” asked the Emperor to invite the Jewish scholar Musi from Cyprus, who – contrary to their expect-

158 Greenwood, “A Reassessment,” 133 for the date.

159 Hamam, *Commentary*, 24–25 for Thomson’s comments on Hamam’s continuous attacks on the Jews as “being particularly foolish and impious,” and 26–27 for assimilation of the Jews with “heretics.”


162 An example of apologetics for this practice and refutation of its “Jewish” origin is found in a *Letter* by Nersēs Şnorhal, written before 1173 when he became the Catholicos of the Armenians, *Endhamrakan t’ult’kSrboyn Nersisi Šnorhalwoy* [General Epistles of St. Nersēs Şnorhal], (Jerusalem, 1871), 252–264.

ations – affirmed the Armenian side of the dispute. The historicity of this episode is hardly to be accepted. Rather, the description fits into what has been termed as a minor type of image ascribed to the Jews also in Byzantine chronicles, that of “possessors of knowledge.” However, the opposite topos, that of the Jews as “dupes” who are not able to see the truth or exhibit an unhealthy attachment to the letter of the Scripture is also attested. Exactly based on this reasoning, the “Jews” are used as a negative term of comparison by St. Nersēs Lambronac’in a colophon written in 1197 in Constantinople. He had travelled to the Imperial capital on a diplomatic mission aimed at establishing a dogmatic union between Armenian and Byzantine Churches. Nersēs was disappointed with his Greek peers and expressed his disillusionment in the following terms: “And here, conversing through these Letters, we found them ignorant of these, unclear in speech and attached to material [things] with Jewish intentions, who do not wish to serve God with the renewal of the spirit but with the oldness of the letter.” It cannot be ascertained without further research whether Nersēs was interested in anti-Jewish arguments only for repudiating the Byzantine point of view. He did find at least one such polemical text during his visit to Constantinople – the Epistle of Barnabas – and translated it according to another of his colophons. On the other hand, in his Commentary on the Proverbs also finished in 1197 Nersēs is not interested in the Jews and in comparison to Hamam his interpretations either tone down Hamam’s diatribe against Jews or lack any reference

164 The controversy over Easter date in 1007 is reported also by Yahya of Antioch Histoire de Yahya-ibn-Sa’id d’Antioche. Continuateur de Sa’id-ibn-Bitriq, Vol. 2. Patrologia Orientalis 23 (1932): 273–275. While Yahya emphasises the importance of Jewish calendar calculations for the establishment of the date of the Christian Easter, the description of Matthew and the involvement of a specific Jewish wise man in the affair is unique. Here the historicity of the episode is not relevant, but the attitude to the Jewish scholar as the “holder of truth.” The testimony of Matthew is reported (in English translation) in Starr, The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 185–186.

165 R. Fishman-Duker, “Images of Jews in Byzantine Chronicles: A General Survey,” in Jews in Byzantium, 777–798, esp. 794. She notes that the image of the Jews as “possessors of knowledge of an important secret” was more common in the Latin West than in Byzantium, however.

166 For this opposite image and examples from Byzantine chronicles cf. Fishman-Duker, “Images of Jews,” 795.

167 Various texts, including Letters by the Patriarchs Germanos and Photius to the Armenians which Nersēs brought with him to Constantinople. Cf. also Russell, “The Credal Poem.”

168 G. Yovsēp’eanc’, Yišatakaran’ jeiragranc’ [Colophons of Manuscripts], Vol. 1. (Antilias, 1951), col. 601. Nersēs had expressed a disapproving attitude towards a literal interpretation of the Scripture also in his youth. In his adaptation of Andreas of Caesarea’s Commentary on the Revelation, 86 he writes that Hebrews accept the scriptures too literally. Nersēs’ embassy to Constantinople in 1197 is briefly mentioned and the colophon translated (slightly differently than the above) in Nerses of Lambron Commentary on the Revelation of Saint John, 12 In 54.

Other important authors of the 12th century do not mention the Jews either. For example, the *Lamentation on the Fall of Jerusalem* contains numerous references to the Old Testament and associates Jewish history with the current political events, but does not refer to any actual Jews. Thus, also outside the apocalyptic sources Jews appear in topical settings and defy an easy connection to verifiable historical events. Before any firm conclusion can be made, we are still in need of in-depth studies on the subject among specific authors and their literary production.

Despite the silence of the written sources, it is more than likely that the Armenians who in the 11th century settled first in Cappadocia then in Cilicia and the adjacent territories, including the various Crusader States, or Byzantine territories of Asia Minor, had more opportunities to encounter Jews or Jewish communities than in their homeland. A Judaeo-Arabic inscription from 1103 and another one from 1127 found in Rusafa attest the presence of a Jewish community in Edessa at a time when there was also a large and growing Armenian population in the city. According to the *Chronicle ad Annum 1234*, after the conquest of Edessa by Zengi in 1144, he brought 300 Jewish families to settle in Edessa. During the rule of Philaretos, in the second half of the 11th century, the cities of the Isaurian coast were active centres of trade, among which Seleucia, situated in the plain of Cilicia, was of great importance. There is evidence for a Jewish community there at least in 1137, but it probably existed since the 11th century. On the east Philaretos’ and later Rubenid princes’ (later kings’) territories extended to Tarsus and Mamistra. These ports actively participated in the trade with Egypt and later with Venice and are thought to have had a Jewish population at least at the time of King Lewon. Jews are attested in other towns of Asia Minor in this period, such as Pyla (11th century), Ephesus (11th century), Chonae (middle of 12th century), Srtobilus (11th century), Trebizond (11th century) and Gangra (13th century). Jews and Jewish economic activity is attested not only in the cities but also in the rural setting. Of course, other prominent locations for the encounter of Armenians and Jews in the 11th and 12th centuries would be Fatimid Egypt and the

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170 Thomson’s “Introduction” in *Hamam*, 36.
175 Vryonis, *The Decline*, 52.
176 D. Jacoby, “The Jews in the Byzantine Economy (Seventh to Mid-Fifteenth Century),” in *Jews in Byzantium*, 219–255, who explores the Jewish presence not only in urban but also rural contexts in Asia Minor.
Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem.¹⁷⁷ This requires yet another set of data for analysis. That in the Cilician context the Armenians were more aware of the Jewish presence may be inferred from the gloss of Vardan Aygkec’i on the term “Jews” in his Counsel. He explains the Armenian hreayk’/Jews as jhutk’/Jews, the Arabic/Persian loanword that may have been more current in common parlance and which definitely referred to living Jews rather than a long-gone Biblical people.¹⁷⁸ Thus, while more research needs to be carried out in order to better understand the types of contexts and specific geographical locations where Armenians and Jews could meet, the possibility of such encounters in the Cilician milieu is more than plausible. This could be at least one reason why the apocalyptic texts from this period are concerned with the function of the Jews at the End of Times. Certainly, their fate – as described in the Armenian apocalyptic texts – is not an envious one from the point of view of modern sensibilities. But if one considers that the only option left for the Muslims in the same sources was their total disappearance, then one is moved to state, with Frasson,¹⁷⁹ that these texts reserve a sympathetic treatment of the Jews.¹⁸⁰ At least the latter had the possibility of repenting for their fathers’ sin and being redeemed at the Second Coming, earning the glorious fate of the martyrs. From a medieval Christian perspective, this was heroic behaviour indeed.

¹⁷⁷ J. Prawer, The History of the Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. (Oxford, 1988), 46 – 64 for various Jewish communities in Palestine before and after the Crusader conquest. It is noteworthy that prior to the conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin, Jewish apocalyptic speculations about a coming Messiah were a wide-spread phenomenon. One wonders if the Armenian texts reflect also a response to these.

¹⁷⁸ La Porta, “Vardan Aygkec’i,” 518.


¹⁸⁰ A final apologetic note must be added. At the beginning of this paper I called for a nuanced study of Christian (Armenian) – Muslim interactions, yet I have treated the Armenians and Jews as monolithic and homogenous groups. To remain within stereotypes but still in plausible contexts of interaction, it is self-evident that an Armenian merchant would have a different experience of interaction with a Jewish colleague than a monk living in or near Edessa with a comparable Jewish scholar or rabbi. However, the sources available to date do not allow such a differentiation. Yet, further research not only into Armenian, but also Jewish sources from this period, something beyond my own competence, will surely shed more light on all of these questions.
Conclusions

Five medieval Armenian eschatological sources considered in this paper present unique traditions on the Antichrist and ascribe to a particular view on the function of the Jews at the End of the World. Comparative textual analysis of the Vision of St. Nersès, the Sermo de Antichristo ascribed to Epiphanius of Salamis, Prophecies of Agaton and a Counsel by Vardan Aygetk’i reveal affinities in their depiction of the end-time evil-doer – the Antichrist. Moreover, the last four present a similar scenario on the fate of the Jews at the End of the World. This paper suggests that an important earlier common source for these traditions is a hitherto unexplored text preserved in manuscripts and known as Agatangel On the End of the World. Not only the name of the Antichrist and his parents are found in this text, as has been noted by Rosenstiehl, but also the role ascribed to the Jews: their original acceptance of the Antichrist, followed by a strong opposition to the eschatological enemy and their eventual martyrdom. While the absence of valid critical editions precludes any firm conclusions as far as direct textual dependences are concerned, Agatangel seems to preserve a more archaic text-form and is plausibly older than any of the other sources discussed here. A future study on the dating of Agatangel will help us better understand the process of transmission of these topoi in Armenian apocalyptic texts in time and space.

The paper also reveals the importance of Hippolytus, but especially of Ps.-Hippolytus De consummatione mundi, on shaping certain apocalyptic topoi that are commonly found in Armenian texts. My hypothesis is that such themes too were transmitted into Cilician Armenian apocalyptic texts through Agatangel rather than directly through Ps.-Hippolytus. But in this case as well the lack of a critical edition of Armenian Ps.-Hippolytus leaves us with preliminary conclusions rather than a fully proven hypothesis. Nevertheless, it is my hope that even these preliminary conclusions will alert scholars working in other Eastern Christian languages, especially Syriac, for researching the impact of Ps.-Hippolytus on the relevant literary production. Textual affinities of Agatangel with some Greek apocalypses such as the Andreas Salos Apocalypse and the Greek Apocalypse of Daniel are also worthy of attention, as are some textual units in Agatangel that seem to be pieces of anti-Jewish polemic or counter-exegesis of the Bible. These signal knowledge of and answer to Rabbinic interpretations. It is, thus, necessary to explore apocalyptic sources in a wider context of Eastern Mediterranean languages and cultures in order to appreciate a type of cultural exchange and transfer that seems to have been more fluid and is more discernible in the case of such non-canonical texts.

Last but not least, the creation of any text must have some relevance to contemporary concerns and a source-critical analysis alone cannot explain the interest in the Jews and their fate found in Armenian apocalyptic texts, especially from the Cilician period. The immigration of Armenians to Cappadocia and Cilicia and their settlement in these and other territories in the Levante in large numbers could well have brought them into direct contact with Jewish communities residing there. Certainly,
neither of the texts studied here nor other sources imply any kind of real or thorough knowledge of contemporary Judaism. Yet, they at least testify that there was a greater awareness of Jews and a concern to incorporate them into the grand scheme of World History which for a Christian author was necessarily moving towards the eschaton.