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Amir P'ōlin between Tabriz and the Erznka Christian Brotherhood: Reassessing the Importance of Manuscript V103 (1336 CE) and its Commissioner-Copyist

Abstract: Manuscript V103, copied by Amir P'ōlin in Tabriz in 1336 contains two parts, a homily by Yovhannēs Erznkac'i for the Christian brotherhood he had founded in 1280, and twenty-two poems by Kostandin Erznkac'i, who was associated with this brotherhood. It also contains a colophon which gives us the identity of the copyist, who moreover was a friend of the poet, who devoted a poem to him. This contribution assesses the importance of this manuscript, of its copyist, as well as of the place of copying, the Sanjaran gate-house.

What does he who is pure gold have to fear from the fire?
Will he be broken up into two colours by the touchstone?
The heart in which the light has risen cannot abide with the darkness,
He whose eyes are blind can have no awareness of the light.
(Kostandin Erznkac'i, poem for Baron Amir)¹

1 Introduction

In 1336, a man calling himself Amir P'ōlin copied a manuscript for his own use in the Sanjarān gate in Tabriz (present day Iran).² It contains a homily by Yovhannēs Erznkac'i Pluz, a highly respected clerical authority and poet from Erznka (Erzincan, present day Turkey), and a majority of the poems (twenty-two out of twenty-

1 Unless indicated otherwise, all translations from the Armenian are by the author of this contribution.

2 Doubt has never been expressed about Amir P'ōlin being the only copyist of the two main texts and the colophon of the manuscript. Whether the variation in hands that is perhaps discernible in the manuscript gives reason to reconsider this, must be determined in a separate publication. However, Amir sometimes inserts himself in the text of Kostandin's poetry, e.g. at the end of poem 2 (fol. 38^v): թողում զայս անցաւորս եւ Կոստանդինս և զամիրս որ գրեցի ի մենէ ի բաց, 'And I Kostandin leave this transitory world – and me, Amir, who wrote this – behind us', which removes any doubt there might be about his copying of the poems. On Azaria as collaborator to the formation of the manuscript, see below, with Fig. 3.

six or twenty-seven known to exist) written by his compatriot Kostandin Erznkac'i, who is one of the most appreciated poets to have composed and performed in Middle Armenian, the vernacular of the time. This article will bring to the fore the importance of Amir P'ōlin's manuscript, preserved since 1759 by the Mekhitarist Catholic Armenian Monastic Order at San Lazzaro in the Venetian Lagoon under the shelfmark 103 (hereafter V103). It also seeks to throw further light on Amir P'ōlin and his relationship with the Christian brotherhood of Erznka, founded in 1280 by the same Yovhannēs Erznkac'i, as well as scrutinise his friendship with Kostandin, who devoted a poem to him.

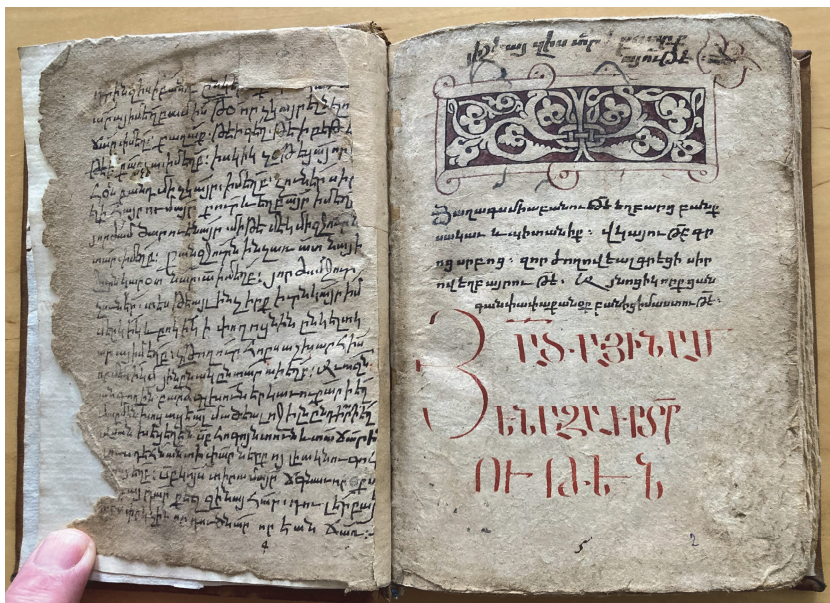


Fig. 1: V103, fols 1^v–2^r.

2 Amir P'ōlin's manuscript

V103 is a cotton paper manuscript, consisting of ninety-one folios measuring 12 × 16.5 cm. It has one column per page, of seventeen lines.³ It contains twelve

³ The description of the manuscript follows Čemčemean 1996, col. 783, with corrections from Poturean 1905, 8–10. Srapyan 1962, 110–111, follows Poturean. Van Lint 1996, 3–5 combines the

quires, each consisting of eight folios, except for the first and the fifth quire, each of which lacks the first folio, and the seventh, from which the final folio is missing. The final quire consists only of six folios, possibly having lost two. The folio numbering contains one error: the number 86 occurs twice. This means that the second number 86 must be read 87, and so on: the folio now numbered 90 is in fact fol. 91. Thus, out of a maximum of ninety-six folios, ninety-one are preserved.

The manuscript has two different sets of numbering. One counts its folios, the other its pages. But they do not start at the same place. Between the front cover and the first preserved probably original folio, two eighteenth-century paper leaves have been inserted. The first of these is unnumbered. The second leaf contains a table of contents of the manuscript on the recto side, which is numbered 1. The verso is numbered 2. No folio number is given. The table of contents indicates the beginning and end of the sections of the manuscript by page number, running from 5 to 181. The next folio, the first one preserved from the original manuscript is numbered as page 5 on the recto, page 6 on the verso, and in addition to that on the recto carries a folio number, 1. The last folio before the back cover is a similarly inserted eighteenth-century leaf. It is blank and does not carry any numbering. In this contribution the folio numbering, which does not take into account the later inserted two opening leaves and the end leaf, is followed.

Since the manuscript consists of cotton paper, it is worn, with the consequences of exposure to humidity also notable. Someone has marked many of the margins with ink. The manuscript reached San Lazzaro unbound. Here a modern binding was added, preventing further loss of leaves. The name of the binder remains unknown. Before fol. 32 (which is the second folio of quire number 5), the opening folio of quire number 5 is missing. This is clear because fol. 31^v carries the quire number 4 (Armenian :դ:), indicating that it is the last folio of that quire, while fol. 32^r does lack number 5 (Armenian :ե:), making clear that it is not the opening folio of that quire. A later hand (possibly by the eighteenth-century Mekhitarist father who prepared the manuscript for rebinding) has added a note in *notrgir* (late miniscule)⁴ in the lower margin of fol. 32^r stating: ‘The first folio of this quire is lacking’.⁵ The last folio of quire number 7 is lacking as well: it belongs between the current fols 53 and 54. Fol. 54 is the opening folio of quire eight, with the quire number (Armenian :ը:) clearly drawn in the lower margin. Fol. 53^v has a

information from Poturean with autopsy of the manuscript. The manuscript was consulted again and photographed during a visit to San Lazzaro in April 2024.

4 On *notrgir*, see AAP, 73–75, and Kouymjian 2015, 281–282.

5 պակասի սկիզբն տեսնիս է՝.

brief note in *notrgir* in the lower margin, stating: ‘A folio is missing’.⁶ The discontinuities in the texts provide further proof that two folios have fallen out of the manuscript. On fol. 85^v, the last one of quire 11, a further note, in a (near) contemporary hand, drawn in very thin letters states: ‘Poem by Kostandin for our spiritual brother Amir, (in full dedication of my) soul to his soul and from heart to heart’.⁷ This is the title of poem 21 (on which see Section 5 below), the opening verse of which is the first line of fol. 86^r, with which quire 12 begins. This looks like the correction of an oversight (see Fig. 4).

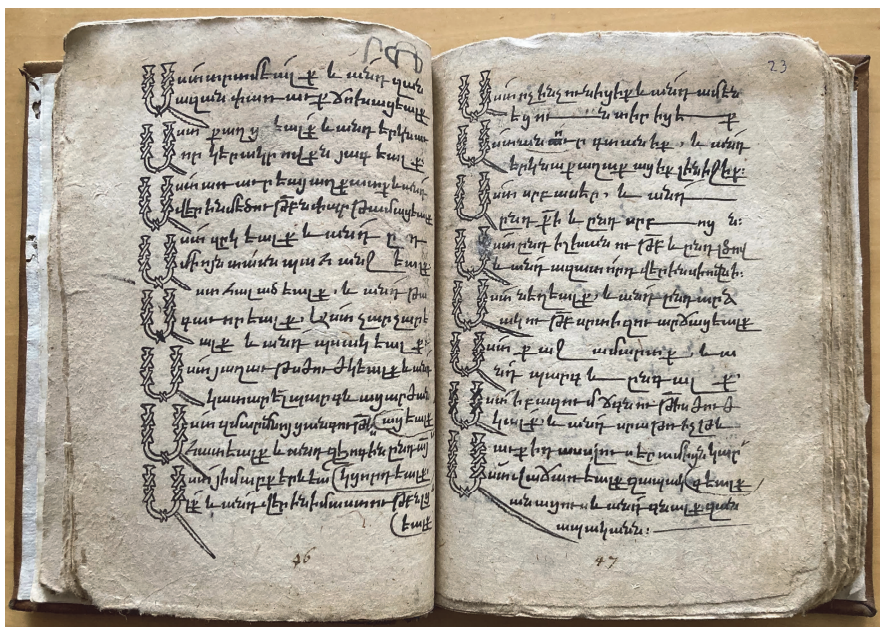


Fig. 2: V103, fols 22^v–23^r; decorative initials, majuscule A (Armenian U).

The writing is a learned *bologir* (roundscript).⁸ Decorative script occurs in various forms throughout the manuscript. The opening lines of the two texts are writ-

⁶ The Armenian reads: (թուղթ պակասի).

⁷ The Armenian reads: Բան ի կուսարնդեայ առ /մեր հոգևոր եղբայրն ամիր/ հոգով ի հոգի և սրտ ի սիրտ. For the writing, in particular the *h*, cf. AAP, plates 97 (M167, dated 1284–1335) and 114 (J1257, dated 1322).

⁸ On *bologir*, see AAP, 69–73, and Kouymjian 2015, 279–282. For a comparable hand in ‘learned *bologir*’, see AAP, no. 111 (M3589, dated 1319, fol. 60^r).

ten in red ink, the titles of the texts in black ink. Many initials opening paragraphs in the first texts are decorative capitals, stretching vertically over two or more lines, executed in black ink (see Fig. 2). The manuscript does not contain any marginal decorations, illuminations or *khorans*, the richly coloured headpieces that take the form of a vault in a rectangle, often with an opening of various shapes on the lower end. Smaller, rectangular headpieces (*half-khorans*), measuring 2.8×8.2 cm, occur on fols 2^r and 36^v. The first half-khoran is placed at the beginning of Yovhannēs's homily, while the second precedes the second of Kostandin's poems.

Over the half-khoran on fol. 2^r a memorial (usually also called colophon in Armenian studies) is written, stating: 'Remember me Lord, in Your Kingdom' (see Fig. 1).⁹ While also written in *bolorgir*, it seems to be by a different hand. The half-khoran on fol. 36^v is surrounded by a text, stating (see Fig. 3): 'Remember Azaria, servant of Jesus Christ in [Christ]. The marvelous writings will also be judged'.¹⁰ The two texts seem to belong to the same hand. Perhaps Azaria drew the half-khorans?



Fig. 3: V103, fol. 36^v, upper part: Azaria's colophon, half-khoran and, in red ink, the opening line of poem 2.

9 The Armenian reads: յիշեայ զիս տ՛ր [ի] քո արքայութեան:

10 Ազարիայ՝ յի քի՝ ծարայ՝ յիշեցէք ի [ք] / յատեան դնի և դպրութի[ւն]ք հրաշիցն:

The manuscript is dated ԶԶԵ (785 of the Armenian Era), that is 1336 CE. Amir P'ōlin was its commissioner and also its copyist. A colophon is found on fols 89^r–89^v, followed by a prayer directed at the Theotokos, the Mother of God, which mentions also Amir's name. On fol. 91^v (erroneously numbered 90^v), the last folio of the manuscript in its current state, a poem, partially preserved, addresses Jesus. As for the provenance of the manuscript, a secondary note on the flyleaf states '[Our] V. Father Mkrtič' *vardapet* [Ananean] brought this book with him from Constantinople, in the year of the Lord 1759, on January 30'.¹¹

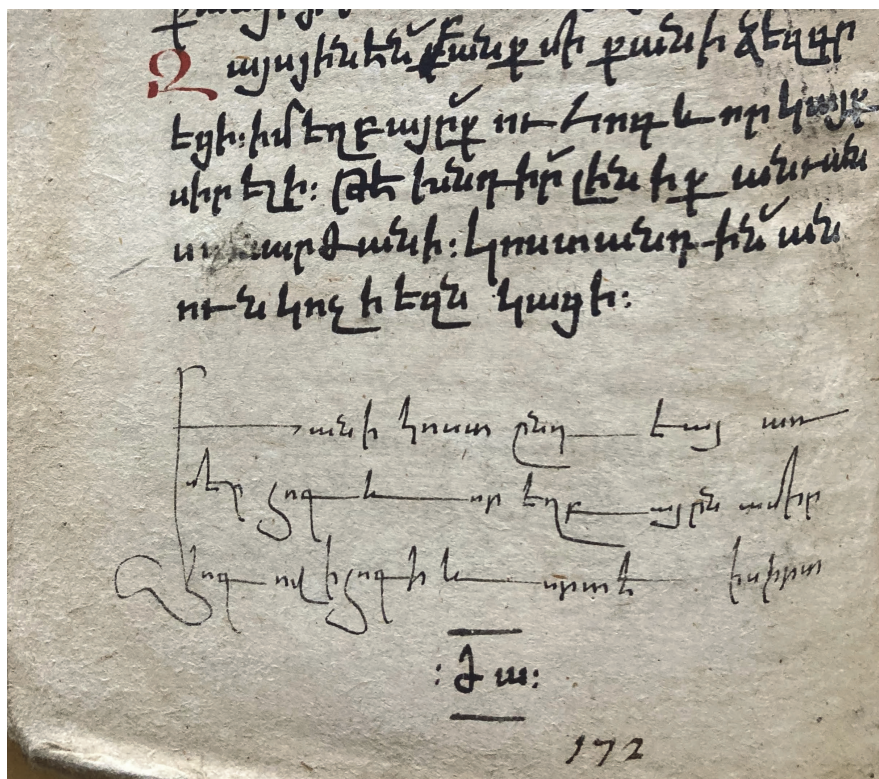


Fig. 4: V103, fol. 85^v, the last of quire 11 (Armenian :ժ ա:), with title of poem 21.

¹¹ Զայս գիրս եբեր ընդ իւր Վ. Շ. Մկրտիչ վարդապետն ի Կոստանդնուպօլսոյ, յամի ղ'ն 1759 ի յունվարի 30: The English translation renders the text as given in the catalogue: the words between square brackets were added by Čemčemean 1996, col. 783 and do not occur in the original text.

This formal description of the manuscript may make one wonder what is special about it. A look at its contents may begin to shed some light on this.¹² This is limited to two textual units, followed by a colophon. The first comprises fols 2^r to 28^r and contains a homily by Yovhannēs Erzncac'i (c. 1230–1293). The second, occupying fols 28^r to 89^r (thus the numbering on the folio, in reality it is fol. 90^r), consists of twenty-two poems by Kostandin Erzncac'i (c. 1240/1250–after 1304).¹³ The colophon is followed by a prayer and poem, mentioned above, occupying fols 89^r–90^v (90^r–91^v). The colophon contains crucial information, about which more below. To begin to appreciate the saliency of this manuscript, we have to look at the combination of the works by the two Erzncac'is it contains: Yovhannēs's homily and Kostandin's poems.

Manuscript V103 is irreplaceable as a repository of Kostandin's poems: twenty-two of the twenty-six or twenty-seven poems known by Kostandin are collected in it.¹⁴ The Venice catalogue bears witness to this by the rubric it assigns to it: 'Kostandin Erzncac'i'. Yet, this gives a one-sided impression. The poems are preceded by a homily written by Yovhannēs Erzncac'i, entitled 'A Few Useful Words on the Congregation of the Brothers'. This is an important document by one of the most influential *vardapets* (doctors of the Armenian Church) of the time, that has not been sufficiently appreciated in the context in which its earliest preserved copy occurs.¹⁵ It will be shown that this homily was addressed at a Christian, Armenian brotherhood in Erzka, for which Yovhannēs Erzncac'i wrote a constitution in 1280, soon followed by another such text. Before addressing the texts contained in Amir P'ölin's manuscript, a few words about this brotherhood will trace its context.

¹² For a more detailed survey of the contents of the manuscript than can be given here, see van Lint 2019, 107–120; van Lint 2020 presents a description of the various types of poems Kostandin wrote.

¹³ van Lint 1996, 8–12.

¹⁴ Sixteen other manuscripts contain poems by Kostandin, offering at most four of them. Twelve manuscripts contain only poems absent from V103. The four manuscripts that contain poems present also in V103 are V258, dated to probably before 1270, which offers Բանք յաղագս չար կնոջ նախատինքն և յաղագս բարի կանանց, 'An admonishing poem about the evil woman and about good women' (poem 20 in V103); M9053 (fourteenth century); V299 (dated 1469); and M3595 (fifteenth century). These three all contain V103's poems 11 and 12, Բանքս վարդի արինակաւ գթիստոս պատմէ, 'This poem speaks of Christ by means of the example of the rose' and Մեկնութիւն վարդին համարաւ; Վասն անգիտաց շինեցի, զի կարծէին եթէ վասն մարման(որաց) էր բանք վարդին, և վասն այն գրեցի, 'A short interpretation of the rose. I have written it for the ignorant, because they were under the impression that the poem about this rose should be interpreted after the body; therefore, I wrote it'. See van Lint 1996, 3–19.

¹⁵ M728 (1621, Šatax) preserves another copy of this homily. Published in a diplomatic edition in Baldasarean 1996, the editor apparently wasn't aware of the text's presence in the nearly three centuries older V103.

3 The Erznka brotherhood and its constitution of 1280

The city of Erznka (nowadays Erzincan in the Republic of Turkey) was an important hub lying on a crossroad of trade routes between Constantinople and Tabriz, in Persia, and between Cilicia on the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea. Having come under Il-Khanid Mongol rule in the 1240s, it was a cosmopolitan city with many religious affiliations, Christian and Muslim. It was home to urban youth, both Muslims and Armenian Christians. These young people would gather for festive togetherness, including dancing, singing and wine drinking. The various religious denominations of the city would vie for their allegiance. United in brotherhoods, they would play an important role in the city's economic, social and military life, by being professional artisans and craftspeople, by looking after one another's well-being and offering hospitality to travellers, and by keeping the trade routes on which the city lay safe for the caravans that would use them. They could be a rough lot and the Armenian Church wanted to make sure that they would remain Christian and lead an if possible exemplary Christian life. *Vardapet* Yovhannēs Erznkac'i was instrumental in establishing the framework necessary to realise such a goal. He Christianised the ideals of manliness that were paramount in the Islamic brotherhoods.

Manliness, or male youthfulness, is a central element of the brotherhoods that flourished in Anatolia in the later thirteenth and first part of the fourteenth centuries. Key terms across languages involved are set out in Seta Dadoyan's following paragraph:

Technically the Arabic *fata* (*fityān* is the plural, *futuwwa* is the abstract noun) *h'adith*, *shabb*, the Armenian *manuk*, *ktrīč* (brave young man), *eritasard* (young man), the Persian *janwanmard* or *juvanmard*, the Turkish *yigit*, *akhī* rather, *aqqī*) implied youth, courage, audacity, honor, generosity, toughness, and not a particularly ethical person in the religious sense.¹⁶

Yovhannēs Erznkac'i's second treatise for the brotherhood clearly states his purpose:

Now, male youthfulness [Arm. *manktut'iwn*, Pers. *fotovvat*] is three things. One, someone keeps strong the good things received from God and doesn't lose them. Two, in the battle he

16 Dadoyan 2003–2004, 119–120.

enters, he stands bravely and is not conquered. Three, he strives hard not to renege on the things he has promised.¹⁷

Research on Armenian Christian brotherhoods in Anatolia and their relationship with initiatives for reform of *futuwwa* confraternities taken by 'Abbasid Caliph Al-Nāṣir Li-Dīn Allāh (575–622 AH / 1180–1225 CE) in the first quarter of the thirteenth century has made considerable progress in the last few decades.¹⁸ Presented by Lewon Xaç'ikean in 1951 and 1962, the *Statute and Rules* or *Constitution* for the Christian brotherhood of Erzinka, written in 1280 by Yovhannēs Erzknac'i and supplemented by him with a second series of stipulations (*Rules and Instructions*) sometime later, was first placed into the Muslim Anatolian context of *futuwwa* and *akhī* by Dickran Kouymjian in 1975.¹⁹ A study of this relationship was initially undertaken by Dadoyan, who emphasised that 'youth brotherhoods were essential parts of the medieval Middle-Eastern urban landscape' and that 'given the nature of the Middle Eastern world following Seljuk then Mongol invasions, the subject of urban youth in the entire region constitutes a singularity and should be studied as such'.²⁰ Rachel Goshgarian then studied the seven surviving Anatolian *futuwwa* texts in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Armenian, and placed the Armenian texts in their Anatolian context.²¹ James Russell argued for an Iranian substratum or inspiration in such Armenian Christian brotherhoods, and sees the *Constitution* as an example of wider church reform in Armenia.²² Dadoyan stressed the originally – and persisting – secular character of these brotherhoods and devotes much attention to the moral, Christian dimension of the *Constitution* and its se-

17 Արդ, մանկութիւն Գ. իրք է, մինն այն է, զի զբարիսն, որ յԱստուծոյ առեալ է, ամուր պահէ եւ ոչ կորուսանէ. Բ. ի պատերազմն յոր մտեալ է, արի կենայ եւ ոչ յաղթի. Գ, այնմ իրաց, որ խոստացած է ջանք դնէ որ չգրկի (Erznac'i-Tēr-Srapyan and Baldasarean 2013, 407–408). Cf. the translations by Goshgarian 2018, 182; and Dadoyan 2014, 92.

18 In particular Dadoyan 2003–2004; Dadoyan 2005; Dadoyan 2014; and Goshgarian 2013a; Goshgarian 2013b; Goshgarian 2017; Goshgarian 2018. Goshgarian 2018, 187–189 gives the *status quaestionis* at the time.

19 Xaç'ikean 1951; Xaç'ikean 1962; Kouymjian 1975. Xaç'ikean 1951 briefly mentions *akhi* groups (see the reprint: Xaç'ikean 1995, 206). The text of the first constitution was published in Xaç'ikean 1962; both texts: Baldasarean 1977, 220–228, 229–239; Erzknac'i-Tēr-Srapyan and Baldasarean 2013, 397–405, 406–416. Studies of the *Constitution* include Srapyan 1962, 21–29; translations into English of both texts are available in Goshgarian 2018, 196–211. Russell 1994, 32–37 and van Lint 2019, 123–131 give the first one.

20 Dadoyan 2003–2004, 117, 118. She returned to the subject in Dadoyan 2005, followed by Dadoyan 2014, 69–109, 111–132.

21 Goshgarian 2013b and 2018. Yıldırım 2018, on the transformation of the courtly *futuwwa* promulgated by al-Nāṣir to the *akhi-futuwwa* of Anatolia.

22 Russell 1994; Russell 1995; Russell 2004b, 1067.

quel, which sought to address excesses that had arisen since the original constitution was promulgated. Dadoyan also paid detailed attention to, and interpreted, the poetry both Yovhannēs and Kostandin Erznkac'i devoted to this brotherhood.²³

Dressing them in Christian attire, Yovhannēs Erznkac'i modelled his texts on the *futuwwa* text written in Konya by Caliph Al-Nāṣir's emissary to Anatolia, Shehab al-Din 'Omar Sohravardī (1144–1234).²⁴ Yovhannēs's foundation of a Christian brotherhood aimed at inculcating Christian behaviour in an organisation not necessarily prioritising such tenets. It emphasises chastity and self-restraint, chivalrous and courageous behaviour. The second text addresses excesses arisen in the relationship between the *manktawag*, the elder, and the *manuk*, the younger member(s) of the brotherhood, and is also concerned with curbing sexual desire as well as with ceremonial matters. We may read the texts copied by Amir P'ōlin against the background of these two documents.

4 The contents of the texts Amir P'ōlin copied in his manuscript

This section briefly reviews the contents of Yovhannēs's homily, incontrovertibly addressed at the brotherhood, and Kostandin's poetry reflecting many of the themes addressed in the homily, including the didactic concerns addressed in the poem he wrote for his friend Amir P'ōlin.

4.1 Disambiguation: Text 1, V103, fols 2^r–28^r, Yovhannēs Erznkac'i's homily for the Erznka brotherhood

The homily's opening lines and a remark towards the end make it clear that a specific brotherhood is addressed:

²³ For scholarship on Kostandin Erznkac'i's poetry, K'iwrtēan 1953, 152–168; Step'anyan 2005, 231–243; Thomson 1995, 145–146; Thomson 2007, 192. Abelyan 1970, 356–399 and Hairapetian 1995, 384–401 consider the poet in the framework of Armenian literary history. Relevant to this study are also Bardakjian 2014; Cowe 1988–1989; Cowe 1995, 35; Cowe 2005, 386–396; Cowe 2015, 89–90; Dadoyan 2003–2004, 150–153; Dadoyan 2005, 349–364; Dadoyan 2014, 119–130; Goshgarian 2013a, 242–244; Goshgarian 2017, 123–126; Goshgarian 2018; Russell 1987b; Russell 2001–2002, 83–91; Pifer 2021, 170–198; van Lint 1995; van Lint 1996; van Lint 2019, 111–122; van Lint 2020.

²⁴ Goshgarian 2018, 192–193 with Goshgarian's transcription of the name maintained; cf. Cowe 2015, 95–96.

Յաղագս միաբանութեան եղբարց բանք սակաւ և պիտանիք: Վկայութեամբ գրոց սրբոց: զոր ժողովեալ գրեցի սիրով եղբայրութեան Այնոցիկ որք ցանգան փափաքանօք բանից իմաստութեան:²⁵

A few useful words on the congregation of the brothers, with testimony from the Holy Scriptures, which I, after collecting them, wrote out of love for [the] brotherhood, for those who desirously long for words of wisdom.

Ողորմեացի բարեգութն Աստուած այնոցիկ որք զհիմն և զսկիզբն միաբանութեանս են արկեալ, որք հրաժարեալք են, եւ որք կան²⁶

May the compassionate God have mercy on those who have laid the foundation and the beginning of this congregation and who are deceased, and on those, who are alive.

This latter sentence proves that no abstract unity or a general moral category of brotherhood are meant, but a concrete institution, with founders, some of whom are no longer alive. The homily, then, is addressed to the members of the brotherhood, and it is unlikely that another such institution is meant than the one founded by the same Yovhannēs in Erzinka. Moreover, it is copied by one of the members of this brotherhood, together with Kostandin Erzinkaci's poetry, which was performed for it and circulated at least among some of its members.

4.2 The themes of Yovhannēs's homily

The homily's aim is to help the brotherhood grow in love, as a 'temple for the Holy Spirit'.²⁷ Yovhannēs points to the useful words of Scripture, which 'are like pearls encased in gold'.²⁸ As sons of light they must engage in spiritual battle against vices: prostitution (*pořnkut'iwn*), including adultery, masturbation, gluttony, presumption, theft, slander, quarrel, hatred of one's brother. One must refrain from lying, giving false testimony, idle speech, jokes, comedy, laughter. Refusal to honour one's parents is serious. The punishment for these are death and hell. Bridling one's tongue, avoiding a 'false tongue', is an important means to prevent such an end. Yovhannēs then characterises righteous speech. Compassion and mercy are

²⁵ V103, fol. 2^r. Quotations from the homily are from V103. Only in case of a spurious reading, the text in M728, the only other copy currently known, will be adduced. The lines adduced here occur on fol. 2^r.

²⁶ V103, fol. 27^v.

²⁷ V103, fol. 3^{rv}, տաճար հոգոյն / սրբոյ: On the themes of Yovhannēs's sermon, see also van Lint 1996, 25–27; and van Lint 2019, 107–111.

²⁸ V103, fol. 6^r, և իբրեւ զոսկի մարգարտիւ յեռեալ.

loving ways of treating others. One must refrain from pronouncing judgment. Compassion spreads and becomes a defining characteristic of the community.²⁹ Then follows the central commandment of faith, to love God with all one's heart, and one's neighbour like oneself. Love is the basis of wisdom, virtue, and light, bringing humankind closer to God. The importance of the virtues of humility, meekness, and mercy are stressed, preparing one for the Kingdom of God in everlasting life. Difficulties and persecution when living a godly life are contrasted with the bliss that awaits one after death: the brotherhood is a loving community where God himself dwells, to be continued in a perfected way in the afterlife. Finally, Yovhannēs describes the brotherhood as part of the wider Christian community, including all ranks of the clergy, hermits and monks in his prescriptions for the Christian life, firmly anchoring the brotherhood within the Armenian Apostolic Church. He ends by asking forgiveness from God for his sins.

The homily traces a clear path for spiritual growth of each member of the brotherhood individually and in relationship to one another. Unsurprisingly, this all fits well with the precepts given in the *Constitution* for the brotherhood, and its sequel.

This homily must have had special meaning for Amir P'ōlin, making it one panel of the diptych of his *vademecum* for the Christian life that manuscript V103 represents. He must have perceived the homily and poetry as intimately correlated.³⁰

4.3 Text 2, fols 28^r–89^r (90^r): Kostandin Erznkac'i's poems

The subjects touched upon in Kostandin's poems are similar to those addressed by Yovhannēs. Kostandin also opens by creating a framework against which his didactic poetry may be read.³¹ This takes the form of a hundred-and-sixty-line biblical history, opening with a quatrain praising the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as an inseparable Trinity and one Godhead, omnipresent and all-powerful.³² The final quatrain returns to Christ-God's all-powerfulness, who is being in essence and for ever without ending. The poem relates the beauty of the cosmos. All creation is dependent for its existence on God.

²⁹ The negative implication present in Paul's warning in Gal. 5:9 is clearly not involved in this imagery. Using the same metaphor, Paul there speaks of the corruption of the community of the believers even by a small tendency to untruth.

³⁰ Van Lint 2019, 107–111 compares the themes of Yovhannēs homily with those of Kostandin's poems.

³¹ V103, fols 28^r–36^r.

³² One folio is missing from the manuscript. The complete poem will have been close to twenty lines longer.

Towards the end of a poem, the poet often addresses himself. On this occasion, he states in lines 153–156:³³

Խնդրէ դու Կոստանդին ի սուրբ Հոգոյն քեզի բաժին,
Դու այլ լուսաւորէ լեր արժանի փոքր մասին,
Զարդարէ դու զքեզ տաճար զեղեցկաշէն թագաւորին,
Եւ ապայ գալուն մնաս արեգակն շառաւելին.³⁴

You Kostandin, ask for your part of the Holy Spirit,
Enlighten and be worthy of a small part,
Adorn yourself as a beautifully built temple for the King,
And then wait for the coming of the ray of the sun.

This readiness to be transformed through the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ permeates Kostandin's poetry. The didactic poems that follow can be characterised as examples and exercises on the way towards this goal. Kostandin writes about himself, but his experience and advice make it clear that he is an 'everyman' whose vicissitudes are applicable to other Christians' lives. They also chronicle some of the difficulties with which functioning in the environment of the brotherhood presented both himself, and his friend Amir P'ōlin.

The second poem is 'like a pearl set in gold'.³⁵ It further strengthens the parallels with Yovhannēs's homily, continuing to prepare the audience for a Christian life. Love is the underlying principle of the cosmos, the reason for its creation, and the essence of God's being. A spiritual human being, someone whose 'eyes of the soul' are open, lives on this fundament of love, shown by Christ – here a beautiful flower – in his incarnation and crucifixion. Knowledge without love isn't wisdom. Since wisdom based on love is often unwelcome, one must know when to be silent: the theme of the bridled tongue resurfaces. A distinction between those accepting and those rejecting Christ's love and wisdom is drawn. Kostandin is clear about this choice for a *sobria ebrietas*, a drunkenness in which one retains one's sobriety, which is the result of being imbued with the Holy Spirit. He is set on a spiritual journey, and invites his audience, including Amir P'ōlin to do the same.³⁶

³³ In V103, the poems are written out as continuous prose. Line numbers refer to the editions of the poems in Srapyan 1962 and van Lint 1996.

³⁴ V103, fol. 36^r.

³⁵ V103, fol. 36^v.

³⁶ V103, fols 36^v–38^r. Love is central too, in poem 13, 'Poem about the incomprehensible marvels of God, which I cautiously endeavour (to present) thus. Help me, Christ' (fols 64^r–66^v).

The third poem has Christ's Second Coming as theme and is couched in the form of a poem about spring.³⁷ Christ is presented as the rose, king of the flowers. A number of Kostandin's other poems deploy the same imagery.³⁸ An intensity of colour, smell, and other sense perceptions characterise these poems, as well as an all-pervasive joy. These poems celebrate the abovementioned mystical inebriation, the union with God-Christ in *sobria ebrietas*. Further recurring themes are love as the essence of the universe, and the coupling of love with beauty. Poem 16 also features inebriation with the nightingale as cupbearer. Yovhannēs's reminder in the homily that where two or three are present in Christ's name, Christ will be there with them, is abundantly and joyously presented in Kostandin's poem. Kostandin is assured of, and grateful for Christ's love for him: 'you have become worthy of the rose / And have heard the voice of the nightingale'.³⁹ Kostandin's verses fit perfectly with Yovhannēs's precepts for the brotherhood.

Kostandin had experienced this mystical union himself. Poem 8, 'Some speak ill of me out of envy, saying, "How can he recite such a poem, as he has not had much tuition from a *vardapet*?" [...]', documents palpable antagonism against the poet and also relates how both his talent for writing poetry and his authority to speak were bestowed upon him in a vision he had when he was 15 years old.⁴⁰ The three last preserved stanzas of the poem give an insight in his continued mystical experience and his inner joy, and the danger that he is now exposed to.⁴¹ The theme of conflict because of his choice for a life of faith, love and wisdom appears. A central stanza in Kostandin's oeuvre records his *sobria ebrietas*:

Այսօր հոգովս ուրախ եմ՝ և ի մեծ մուրատ հասայ,
 Ռբ ես առանց շրթունք՝ կու խմեմ յայն գինուն շիշայ.
 Սարխօշ եմ յայն սիրուն՝ և է միտքս ի հօն յուր ինք լինայ.
 Չունիմ շատոց կարիք, ով է չարկամ ու զիս որսայ:⁴²

37 V103, fols 38^r–39^v.

38 Poems 11 'This poem speaks of Christ by means of the example of the rose' (fols 58^r–61^v) and 12, 'A short interpretation of the rose. I have written it for the ignorant, because they were under the impression that the poem about this rose should be interpreted after the body [...]' (fols 61^v–64^r). Poem 15 'A poem about the mystery of Christ, through the example of spring; do not interpret this poem after the flesh, but after the spirit' (fols 70^r–75^v), poem 16 'The same poem about the mystery [of Christ] and a vision in another way, which is allegorically presented as follows' (fols 75^r–77^v).

39 արժանի եղեր վարդին / Եւ լսեցեր բլբուլի ձայն:

40 V103, fols 51^r–53^v. Van Lint 1995; Russell 2001–2002; and Bardakjian 2014 address this poem.

41 Due to a missing folio, the poem remains incomplete.

42 V103, fol. 53^v. Quoted are lines 53–56 of the poem.

Today my soul is joyful, I saw a deep wish fulfilled:
 I am drinking without lips a glass of that wine;
 I am drunk with that love and my thoughts are there, where He is,
 I do not need the many men that wish me ill and pursue me.

Three poems deal with various forms of religious diversity, i.e. dissent, heresy, other faiths. Poem 4 is 'About evil friends and about avoiding some seducers, who oppose goodness'.⁴³ The fifth and sixth poems bear as titles 'A poem to be interpreted in two ways: after the spirit and after the flesh, thus spoken allegorically' and 'A poem about the Sun of Righteousness, which is also Christ, the Only-Begotten Son who rose from the Father, told in allegory'.⁴⁴ They return to the source of life and light: the loving God, manifest in Christ.

Hostility against the poet is never far away. It defines the seventh poem, 'About the ignorant who falsely speak useless words and their opposition against the wise'.⁴⁵ The oppositions found in this poem are central to Kostandin's work and reflect Yovhannēs's injunctions.

Poem 19, '[...] written in an hour of sadness, which I wrote because of the wounds which false brothers inflicted upon me', is an exercise in self-admonition. Kostandin moves from intoxication by sorrow through the pursuit of unworthy aims to the sobriety of the long-term goal, beyond life on earth.⁴⁶

The final poem is entitled 'About brotherhood, good and bad'.⁴⁷ Gone is the jubilant mood pervading the poems on the rose and the nightingale – deafness to advice and hostility are the poet's part. The last three lines of the collection show a complete breakdown of communion: the brother has become a stranger.

Closely related to this theme, and pervasive also in Yovhannēs's homily, is the bridling of one's tongue and refraining from judgement. It appears in poem 9 and is explained in poem 10.⁴⁸ Kostandin's human nature is contradictory. He lives with unresolved tensions between the four elements of water, air, fire and earth. Not everyone forgives him: some consider him a madman, who ought to be killed. This is the nadir of the collection – and a reminder of Yovhannēs's warning in his sermon that persecution may await those who follow Christ.

⁴³ V103, fols 40^v–43^r.

⁴⁴ V103, fols 43^v–45^r and 45^r–46^v.

⁴⁵ V103, fols 47^r–50^v.

⁴⁶ V103, fols 80^v–82^r.

⁴⁷ V103, fols 87^r–89^r.

⁴⁸ V103, fols 54^r–56^v and 56^v–58^r. This is also the theme of poems 17 'A useful and advantageous advice to all' (fols 77^v–78^v) and 18 (fols 78^v–80^r). Poem 17 stresses the need of a pure heart, employing images from alchemy absent from Yovhannēs's homily.

A further theme linking the poetry to the homily is the transitoriness of life, which in poem 14 contains the only instance of critique of laughter. Present in Yovhannēs's homily, Kostandin interprets it as a sign of pride and hybris.⁴⁹ An early poem describes, in the style of Proverbs, the dangers of a wanton woman – pointed out in Yovhannēs's list of vices – and the blessing of a good one.⁵⁰

Kostandin's one but last poem in the manuscript is addressed to Amir P'ōlin himself and will be discussed in the following section.⁵¹

Kostandin's poems have been interpreted in a variety of ways.⁵² It is indisputable that Kostandin had a spiritual meaning in mind, rather than an almost mimetic rendering of the drinking parties that urban fraternities were known for. His explanations steer understanding of his poetry away from one 'according to the body', or 'the flesh' (*i marmin*, *marmnawor*), to a spiritual one (*i hogi*), making it very clear that they are meant to be spiritually educating through an engagement of the senses that afford an appreciation of the beauty of creation and of human companionship, worshipping the creator in mystical drunkenness. Not everyone could reach such an understanding of his work without being nudged in that direction. His lines in the vision poem 'I am drinking without lips a glass of that wine / I am drunk with that love and my thoughts are there, where He is', further underline such an understanding of his work.⁵³ It is a perspective that tallies with the title and opening line of Kostandin's poem 'For our spiritual brother Amir, made in full dedication of heart and soul. Lord Amir, our beloved brother in whom we take pride'. The fact that Amir P'ōlin saw fit to juxtapose Yovhannēs's sermon with a collection of poems that is thematically so similar lends credence to the idea that the copyist must have understood the poems in this spiritual way, as well.⁵⁴ His experiences seem to have paralleled those of Kostandin's, a rejection of his authority, and a refusal to accept his advice, given in line with Christian teaching. When Kostandin addresses himself, Amir P'ōlin often adds his own name.⁵⁵ Finally, this view preserves coherence in purpose throughout Kostandin's corpus: he does not contradict in the convivial poems of spring and joyful gatherings what he propounds in his more directly didactical ones.

49 V103, fols 67^r–70^r.

50 V103, fols 82^r–85^v.

51 V103, fols 86^r–87^r.

52 See n. 23.

53 Interpretation first proposed in van Lint 1995 and van Lint 1996; see also Cowe 2015, 89.

54 This is less convincing if the exemplar was similarly construed.

55 These instances are gathered and discussed in van Lint 1996, and in van Lint 2019, 120–122.

We have now formed an idea of both main texts in Amir P'ōlin's manuscript. They can indeed be read in parallel, both aiming at the deepening of love for God and one's neighbour, within the brotherhood and through the brotherhood with the wider world. The poetry allows for close emotional and individual identification, representing as it were the beating heart of the organism that the manuscript embodies, while the homily is a guide for the mind to tune one's instrument in the proper key, aiming at transformation to the likeness of Christ through practice of the precepts contained in it. The manuscript thus can be perceived as one whole, a personal companion, a *vademecum* on the road through life for a member of the Erznka brotherhood, in which he at one time played, or was still playing, a role of responsibility. Let us now look at Kostandin's poem for Baron Amir, the only one written for a named individual.⁵⁶

5 A special poem, addressed to Amir P'ōlin, V103, fols 85^v–87^r

(85^v) Բան ի Կոստանդնուպոլսի քաղաքի հոգևոր եղբայրն Ամիր, հոգով ի հոգի և սրտէ ի սիրտ:

(86^r) Պարոն Ամիր, մեր պարծանաց եղբայր և սիրելի,

Զայս սակաւ բանքս ի կարգի, որ վասն ձեր շարագրեցի,
Աղէկ մտիկ դիր ու ճանչէ. ուժով է բանքս և պիտանի,
Բայց յանգետ մարդիքն ի մաւտ՝ է անպիտան դառն և լեղի:

5. Թէ յանգետ մարդիքն ի մաւտ դու բան խաւսիս գերդ գոսկի,
Նայ չկարէ զինք գիտենալ, տկար է միտքն որ ոչ տանի.
Թէ լնուս դու մարգարիտ յառջն իշու կամ ի խոզի,
Նայ չհամարի զամենն ոչինչ, թէ Բէ՛ր ինձի յերդ ու գարի:

Թէ հիվընդին տաս կերակուր քաղցր ու անուշ նման շաքրի,

10. Նա մաղձով սիրտն է ի լի, նորայ թուի զահր ու լեղի.
Թէ վառես ջահս հազար ու մոմեղ (86^v) էնս արջն կուրի՝
Նորայ թ[ու]ի ամենն ոչինչ զքեզ այլ գերտ [զին]ք կ[ո]յր համարի:

⁵⁶ For the text, an English translation, and brief commentary see van Lint 1996, 321–327; a translation is also given in van Lint 2019, 117–120. The text is preserved in V103 alone. Its edition here, including division into lines and stanzas follows van Lint 1996, 321–323, with corrections upon autopsy of the manuscript in April 2024. Where van Lint 1996 had *o* (following Poturean 1905 and Srapyan 1962), *աւ* is written, restoring V103's reading.

- Ահայ շատ կսկիծ ու վէր է, ջաւհար ունի ի մէջ ծովի,⁵⁷
 Որ մտէ յատակ ծովուն և գտանէ իրք պիտանի.
15. Եւ բազում աշխատանաւք ի դուրս բերէ ի ցամաքի,
 Նայ անգէտն առնու ի ձեռն և չհամարի զինքն ապիկի:
- Թէ լինի մարդն խելաւք, որ անգիտաց համեմ լինի
 Ու շատոց անհամութեան է համեմող և պիտանի,
 Թող սանձէ զարագ լեզուն, մէջ անգիտաց շատ չխաւսի.
20. Թէ չէ՝ աղն անհամեսցի՝ չ'ալ համեմող իր չգտանի:
- Մէքէն կանք տրտմել ի յաշխարհիս ով վատ խաւսի.⁵⁸
 Ով սուր ունի զլեզուն, կամ է շուն (86^r = 87^r) ու անհարկի,
 Յուցանէ զլոյսն խաւար, նա լուսոյն երփ խաւար կոչի
 Կամ Մաղրիպի ոսկին որ մահաքովն դալպ լինի:
25. Ով է խալաս ոսկի՝ նա ի հրոյն յի՞նչ երկնչի,
 Կամ մահաքին համար ի յերկու գոյն ինքն բացուի.
 Ի վուր սիրտ որ յոյս ծագել նա ի մաւտ խաւար չաւթի,
 Ով կոյր է ի յաչաց, նա ի լուսոյն խապար չունի:
- Դու է՞ր կաս յանդիշայ խիստ թըւայքար ողորմելի,
 30. Կամ ի ծովուս միջին դու նաւ ուզես անշարժելի.
 Դու կա՛ց իմաստութեամբ՝ որ քեզ գտնուս հանգիստ բարի.
 Ու թող մարդիկ ասեն՝ թէ խել է նայ ու խելք չունի:
- Գեմ բարձր (86^v = 87^v) է արեգակն ու լուսատու է աշխարհի,
 Ի՞նչ մեղ կայ իր լո(ւսոյ)ն, որ երփ ամբով ինքն ծածկի.
35. Լուսինն որ է բոլոր ու խոռեղով ինքն երեւի՝
 Չասեն լուսոյն թերի երբ լիութիւնն յիրմէն լինի:
- Եղի՛ր դու հուր վառել ի սուրբ սրտէ հոգով բանի.
 Ով որ ինք չար կամաւք ի քեզ դիմէ՝ սայ ինք երի.
 Ով սէր ունի սրտով ու գերդ գեղդ խոնարհ լինի՝
40. Դու զհուրն ջուր գուգէ ի յիր դիմաց՝ ու հով քամի:

57 Emended from the manuscript reading Ահայ շատ կսկիծ ու վէր է, ջաւհար ունի մէջ ծովուն. It restores a 4/4 scansion in the second half of the line (մէջ expanded to ի մէջ) and preserves the monorhyme in -i, replacing ծովուն with ծովի.

58 Poturean (1905, 155, n. 1) states that the first part of the line yields no meaning and is two syllables short. Srapyan (1962, 196, note to l. 21) also remarks that it is nonsensical. The matter cannot be addressed here, yet *kank'*, a first plural present indicative, confirms the reading *menk'*, therefore a translation 'We are saddened by him/anyone who speaks evil in this world' is proposed. Does Amir Polin's hand lie behind the exceptional shift, in this poem from first singular to first plural? I hope to return to this line in a further publication.

Զայս բանքս ի Կոստանդէա դապուղ արա, որ քեզ տըլի.
 Հալէ զինքս մըտաւք ու հասկացիր հոգովդ ի լի.
 Յերակ յարթուն կացիր ի յաշխարհիս, բէտար կացիր,
 Զի շատք է սուտ խաբէլ, (87⁹ = 88⁹) յետոյ ձգել յատակ ծովի:

45. Ի յանգէտ մարդոյն փախիր, յիրմէն ի զա՛տ կաց ու ի հեռի.
 Մի՛ իրենն հաւատալ որ նենգութեամբ քեզ խոնարհի.
 Ի սուրաթն մի՛ նայիլ որ յերևան կայ և յայտնի.
 Միֆաթին արա մըտիկ որ է խորին անգիտելի:

Ով ունի իմաստութիւն թող առ մարդիկ շատ չխաւսի.

50. Ով չունի սէր ընկերի՝ թող լեզուովն մարդ չդատի.
 Ով չկարէ սիրտ մի տրտում ուրախ պահել՝ նայ է՝ ր գովի:

A poem by Kostandin for our spiritual brother Amir, made in full dedication of heart and soul.

Baron Amir, brother we take pride in and our dear one
 Understand these few fitting words, which I have composed for you,
 And pay full heed to them: this poem is powerful and useful,
 But for ignorant people it is useless and bitter as gall.

5. If among the ignorant you speak a word which is like gold,
 They cannot understand it, feeble are their minds and cannot grasp it;
 If you cast pearls before ass or swine,
 It considers it of no worth and says, 'Bring me straw and barley'.

If you give a sick man food, sweet and delicious like sugar,

10. While his heart is full of bitterness, it will seem to him poison and gall.
 If you light a thousand torches and candles before a blind man,
 It will all seem nothing to him, he will consider you as blind as he is.

Behold, this is a very sharp pain and suffering: somebody has a pearl in the sea,
 When he enters the depths of the sea and finds a precious thing,

15. And with much effort brings it to land,
 Then an ignorant takes it into his hand and considers it mere glass.

If a man is sensible, so that he is a spice to the ignorant,
 A seasoning and of use for many a person's lack of taste;
 Let him curb his quick tongue, let him not speak much among the ignorant,

20. If he does, the salt will become tasteless, and no seasoning will be found in its stead.

We are saddened by him⁵⁹ who speaks evil in this world,
 Who has a sharp tongue or is a dog and shameless,

59 See the previous note.

He pretends that the light is dark; now when is the light called dark?
Or when is it said that the gold of the West is false according to the touchstone?

25. What does he who is pure gold have to fear from the fire?
Or will he be broken up into two colours by the touchstone?
The heart in which the light has risen cannot abide with the darkness,
He whose eyes are blind can have no awareness of the light.

Why are you so pensive and miserable, so caught up in your thoughts –

30. Do you want a stable ship on high seas?
Be full of wisdom, that you may find true peace within yourself,
And let people say, 'He is mad and has lost his wits'.

Indeed, high is the sun and a bestower of light upon the earth,
How is its light to blame, when it is covered by a cloud?

35. The moon is round, and when it appears in diminished shape,
I will not say there is a lack of light, when it has fullness in itself.

Be a burning fire out of a pure heart through the Spirit of the Word;
Whoever turns against you with a bad desire will get burned himself.
Whoever loves with all their heart and is humble like the soil,

40. For them you must oppose fire with water and a refreshing wind.

Approve of this poem by Kostandin, which I gave to you,
Soften yourself with these thoughts and grasp them fully with your soul;
Always be alert in this world, be watchful,
Since the lie has deceived many and cast (them) to the bottom of the sea.

45. Flee from the ignorant man, stand apart from him and keep aloof,
Do not believe him when he cunningly humbles himself for you.
Do not mark the countenance, which is outward and visible,
Turn your thoughts to the character, which is hidden and inscrutable.

If someone possesses wisdom, let him not talk too much with people,

50. If someone has no love for his companion, let him not judge man with his tongue;
If someone cannot cheer up a saddened heart, why is he praised?

Kostandin's opening address reveals a close relationship between poet and addressee, and one of great respect.⁶⁰ It is unlikely that anyone but the commissioner-copyist is meant – we may therefore safely identify Amir P'ölin with Baron

⁶⁰ Scholarly comment on this poem includes Poturean 1905, 38; Tchobanian 1929, 14–18, with French translation; Srabyan 1962, 68–70; Dadoyan 2005, 259; Dadoyan 2014, 128–129; Goshgarian 2013a, 243. Van Lint 2019 contains a translation, without commentary.

Amir.⁶¹ The title 'baron' indicates a man of some influence and, potentially, wealth. Kostandin calls him his brother and given the context of the manuscript – it is likely that he was a member of the Erznka brotherhood with which Kostandin was associated.

The poem repeats some of the core didactic themes of the collection. Conspicuously absent from it are the joyful spring gatherings in nature with nightingales warbling about their love for the rose and all being drunk with the rose's love for them. No mystical union among brothers, united in the love of and their love for Christ is intimated. The main advice the poem gives is not to speak with people incapable of valuing what Amir P'ōlin might say to them. Kostandin points to Amir P'ōlin's ill-advised apparent expectation of being understood and appreciated. He should accept that he is rejected by some and considered mad. It had happened to Kostandin as well. A complication here arises: if Amir P'ōlin was, or had been, a man of standing in the Erznka brotherhood, a *manktawag* ('leader of ten or of forty'), he may have expected to be obeyed. While not the spiritual leader of the brotherhood – that was, initially at least, the old *vardapet* Grigor Sanahnec'i⁶² – he shared Kostandin's religious precepts and will have wanted to see them applied by those under his authority. The poem may thus have been written after a rift had occurred between Amir P'ōlin and someone or a group of people under his authority in the brotherhood.⁶³

Amir P'ōlin's subjective approach doesn't reflect the reality of the situation, as Kostandin seems to say when he observes that it is not the sun's fault if it is obscured by clouds, nor is the appearance of the moon in its different phases a reflection of its true state: it is always round.

One must understand the ignorant as those who do not wish to live according to the Word of God, as interpreted along the lines of the Armenian Orthodox Church. This may well reflect the tensions in the brotherhood encountered at the time by Amir P'ōlin and Kostandin alike. The abovementioned rowdy character of the young members and their gatherings were meant to be curbed by the constitution of the brotherhood and its sequel, but this poem, together with those where Kostandin is attacked, may well document its limited effect.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Thus already Abelyan 1970, 356–357 (first published in 1946).

⁶² Van Lint 2019, 124.

⁶³ Dadoyan 2005, 259 and Dadoyan 2014, 128–130 stretch the evidence; cf van Lint 2019, 116–117.

⁶⁴ Yovhannēs Erznkac'i devotes a poem, written in about 1290, to a repentant *manktawag* whose behaviour towards the junior member under his care had been wanting. Srapyan 1958, 90–91, 171–182; Dadoyan 2014.

6 Amir P'ōlin's colophon, V103, folios 89^r–90^r

This section seeks to place the manuscript in the context of its copying. The colophon identifies Amir P'ōlin as the manuscript's copyist and commissioner.⁶⁵ What does its place of copying mean, and what does it tell us about the copyist's activity? No attention has been paid to this element of the manuscript nor of what one might call its copyist's testimony. Further, what can we learn about Amir P'ōlin's identity from his name?

The colophon consists of two parts, the colophon itself identifiable by a series of elements usually present in such texts, followed by an invocation of the Theotokos. A segment of a poem on Christ completes the manuscript as we have it.⁶⁶ Whether Amir P'ōlin regarded it as part of his colophon, is difficult to say. What it does show is his devotion to Mary, and to Christ. It is impossible to know whether any texts followed them, but this does not detract from the characterisation of Amir P'ōlin as a devout Christian. Let us read the text of the colophon.⁶⁷

(Fol. 89^r [90^r]) Բայց գրեցաւ սայ ի թարեթ ի դաովագայի սնջայտանս, շնորհիւ և ողորմութեամբ ամենաարինեալ տիրամար սուրբ աստուածածնին, ձեռամբ մեղապարտ և դատապարտեալ ոգոյ նուաստ գրչի Ամիրիս՝ մականուն Փօլին քալայմաչի⁶⁸ Յուսուփայ⁶⁹ որդուս Միթոռի թոռն՝ ի վայելումն անձին իւրոյ և յիշատակ հոգոյ իւրոյ և ծնողացն իւրոյ: Տէր Յիսուս Քրիստոս Աստուած բոլ(fol. 89^v [90^v])որից համայնից ողորմեսցի մեզ և ձեզ ի կարդացողին և լսողին և այնցիկ որք հաւ[ատով] զմեզ ի Քրիստոս յիշեն: Քրիստոս զիրմանքն յիշէ իւր արքայութիւնն: Ի թիվս⁷⁰ ՉՁԵ ի նալասարթի: գրեցաւ այս գիրս ամեն:⁷¹

Աղաջեմ զամենարինեւ տիրո[ւ]ի Մարիամ լիապէս ծնողտ աստուծոյ դուստր արքայի երկնայտրի մայր որբոց փառատր մխիթարութե[ա]նց վշտացելոց ճանապարհ մոլորելոց

⁶⁵ Published: Poturean 1905, 9–10 (lacks supplication of the Theotokos); K'iwrtean 1953, 162 (based on Poturean); Srapteryan 1962, 111 (based on Poturean); Čemčemean 1996, col. 788 (gives colophon and supplication); Step'anyan 2005, 235 (based on K'iwrtean); HJH, 262–263 (based on Čemčemean, but with some differences); cf. van Lint 1996, 386–387 with translation; van Lint 2019, 131–132, translation only. Abbreviations are resolved and missing letters added between square brackets; signs between {} need to be deleted. V103 is the only instance of this colophon.

⁶⁶ On quires and missing folios, Section 2.

⁶⁷ The text given here is based on van Lint 1996, 386 with corrections upon autopsy of V103 in April 2024.

⁶⁸ Čemčemean 1996, col. 788 գրչի Ամիրիս՝ մականուն Փօլին քալայմաչ ի Յուսիփայ որդուս մի թոռի թոռն.

⁶⁹ van Lint 1996, 386 has Յուսիփայ, which must be a typo.

⁷⁰ Čemčemean 1996, col. 788 թվս.

⁷¹ Čemčemean 1996, col. 788 ամեն.

փրկութեան յուսացելոցս ի քեզ: Կոյս գոլով յառաջ քան զծնունդն: Կոյս ծնընդութեամբն և կոյս յետ ծնընդեանն: Աղբուր ողորմութեան և փրկութեան շնորհացաւիղ, (fol. 90^r [91^r]) [աղբ]ուր գթութեան և քաղցրութեան, աղբուր մխիթարութեան և քաղցրութեան, աղբուր շնորհող և մխիթարիչ մեղատուրաց: Բարեխաւսեայ վասն իմ մեղատուրիս քում ծառայիցս և Ամիրիս առաջի որդոյ թո միաձնի, զի յիրով ողորմութեամբն և քոյին բարեխաւսութեամբս շնոր(շ)իկեցէ ինձ ողորմելոյս ժամանակ առաջ քան զաւր վախճանի իմոյ որպէսզի մաքուր զղճման և ճշմարիտ խաւստովանութեամբ և լիակատար ապաշխարութեամբ քավեցից զմեզս իմ և ամենայն հաւատացելոց կենդան[ե]աց և ն[ն]ջեցելոց կեանք և հանգիստ յաւիտենից ամէն: Փառք և երկր(ր)պագութիւն հաւր և որդւոյ և սուրբ հոգոյն:

(Fol. 89^r [90^r]) But this was written in Tabriz, in the Sanjarān gate through the grace and the mercy of the all-blessed Mother of the Lord, the Holy Mother of God, by the hands of the guilty and condemned ignoble soul, the copyist Amir, whose nickname is P'ōlin, son of Yusup' Kalaymač'i,⁷² grandson of Mit'ōr, for his own convenience and for the memory of his soul and of his parents. May the Lord Jesus Christ, God of all (fol. 89^r [90^r]) and everything, have mercy on us and on you who read or hear this and on those who remember us in faith before Christ. Christ remembers his own in his kingdom. In the year 1336, in [the month of] Navasart,⁷³ this book was written, amen.

I supplicate you, most blessed Lady Mary, you perfect parent of God, daughter of the Heavenly King, mother glorified⁷⁴ by orphans, road of consolations for the afflicted, for those who have strayed from salvation and put their hopes in you. Virgin before giving birth, virgin in birth and virgin after birth. (Fol. 90^r [91^r]) Source of mercy and provider of salvation, source of compassion and sweetness, source of consolation and sweetness, source of granting pardon to, and comforter of sinners. Intercede on behalf of me, sinner, of your servants, and of me, Amir, before your only-begotten Son, that through his compassion and your intercession, He may grant me, miserable one, time before the day of my end, so that I, in pure contrition and sincere confession and complete repentance, may atone for my sins and [I supplicate] for all believers, living and deceased, eternal life and peace, amen. Glory and worship to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amir P'ōlin copied the manuscript in Tabriz. This is important information. We learn also that this took place in 1336, when the Mongol Ilkhanid empire was losing its power and integrity. Until then, Amir P'ōlin had known no other geopolitical situation. Tabriz had been

⁷² One may also read: 'Amir, nicknamed P'ōlin Kalaymač'i – the son of Yusuf, the grandson of Mit'ōr'. Potureau writes Փօլին Քալայմաչ ի Յուսիփայ որդու, deciding in favour for the attribution of Քալայմաչ to Amir, by making it part of his nickname.

⁷³ Navasart was the first month of the Armenian calendar, according to the fixed calendar. It ran from 11 August to 9 September. It also may mean New Year's day, the first day of the month Navasart, 11 August (HAB III, 435–436; Russell 1987a, 50 and 68, n. 97).

⁷⁴ փառաւոր for փառաւորեալ, see NBHL II, 934.

a cultural and economic centre and its transformation from a city on the political periphery of the late Abbasid caliphate into a major political, economic and cultural centre of the Mongol and Timurid periods, [...] contributed significantly to the cultural and intellectual achievements of this time.⁷⁵

While Christians, among them Armenians, had relatively thrived under the Ilkhans, this changed after Ghazan Khan's ascendancy to the throne in 1295 and his conversion to Islam, when persecutions increased. Nevertheless there was still a Christian presence – both ecclesiastical and mercantile – in Tabriz in the 1330s, and Tabriz remained an important trading hub until the disintegration of the Ilkhanate after 1335.⁷⁶ Johannes Preiser-Kapeller has shown the significance of Tabriz as locality on the mental map of thirteenth–fourteenth-century merchants of various Christian denominations (Oriental, among these Armenian, as well as Greek Orthodox and Catholics) and the apocalyptic images associated with the city after gaining prominence in the Ilkhanid period.⁷⁷ Hakob Manandian explored the trading route from Ayas (Layazzo) in Cilicia to Tabriz via Sivas, Erzinka and Erzurum.⁷⁸ To this may now be added Thomas Sinclair's minutely researched and carefully argued study of this route, taking as its point of departure the description made in 1330 at the latest by the fourteenth-century traveller and banker Pegolotti.⁷⁹ The route had its heyday in Amir P'ōlin's lifetime. The location of both Erzinka and Tabriz on an important international trade route may explain why Amir P'ōlin copied the manuscript in Tabriz.

Amir P'ōlin provides us with further information, indicating the precise locale in Tabriz where he had copied the manuscript – or at the very least the colophon, although the writing on the folios concerned is continuous and does not give the impression of having been interrupted (see Fig. 5): *i darvazayi snjayrans*, an Armenian rendering of the Persian *darvāza-yi sanjarān*, 'in the Sanjarān gate', which I take to mean 'in the Sanjarān gate-house'.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Pfeiffer 2014b, 4.

⁷⁶ On Tabriz's significance as intellectual, cultural, and Islamic religious centre, Pfeiffer (ed.) 2014a.

⁷⁷ Preiser-Kapeller 2014.

⁷⁸ Manandian 1965, 171–185.

⁷⁹ Sinclair 2020.

⁸⁰ Armenian ի դարվազայի սնջայրանս for Persian *darvāza-yi sanjarān* 'in the Sanjarān gate'. *Darvāza* 'a.o: gate; square; a market-place, or exchange where merchants meet', Steingass 1975, 514a; *sanjar* 'prince, emperor, king', Steingass 1975, 700b, but here a geographical indicator.

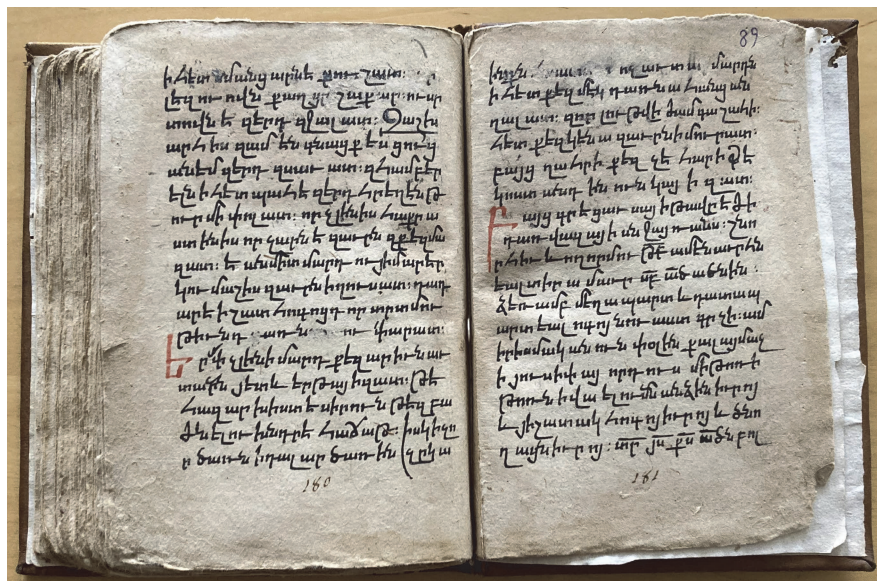


Fig. 5: V103, fols 88^v–89^r [89^v–90^r]; final part of poem 22 and opening part of the colophon.

The Sanjarān quarter was located in the north-west of the city, within the city walls that were to become an inner wall in Ilkhanid times, when the city was one of their capitals and expanded rapidly requiring much larger walls. The old city wall, rebuilt in 1043 after the earthquake of the previous year, had ten gates, of which the Sanjarān gate was one, opening onto the road to Erzurum and Sivas, the ‘Rome Road’, as well as the Šām road, leading to Aleppo via Marand, Van, and Diyarbakir.⁸¹ The former road was part of the Ayaz-Tabriz itinerary on which

81 ‘Rome Road’: more precisely ‘Rum Road’. Jafarpour Nasser 2018, 43, with map on p. 45, fig. 2; English language map (fig. 1 on p. 4) in ‘Muslim Pious Foundations as Urban Nucleuses during the Sustainable Development of Ilkhanid Cities: A Case Study of Tabriz’, A. Mohammad Moradi, Professor of Iran University of Science and Technology, Architecture and Urbanism Faculty, m_moradi@iust.ac.ir; Sanaz Jafarpour Nasser, MSc Student of Iran University of Science and Technology, Architecture and Urbanism Faculty, s.jafarpour.n@gmail.com. Paper reference number: 213, 0106-689. Name of the presenter: Sanaz Jafarpour Nasser. 5th Symposium on Advances in Science & Technology 2011, Khavaran Higher-education Institute, Mashhad, Iran, 12–14 May, PDF available from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336775860_Muslim_Pious_Foundations_as_Urban_Nucleuse_s_during_the_Sustainable_Development_of_Ilkhanid_Cities_a_case_study_of_Tabriz>. There is contemporary confirmation of the name of this gate in the Rab’-e Rašīdī endowment charter of 1309, describ-

Erznka lay.⁸² In Ilkhanid times, the outer walls of the much expanded city would have afforded access through the *darvāz-e hrūm* ‘the Rome gate’, i.e. the gate to Anatolia and Asia Minor.⁸³ The Sanjarān gate would then be reached inside the city. If Amir P’ōlin came from Erznka, which we find more likely than that he was an inhabitant of Tabriz, his choice of location is no surprise from a geographical point of view.

That choice is significant also for another reason. Amir P’ōlin is not copying the manuscript in a church or monastery, but in a more secular location, one which afforded not only entrance to, in this case the old city, but which, given the word’s meaning, may have comprised locations for mercantile transactions.⁸⁴ Amir P’ōlin might have copied the manuscript, or might have had it copied in a clerical environment had he so desired, since there were Armenian churches in Tabriz at the time, but, apparently, he didn’t. We have a number of manuscripts that were copied in the city between 1331 and 1345.⁸⁵ Of the manuscripts listed, several were copied ‘under the protection of the Holy Theotokos Mother of Light and the Holy Soldier Saint Sargis and his Son Martiros’ as one formula states – similar formulae occur in other manuscripts locally copied at the time.⁸⁶ What is clear is that none mentions the Sanjarān gate. It is possible that Amir P’ōlin was a merchant, or that he had helped escort a caravan with a group of younger members of the brotherhood. However, on the basis of our current knowledge, we have no way of determining whether the brotherhood was still active in 1336, and if so, whether Amir P’ōlin was one of its leading members. The difficulties men-

ing Rašīd al-Dīn’s foundation for the large quarter that was to contain his tomb, and in Hamd-Allāh Mostawfī’s *Nozhat-al-qolub* (740 AH / 1339 CE); Jafarpour Nasser 2018, 40 and 41, Table 1.

⁸² Sinclair 2020.

⁸³ Maps (p. 6, fig. 2) in Mohammad Moradi’s and Jafarpour Nasser’s paper mentioned above (n. 82), giving ‘Rome gate’ for what must have been called the ‘Rum gate’, and Jafarpour Nasser 2018, 45, fig. 3.

⁸⁴ Cf. n. 81 above.

⁸⁵ HJH, 105, no. 539 (BZA470), containing the homilies of Bartholomeus of Bologna, copied in a Catholic Church in 1331; Nersessian 1986, 7–8, LOB Or. 5304; HJH, 194, no. 604 (M78), fragments of a New Testament (1334), with second colophon by editor, HJH, 420, no. 783 (1345); HJH, 241, no. 628 (M2776), a tractate in verse against the dyophysites (1335); HJH, 259, no. 645 (M5968), gospels, 1336; HJH, 261, no. 646 (M5019), gospels, 1336; HJH, 298, no. 673 (M212), gospels, 1337; HJH, 418, no. 781 (M731), a collection of dogmatic works (1345). Several of these manuscripts are discussed in Martirosyan 1982: M78, M212, M2776, M5019, M5968. The bibliography for these manuscripts, especially M212 is ever expanding.

⁸⁶ HJH, 194, (M78, fols 289^v–290^r) in the previous note. A similar formula, leaving out the military Saint Martiros, occurs in M5968 (fol. 243^v), while M212 (fol. 310^r) has an even briefer formula ‘under the protection of the Holy Mother of Light and Saint Sargis the General’.

tioned in the poems make it more likely than not that he was in Tabriz in matters other than those concerning the brotherhood, possibly including trade.

Why he would copy Kostandin's poems together with Yovhannēs's homily in Tabriz, rather than Erzinka, is unclear. Did he come across (one of) the texts in Tabriz rather than Erzinka? We also do not know whether the choice to combine the two was Amir's or was present in his *Vorlage*. It is tantalising to think that he may have had the poet's own manuscript in front of him (of which we know nothing), which may have contained also the poems not present in Amir P'ōlin's copy.

The colophon then mentions 'the grace and the mercy of the Mother of the Lord, the Holy Mother of God' as the power by which the copying of the manuscript was completed. This is somewhat significant, as it does not mention any of the members of the Trinity but highlights the Theotokos instead. It does not fully tally with the formulae of other manuscripts copied in this period in Tabriz, but shares the prominence they accord to Mary. Following this, Amir P'ōlin mentions himself in the self-denigrating terms that are usual for scribes of Armenian colophons, 'by the hands of the guilty and condemned ignoble soul', showing his acquaintance with the style of such texts. He then gives his name and pedigree.

The name Amir P'ōlin consists of two elements. Amir derives from Arabic *'amīr*, meaning 'prince', which literally is 'he who commands, gives orders'. As male name it is attested in Armenia since the thirteenth–fourteenth century. It may be used as an honorific or a title.⁸⁷ The second part, P'ōlin is unclear in meaning. Its sole attestation is in the manuscript under investigation. Ačariyan calls it a 'highly unusual name'.⁸⁸ An unsubstantiated guess might derive it from Paulin, a name that appears in England after the Norman conquest and which in a further unconfirmed hypothesis might be derived from Paulinus – but there is no proof of this. This would presuppose a Norman–French connection, probably through Catholic missionaries. However, Amir P'ōlin clearly subscribes to the Armenian Church's tenets and knows Armenian well. His standard of copying is by no means worse than that of many copyists of undisputable Armenian descent. Non-Armenian progeny might, but need not, find support in the names of his father and grandfather: Yusup' and Mit'or'. The former, of Arabic origin, is readily recognisable and was in use among Armenians 'from the twelfth until the eighteenth century'.⁸⁹ It may represent a variant of Yovsep' (Joseph). The name Mit'or' does

⁸⁷ Thus Ačariyan 1972a, 119.

⁸⁸ Ačariyan 1972a, 138.

⁸⁹ Ačariyan 1972b, 737. It occurs in a colophon in 1414 under the name Yusuf (Xaç'ikean 1955, 168, no. 173, M2063, Grigor Tat'ewac'i's book of homilies), and in the name Kara-Yusuf (Xaç'ikean 1967,

not occur in Ačāryan's *Dictionary of Personal Names* – and seemed so unusual to Father Čemčemean, the author of the *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of the Mekhitarists' Library in Venice*, that he read մի թոռի թոռն (mi t'ori t'orn), 'the grandson of a grandson', which seems devoid of meaning, instead of Միթոռի թոռն (Mit'ori toṛn), 'the grandson of Mit'or', the reading of Poturean, followed by K'iwrtēan and Srāpyan.⁹⁰ Čemčemean's reading was adopted also by the editors of the volume of colophons written between 1326 and 1350.⁹¹ However, the name occurs in the form Mit'or (with *r*, not *ṛ*) in two thirteenth-century colophons.⁹² The name contains a further term: բալայմաչի (*k'alaymac'i*), which so far resists translation or explanation.

The next phrase is self-explanatory: 'for his own pleasure'; Amir P'ōlin still valued Kostandin's poetry, and he clearly also valued Yovhannēs's homily. The colophon further cements the function of the manuscript as a spiritual *vademecum* and as a testimony to brotherhood literature, albeit possibly quite apart from that organisation's actual status. The next phrase places the act of copying in the religious realm, an act of piety, and is a staple phrase in Armenian colophons: 'and for the memory of his soul and of his parents'.

Further usual colophonic prayers follow, including the reciprocity of grace befalling those who pray for grace for the copyist and his readers and audience. The precise date and 'amen' end the formal part of the colophon.

The invocation of Mary provides further insight in Amir P'ōlin's intentions. It is some forty words longer than the colophon proper. Adoration of the Theotokos and daughter of the Heavenly King is given free rein here. One sentence is particularly striking. Amir P'ōlin wants to devote the remainder of his life to sincere contrition, confession, and repentance. This sentence places even greater importance on the contents of the manuscript. He will have envisaged it as an instrument through which repentance might ensue. The injunctions Yovhannēs Erznkac'i laid down in his homily, the spiritual depth of Kostandin's joyous poetry, and the sobering advice in his didactic ones, summed up in his poem dedicated to Amir P'ōlin himself, were instruments to prepare the copyist for his final journeys, here on earth, and then beyond.

654), under the name Yusup' with reference to Kara-Yusuf, which remains unidentified outside the index of the book.

⁹⁰ Poturean 1905, 10; K'iwrtēan 1953, 162; Srāpyan 1962, 111.

⁹¹ Čemčemean 1996, col. 788, followed in HJH, 262.

⁹² Mat'evosyan 1984, 165, no. 120, V129, fol. 138^v, gospels, dated 1230; Mat'evosyan 1984, 842, no. 678, M8179, synaxarion, dated 1298.

7 Conclusion

Manuscript V103 presents an important witness about the Erznka brotherhood and three of its protagonists, the theologian Yovhannēs Erznkac'i, the poet Kostandin Erznkac'i and a potential *manktawag* or leader of it, the copyist (and merchant?) Amir P'ōlin. If homily and poems were copied from an exemplar in which both were present, we have the beginning of a tradition of the reception of brotherhood literature. If it was Amir's deliberate act to combine the text, he represents a unique witness to it (as it is, that is the situation), and underlines his seriousness in interpreting these brotherhood texts as guidelines for his Christian life, at a point when he had come to a conversion involving contrition, confession and repentance. That makes it a unique personal document of a fourteenth-century layman.

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Abbreviations

References to Armenian manuscripts follow Coulie 2020, adopted by the Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes and increasingly representing the standard in Armenian studies. The sigla used in this contribution are the following:

BZA = Bzommar (Lebanon), Zmmaru Patriark'akan Miabanut'iwn.

J = Jerusalem, Aṙak'elakan At'oṙ Srboc' Yakovbeanc'.

LOB = London, British Library.

M = Yerevan, Matenadaran [Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts].

V = Venice, Biblioteca dei Mechitaristi di S. Lazzaro degli Armeni.

AAP = Michael E. Stone, Dickran Kouymjian and Henning M. Lehman, *Album of Armenian Paleography*, Århus: University of Aarhus Press, 2000.

- HAB III = Hrač'ya Ačařyan, *Հայերեն արմատական բառարան* [Etymological Dictionary of the Armenian Language], vol. 3, Yerevan: Erevani Petakan Hamalsarani Hratarakč'ut'yun, 1977.
- HJH = Lewon Xač'ikean, Artašes Mat'evosyan and Arp'enik Łazarosyan, *Հայերեն ձեռագրերի հիշատակարաններ*, ԺԴ դար. Մասն Բ (1326–1350 թթ) [Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts (1326–1350)], Yerevan: Matenadaran, 2020.
- NBHL II = Gabriël Awetik'eian, Xač'atur Siwrmēlean and Mkrtič' Awgerean, *Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազեան Լեզուի. Հատոր Երկրորդ Հ-Ֆ* [New Dictionary of the Armenian Language, vol. 2: H–F], Venice: San Lazzaro, 1837.

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