

Siranuysh Araqelyan

ON A KHACHKAR (STONE CROSS) INSCRIPTION IN ARINJ

Keywords- Khachkar, inscription, sculptor, memorial.

Arinj village was historically part of Kotayk' province, Ayrarat region of Armenia (today's Abovyan district of Kotayk' marz). The architectural monuments and khachkars (stone crosses) found in Arinj indicate that it was a center of education and culture in X-XII centuries¹. Around 180 khachkars dating back to different centuries are found here.

Since XII century the khachkar becomes a key element in the context of medieval cemetery, and among other functions, it had a memorial function. The khachkar is situated in the eastern side of the gravestone, at the feet of the deceased. The memorial function of the khachkar is realized through the cross, the writing and the image². In khachkar inscriptions the cross stands as the Holy Sign, signifying salvation of souls. It should be noted that in the Middle Ages due to the phenomenon of khachkars, the folk worship of stones has been preserved, acquiring a Christian symbolism. It is due to this fact that the stone monument has started to designate persons and events, and has become the best way to preserve their memory. The cross is also a sign of the believer's identity directed at the last days, and it is believed that at the time of the Second Coming the cross will accompany the believer towards the real cross rising from the East³.

Khachkar inscriptions are canonical. In them the commissioner usually denotes the date, the name of the deceased, as well as his/her own name and those of his/her children or parents, asks for their longevity and for salvation of their souls, and also asks readers to be remembered in their prayers. That is, the preservation of the name is rated highly here, and the name is submitted to the khachkar, which is meant to preserve it until the last days, since the khachkar too acts as a book of life, which bears the the writing of the name and the image. This is the reason for the anxiety lest the name should be deleted, in relation to which there is both a request and a curse: "I request that that great evil not be done. And if it is worth writing, write your name in another place instead of deleting the name or the writing in the first place. And the one who dares and deletes this, let that one's name be deleted from the book of life, whoever he/she is" (Աղաչեմ մի գործել զչարդ այդ մեծ: Ապա եթե արժան է գրելոյ, գրեսցէ զիւրն անուն յայլում տեղուջ, եւ զանաջնոյն մի ջնջեսցէ անուն կամ գիր: Եւ որ յայս յանդգնի եւ ջնջէ, ինքն ջնջի ի կենաց գրոյն՝ թէ որ եւ իցէ). Our study is devoted to inscriptions on khachkars, in particular, to the the inscription on one of the group khachkars in the northern part of the cemetery Arinj, approximately in its center. The principle of burying members of the same kin close to one another, which was clearly in force in the Middle Ages, has led to the emergence of group khachkars in cemeteries. Thus, several khachkars were erected side by side, sometimes even on a common pedestal. The graveyard under discussion consists of four crosses erected on a single pedestal, only the first of which bears an inscription, and is dated by the year 1206. This inscription, along with a number of other khachkar inscriptions in Arinj, has been studied by Rowben Gasparyan⁴, as well as by Samvel Karapetyan in his booklet⁵. The inscription, as several other inscriptions on khachkars in Arinj, was written both in erkatagir and in šelagir. The inscriptions is hard to read in places due to the damage of the khachkar. Examining the printed material and comparing it with the original inscription on the khachkar, I would like to provide some clarifications. Through a comparative examination of the printed

¹ Գասպարեան Ռ., Միջնադարեան Առինջ գիւղը եւ նրա վիմական յուշարձանները /Հանդէս ամսօրեայ, Վիեննա-Երևան, 2005, Gasparyan R., The village Arinj and its lapidary monuments, Handes amsoreay, Vienna-Yerevan, 2005, p. 314.

² Պետրոսյան Հ., Խաչքարը և հիշատակի միջնադարյան ընկալումը /Հայոց պատմության հարցեր: Գիտական հոդվածների ժողովածու, թիվ 6, Ե., 2005, Petrosyan H., Khachkar and the Medieval Perception of Memory / Hayoc patmowtyan harcer: Gitakan hodvacneri žołovacow №6, Yerevan, 2005, pp. 195-215.

³ Պետրոսյան Հ., *ibid.*, p. 199.

⁴ Gasparéan R., *ibid.*, pp. 324-325.

⁵ Կարապետյան Ս., Առինջ գյուղի պատմական հուշարձանները, Ե., 2015, Karapetyan S., Historical monuments of the village Arinj, Yerevan, 2015, p. 12.

material and the original inscription, I will try to verify in-depth and to complete the textual reading of the inscription. I copy here the full text of the inscription published in "Handes amsorea". "Jesus Christ year 655 (ՈԾԵ) /I, Avetis, with much hope erected the geravra /holy sign intercession of the soul of Nrc̄əs, my spouse and my children ĒĒĒĒsirws git sa ksi /Grigory and Mxitar/ remember the one who created these, I plead" (Հիսուս Թրիստոն[u] ՈԾ Ե [Է] (1209) թիվ / Ես Աւետիս/ մեծ հուսով / կան[գն]եցի զգերավրա /Սուր Եշանիս բարե[խ]աւսո[ւ]թ[եա]ն հոգո Նրճրսի ամ/ուսնո իմն եւ զաւակաց իմոց սիրու գիթ սա քս ի /զգրիգոր ու զՄխիթարա/ յիշեսջիք զկազմող զոնոյ անցա աղաչեմ:).

The comparative study shows that the year is clearly 655 (ՈԾԵ) and the letter «Ե» that R. Gasparyan mentioned in the quotation marks is unreasonable, so in terms of the date we do not get 1209, which would be wrong even in case of «Ե», but instead 1206 (ՈԾԵ = 655, to which we add 551(the first year of Armenian date), which amounts to 1206). We have an identical situation here: «Ես Աւետիս /մեծ յուսով /կան[գն]եցին» "I, Avetis, with much hope erected" but the following the word «զգերավրա» [zgeravra], should be instead «զերավրա» "with perfect splendour, excellent", because we do not find the word «զգերավրա» [zgeravra] anywhere, including the dictionaries. Therefore it should be «զերավրա», which we find in the "New Dictionary of the Armenian Language", and which means "with perfect splendour, excellent"¹. It is in perfect accordance with the content of the inscription. Probably the small damage in that part of the slab was the reason why Gasparyan read «զ» for «զ», overlooking the fact that according to the orthography of Grabar (Classical Armenian) the letter «զ» is used inside the word only after the letter «ո», whereas after the letter «ս» the letter «ւ» is used, which is vividly manifested in several words within the very same inscription. The following passage in the printed version, «Սուրբ Եշանիս բարե[խ]աւսո[ւ]թ[եա]նը» "the intercession of the Holy Sign", contains an obvious mistake both in terms of syntax and in comparison with the original. Within the original inscription we read rather clearly: Սուրբ Եշանս ի բարեխաւսութիւնը "Holy Sign for the intercession", and not Սուրբ Եշանիս բարե[խ]աւսո[ւ]թ[եա]ն, "the intercession of the Holy Sign", as read by Gasparyan. In the passage where the names are mentioned Gasparyan has read the following hard-to-read text: «զաւակաց իմոց սիրաւս գիթ սա քս ի /զգրիգոր եւ զՄխիթարա /» "my children . . . siraws git sa ks i /zGrigor ew zMxitar". As we see from the text, only the names of the last two, those of Grigor and Mkhitar are legible. In the original inscription, though not so clearly, but still the following can be read: «զաւակաց իմոց Տիրավագի եւ Սարքսի» "my children Tirawagi ew Sarksi]. We find the name Tirawag in the Dictionary of Armenian Proper Names, according to Hr. Ačaryan's etymology, it is a male name, consisting of the Armenian words տէր [lord] and ավագ [elder]². This name is mentioned in the Armenian literature starting with XIII century and is found also in the form of Տէրավագ [Teravag]. The rest of the lines that precede this, were transcribed correctly, and therefore I will not discuss them here. In the last passage Gasparyan reads «յիշեսջիք զկազմող զոնոյ» [yišesjik zkazmoł ztoł]. In the original there is no such word as «զոնոյ» [ztoł], and one can clearly read: «զկազմող անցա» [zkazmoł soca]; also the word «աղաւթս» [aławts], which precedes the word «յիշեսջիք» [yišesjik] and is hard to discern, is omitted.

Following the examination of the comparative text published in «Հանդէս ամսօրեա» [Handès amsôrea], let us discuss the text of the inscription published in the booklet «Առինջ գյուղի պատմական հուշարձանները» [Ařinj gyowłi patmakan howšarjannerə]: Jesus Christ. the year OCE (1206), I, Avetis, with much hope erected the excellent Holy Sign for the soul of my spouse Nrc̄əs and my children Tiravag and Sark'is. Remember in your prayers Grigor and Mxit'ar, the one who created these, I plead. (Յիսուս Թրիստոն ՈԾԷ (1208) [Ժ], |Ես՝ Աւետիս, | մեծ յուսով կան(գն)եցի զգերավրա (թերևս՝ գետարգելա) | սուրբ նշանս ի բարեխաւսութիւն հոգո՝ Նրճրսի ամ/ուսնո իմն եւ զաւակաց իմոց՝ Տիրավագի եւ Սարքսի, | զգրիգոր եւ զՄխիթար, | աղաւթս | յիշել զիմ զկազմող անցա զիս աղաչեմ). In comparison with the original text, in the

¹ Նոր բառգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի, տպարան ի Սրբոյն Ղազարու, Վենետիկ, 1836, New Dictionary of the Armenian Language printed in San Lazzaro, Venice, 1836, p. 544.

² Անտեան Հ., Հայոց Անձնանունների Բառարան, հ. Ե, Երևան, 1962, Ačaryan H., Hayoc Andznanownneri Bařaran, Vol. V, Yerevan, 1962, (Dictionary of Armenian Proper Names), p. 166.

transcription of this inscription too we find some inaccuracies. The letter «ժ» [ž] at the beginning, set in parentheses by S. Karapetyan, is clearly read in the original as «թ», standing for the year and following the «ՌԾԵ» [OCE], which marks the year in Armenian letters. Then, beside the word which is read as «զգերալրա» [zgeralra], Karapetyan has written «զետարգելա» [getargela] in parentheses, thinking that the khachkar might be connected with the Getargel sacred place nearby. But in the original inscription we read quite clearly «զերալրա» [geralra], as mentioned above. Unlike Gasparyan, Karapetyan reads the name «Տիրավագ» [Tiravag] and the word «յաղալթս» “in the prayers” near the end, but instead of «յիշեսյիք» [yišesjik], Karapetyan reads «յիշել զիմ» [yišel zim], which is inconsistent in terms of syntax, and in the original inscription too one can clearly read «յիշեսյիք» [yišesjik]. In terms of textual completeness, reading «զիս» [zis] before the word «աղաչեն» [ałačem] would also be inconsistent. This part of the original inscription is damaged and renders the written word illegible, and, in terms of content, the reading of «զիս» [zis], as suggested by Karapetyan, is inconsistent.

Following the comparative review of the printed materials and the original inscription, the full reading of the text will be as follows, taking into consideration punctuation marks, which are important in terms of content but are missing from the inscription, as well as the inscriptional text that is outside the main text and that has been added by the khachkar-maker (the sculptor of the khachkar) and which often confuses the reader: Jesus Christ: year OCE (1206), / I Avetis / with much hope/ erected the excellent/ holy Sign for the intercession of the soul of Nrc̄əs, my spouse, and my children Tirawag ew Sarkis: ZGrigor ew zMxitar (Յս Քս: ՌԾԵ: (1206) թ., / ես Աւետիս / մեծ յուսով/ կանգնեցի զգերալրա/ սուրբ Նշանս ի բարեխաւսութիւն հոգո Նրճրաի՝ ամ/ուսնն իմն եւ զաւակաց իմոց՝ Տիրավագի եւ Սարքսի: ԶԳրիգոր եւ զՄխիթար [յաղալթս]ւ/ յիշեսյիք. զկազմող սոցա ... աղաչեն). Now we can clearly infer from the text the content of the inscription, which is as follows: "Jesus Christ. In the year 1206 I, Avetis, with much hope erected the excellent Holy Sign for (the intercession for) the soul of my spouse Narčəs and my children Tiravag and Sarkis. Remember in your prayers Grigor and Mxitar, the maker of these, I request. "

In khachkar inscriptions there sometimes occur inscriptions where the name of the khachkar sculptor is mentioned. We find the name of the khachkar maker either outside the text of the main inscription, within the ornamental patterns on the borders or in some other inconspicuous spot. The sculptor asks for one thing, by mentioning his name: to be remembered. This is mainly due to the medieval perception of memory. We find the first mention of the name of khachkar maker in 9th century (on the khachkar of 886 in Kečowt). We find the majority of the names of khachkar makers on the khachkars of 13th, and 16-17th cc., since these were the periods when khachkars were most widely spread¹.

In their inscriptions, khachkar makers call themselves as վարդապետ “master”, գծող “one who draws”, հորիմող “one who composes”, կազմող “one who composes”, քարգործ “stone-worker” etc. Most of them were laymen, but some of them were from the clergy, including several bishops.

This proves that creating a khachkar was quite an honorable work². Referring to the khachkar inscription under discussion, let us note that in the text of the inscription, in addition to the name of the patron of the khachkar and those of his family members, khachkar makers have also mentioned their own names: Grigor and Mkhitar. There is no doubt that in addition to the khachkars we discussed, these masters have created the ones erected to the north-east, which, as one can see from the inscription, were commissioned by Barsegh the priest and his son Step'anos in 1220. Although the khachkar sculptors' names are not mentioned in on these khachkars, the obvious identity of the composition suggests that they too were carried out by these sculptors. Another khachkar created by Grigor stands slightly to the north of the south entrance to Ařinj cemetery. The only inscription on the khachkar is below the cross. It reads: «ԶԳրգոր կազմողս եւ ծնողս

¹ Պետրոսյան Հ., Խաչքար: Ծագումը, գործառույթը, պատկերագրությունը, իմաստաբանությունը, Ե., 2008, Petrosyan H., Yerevan, The Khachkar: Origins, Function, Iconography, Semantics 2008, p. 241.

² Petrosyan H., *ibid.*, p. 243.

հիշեցէք» “please remember Grigor the composer and his parents”. There are two or three more inscriptions on the khachkars in Añinj, where Grigor the sculptor's name is mentioned. Still, the composition and the year of these khachkars suggest that this Grigor lived and worked in XV c. and is not related to the sculptor mentioned in the above inscription (XIIIc.).

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that following a bicentennial break, the art of making khachkars was revived since the 60's of XX century and still stands as a vibrant and multifunctional manifestation of Armenian culture. It has crystallized during the centuries and has become one of the symbols of Armenian identity. As H. Petrosyan puts it, "... according to the contemporary general perceptions, each khachkar is unique in itself, even the separate ornaments are unique, and unfathomable is its composition"¹.

Սիրանույշ Առաքելյան, Առինջի խաչքարային մի արձանագրության շուրջ,- խաչքարային արձանագրությունները կանոնիկ են, ուր հիմնականում խաչքար կանգնեցնողը հիշատակում է կանգնեցման թվականը, ննջեցյալի անունը, նաև իր և իր զավակների կամ ծնողների անունները, հայցում նրանց արևշատությունը և հոգիների փրկությունը, ինչպես և կարդացողներից հայցում է հիշել իրենց աղոթքներում: Մեր կողմից քննարկվող նյութը վերաբերում է Առինջի գերեզմանոցի հյուսիսային մասում, գրեթե կենտրոնում գտնվող խմբային խաչքարերից մեկի արձանագրությանը: Այս արձանագրությանը, ի թիվս Առինջի մի շարք խաչքարերի արձանագրությունների, անդրադարձել են Ռուբեն Գասպարյանը «Հանդես ամսօրեայի» 2005թ. համարում և Սամվել Կարապետյանը իր «Առինջ գյուղի պատմական հուշարձանները» գրքույկում: Տպագիր նյութերը համեմատական քննության առնելով բնագրային արձանագրության հետ՝ փորձել ենք հիմնավոր կերպով ձշտել և ամբողջական դարձնել արձանագրության տեքստային ընթերցումը:

Բանալի բառեր- խաչքար, արձանագրություն, վարպետ, հիշատակ

Сирануиш Аракелян, Об одном хачкарном протоколе села Ариндж,- Хачкарные протоколы каноничные, где в основном тот, который возводит хачкар, упоминает дату возведения, имя пакующего, а также свое имя и имена своих детей или родителей, просит о долголетию и спасении душ для них, а также просит читающих о том, чтобы они упомянули его в их молитвах. Обсужденный нами материал относится к одному протоколу из группы хачкаров, находящейся почти в центре северной части кладбища села Ариндж. О данном протоколе, в числе ряда протоколов хачкаров Аринджа, упоминали Рубен Гаспарян в номере "Андес амсореа" /ежемесячный журнал/ 2005 г. и Самвел Карапетян в своем книжке "Исторические памятники села Ариндж". Сделав сравнительный обзор печатных материалов с оригинальным протоколом, мы попытались обоснованно выяснить и дополнить текстовое чтение протокола.

Ключевые слова: Хачкар, протокол, мастер, память

¹ Petrosyan H., *ibid.*, p. 377.