

Kin and Culture

Clan, Household and Family Formation in Late Antique Armenia



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Kin and Culture: Clan, Household and Family Formation in Late Antique Armenia**Short Abstract**

The importance of Armenia's hereditary *naxarar* elite in the late antique and medieval eras has long been acknowledged by scholars, and the region's peripheral position has made these landed aristocrats a focus of academics of the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires also.

However, study of *naxarar* families has not been accompanied by dedicated scholarship concerning the nature of family itself as an institution within Armenia. The following thesis acts as a first step, examining how Armenian families formed, operated and what expectations were placed upon their members from the fifth century until the mid-seventh century CE.

The thesis argues the family was perhaps the most significant political entity in late antique Armenian life. Membership within a *naxarar* clan was more significant than official service in the Aršakuni royal court or Byzantine or Sasanian imperial administration. Indeed, monarchical and imperial courts, as well as the native Christian clerical administration, even drew on these clans to support their authority. Clan power was safeguarded from imperial interference by Armenia's geography, strategic location and probably the institution's deep integration at less prestigious (and less visible) levels of society, with clerics, lesser nobles and perhaps non-nobles all being arranged in clans. This was reinforced by the interlacing nature of the household, which incorporated individuals of various clans and social classes through marriage, service, slavery and *dayeakut'awn* and, in doing so, better embedded the family within the social framework.

Armenia is not unique in emphasising the family's place as a critical institution, and *Kin and Culture* finds substantial parallels between Armenian and Iranian practice, most notably that of the Sasanians' Parthian predecessors. However, Armenia is a particularly visible example of clan power. Analysis explicitly through the lens of family and family practices has implications for our understandings of late antique Armenian culture, society and law.

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Long Abstract

The thesis seeks to demonstrate the importance of the family in late antique Armenia and the utility of this lens as a means of examining the region. Armenia was dominated from earliest records until the Mongol invasions by the *naxarar* elite, a network of hereditary and largely autonomous noble families whose power was predicated on their control of vast, often isolated, territories of land. Other institutions, including the royal Aršakuni court, the Armenian Christian clergy and the imperial administrations of the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires, who both laid claim to regions of Armenia, relied on the prestige of these dynasties to operate effectively. The thesis both highlights this situation and intends to justify it.

Such a project builds upon previous research, which has long understood the importance of the *naxarar* and of hereditary descent to their power but has only in the last few decades begun to analyse aspects of the family itself, primarily through study of elite Armenian women. *Kin and Culture* aims to rectify this at the earliest period in which voices internal to the region become accessible, using fifth- to seventh-century CE narrative and clerical sources in concert to gain the broadest possible scope of Armenian society. This includes utilising prior studies into the place of elite Armenian women to compliment the wealth of research that concerns itself with elite men, but also extends beyond this to consider the less-studied roles played by children, slaves and non-elite free individuals in an Armenian family context.

Due to the region's liminal position on the borders of the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires, it is also necessary for *Kin and Culture* to supplement its analysis with frequent reference to sources from these empires, primarily in Greek and Middle Persian. In keeping with the general pattern found by scholarship on the region, Armenia appears heavily Iranianised and family practice accords more closely with those of the Persian Zoroastrian and Sasanian Syriac Christian communities than the Byzantine Greeks to their west. It must be stressed that this does not indicate Armenia was merely adopting Sasanian models, but rather points to a more complex interaction characterised by extensive cultural contact between Armenia and the Iranian world (particularly the Sasanians' Parthian predecessors) wherein a direct genetic link cannot be easily drawn. Furthermore, the nature of the extant Middle Persian corpora means the thesis at times must work around significant lacunae and compare Armenian material to sources from before and after the period of primary concern. Nonetheless, the extent of parallels observable between Armenian and Iranian practices

renders this comparison highly informative and focus on the institution of family especially highlights otherwise obscured features, such as the interrelation of Armenian and Iranian fosterage practices and the heavy involvement of the clergy in pre-medieval Armenian law. For the purposes of keeping the study's aims manageable, the Sasanians' Islamic successors and their interactions with and influences on the Armenians are not discussed. This is designed to prevent the thesis' focus from becoming so broad as to be unhelpful.

To render the complex institution of family in a manner that is both comprehensive and clear, the institution is separated into clan and household: anthropological terms which are used to differentiate the political identity and extended family from the co-residential domestic unit and theatre of daily production. This is necessary due to the variety of meanings contained within the term 'family' and its Armenian equivalents. Furthermore, although it is not always possible to disentangle the family's various elements, adopting such a model allows the thesis' chapters to be ordered in an intuitive and understandable way with minimal re-explanation. While this binary is artificial and itself obscures elements of lived reality, such as the family's emotional aspect or the architecture of buildings in which they resided, I find clan and household the two most necessary categories for analysis as they best fit the evidence available to historians. The clan/household binary is further intersected with binaries of man/woman, male/female and child/adult to ensure the fullest examination.

Clan and household were entangled and mutually supporting networks and the structure of the dissertation reflects this, being composed of three unequal sections that address in order the clan system, then the household reinforcing it and finally the marital institution that created the household and conferred clan membership to wives.

The first chapter examines the clan structure and assesses the ability of claims to common relation to act as a basis for accumulating privileges. It offers a broad overview to demonstrate that clans acted as the primary justification for elite authority in Armenia during the period, and that relation to these units themselves was more significant than relation to famous ancestors or adoption of official roles in royal or imperial courts. The Byzantine and Sasanian Empires and the Aršakuni Armenian monarchy did impose their own frameworks, which sometimes complicated or worked against the gender and kinship structures underpinning the power of *naxarar* families. However, these challenges were never sufficient to subsume the *naxarar*. Rather, these polities relied on clans to assert their own authority, with the Aršakuni monarchy operating in a role closer to *primus inter pares* of the *naxarar*

than a typical aristocracy prior to its dissolution in 428 CE. The episcopal structure likewise demonstrates the predominance of *naxarar* clans, with bishops appended to specific families instead of urban centres in almost all instances.

This situation must be contextualised with reference to the Iranian world, as similar clans operated throughout what had been the Parthian Empire in the Caucasus and Mesopotamia. It is therefore the visibility and power of the *naxarar* clans of Armenia, not their existence, that renders them significant. Using James C. Scott's idea of 'state repelling' geography, this survival is attributed to a mix of Armenia's topography and varied fertility. This was reinforced by its strategic position between empires and dominant local religious confession of Armenian Christianity. All these factors complicated attempts by imperial and royal forces to impose control over the entire region while simultaneously encouraging the formation of small powerbases that refused to entirely adopt either Roman or Persian identity. It is probable also that clans existed to a significant social depth. While the extant evidence renders the existence of clan organisation outside of the *naxarar* class inconclusive, analysis of Armenia's church structure and Parthian linguistic elements in Armenian give tentative support to the supposition that clans existed at every free level of society.

The thesis then discusses the household, further explaining the *naxarar* system's resilience by demonstrating how a network of households served to embed clans. Households were able to furnish clans with new members, propagate alliances, incorporate members of other clans in a single residential unit and put the claims of the clan into practice at the ground level. *Naxarar* households especially required support by slaves and individuals from other social classes and themselves imposed upon less powerful households, which reinscribed their clan's authority within society. As such, *Kin and Culture* considers households not self-sufficient, isolated fractions of a single clan, but permeable entities that integrated individuals of multiple clans through bonds of marriage, nurturing, education, protection and social prestige.

Here the study is also expanded beyond the male political realm and outlines the normative roles of men, women and children. The role of women in managing the household during male absences and in providing for education of children is discussed, alongside an overview of the access of these women to public spaces. Furthermore, the boundaries of childhood and adulthood are sketched. The age of majority for girls is less clear than it is for boys, due to female children being less frequently mentioned and subject to different

expectations when compared to their male peers. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that boys came of age at fifteen and girls between the ages of twelve and fifteen, which is broadly consistent with cross-cultural contemporary practice. The chapter then, in its final section, examines the cross-residential child-rearing practices collectively referred to as *dayeakut 'iwn* (lit. 'wet-nursing'), which was one of the ways in which children could be used to connect and move between Armenian households. *Dayeakut 'iwn* is suggested to have taken at least two distinct forms – genuine wet-nursing and guardianship for the sake of education – which may have been related and likely bear connections to the rarely-mentioned Iranian practice of *dāyagīh* (lit. 'wet-nursing') as well as wet-nursing practice elsewhere in the Caucasus. *Dayeakut 'iwn* was useful for reinforcing allegiances between clans, providing security by safeguarding heirs from danger, educating children and perhaps providing them with spouses. It is therefore a useful demonstration of the way in which the household supported the clan structure, even using individuals who were typically viewed as dependants. The chapter's focus on inter-clan bonds likewise creates a bridge linking it with the final chapter, which examines the institution of marriage.

Marriage served to create new households and render children produced in the unit legitimate. To enable this, the woman's natal clan identity was overlaid by an association with her husband's clan, but this did not entirely cut her ties to her natal clan. Armenian texts evidence at least one partial-right form of marriage wherein this transition between clans did not occur, which was practiced among the elite at least until the fourth century CE and is likely equivalent to the Zoroastrian practice of *čagar* ('auxiliary') marriage. Armenia ultimately shows a less pronounced connection to Sasanian Persia in the forms of marital union from the fifth century onwards, likely due to the influence of Christianity, which imposed heavy restrictions on marital morality and particularly the contraction of consanguineous unions, which were promoted as laudable by contemporary Zoroastrianism. Furthermore, the form of union practised as normative in Armenia is too broadly comparable to marital practice throughout the late antique world for a connection to any one specific cultural influence to be drawn for the marriage union in general. The existence of a *čagar*-style practice may simply represent Iranian influence on a pre-existing native institution or one influenced by a third party, that was not significant enough to meaningfully affect the main practice itself. Betrothal legislation similarly attests the existence of primarily native formulae, in the form of bridewealth payments and bridal abduction practices that were not recognised in Byzantine or Iranian law. This demonstrates that Armenian practice was more

than simply the result of influence from the empires around them, but represented a dialogue between inherited, influenced and native attributes.

However, the Armenian wedding ceremony does display some particularly marked signs of Iranian influence both in how it was conducted and how improper practice was treated. Here, the chapter may be viewed as a case study into what analysing the family as a field may illuminate about Armenian society more broadly. Critically, clerical officiation of the wedding ceremony's central crowning ritual was highly irregular among Christian communities in the period yet is depicted as standard practice in Armenian canons. This coincides with a greater emphasis on punitive justice in these canons, with clerics being empowered to issue fines and order beatings and execution. When taken in concert with Armenia's political situation and placed in the context of the Sasanian administration of law, I suggest that the clergy's involvement in the wedding ceremony is reflective of a monopoly on local, systematised justice caused by the absence of an embedded secular administration. Being the only institution with region-wide authority, the clergy involved themselves in secular law in a way comparable to the practices of Jewish and Christian communities in Sasanian Mesopotamia and later medieval Armenian law. The integration of this law into Armenian Christianity reflects a complex dialogue between the powerful Christian administration and their Iranianised predecessors. Such a narrative helps demonstrate the importance of involving the family in study more broadly, as it draws the eye to developments that might otherwise be overlooked.

The nature of the research is in many ways a compromise, examining a topic far too complex to be broached without a degree of generalisation and using sources that do not perfectly align in terms of periodisation, genre or cultural background. The results of this thesis then must be considered a first step, but a critical one, offering a structure to understand the Armenian family that demystifies its characteristics for an audience from a variety of academic backgrounds, places the institution within its wider socio-cultural context and hopefully lays the groundwork for profitable study of Armenian family practice in later eras. The primary focus on the family as constructed from overlapping clans and households, formed and affiliated through bonds of biological relation and fictive social kinship, demonstrates not only how noble dynasties became such a vital part of the Armenian social fabric, but also how they were able to endure and hold influence in and outside Armenian society throughout the late antique period and beyond.

Acknowledgements

Much like the maintenance of the household, the completion of this thesis would never have been possible without the guidance and support of many people both within and without the university. I would particularly like to thank my supervisors – Professors Yuhan Vevaina, Theo Van Lint and Phil Booth – for providing me with invaluable academic advice, moral support and opportunities to deepen my understanding of the field. Without regular meetings with Yuhan and Theo to monitor the thesis’ progress and discuss translation, the study would have been considerably weaker. Similarly, Phil’s advice regarding the Byzantine facet of the research and his pastoral support has been invaluable. I am especially thankful to him for his help during the Covid-19 pandemic. Further, I wish to express my gratitude to James Howard-Johnston for discussing the thesis with me at an earlier stage, as well as every student and colleague whose has contributed to my research through questions and discussions during class or at various conferences.

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Finally, it seems appropriate to end my acknowledgements by thanking my family, with whom I was accidentally isolated for two years through the pandemic. My parents and brothers have been a huge support in my research and eternally patient in listening to me expound upon the various dead-ends and contradictions I have faced along the way. I would especially like to acknowledge my twin brother, Luke, whose interest in the socially constructed nature of binaries led to many discussions that ultimately formed the spine of this thesis over the years.

Abbreviations

Bibliographical Abbreviations

- BSOAS* *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.*
- CJ* *The Codex of Justinian. A New Annotated Translation, with Parallel Latin and Greek Text*, vol. 2, trans. F.H. Blume, eds. B.W. Frier et al. (Cambridge, 2016).
- CTh* *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions: A Translation with Commentary, Glossary, and Bibliography*, eds. and trans. C. Pharr, T.S. Davidson and M.B. Pharr (Princeton, 1952).
- DABIR* *Digital Archives of Brief Notes and Iran Review.*
- DOP* *Dumbarton Oaks Papers.*
- Elr.* *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 16 vols., ed. E. Yarshater (London, 1985-2020).
- Epic Histories* P'awstos Buzandac'i, *Buzandaran Patmut'iwnc'*, in *Matenagirk' Hayoc'*, vol. 1: 5 dar, ed. Z. Ekawean (Antilias, 2003), pp. 277-428. English translation is available as *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand: (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnc')*, ed. and trans. N.G. Garsoïan (Cambridge MA, 1989). To prevent confusion the Armenian text is cited as *Epic Histories* and Nina Garsoïan's translation as *Epic Histories*, trans. Garsoïan.
- GT'* *Girk' T'lt'oc'* [*Book of Letters*], ed. Y. Izmireanc' (Tiflis, 1901).
- JAOS* *Journal of the American Oriental Studies.*
- MH* *Matenagirk' Hayoc'* [Armenian Classical Authors], 15 vols., ed. Z. Ekawean (Antilias, 2003-2010).
- MX* Movses Xorenac'i, *Patmut'iwnc' Hayoc'* in *MH* vol. 2: 5 dar, ed. Z.

- Ekawean (Antilias, 2003), pp. 1743-2122.
- MHD+A* Farraxvmart ī Vahrāmān, *Mādigān ī Hazār Dādistān*, ed. A.G. Perikhanian, trans. N.G. Garsoïan (Costa Mesa, CA, 1997). *MHD* refers to the first part, originally edited by J.J. Modi as *Mādigān-i-hazār dādistān: a photozincographed facsimile of a MS. belonging to the Mānockji Limji Hoshang Hātariâ Library in the Zarthoshti Anjuman Âtashbeharâm with an introduction*, ed. J.J. Modi (Pune, 1901). *MHDA* refers to additional material prepared by Tehmuras D. Anklesaria. *The social code of the Parsees in Sasanian times or Mādigān ī Hazār Dādistān*, ed. T.D. Anklesaria (Bombay, 1914).
- KH* Yovhannēs Awjnec‘i, *Kanonagirk‘ Hayoc‘ [Armenian Book of Canons]*, ed. V. Hakobyan, 2 vols. (Erevan, 1964-1971).
- Novels* *The Novels of Justinian: a complete annotated English translation*, 2 vols., trans. D.J.D. Miller, P. Sarris (Cambridge, 2018).
- Phl Vd.* *Wrestling with the Demons of the Pahlavi Widēwdād: Transcription, Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans. M. Moazami (Leiden, 2014).
- PRDD* *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 2 vols., ed and trans. A.V. Williams (Copenhagen, 1990).
- REA* *Rivāyat-i Hēmūt-i Ašawahistān*, ed. and trans. N. Safa-Isfehni (Cambridge, MA, 1980).
- REArm* *Revue des Études Arméniennes*.
- Sad-Dar* *Sad Dar, or The Hundred Subjects in Pahlavi Texts*, vol. 3: *Dînâ-î Maînôg Khirad, Sikand-Gûmânîg Vigâr, Sad Dar*, trans. E.W. West

(Cambridge, 1885). This refers to the *Sad-Dar Natr* (Prose *Sad-Dar*).

A recent translation of the metered *Sad-Dar* prepared by Mojdeh Pourhamzeh and abbreviated to *Şad Dar Naẓm* is included in the 6.3 – Dissertations section of my bibliography. M. Pourhamzeh, *Critical Edition and English Translation of the Şad Dar Naẓm* (MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 2021).

- Supp.ŠnŠ* *The Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest Nē-Šāyest*, ed. and trans. F.M.P Kotwal (Copenhagen, 1969).
- ŠKZ* *Die dreisprachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I an der Ka ‘ba-i Zardušt (ŠKZ)*, vol. 3.1, ed. and trans. P. Huyse (London, 1999)
- ŠnŠ* *Šāyast-nē-Šāyast: A Pahlavi Text on Religious Customs*, ed. and trans. J.C. Tavadia (Hamburg, 1930).
- Vd.* *The Zend-Avesta*, vol. 1: *Vendîdâd*, trans. J. Darmesteter (Oxford, 1895).

Languages

Arm.	Armenian	Parth.	Parthian
Av.	Avestan	Phl.	Pahlavi
Eng.	English	PIE	Proto-Indo European
Gr.	Greek	PIr.	Proto-Iranian
MP.	Middle Persian	Sogd.	Sogdian
OIr.	Old Iranian	Syr.	Syrian
OP.	Old Persian	WMIr.	West Middle Iranian

Glosses

Acc.	Accusative	Loc.	Locative	Pl.	Plural
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Transcription

For ease of use by those outside the field, all texts have been transcribed. Armenian transcription follows the Hübschmann-Meillet-Benveniste (HMB) system used in *Revue des Études Arméniennes*. Where available, works are cited from the *Matenagirk' Hayoc'*, although other editions have been used and are listed in the bibliography.

Pahlavi transcription follows MacKenzie's phonemic system.¹ Thus 'to be' is rendered *būdan* and not <YHWWN-tn'> (the Arameogram) or <bwt'n'> (the less common phonetic rendering). The current state of the field means Pahlavi transcriptional practices show significant variation. MacKenzie's system has been adopted to provide a unified model, rather than capturing each academic's differing spellings. Thus <ŠYLTA> or <p'thš'(d)> ('full-right (marriage)') is rendered *pādixšāy* and not *pātixšāy* (as Perikhanian) or *pâtakshâê* (as Bulsara).² Exact transcription from manuscript is provided in instances where words are unidentifiable.

¹ See D.N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (Abingdon, 1971), pp. ix-xviii.

² Farraxvmart ī Vahrāmān, *Mādigān ī Hazār Dādistān*, ed. A.G. Perikhanian, trans. N.G. Garsoïan (Costa Mesa, CA, 1997), p. 380; *The Laws of the Ancient Persians as found in the "Mâtikân ê Hazār Dâtastân" or "The Digest of a Thousand Points of Law"*, vol. 2, trans. S.J. Bulsara (Bombay, 1937), p. 763.

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Chapter 1 – General Introduction

1.1 – Introduction

The family as an institution was essential to Armenia during Late Antiquity. The *naxarar* elite – a network of hereditary and largely autonomous dynasties of nobles in control of vast territories of land – formed a solid base upon which other institutions – religious, royal and imperial – drew to secure power.³ These *naxarar* groups' authority and durability throughout the period resulted, in part, from long-term Iranian cultural influence. Armenia's position and topography are also significant factors, but the family's endurance cannot be understood without reference to the structures of the Armenian family itself. Individual residence units formed an interconnecting web of relations that supported and continued the existence of the larger identity groups upon which the *naxarar* social pattern depended. Through this structure, the Armenian family affected practically every observable institution in the region.

The Armenian family's significance – acting at an individual level to influence a person's social position and at a social level as a system around which institutions were structured, and power justified – renders its study of great interest to scholars of the region during Late Antiquity. Of particular interest is the insights such a study can bring to the character of the *naxarar* system. Named after the class of high nobility that dominated late antique and medieval society, the *naxarar* system has long attracted especial interest among

³ The etymology of the word *naxarar* is hotly debated. Parvaneh Pourshariati related it to Parthian **naxwa-dār* ('holder of the primacy'), although this attribution is not universally accepted. Prods Oktor Skjærvø noted the appearance of the similar *naxwār* in Syriac and late Sasanian bullae, but this seems less likely as *naxwār* was a late administrative position that does not concord with the *naxarar*. P. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: the Sasanian-Parthian confederacy and the Arab conquest of Iran* (London, 2008), p. 504; P.O. Skjærvø, 'Review: Contributions à l'histoire et la géographie historique de l'empire sassanide. *Res Orientale*, vol. 16 by Rika Gyselen', *JAOS* 129.1 (2009), p. 147. See also, R. Gyselen, 'L'administration provinciale du *naxwār* d'après les sources sigillographiques (avec une note additionnelle sur la graphie du mot *naxwār* par Ph. Huysse)', *Studia Iranica* 33.1 (2004), pp. 31-46.

scholars of the region and the fourth to seventh century is particularly well studied.⁴ While dynastic aristocracies were a fundamental part of Caucasian society, they were uncommonly powerful, vital and durable in Armenia, and the significance of the *naxarar* is difficult to overstate. The hereditary *naxarar* were at once the backbone of society and the most visible social group in literary sources, and in Cyril Toumanoff's words, 'the creative minority that set for it the pattern of behaviour and style of life.'⁵ Between the abolition of the Parthian Aršakuni dynasty in 428 CE and the coronation of Ašot I Mec as the first Bagratuni king c. 884 CE, Armenia had no higher native political authority than the *naxarar* outside the clerical establishment. So significant were the *naxarars* in the region's history that Nicholas Adontz dated the end of Armenian independence not to the fall of either royal dynasty, but rather to the destruction of these houses during the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century.⁶ It is a hinderance to Armenian studies that these families have not yet been analysed through the lens of the family, given how important the *naxarar* were as an organising institution. While the lion's share of *Kin and Culture* concerns itself with members of the *naxarar* class, the thesis also strives to extend its view to those outside this sphere where possible.

Academics studying the late antique world more generally, particularly scholars of the Sasanian Empire and Byzantium, will also find the thesis interesting. Armenia's position on the border between the Byzantine and Iranian worlds has often condemned it to what Giusto Traina dubbed an "'Orientalist" ghetto' but makes it an important strategic asset and cultural contact zone.⁷ It did not merely reflect contemporary Byzantine or Sasanian (224-651 CE) imperial views, nor a historic Parthian (247 BCE-224 CE) view. Rather, Armenia operated in a complex dialogue between these influences; internal voices; and broader Caucasian

⁴ Z. Pogossian, 'Women at the beginning of Christianity in Armenia', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 69.2 (2003), p. 358. See N. Adontz, *Armenia in the period of Justinian: the political conditions based on the Naxarar system*, trans. N.G. Garsoian (Lisbon, 1970).

⁵ C. Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Georgetown, 1963), p. 144.

⁶ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 6.

⁷ G. Traina, 'Ancient Armenia: Evidence and Models', *Electrum* 28 (2021), p. 16.

practice, within wider constellations of Transcaucasian, Christian, Iranian and Roman contexts. Imperial forces likewise responded to this, most famously in Byzantine Emperor Justinian's (r. 527-565 CE), legislation to undercut *naxarar* power. As such, study of Armenia is not just a regional project, but offers a useful vision of the Byzantine world external to Greek sources and acts as a necessary window into the Sasanian world, which possesses few contemporary sources. Iranian influences are particularly pronounced, and the thesis therefore has a secondary aim of highlighting these where it helps contextualise Armenian family practice.

Finally, the thesis is valuable for family and group studies. *Kin and Culture* is not a work of historical anthropology, but it does seek to engage with modern anthropological theories in studying Armenian families. The family structure is often merely assumed in analyses of Armenia and opening this up to reconstruction both transforms our view of the region and allows comparisons with other settings. The thesis also recognises the need to be sensitive to gender and age categories, the latter of which has especially been overlooked. Despite children being prominent in the kinship system, the historical anthropology of childhood as a field remains in its infancy. Most historical studies that examine children as their own socio-conceptual category focus on the Latin West.⁸ In remaining conscious of the child/adult age binary as well as the more studied man/woman gender binary, the thesis not only strives for a more precise reconstruction of Armenia in this period, but also provides a Caucasian example for those interested in family studies which they can apply to their own

⁸ For some relevant exceptions see J. Baun, 'The Fate of Babies Dying Before Baptism in Byzantium', *Studies in Church History* 31 (1994), pp. 115-125; N.M. Kalogeras, *Byzantine Childhood and Education and Its Social Role from the Sixth Century Until the End of Iconoclasm* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2000); T.S. Miller, *The Orphans of Byzantium: Child Welfare in the Christian Empire* (Washington DC, 2003).

work. This is relevant even if a scholar is only interested in adult, elite men, since the existence of these boundaries inform that category too.⁹

The writing of this dissertation coincided with social distancing efforts aimed at tackling the Covid-19 pandemic. With many around the world suddenly isolated from all except their direct family unit, we are likely now more aware than ever of how significant this institution is in our lives. Armenia's isolating geography and prominent family system seems a good mimic for lockdown, but this is not the only reason a focus on Armenian kinship is timely and interesting.

⁹ K. Calvert, 'Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood', *The Children's Culture Reader*, ed. H. Jenkins (New York, 1998), pp. 67-80.

1.2 – Background and Sources

The family's importance in late antique Armenia has been long understood. Nicolas Adontz's seminal 1908 publication, translated by Nina Garsoïan in 1970 under the title *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, characterised the reforms of that emperor as motivated by a desire to weaken the grip of the kin-based *naxarar* system over the region and offered a vision of Armenian society that was strongly informed by early twentieth-century models of European feudal relations.¹⁰ Cyril Toumanoff modified Adontz's study in a series of essays from 1963 but was not primarily interested in analysing kinship.¹¹ The position of certain groups within the family has also been broached. David Zakarian and Zara Pogossian both contributed to our understanding of women in the household and Robert Bedrossian analysed the child-rearing practice of *dayeakut' iwn* ('guardianship, lit. wet-nursing').¹² To this may be added Cornelia Horn's work on children in nearby Georgia and other pieces in the burgeoning field of the history of childhood.¹³ While all of this is helpful, the principal study of the Armenian family's construction and elaboration during this period has not been attempted and is long overdue.

To achieve this elaboration, *Kin and Culture* utilises fifth to seventh-century CE canonical and narrative historical sources in concert. The most relevant narrative sources are the *Buzandaran Patmut' iwnk'*, a fifth-century CE source attributed to P'awstos Buzandac'i and translated by Nina Garsoïan under the name *Epic Histories*; the near contemporary writings of Łazar P'arpec'i and Elišē on the 450-451 CE Armenian rebellion against Šāhān-

¹⁰ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*.

¹¹ Toumanoff, *Studies*.

¹² D. Zakarian, 'The "Epic" Representation of Armenian Women of the Fourth Century', *REArm* 35 (2013), pp. 1-28; *idem*, 'Women on the Throne and the Symbolic Attributes of Authority', *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 22 (2013), pp. 23-38; *idem*, *The Representation of Women in Early Christian Literature: Armenian texts of the fifth century* (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2014); *idem*, *Women, Too, Were Blessed: The Portrayal of Women in Early Christian Armenian Texts* (Leiden, 2021); Pogossian, 'Women at the beginning of Christianity in Armenia', pp. 355-380; R. Bedrossian, 'Dayeakut' iwn in Ancient Armenia', *Armenian Review* 37 (1984), pp. 23-47.

¹³ C.B. Horn, 'The Lives and Literary Roles of Children in Advancing Conversion to Christianity: Hagiography from the Caucasus in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages', *Church History* 76.2 (2007), pp. 262-297.

šāh Yazdgerd II (r. 438-457) that culminated at the 451 CE Battle of Awarayr; the seventh-century *History* attributed to Bishop Sebeos Bagratuni; and the purportedly fifth- but more likely eighth-century *History* of Movses Xorenac'i.¹⁴ The fifth-century *History* of Agat'angēlos (Gk. *Agathaggelos*, 'bearer of good news'), which primarily focused on Armenia's conversion by Saint Gregory the Illuminator during the reign of King Trdat III (298-c.330 CE), is also used.¹⁵ These narrative histories largely focused on the high elite, but even here they are not equally informative. Łazar and Elišē were both Mamikonean partisans sponsored by that family and most other elite families appear only as bit-players on the sidelines of a Mamikonean drama. It is not enough for an assessment of Armenian family to look at only narrative sources.

While visibility of the *naxarars* means much of *Kin and Culture* concerns itself primarily with them, it is hoped that it will contribute to a more complete picture of Armenian society than is typically portrayed by the preoccupation of narrative histories with adult, male *naxarar* from particularly important families. Families were, after all, not merely the preserve of elite males but rather existed over all classes and contained women, children and (in the case of noble and clerical families) slaves. These social groups can be expanded upon through reference to the eighth-century *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, a collection of canons

¹⁴ P'awstos Buzandac'i, *Buzandaran Patmut'iwnc'* [henceforth *Epic Histories*], in *Matenagirk' Hayoc'* [henceforth MH], vol. 1: 5 dar, ed. Z. Ekawean (Antilias, 2003), pp. 277-428; Łazar P'arpec'i, *Patmut'iwnc' Hayoc' ew T'ult' Łazaray P'arpec'woy*, in *Ibid*, pp. 2201-2394; Elišē, in *Ibid*, pp. 515-1072; Sebeos Bagratuni, *Patmut'iwnc' Hayoc'*, in MH, vol. 4: 7 dar, ed. Z. Ekawean (Antilias, 2005), pp. 453-566; Movses Xorenac'i, *Patmut'iwnc' Hayoc'* [henceforth MX] in MH vol. 2: 5 dar, ed. Z. Ekawean (Antilias, 2003), pp. 1743-2122. For English translations: P'awstos Buzandac'i, *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand: (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnc')*, ed. and trans. N.G. Garsoian (Cambridge MA, 1989); Łazar Parpec'i, *The History of Łazar P'arpec'i*, ed. and trans. R.W. Thomson (Atlanta, GA, 1991); Elišē, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, trans. R.W. Thomson (Cambridge, MA, 1982); Sebeos Bagratuni, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, part 1. *Translation and Notes*, trans. R.W. Thomson, ed. J. Howard-Johnston, with T.W. Greenwood (Liverpool, 1999). On the dating of Movses Xorenac'i: C. Toumanoff, 'On the Date of Pseudo-Moses of Chorene', *Handes Amsorya: Zeitschrift für armenische Philologie* 75 (1961), pp. 467-476. Debate also exists around the dating of Elišē. Thomson suggests a sixth-century date, while Riccardo Pane dates it to the mid-fifth century in his Italian translation: Elišē, *Storia di Vardan e dei martiri Armeni*, ed. and trans. R. Pane (Rome, 2005).

¹⁵ Agat'angēlos, *Agat'angēleay Patmut'iwnc'*, in MH vol. 2, pp. 1295-1736; *Idem, History of the Armenians*, trans. R.W. Thomson (Albany, 1976).

collated by Kat'olikos Yovhannēs III Awj nec' i (John the Philosopher).¹⁶ The 444 CE Council of Šahapivan, sixth-century Canons of Kat'olikos Nersēs II Aštakerc' i and Bishop Meršapuh Mamikonean, and 645 CE Council of Dwin especially dedicate significant focus to women, non-elite individuals and families.¹⁷

Other more spurious canons are helpful, but various irregularities mean they will primarily be used to support other sources. The Letter of Bishop Sevantos, which claims to represent the decisions of a gathering of two hundred and twelve *kat'olikosk'*, appears directly after Šahapivan within *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, suggesting the compiler considered it a fifth-century source.¹⁸ However, Sevantos is otherwise unknown and *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*'s confused chronology of Greek councils means this dating must be treated with caution.

Canons attributed to Saint Gregory the Illuminator and Kat'olikos Sahak Part'ew (r. 389-439 CE) are likely spurious.¹⁹ Hubert Kaufhold argues the former was inserted into *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'* at a later stage.²⁰ Frederick Conybeare suggests the latter was a seventh-century CE production given its reference to the Feast of the Mother of God, which was not practised in

¹⁶ Yovhannēs Awj nec' i, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc' [Armenian Book of Canons]* [henceforth *KH*], ed. V. Hakobyan, 2 vols. (Erevan, 1964-1971).

¹⁷ *KH* vol. 1, 18, 20 pp. 422-466, 475-490; vol. 2, 38, pp. 200-215. For Italian translations of Šahapivan and Dwin, A. Orengo, 'Canoni Conciliari Armeni: Šahapivan e Dowin', *Augustinianum* 58.2 (2018), pp. 533-595. For English translation of Šahapivan, V.S. Hovhanessian, 'The Canons of the Council of Šahapivan', *REArm* 37 (2017), pp. 73-95. I consider 'Neršapuh', the spelling adopted for the Mamikonean bishop by *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'* and the eleventh-century CE historian Step'anos Tarōnec' i, a corruption of Meršapuh (MP. Mihr-Šābuhr, formed from the theonym Mihr and the Sasanian-era personal name Šābuhr, 'son of the king'). The canons show evidence of being an emendation of a previous text, including a historicising dedicatory line and often arbitrary chapter separations. I contend that the name Meršapuh, being no longer in popular use, was incorrectly amended to Neršapuh. Figures called Neršapuh Arcruni and Neršapuh Rmbosean appear in Elišē, but in all instances this is amended from multiple manuscripts reading Meršapuh, Meršapurh or Meršah. Meanwhile, 'Meršapuh' Mamikonean appears in the *Girk' T'it'oc'* as a signatory to the 555 CE pact of the union agreed at the Second Council of Dwin; in two letters under Kat'olikos Babken I (490-516 CE); and five under Nersēs II (548-557 CE). Elišē 2.229, 3.143, 3.159, 5.9, pp. 568, 602, 605, 635, 752; Step'anos Tarōnec' i, *The Universal History of Step'anos Tarōnec' i*, ed. and trans. T.W. Greenwood (Oxford, 2017), p. 150; *Girk' T'it'oc'* [henceforth *GT'*], ed. Y. Izmireanc' (Tiflis, 1901), 8-11, 13, 16-17, pp. 41-58, 62, 70-77. Cf. T.W. Greenwood, 'Social Change in Eleventh-Century Armenia: The evidence from Tarōn' in *The Transformation of Byzantium: Social Change in Town and Country in the Eleventh Century*, ed. J. Howard-Johnston (Oxford, 2016), p. 204. For the name Meršapuh, see Ph. Gignoux, *Iranisches Personennamenbuch*, Band 2, *Mitteliranische Personennamen*, Faszikel 2: *noms propres sassanides en moyen-perse épigraphique*, eds. M. Mayhofer and R. Schmitt (Vienna, 1986), §656, p. 130.

¹⁸ *KH* vol. 1, 19, pp. 467-474.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11, 17, pp. 243-249, 363-421.

²⁰ H. Kaufhold, 'Sources of Canon Law in the Eastern Churches', in *The History of Byzantine and Eastern Canon Law to 1500*, eds. W. Hartmann and K. Pennington (Washington DC, 2012), pp. 319-320.

Byzantium before then, although its similar ordering and subject matter to the Canons of Nersēs and Meršapuh may suggest a relation between the two.²¹ Regardless, there is much to recommend in these more irregular and often shorter canonical sources, especially concerning Armenian marriage and the place of women. The Canons of Caesarea, an Armenian fiction formed from an altered version of the last six canons of the 314 CE Council of Ancyra in Syria supplemented by four additional canons of unknown provenance, purported to have been convened to address sins committed by women.²² Two councils attributed to the Apostles Thaddeus and Phillip, which survive only in Armenian, may also represent local productions.²³ The former, composed between the sixth and tenth centuries CE, follows the question-and-answer format of controversy literature, which was particularly influential in the Eastern Syrian educational system and Sasanian debate culture.²⁴

Direct comparison between religious councils and narrative histories cannot be attempted due to genre differences. For instance, the social status of the *naxarars* significantly insulated them from clerical regulation, and they are seldom mentioned in canonical sources. Nevertheless, clerical sources are some of the only Armenian literature in the period directly addressing non-noble individuals. It is hoped that, by adopting both narrative and canonical texts, *Kin and Culture* will provide a more fine-grained image of Armenia that takes some account of its variation.

Also useful, if dubious, are the *Gahnamak* (*Throne List*, MP. *Gāh-nāmag*) and *Ps.-Gahnamak*, also dubbed *Zōranamak* (*Military List*, MP. *Zōr-nāmag*).²⁵ *Gahnamak* is dated 26 December 424 CE and attributed to Sahak Part'ew emulating an earlier work kept in

²¹ F.C. Conybeare, 'The Armenian Canons of St. Sahak Catholicos of Armenia (390-439 AD)', *The American Journal of Theology* 2 (1898), IV.viii, p. 828; *KH* vol. 1, 17.43, pp. 400-402.

²² *Ibid.*, 6, pp. 168-176.

²³ *KH* vol. 2, 26-27, pp. 19-45.

²⁴ J.T. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley, 2006), pp. 181-190.

²⁵ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, III.A-B, pp. 191-195, 67*-72*.

Ctesiphon. Whether it was sent from Armenia to the Sasanian capital or vice versa is unclear based on damage to the first line.²⁶ *Zōranamak* was composed in a Semitic language, possibly Syriac, in the 330s CE and translated into Armenian in the fifth century.²⁷ Both retain purportedly early lists of *naxarar* clans, which may be supplemented and compared to Robert Hewsén's historical atlas of Armenia and analysis of the region's episcopal situation before 730 CE.²⁸

In addition to native Armenian sources, texts in other languages – primarily Middle Persian, Avestan, Greek and Syriac – are used to offer context. Middle Persian and Avestan texts are primarily Zoroastrian oral works first compiled in the Islamic era. The earliest extant Avestan manuscript dates from the thirteenth century CE in Cambay, Gujarat, despite the language's 2nd-millennium BCE origins.²⁹ Middle Persian texts primarily date from the ninth century CE onwards, although a few late Sasanian Middle Persian works exist.³⁰ The most notable is the *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* or *The Book of a Thousand Judgements*, a legal compilation written in Book Pahlavi (Zoroastrian Middle Persian) script clarifying matters regarding hypothetical legal cases with a putative seventh-century date. The source comprises a facsimile copied from a unique manuscript from the Hataria Library in Pune, India by J.J. Modi in 1901 (abbr. *MHD*) and additional material published in 1912 by Tehmuras D.

²⁶ [*Im S*]ahakay xndir arareal i dran yArtašēsi T'agawori ('I, Sahak, sought from the court of King Artāšēs'), Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, III.A, pp. 191, 67*. [*A*]ha kay xndir arareal i dran yArtašēsi T'agawori ('Here is requested from the court of King Artāšēs'), A. Hakobyan, '«Gahnamak Azatac' ew Tanutērnac' Hayoc'» ew «Zawranamak» [“The Gahnamak of Armenian Azats and Tanuters” and “Zōranamak”]. Research and Texts], *Bazmavep* 3-4 (2011), pp. 530, 549.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 549-550.

²⁸ R.H. Hewsén, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago, 2001); *Idem*, 'An Ecclesiastical Analysis of the Naxarar System: A Re-examination of Adontz's Chapter XII', in *From Byzantium to Iran: Armenian Studies in Honour of Nina G. Garsoïan*, eds. J.-P. Mahé and R.W. Thomson (Atlanta, 1997), pp. 97-149.

²⁹ M.A. Andrés Toledo, 'Primary Sources: Avestan and Pahlavi', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* eds. M. Stausberg and Y.S.-D. Vevaina with A. Tessmann (Chichester, 2015), p. 519.

³⁰ For historiography on the Sasanian Empire and Pahlavi Literature, see Ph. Gignoux, 'Problèmes de distinction et de priorité des sources', *Prolegomena to the Sources on the History of Pre-Islamic Central Asia*, ed. J. Harmatta (Budapest, 1979), pp. 137-141; *Idem*, 'Pour une nouvelle histoire de l'Iran sasanide', *Middle Iranian Studies: Proceedings of the International Symposium organised by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to the 20th of May 1982*, eds. W. Skalmowski and A. van Tongerloo (Leuven, 1984), pp. 253-262; R. Gyselen, 'Primary Sources and Historiography on the Sasanian Empire', *Studia Iranica* 38.2 (2009), pp. 163-190; M. Macuch, 'Pahlavi Literature', *The Literature of Pre-Islamic Iran*, vol. 1, eds. R.E. Emmerick and M. Macuch (London, 2009), pp. 116-196.

Anklesaria based on a manuscript in his possession (abbr. *MHDA*) – which was greatly concerned with matters of family conduct, marriage and inheritance.³¹ Early Sasanian epigraphic evidence is also used, including the third-century victory inscriptions of Šābuhr, the Paikuli inscription of Nerseh and the inscriptions of Zoroastrian high-priest Kerdīr.³² These permit comparison between Armenia and their Iranian neighbours and, taken together, evidence the existence of several institutions found in Armenia in the Sasanian world.

The Armenian historical tradition shows a marked hostility towards Persia, due to their differing religious confessions and the fact historical writing in Armenia began in the generation immediately following the Sasanian defeat of Vardan Mamikonean's Armenian rebellion at Awarayr.³³ Such sentiment obscures long-inherited Iranianised elements. Nina Garsoïan, James Russell and others have demonstrated significant Iranian cultural influence in Armenian society, which is supported by linguistic evidence.³⁴ For example, until 1084 Armenians used a calendar which included four months whose names had roots in Persian Zoroastrianism: Nawasardi ('month of the new year'), Trē (MP. Tīr), Mehekani ('month of Mihr'), and Ahekani ('month of fire').³⁵ Armenian sources demonstrate insight into the Sasanian system that has furthered study of that empire.³⁶ Indeed, Armenians still considered the Persians a valid authority during the Arab Conquests, when the 645 CE Council of Dwin

³¹ Farraxvmar tī Vahrāmān, *Mādigān ī Hazār Dādistān*, ed. A.G. Perikhanian, trans. N.G. Garsoïan (Costa Mesa, CA, 1997); M. Macuch, 'Mādayān ī Hazār Dādestān', *EIr*.

³² *The Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli*, part 3.1, *Restored Text and Translation*, ed. P.O. Skjærvø (Wiesbaden, 1983); *Ka'ba-i Zardušt Inscription of Kerdīr*, ed. and trans. M.-L. Chaumont, 'L'inscription de Kartir à la 'Ka'bah de Zoroastre': Texte, traduction, commentaire', *Journal Asiatique* 248 (1960), pp. 339-380; *Les quatre inscriptions du mage Kirdīr*, ed. and trans. Ph. Gignoux (Paris, 1991).

³³ N.G. Garsoïan, 'Locus of the Death of Kings: Iranian Armenia – The Inverted Image', in *The Armenian Image in History and Literature*, ed. R.G. Hovannisian (Malibu, 1981), p. 28.

³⁴ *Idem*, *Armenia Between Byzantium and the Sasanians* (London, 1985); J.R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia* (Cambridge, MA, 1987). For linguistic evidence see R. Meyer, *Iranian-Armenian Language Contact in and Before the 5th Century CE: An investigation into pattern replication and societal multilingualism* (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2017). For further discussion on linguistic evidence, see chapter 2.5.1, pp. 114-118.

³⁵ A. Panaino, 'Calendars i. Pre-Islamic calendars', *EIr*.

³⁶ For example, see Ph. Gignoux, 'Pour une évaluation de la contribution des sources arméniennes à l'histoire sassanide', *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 31.1-2 (1985-1988), pp. 59-72; N.G. Garsoïan, 'Armenian Sources on Sasanian Administration', *Sources pour l'histoire et la géographie du monde iranien (224-71)*, ed. R. Gyselen (Bures-sur-Yvette, 2009), pp. 91-114.

defended the perpetuity of church properties established by King Trdat and St Gregory on the grounds they had been recorded in Persian archives.³⁷ A study examining Armenia must thus be cognizant of the region's Iranian context, which was so marked that Robert Thomson dubbed pre-Christian Armenians 'not so much permeated by Iranian culture as examples of it'.³⁸

The thesis also uses Byzantine and non-Iranian Sasanian sources. Armenian sources were often hostile to Byzantium as well as the Sasanians. Sebeos cast both empires as Beasts of the Prophet Daniel's apocalyptic vision and imagined a letter from the Byzantine Emperor Maurice (r. 582-602 CE) to *Šāhān-šāh* Husraw II (r. 590, 591-628 CE) where the former proposed deporting Armenians to distant frontiers.³⁹ Still, Byzantium's influence on Armenia warrants their inclusion. The 535-536 CE reforms of Justinian, preserved in *Novels* 21, 31 and *Edict* 3 – are particularly relevant accounts of that empire's attempts to regulate the region against the interests of the *naxarar*.⁴⁰ The Syriac synods of the Church of the East, the predominate Christian community of the Sasanian Empire, found in *Synodicon Orientale* likewise compare usefully to Armenian canonical literature.⁴¹ These sources' concentration in the sixth century helps bridge a period which preserves relatively little internal Armenian literature, most of which concerns doctrinal issues.

³⁷ *KH* vol. 2, 38.9, pp. 209-210.

³⁸ R.W. Thomson, 'Armenian Ideology and the Persians', in *La Persia e Bisanzio. Atti del convegno internazionale, Roma, 14-18 ottobre 2002*, ed. Antonio Carile (Rome, 2004), p. 373.

³⁹ *Yaynm žamanaki t'agaworn Yunac' Mawrik hramayē greł ar t'agaworn Parsic' gir ambastanut'ean vasn išxanac'n amenayn Hayastaneayc' ew zawrac' iwreanc'*: «Azg mi xotor ew anhnazand en, asē, kan i miji merum ew pltoren: Bayc' ek, asē, ew zims žolovem ew i T'rakē gumarem. ew du zk'oyd žolovē ew hramayē yArewels tanel: Zi et'ē meṛanin' t'šmanik' meṛanin. ew et'ē spananen' zt'šnamis spananen. ew mek' kec'c'uk' xalalut'eamb:» ('At that time, the king of the Greeks, Maurice, ordered a letter of accusation to be written to the Persian king, concerning all the Armenian princes and their troops. "They are a perverse and disobedient race [azg]," he said, "They are between us and cause trouble. But come," he said, "I shall gather mine and send [lit. convoke] them to Thrace. And you gather yours and order them to be transported to the East. For if they die, our enemies died, and if they kill, they kill our enemies; but we shall live in peace."'), Sebeos 15.3-6, p. 487. Cf. *Ibid.* 44.25-33, p. 534; Daniel 7:3-24.

⁴⁰ *The Novels of Justinian: a complete annotated English translation*, 2 vols., trans. D.J.D Miller and P. Sarris (Cambridge, 2018), vol. 1, pp. 229-231; vol. 2, p. 1038.

⁴¹ *Synodicon Orientale, ou, Recueil de synodes nestoriens*, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot (Paris, 1902).

Sources in Middle Persian and Armenian have been consulted in the original language, while other languages have been dealt with largely in translation. Pahlavi and Armenian translations are heavily indebted to the edited translations cited and the amendments these have made to extant manuscripts. Where they differ from current English language editions, this reflects my own interpretation. This is necessary in Pahlavi especially, where an absence of contextualising material often renders the meaning of complex passages unclear. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on travel has frustrated access to some sources and footnotes reflect the use of available editions.

Kin and Culture does not make significant use of archaeological sources due to an absence of archaeological work on the period. Talalay and Alcock noted in 2006 that Western archaeology tended to overlook the Caucasus as neither properly ‘Mediterranean’ nor ‘Near Eastern’.⁴² Although their work concentrated primarily on the Parthian era and earlier, their claim remains true under the Sasanians. Stephen Kroll’s survey of finds in southern Armenia between 2000-2003 did not distinguish Late Antiquity from Achaemenid-Hellenistic finds, while the preliminary report of 2015 fieldwork at Daštadem fortress in Aragocotn focused entirely on the medieval structure, noting only once that G. Sargsyan had identified a fifth- to seventh-century CE structure beneath this.⁴³ The focus of archaeological digs on urban and military sites means their relevance is questionable for a general study, since Armenia’s population was primarily rural. Therefore, the thesis focuses primarily on the family’s political, ideological and legal implications, which may be illuminated by textual sources. The lived realities that a more complete archaeological corpus could illuminate are a fruitful avenue for future study.

⁴² L.E. Talalay and S.E. Alcock, *In the Field: The Archaeological Expeditions of the Kelsey Museum* (Ann Arbor, 2006), p. 89.

⁴³ S. Kroll, ‘Southern Armenian Survey (Syunik) 2000-2003’, *Aramazd* 1 (2006) pp. 19-49; H. Melkonyan, A. Babajanyan, A. Harutyunyan, D. Davtyan and S. Aghaian, ‘The Excavation of Dashtadem Fortress: Preliminary Report on 2015 Fieldwork Activity’, *Aramazd* 11.1-2 (2017), p. 264. Cf. G. Sargsyan, ‘Daštademi amroc՝ա. Hay amroc՝ašinakan ezaki karuyc՝i zargac՝man p՝ulerə’, *Hay arvest՝՝ mšakut՝ ayin handes* 3-4 (2007), p. 36.

Nor does the dissertation engage heavily with the emotional roles that families played. This is not to say families were believed to have no emotional element in late antique Armenia. Łazar's account of *Šāhān-šāh* Yazdgerd I's installation of his son as Armenian king for example, which is justified by the hope that Armenians would adopt Iranian customs by intermarrying and be less inclined to ally 'like brothers' with their Byzantine neighbours, relied on an understanding of family as both something that could achieve practical political ends and a deeply important emotional connection.⁴⁴ However, this emotional content cannot be reliably accessed through the kinds of sources we possess. The Armenian histories utilised are often epic in character and the motivations they ascribed generally represent literary *topoi* and the imaginings of a distant author rather than reality. While these sources would have been designed to evoked emotional responses in contemporary audiences, they do not express the genuine emotional responses of the actors presented. Nor can they necessarily tell us what the audience's emotions would have been since emotional expression relies on cultural and geographical contexts and different communities can respond to the same action in remarkably divergent ways. For a modern example, Gujarati students interviewed in London were unconcerned by kissing in public, but differing attitudes towards restraint caused Gujarati Indians of the same age and economic bracket in Baroda to consider this practice inappropriate.⁴⁵ Attempts to reconstruct the response of a contemporary Armenian community to epic sources must therefore be highly tentative. As such, the following study

⁴⁴ *Ew oč' kamec' eal Yazkertı t' agaworec' uc' anel i veray ašxarhis Hayoc' yazgēn Aršakuneac' tagaworec' uc' anēr i veray soc' a ziwr zordin, orum anun ēr Šapuh, əst anuan hawr iwroy. xorheal č' arč' ar imac' muns arnn i mits iwır [...]* *Oroc' guc' ē goroveal ar mimeans azgac' n, əst awrini elbarc', ork' ənd merov ew ənd Yunac' išxanut' eambn en, ew hawaneal erbēk sirov ənd mimeas ew ekealk' i miabanut' iwn' xawsesc' in i xalalut' win [sic] ənd t' agaworin Yunac', ew ənd nora hnazandut' eamb yawžarealk' apstambesc' in i mēnj [...]* *Ayl ew amusnut' eanc' turewariwk' halordealk' ar mimeans, zatuc' ealk' aynuhetew orošin i siroy noc' a ew yawarinac' n,* ('And not wanting to enthrone anyone from the clan of the Aršakuni over the land of Armenia, Yazdgerd enthroned over them his son, whose name was Šābuhr, after his father. The man thought evil ideas in his head [...]) Perhaps those who are under our authority and those under the Greeks might, like brothers, turn with affection to each other's clans [azg] and, now persuading each other with love and uniting, talk with the Byzantine emperor, gladly submit to him, and rebel against us [...]) And being linked to each other in reciprocal marriages, they will consequently become detached from them [the Greeks] and their religion'), Łazar 12.5-9, pp. 2216-2217. Cf. MX III.55.6-56.4, pp. 2084-2087.

⁴⁵ K. Twamley, 'Love and desire among middle-class Gujarati Indians in the UK and India', *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 15.3 (2013), pp. 327-328.

thus prioritises the cultural and political aspects of family practices, and largely avoids speculating on the emotional bonds between family members that were undoubtedly fundamental to family experience in practice but are much more challenging to access.

1.3 – Periodisation

The focus on the fifth to seventh century has been chosen to concord, respectively, with the invention of the Armenian written language and the fall of the Sasanian Empire. Both marked watershed moments in Armenian relations with neighbouring powers and cultures, delineating what Zaroui Pogossian calls the first period of Christian Armenia.⁴⁶ This model is preferable to organising around more Byzantine-focused definitions of Late Antiquity, which tend to differ dependant on the polity that the individual scholar is examining and have often been formulated without considering the Sasanian Empire.⁴⁷ Even Peter Brown, who popularised the term outside of art history in English-speaking academia, showed variation on the exact boundaries of Late Antiquity, identifying the period as 250-700 CE in the text of his book yet 150-750 CE in its original subtitle.⁴⁸ The present study does not intend to meaningfully redefine the artificial distinction between Classical and Late Antiquity. Rather, the period has been selected to best fit this study of Armenia specifically.

The *naxarar* families that form the lion's share of the surviving evidence had their origins in or before the Parthian era (247 BCE-224 CE) and endured until the Mongol invasions of the 1230s CE.⁴⁹ However, recognisably internal Armenian works only began to be produced in the fifth century following the Armenian alphabet's invention, traditionally attributed to Mesrop Maštoc' c. 405 CE. While Philostratus, writing in the second and third

⁴⁶ Pogossian, 'Women at the beginning of Christianity in Armenia', pp. 356-357.

⁴⁷ C. Ando, 'Decline, Fall and Transformation', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1.1 (2008), pp. 37-38; M.G. Morony, 'Should Sasanian Iran be Included in Late Antiquity?', *Sasanika Occasional Papers* 1 (2010), pp. 1-7.

⁴⁸ P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (London, 1971), p. 7. The term was earlier used by art historians Paul Friedlaender, in his examination of fifth- and sixth-century CE textiles, and Shmuel Sambursky's study of the Neoplatonists in the third to mid-sixth centuries CE. *Documents of Dying Paganism. Textiles of Late Antiquity in Washington, New York and Leningrad*, ed. P. Friedlaender (Berkeley, 1945); S. Sambursky, *The Physical World of Late Antiquity* (New York, 1962). The German language equivalent, *Spätantike*, can be traced to art historian Alois Riegel. A. Riegel, *Die Spätromische Kunstindustrie nach der Funden in Österreich-Ungarn* (Vienna, 1901). For an overview of Late Antiquity's history as a term cf. E. James, 'The Rise and Function of the Concept "Late Antiquity"', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1.1 (2008), pp. 20-30.

⁴⁹ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 183; L. Read, 'The *Ašxarhac'oyc'* and the Construction of Armenian Geo-political Space in the 7th century' (29 Feb 2020, The Oxford University Byzantine Society's 22nd International Graduate Conference, University of Oxford, 28-29 February 2020).

century CE, records the existence of a preceding Armenian alphabet, no sources written in it survive.⁵⁰ This alphabet appears to have been forgotten by the fifth century, when Koriwn claims only a few of its characters (*nšanagir*) were known to a Syriac bishop called Daniel.⁵¹ Some pre-fifth-century texts in other languages do survive. These include seven ca. 200 BCE Greek inscriptions at Armavir and an inscription of Sasanian dynastic founder Ardašīr I at Salmās/Zangezur near Lake Urmia.⁵² There also a letter from Bishop Macarius I of Jerusalem to the nascent Armenian church composed c. 335 CE, which responded to questions posed in a letter sent by the Armenian Kat'olikos Vrt'anēs (327-342 CE) and survives in an Armenian translation of a Greek original.⁵³ However, while these works may be highly informative about aspects of Armenian society before the development of its native script, they remain the production of external powers responding to the region's situation or imposing upon it. The emergence of consciously 'Armenian' literary tradition coincides with the convocation of the earliest pan-Armenian council whose canons survive (Šahapivan), making the fifth century critical from a clerical perspective. A fifth-century inception avoids backdating where possible, as this is the earliest point at which internal Armenian voices are directly comparable to outside sources. References to prior eras may not represent reality so much as fifth-century reconstructions of the past.

The seventh-century cut-off, meanwhile, has been selected to accord roughly with the destruction of the Sasanian Empire (224-651 CE). Iranian cultural influence on Armenia is widely attested and its role in shaping family practice is one of the secondary questions *Kin and Culture* addresses. The empire controlled most of Armenia from the time of the 387 CE

⁵⁰ Flavius Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana: The Epistles of Apollonius and The Treatise of Eusebius* ed. and trans. F.C. Conybeare (London, 1912), II.ii, pp. 120-121.

⁵¹ Koriwn, *Patmut' iwn Varuc' ew Mahuan Arn Eranelwoc' Srboyn Mesropay Vardapeti Meroy T'argmanč'i*, in *MH* 1, 6.6, p. 236.

⁵² On the Armavir inscriptions, see Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, pp. 54-58. On the Salmās inscription, see A. Perikhanian, 'Une inscription araméenne du roi Artasēs trouvée à Zanguézour (Siwnik')', *REArm* 3 (1966), pp. 17-29.

⁵³ *Macarius of Jerusalem: Letter to the Armenians c. 335. Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans. A. Terian (Crestwood, NY, 2008).

Peace of Acilesene, with only a few brief periods when the border shifted in the Byzantines' favour. Limiting study according to the dates of the Sasanians, the longest enduring Persian dynasty, both acknowledges this group's importance in influencing Armenia's practices and prevents the thesis from becoming unwieldy by having to balance a tripartite distinction between Sasanian and Arabian governance on one border and enduring (but constantly developing) Byzantine influence on the other.⁵⁴

A study of fifth- to seventh-century Armenia allows for an appraisal of Adontz's thesis; an acknowledgement of the interest which the Byzantine Empire showed towards Armenian family practices; and assessment of what effect, if any, imperial strictures had on the region's practices or ideas of acceptable familial customs in the short and medium term. Seventh-century data is necessary for this last aim, as sixth-century Armenian sources are not numerous enough to permit such analysis without seventh-century comparanda. Longer-term influences are not considered, due to the danger of back forming and ignoring more proximate influences in cases where short- and medium-term effects are not apparent.

The dates selected are guides and not walls. The nature of the available source materials and the requirement to contextualise Armenian information with Iranian and Byzantine sources to properly understand family practices means it will often be necessary to range further and engage with sources that lie outside the fifth to seventh centuries. The minimal survival of Sasanian material means a pre-Islamic Iranian image of Armenia must be indirectly reconstructed through traces of an Iranian *Weltanschauung* mirrored in Armenian sources, and Islamic period Avestan and Middle Persian collections that reinscribe and resignify earlier material.⁵⁵ Prods Oktor Skjærvø argues that the Avestan *Videvdad*, or *Vendīdād*, whose earliest written manuscripts date to the fourteenth century CE, was orally

⁵⁴ For an overview of Arabian governance and Sasanian continuities in post-Sasanian Armenia, see A. Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam: Islamic Rule and Iranian Legitimacy in Armenia and Caucasian Albania* (Cambridge, 2017).

⁵⁵ Garsoïan, 'Locus of the Death of Kings', p. 28.

composed in the first half of the first millennium BCE.⁵⁶ The tenth-century Pahlavi *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd ī Ašawahistān* and seventeenth-century Persian *Rivāyats* collected by Hormazdyar Framarz include in-depth explanations of Zoroastrian marital forms visible in the *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān*.⁵⁷ Such sources may help reconstruct the forms and evolutions of practices appearing in Armenian and Sasanian Late Antiquity. The twelfth-century CE Armenian *Datastanagirk'* (*Lawcode*) of Mxit'ar Goš is also a vital late source, as it represents the earliest attempt to compile Armenian law outside of church canons and is therefore an important point of comparison to earlier canonical law.⁵⁸ Ignoring these sources would considerably hamstring research, although their position outside the period of primary concern means they should be considered a secondary form of primary source.

The conclusions reached by *Kin and Culture* are general. Great variation likely existed within the family practices of Armenians in the three-century period that this thesis covers, which are inaccessible to modern academics due to the region's political fragmentation and the narrow focus of surviving sources. Institutions like motherhood and childhood did occur within a range of societal expectations that limited their variation, but these were not fixed states and individual people and communities frequently negotiated and renegotiated their positions in comparison to each other and greater power structures, with change in the exact nature occurring over time. Some of this change will be illustrated in our discussion, but much was too small scale to have been recorded. Ultimately, the thesis is in many ways something of a compromise, constructed from sources that do not perfectly align in terms of periodisation, genre or cultural background and examining a topic far too complex to be broached without a degree of generalisation. Regardless, I contend *Kin and Culture* is

⁵⁶ P.O. Skjærvø, 'The *Videvdad*: Its Ritual-Mythical Significance', in *The Age of the Parthians*, eds. V.S. Curtis and S. Stewart (London, 2006), pp. 105-141.

⁵⁷ *Rivāyat-i Hēmī-i Ašawahistān* [henceforth *REA*], ed. and trans. N. Safa-Isfahani (Cambridge, MA, 1980); Hormazdyar Framarz, *The Persian Rivayats of Hormazdyar Framarz and Others. Their Version and Introduction with Notes*, ed. and trans. E.B.N. Dhabhar (Bombay, 1932).

⁵⁸ Mxit'ar Goš, *Girk' Datastani*, ed. X. T'orosyan (Yerevan, 1975). For English translation, Mxit'ar Goš, *The Lawcode (Datastanagirk') of Mxit'ar Goš*, ed. and trans. R.W. Thomson (Amsterdam, 2000).

an important first step, offering a structured understanding of the Armenian family that places the institution within its wider socio-cultural context and hopefully demystifying much of its detail for an audience from a variety of academic backgrounds.

1.4 – Defining the Family

Information cannot be discussed without in some way structuring it, privileging certain features over others. Further, there is no definition of ‘family’ that is culturally universal and can be grounded in either biological, social or psychological models without being so broad as to be fruitless.⁵⁹ A great spectrum of cultures possess a concept labelled ‘family’ and recognised with equivalent terms, but each of these are specific. Will Atkinson declared that ‘family’ as a category (as well as other common equivalents like ‘household’ or ‘home’) had ‘no foundational essence or universal substance’ cross-culturally and did not inherently imply consanguinity, shared function or even perceived relation.⁶⁰ *Kin and Culture* therefore rejects importing universalising theories and aims to construct a model that illuminates Armenian practice more specifically.

However, this is no easy task. Normative familial practices in any society, Armenia included, are often considered assumed or implicit knowledge by the communities adopting them. As such, key information is regularly omitted due to the readers’ presumed familiarity. Cross-cultural comparison can only do so much to alleviate this, as the family is also understood through the contemporary lens of the researcher, who themselves warps the resulting image. The historian can possess only two of the four kinds of knowledge discerned by Jonathan Gorman (to know about something, the fourth kind; and to know something is or isn’t the case, the first kind), but they cannot understand what it is like to experience the institution (the third kind) nor necessarily how to enact it (the second kind).⁶¹ It is in these latter regions that assumed knowledge particularly proliferates. In sociological terms, historians may reconstruct something in an ‘emic’ (from the perspective of the subject of

⁵⁹ C. Geertz, ‘The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man’, in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York, 1973), pp. 39-42.

⁶⁰ W. Atkinson, ‘A sketch of ‘family’ as a field: From realized category to space of struggle’, *Acta Sociologica* 57.3 (2014), p. 224.

⁶¹ J. Gorman, *Understanding History: An Introduction to Analytical Philosophy of History* (Ottawa, 1992), pp. 16-19.

study) or ‘etic’ (from the perspective of an outside observer) manner but will always be an outsider looking in and must acknowledge that what they produce is, at best, a modern reconstruction of how their area’s subjects perceived things to be.⁶²

This is not a *carte blanche* for academics to make no attempts to mitigate the presentism inherent in researching a historical period. Rather, it acknowledges that universalising approaches cannot be uncritically applied, nor can a context’s specificity be fully recaptured. Even with an institution as significant and forceful as the Armenian family, the process of rendering the information comprehensible to academics alters it minutely. No study can avoid this.

The frameworks of study must therefore be presented and justified. The potential meanings of ‘family’ are too broad to allow specific study without creating confusion. The same terms are used non-exclusively to identify both extended and narrow groupings. The same is true in Armenian. *Tun* (‘house’, from PIE **dōm*, ‘house, dwelling place’) denoted both the great *naxarar* groupings and a simple residence, while the related *tanutēr* (‘lord of the house’, from *tun*’s genitive *tan*) could refer to the head of either unit in whose power its assets were vested.⁶³ It’s also possible that *tanutēr* could be used with no necessary familial implications. Smbat Bagratuni and his son Varaztiroc‘ are both described by Sebeos as receiving *tanutērut’iwn* (‘lordship of the house’) while at the Sasanian court from *Šāhān-šāhs* Husraw II and Kavād II respectively, with the former also receiving the honorific name Xosrov Šum (‘Joy of Husraw’) at the same time.⁶⁴ *Tanutērut’iwn* in this context can hardly have implied control over the royal clan and was more likely either a formal acknowledgement of these individuals’ position as *tanutēr* of the Bagratuni clan or an

⁶² On the background and use of emic and etic, see T. Mostowlansky and A. Rota, ‘Emic and Etic’, *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Anthropology* [accessed 26/04/2022].

⁶³ H. Ačařean, *Hayerēn armatakan bararan* [Dictionary of Armenian Root Words], 4 vols., 2nd ed. (Yerevan, 1971-1979), vol. 4, p. 427; H.K. Martirosyan, *Etymological Dictionary of the Armenian Inherited Lexicon* (Leiden, 2010), p. 618.

⁶⁴ Sebeos 28.11, 40.7, pp. 499, 523.

Armenian gloss on a Sasanian court position. The family's institutional complexity – containing both extended identity groups and residential units, a political identity and a domestic reality, and individuals of various age, gender and social groups – makes it useful to subdivide.

The thesis adopts the terms 'clan' and 'household', established as a binary, to aid in analysis. These do not represent separate institutions from the family but divergent ways of categorising the complex institution to highlight different aspects. The clan/household binary separates the juro-political from the domestic; the identity group from the functional unit; and the broad extended family (likely rarely encountered in its entirety except at times of war but nonetheless holding a sense of kinship to one another) from the closer-knit group of individuals who interacted with one another daily. Like all binaries, this distinction is constructed and dependant on the existence of its other half.⁶⁵ It is not real, in that neither modern audiences nor fifth-century Armenians would see the line or travel knowingly from the household out into the clan space. Further, empirical evidence overwhelmingly contradicts dichotomised constructions of binaries, which obscure certain aspects of family (e.g., the physical buildings in which groups lived). A clan/household divide may also overstate the level of distinction existing between these two concepts.

However, establishing this binary usefully highlights the *naxarar* clans' political influence, the roles and strategies adopted by residential units in normative practice, and the interlocking and self-reinforcing structure of family activity. The household replicates the clan, and the clan dictates the social placement of individual households. Several other binary opposites – adult/child, man/woman and male/female – are also utilised in *Kin and Culture*

⁶⁵ V. Burr, *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* (New York City, 1995), p. 73.

and are most visible in the household unit.⁶⁶ These binaries are identifiable in many societies, although they did not form consistently across all societies where they occurred or even within individual societies. Much of the complex reality that certainly existed is erased by the application of such binaries, but they are necessary to give words to and permit analysis of the organisational structures that existed.

1.4.1 – Clan

‘Clan’ originally emerges from study of family-based identity groups in the Scottish Highlands and Lowlands but has found broader usage describing kin-based identity groups throughout the world.⁶⁷ The term has been chosen to capture a unit comprising an extended family, connected through real or fictive patrilineal relation.⁶⁸ In cultural anthropology, it refers to a unilineal descent group whose members may acknowledge a foundational ancestor, but whose genealogical connection to that ancestor are not necessarily remembered.⁶⁹ These were identity groups more than lived realities, acknowledged for the purposes of exercising political power and justice and accumulating privileges to members of the in-group. The way in which the clan is expressed is heavily determined by the political system around it, but it also shapes that system, especially in regions like Armenia where clans were powerful. It is not the only term that could be chosen to express the Armenian system. Nikolaus Overtoom, discussing the similarly arranged Parthian Empire, uses the

⁶⁶ On binary opposites, see M. Shafieyan, ‘Binary Opposition and Binary Pairs: From Derrida to the Islamic Philosophy’, *2nd International Conference on Humanities, Historical and Social Studies* 17 (2011), p. 197.

⁶⁷ R. Sen, ‘Clan Identity’, *Encyclopedia of Identity*, eds. R.L. Jackson and M.A. Hogg (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2010), pp. 83-86.

⁶⁸ E. Prine Pauls, ‘Clan’, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [accessed online at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/clan>, 07-01-2021].

⁶⁹ R.H. Lavenda and E.A. Schultz, *Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Boston, 2003), pp. 152-156.

word clan only once in passing.⁷⁰ However, clan is deemed the most useful term for the following study.

Among the *naxarar*, clan relation was indicated through a common surname that associated all members both to each other and to the district or districts that fell under the clan's hereditary control. These units were called *tun* ('house'), *gerdastan* ('house, possessions, body of servants', from PIE **g^herd^h-*, 'to enclose with a fence', possibly via Iranian mediation; compare MP. *gāl*, 'household, following') or *tohm* ('family', lit. 'seed', equivalent to MP. *tōm* of the same meaning, both from Old Persian *tau^hmā-*).⁷¹ The terms *azg* and *tak* ('race', from MP. *azg*, *tāg*, 'branch') are also sometimes used, as in the *Epic Histories*, where they referred to the Aršakuni royal dynasty.⁷² Such phrasing bears comparison to the Sasanian organisation where large networks of kinsmen were called *tōm*, *nāf* ('kin', cognate with Eng. 'navel') or *gōhr* ('stock, seed, essence').⁷³ None of these terms referred exclusively to the extended family. Šahapivan's final canon uses the most common term, *tun*, to refer to a unit comprising an individual *naxarar*, his wife and children, with slaves also mentioned in the chapter.⁷⁴ Zakarian suggests that the 'clan' meaning of *tun* likely developed later from the original meaning of 'house' as the structure.⁷⁵ The translation 'clan' has been selected not to precisely capture these terms usage, but as the most accurate anthropological term to render the organisation visible in Armenian sources without extrapolating greater meaning from the structure than existed or creating confusion between the clan and domestic unit (household).

⁷⁰ N.L. Overtoom, *Reign of Arrows: The Rise of the Parthian Empire in the Hellenistic Middle East* (Oxford, 2020), p. 251.

⁷¹ Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 6-7, n. 24, 30; T.M. van Lint, 'The Formation of Armenian Identity in the First Millennium', *Church History and Religious Culture* 89.1-3 (2009), p. 262; Ačārean, *Hayerēn armatakan bařaran*, vol. 1, p. 541, vol. 4, p. 417; Martirosyan, *Etymological Dictionary*, p. 209.

⁷² *Epic Histories* IV.14.13, p. 339; Ačārean, *Hayerēn armatakan bařaran*, vol. 1, pp. 84-85, vol. 4, p. 360.

⁷³ Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, p. 27.

⁷⁴ *Et'ē i naxarari tan gac'i plcut'iwnc'n, kam kin nora kam dustr kam ordi kam ink'n isk glxovin [...] amenayn tamb iwrov ew cnndovk' ew kenawk' nzoveal lic'i*, ('If contamination is found in a *naxarar*'s house, either his wife or daughter or son or in himself [...] let him be anathematised with his entire family, children and life'), *KH* vol. 1, 18.20, p. 464.

⁷⁵ D. Zakarian, 'Syneisaktism in Early Armenian Christianity', *Le Muséon* 130.1-2 (2017), p. 126.

Clan is preferred over the terms ‘gens’ and ‘lineage’. Gens denotes a group related through a common male or female ancestor, but risks confusion with Latin *gens* from which it descends but which applied to a very different practice.⁷⁶ Clan meanwhile refers specifically to an extended family connected by relation to a specific ancestor where the genealogical links connecting these members are not known or necessarily reconstructed, while descent in the case of lineage is traced to a common ancestor through known links.⁷⁷ The Old Persian Behistun inscription of Darius’ includes an example of lineage, establishing the king’s authority through a procession of paternal relations: ‘Saith Darius the King: my father was Hystaspes; Hystaspes’ father was Arsames; Arsames’ father was Ariaramnes; Ariaramnes’ father was Teispes; Teispes’ father was Achaemenes.’⁷⁸ Armenian sources sometimes reconstruct lineage, as Movses Xorenac‘i does when recording Nersēs I’s relation to St Gregory upon his ordination as Kat‘ofikos.⁷⁹ However, lineage’s requirement for direct, remembered links means lineage-based social group rarely span greater than five generations (grandparent, parent, Ego, children, grandchildren).⁸⁰ Armenian *naxarar* demonstrate a larger group with a much longer time depth. Consequently, clan is the most representative English word to render the structure of Armenian elite organisation.

Clan, like lineage, is a juro-political unit constituted from the examined culture’s specific social principles of kinship and descent and often implying collective ownership of resources; collective representation in the wider political landscape; and collective responsibility in the law and community. This identity group bound members who acknowledged it into a single unit for the benefit of both individuals and the collective, and

⁷⁶ C.J. Smith, *The Roman Clan: The Gens from Ancient Ideology to Modern Anthropology* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 1-3.

⁷⁷ Smith, *Roman Clan*, p. 2.

⁷⁸ R. Fowler, ‘“Most Fortunate Roots”: Tradition and Legitimacy in Parthian Royal Ideology’, in *Imaginary Kings: Royal Images in the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome*, eds. O. Hekster and R. Fowler (Stuttgart, 2005), p. 135.

⁷⁹ *Nerseh, ordi At‘anagineay, ordwoy Yuskan, ordwoy Vrt‘anay, ordwoy srboyn Grigori* (Nersēs, son of At‘anginēs, son of Yusik, son of Vrt‘anēs, son of St Gregory’), MX II.20.2, p. 2030.

⁸⁰ Lavenda and Schultz, *Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology*, p. 154.

was critical to determining an individual's inheritance rights, access to resources and position within the community.⁸¹ However, the clan was not a unit of daily production, reproduction or residence.⁸² This was the household, which acted as the mechanism that continuously replenished the clan.

1.4.2 – Household

To incorporate women and children and fully explicate the Armenian family, it is not enough to look at the clan that operated in the highest echelons of political society. It is also necessary to view the small scale in which women and children were normally considered. For this, the model of household has been chosen. This denotes the family as a co-resident, domestic group, often incorporating individuals from multiple clans, social classes and age categories. Households existed at all levels of society and were originally considered a natural unit, although this position was heavily questioned in the 1980s and the current study recognises them instead as an artificial construction provided by academics.⁸³

The concept of household has been chosen over the descent group (all the offspring of a couple, living or dead, co-residing or not) or elementary/nuclear family unit (the husband-wife-child triad) due to both visibility and relevance. The elementary family unit did form the centre of many Armenian households. However, a co-residential focus better suits Armenia's observable realities, wherein individual family units often included corollary relatives, slaves and individuals possessing real or fictive kinship bonds to each other who contributed to a

⁸¹ M. Fortes, 'Introduction', in *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*, ed. J. Goody (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 6-12; P. Roberts, 'Anthropological Perspectives on the Household', *Institute of Developmental Studies Bulletin* 22.1 (1991), p. 61.

⁸² Roberts, 'Anthropological Perspectives on the Household', p. 60; J. Guyer, 'Household and Community in African Studies', *African Studies Review* 24.2/3 (1981), p. 89.

⁸³ O. Harris, 'Households as Natural Units', in *Of Marriage and the Market*, eds. K. Young, C. Wolkowitz and R. McCullagh (London, 1981), pp. 136-155; B. Almond, 'Family: Social construction or natural phenomenon?', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 97.385 (2008), pp. 29-43.

house's maintenance or were dependant on its resources. Individuals moved, permanently or temporarily, between these units through marriage, fosterage and service, all of which was integral to upholding the Armenian social fabric. That Armenians understood the importance of co-residence as an element of family is reflected by the use of *erd* (lit. 'roof, sky-light') and *cux* (lit. 'smoke', from Hittite *tuhh-* 'smoke') to refer to the family unit.⁸⁴ These associated the family with the house's smoke-hole – the only exit other than the door in a traditional Armenian dwelling – and thus implicitly with the building (or buildings) in which they resided. A model that privileged biological relation alone would not only obscure this but would be difficult to accomplish as the genealogical and biographical data required to create a comprehensive picture of Armenian descent group practices does not exist. It is thus more achievable and enlightening to focus on a form of analysis that privileges domestic situation when examining this smaller scale of a family.

Additionally, the household provides a useful lens for viewing the residential unit's role in replicating social norms over generations. Sylvia Wargon, a demographer examining comparative family organisation in the context of modern Canada, noted the household was the primary group in which most individuals lived throughout their life and where behaviour-determining decisions were made.⁸⁵ It was through these logistical and legal collectives, based around an embodied living arrangement, that the claims of clans to specific territories and privileges were realised and operated. Furthermore, it was primarily within the household that children were produced and socialised into societally approved roles.⁸⁶ This was an

⁸⁴ On the etymology of *cux*, V.V. Ivanov, 'A Probable Structure of a Proto-form of the Ancient Armenian Song of Vahagn', *Aramazd* 6.1 (2011), p. 13. Compare the equivalent Middle Persian *dūdāg* ('family'), from *dūd* ('smoke').

⁸⁵ S.T. Wargon, 'The Study of Household and Family Units in Demography', *Journal of Marriage and Family* 36.3 (1974), pp. 561-562.

⁸⁶ Socialisation theory's over-focus on children as passive receivers of data renders it insufficient to capture the true complexity of childhood interactions with the structures around them. However, late antique sources do not provide the kind of biographical information necessary to escape this model. For criticism of socialisation as an approach to the study of childhood, see S.H. Matthews, 'A Window on the 'New' Sociology of Childhood', *Sociology Compass* 1.1 (2007), pp. 322-334.

extremely important role, since no social system can exist if its members do not produce enough offspring or adequately emplace their offspring within the culture that they wish to incorporate them into.⁸⁷ Meyer Fortes, in his introduction to Jack Goody's collection *The Developmental Cycle of Domestic Groups*, dubs the domestic group 'the workshop' of social reproduction.⁸⁸

The use of household here is somewhat expanded from the definition used in social anthropology, where it typically only denotes 'a collection of people living and eating together', with the sphere of daily production, reproduction and co-residence instead dubbed the 'domestic domain'.⁸⁹ However, such a divide implies a level of observable daily variation that is not possible for historians, where the unit's appearance has been calcified through literary sources and the death of all members. To solve this, I consider the domestic domain within the household, a choice that is not without precedent. To economists, the domestic domain is an integral part of the household, defined as a domestic unit with decision-making autonomy about production and consumption, generally including a single head and labour force who did not possess such significant autonomy.⁹⁰ This model itself has been criticised for overstressing the unity and independence of individual households and underrepresenting the mobility of individuals within them.⁹¹ It is necessary to remember that a household is affected by and interacting with the wider community continuously, and its functions are not necessarily performed jointly by all members. In the Armenian context this means the household is continually shaping and being shaped by the clan system.

⁸⁷ Fortes, 'Introduction', p. 1.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸⁹ Roberts, 'Anthropological Perspectives on the Household', p. 60.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 64; Guyer, 'Household and Community', pp. 98-99.

1.4.3 – Armenian Terminology

The clan/household division is a modern academic distinction and does not originate from Armenia itself, meaning that the two structures are not consistently separable in Armenian sources. The absence of a written legal framework until long after the period also means no consistent attempt was made to categorically differentiate extents of family groupings from one another, in a way found in societies with better preserved legal sources. There is, for example, nothing approaching Sasanian law's distinction between *dūdāg* (an individual family unit/household); *kadag* (a lineage limited to three or four generations of agnates descending from a *kadag xwadāy*, 'household lord'/*pater familias*); and the broader kin group – referred to as *nāf* ('kin'), *tōm* ('seed') or *gōhr* ('essence').⁹² Regardless, it is useful to familiarise ourselves with several key terms that will appear in the clan or household context.

The term *sepuh* ('cadet', deriving from Avestan *vīsō-puθra-*, 'son of a [noble] house') is used to refer to all a clan's adult male agnates (that is, individuals descended from the same real or fictive male ancestor) other than the clan head.⁹³ The term is not found in a household context and was used relatively non-specifically, rarely distinguishing based on seniority, age or relational proximity. Łazar refers to brothers, sons and nephews of *tanutēr* as *sepuh* without distinction.⁹⁴ While *awag* ('senior') or *mec* ('great') was occasionally used to indicate particularly important *sepuh*, this was not consistent and likely did not represent an official gradation so much as an in-the-moment acknowledgement of prestige, given it sometimes appears in conjunction with *awag tanutēr* ('senior *tanutēr*').⁹⁵ The term's non-specificity makes fine-grained analysis highly speculative, including obscuring the degree of relation that conveyed *sepuh* status. They perhaps extended only to four degrees of relation in

⁹² Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, p. 27.

⁹³ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 357; Toumanoff, *Studies*, pp. 124-126. Cf. Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 6, n. 30.

⁹⁴ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 521, n. 77. For example, Łazar 18, 27, 67, 94, pp. 2234-2235, 2248-2250, 2316, 2365.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 23.6, 25.8, 27.21, 45.1, pp. 2242, 2244, 2249, 2278.

the Christian period, but several reconstructions suggest a much wider network. Such an extent would match the degree of relation considered incestuous in the Canons of Šahapivan, but this reflects Biblical precedents surrounding consanguinity and cannot be reliably back-formed to reconstruct the bounds of the *naxarar* system, which appears well established by the onset of Christianity.⁹⁶ Robert Bedrosian envisioned *naxarar* clans as at times containing thousands of related individuals, which would require a wider network of relationships.⁹⁷ *Sepuh* may even have denoted marital connection. T'ēodoros Trpatuni is included at the end of a list of Vahewuni *sepuhk* ('cadets') who rebelled against the Greeks in Sebeos, suggesting he was *sepuh* to his marital clan.⁹⁸ Varazvaḷan Siwni was identified as a *sepuh* and son-in-law of mid-fifth-century CE *tanutēr* Vasak Siwni, but may have also borne an unattested birth relation to that clan.⁹⁹

Other terms are confusing because the distinction between clan and household is not made consistently. *Tēr* ('lord', from Arm. *ti-ayr*, 'great man'), like its derivative *tanutēr*, often referred to the clan's head but could also denote heads of individual households when not used as a title.¹⁰⁰ This results in instances such as *sparapet* Manuēl Mamikonean conferring the status of *tērut'iw*n ('lordship') to his adult son Artašir, who was likely already a household *tanutēr*.¹⁰¹ *Išxan* ('prince', from Ir. *xšāna- 'prince, ruler', cf. Sogd. *axšāwan*,

⁹⁶ *KH* vol. 1, 18.13, pp. 446-450.

⁹⁷ Bedrosian, 'Dayeakut'iwn in Ancient Armenia', p. 24.

⁹⁸ Sebeos 17.3, p. 489.

⁹⁹ *Ew ēr Varazvaḷan ays p'esayac'eal išxanin Siwneac' Vasakay [...] zpilc sepuhn Siwneac' z Varazvaḷan*, ('And this Varazvaḷan was son-in-law of Prince Vasak Siwni [...] the foul *sepuh* of the Siwni, Varazvaḷan'), *Łazar* 20.2-6, pp. 2237; Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 521, n. 77.

¹⁰⁰ The origin of the *ti-* prefix is currently unknown. *Ayr* has been connected to Gr. *ánēr*, 'man, husband', with Antoine Meillet in 1896 rejecting an origin from PIE **ysen-*, 'male'. However, a connection between Arm. acc/loc. pl. *ars*, 'men', and PIE acc. pl. **an̥ns*, 'men', was upheld. Martirosyan, *Etymological Dictionary*, pp. 61-62.

¹⁰¹ *Apa yet aysorik hiwandac'aw sparapetn zawravarn Hayoc' Manuēl zaxt hiwandut'ean mahu. ew koč'eac' zordi iw*r zArtašir, *ew et nma ztērut'iw*n iwr ew z*sparapetut'iw*n zawravarut'eann iwroy, ('After that *sparapet* and general of Armenia Manuēl fell ill with a fatal disease. And he called his son, Artašir, and gave to him his *tērut'iw*n and his *sparapet* generalship'), *Epic Histories* V.44.7, p. 415. *Sparapet* was a military title derived from Parth. *spāhbed* ('general', lit. 'army lord') designating the general-in-chief of Armenian forces, which was hereditarily associated with the Mamikonean family from the fourth century CE at latest until the second half of the eighth century, when it transferred to Smbat Bagratuni. S. La Porta, 'Sparapet', in *The Oxford Dictionary of*

'king', ultimately from Proto-Iranian *xšāH- 'to rule, be lord of'), often used for heads of particularly powerful clans, could also imply a lord of any type.¹⁰² Ultimately, the term that was most consistently used only for clan heads was *nahapet* ('patriarch', from Parth. *nāfapat*, 'head of clan').¹⁰³ This could denote the oldest members of a clan and was widely attested as a term for Biblical patriarchs and heads of powerful clans like the Orduni and Mamikoneans but was not used as frequently as *tēr* or *tanutēr* and ultimately fell out of common usage at some point before the twelfth century.

Given such terminological vagaries, the thesis will not attempt a differentiation between clan and household *tanutēr*, instead relying on context to indicate which is meant. This may seem like a recipe for confusion, but this lack of extricability is a useful reminder that the clan and the household represent artificial, academic divisions. The two units performed different functions but were not separate nor separable from one another. It is likely any privileging of clan uses of terms over household represent nothing more ideological than the preoccupations of Armenian narrative sources, whose focus on the public and political spaces (where clan identity predominated) cause the clan meaning of *tanutēr* and its equivalents to be more frequently applied.

Late Antiquity, vol 2, ed. O. Nicholson (Oxford, 2018), p. 1410. All compounds ending *-pet* emerge from Parthian/Persian °*bed*, from PIE **pati-* 'lord, master'.

¹⁰² Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 7; C. Toumanoff, 'Introduction to Christian Caucasian History: The Formative Centuries (IV-VIIIth)', *Traditio* 15 (1959), pp. 116-117. On the etymology of *išxan* see R. Schmitt and H.W. Bailey, 'Armenia and Iran iv. Iranian influences in Armenian language', *Elr*; Ačārean, *Hayerēn armatakan bašaran*, vol. 2, pp. 246-247. Vyacheslav Ivanov instead suggests an etymology from Hittite *ešha-š/-išha-š* 'master, owner of a slave', Ivanov, 'Probable Structure', p. 13. Koriwn referred to *Dustr*, wife of Vardan Mamikonean, as *išxanakin* ('wife of an *išxan*), but no gendered equivalent exists for *naxarar* or *nahapet*, Koriwn, 25.3, p. 253; Zakarian, *Women, Too, Were Blessed*, p. 49.

¹⁰³ *Datastanagirk'*, trans. Thomson, p. 112, n. 289; S. Gabamachean, *Nor bargirk' hayerēn lezui [New Dictionary of Armenian Language]* (Istanbul, 1910), p. 1013; *Epic Histories* III.4.3, p. 280. For the secular use of *nahapet* see Garsoïan's commentary in *Epic Histories*, trans. Garsoïan, p. 548; Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 6, n. 30.

1.5 – Other Definitions

Beyond the clan and household, attempts to study the family engage scholars with many different segments of Armenian society. Questions of social standing and the relative position of individuals require the dissertation to define the understandings of class, sex, gender and age category that will be used. These definitions implicitly affect each chapter, while terminology required for a specific section (such as the *pater/genitor* distinction) will be defined in the relevant chapter.

1.5.1 – Class

In illustrating the *naxarar* system, the various significant lay groups forming Armenian society will be referred to as classes. The term is not used in a strictly Marxian sense.

Although Armenia's social model was broadly para-feudal – centred on a nobiliary elite based around vast, rural estates – much is unknown about it, and contorting what is observable into a Marxist framework would be reductive.¹⁰⁴ Rather, 'class' here intends to express that clans were organised into at least three more-or-less discrete social categories: *naxarar* ('high nobility'), *azat* ('lesser nobility', lit. 'free'), and *anazat* ('non-noble', lit. 'unfree').¹⁰⁵ Priestly families occupied their own co-occurrent but connected hierarchy, with

¹⁰⁴ Hewsen, 'Ecclesiastical Analysis', p. 98.

¹⁰⁵ Nina Garsoïan compared Armenian classes to the Zoroastrian estates, with *naxarar* corresponding to Iranian *wuzurgān* (lit. 'big, great men'), the *azat* to their Iranian cognate *āzād* (lit. 'free', perhaps ultimately etymologising from *zan-* 'born [into the clan]') and the *šinakan* to MP. *wāstaryōšān* ('farmers'). On the absence of scribes (MP. *dibīr*; Arm. *dpir*) from Armenian sources, she suggests the Christian clergy assumed their functions, as supported by Nersēs and Meršapuh's proclamation about *dpir*, who appear in the church alongside a *k'ahanay*, that *zjew ekelec'akanac' anel iwroy kargin vayel ē əst k'ahanayakan awrini* ('it is fitting he hold the clerical costume of his rank according to priestly right'). N.G. Garsoïan, 'Naxarar', *EIr*; *idem*, 'Azat-/Azatut'iwñ', in *Epic Histories*, trans. Garsoïan, pp. 512-513; M.-L. Chaumont and C. Toumanoff, 'Āzād (Iranian Nobility)', *EIr*; *KH* vol. 1, 20.11-12, p. 483.

anazat forbidden from becoming priests or purchasing church lands, and bishops frequently being of *naxarar* origin.¹⁰⁶

Unlike households, all clan members were confined to the same broad class. The term *azat* was sometimes used as an umbrella term to refer both to the local elite and the *naxarar*, but a distinction did exist that indicates these two classes possessed separate and recognised social identities. The Council of Šahapivan frequently specified specific sanction for members of the *azat* but referred to *naxarar* only in its final canon which implied that the clergy had limited recourse to sanction them.¹⁰⁷ Movses Xorenac‘i also refers to Nersēs Dimak‘sean being promoted from *azat* to *naxarar* status, a promotion that applied to all his clan members in perpetuity, separating them from their former position as *azats*.¹⁰⁸ No equivalent promotions of *anazat* are recorded, either because they were insufficiently noteworthy to Armenian authors, or because they did not occur due to the class boundaries between nobles and non-nobles being less permeable than those between different grades of the nobility.

Clans may also have been further hierarchically structured within their classes, one beneath the other from the royal Aršakuni down, existed. Both the *Gahnamak* and *Zōranamak* purportedly reconstruct such an order among the *naxarar*, although their validity is dubious.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, they were not merely organised in a simple hierarchy, but were also contained into wider, clan-bounded and exclusive groups. While a degree of presentism is unavoidable in calling these classes, I find this more useful than the non-specific ‘social group bounded’ which possesses misleading implications, since women or holy men could be considered different ‘social groups’ but were still members of the same broad class.

¹⁰⁶ *KH* vol. 2, 38.8, pp. 206-209.

¹⁰⁷ *KH* vol. 1, 18.20, pp. 464-465.

¹⁰⁸ *MX* II.47.

¹⁰⁹ See Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, III.A-B, pp. 191-195, 67*-72*.

Finally, it is worth saying more on the *anazat*, who were also called *šinakan* ('peasant') and *ramik* ('low-born').¹¹⁰ Adontz suggested *šinakan* were free, while other *anazat* were unfree serfs, but this misunderstands *anazat* as meaning literally 'unfree'.¹¹¹ More probably both *ramik* and *šinakan* possessed little social power but were technically free, with the terms either being synonyms or denoting a difference that is not readily reconstructible. Vahan Kurkjian suggested *šinakan* were a subcategory of *ramik*, whilst Simon Payaslian more recently argued *šinakan* was the common term and *ramik* denoted poor urban labourers.¹¹² Clerical literature supports Payaslian's hypothesis. *Šinakan* appears eleven times across eight canons of Šahapivan while *ramik* is not used.¹¹³ The 645 CE Council of Dwin refers once to *ramik heceloc* ('plebian cavalymen'), but otherwise used *šinakan*.¹¹⁴ This may imply a prestige difference, further supporting Payaslian, since Movses Xorenac'i claimed King Vałaršak ordered townspeople to be more highly regarded than their countryside equivalents.¹¹⁵ However, enough uncertainty exists to remain cautious. Xorenac'i's supposed source for Vałaršak's reforms (the Parthian archives attributed to Mar Abas Catina) are fictitious.¹¹⁶ *Epic Histories* at one point implies *ramik* were inferior, describing the gathering of Armenians who sent Andovk Siwni and Aršawir Kamsarakan to petition the Byzantine Emperor for aid against Šābuhr II including *šinakanac' angam ramik*

¹¹⁰ Zakarian, *Women, Too, Were Blessed*, p. 44. Note that the position of *šinakan* does not neatly accord with modern understandings of peasantry, as they had little control over the land they worked. Compare J. Banaji, 'Economic Trajectories', in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. S.F. Johnson (Oxford, 2012), p. 610.

¹¹¹ Toumanoff, 'Introduction to Christian Caucasian History', p. 71; N. Adontz, 'L'aspect iranien du servage', *Recueils de la Société Jean Bodin* 2 (1959), pp. 150-151.

¹¹² V.M. Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia* (New York, 1964), pp. 315-316; S. Payaslian, *The History of Armenia: From the Origins to the Present* (New York, 2007), p. 31.

¹¹³ *KH* vol. 1, 18.3-5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, pp. 432-444, 446-450, 455-459.

¹¹⁴ *KH* vol. 2, 38.8-9, 12, pp. 206-211.

¹¹⁵ *Hraman tay' ew k'alak'ac'eac' mardkan argoy ew patiw linel arawel k'an zgeljkac'. ew geljkac' patuhel zk'alak'ac'n orpēs zišxans* ('[Vałaršak] ordered that the men of the cities be more highly esteemed than countrymen, and the countrymen honour the citizens as princes'), MX II.8, pp. 117-118.

¹¹⁶ N.G. Garsoian, 'Movsēs Xorenac'i', *EIr*.

mardkann ('*šinakan* and even *ramik* men').¹¹⁷ Since the difference between *ramik* and *šinakan* cannot be confidently established, I treat them as largely synonymous.

1.5.2 – Culture

Establishing a bounded and coherent Armenian 'culture' for discussion of the *naxarar* system is difficult. Adam Kuper notes that 'culture' is a fabrication that cannot be unproblematically understood by outsiders, a warning that is especially pertinent to historians.¹¹⁸ Since no living members of the late antique world exist, any attempt at illustrating their systems will invariably be an external reconstruction.

Furthermore, discussion of a singular 'Armenian culture' assumes a more uniform picture than existed.¹¹⁹ The Armenian highlands had been a crossroads between Europe and the Middle East since at least the late Neolithic, and ethnographically the region was likely never comprised of a single unified group.¹²⁰ After Persia and Byzantium's division of Armenia during the 387 CE Peace of Acilesene the region rarely fell consistently under one administration, with Persarmenia keeping its sovereign until 428 CE while the smaller western regions were ruled directly by Byzantium with no centralised Armenian authority.¹²¹ What constituted Armenia from any given date, context or perspective varied. This plurality was noted by contemporary sources. The sixth-century CE ps.-Zacharias Rhetor split

¹¹⁷ *Epic Histories* III.21.2, p. 306.

¹¹⁸ A. Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account* (London, 1999), p. 19.

¹¹⁹ Kuper, *Culture*, p. 19.

¹²⁰ A survey of genetics of the modern regions of Ararat Valley, Gardman, Sasun and Lake Van, suggested a shared source population for Armenian groups but also displayed heavy differentiation consistent with a variety of different populations entering, specifically from Turkey in Sasun, the Balkan Peninsula in Lake Van and Iran, Greece and North Africa in Gardman and Ararat Valley. In Late Antiquity Utik', northeast of Lake Sevan, contained a Sewordi Turkic component and numerous prominent families (including the Bagratuni, Arcruni and Mamikoneans) depicted themselves with non-Armenian heritage. R.K. Lowery et al, 'Regionalized Autosomal STR Profiles among Armenian Groups Suggest Disparate Genetic Influences', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 146 (2011), pp. 171-178; M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025* (London, 1996); N.G. Garsoïan, 'Mamikonean Family', *EIr*.

¹²¹ Pogossian, 'Women at the beginning of Christianity in Armenia', pp. 357-358.

Armenia into five peoples, including Gurzan (Georgian) and Arran.¹²² We should therefore not expect identifiers of ‘Armenia’ to create one bounded, unproblematic category.

Adapting Tim Greenwood’s model for identifying Armenian spaces, I consider Armenia simultaneously a political entity comprised of the regions that historically formed the Aršakuni kingdom; a linguistic identity of all regions that spoke Armenian; and a geo-religious definition that incorporated churches in communion with the Armenian Kat’oikos, with all definitions redrawn and renegotiated to meet contemporary political and confessional circumstances.¹²³ Armenian identity could even be claimed if none of these features were present, being ascribed to the Roman emperor prophesied to deliver Christian Armenians from Islamic domination by the twelfth-century apocalyptic text *Prophecies of Agat’ on*, which was based on his supposed descent from one of three hundred warriors King Trdat III gifted to Constantine the Great upon visiting Constantinople.¹²⁴ None of these definitions then were essential, but all three overlapped and interacted in creating Armenian groups that were both utilised by insiders and identified by external observers. The first and third definitions are most important for the present study, but the second one is significant because the Armenian language in its written form is the lens through which an ‘internal’ Armenian voice is distinguished, rendering the speech-community implicit in all analysis.

I have also chosen to characterise the pre-Christian faith of Armenia as Zoroastrianised when it could be argued to be properly Zoroastrian. Pre-Christian Armenia displayed a greater integration of Zoroastrian deities and elements than Mesopotamia – the province containing the Sasanian royal conurbation of Ctesiphon – with deities significant to Parthian Zoroastrianism, Mithra and Vahagn (likely from Avestan *Vərəθragna*), being

¹²² *The Syriac Chronicle Known as That of Zachariah of Mitylene*, trans. F.J. Hamilton and E.W. Brooks (London, 1899), 12.7, pp. 327-328.

¹²³ T.W. Greenwood, ‘Armenian Space in Late Antiquity’, in *Historiography and Space in Late Antiquity* ed. P. Van Nuffelen (Cambridge, 2019), p. 57.

¹²⁴ Z. Pogossian, ‘The Armenian Version of Ps.-Hippolytus *De Consummatione Mundi* and its Impact on the Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: A First Appraisal’, *Le Museon* 133.1-2 (2020), pp. 142-143.

particularly prominent.¹²⁵ Comparatively, only one god enumerated in Armenian conversion narratives, Astlik (lit. ‘little star’), had a clear native origin.¹²⁶ Of the divinities included in the Armenian calendar as the names of days (Astlik, Mihr, Aramazd, Anahit, Vahagn and Apam Napat), five were Zoroastrian deities, while the months also largely accorded with the Zoroastrian calendar, including months named in honour of the gods Tir (*trē*), Mihr (*mehekan*) and the new year’s celebration of Nowruz (*nawasard*).¹²⁷

Pre-Christian Armenia’s high integration of Greek deities – seen in terracotta statuettes at Artaxata and numismatic finds – does not disprove its Zoroastrian nature.¹²⁸ Parthian Zoroastrianism also heavily integrated Greek elements. A bronze Heracles statue, identified as Vərəθragna by Parthian inscription, was found in excavations at Seleucia-on-Tigris in Mesopotamia.¹²⁹ That these were unorthodox by later Zoroastrian standards is not disqualifying. Albert De Jong suggests that a coherent Zoroastrian orthodoxy was a Sasanian-era fiction that obfuscates the faith’s pluralistic and regional character by reading the results of Zoroastrianism’s long pre-Islamic history onto other contexts as if they unproblematically reflect its founder’s original intent.¹³⁰ I call pre-Christian Armenians ‘Zoroastrianised’ as a practical consideration rather than a judgement of their lacking orthodoxy, to avoid confusion

¹²⁵ A. de Jong, ‘Armenian and Georgian Zoroastrianism’, in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, eds. M. Stausberg and Y.S.-D. Vevaina with A. Tessmann (Chichester, 2015), p. 123, 127. Cf. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, p. 143, 153. Armen Petrosyan instead proposes local origins that were subsumed under Iranian names, A. Petrosyan, ‘State Pantheon of Greater Armenia: Earliest Sources’, *Aramazd* 2 (2007), pp. 174-201.

¹²⁶ M.P. Canepa, *The Iranian Expanse: transforming royal identity through architecture, landscape, and the built environment, 550 BCE-642 CE* (Oakland, 2019), p. 199.

¹²⁷ M. Compareti, ‘Armenian Pre-Christian Divinities: Some Evidence from the History of Art and Archaeological Investigation’, in *Studies on Iran and The Caucasus: Presented to Prof. Garnik S. Asatrian on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday*, eds. U. Bläsing, V. Arakelova and M. Weinreich (Leiden, 2015), p. 194; L.H. Gray, ‘On Certain Persian and Armenian Month-Names as Influenced by the Avesta Calendar’, *JAOS* 28 (1907), pp. 331-344.

¹²⁸ Compareti, ‘Armenian Pre-Christian Divinities’, pp. 195-196.

¹²⁹ A. Invernizzi, ‘Héraclès a Séleucie du Tigre’, *Revue Archéologique* 1 (1989), pp. 65-113.

¹³⁰ A. de Jong, ‘Regional Variation in Zoroastrianism: The Case of the Parthians’, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, New Series 22 (2008), pp. 20-22; T. Daryaee, ‘The Fall of the Sasanian Empire to the Arab Muslims: From Two Centuries of Silence to Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Partho-Sasanian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran’, *Journal of Persianate Studies* 3 (2010), pp. 250-252; A. Hultgård, ‘The Mandaean Water Ritual in Late Antiquity’, in *Ablution, Initiation and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, vol. 1, eds. D. Hellholm, T. Vegge, Ø. Norderval and C. Hellholm (Berlin, 2011), p. 88.

with Sasanian Zoroastrianism and indicate that Armenian sources elide any sense of Zoroastrian origin.

1.5.3 – Gender and Sex

Since Armenian social practices were heavily gendered, their study benefits from a sensitivity to issues of gender and sex. Sex – a physiological term denoting the biological aspect of male and female – is generally less relevant to our discussion than gender – the behavioural, social and psychological characteristics of men and women, which may be informed by biology but are not biologically determined.¹³¹ This is because gender is one of the most universal means by which social and psychological identities are formed.¹³² Its social dimension means that gender norms and differences are more visible than those of sex and change both between and within individual cultures.¹³³

As transgender and intersex people become more visible in popular discourse, it is ever more apparent that considering gender and sex as synonymous and totalising fails to account for reality.¹³⁴ Societies demonstrate a multiplicity of gender presentations, which may be overtaken and replaced by others under sufficient pressure.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, *Kin and Culture* generally treats gender and sex synonymously and as a binary of opposites. This is

¹³¹ J. Pryzgodna and J.C. Chrisler, 'Definitions of Gender and Sex: The Subtleties of Meaning', *Sex Roles* 43.7/8 (2000), p. 554.

¹³² E.A. Stewart, *Exploring Twins: Towards a Social Analysis of Twinship* (London, 2000), p. 150.

¹³³ See, for example, Thorne's discussion of the high degree of gendered separation among schoolchildren at school compared to elsewhere. B. Thorne, *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1993), pp. 34-61.

¹³⁴ On the difference between sex and gender and the problem with a binary construction of sex and gender in the modern day, see the collection *Normed Children: Effects on Gender and Sex Related Normativity on Childhood and Adolescence*, eds. E. Schneider and C. Baltes-Löhr, trans. M. Müller and S. Volkens (Bielefeld, 2018).

¹³⁵ J. Scott, 'Hegemonic Masculinity', *A Dictionary of Sociology*, ed. J. Scott (Oxford, 2015), p. 302; R.W. Connell and J.W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and Society* 19 (2005), pp. 829-859. For a twentieth-century example of this change occurring in the US perceptions of the military, see C. Duncanson, 'Hegemonic Masculinity and the Possibility of Change in Gender Relations', *Men and Masculinities* 18.2 (2015), pp. 231-248; S. Niva, 'Tough and Tender: New World Order, Masculinity and the Gulf War', in *The 'Man Question' in International Relations*, eds. M. Zalewski and J. Parpart (Boulder, CO, 1998), pp. 118-121.

not intended to challenge the validity of constructing gender or sex more complexly or a suggested approach for general study. Rather, it reflects the character of late antique Armenian sources, which generally based an individual's gender identity on assumed sex characteristics and heavily regulated the roles available to women. There is evidence of more complex understandings of gender, particularly in chapter two's discussion of eunuchs and chapter three's analysis of women, both groups who were excluded from masculinity yet had some presence in the male-dominated public sphere. However, the Armenian family as institution relied on reducing this reality down to a self-supporting model that considered gender and sex synonymous and their divisions binary. The study thus conflates the two except in areas where the discontinuity this creates is notable.

1.5.4 – Adulthood and Childhood

The distinction between adult and child is sometimes even more important than gender in deciding an individual's position in society. Boys especially lack the resources necessary in many cultures to operate male privilege, leaving them more defined by their 'child' position than gender.¹³⁶ Despite this, childhood has attracted little study and many modern examinations still consider children only in terms of the adults they will become.¹³⁷ No examination of the Armenian family can be attempted without what is arguably the purpose of the family. Therefore, a model for analysing the child/adult divide must be formulated.

Biologically determined models of childhood are presentist and impossible to apply to Late Antiquity. While physical maturation is a universal experience, navigation into adulthood is more often based on developmentally arbitrary cultural notions. The biological

¹³⁶ Thorne, *Gender Play*, p. 172; C. Haywood and M. Mac an Ghaill, *Men and Masculinities: Theory, research and social practice* (Philadelphia, 2003), p. 72.

¹³⁷ C. Bartholomaeus, 'I'm not allowed wrestling stuff': Hegemonic masculinity and primary school boys', *Journal of Sociology* 48.3 (2012), pp. 230-231.

sciences' definition of childhood, as the period between weaning and the eruption of the first adult molar (M_1), accords with no culture's common understanding and is itself not cross-culturally static.¹³⁸ Weaning age depends on cultural expectations and, while still poorly understood, recent evidence suggests permanent tooth formation may be influenced by nutrition.¹³⁹ It has similarly been proposed that cultural expectations powerfully impact childhood brain development.¹⁴⁰

Another frequent marker for the end of childhood, the onset of menstruation (menarche) or semen production (semenarche) is likewise culturally influenced. Menarche requires an approximate 3:1 lean body weight to fat ratio to occur.¹⁴¹ Therefore, great variation exists between average age at menarche across place and time even, as one 2018 Danish study found, within the space of single generations.¹⁴² Male adolescence is less

¹³⁸ Biologists traditionally split human development into five stages: infancy (birth to weaning), childhood (weaning until M_1 molar eruption), juvenile (M_1 until the onset of puberty), adolescence (the course of puberty) and adulthood. B. Bogin, 'The Human Pattern of Growth and Development in Paleontological Perspective', in *Patterns of Growth and Development in the Genus Homo*, eds. J.L. Thompson, G.E. Krovitz, A.J. Nelson (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 15-44; R. Mace, 'Evolutionary Ecology of Human Life History', *Animal Behaviour* 59 (2000), pp. 1-10.

¹³⁹ G. Leick, 'Too Young – Too Old?: Sex and Death in Mesopotamian Literature', in *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World*, eds. M. Masterson, N. Sorkin Rabinowitz and J. Robson (New York, 2015), p. 82. Qamaruddin Nizami's examination of over 2,000 North Sudanese children found malnutrition had little effect on tooth stages, while Esan and Schepartz's more recent sample of 642 Black South African individuals concluded nutrition significantly impacted permanent tooth development, with overweight children reaching the final stage of development quicker than their underweight peers. T.A. Esan and L.A. Schepartz, 'Does nutrition have an effect on the timing of tooth formation?', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 171.3 (2020), pp. 470-480; Q. Nizami, 'Malnutrition Has No Effect on the Timing of Human Tooth Formation', *PLOS ONE* 8.8 (2013) [accessed online 23/07/2020 at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3758289/>].

¹⁴⁰ M. Donald, 'Evolutionary Origins of Autobiographical Memory: a retrieval hypothesis', in *Understanding Autobiographical Memory: Theories and Approaches*, eds. D. Berntsen and D.C. Rubin (Cambridge, 2012), p. 272; A. Högberg and P. Gärdenfors, 'Children, Teaching and the Evolution of Humankind', *Childhood in the Past* 8.2 (2015) pp. 114-115.

¹⁴¹ R.E. Frisch, 'Body Fat, Menarche, Fitness and Fertility', *Human Reproduction* 2.6 (1987), pp. 521, 524-525; A. Soliman, V. De Sanctis and R. Elalaily, 'Nutrition and Pubertal Development', *Indian Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism* 18.1 (2014), pp. 39-47.

¹⁴² N. Brix, A. Ernst, L.L.B. Lauridsen et al., 'Timing of Puberty in Boys and Girls: A Population-Based Study', *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology* 33.1 (2019), pp. 70-77; D.H. Morris et al., 'Determinants of Age at Menarche in the UK: Analyses from the Breakthrough Generations Study', *British Journal of Cancer* 103.11 (2010), pp. 1760-1764; L. Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 47-48; Amundsen and Diers, 'Age of Menarche', pp. 363-369. E.R. Baker noted a three-year decrease in the age of menarche between 1840 and the 1980s in the United States and Song et al. recorded a 4.5 month decrease per decade in China 1985-2010, E.R. Baker, 'Body Weight and the Initiation of Puberty', *Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology* 28.3 (1985), pp. 573-579; Y. Song, J. Ma, H.J. Wang et al, 'Trends of age at menarche and

studied, but evidence indicates similar nutritional effects on menarche.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the taboo nature of these processes mean that they are typically only discussed in Greek medical texts, which reflected historic rather than contemporary knowledge. Aetius Amidenus's sixth-century CE claim menarche occurred at fourteen was based on the second-century CE physician Soranus of Ephesus, not his own observations.¹⁴⁴ These biological markers are therefore too poorly recorded and prone to variation to ground a study of childhood in fifth- to seventh-century Armenia.

Kin and Culture considers childhood instead a biologically informed social position, generally denoting someone in the process of physical and psychological development and socialisation.¹⁴⁵ Childhood and adulthood are often defined through a series of binary opposites (e.g., play/work, asexual/sexual) meaning neither can meaningfully exist without the other.¹⁴⁶ Within this construction children are invariably of lower status. They are excluded from certain institutions and subordinated under adult authority by the assumption they are dependant, innocent/ignorant or otherwise unfit to make decisions that adults cannot override.¹⁴⁷ Not all societies contain a concept of childhood.¹⁴⁸ Phillippe Ariès' well-known

association with body mass index in Chinese school-aged girls, 1985-2010', *The Journal of Pediatrics* 165.6 (2014), pp. 1172-1177.

¹⁴³ E.R. Ezeome, S.O. Ekenze, R.O. Obanye et al., 'Normal Pattern of Pubertal Changes in Nigerian Boys', *West African Journal of Medicine* 16 (1997), pp. 6-11.

¹⁴⁴ L.A. Alberici and M. Harlow, 'Age and Innocence: Female Transitions to Adulthood in Late Antiquity', *Hesperia Supplements* 41 (2007), p. 195, n. 13; D.W. Amundsen and C.J. Diers, 'The Age of Menarche in Medieval Europe', *Human Biology* 45.3 (1973), pp. 363-364. See Soranus, *Soranus' Gynecology*, ed. and trans. O. Temkin (Baltimore, 1991), 1.4.20, p. 17.

¹⁴⁵ K.A. Kamp, 'Children and their Childhoods: Retrospectives and Prospectives', *Childhood in the Past* 8.2 (2015), pp. 162-163.

¹⁴⁶ K. Bacon, *Twins in Society: Parents, Bodies and Talk* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 11; Thorne, *Gender Play*, p. 154; R. Benedict, 'Continuities and Discontinuities in Cultural Conditioning', *Psychiatry* 1 (1938), pp. 161-167.

¹⁴⁷ M. Wyness, *Childhood and Society* (London, 2019), p. 53. On the separation of modern children from access to, for example, the economic apparatus, see O. Nieuwenhuys, 'The Paradox of Child Labor and Anthropology', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996), pp. 238-246. On the use of innocence and parental control as disempowering tactics, see A. James and A.L. James, *Constructing Childhood: Theory, Policy and Social Practice* (Basingstoke, 2004); J. Kitzinger, 'Defending Innocence: Ideologies of Childhood', *Feminist Review* 28 (1988), pp. 77-87; J.C. Galen, 'Interrogating Innocence: "Childhood" as exclusionary social practice', *Childhood* 26.1 (2019), pp. 54-67.

¹⁴⁸ A. Prout and A. James, 'A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, Promise and Problems', in *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, ed. A. James and A. Prout (London, 1997), pp. 7-9.

position – that childhood emerged in Europe only between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries CE – perhaps undervalues the existence of premodern childhoods, but nonetheless demonstrates childhood is culturally contingent and not identical across all societies.¹⁴⁹

Rather, childhood and adulthood are defined by adult society and subject to change based on its needs. While childhood experience does contain a biological component, the impact of cognitive and physical development on distinguishing children from adults should not be overstated.¹⁵⁰ Psychologists have long cautioned that these categories are often held without or in contradiction to scientific evidence.¹⁵¹ For example, the United States and much of Europe now consider the legal age of majority eighteen and the age at which an individual is considered competent to vote, despite sexual maturation typically occurring between ages ten and seventeen and neuromaturation continuing into the twenties.¹⁵² US voting age was reduced in 1960s from twenty-one to eighteen, to bring it into parity with conscription.¹⁵³ Contemporary Jacksonville senator Paul McMillan compared this to the English increasing majority from fifteen to twenty-one in the thirteenth century, which he claimed was also a

¹⁴⁹ P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. R. Baldick (New York, 1962), p. 125. Cf. A. Wilson, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood: an appraisal of Phillipe Aries', *History and Theory* 19.2 (1980), pp. 132-154; A. Classen, 'Phillipe Aries and the Consequences: History of Childhood, Family Relations and Personal Emotions: Where do we stand today?', *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality*, ed. A. Classen (Berlin, 2005), pp. 1-66; J. Clarke, 'Histories of Childhood', in *Childhood Studies: An Introduction*, ed. D. Wyse (Oxford, 2004), pp. 3-12.

¹⁵⁰ M. Sánchez Romero, 'Landscapes of Childhood: Bodies, Places and Material Culture', *Childhood in the Past* 10.1 (2017), p. 32.

¹⁵¹ S.B. Johnson, R.W. Blum and J.N. Giedd, 'Adolescent Maturity and the Brain: The Promise and Pitfalls of Neuroscience Research in Adolescent Health Policy', *Journal of Adolescent Health* 45.3 (2009), pp. 216-221; For a discussion of the dangers of over-privileging scientific arguments of childhood in modern American legal practice, see W. Gardner, D. Scherer and M. Tester, 'Asserting Scientific Authority: Cognitive development and legal rights', *American Psychologist* 44.6 (1989), pp. 900-901.

¹⁵² H. Gehlbach, 'Adolescent Development', *Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy*, vol. 1, ed. D.C. Phillips (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2014), pp. 18-19; E.R. Sowell, P.M. Thompson, C.J. Holmes et al. 'In vivo evidence for post-adolescent brain maturation in frontal and striatal regions', *Nature Neuroscience* 2.10 (1999), pp. 859-861; Johnson, Blum and Giedd, 'Adolescent Maturity and the Brain', pp. 216-221; S.M. Sawyer, P.S. Azzopardi, D. Wickremarathne and G.C. Patton, 'The Age of Adolescence', *Lancet Child and Adolescent Health* 2.3 (2018), p. 224. Tooth growth (third molar eruption) also generally continues into the twenties, although it concludes earlier in some populations, A. Olze, P. van Niekerk, T. Ishikawa et al, 'Comparative study on the effect of ethnicity on wisdom tooth eruption', *International Journal of Legal Medicine* 121.6 (2007), pp. 445-448.

¹⁵³ E.S. Scott, 'The Legal Construction of Childhood', in *A Century of Juvenile Justice*, eds. M.K. Rosenheim, B. Dohrn and D. Tanenhaus (Chicago, 2002), pp. 122-123.

military requirement to ensure men had adequate strength and training for mounted combat.¹⁵⁴ A similar instance of the bounds of childhood being redefined for military purposes occurred during the 1980-1988 Iraq-Iran war, when Iran replaced the Convention of the Rights of the Child's age-based definition of childhood with a Quaranic, puberty-based definition to legalise military service performed by boys under fifteen.¹⁵⁵

Such requirements need not retain relevance for the vision of adulthood they inspire to persist. A recent special issue of *American Psychologist* noted that the more cognitively challenging nature of work and increased educational preparation required to secure stable employment meant many individuals in modern societies did not meet the criteria culturally associated with adulthood – finishing education, obtaining stable work, marriage and parenthood – until well after reaching legal adulthood.¹⁵⁶ These boundaries then could outlive the cultural needs that spawned them if the impetus necessary to redefine them did not arrive, but they are nonetheless culturally specific. As such, study of Armenian childhood cannot apply modern scripts uncritically.

Childhood cannot be entirely divorced from class and gender variables since a child's access to power and protection depends on their placement in these hierarchies.¹⁵⁷ Noble boys were often particularly able to remain dependants and control their entry into adulthood in late antique societies, while girls were required to marry quickly and non-nobles to support their household through labour. This is partly why Byzantine adolescence was so often male-focused, to the point that the existence of a female adolescence in the period has been

¹⁵⁴ Statement of Paul McMillan, Jacksonville, Fla. in *Lowering the Voting Age to 18. Hearings, Nineteenth Congress, second session. May 14, 15, and 16, 1968* (Washington, 1968), p. 77.

¹⁵⁵ A. Giladi, 'The Nurture and Protection of Children in Islam: Perspectives from Islamic Sources', *Child Abuse and Neglect* 38 (2014), p. 586.

¹⁵⁶ J.J. Arnett, O. Robinson and M.E. Lachman, 'Rethinking Adult Development: Introduction to the Special Issue', *American Psychologist* 75.4 (2020), p. 426.

¹⁵⁷ Prout and James, 'New Paradigm', p. 8; S. Jackson, *Childhood and Sexuality* (Oxford, 1982), p. 26.

debated.¹⁵⁸ Given the dearth of lived experience in Armenian sources, I am more concerned with normative practice than exceptions, although women and children certainly would have contravened adult/masculine spaces in individual instances.

1.5.4.1 – Adolescence

Adolescence is a transitional category characterised by the gradual accumulation of adult access and identity. The period is often depicted as a third coherent stage. The definition the World Health Organisation adopted, for example, positions adolescence (ages 10-19) between childhood and adulthood as a third coherent category encompassing puberty.¹⁵⁹ However, rather than a third category I consider it a modifier laid over the adult/child binary. This is because, in practice, adolescents rarely receive a clear role in society, instead inhabiting an ambiguous space judged by the standards of both childhood and adulthood but officially considered one or the other.¹⁶⁰ Most adolescents following the WHO's definition are children according to the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, while 18- and 19-year-olds are simultaneously adolescents and legally/socially adults.¹⁶¹ John Coleman et al. noted the adolescent transition from child to adulthood had an ambiguous start and end date, with the latter being less well-defined in the WHO's definition.¹⁶² Adolescence is therefore best understood as a category supplied over the child/adult binary on an *ad hoc* basis to

¹⁵⁸ B. Caseau, 'Too Young to be Accountable: Is 15 Years Old a Threshold in Byzantium?' in *Coming of Age in Byzantium: Adolescence and Society*, ed. D. Ariantzi (Berlin, 2017), pp. 25-28.

¹⁵⁹ A. Brizio, I. Gabbatore, M. Tirassa and F.M. Bosco, "'No more a child, not yet an adult": studying social cognition in adolescence', *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (2015), p. 2; World Health Organisation, 'Adolescent Health' [accessed online at <https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health> on 21/09/2021]; K.L. Dehne and G. Riedner, 'Adolescence: A dynamic concept', *Reproductive Health Matters* 9.17 (2001), p. 11.

¹⁶⁰ M. Csikszentmihalyi, 'Adolescence', [accessed online at <https://www.britannica.com/science/adolescence-on-10/05/2021>].

¹⁶¹ United Nations General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child: Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49* (New York, 1989), p. 2.

¹⁶² J. Coleman, L. Catan, C. Dennison, 'You're the Last Person I'd Ever Talk to', in *Youth in Society: Contemporary Theory, Policy and Practice*, eds. J. Roche, S. Tucker, R. Flynn and R. Thomson (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2004), pp. 227-228.

manage individual transitions and elide inconsistencies that movement across a binary produce.

Since binaries produce no removal point for movement between them, some strategy is required to elide the transition, but adolescence is not the only way of doing this. Modern alternative categories include youth (typically ages 15-24) and more recently young adulthood and emerging adulthood (referring to approximately ages 18-26).¹⁶³ Elsewhere, children may enter adulthood immediately through an initiation or coming-of-age rite.¹⁶⁴ One form of transition management neither precludes nor evidences others' existence. Thus, it is not guaranteed that each culture would possess an adolescence.

Ideas regarding transition and what signs of biological maturity represent rely on contemporary social norms. Classical Greek medicine considered menarche or semenarche to mark puberty's end, while the modern Tanner Scale places them midway through a process that continues for several more years.¹⁶⁵ The scientific validity of each model is immaterial, as treatment of adolescents is determined more by the perception of development than actual biological change.

Both childhood and adulthood contain numerous subcategories – such as old age, infancy or parenthood – whose meanings are similarly culturally determined and often involve transition into a new social status (e.g., parent).¹⁶⁶ For the purpose of managing discussion and in recognition of the available source material's limitations for reconstructing Armenian social categories, these subcategories are considered within the adult/child binary rather than their own separate framework.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁶⁴ Dehne and Riedner, 'Adolescence: A dynamic concept', p. 12.

¹⁶⁵ Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies*, p. 48; J.M. Tanner, *Growth at Adolescence* (Oxford, 1962); Brix et al., 'Timing of Puberty', pp. 75-77; A. Diaz, M.R. Laufer and L.L. Breech, 'Menstruation in Girls and Adolescents: Using the Menstrual Cycle as a Vital Sign', *Pediatrics* 118 (2006), p. 2246.

¹⁶⁶ For discussion of the social construction of parenthood: R. LaRossa, *Becoming a Parent* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 1986), pp. 10-11.

1.6 – The Order of Chapters

The dissertation is organised into three unequal sections, reflecting the mutually supporting network in which the family operated. The clan, household and marriage are addressed in order, as the clan system was reinforced by households, which were formed by marriage.

The first chapter seeks to demonstrate the continual primacy of the clan structure, particularly the *naxarar* clans, in Armenian affairs throughout the fifth to seventh century. It offers a broad overview to demonstrate how clans, as a political and identity unit, justified the authority of the *naxarar* and structured and legitimised the power of Armenian institutions, including the church and monarchy. Royal and imperial authorities – the Byzantine and Sasanian empires and the Aršakuni or Armenian Arsacid royal family – imposed their own frameworks on Armenia and introduced elements which complicated or worked against the gender and kinship structures on which *naxarar* power was based. These never supplanted the *naxarar* clans as Armenia's dominant organisational power, but they do demonstrate the region's complexity. The section also addresses whether clans existed among other classes.

The chapter then explains this situation, arguing that Armenia's topography encouraged relatively local powerbases suitable for a clan structure and frustrated attempts by empires and monarchies to exert authority over the whole region. Armenia's position between rival empires further impeded centralisation. Although Byzantium was not averse to managing Armenia through its native hereditary lords, attempts were made under Justinian, Maurice and others to bring Armenia into accord with the Byzantine administration of imperial officials. The failure of these attempts to limit or constrain *naxarar* power resulted from these more general factors. Comparatively, while the *naxarar* system was heavily influenced by the culture of the Sasanian Empire's Parthian predecessors, Persia was not so concerned with limiting the powers of a clan-based elite. The Sasanian court was willing to

wed official positions and personal aristocratic power in a manner that was mutually supportive as opposed to oppositional, operating a system when dealing with the similar Christian aristocracy of Mesopotamia that resembled the less successful policy of the Aršakuni in Armenia and would not have been inherently threatened by the existence of a clan elite. Engaging with the character, social significance and resilience of the *naxarar* system explicitly through the lens of family then presents previously hidden complexity, helping to relate Armenia's noble, clerical and courtly administrations with the surrounding world.

The chapter on household further explains the *naxarar* system's resilience, while extending the study beyond the adult, male-dominated political sphere. Households played a vital role in embedding clans by furnishing them with new members, propagating alliances between them and incorporating members of multiple clans in a single residential unit. *Naxarar* households especially required individuals from other social classes to operate, some of whom bore no real or even fictive kin allegiance to the clan. The chapter also outlines the specific normative roles of men, women and children. The cross-residential child-rearing practices collectively referred to as *dayeakut'awn* ('wet-nursing') are discussed. *Dayeakut'awn* safeguarded a clan from extinction by raising children outside their natal households and reinforced alliances between the clans involved, while educating children and perhaps establishing affiliative quasi-kin bonds between child and guardian. This focus inter-clan bonds creates a bridge linking this chapter with the next, which establishes how households were formed.

The final chapter addresses the implications of normative marriage, wedding and betrothal. As the household supported the clan, so did marriage – as the only way to form new, legitimate households – support and replicate the household structure and establish alliances between clans. The chapter seeks to go beyond simply viewing marriage as a forum

for affiliation, illustrating how studying the Armenian family can illuminate seemingly disconnected areas through examining canonical approaches to marriage. Specifically, the church's unusually heavy involvement in marital practice compared to other contemporary Christian communities illuminates the region's legal system more generally. Armenian priests held a wide legal remit, possibly approaching a monopoly over systematised local justice. They officiated weddings and punished unacceptable betrothal strategies and marital forms. This role was likely adopted from the priesthood's Zoroastrianised pre-Christian forebears, which created tension between their need to balance Christian moral mores and their community's needs. The dissertation therefore engages with the complexities caused by Armenia's position between the Greek and Iranian worlds and demonstrates the amount a study through the lens of family can reveal, highlighting features of Armenian law in a period before a conclusive image of the judicial system can be created.

Wedded through *Kin and Culture* is a secondary question of the influences upon the Armenian clan system. This takes the analysis beyond expressing the peculiarities of an isolated and singular system to account for Armenia's position within the wider Iranian world. All sections demonstrate Armenian society was heavily influenced by a powerful Iranian, especially Parthian, substratum. This does not prove the practices discussed represent simple Armenian borrowings of Iranian practice but demonstrates that, by the time Armenian sources emerged, the region was heavily Iranianised to the point of sometimes appearing Iranian, irrespective of whether these institutions originated in Parthia, Persia or local custom. The impact of Armenia's long history in the Iranian milieu stretched far beyond the *šāhān-šāhs*' direct influence, although Sasanian conquest in 224 CE, Armenian conversion to Christianity c. 314 CE and Arab Conquests of the Iranian world from 633-654 CE all placed strains on Armenian-Iranian relations that ensured this was the last period that enjoyed such

close interaction.¹⁶⁷ In this way, the thesis demonstrates the complex interactions between locally and non-locally derived practices that undergirded family practices, where Iranian influence formed a particularly significant strand.

¹⁶⁷ H. Papazian, 'Armenia and Iran vi. Armeno-Iranian Relations in the Islamic Period', *EIr*.

Chapter 2 – The Clan in Late Antique Armenia

2.1 – Introduction

The clan was the most visible form of family in Armenia as the *naxarar*, the region's rural estate-based noble class, were organised around this extended family unit. While individuals often held positions in the imperial or Aršakuni administration, their power was undergirded by their membership in *naxarar* clans. The region's other institutions were structured around accommodating and utilising these hereditary clans, and the clan could therefore be considered the primary identity group governing the high nobility.

When approaching the *naxarar* through a clan lens, it is important to acknowledge the various pressures that informed this social pattern. The following chapter begins by outlining how the clans were embedded in Armenia, acknowledging their existence within a wider context of clan-based aristocracies that operated in the primarily non-Iranian speaking regions that had been politically and culturally part of the Parthian Arsacid Empire (247 BCE-224 CE). Albert de Jong termed this the 'Parthian Commonwealth'.¹⁶⁸ Within it, the *naxarar* clans were particularly powerful, productive and visible. They were also highly resistant to centralising forces, both the Aršakuni monarchy (12-428 CE) and the Byzantine and Sasanian imperial administrations. This was due to Armenia's isolating geography and vital strategic position, which hampered attempts to effectively dominate the entire region and encouraged both empires to instead adopt policies of split control. The region was divided from the Treaty of Acilesene in 387 CE until the Arab Conquest of Armenia in 638-645 CE. The Byzantines, who made more serious efforts to legislate against *naxarar* clans, held Greater Armenia, which comprised only around a quarter of the region for most of the

¹⁶⁸ de Jong, 'Armenian and Georgian Zoroastrianism', p. 127. These regions included parts of Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia and Georgia in the west and the Kushans in the east. A. de Jong, 'The Cologne Mani Codex and the Life of Zarathushtra', in *Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians: Religious Dynamics in a Sasanian Context*, ed. G. Herman (Piscataway, NJ, 2014), pp. 129-147.

period, excluding some territorial concessions in the reign of Maurice and the complete but temporary loss of Byzantine control during the 602-628 CE Roman-Persian War.¹⁶⁹ The Sasanians on the other hand, who held the remaining three quarters, dubbed Persarmenia, preferred to co-opt rather than undermine pre-existing clan power, as they did with Mesopotamia's clan-elite.

Finally, the chapter briefly considers the social depth of the clan system. While necessarily inconclusive, the clans' sheer prominence in Armenia suggests the *azat* and perhaps *anazat* classes were also organised into clans. The *naxarars*' existence within a broader Iranianised elite network does not preclude great social depth, since Parthian elements were infused throughout the language to a degree indicating extensive influence at every level. The existence of priestly clans also offers indirect evidence for clans among other classes.

¹⁶⁹ For an overview of this conflict, see J. Howard-Johnston, *The Last Great War of Antiquity* (Oxford, 2021).

2.2 – Problematics

As the clan was a political identity particularly visible in the *naxarar* class and among the adult male population, most of this chapter examines *naxarar* men. The fourth to seventh centuries are by far the best-studied period for this group, but the *naxarar* clans great importance makes this nonetheless an integral first step.¹⁷⁰ Nicholas Adontz contended ‘no serious understanding or interpretation of Ancient Armenian life and history’ could be attempted without examining the *naxarar*, while Richard Hovannisian subtitled the first volume of his edited collection on Armenian history, dealing with the fourth to the fourteenth century CE, ‘the Dynastic Periods’ in reference to the *naxarars*’ dynastic organisation.¹⁷¹ Other classes, the *azat* and *šinakan*, are recorded sparingly and the chapter therefore focuses primarily on the high elite.

That said, the unequal nature of *naxarar* biographical information means a complete picture cannot be drawn. Smaller clans were often obscured by narrative sources that focused primarily on more powerful dynasties, specifically the Mamikoneans. The Aršamunik‘, Vanand and Basean families are only recorded in narratives of their destruction or because they were offshoots of larger clans (the Mandakuni, Vanandec‘i and Orduni).¹⁷² The Habužean and Bagean disappear after 361 CE, their survival thereafter uncertain.¹⁷³ This inequal focus renders the exact number of clans that existed unclear.¹⁷⁴ The *Gahnamak* enumerates seventy, to which the *Zōranamak* adds nineteen more, but only a single folio of *Gahnamak* survives and some clans’ historicity is disputed.¹⁷⁵ Hewsens, using Toumanoff as a

¹⁷⁰ Pogossian, ‘Women at the beginning of Christianity’, p. 358. See, for example, Adontz, *Armenia in the period of Justinian*; Toumanoff, *Studies*.

¹⁷¹ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 165; *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1: *The Dynastic Periods, from Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century*, ed. R.G. Hovannisian (New York, 1997).

¹⁷² A. Mardirossian, *Le livre des canons arméniens (Kanonagirk‘ Hayoc‘) de Yovhannēs Awjnec‘i: église, droit et société en Arménie du IV^e au VII^e siècle* (Leuven, 2004), p. 107, n. 30.

¹⁷³ *Epic Histories* IV.11.4, p. 333; Hewsens, ‘Ecclesiastical Analysis’, p. 106.

¹⁷⁴ For a useful map of known clans, see Hewsens, *Atlas*, p. 63.

¹⁷⁵ Hakobyan, ‘Gahnamak ew Zawranamak’, p. 549.

basis, identified sixty-eight distinct *naxarar* clans in late antique Armenia, while Thomson suggested around fifty.¹⁷⁶ Such messiness means the chapter cannot provide a representative snapshot of the clan network in any one era, but instead strives to address the embeddedness of the clan system as a whole and its power relative to other institutions.

A greater variety existed than is accessible in the sources, both in the sense that not all clans are likely to have operated in the same way and that individual clans experienced change over time. Social identities are always performative and problematic, representing a negotiated space constantly in the process of being created, reappraised and recreated.¹⁷⁷ Their fixed, natural appearance is illusory, caused by the repetitive performance of central practices within a shifting landscape and by ignoring or not recording discontinuities.

The Siwni, whose inclusion within Armenia was ambiguous, are a prominent example of clan variation. Zachariah of Mytilene claims they spoke a different language to other Armenians and Siwnik' is recorded as a separate kingdom (*Sīgān šāh*) on the third-century Paikuli inscription of Nerseh I, and province (*Sīsagān*) on a late Sasanian seal of the *zarrbed* (lit. 'chief of gold'), an official entrusted with managing mines.¹⁷⁸ Sebeos' claim Vahan Siwni requested Husraw II transfer Siwnik' from the *diwan* ('administrative zone') of Dwin to P'ayatakaran may also reflect this controversy.¹⁷⁹ P'ayatakaran's own position relative to Armenia was ambiguous. Sebeos located it in Ādurbādagān, but it appears instead among the

¹⁷⁶ Hewsen, 'Ecclesiastical Analysis', pp. 100-102. See also, Toumanoff, *Studies*, pp. 192-252; R.W. Thomson, 'Eastern Neighbours: Armenia (400-600)', in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500-1492*, ed. J. Shepard (Cambridge, 2019), p. 159.

¹⁷⁷ J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London, 1999). Cf. T.H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, 3rd ed. (London, 2010), p. 81.

¹⁷⁸ Ps.-Zacharias Rhetor, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zacharias Rhetor: Church and War in Late Antiquity*, ed. and trans. G. Greatrex, R.R. Phenix and C.B. Horn (Liverpool, 2011), 12.7, p. 447; *The Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli*, part 3.1, §92; R. Gyselen, *Nouveaux matériaux pour la géographie historique de l'Empire Sassanide: Sceaux administratifs de la collection Ahmad Saedi* (Paris, 2002), pp. 31, 79, 226-227. For the identification of *Sīgān šāh*, see T. Daryaei, 'Armenia and Iran: The Birth of Two Nations in Late Antiquity', *Electrum* 28 (2021), pp. 63-64; W.B. Henning, 'A Farewell to the Khagan of the Aq-Aqatārān', *BSOAS* 14.3 (1952), p. 512.

¹⁷⁹ Sebeos 8.29-30, p. 471; G.E. Areshian, 'Sasanian Imperialism and the Shaping of Armenian Identity', in *Empires and Diversity: On the Crossroads of Archaeology, Anthropology, & History*, ed. G.E. Areshian (Los Angeles, 2013), p. 156.

fifteen lands of Greater Armenia in the short recension of the seventh-century geographical text *Ašxarhac'oyc'*, attributed to Anania Širakac'i.¹⁸⁰

The *naxarar* of Siwni had a reputation for allying with the Sasanians over other Armenians. An inscription of Ardašīr I found at Salmās in Siwni depicts two figures who Touraj Daryaee identifies as Siwni *naxarar*, likely attests the clan's early allegiance with the Sasanians.¹⁸¹ At the other end of the period, Siwni *tanutēr* Gregory II Novirak and his son died fighting for Persia at the 636 CE Battle of Qadisyya against the Arabs.¹⁸² The relationship between Siwni and the Sasanians had remained close, to the point that Cyril Toumanoff suggested Gregory Novirak was married to a daughter of *Šāhān-šāh* Husraw II.¹⁸³

Siwni was also the most powerful clan after the Aršakuni royal family. They were first *naxarar* clan enumerated in the *Gahnamak*; controlled the largest principality in Armenia and its only metropolitan see; and the *Zōranamak* contended they mustered more troops in defence of the realm than the next two clans combined: 19,400 compared to the Kadmeac'i and *bdeašx* ('military governor') of Gugark', who mustered 13,200 and 4,500 respectively).¹⁸⁴ This power may have made the Siwni uniquely able to flout Armenian norms. However, it seems more probable that the Siwni were merely the most visible

¹⁸⁰ Anania Širakac'i, *The Geography of Ananias of Širak (Ašxarhac'oyc') : the long and short recensions*, ed. and trans. R.H. Hewsen (Wiesbaden, 1992), V.22, pp. 59-59A, 255; Read, 'The *Ašxarhac'oyc'* and the Construction of Armenian Geo-political Space'.

¹⁸¹ Daryaee, 'Armenia and Iran', pp. 64-65. Shavarebi also proposes an Armenian identification for these figures, E. Shavarebi, 'A Reinterpretation of the Sasanian Relief at Salmās', *Iran and the Caucasus* 18 (2014), pp. 115-133. Contrast Maksymiuk, who instead identifies these figures as fourth-century Sasanian rulers Šābuhr II and Ardašīr II. K. Maksymiuk, 'The Sasanian Relief at Salmās: New Proposal', in *Crowns, Hats, Turbans and Helmets: The Headgear in Iranian History*, vol. 1: *Pre-Islamic Period*, eds. K. Maksymiuk and G. Karamian (Siedlce, 2017), pp. 108-109.

¹⁸² Sebeos 42.61-63, p. 530.

¹⁸³ C. Toumanoff, *Manuel de généalogie et de chronologie pour l'histoire de la Caucasic Chrétienne (Arménie – Géorgie – Albanie)* (Rome, 1976), p. 229.

¹⁸⁴ Hewsen, 'Ecclesiastical Analysis', p. 114; Hakobyan, 'Gahnamak ew Zawranamak', pp. 531, 538, 542-546. The territory of the Siwni remained undivided until Vasak Siwni II's death in 821 CE. Hewsen, *Atlas*, p. 121. *Bdeašx*, an Iranian position of uncertain etymology attested in Armenia and Georgia, was a hereditary title for the rulers of Gugark in Iberia. See W. Sundermann, 'Bidaxš', *EIr*; N. Aleksidze, 'Pitakhsh', *The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2018) [accessed online at <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662778.001.0001/acref-9780198662778-e-3748>, 16/06/2022].

example of clan variation. Step'anos Siwnec'i (d. 735 CE) recorded Armenian dialects not only in Siwni, but also Korčayk', Xoyt', Fourth Armenia, Sper, Arcax and one of the Mamikonean heartlands, Tayk'.¹⁸⁵ More variety therefore likely existed in practice than the available sources reveal.

In establishing the clan system's Iranian and specifically Parthian context, we must acknowledge that some of the best studies of the Parthian and Sasanian Empire are considerably dated. Arthur Christensen's *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* and George Rawlinson's studies of the Parthian Arsacids are unsurpassed in their scope and depth, but the former is almost eighty years old and the latter older, written before the rise of Iranian archaeology or the recovery of the Parthian language.¹⁸⁶ As such, this study is supplemented with more recent work in the fields of linguistic analysis and historical geography. Robin Meyer's dissertation on Parthian language elements in Armenian is especially helpful, as is Richard Payne's analysis of Northern Mesopotamia's largely Parthian elite and Richard Fowler's discussion of Arsacid use of Greek.¹⁸⁷ I am also indebted to the work of Fernand Braudel and James C. Scott, whose studies on topography's importance in limiting empires, in the Mediterranean and the Zomia highlands of Southeast Asia respectively, provide a framework for understanding Armenia's clans through their environment as much as their political history.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Greenwood, 'Armenian Space', pp. 57-58.

¹⁸⁶ A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen, 1944); G. Rawlinson, *The Sixth Great Oriental Monarchy: Or, The Geography, History, & Antiquities of Parthia* (London, 1900); *Idem, Parthia* (London, 1893).

¹⁸⁷ Meyer, *Iranian-Armenian Language Contact*; R.E. Payne, *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity* (Oakland, 2015); Fowler, 'Most Fortunate Roots', pp. 125-155.

¹⁸⁸ F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, vol. 1, trans. S. Reynolds (London, 1972); J.C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, 2009).

2.3 – The *Naxarar* System

The clan organisation of the *naxarar* is most visible in land ownership practices and naming conventions. *Naxarar* clans were associated through paternal relation, with maternal links rarely considered unless no male heirs existed. Each clan's holdings were centred on a core of land, called *hayrenik* ('inherited land, patrimony'), which was administered as a single unit by the *tanutēr* ('clan head').¹⁸⁹ Armenia was not entirely composed of parcels of *hayrenik* land. Elišē also referred to *pargewakank* ('gifted estates') and *k'sakagink* ('purchased estates'), indicating the existence of a market in land that may have permitted opportunities for individual landholding to nobles outside their clan structure.¹⁹⁰ Such estates may have included the former lands of the Aršakuni and other extirpated *naxarar* clans, or lands in urban centres, but evidence for their existence is slight. Adontz argued that *k'sakagink* was not as significant as the other two types of land and suggested *pargewakank* lands were exclusively small holdings.¹⁹¹ As such, *hayrenik* was likely the primary form of noble land holding in the region.

The *tanutēr* held significant authority within his clan, for example being empowered to operate the clan's *gund* ('battalion', from MP. *gund*, 'army, troop, gathering') as his private army. However, he was not autonomous from other agnates nor could he alienate *hayrenik* and bequeath it to whomever he chose. Rather, *hayrenik* was considered the clan's common property which he held in trust, effectively acting as a guardian. This may explain why, though commonly held by the most senior clan member, there was no strict rule of

¹⁸⁹ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 151-153; N.G. Garsoïan, 'Naxarar', *EIr*; C. Toumanoff, 'The Princely Nobility of Georgia', in *From Byzantium to Iran: Armenian Studies in Honour of Nina G. Garsoïan*, eds. J.-P. Mahé and R.W. Thomson (Atlanta, 1997), p. 41. See also Ačarean, *Hayerēn armatakan bararan*, vol. 1, pp. 593-595; D.N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (Abingdon, 1971), p. 38.

¹⁹⁰ Elišē 3.250, p. 619.

¹⁹¹ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 347-348.

primogeniture in *tanutēr* appointments.¹⁹² The position could be held by a more junior member if the current *tanutēr* was considered unfit. Aršak II received the *tanutēr* position as king of Armenia when his father, Tiran, was blinded.¹⁹³ *Sepuh* ('cadets') probably received shares of *hayrenik* 'to administer, as Nersēs and Meršapuh encouraged unlearned relatives of a priest to work on their *hayreni hol* ('paternal land') instead of seeking clerical offices.¹⁹⁴ The *tanutēr*'s role in deciding these allotments is unclear, but again, there does not appear to have been a strict seniority. Anania Širakac'i, in his mathematical text *Yalags harc 'man ew lucman* (*Concerning Questions and Answers*), offered no justification for depicting Nerseh Kamsarakan gifting more of the prisoners he captured from the city of Bahl to his younger brother Hrahat than the elder Sahak.¹⁹⁵ This suggests Hrahat held higher prestige, which may have had implications for *hayrenik* 'distribution as well as gift-giving.

Communal landholding of this type is cross-culturally typical of societies where an individual's primary (or sometimes, only) political and legal rights are conferred by membership to the family group.¹⁹⁶ That this was the case among the *naxarar* is suggested by their class universally possessing surnames, which were already well-established by the fifth century, although their origin cannot be reconstructed. For comparison, while the re-emergence of surnames in Byzantium can be traced to the eighth or ninth century CE, they saw increasing use during the eleventh and twelfth centuries as elite families became a more important source of social prestige.¹⁹⁷ The Armenian use of surnames among the *naxarar* therefore represents an unusually early adoption for outward markers of *genos* and such a practice suggests a particularly powerful elite of noble families.

¹⁹² Primogeniture is also absent from Sasanian inheritance practices. M. Macuch, 'Descent and Inheritance in Zoroastrian and Shi'ite Law: A Preliminary Study', *Der Islam* 94.2 (2017), p. 329.

¹⁹³ *Epic Histories* III.21.30-31, p. 308.

¹⁹⁴ *KH* vol. 1, 20.5, p. 480.

¹⁹⁵ T.W. Greenwood, 'A Reassessment of the Life and Mathematical Problems of Anania Širakac'i', *REArm* 33 (2011), pp. 165-166, 176.

¹⁹⁶ Lavenda and Schultz, *Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 153-154.

¹⁹⁷ N. Leidholm, *Political Families in Byzantium: The Social and Cultural Significance of the Genos as Kin Group, c. 900-1150* (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2016), pp. 2-5.

Naxarar surnames were often identical to names of the territory their clan controlled, and it is unclear whether territories were more commonly named after clans or vice versa. The predominance of patronymics suffixed *-uni* may suggest an origin in once-reconstructible lineages that began crystallising in the Urartian period.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, Siwni is cognate with Lake Sevan, which lay within the territory, and either name may have emerged from the other.¹⁹⁹ Regardless of individual origins, *naxarar* surnames had calcified by the fifth century to the point that ownership of their titular territory was not required for a *naxarar*'s clan identity to persist. The Vahewuni and Paluni kept their surnames upon being disinherited and re-established elsewhere, with a second region of Palunik' within Vaspurakan presumably denoting the site the latter was relocated to.²⁰⁰ However, surnames were not inviolable. Hewsen suggested the Vaspurakan Paluni, who are last recorded 505-506 CE, became the Mehnuni, a surname recorded only in late and unreliable sources that they may have adopted to distinguish themselves from the original line.²⁰¹ No single pattern emerges for *naxarar* surnames, yet the fact they existed at all testifies to the clan's significance in Armenia.

Naxarar power was often justified through aetiological myths, which justified a clan's lands and privileges through relation to prestigious ancestors or service to another power. The Aršakuni royal family claimed descent from Parthian King Aršak II (217-191 BCE) through his likely-mythical younger brother, King Vałaršak of Armenia; the Mamikoneans from Mamik and Konak, eponymous half-brothers of the second-century CE King Čenbakir of

¹⁹⁸ Geworg Ĵahukyan identified *-uni* as likely Urartian in origin. G. Ĵahukyan, *Hin hayereni verĴacanc'neri cagumə* (Yerevan, 1998), p. 812.

¹⁹⁹ A. Petrosyan, 'The "Eastern Hittites" in the South and East of the Armenian Highland?', *Aramazd* 4.1 (2009), p. 65.

²⁰⁰ Toumanoff, *Studies*, pp. 212, 215; Hewsen, 'Ecclesiastical Analysis', pp. 111-112.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-112. For the Mehnunik', see Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 68*-71*; Zenob Glak, *Patmut'iwñ Tarōnoy* (Venice, 1832), p. 48. Two bishops of Mehnuni (T'adēos and Aharon) appear in letters and clerical lists in the *Girk' T'it'oc'.* *GT'* 8, 16-17, 28-30, pp. 42, 70, 73, 146, 149, 151. T'ovma Arcruni places Mecnuni, perhaps a corruption of Mehnuni, alongside Palunik' in a list of regions given to Gagik Arcruni. T'ovma Arcruni and Anonymous, *Patmut'iwñ Tann Arcruneac'*, ed. M.H. Darbinyan-Melikyan (Erevan, 2006), III.29, pp. 277-278. For English translation, see *Idem, History of the House of the Artsrunik'*, trans. R.W. Thomson (Detroit, 1985), p. 314.

China; and the Eruanduni from mythical Aršakuni twins Eruand and Eruaz.²⁰² All these claims are of dubious historicity. Common tropes – like dynastic founders leaving their homelands after a failed uprising or relation to/through twin(-like) heroes – should remind us we are reading epic accounts.²⁰³ Movses Xorenac‘i offers several etymologies that instead attributing a clan’s surname to their role serving royals or other *naxarar* clans prior to their promotion, which may seem initially more plausible but are not supported by modern analysis. For example, he claimed the Spanduni’s name originated from their role supervising slaughterhouses (*spand*, ‘sacrifice, butchery’) for their parent clan, the Kamsarakan, but Hrač‘ Martirosyan connected it to the personal name Spandarāt (from Parthian **Spandaδāt(a)*-, ultimately OIr. *Spanta-δāta*, ‘given by Spəntā-’).²⁰⁴ Regardless of their authenticity, these internal claims demonstrate a desire to link contemporary authority with hereditary descent from empowered forebears, indicating the importance of the clan in justifying power.

Mythic origins could tie multiple clans together ideologically through common ancestry. The Arcruni, Gnuni, and hereditary *bdeašx* of Ałjnik‘, all supposedly descended

²⁰² Aršak and Vałaršak – MX I.8, II.68.7, pp. 1771-1772, 1953; Mamik and Konak – Sebeos 4, p. 461. Movses Xorenac‘i instead calls the Mamikonean progenitor Mamgon, while *Epic Histories* ascribes the family Chinese origin but does not name their founders. MX II.81, pp. 1971-1973; *Epic Histories* V.4.70, 37.20 pp. 384, 406; See also A. Petrosyan, ‘Origins of Prominent Armenian Princely Families According to Traditional Data’, *Journal of Armenian Studies* 1 (2017), pp. 5-13; A. Petrosyan and N. Tiratsyan, ‘First Armenian Capital Armawir as a Cult Center’, *Aramazd* 6.2 (2011), p. 161; S. Haroutyunian, ‘Armenian Epic Tradition and Kurdish Folklore’, *Iran and the Caucasus* 1 (1997), pp. 85-92. The post-eighth-century CE *Patmut‘iwn Taronoy*, attributed to Yovhannēs Mamikonean, offers a different origin for the Mamikonean princes of Tarawn, instead associating them with the twin pre-Christian Armenian deities Demetr and Gisanē, who are identified as Indian princes granted the region by Vałaršak. Ps.-Yovhannēs Mamikonean, *The History of Tarōn [Patmut‘iwn Tarōny]: Historical investigation, critical translation and historical and textual commentaries*, ed. and trans. L. Avdoyan (Atlanta, 1993), 107-110, pp. 87-88.

²⁰³ Petrosyan, ‘Origins of Prominent Armenian Princely Families’, p. 13. The Armenian epic poem *Daredevils of Sasun* identified Sanasar and Adramelēk as twins. Twins in such foundation myths were often fraternal opposites, representing different social principles. J. de Nooy, *Twins in Contemporary Literature and Culture: Look Twice* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 114-115; M.R. Shayegan, *Aspects of History and Epic in Ancient Iran: From Gaumāta to Wahnām* (Washington, DC, 2012), pp. 72-121.

²⁰⁴ *Asem ew zSpandunis d i veray zenaranac‘*, (‘I say also the Spanduni, administering (lit. over) the slaughterhouses’), MX II.7.16, p. 1857. Cf. H.K. Martirosyan, ‘The Armenian Patronymic Arcruni’, in *Over the Mountains and Far Away: Studies in Near Eastern history and archaeology presented to Mirjo Salvini on the occasion of his 80th birthday*, eds. P.S. Avetisyan, R. Dan and H. Grekyan (Oxford, 2019), p. 332. Cf. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 455, n. 15.

from the Biblical King Sennacherib of Assyria through his sons Sanasar and Adrammelech, while the Kamsarakan and Širak *tuns* were presented as descendants of the Parthian Karēn clan.²⁰⁵ Such mythic relations undergirded Armenian identity too. The region's native names – *ašxarh/erkir Hayoc* ('land of those [descended from] Hayk') and the even more familiar *Hayoc' tun* ('house of those [descended from] Hayk') – both imagined Armenia as a super clan descended from the mythical giant Hayk, later Christianised as the Biblical Japheth's great-grandson.²⁰⁶ Movses Xorenac'i similarly connected the word 'Armenia' to a descendant of Hayk' called Aram, which Armen Petrosyan suggests was a theophoric ethnonym from *Arma-* 'moon, moon god'.²⁰⁷ The reality that Armenians were not a unified ethnic group is here less important than the fact the identarian bounds of Armenia were explicitly understood in family terms. This was also implicitly true. The boundaries Greenwood contended late antique Armenians structured their identity around – shared language, religion and historic connection to the Aršakuni kingdom – matched the Greek idea of *ethnie* and the principles Albert Stepanyan identified in Armenian family identity construction – shared blood (*ariwn*), faith (*den*) and reason (*ban*, lit. 'word').²⁰⁸

One must not overemphasise mythic origins' significance in justifying *naxarar* authority and assume clans were only important because they claimed powerful ancestors. Though ancestry was significant in clan myth making, foundational myths appear relatively infrequently. That the patronymic origins of surnames like Spanduni could be forgotten and replaced by associations with fictional characters or positions indicates *naxarar* clans were

²⁰⁵ MX I.23, pp. 1814-1815; Martirosyan, 'Armenian Patronymic Arcruni', p. 331; Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc*, p. 107.

²⁰⁶ MX I.12.36, pp. 1786-1787; Greenwood, 'Armenian Space', p. 57; A.A. Stepanyan, 'Household/Family in Social Theory of Moses Khorenatsi', *VEM Pan-Armenian Journal* 4.68 (2019), p. 48.

²⁰⁷ MX I.12.38, p. 1787; A. Petrosyan, 'Moon God and Denomination of Armenia', *Aramazd* 7.1 (2012), pp. 68-71.

²⁰⁸ Greenwood, 'Armenian Space', pp. 57-85; Stepanyan, 'Household/Family', pp. 48-49. *Den* ('religion') is borrowed from MP. *dēn* (from Av. *daēnā*) a metaphysical and theological concept encapsulating religious affiliation (i.e. *Weh Dēn*, 'Zoroastrianism', lit. 'The Good Religion'), inner virtue and that virtue's personification in the form of a woman. For an overview of the term's uses and implications, see M. Shaki, 'Dēn', *EIr*, pp. 279-281.

more than simple expressions of lineage. They were heavily embedded groups where individuals' authority came primarily from connection to the clan itself and foundational myths were only part of justifying these clans' prestige.

2.3.1 – The Parthian Commonwealth

Clan organisation was not an Armenian peculiarity but fitted into a larger system of powerful clan-based elites operating in the once-Parthian world. The *wuzurgān* (lit. 'big ones') clans of Parthian Mesopotamia are more poorly recorded than the *naxarar* with only two, the Sūrēn and Karēn, definitively named in Parthian sources.²⁰⁹ While Sasanian-era records are fuller, ambiguous cases still exist. Ardašīr Tahmšābuhr and Narseh Gōbedān, recorded on the Paikuli inscription of Narseh I and a no-longer preserved fourth-century inscription at Meškinšahr in the Sabalan foothills respectively, may evidence otherwise unrecorded clan names or simply lineage-based patronymics.²¹⁰

Despite these uncertainties, evidence suggests the *wuzurgān* possessed nearly identical roles and privileges to their *naxarar* peers. They organised and commanded personal armies and were called upon by the *šāhān-šāh* to supervise taxes and manage Zoroastrian institutions.²¹¹ The Sūrēn clan's hereditary positions as *sipāh-sālār* ('commander in chief', lit. 'army chief') of the Parthian royal armies and *tājbaxš* ('bestower of the crown')

²⁰⁹ Rawlinson, *Sixth Great Oriental Monarchy*, p. 419; de Jong, 'Regional Variation', p. 23; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, p. 104.

²¹⁰ Skjærvø restores Tahmšābuhr (lit. 'of the seed of a king's son') as <'rthštr ZY t[h]mš[h]pwhry> and <'rthštr thmšhypwhr>. *Tōm* ('seed') is typically <twhm>, but the <w> may have been elided. Humbach suggests Gōbedān is a hereditary name referencing the mythic Iranian homeland of Gōbedestān attested in *Bundahišn*. *The Sassanian Inscription of Paikuli*, §32; R.N. Frye and P.O. Skjærvø, 'The Middle Persian Inscription of Meshkinšahr', in *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 10 (1996), p. 54; H. Humbach, 'About Gōpat-šāh, His Country, and the Khwārezmian Hypothesis', in *Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1985), pp. 331-333. Cf. *Bundahišn: Zoroastriische Kosmogonie und Kosmologie*, vol. 1: *Kritische Edition*, ed. F. Pakzad (Tehran, 2005), 29.5-7, pp. 339-340. For English translation: *The Bundahišn: The Zoroastrian Book of Creation*, ed. and trans. D. Agostini and S. Thrope (New York, 2020), 29.5-7, p. 155.

²¹¹ Payne, *State of Mixture*, p. 145.

to the king were equivalent to the Mamikonean and Bagratid privileges under the Aršakuni.²¹²

Parthian influence on Armenia is unsurprising, given Armenia's long history of membership in the Parthian Commonwealth. Armenia had come under the Parthian Arsacid Empire's control during the reign of Mihrdāt II (c. 121-91 BCE) and the throne was held by members of an Arsacid branch family – the Aršakuni dynasty – from 12-428 CE excluding a brief Roman occupation under Trajan and a trio of Sasanian claimants.²¹³ The region fitted into what Touraj Daryaee called a collaborative system with the Parthian Empire, the Kings of Albania and Aršakuni-ruled Iberia (189-284 CE), wherein rulers intermarried and the country mansions of the *wuzurgān* were imitated.²¹⁴ Indeed, Armenia appears to have been particularly prominent within this system. Agat'angēlos claims the Aršakuni king was second only to the Parthian king himself at the imperial court.²¹⁵ One of the best-known episodes of Arsacid history occurred in Armenia: when Roman pro-consul Marcus Licinius Crassus' severed head was used as a prop in a performance of Euripides' *Bacchae* at the Parthian King Wērōd II's wedding to a sister of Artavazd of Armenia.²¹⁶

Considerable overlap between Armenian and neighbouring aristocracies remained under the Sasanians. Vasak Siwni was *marzbān* ('margrave', lit. 'protector of the border', from Parth./MP. *marz* 'frontier' and *bān* 'protector, guard') of Iberia in the mid-fifth century

²¹² V.S. Curtis and S. Stewart, 'Introduction', in *The Age of the Parthians*, vol. 2: *The Idea of Iran*, eds. V.S. Curtis and S. Stewart (London, 2007), p. 4; A.D.H. Bivar, 'Gondophares and the Indo-Parthians' in *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 32-33.

²¹³ Schmitt and Bailey, 'Armenia and Iran iv'; Zakarian, *Women, Too, Were Blessed*, p. 42; D.M. Lang, 'Iran, Armenia and Georgia', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3.1: *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, ed. E. Yarshater (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 517-518. For recent coverage of Mihrdāt's Armenian campaigns, see Overtoom, *Reign of Arrows*, pp. 255-263.

²¹⁴ Daryaee, 'Armenia and Iran', p. 59; de Jong, 'Regional Variation', p. 24.

²¹⁵ Agat'angēlos, I.1, p. 1315.

²¹⁶ de Jong, 'Regional Variation', p. 17. This event would have contravened Avestan and Pahlavi *nasā* regulations and has been used to cast the Arsacids as improper Zoroastrians or, in Rawlinson's case, 'Oriental' barbarians inferior to the Romans (despite Roman leaders similarly parading the heads of Pacorus and Artavazd). *Ibid.* pp. 18-22; Rawlinson, *Sixth Great Oriental Monarchy*, p. 175; *Idem*, *Parthia* (London, 1893), p. 177.

and had strong ties with the Huns.²¹⁷ Juik Mamikonean meanwhile was related through marriage to the *bdeašx* of Iberia and fled to his court after her husband, Hmayeak Mamikonean's, death at Awarayr.

Members of *wuzurgān* clans likewise operated in Armenia. The Mihrān were particularly influential throughout the Caucasus, due to monopolising the role of *spāhbed* ('commander-in-chief', equivalent of Arm. *sparapet*) of the Sasanian Empire's northern quarter (*kūst-ī Ādurbādagān*), which contained the region.²¹⁸ Wahrām Čōbīn, the Mihrān usurper who briefly deposed Husraw II in 590 CE, may have been *marzbān* of Armenia.²¹⁹ Another *marzbān* of Armenia, this one a member of the Sūrēn clan, constructed a fire temple at Dwin in 565 CE and was killed in a revolt in 571.²²⁰

It is unclear whether the *naxarar* clans emerged from this wider Parthian context or were a native institution Parthianised by interaction with it. Garsoīan contended the *naxarar* system began under the Parthians and several clans' proclaimed origins support this.²²¹ The Kamsarakan claimed Karēn descent.²²² Gregory the Illuminator's descendants, the Gregorids, proclaimed Sūrēn heritage until their last member – Sahak Partew (Sahak the Parthian) –

²¹⁷ *Ew greac' i namakin ar na ayspēs [...] ew es minč' Vrac' marzpann ēi ew duṛn Aluanic' yimum jerin ēr' bazum zawragluxk' Hrnac' and is barekamac'an uxtiw ew erdmamb, ew aysawr novin erdmamb ert'eweken ar is*, ('And [Vasak] wrote the following in a letter to [Vardan] [...] "and when I was *marzbān* of Iberia, and the Gate of Albania was under my control, many of the Huns' commanders befriended me with treaty and oath, and they come to me today by the same oath.''), Łazar 45.20, p. 2279. On the role of *marzbān*, see J.H. Kramers and M. Morony, 'Marzpan', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs [accessed online at https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/marzpan-SIM_4991?s.num=502&s.start=500, 15/02/2021]. Eberhard Sauer, following Greenwood, argues the passage refers to Dariali (*duṛn Alanac'*, 'the Gate of the Alans'), which has been confused with Derbent (*duṛn Aluanic'*, 'Gate of Albania'). E.W. Sauer, 'The History of the Dariali Gorge', in *Dariali: The 'Caspian Gates' in the Caucasus from Antiquity to the Age of the Huns and the Middle Ages: The Joint Georgian-British Dariali Gorge Excavations and Surveys of 2013-2016*, vol. 2, eds. E.W. Sauer et. al. (Oxford, 2020), p. 878.

²¹⁸ One indication of this broader influence is that the Chosroid dynasty (284-807 CE), who replaced the Iberian Aršakuni, were of Mihrān origin. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, p. 104.

²¹⁹ K. Farrokh, *The Armies of Ancient Persia: The Sassanians* (Barnsley, 2017), p. 352.

²²⁰ R.N. Frye, 'The Reforms of Khosrow Anushirvan (The Immortal Soul)', *Iran Chamber Society* [accessed online at https://www.iranchamber.com/history/articles/reforms_of_anushirvan.php, 06-09-2021].

²²¹ Garsoīan, 'Naxarar'.

²²² Areshian, 'Sasanian Imperialism', p. 155.

although Marie-Louise Chaumont suggests Gregory was actually Cappadocian Greek.²²³

Many *naxarar* patronymics (like Spanduni, above) reflect Parthian personal names. Amatuni likely developed from the masculine name Amtan (OIr. **Ama-tanū*- ‘having power in the body’) and Słkuni from Słuk (Parthian Selūk).²²⁴ Old Iranian derivatives – like the rarely attested Trpatuni (from OIr. **Tīrī-pāta*, ‘protected by Tīrī’) or the district of Patsparunik‘ (reflecting a patronymic formed from Arm. *patsparel*, ‘to protect’, OIr. **pati-spara-*) – may also come through Parthian, since conditions favourable for Armeno-Iranian cultural interchange existed almost exclusively in pre-Christian Aršakuni Armenia.²²⁵ These clan-names suggests a significant Parthian(ised) contingent among the *naxarar*.

However, internal or pre-Parthian origins for the *naxarar* clan system cannot be dismissed. Leonardo Gregoratti argued that, although clans only became leading actors during Parthian era, the para-feudal model of quasi-aristocratic estates central to the *naxarar* system already existed under the Artaxiads (189 BCE-12 CE).²²⁶ Pliny’s account of the administrative divisions of Armenia might remember such a system operating in the first century CE.²²⁷ Even if Iranian influence could be proven, the Parthian era is merely the most likely candidate for cultural exchange, and a pre-Parthian origin remains possible. Armenia was under Achaemenid and then Seleucid domination from c. 600-189 BCE, with Armenian service to Iranian kings first attested under Darius I (r. 522-486 BCE).²²⁸ The Greek Avroman

²²³ Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, p. 44; M.-L. Chaumont, ‘Armenia and Iran ii. The pre-Islamic period’, *EIr*.

²²⁴ Martirosyan, ‘The Armenian Patronymic Arcruni’, p. 332. The personal name Słuk is attested, in use by a Słkuni prince, in MX II.84, p. 1977.

²²⁵ Martirosyan, ‘The Armenian Patronymic Arcruni’, p. 332; Schmitt and Bailey, ‘Armenia and Iran iv’. On the Trpatunik’: Toumanoff, *Studies*, p. 221.

²²⁶ L. Gregoratti, ‘Between Rome and Ctesiphon: the Problem of Ruling Armenia’, in *Армения — Иран: Proceedings of the Conference Armenia – Iran: History. Culture. The modern perspectives of progress*, eds. E.D. Dzhagatspanyan, A. Ganich and V.K. Ghazaryan (Moscow, 2012), pp. 135-137.

²²⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, vol. 2: Books 3-7 ed. and trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Ma., 2014), 6.10, pp. 356-357.

²²⁸ Schmitt and Bailey, ‘Armenia and Iran iv’; N. Kesecker, ‘The Behistun Inscription and the Origins of Armenia’ (1 May 2016, St John Armenian Church, San Francisco).

parchment contains an Artaxiad princess named Aryazatē (‘daughter of an Iranian’), who married Mihrdāt II in 87 BCE, indicating they already proclaimed Iranian ancestry.²²⁹

There is therefore insufficient evidence to trace the Armenian clan system’s origins. Nor would such reconstruction necessarily be helpful, since origins do not inherently provide insight into how systems operated in later periods. Regardless of when it developed, the *naxarar* system emerging in the fifth century had been heavily Parthianised by a half-millennium of complimentary cultural contact between Armenia and the Parthians – perhaps representing a shared culture. Adontz argued that whenever the *naxarar* system developed, its final shaping occurred during the Arsacid period.²³⁰

Ultimately, Armenia’s position within the Parthian Commonwealth is important because of its visibility and relative productivity in Late Antiquity, not because it may help us backform its origins. Noble power was more apparent in Armenia than many other regions of the Parthian Commonwealth. Iberian sources often depict a subordinated *erist’avi* (‘duke’, lit. ‘head of the host’) elite beneath the Chosroids. However, Stephen Rapp suggests this is an illusion created by the surviving sources being almost exclusively sponsored by the Iberian Bagratid monarchy.²³¹ This obscured a reality of powerful estate-based dynastic nobles, who in fact requested the *šāhān-šāh* temporarily dissolve the Chosroids in 530 CE, in a manner reminiscent of the Armenian Aršakuni’s fate. *Naxarar* were therefore remarkable in their power and visibility, not their existence.

²²⁹ M.E. Stone, ‘Three Observations on Early Armenian Inscriptions in the Holy Land’, in *From Byzantium to Iran: Armenian Studies in Honour of Nina G. Garsoïan*, eds. J.-P. Mahé and R.W. Thomson (Atlanta, 1997), p. 422; N.C. Debevoise, *A Political History of Parthia* (Chicago, 1938), p. 47. For text and translation of Avroman I, see E.H. Minns, ‘Parchments of the Parthian Period from Avroman in Kurdistan’, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 35 (1915), pp. 29-31.

²³⁰ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 165.

²³¹ *Erist’avi* is a word without exact Armenian analogue. It is occasionally used in the sense of *tanutēr*, though it more commonly referred to a position within the royal court. S.H. Rapp Jr., *The Sasanian World through Georgian Eyes: Caucasia and the Iranian Commonwealth in Late Antique Georgian Literature* (London, 2014), pp. 210, 314; Lang, ‘Iran, Armenia and Georgia’, p. 529.

2.3.2 – Diocesan Structure

Armenia's diocesan administration, which began but did not reach its final articulation during the Aršakuni period, vividly demonstrates clan authority. With two exceptions – Manjkert and Mardpetakan – Armenian bishoprics were not based around urban centres, as Armenia was relatively sparsely urbanised.²³² The region's only metropolitan, the bishop of Siwni, in fact controlled a territory containing no significant urban centres until the thirteenth century.²³³ Instead, bishops were associated with *naxarar*.

Of twenty-seven sees extant by 555 CE, only five were not assigned to a specific clan – excluding the Kat'olikos, whose association with the royal domain of Ayrarat was retained after the fall of the Aršakuni. Manjkert and Basean/Mardali were in regions whose known *naxarar* were extinct by the fifth century, perhaps explaining their respective attachment to the town of Manazkert and a monastic centre.²³⁴ Eli and Arnay also attached to monasteries, reflecting the norms of Iberia where they initially formed before entering Armenian communion in 607 CE, while Mananali was centred on the pre-Christian temple lands of Bagayarič, likely reflecting that site's importance.²³⁵ The layout of dioceses roughly reflects the relative power of *naxarar* clans, with Mamikonean and Siwnian bishops appearing particularly influential and smaller clans either represented by bishops of more powerful clan (their parent clan or the clan who owned the territory in which their holdings lay) or falling outside of the church's remit.²³⁶ The norm was one of tight association between bishop and *naxarar* clan, with each lending their support to reinforce the other's authority.

²³² Hewsen, 'Ecclesiastical Analysis', p. 109.

²³³ *Idem.*, *Atlas*, pp. 121-122. Additionally, when Yovhannēs Sinuagan (591-611 CE) set up his challenge to Kat'olikos Movsēs II (576-604 CE), he settled in the village of Awan, where he was buried, as opposed to an urban centre. Sebeos 33.29, p. 508.

²³⁴ Hewsen, 'Ecclesiastical Analysis', pp. 109-110.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-110.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-108; Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 288.

Since *naxarar* clans and the lands they controlled typically bore the same name, bishops were often able to derive authority from both simultaneously. Where this was not the case, we see various approaches. Bishop Xabib of Arcruni was clearly identifying with the clan's name and not the region they controlled (Vaspurakan), while several bishops (eg. Bagrewand, Turuberan, T'morik') appear associated with territories.²³⁷ Bishop Meršapuh of the Mamikoneans appears to have utilised both, being sometimes referenced as bishop of Tarawn.²³⁸ Complicating the picture, Hewsen suggests territory names like Arsaruni and Zarēhawan represent alternative clan names.²³⁹ Most likely bishops deployed clan and territory associations on an *ad hoc* basis and in a manner that was, to an extent, self-motivated instead of imposed by their *naxarar*. This would explain why the bishop of Manjkert appears as 'bishop of Hark' in conciliar lists of the 505 and 555 CE Councils of Dwin, associating him with a clan eradicated in the fourth century.²⁴⁰ Bishops could derive prestige from associations to *naxarar* clans, even purely historic ones.

These associations may reflect similar connections between clans and the priesthood before Christian conversion, perhaps adopted from Parthian Zoroastrianism, which was intensely local compared to Achaemenid or Sasanian practice. Parthian Zoroastrianism was not used as an instrument of governance and instead centred around dynastic fires and priests employed in the retinue of elite households.²⁴¹ Ardašīr I destroyed the former, touting the

²³⁷ T.W. Greenwood, 'Armenia', in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. S.F. Johnson (Oxford, 2012), p. 125.

²³⁸ *KH* vol. 1, 20, pp. 475-478.

²³⁹ Hewsen, 'Ecclesiastical Analysis', pp. 99-102.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109; Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 294-295. For the destruction of the Hark', see *Epic Histories* III.4, pp. 280-281.

²⁴¹ A. de Jong, 'Religion and Politics in Pre-Islamic Iran', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, eds. M. Stausberg and Y.S.-D. Vevaina with A. Tessmann (Chichester, 2015), p. 95; *Idem*, 'Armenian and Georgian Zoroastrianism', p. 127; *Idem*, 'Regional Variation', p. 24. The *Letter of Tansar*, purportedly penned by a high priest of Ardašīr I and revised in the sixth century but surviving only in an early thirteenth-century Persian translation, characterised use of dynastic fires as a strict Parthian invention. *The Letter of Tansar*, ed. and trans. M. Boyce (Rome, 1968), p. 47.

survival of his own dynastic fire on the reverse of many early coins.²⁴² The Sasanians encouraged a more imperially centralised clergy, perhaps evidenced in the inscription of Kerdīr's reference to retraining wayward Zoroastrian clerics.²⁴³ Given the Parthian origins of St Gregory and King Trdat, who Agat'angēlos credits with training the early Christian priesthood, Arsacid elements may have survived in the region's clerical administration despite their extirpation elsewhere in the Persian world.²⁴⁴ This may explain why *Epic Histories*' understanding of Meružan Arcruni and Vahan Mamikonean's conversion to Zoroastrianism was so local, focused on the pair building fire temples in their own property (*sep'hakan*) and forcing their relatives to study the faith.²⁴⁵

Regardless of their origins, diocesan attachment to clans speaks to the power of the *naxarar* more than a lack of urbanisation. Bishops in similarly sparsely urbanised Iberia typically attached to monasteries, likely due to the nobility's comparative weakness.²⁴⁶ In Armenia meanwhile, the *naxarar* were heavily personally involved in the church.

Agat'angēlos claimed the presumptive *kat'olikos* was customarily escorted by *naxarar* rather than bishops on his journey to be confirmed during the Aršakuni period, while *Epic Histories* depicted *tanutērs* advising the king on selecting *Kat'olikoses*.²⁴⁷ Łazar credited them with Surmak Arckec'i's election and removal specifically.²⁴⁸ Kamsarakan, Vahewuni, Ařavelean

²⁴² M. Alram, 'The Beginning of Sasanian Coinage', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 13 (1999), pp. 72-74, fig. 17-20, 22-23, 25-30. Cf. A. de Jong, 'One Nation Under God? The Early Sasanians as the Guardians and Destroyers of Holy Sites' in *Götterbilder-Gottesbilder-Weltbilder*, vol. 1, *Ägypten, Mesopotamien, Persien, Kleinasien, Syrien, Palästina*, ed. R.G. Kratz and H. Spieckermann (Tübingen, 2006), pp. 223-238.

²⁴³ *Quatre inscriptions du mage Kirdīr*, §16 [KKZ 13/KNRm42-43/KSM20-21], pp. 63, 72.

²⁴⁴ Agat'angēlos 119-120, pp. 1702-1707.

²⁴⁵ *šinec'ic' atrušan yimum tann sephakanin* ('I shall establish an *atrušan* in my own noble house'), *Epic Histories* IV.23.4, p. 354. Cf. *Ibid*, IV.59, pp. 374-375. On Armenian fire temples see J.R. Russell, 'Atrušan', *Elr*.

²⁴⁶ Hewsen, 'Ecclesiastical Analysis', p. 108.

²⁴⁷ Agat'angēlos 112.1-2, pp. 1683-1684; *Epic Histories* III.13-15, 17, IV.3.2, pp. 294-302, 311; N.G. Garsoian, 'Secular Jurisdiction over the Armenian Church (Fourth-Seventh Centuries)', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1983), p. 229.

²⁴⁸ *Ew tanutērac'n Hayoc', oroc' xostac'eal ēr zkat'olikosut'iwnn Surmakay arckec'i eric'un' nstuc'in zna yat'or' kat'olikosut'ean Hayoc':Urum, yet sakaw inč' žamanaki anc'eloy, ənddimac'eal omanc' i zawravar iřxanac'n Hayoc'' meržeal ənkec'in zna yiřxanut'eanē kat'olikosut'eann*, ('And the *tanutērs* of Armenia, who promised the *kat'olikosate* to the priest Surmak Arckec'i, seated him on the throne of the Armenian *kat'olikos*).

and Daštakaran princes all attended the 505 CE Council of Dwin without obvious clerical representation, though the first three may have been represented by the *Kat'olikos* through their holdings in Ayrarat and the last was possibly an observer from Albania, where their holdings in Šakašēn were located at the time, having left the Armenian orbit in 387 CE.²⁴⁹

While these appearances demonstrate the *naxarar* were powerful enough to exert their influence on the clergy, bishops also possessed surprising autonomy. Until at least the 555 CE Council of Dwin, if not the 725/726 CE Council of Manazkert, church councils were primarily convoked by ecclesiastical rather than secular authorities, which was uncommon in Byzantium.²⁵⁰ Diocesan attachment to clans thus allowed bishops more influence in clerical gatherings than was elsewhere typical, as these more local powerbases decoupled the overall clerical structure from a single secular authority.

However, after a short time, opposed by some princely generals of Armenia, they rejected and deprived him from the authority of the *kat'olikosate*'), Łazar 15.1-2, p. 2223.

²⁴⁹ Hewsen, 'Ecclesiastical Analysis', pp. 115-116.

²⁵⁰ Garsoïan, 'Secular Jurisdiction', p. 229.

2.4 – Clans and Courts

Membership in a *naxarar* clan was not the only passage to secular power. The Aršakuni monarchy and Byzantine and Sasanian administrations who replaced it, in 390 and 428 CE respectively, worked on court models which offered individual Armenians power in exchange for official service.²⁵¹ These courts sometimes actively resisted the logics undergirding hereditary clans, but court officials never became more prominent than hereditary lords.

Royal or imperial court officials in Armenia were generically termed *ostikan* ('court officer', from MP. *ōstīgān*, 'reliable') or *gorcakalk* ('officials').²⁵² Šahapivan's treatment of them indicates these positions were theoretically non-hereditary, as its canon concerning crimes committed by powerful figures referred to the wives and children of *naxarar* and bishops but mentioned only an *ostikan* and his wife.²⁵³ An *ostikan*'s children were apparently unnecessary to sanction, likely because they did not automatically benefit from his rank upon his death. In providing non-hereditary authority, court structures offered a passage to power outside of the clan structure and insulated themselves to an extent from the clans.

Eunuchs keenly demonstrate this insulation, being incapable of having heirs and complicating the gender binary upon which clan inheritance was based. Within the Aršakuni court, they monopolised the positions of *Hayr Mardpet* ('head chamberlain of the royal court', lit. 'father headsman') and attendants of the royal chamber. *Zōranamak* also refers to eunuch guards of the queen and royal treasury: the Mardpetakan.²⁵⁴ Eunuchs may have ranged further, as *Epic Histories* attributed the title of *išxan* of Angel-tun, normally associated with the Arcruni family, to a *Hayr Mardpet* called Drastamat.²⁵⁵ However, this

²⁵¹ Thomson, 'Eastern Neighbours', pp. 157-159.

²⁵² Ačařean, *Hayerēn armatakan bařaran*, vol. 3, pp. 570-571.

²⁵³ *KH* vol. 1, 18.20 pp. 465-466. See also *Ibid.* 18.2, pp. 431-432.

²⁵⁴ *Mardpetakan, or ē nerk'ini pahapan i veray t'aguhwoyn ew ganjuc 'n* ('The Mardepetakan, who is the eunuch guard over the queen and treasury'), Hakobyan, 'Gahnamak ew Zawranamak', p. 548.

²⁵⁵ *Isk Drstamatn nerk'ini, or yams Tiranay t'agaworin Hayoc' ew Aršakay ordwoy nora t'agaworin Hayoc' leal ēr išxan tan gawarin ew hawatarin ganjuc' Angel berdin, ew amenayn berdac'n ark'uni, or i kołmans*

figure was likely fictitious, since Drastamat (*durust-amat*, ‘he who comes in time’; cf. MP. *drust-āmad* ‘the one who comes whole’) is an aptonym for his narrative role.

By holding roles associated with access to the royal person and women, Armenian eunuchs matched practice attested in the Sasanian Empire and Byzantium, concurring slightly more with the latter than the former.²⁵⁶ The equivalent Greek position to *hayr mardpet*, *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, was monopolised by eunuchs at least two of whom (Eutropius and Eutherius, under Emperors Arcadius and Julian) were Armenian.²⁵⁷ In contrast, a fourth-century seal depicts the Sasanian equivalent, *hayr tagawori* (lit. ‘king’s father’) Wehdēn Šābuhr, with moustaches, when eunuchs typically cannot develop facial hair if castrated before puberty.²⁵⁸ Given these parallels, Adontz and Toumanoff suggested eunuchs may have controlled the Aršakuni royal wardrobe and apartments, like their Byzantine equivalents.²⁵⁹

ayyns. soynpēs ew yerkrin C’op’ac’ i Bnabel berdin ganjk’n leal ēin ənd novaw, ew barj nora ’i ver k’an zamenayn naxararac’n [...] ew zays Drastamatn nerk’ini zišxann zAngel tann gereal tareal ēr yerkim Parsic’ (‘As for the eunuch Drastamat, in the days of Tiran king of Armenia and his son Aršak of Armenia, he had been the prince of the house of the district and had been entrusted with the treasures of the fortress of Angl and with all the royal fortresses in those regions, similarly the treasuries at Bnabel fortress in the land of Cop’k’ were under him. His cushion was higher than all the *naxarars* [...] And this Drastamat the eunuch, prince of Angeltun, had been taken captive to the land of the Persians’), *Epic Histories* V.7.7-8, pp. 387-388. Cf. *Ibid.* IV.24, pp. 355-357; Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 513-514, n. 43; Petrosyan, ‘Origins of Prominent Armenian Princely Families’, p. 9.

²⁵⁶ M. Whittow, ‘Eunuchs and their Uses’ (The Bodley Club, Merton College, University of Oxford delivered 22 February 2017). For Sasanian evidence, see the third-century inscription of Šābuhr I commissioned by the eunuch *šabestān āyēnīg* (‘master of ceremonies in the harem’) Abnūn at Narsrabad in Fārs; the sixth-century seal of a *harzbed* (‘chief eunuch, guardian of the harem’) named Bōxtšābuhr; and the eunuch Wuzurgmīhr Buxtāgān, a *winārbed* (‘supervisor’) of the royal bedchamber and *darīgbed* (‘palace superintendent’) under Husraw I mentioned in the *Ayādgar ī Wuzurgmīhr*. J.A. Lerner, ‘The Seal of a Eunuch in the Sasanian Court’, *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 1 (2006), pp. 114-115. For the meaning of the *harzbed* title, see A. Tafazzoli, ‘An Unrecognized Sasanian Title’, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* ns. 4 (1990), pp. 301-305; A. Kolesnikov, ‘Eunuchs ii. The Sasanian Period’, *EIr*.

²⁵⁷ Claudius Claudianus, *Claudian*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. M. Platnauer (London, 2014), I.47, 58, pp. 142-143; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum Gestarum Libri qui supersunt*, ed. W. Seyfarth (Leipzig, 1978), 16.7.5, p. 77; S. Tougher, ‘Eunuchs in the East, Men in the West? Dis/unity, Gender and Orientalism in the Fourth Century’, in *East and West in the Roman Empire of the Fourth Century: An End to Unity?*, eds. R. Dijkstra, S. van Poppel and D. Slootjes (Leiden, 2015), pp. 151, 158-159. See also Narseh, a eunuch sent by Justinian to Italy in 551 CE to vanquish the Ostrogoths, who is notable for his masculine depiction in Procopius and Agathias. See M.E. Stewart, *Masculinity, Identity and Power Politics in the Age of Justinian: A Study of Procopius* (Amsterdam, 2020), pp. 137-146.

²⁵⁸ Christensen, *L’Iran sous les Sassanides*, p. 288, fig. 34. Łazar records an *ambarapet* (lit. ‘chief of provisions’) called Vehdenšapuh, who may be the same individual. Łazar 50.2, pp. 2283.

²⁵⁹ C. Toumanoff, ‘Introduction to Christian Caucasian History II: States and Dynasties of the Formative Period’, *Traditio* 17 (1961), p. 19; Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 341-342. cf. *Epic Histories* III.20, IV.3, pp. 303-306, 311-313.

Eunuchs posed a visible challenge to binary constructions of gender. Castrati lacked facial hair, vital to Armenian constructions of masculinity, and underwent significantly delayed epiphyseal fusion compared to uncastrated men, typically resulting in wider hips and ribs and longer skulls, arms, legs and fingers.²⁶⁰ Their visual and functional difference created anxieties regarding their place within the gender binary and therefore the clan system itself. P'isak, the likely-eunuch chamberlain blamed for the King Tiran's blinding in *Epic Histories*, is never referred to by his natal Siwni clan's surname.²⁶¹ Unfavourable stereotypes of conniving or pompous eunuchs may also reflect these anxieties. One of the few passages in *Epic Histories* to depict Queen P'aranjem sympathetically involved her being berated by an unnamed *hayr mardpet*.²⁶² The *Patmut'iw n vasn Neran galstean ew vasn kataraci ašxarhis* (*History on the Advent of the Antichrist and on the end of the world*), attributed to Agat'angel, identified a Pontic eunuch named Hromelay as the father of the Antichrist.²⁶³ Kathryn Ringrose, studying eunuchs in Byzantium, even argued that eunuchs deviated from binary constructions of gender enough to be considered a third gender.²⁶⁴ Such a claim is perhaps overstating the challenge eunuchs posed to Byzantium's gender binary, as Michael Stewart notes Byzantine attitudes towards gender were likely more flexible than is often acknowledged.²⁶⁵ Resentment towards eunuchs holding traditionally 'masculine' military ranks appears to have reduced between the fourth and sixth centuries CE.²⁶⁶ Yet even if they did not represent a third gender, eunuchs – and *ostikan* in general – existed outside of and implicitly challenge clan structures.

²⁶⁰ Whittow, 'Eunuchs'. Cf. D. Montserrat, 'Reading Gender in the Roman World', in *Experiencing Rome: culture, identity and power in the Roman Empire*, ed. J. Huskinson (London, 2000), p. 176.

²⁶¹ *Epic Histories* III.20, pp. 303-306.

²⁶² *Epic Histories* IV.55.19-22, p. 371.

²⁶³ Pogossian, 'Armenian Version of Ps.-Hippolytus', p. 149.

²⁶⁴ K. Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium* (Chicago, 2003), pp. 3-4. Montserrat suggests celibates should also be considered in this third category, Montserrat, 'Reading Gender in the Roman World', p. 158.

²⁶⁵ Stewart, *Masculinity, Identity and Power Politics*, pp. 125-153.

²⁶⁶ S. Tougher, 'Social Transformation, Gender Transformation? The Court Eunuch, 300-900', in *Gender in the Early Medieval World, East and West, 300-900*, eds. L. Brubacker and J.M.H. Smith (Cambridge, 2004), p. 88; Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant*, p. 33.

However, the threat this challenge posed should not be overestimated, as *ostikan* never became more important than *naxarar*. The *Gahnamak* includes only two royal functionaries, the *K'alak'apetn ark'uni* ('keeper of the royal city') and the *Orsapetn ark'uni* ('keeper of the royal hunt'), who were among the lowest ten nobles on its list.²⁶⁷ Elišē likewise named twenty-one individual *naxarar* and twenty-three involved clans when enumerating the groups involved in Awarayr but named only two officials, referring to the rest generically as *gorcakal*.²⁶⁸ One of the named officials was rebellion ringleader Vardan Mamikonean, was *sparapet* ('commander-in-chief', MP. *spāhbed*, 'army chief'), while the latter, the *šahxoṛapetn ark'uni* ('royal equerry'), was one of the last individuals listed, above only the obscure Xurs Sruanjteac', four clans whose attendance is recorded collectively and the undifferentiated court officials.²⁶⁹

In Vardan Mamikonean's case, the *sparapet* role was monopolised by his clan, and we here see an example of court offices acting like hereditary rights in practice. Several of the Aršakuni court's most significant positions were monopolised by the strongest clans. The Amatuni were *hazarpet* ('superintendent', MP. *hazārbed*, lit. 'chiliarch, commander of a thousand'), for example, and the Bagratuni held twin roles of crowning the king (*t'agkap* 'crown') and as *aspet* ('master of cavalry', MP. *asped*, 'commander of the cavalry').²⁷⁰ In this way the challenge of courtly roles to the clan structure was defused by rendering them as hereditary privileges. These appear to have been relatively stable, as the only major clan to lose their position during the Aršakuni period was the Vahewuni high priesthood, who were

²⁶⁷ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, III.A., p. 192, 68*; Hakobyan, 'Gahnamak ew Zawranamak', pp. 535, 539.

²⁶⁸ Elišē 5.9, pp. 635-636.

²⁶⁹ On the *Šahxoṛapetn ark'uni*, see Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 442, n. 21. The Sruanjteac' also appear last in both Łazar and Elišē's account of the martyrs of Awarayr. They do not appear in any other source outside of this event, suggesting they were a minor clan. See Elišē 5.165, p. 660; Łazar 39.9, p. 2269; Toumanoff, *Studies*, p. 221.

²⁷⁰ Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, pp. 50, 106-107. *Epic Histories* instead ascribes the *hazarpetut' iwn* to the Gnuni: *Ew skizbn gorcakalut'eann hazarpetut'eann ašxarhatesn xnamakalut'eann, ašxarhašēn ašxarhatac dehkanut'eann, šinakanašēn azgn Gnuneac'' hazarpetn amenayn erkrin*, ('And the first office of the *hazarpet*ship attending to the public – which cares for [and] cultivates the province's land – [went to] the *šinakan*-flourishing Gnuni family, the *hazarpet* of all the land'), *Epic Histories* IV.2.8, p. 311.

disinherited upon Armenia's conversion in favour of the Christian Gregorids. Nevertheless, Armenian magnates were rarely referred to by their court position. Only one of the eighteen *tanutēr* Łazar recorded signing the Armenian response to Mihrnerseh's letter was denoted exclusively by title – Vriw the *malxaz*.²⁷¹ This was likely an exception due to the importance of the role, whose exact responsibilities are unknown but was significant enough to appear directly after the prince of all Armenia in the *Gahnamak* and see its clan (the Xorxoruni) dubbed *Malxac 'uni* in Adontz' reconstruction of the same document.²⁷² In general, however, official positions were considered less significant than hereditary lordship, and *Epic Histories* account of Aršak II's restoration following King Tiran's madness, enumerates *gorcakal* last, seated on cushions or standing while the *naxarar* sat on thrones.²⁷³

Similarly, while eunuchs frustrated the hereditary logics of clans, this feature of their existence was defanged to an extent by depicting them with the use of kinship terminology, which served to naturalise them back into the clan structure. Most notably, the *hayr* ('father') element of *Hayr Mardpet* cast this official as father of the court. The eunuch Mardpetakan were perhaps likewise associated with the Mardpetuni clan, as Argam Ayvazian and Albert

²⁷¹ Łazar 23.5, pp. 2242. *Matenagirik' Hayoc'* calls this individual Vrim, but I amend to Vriw in accordance with 1904 edition, Łazar P'arpec'i, *Patmut'iw n Hayoc' ew T'ut' ar Vahan Mamikonean*, eds. G. G. Tēr-Mkrtč'ean and S. Malxanean (Tiflis, 1904), p. 45.

²⁷² Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, III.A., p. 191, 67*; Hakobyan, 'Gahnamak ew Zawranamak', pp. 531, 538. Van Esbroeck translates *malxaz* as 'treasurer', but Garsoian disputes this. Kouyoumdjian instead has it as 'chief bodyguard/chief eunuch', although the latter possibility can likely be discarded due to its hereditary association. M. van Esbroeck, 'Impact de l'écriture sur le concile de Dwin de 555', *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum* 18 (1986), p. 312; N.G. Garsoian, *L'Eglise arménienne et le grande schisme d'Orient* (Leuven, 1999), p. 478, n. 26; M.G. Kouyoumdjian, *A Comprehensive Dictionary, Armenian-English* (Beirut, 1970), p. 479.

²⁷³ *Ew norogec'aw zuart'ac'aw tērut'iw n t'agaworut'eann Hayastan erkrin orpēs ew zařajins. mecameck'n yiwrak'anč'iw r gahu, ew gorcakalk'n yiwrak'anč'iw r č'ap'u [...] Ew ayl yaysm azgac' ew i xonarh, or gorcakals anun barjiwk' araji ark'ayin patiw i glux bazmēin. t'ol znahapets mecamecs ew ztanutears, ork' gorcakalk' miayn ēin, inn harewr barj' or mtanēr i žam tačarin uraxut'eann bazmakalac'n kargeloc', t'ol zotnkays gorcakalut'eann spasu* ('And he renewed and clarified the lordship of the kingdom Hayastan as before, each grandee on his throne and each official on his cushion [...] and other than from these families were also officials of humbler [families], who sat before the king, *patiw* on their head. Excluding the great *nahapets* and *tanutērs*, those who were only officials [numbered] 900 cushions, who entered ranked as guests during joyful banquets, excluding footmen, of service function'), *Epic Histories* IV.2.7-10, p. 311.

Stepanyan suggest but do not discuss.²⁷⁴ While Toumanoff disputed this, arguing a literal lineage of eunuchs would be impossible, the Mardpetuni could have supplied eunuchs or been a fictive clan designed to naturalise eunuchs within the clan system.²⁷⁵ Adontz suggests, based on the ninth-century CE historian T'ovma Arcruni, that the *mardpet* element of Mardpetuni originally denoted a Vaspurakan noble family that become associated with eunuchs by the fourth century.²⁷⁶ Such associations obscured the breaches eunuchs posed to the gender binary and hereditary logics with the language of those systems.

2.4.1 – Royal Authority

While court officials were not as powerful as the *naxarar* elite, this does not mean *naxarar* could simply ignore either the monarchy or imperial powers surrounding them. Kings were at least theoretically empowered to establish or destroy *naxarar* clans. Movses Xorenac'i attributes the rise of the Gnuni, Hawuni and Jiwnakan to their service to the royal family as cupbearers (*gini*, 'wine'), falconers (*haw*, 'bird') and providers of snow to the Aršakuni summer residence (*jiwnakan*, 'snowy').²⁷⁷ While these etymologies are dubious, their presentation demonstrates this was considered a valid avenue to power even after the dynasty's fall.²⁷⁸ The Gnuni example is especially remarkable considering the same historian

²⁷⁴ A.A. Ayvazian, *The Historical Monuments of Nakhichevan*, trans. K.H. Maksoudian (Detroit, 1990), p. 90; Stepanyan, 'Household/Family', p. 39, n. 46.

²⁷⁵ Toumanoff, 'Introduction to Christian Caucasian History II', pp. 19-20.

²⁷⁶ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 195, 249-251, 513 n. 43, 69*. Cf. T'ovma Arcruni, III.29, p. 278.

²⁷⁷ MX II.7.14-17, p. 1857.

²⁷⁸ Gnuni may have instead emerged from *gin* ('price'), matching the semantic origin of the Gnuni's alleged founder Adramelēk (from OIr. **arj-* ('price')). Adontz suggests Jiwnakan originated from the snowy nature of that clan's territory on the slopes of the Aragac', not their court function (although snow was a commodity traded to hotter regions in the Mediterranean). Finally, Sargis Ayvazyan and Armen Petrosyan linked Hawuni to the Urartian toponym Abuni, Petrosyan also noting a connection to *haw* ('grandfather') juxtaposed to the neighbouring province, Ordunik' (*ordi*, 'son, child'). Martirosyan, 'The Armenian Patronymic Arcruni', p. 332; Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 455, n. 15; A. Petrosyan, *The Problem of Armenian Origins: Myth, History, Hypotheses* (Washington, DC, 2018), p. 166; S.R. Ayvazyan, 'The Possibility of Clarification of the Period of Some Phonetical Changes in the Armenian Language by Means of the Van (Ararat-Urartu) Cuneiform Inscriptions', *Fundamental Armenology* 2.4 (2016), p. 316. On snow trade, see Braudel, *The*

attributed them Assyrian pedigree that could have been the basis for their power instead. In the other direction, the Orduni were exterminated on royal order in the mid-fourth century CE for feuding with their Manawazean kinsmen.²⁷⁹ Several dynasties were supposedly reduced to eunuch status and placed under the *Hayr Mardpet*'s supervision, effectively removing them from their role in the clan system.²⁸⁰ Finally, the king was empowered to select the *Kat'olikos*. While some royal appointments were protested – particularly those of King Aršak II and Pap following the exile and assassination of Nersēs I respectively – there is no evidence of *naxarar* ever successfully forced a candidate upon the king or drove a selected *Kat'olikos* from their throne.²⁸¹ Aršak II's candidate Č'unak was emplaced despite being so widely condemned he was forced to seek support for him outside the Armenian Church, in Ałjnik' and Korduk'.²⁸² Similarly, Pap's proposed *Kat'olikos* 'held his dignity from the king's will alone', despite being unacceptable to Caesarea and raised without consultation.²⁸³

A category distinction existed between the Aršakuni and other clans that rendered the royals more than simply powerful *naxarar*. In *Epic Histories*, Mušel Mamikonean explained his decision not to kill King Urnhayr of Albania in battle to both Urnhayr himself and the Armenian King Pap by arguing someone who wore a crown was Pap's equal, not his own.²⁸⁴

Mediterranean, pp. 27-28. For the Dimak'sean's similar ascribed origin as royal wet-nurses, which is not reflected in their name, see Chapter 3.5.3, p. 186.

²⁷⁹ MX III.2, p. 2009; *Epic Histories* III.4, pp. 280-281; Toumanoff, 'Introduction to Christian Caucasian History II', p. 63.

²⁸⁰ *Na ew nerk'inis i noyn azgē xzel. ew nahapet noc'a zHayr išxan masin Atrpatakanē minč'ew c'Čuaš ew c'Naxčawan, ew nahapetut'ean azgin sa mecaroy*, ('And he ordered those ones from the family to be cut into eunuchs and [gave] their patriarch and the honour of this family's patriarchate to the *Hayr*, prince of the territory from Atropatene to Čuaš and Naxčawan), MX II.7.21, p. 1858; Toumanoff, 'Introduction to Christian Caucasian History II', p. 20, n. 85.

²⁸¹ Garsoian, 'Secular Jurisdiction', p. 231, n. 45, p. 233, n. 49. *Epic Histories* argued Nersēs was poisoned by Pap, although both Malkhasyanc' and Gevorgian postulated in their commentaries on *Epic Histories* that the symptoms described indicated a natural death from pulmonary artery rupture. Similar symptoms could be caused by arsenic or oleander, the former of which is found in Armenian copper mines exploited since 6000 BCE. *Epic Histories*, trans. Garsoian, p. 318, n. 7; S. Murcott, *Arsenic Contamination in the World: An International Sourcebook 2012* (London, 2012), pp. 87-88; L. Cilliers, F.P. Retief, 'Poisons, Poisoning and the Drug Trade in Ancient Rome', *Askroterion* 45 (2000), pp. 93-95.

²⁸² Garsoian, 'Secular Jurisdiction', pp. 232-233.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 233. Movses Xorenac'i names Pap's appointee Šahak, while *Epic Histories* instead calls him Yusik. MX III.39.2, p. 2060; *Epic Histories* V.29.2, p. 398.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, V.4.60-68, pp. 383-384.

However, this status was not inviolable, especially if the king was not a member of the Aršakuni clan. During the reign of Sasanian incumbent Šābuhr IV (King of Armenia 415-420, Sasanian *šāhān-šāh* 420), Šavasp Arcruni called upon his clan's own Assyrian royal pedigree to cast himself as Šābuhr's equal and deflect claims that he had forgotten his station.²⁸⁵ In this context, Mušel Mamikonean's image of royal superiority appears an argument the *naxarar* employed when it was helpful for them to appear lesser than their kings, which could be dispensed with when desired, rather than a feature of kingship imposed by the Aršakuni.

The Aršakuni did not possess authority over the nobility comparable to that implied in a typical feudal model and were more *primus inter pares* figures. The *naxarars* owed *carayut 'iwn* ('service') to the king due to his greater might, but they could and did exchange suzerains without issue, with the Aršakuni's ultimate replacement by a Sasanian *marzbān* in 428 CE being affected by Wahrām V Gōr (r. 420-438 CE) on the *naxarars*' request.²⁸⁶ The king was therefore reliant on the *naxarar* and not the inverse. Gregoratti asserted that Aršakuni utilisation of *naxarars* as crown officers resulted from these clans already controlling local communities and the mountain passes and valleys necessary for cross-regional communication.²⁸⁷ This meant the Aršakuni's actual power was relatively limited. Both Xosrov III and Aršak II were required to return the lands of clans they had extirpated – the Kamsarakan, Širak, Aršaruni and *bdeašx* of Ałjnik – when survivors presented themselves, despite Aršak at least having turned the cleared regions into royal demesne.²⁸⁸

Archaeological evidence supports the image of a relatively weak monarchy, demonstrating a paucity of public constructions under the Aršakuni compared to the

²⁸⁵ MX III.55.18-21, pp. 2086.

²⁸⁶ Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian Society*, pp. 113-114; Thomson, 'Eastern Neighbours', p. 160.

²⁸⁷ Gregoratti, 'Between Rome and Ctesiphon', p. 134.

²⁸⁸ *Epic Histories* III.9, IV.19, pp. 287, 348.

remaining Sasanian era.²⁸⁹ Aršakuni finds, like the fort of Zak‘ari-berd, typically demonstrate the good military knowledge, poor building skill and concern for resource efficiency consistent with regions beset by high degrees of external and internal conflict.²⁹⁰ The mud brick Christian basilica at the Aršakuni summer residence of Dwin was relatively small (28.9 X 12.5m) as was the royal mausoleum at Ałc‘k‘ (a rectangular 3.81 X 2.66 m room built after the 364 CE, with three niches containing crude stone sarcophagi), which could have been constructed by one stonemason with a small group of apprentices and unskilled labourers.²⁹¹

Following the Aršakuni’s fall, the *naxarar* clans were the highest native authority in Armenia. *Tanutēr* from the most prominent clans pursued individual foreign policies and were treated as immediate vassals of the Roman emperor, receiving the treatment due to minor kings.²⁹² Even during the Aršakuni period, individual *tanutēr* often acted as direct subjects of imperial courts, as Vardan Mamikonean appears to have been when acting as a messenger to Aršak II.²⁹³ *Sepuh* similarly appeared as free agents by the fifth century, invited to negotiations and co-signing decrees.²⁹⁴ Clans were powerful authorities in their own rights and members could exercise a great deal of sovereign power when interacting on the international stage, without needing royal or imperial officials to act as an intermediary. Thomson’s characterisation of the *naxarar* families’ rights and privileges, in Persarmenia at least, as ‘more fundamental than royal authority’ appears to be borne out.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁹ Construction is especially prominent during Husraw II’s total control of the region (c. 610-627 CE), Areshian, ‘Sasanian Imperialism’, pp. 151-155.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

²⁹² Thomson, ‘Eastern Neighbours’, p. 159; Toumanoff, *Studies*, pp. 133-135, 147.

²⁹³ *Epic Histories* IV.18, pp. 347-348.

²⁹⁴ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 358.

²⁹⁵ Thomson, ‘Eastern Neighbours’, p. 159.

2.4.2 – Imperial Authority

The *naxarar* lords' personal power encouraged them to vacillate in their loyalties towards the empires surrounding them, switching sides to gain or maintain privileges. Despite Vardan Mamikonean's leading role in confronting Yazdgerd II's attempt to reimpose Zoroastrianism in Armenia and the clan's powerbase within Roman-controlled Greater Armenia, the Mamikoneans were not always loyal to Byzantium. Vardan's own nephew, Vahan, served the Persian court as *marzbān* of Armenia from 485 CE until his death.²⁹⁶ Even individual *naxarar* sometimes switched allegiances. Smbat Bagratuni served as a Byzantine commander in the Balkans but, upon being disgraced and exiled to Africa, reappears in the court of Husraw II, where he and his son Varaztiroc' had illustrious careers. The former rose to the third highest rank in the court and the latter became the last *marzbān* of Armenia to receive an honorific name: Ĵavitean-Xosrov (MP. Ĵāwēdān-Husraw, 'Eternal Husraw').²⁹⁷

The inconsistent loyalty of the *naxarar* elite raises the question of why the Byzantines and Sasanians did not remove them. The clan networks on which Armenian lordship depended were alien to the Byzantine system of temporary, non-hereditary court officials. The Roman *gens* – often translated 'clan' or 'house' and giving its name to the modern anthropological category – had long lost relevance by Late Antiquity and was regardless a largely a fictive grouping without the same kind of para-feudal, genetic implications of either the Armenian clan or its modern namesake.²⁹⁸ Where great estates were accommodated, as in Egypt or following Anastasius' appeasement policies, they represented aristocratic abuses of power and not the empire's active cultivation of a clan-based elite.²⁹⁹ The Sasanian world was more familiar with a clan model, but the heavy degree of Parthian influence also

²⁹⁶ Łazar III.99, p. 2371.

²⁹⁷ For Smbat and Varaztiroc's careers see Sebeos 24, 27-29, pp. 495-496, 498-502.

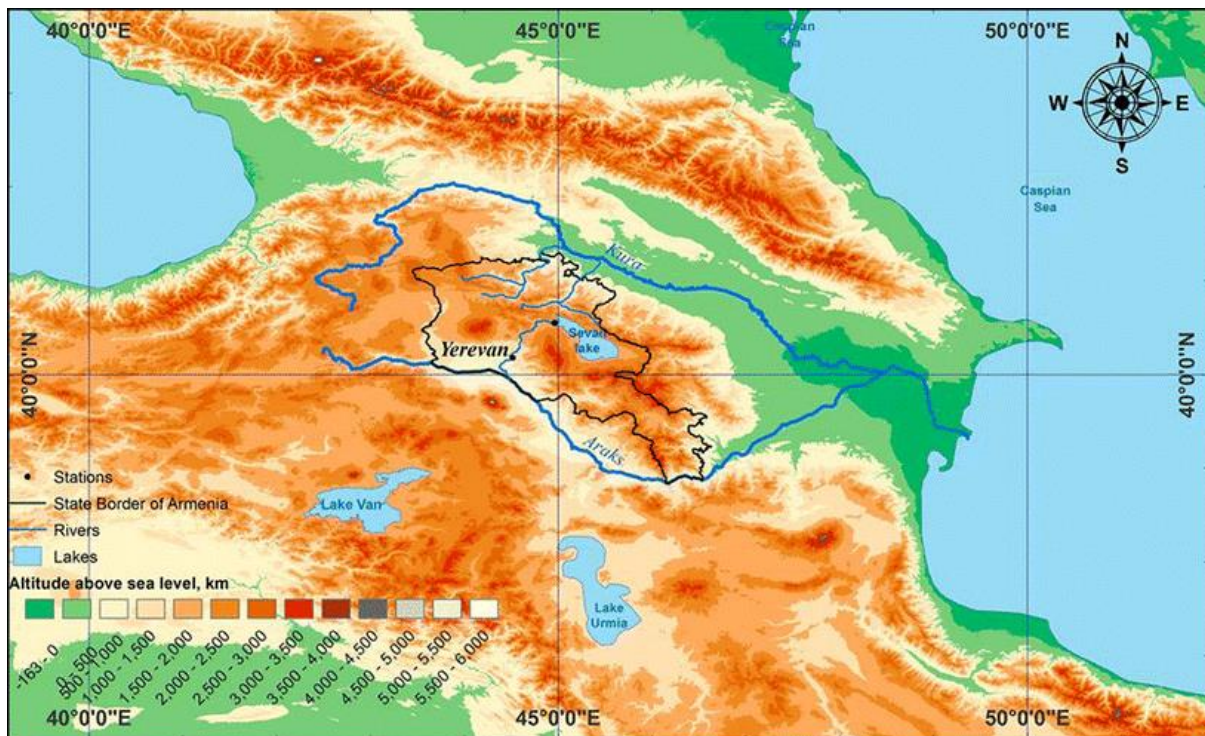
²⁹⁸ 'Gens (pl. *gentēs*)' in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (3rd ed.), ed. M.C. Howatson (Oxford, 2011), p. 263; Smith, *Roman Clan*, pp. 1-3.

²⁹⁹ P. Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 177.

incentivised them to check the power off the *naxarar*. All empires are to a degree multicultural, their centres never perfectly imposed over subjects after the initial phase of conquest.³⁰⁰ This was especially true in areas like Armenia, where two opposing visions of imperial hegemony existed for subjects to borrow and adapt. That said, the specific problems the *naxarars* posed raise the question of why they were not better integrated into either imperial system? The most compelling explanation is a combination of geography and strategic location.

³⁰⁰ A. Panaino, 'Multilingualism and Empires: Byzantium and Sasanian Persia', in *Iranica* 25 (2017), pp. 492-493; L.E. Weitz, *Between Christ and Caliph: Law, Marriage and Christian Community in Early Islam* (Philadelphia, 2018), p. 3.

2.4.3 – Geography



Topography of the Armenian Highlands (Source: A. Gevorgyan, ‘Summertime Wind Climate in Yerevan: Valley Wind Systems’, *Climate Dynamics* 48.5-6 (2016), fig. 1.).

The region’s geography is vital to understanding the *naxarars* endurance, since the social sphere cannot be meaningfully separated from the ecosystem it is embedded in.³⁰¹ Armenia was characterised by several isolated, fertile alluvial basins surrounded by high mountains and, in some cases, centred on volcanic lakes.³⁰² James C. Scott, studying similar conditions in the Tai statelets of South-East Asia’s Zomia Highlands, found such regions ‘state repelling’, meaning both that the effort required to maintain governance over them was greater than the manpower and grain they generated, and that a powerful state was unlikely to

³⁰¹ F. Barth, ‘Towards Greater Naturalism in Conceptualising Societies’, in *Conceptualising Society*, ed. A. Kuper (London, 1992), p. 20.

³⁰² S. Connor and E. Kvavadze, ‘Environmental Context of the Kura-Araxes Culture’, *Paléorient* 40.2 (2014), p. 13.

rise within them.³⁰³ Braudel noted a similar tendency in the mountains of the early modern Mediterranean, with lowland urban civilisations penetrating only slowly and imperfectly into the highland world.³⁰⁴

Although Armenia lacked the fluid social structure Scott identified, its similarly high, rugged landscape frustrated travel.³⁰⁵ The Armenian plateau is the highest of three contiguous landlocked plateaus – bordered by the Anatolian plateau in the west and the Iranian plateau in the south-east – and its own highest regions witness annual average temperatures below freezing.³⁰⁶ Extreme variation in topography over short distances – caused by extensive areas of metamorphic and sedimentary rock and deep gorges created by wind, water and glacial erosion – means land travel was and remains difficult.³⁰⁷ Large late antique armies would have been especially impacted, with year-round travel rendered impossible as higher passes were blocked by snow before May and mud from May to June, and forage often insufficient for horses.³⁰⁸ Particularly severe winters could inflict heavy casualties, as was the case for both a Roman army of Severus Alexander's abortive 233 CE Armenian campaign and an ill-prepared 1915 Turkish force in what had once been the Vanand region.³⁰⁹ The Sasanians would likely have found troop movement even more difficult due to the greater definition of Armenia's borders in the east, north-west and south.³¹⁰ The logistics of moving troops and officials through Armenia therefore was more problematic than its relatively short distance from the imperial capitals belies. Clans meanwhile were not so challenged by these

³⁰³ Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 53, 178.

³⁰⁴ Braudel, *Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*, p. 38.

³⁰⁵ Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 178-179; Whittow, *Orthodox Byzantium*, p. 201.

³⁰⁶ Connor and Kavadze, 'Environmental Context', p. 13. The highest point in the Armenian plateau, Mount Ararat is also the highest point in West Asia at 5,200m above sea-level. B. Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, p. 32.

³⁰⁷ Connor and Kavadze, 'Environmental Context', p. 13.

³⁰⁸ Whittow, *Orthodox Byzantium*, pp. 198-199.

³⁰⁹ M.R. Jackson Bonner, *Last Empire of Iran* (Piscataway, NJ, 2020), pp. 38-39; J.A. Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire* (Oxford, 2014), p. 88.

³¹⁰ R.H. Hewsens, 'The Geography of Armenia', in *Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, p. 2.

restrictions since kin-based structures tend to weaken when geographically separated and therefore keep more proximate to one another.³¹¹

Armenia's high but varied fertility likewise supported local administrations more than centralising ones. It received heavy but inconsistent rainfall and sat at the juncture of two floral zones (Girkan mesophytic and Iranian/Persian xerophytic) and three zoogeographical zones (Anatolian, Iranian and Caucasian) ensuring great agricultural variety.³¹² Apricots, grapes, apples, cherries, lemons, melons, oranges, quinces, pomegranates, berries and nectarines are all grown in Armenia.³¹³ The diversity of root vegetables, included in Łazar's encomium of Ayrarat, is especially notable since diverse root crops with uneven maturation were impractical for centralising powers desirous of predictable harvests that could be collected and taxed on a regular, often annual, basis.³¹⁴ However, such varied fertility could support a local elite very well, providing subsistence needs and allowing trade to respond to a wide range of markets. Armenia was an Achaemenid centre for winemaking; its peaches were traded westwards in the time of Alexander the Great; and Ruzan Palanjyan has suggested that the valuable perfume Amomum was produced in Cory, North of Lake Van, during the Parthian era.³¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, the region's largest alluvial basins – the Araxes and Kur valleys around Lake Sevan in the east; Lake Van in south central Armenia; and Tarawn in the

³¹¹ Sen, 'Clan Identity', p. 86.

³¹² High rainfall in Van and Urmia is from January to April, while further north around Yerevan, Erzurum and Kars it peaks April to May with a dry spell July to September. Higher elevations sometimes receive three times as much as lower and much of the modern polity is semiarid. Connor and Kvavadze, 'Environmental Context', p. 13; H. Field, 'The Land and the People' in *Contributions to the Archaeology of Armenia*, eds. V.P. Alekseev et al., trans. A. Krimgold (Cambridge, MA, 1968), pp. 1, 4; D. Elliot et. al., *Wind Energy Resource Atlas of Armenia* (Oak Ridge, TN, 2003), p. 3.

³¹³ T.G. Roufs and K. Smyth Roufs, *Sweet Treats Around the World: An Encyclopedia of Food and Culture* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2014), p. 12.

³¹⁴ Łazar 7.2, pp. 2208; Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 178-179.

³¹⁵ R.S. Palanjyan, *Viniculture and Processing of Industrial Crops in Ancient Armenia (VI Century B.C. – IV Century A.D.)* (PhD diss., National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2015), p. 21; *Idem.*, 'Amom Kočvoł Anušahot Buysi Artadrut'yamb Hřčakvaō Vayri Telorošman P'orj' [An Attempt to Localise the District Famous for the Production of an Aromatic Plant Amomum], *Patma-Banasirakan Handes* 1 (2002), pp. 163-175; R. Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History* (Berkeley, CA, 2013), p. 95.

west – where grounds were most fertile and movement least problematic, supported some the most powerful dynasties: the Mamikoneans, Siwni, Kamsarakan and Bagratuni.³¹⁶

Consciousness of Armenian geography helps explain not only the inability of imperial powers to incorporate all of Armenia, but also why Armenia itself did not consolidate under an autocratic monarchy. Even when royal reach was greatest, territorial resistance was readily exercisable. For example, the Artaxiads were protected from Augustinian policies of installing Roman royal candidates due to their own control of critical passes and fortresses in the region.³¹⁷ However, during the last century BCE, neither Pompey nor Tigranes the Younger could overcome the defence of a fortress in Sophene and deliver its royal treasure to the Armenian king, even though Tigranes himself controlled the region, and the same failure befell Antonius upon capturing King Artawazd in 34 BCE.³¹⁸ Periods of extensive imperial power were short-lived. Emperor Trajan was able to refuse the Aršakuni claimant in 114 CE and reduce Armenia to a Roman province but this was not maintained by Hadrian after 118.

It is not profitable to be overly scientific. Favourable geography could insulate elite clans, but it could neither protect them nor thwart centralising powers in all eventualities. The Orduni dynasty's fourth-century eradication occurred despite the geographical advantages offered by their control of the fecund, isolated plain of Basean.³¹⁹ In fact, Armenia's geography may have encouraged extirpations, since the Aršakuni could more easily eradicate a local power than control them long term. Local geography was an influence that encouraged certain outcomes, making it easier for local clans to administer regions and harder for centralising powers to make headway. However, to explicate the *naxarars*

³¹⁶ Whittow, *Orthodox Byzantium*, pp. 201-202.

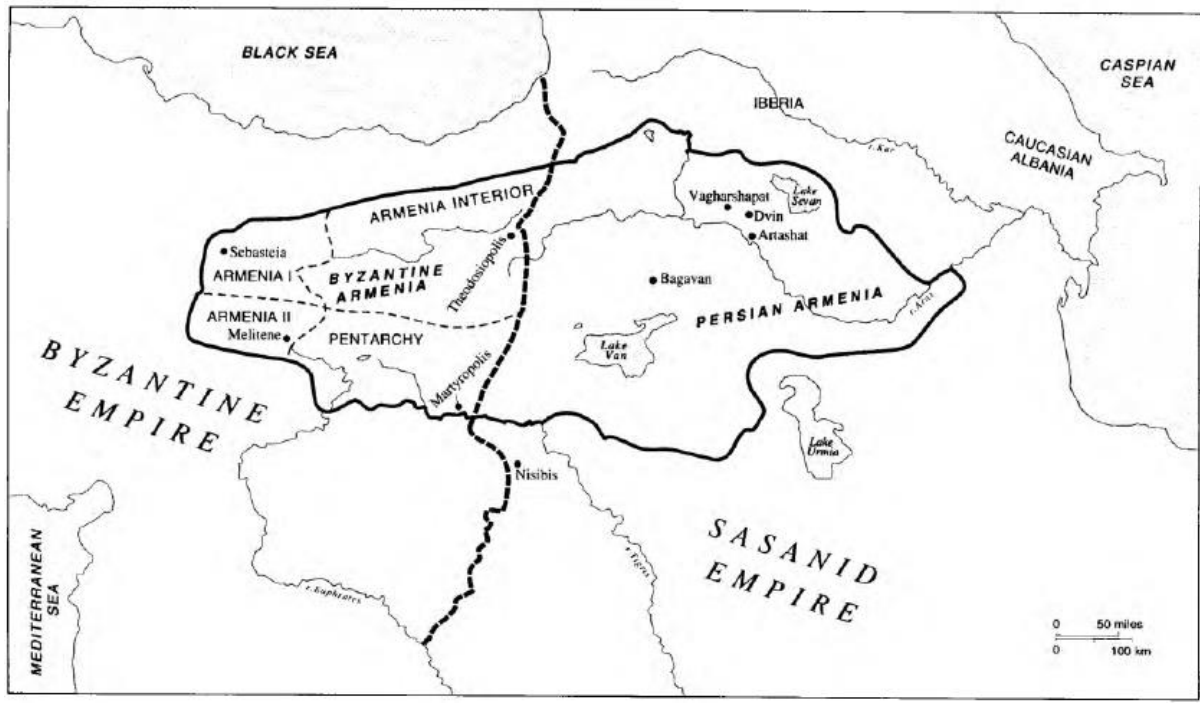
³¹⁷ Gregoratti, 'Between Rome and Ctesiphon', p. 137.

³¹⁸ Cassius Dio, *Dio's Roman History*, vol. 3, ed. and trans. E. Cary (London, 1914), XXXVI.53.3-4, pp. 90-91; Gregoratti, 'Between Rome and Ctesiphon', p. 135.

³¹⁹ Toumanoff, 'Introduction to Christian Caucasian History II', p. 63; Whittow, *Orthodox Byzantium*, pp. 201-202. For accounts of the Orduni's destruction, see MX III.2, p. 2009; *Epic Histories* III.4, pp. 280-281.

position, we must also consider the strategic geography and aims of the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires.

2.4.4 – Strategy and Imperial Policy



The division of Armenia after the Peace of Acilesene c. 387-591 CE (Source: G.A. Bournoutian, *A Concise History of the Armenian People (From Ancient Times to the Present)* (Costa Mesa, CA, 2006), p. 142, Map 11).

Compounding Armenia's challenging geography was its strategic importance to the Byzantine and Persian Empires. The plateau was set between rival empires from the second millennium BCE until the thirteenth century CE. Its borders provided direct access into Anatolia, Media, Syria and Mesopotamia and so was vital in ensuring defence of these regions from hostile empires and Eurasian steppe nomads. Influence over Armenia had been

particularly relevant in Rome's two invasions of the Parthian Empire during the first century CE and it continued to be integral to the Sasanians due to the entry it gave into Mesopotamia especially, which remained both the Sasanian Empire's breadbasket and the site of Ctesiphon, their administrative capital and trade hub.³²⁰

Given Armenia's size, access to resources and tendency to cause rather than abate trouble, it is perhaps better to consider it a peripheral zone than a buffer zone.³²¹ While Yervand Margaryan cautions that Immanuel Wallerstein's peripheral zone model underrepresents the periphery's importance and creative potential, its characterisation of a peripheral zone as one primarily of low-skill production and raw material extraction otherwise fits Armenia.³²² Regardless, Armenia possessed an ambiguous space between the Byzantine and Persian empires that culminated in the Peace of Acilesene c. 387 CE, where it was divided between the two. The border ran from Sper to Martyropolis, separating Sasanian-controlled Persarmenia and the remaining fifth of Armenia, dubbed Greater Armenia.³²³ It was likely porous and most relevant as an administrative division, since Armenian sources rarely referenced it.³²⁴ Greater Armenian *naxarar* retained their traditional rights to tax exemption and freedom from imposed military garrison until Justinian incorporated the

³²⁰ Overtoom, *Reign of Arrows*, p. 257. Umayyad revenue lists from the reign of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd indicate Mesopotamia produced 163.92 million dirhem per annum, which probably does not represent the maximum output under the Sasanians, due to the degradation of the Mesopotamian irrigation system during the decades surrounding the Arab Conquests, resulting in the formation of a 50- by 200-mile Great Swamp along the Nahr Sura Canal that is ascribed to the reign of Kavād I (r. 488-531 CE) by Baladhuri. G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate: Mesopotamia, Persia and Central Asia from the Moslem Conquest to the time of Timur* (Cambridge, 1905), pp. 26-27; H. Kennedy, 'The Decline and Fall of the First Muslim Empire', *Der Islam* 81 (2004), pp. 11-12; Š.A. el-'Alī 'A New Version of Ibn al-Mutarrif's List of Revenues in the Early Times of Hārūn al-Rashīd', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 14.3 (1971), pp. 303-310. For Mesopotamian irrigation, see P. Christensen, *The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environments in the History of the Middle East, 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500*, trans. S. Sampson (Copenhagen, 1993), pp. 49-50; J.F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London, 1989), p. 154; R.McC. Adams, *The Land Behind Baghdad: A History of Settlement on the Diyala Plains* (Chicago, 1965); Idem, *Heartland of Cities: Surveys of Ancient and Settlement and Land Use on the Central Floodplain of the Euphrates* (Chicago, 1981).

³²¹ I. Wallerstein, *World Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, 2004); Traina, 'Ancient Armenia: Evidence and Models', p. 15; E. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), p. 49.

³²² Y. Margaryan, 'Introduction', in *On the Borders of World-Systems: Contact Zones in Ancient and Modern Times*, ed. Y. Margaryan (Oxford, 2020), pp. 1-3.

³²³ Thomson, 'Eastern Neighbours', p. 157.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

region into the empire as four provinces in 536 CE.³²⁵ In the same period, Procopius complained people in the Chorazane region still intermarried across the border and shared common market and farm labour.³²⁶ For *naxarar* clans, such border crossing could be performed over much greater distances. Hmayeak Mamikonean's marriage to Juik Arcruni in the early 440s involved clans whose powerbases lay in opposite corners of Armenia, in Roman-controlled Tarawn and south-east of Lake Van, deep in Persarmenia.³²⁷

Armenia's strategic importance might make complete control of the region seem preferable to separation. However, the requirement for both empires to control the territory encouraged a maintenance of the division set in 387. By the sixth century if not before, Sasanian-Byzantine diplomacy had become more complex than simple hostility and the two empires possessed a diplomatic core that, at least symbolically, acknowledged their parity.³²⁸ Concurrently, Byzantine military policy shifted towards maintaining pre-existing territorial lines, as progressive conquest became less feasible from the Sasanian era onwards.³²⁹ Faced with an equally powerful rival, both sides were disincentivised from attempting to wrest full control of an already difficult to control region. This equilibrium between rival powers generally caused Armenia to flourish, and it was never effectively unified under one imperial system during the period.³³⁰ This particularly frustrated Byzantine attempts to subsume the *naxarar*, as their minority share in the region reduced their reforms' effectiveness.

³²⁵ Procopius, *Procopius*, vol. 7: *On Buildings, General Index*, ed. and trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA, 2014), III.1.16, pp. 182-183; Thomson, 'Eastern Neighbours', p. 159.

³²⁶ Procopius, vol. 7, III.3.9-11, pp. 192-195.

³²⁷ For a map of the regions of Armenia from the late fourth to late sixth century CE, see Hewsen, 'Ecclesiastical Analysis', pp. 148-149.

³²⁸ Panaino, 'Multilingualism and Empires', pp. 495-500; N.G. Garsoïan, 'Byzantium and the Sasanians', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3: *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, part 1, ed. E. Yarshater (Cambridge, 1983), p. 568.

³²⁹ Y. Margaryan, 'The Euphrates Frontier in the Byzantine Period', in *On the Borders of World-Systems: Contact Zones in Ancient and Modern Times*, ed. Y. Margaryan (Oxford, 2020), pp. 6-22.

³³⁰ N.G. Garsoïan, 'Armenia, History of', in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 1: *Aachen – Augustinism*, ed. J.R. Strayer (New York, 1982), p. 474. Cf. Traina, 'Ancient Armenia: Evidence and Models', p. 16.

2.4.4.1 – Byzantine Policy

When Byzantium exercised stable control, reforms appear to have been largely effective. Lesser Armenia, annexed as a Roman province under Diocletian, underwent redrafts of its districts under Theodosius I in the fourth century CE and Justinian in the sixth century, culminating in its five independent satraps being replaced with *praesi* ('governors') reporting to the *vicar* of Pontus.³³¹ Thereafter, the region appears to have assimilated into the Byzantine system. Bishops of Lesser Armenia attended councils their coreligionists spurned, including the 692 CE Council of Trullo which expressly condemned the Armenian practices of performing communion with unmixed wine and permitting church offices to be inherited.³³² With the exception of the powerful bishops of Tarawn, Daranalik' and perhaps Derĵan, they were recorded with reference to urban centres as opposed to clan holdings.³³³ Furthermore, Greenwood suggested a lack of Armenian literary survivals from Rome's Armenian provinces could indicate a linguistic shift towards Greek caused by its usage in church or even Roman suppression of Armenian.³³⁴ A letter sent by bishops of Second Armenia to Emperor Leo I demonstrates that Armenian was still spoken in the fifth century, but it is unclear whether was in the sixth century.³³⁵ Lesser Armenia was still evidently seen as primarily Armenian, given the region's inclusion alongside areas of Greater Armenia in

³³¹ *Novels*, vol. 1, 31, p. 231; Garsoïan, 'Byzantium and the Sasanians', p. 569; Greenwood, 'Armenian Space', p. 64.

³³² *Concilium Constantinopolitanum a. 691/2 in Trullo habitum: (Concilium Quinisextum)*, ed. H. Ohme (Berlin, 2013), 32-33, pp. 37-38. For English translation, see *The Canons of the Quinisext Council (691/2)*, trans. R. Price (Liverpool, 2020), 32-33.

³³³ Garsoïan, 'Secular Jurisdiction', pp. 223-224; *Idem*, 'The Problem of Armenian Integration into the Byzantine Empire', *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, eds. H. Ahrweiler and A.E. Laiou (Washington, DC, 1998), p. 77.

³³⁴ Greenwood, 'Armenian Space', pp. 66-67.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66. See N.G. Garsoïan, 'Some Preliminary Precisions on the Separation of the Armenian and Imperial Churches: the presence of "Armenian" bishops at the first five oecumenical councils', in *Kathēgētria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey for her 80th Birthday*, ed. J.M. Hussey (Camberley, 1988), p. 257.

Justinian's *Novel* 31, but its integration into the Byzantine world significantly dislocated it from the customs that defined Armenia more generally.³³⁶

Byzantium was less successful integrating Greater Armenia. Justinian's *Novel* 21, promulgated 536 CE, called for daughters and their offspring to share succession of *naxarar* patrimonial properties from that year on unless the involved parties had made a settlement otherwise, in an apparent attempt to undercut *naxarar* inheritance models.³³⁷ The immediate effects of this reform are difficult to reconstruct. The fact *Novel* 21 was modifying *Edict* 3 of the previous year, which had seemingly unsuccessfully attempted to *post facto* apply these inheritance strictures from the start of Justinian's reign, implies the earlier ruling had been too difficult to impose.³³⁸ The surviving reforms also faced resistance that led to the death of the governor of First Armenia and the *magister militum per Armeniam*, and the deportation of rebels to the Balkans.³³⁹

Byzantium's minority control of Armenia was only significantly expanded in 591 CE, following territorial concessions by Husraw II. Emperor Maurice created three new provinces (Lower Armenia, Deep Armenia and Inner Armenia II) to accommodate these, also holding a council of union to integrate the Armenian Church.³⁴⁰ Greenwood suggests Sebeos' account of a Vahewuni plot to kill a Byzantine *curator* visiting their territory following these integrations indicates *naxarar* clan property was being transferred to the imperial domain, given *curators* were responsible for managing imperial estates.³⁴¹ However, it is unlikely this had significant long-term effects. Maurice was assassinated in 602 CE and three decades of Perso-Byzantine war undid Byzantine gains in Armenia. Maurice's formulation lasted

³³⁶ Garsoïan, 'The Problem of Armenian Integration', p. 54.

³³⁷ *Novels*, vol. 1, 21, p. 230.

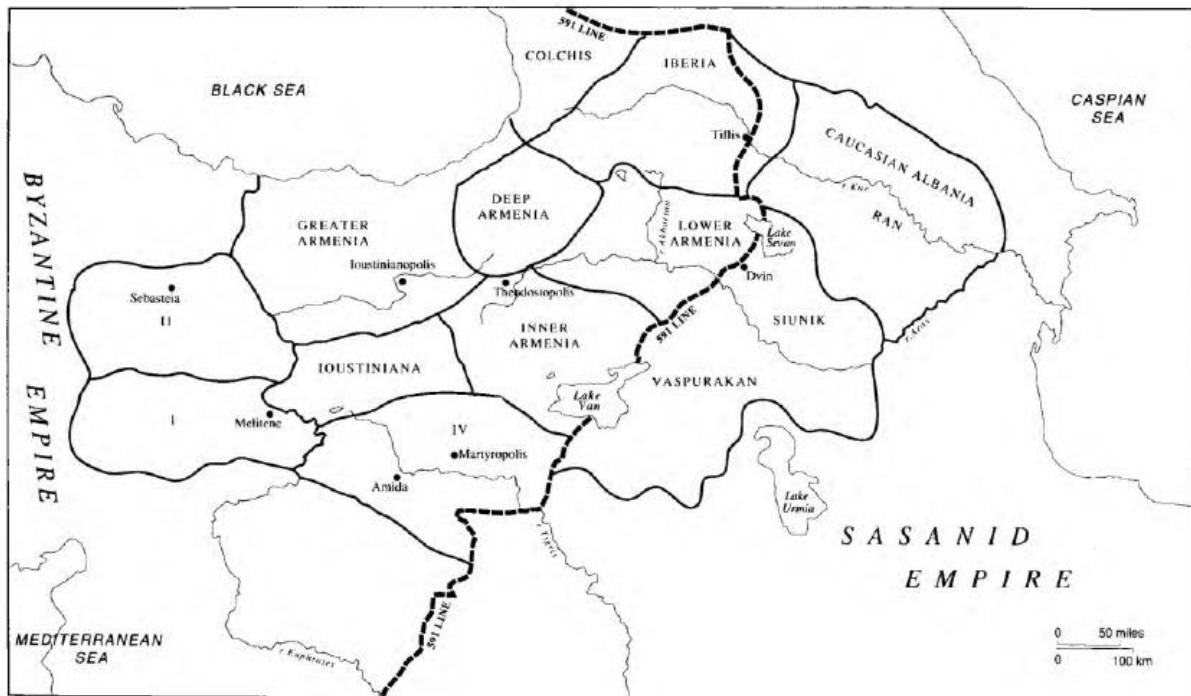
³³⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 3, p. 1038.

³³⁹ Procopius, *Procopius*, vol. 1: *History of the Wars Books 1-2*, ed. and trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA, 2014), II.3.5-27, pp. 270-277.

³⁴⁰ Greenwood, 'Armenian Space', p. 64.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65; Sebeos 17, pp. 489-490.

scarcely more than one generation, meaning Byzantine control was not extended to the majority of Armenia for long enough to seriously damage well-established clans.



The division of Armenia from 591-602 CE (Source: Bournoutian, *A Concise History of the Armenian People*, p. 144, Map 13).

2.4.4.2 – Sasanian Policy

The Sasanian administration controlled the majority of Armenia but was not as concerned with undercutting the clan system. This is not to say that they did not impose upon Armenian society. Dvin, a fourth-century CE foundation that acted as the Aršakuni royal capital and site of the Kat'olikos was also the base of Sasanian *marzbān*. Two sixth- or seventh-century seals from Dvin identify their bearer as *mowbed* ('priest') of the Ādur Gušnasp fire temple in Azerbaijan, demonstrating the prestigious Zoroastrian administration's involvement in

Armenia.³⁴² Sasanian interference was particularly pronounced under the early Sasanians; in the reign of Yazdgerd II (r. 438-457), who attempted to convert the Armenians to Zoroastrianism; and his predecessor Wahrām V, who removed the Aršakuni dynasty and replaced the last Gregorid *kat'olikos* with a trio of Sasanian appointees (Surmak, Brkišo and Šmuel) in what appears to have been an attempt to better incorporate Armenia and its faith into the Sasanian administration and Sasanian-backed, Syriac-speaking Church of the East.³⁴³ In each instance these ultimately stoked rebellion by the *naxarar*.

However, Sasanian *šāhān-šāhs* rarely challenged the *naxarars*' primacy and did not attack the clan organisation underpinning the *naxarar*. Sasanians supplanted the Aršakuni royalty twice in the third century and again in 416-420 CE. Inscriptional evidence attests both Hormizd-Ardašīr (ruled Armenia 252-270 CE, Persia 270-271 CE) and Narseh (ruled Armenia 271-293 CE, Persia 293-302 CE) held the title *Wuzurg-Šāh-Arminān* ('Great King of the Armenians') prior to their ascension to the imperial throne.³⁴⁴ Marie-Louise Chaumont suggests these were relatively successful at curbing *naxarar* in-fighting.³⁴⁵ Yazdgerd I pursued a similar policy less successfully, with his son Šābuhr IV ruling Armenia before briefly becoming *šāhān-šāh* in 420 CE.³⁴⁶

Supplanting the Aršakuni was neither a long-term Sasanian policy nor part of a coherent attempt to subjugate Armenia's elite. These replacements occurred only for a limited time at the beginning of the Sasanian period and the end of the Aršakuni, rather than being the *šāhān-šāhs*' overall approach. There was a general pattern of installing kings-in-

³⁴² A. Kalantaryan and A. Zhamkochyan, 'On Some Dvin Seals and Bullae', *Aramazd* 4.1 (2009), pp. 130-134. On the Ādur Gušnasp: M. Boyce, 'Ādur Gušnasp', *EIr*; Y.S.-D. Vevaina, "'The coals which were his guardians...': The hermeneutics of Heraclius' Persian campaign and a faint trace of the "last great war" in Zoroastrian literature', *Travaux et Mémoires* 26 (2022), pp. 467-490.

³⁴³ Thomson, 'Eastern Neighbours', p. 160; cf. *La "Narratio de Rebus Armeniae": édition critique et commentaire*, ed. G. Garitte (Louvain, 1952), pp. 99-102.

³⁴⁴ Daryae, 'Armenia and Iran', p. 62; *Idem*, 'A Note on the 'Great King of Armenia'', in *Bridging Times and Spaces: Papers in Ancient Near Eastern, Mediterranean and Armenian Studies Honouring Gregory E. Areshian on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, eds. P.S. Avetisyan and Y.H. Grekyan (Oxford, 2017), p. 85.

³⁴⁵ Chaumont, 'Armenia and Iran ii'.

³⁴⁶ Łazar *op cit.* n. 44.

waiting as minor kings within the empire, but this appears to have transitioned to Kūšān – another Arsacid ruled region that opposed the Sasanians in the third and fourth centuries – when Armenia became too contentious a setting for junior royalty.³⁴⁷ Compromise efforts between Wahrām II (r. 274-293 CE) and Diocletian in 286/287 CE likely also aided the restoration of Trdat III.³⁴⁸ Sasanian candidates tended to rule during periods of particular tension between the Sasanians and the Aršakuni – such as during the aftermath of Ardašīr I's conquests when Armenian kings sought to avenge the Arsacids – but did not supplant the Aršakuni more generally.³⁴⁹ Šābuhr IV's promotion perhaps demonstrates Sasanian direct descent inheritance being favoured over Armenian agnatic inheritance, as in the latter system Xosrov IV's nephew Artasēs IV was entitled to inherit but in the former Xosrov had no heir.³⁵⁰ Still, these were all short-term replacements that do not appear to have been intended to meaningfully disenfranchise the *naxarar* so much as replace the troublesome Aršakuni specifically. Even when Armenian sources complain of the Sasanian Empire legislating against the interests of the *naxarar*, this did not necessarily undermine the clan structure on which this class depended. Yazdgerd II's imposition of consanguineous marriage was likely distressing to the Christian population, as it was to Elišē, but if anything strengthened the clan

³⁴⁷ Areshian, 'Sasanian Imperialism', pp. 151-153; Daryaei, 'Armenia and Iran', p. 62; *Idem*, 'A Note on the 'Great King of Armenia'', pp. 85-87. Some overlap is witnessed in Kushano-Sasanian gold coins of Pērōz I, dated to 245-270 CE, bearing the Greek legend *PIRŌZO OZORKO KOβANOβAUO* ('Pērōz, Great King of Kushan'). The legend is instead translated 'Peroz the great, Kūšān king' by Jongeward and Cribb, but the equivalent Middle Persian on copper coins (*wuzurg Kušān šāh*) as 'great Kūšān king' and Khodadad Rezakhani claims their former translation is unprecedented, D. Jongeward and J. Cribb, *Kushan, Kushano-Sasanian, and Kidarite Coins: A Catalogue of Coins from the American Numismatic Society* (New York, 2015), p. 205; Kh. Rezakhani, 'Review of: Jongeward, D. and Cribb, J. with Donovan, P. 2015. *Kushan, Kushano-Sasanian, and Kidarite Coins: A Catalogue of Coins From the American Numismatic Society*. New York', *DABIR* 1.3 (2017), pp. 63-64.

³⁴⁸ Chaumont, 'Armenia and Iran ii'.

³⁴⁹ N.G. Garsoïan, 'Armeno Iranian Relations in the pre-Islamic period', *Elr*. For a list of Parthian Aršakuni rulers, cf. Lang, 'Iran, Armenia and Georgia', pp. 517-518.

³⁵⁰ On Sasanian direct inheritance, see: *MHD* 22.8; M. Macuch, 'Inheritance i. Sasanian Period', *Elr*; B. Hjerrild, 'Āyōken: Woman Between Father and Husband', in *Medioiranica: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 21st to the 23rd of May 1990*, eds. W. Skalmowski and A. van Tongerloo (Leuven, 1993), p. 83; *Idem*, 'Succession and Kinship in the Late Sasanian Era', *Proceedings of the 5th European Conference of Iranian Studies*, vol. I: *Ancient and Middle Iranian Studies*, eds. A. Panaino and A. Piras (Milan, 2006), p. 481.

model by decreasing the likelihood of clan holdings becoming fragmented.³⁵¹ Sasanian impositions were mostly short term and ultimately did not constitute attacks on the clan system in the same manner as Byzantine reforms did.

This approach is comparable to the Sasanian treatment of Mesopotamia's Parthian *wuzurgān* clans, who continued to dominate the court's highest offices throughout the empire's duration.³⁵² Rather than imposing a new administrative order over this nobility, the Sasanians adopted a pragmatic approach based on the principle of a universal monarchy acting as suzerains to diverse subject peoples.³⁵³ *Wuzurgān* power was checked by reorganisations under Husraw I, recorded by later Arabic and Persian sources, which reformed the fiscal system to prevent landowners from accumulating privileges and replaced an army of retainers with a standing army.³⁵⁴ However, these reforms' exemption of Zoroastrians suggests they were responding to the Mazdakite faith's destabilising influence during the reign of Kavād I, not attempting to undermine the nobility entirely.³⁵⁵

Despite this approach, Sasanian governance was complex, demonstrating a heavy degree of parallelism between civil and temple administrations that Lukonin suggests may be backdated to the fourth century CE.³⁵⁶ By the sixth century the empire was split into fifty-six *šahr* ('provinces') organised into four unequal regions controlled by a court-appointed *spāhbed* ('commander'). Each *šahr* contained a civil, religious and religio-judicial administration and a variety of support personnel whose jurisdiction covered only fractions of

³⁵¹ Elišē 2.307, p. 579. For further discussion of consanguineous marriage (*xwēdōdah*), see Chapter 4.3.4, pp. 217-228.

³⁵² Payne, *State of Mixture*, pp. 144-145.

³⁵³ Areshian, 'Sasanian Imperialism', pp. 159-160.

³⁵⁴ For a critical analysis on the sources of Husraw I's reforms, see Z. Rubin, 'The Reforms of Khusro Anūshirwān', in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. 3: *States, Resources and Armies*, ed. A. Cameron (Princeton, 1995), pp. 227-297.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 247, 292-293.

³⁵⁶ V.G. Lukonin, 'Political, Social and Administrative Institutions: Taxes and Trade', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3: *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods*, part 2, ed. E. Yarshater (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 733-734.

a *šahr*.³⁵⁷ A second civil administration attached to the treasury likely also existed which paralleled the religio-judicial administration.³⁵⁸ This *šahr*-network was overlapped by specialist administrations with more varied jurisdictions. The *zarrbed* ('chief of gold'), who organised collections from the empire's mines, held a five *šahr* jurisdiction which included Armenia.³⁵⁹ The position of *āmārgar* ('auditor, tax-collector') was particularly varied. Most only administered parts of *šahr*, but seal evidence attests one managing the two *šahrs* of Khusrō-šad-Kavād and Khusrō-šad-Ohrmazd and another who controlled both Armenia and the obscure *Šahr-pādār-Pērōz*, while Ya'qūbī even refers to an *Ērān-āmārgar* emplaced over the entire empire.³⁶⁰ The late Sasanian Empire evidences a system of well-established, tiered and complimentary administrative branches in both the civil and temple administrations.

Yet this complexity was achieved without compromising the high nobility's power.

All known *spāhbed* were from Parthian or Persian lineages and the first *marzbān* the Sasanian court sent to govern Armenia following King Pap's murder in 374 CE was a Sūrēn clan member.³⁶¹ A figure identified as 'Sūrēnas' in Menander witnessed the Fifty-Years

³⁵⁷ R. Gyselen, *La géographie administrative de l'empire Sassanide: les témoignages sigillographiques* (Paris, 1989), pp. 15-16; *MHDA* 26.17-27.4, 27.13-28.5; Lukonin, 'Political, Social and Administrative Institutions', pp. 733-734.

³⁵⁸ *MHD* 77.6-9; *MHDA* 16.1-17.1, 26.17-28.5; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall*, p. 504. The difference between the two civil administrations, headed by a *šahrab* ('regional governors, satrap') and *ōstāndār* (lit. 'ruler of a territory') respectively, is not immediately apparent. However, the appearance of an *ōstāndār* on two seals and thirty-seven bullae across thirteen *šahr* in the Ahmad Saedi collection demonstrates a broad enough spread that it is unlikely they were local variants of the same position. Gyselen, *Géographie administrative*, p. 11, 23, 38-40; *Idem*, *Nouveaux matériaux*, pp. 61-71.

³⁵⁹ Gyselen, *Nouveaux matériaux*, pp. 31, 79, 226-227.

³⁶⁰ The *āmārgar* of Khusrō-šad-Kavād Khusrō-šad-Ohrmazd may have assisted the *wāspuhragān-framādār* ('commander of the high nobility' or 'court commander', *framādār* lit. 'giver of orders') emplaced over the same region, as Marie-Louise Chaumont contended, mirroring the relationship Arthur Christensen suggested between the *wuzurg-framādār* and the *Ērān-āmārgar*. James Howard-Johnston however considers this unlikely, given *framādār* was a military role. M.-L. Chaumont, 'Framadār', *Elr*; Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, pp. 524-526; J. Howard-Johnston, 'The Late Sasanian Army', *Late Antiquity: Eastern Perspectives*, eds. T. Bernheimer and A. Silverstein (Warminster, 2012), pp. 121-125. Based on its treatment in Lewond, Rika Gyselen identifies *Šahr-pādār-Pērōz* (lit. 'Pērōz is protector of the province', Arm. *Spandaranperoz*, *Spataromn P'eroz*) as the regions north-east of Lake Van, while Pedram Jam contends it was the Ardabil/Qara-sū valley in north-western Iran. Gyselen, *Géographie administrative*, 11, 53; *Idem*, *Nouveaux matériaux*, pp. 41-53, 77-78, 91, 110-113, 119-120, 172-173, 218-219; P. Jam, 'Hrak'otperoz and Spandaranperoz: Armenian Gawa's and Sasanian Šahrs', *Iran and the Caucasus* 21.1 (2017), pp. 50-52. Cf. Lewond, *Patmut' iwn Lewondeay Meci Vardapeti Hayoc*, or *yałags ereweloyn Mahmeti ew zknī norin, t'ē orpēs ew kam orov awrinakaw tirec 'in tiezerac*, *ews arawel t'ē Hayoc* 'azgis in *MH*, vol. 6: 8 *Dar*, ed. Z. Ekawean (Antilias, 2007), 22, p. 803.

³⁶¹ Payne, *State of Mixture*, p. 145.

Peace established between the Sasanians and Byzantines after conflicts over Lazica in 561 CE alongside a *pareunastēr* ('royal chamberlain') whose title, *Zīg*, is likely a misidentified Parthian clan surname.³⁶² The *History of Karka*, a late Sasanian hagiographical text from the Syriac Christian community, included representatives of twelve noble lineages among its martyrs and saints, who traced their origins to either Fārs or the historical Assyrian Kingdom.³⁶³ Payne compared this, and the more narrowly focused *History of Mar Qardagh*, to Mamikonean-sponsored Armenian histories of Awarayr, noting the text depicted a resolutely Christian clan elite, despite the Martyrdoms of Shapur of Beit Niqator, Jacob, Aqebshma and the *History of Karka* including accounts of the city's aristocracy stoning their bishop on imperial order.³⁶⁴ Clan survivals throughout the period may explain Sebēos' reference to a *Vaspuarakann hamarakarn* (MP. *wāspuhragān āmārgar*, 'tax-collector for the high-nobility').³⁶⁵ The *āzād* ('local nobility', lit. 'free') were also integrated into the Sasanian administration as *dahigān* ('local landowners'), a title traditionally considered a creation of Husraw I but that likely already existed in the fifth century and simply became more prominent under him.³⁶⁶

Some Parthian clans even survived the Arab Conquests and accompanied Pērōz, son of *Šāhān-šāh* Yazdgerd III, in his exile in China.³⁶⁷ Nanmei, an official bearing the Chinese

³⁶² *Hoi de ta xunthēkas bebaiountes Hrōmaiōn men Petros ho tōn peri basilea katalogōn hēgemōn kai Eusebios kai heteroi, Persōn de ho Zich ho Iesdegousnaph kai Sourēnas kai heteroi* ('For the Romans, the documents were validated by Peter the master of the offices, Eusebius and others, for the Persians by Zīg Yazdegušnasp, Sūrēnas and others'), Menander Protector, *The History of Menander the Guardsman*, ed. and trans. R.C. Blockley (Liverpool, 1985), pp. 70-71; Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, p. 105 n. 2. Another Zīg (*Zēkas*) appears alongside the Karēn family in Agat'angēlos' account of the Romance of Ardašir and Artabanus, which survives fully only in Greek translation, and in abridged form beginning Simeon Metaphrastes' tenth-century CE *Menology*. See G. Muradyan and A. Topchyan, 'The Romance of Artaban and Artašir in Agathangelos' History', *e-Sasanika* 2 (2008), 6-8, B, pp. 4-5, 8.

³⁶³ *History of Karka d-Beit Slok and Its Martyrs*, in *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*, vol. 2, ed. P. Bedjan (Paris, 1891), pp. 507-535.

³⁶⁴ Payne, *State of Mixture*, pp. 141-151 Cf. Walker, *Legend of Mar Qardagh*, pp. 19-69; *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*, vol. 2, pp. 55, 307, 380, 515.

³⁶⁵ Sebeos 16.4, p. 488.

³⁶⁶ Payne, *State of Mixture*, pp. 145-146.

³⁶⁷ On the Sasanians in China, see M. Compareti, 'Chinese-Iranian Relations xv. The Last Sasanians in China', *Elr*; *Idem*, 'The Last Sasanians in China', *Eurasian Studies* 2.2 (2003), pp. 197-213.

title *Bosi da shouling* ('Grand Head of Persia') depicted alongside Pērōz at the Qianling Mausoleum of Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty (r. 649-683 CE) and his Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690-705), was likely Parthian if the head bearing curly hair and a Parthian moustache found nearby belongs to his statue and not Pērōz's.³⁶⁸ The Sūrēn clan are last attested on a ninth-century CE tombstone of a military commander in Northern China, near contemporary with the last reference to a Sasanian descendant, a clergyman named Li Sui/Lūqā (d. 817 CE) mentioned on a stele in Xi'ān.³⁶⁹

The Sasanian system in Northern Mesopotamia represented an expansion of royal and aristocratic powers in concert, rather than the royalty dominating the aristocracy or vice-versa. Even the Sasanian royal conurbation of Ctesiphon was in Mesopotamia, outside the dynasty's original territory but perhaps inside their imagined archaic Persian empire.³⁷⁰ This suggests an approach to imperialism quite different to modern colonialist regimes, involving the pragmatic economic development of conquered lands and the use of preceding administrative structures, albeit with Sasanian elements overlaid to supply proper Persian prestige.³⁷¹

Sasanian rulers did not let elites simply do as they pleased. The *Kār-Nāmag ī Ardašīr ī Pābagān* ('Book of the Deeds of Ardašīr, son of Pābag'), whose ending during the reign of Hormizd I (272-273 CE) suggests it may have begun as a product of the third century despite being redacted at the earliest in the late Sasanian period, condemned the Arsacids for

³⁶⁸ H.P. Zanous and E. Sangari, 'The Last Sasanians in Chinese Literary Sources: Recently Identified Statue Head of a Sasanian at the Qianling Mausoleum', *Iranian Studies* 51.4, pp. 499-515.

³⁶⁹ G. Ito, 'A Linguistic Interpretation of the Pahlavi Text of the Sino-Pahlavi Tomb Inscription Unearthed at Sian', *Kao gu xue bao* 2 (1964), p. 196; Lukonin, 'Political, Social and Administrative Institutions', pp. 682-683; G. Chengyong, 'The Christian Faith of a Sogdian Family in Chang'an during the Tang Dynasty', trans. M. Nicolini-Zani, *Annali dell'Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"* 64 (2004), p. 181; H.R. Bāghbidi, 'New Light on the Middle Persian-Chinese Bilingual Inscription from Xi'ān', in *The Persian Language in History* eds. M. Maggi and P. Orsatti (Wiesbaden 2011), pp. 105-115.

³⁷⁰ On the Sasanian vision of a historic Persia Empire, see T. Daryae, 'The Construction of the Past in Late Antique Persia', *Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte* 55.4 (2006), pp. 493-503; *Idem*, 'The Idea of the Sacred Land of *Ērānšahr*', *Persianism in Antiquity*, eds. R. Strootman and M.J. Versluys (Stuttgart, 2017), pp. 393-399.

³⁷¹ Areshian, 'Sasanian Imperialism', pp. 153, 159.

allowing the realm to fragment and abandoning the *ēw-xwadāyīh* ('one lordship') that Hormizd restored.³⁷² Still, the survival of the Parthian elite is marked and the Persians appear to have understood that an empire of their size required the co-operation of initially-hostile subject populations to run smoothly. The Sasanian model of governance ultimately resembles a more successful version of the approach the Aršakuni took towards the *naxarar*, perhaps enabled by the greater power of their imperial centre combined with Mesopotamia's flat, urbanised and highly irrigated landscape allowing a more extensive range of travel than was possible in Armenia.³⁷³ The importance of policy differences is thus not a competing thesis with the geographical and strategic outlook. Rather, all these factors operated to frustrate attempts to centralise the *naxarar*.

2.4.5 – Armenian Christianity

Armenia's adoption of Christianity, traditionally dated to 301 CE but potentially occurring later in 314/315 CE compounded other issues in managing the region.³⁷⁴ This increasingly placed a wedge between Armenia and Zoroastrian-dominated Persia, although Armenian Christianity was not necessarily anathema to the Sasanians. Kat'olikos Komitas attended and prepared a definition of the faith for a debate at the court of Husraw II.³⁷⁵ However, while Christian confession did not fully disconnect Armenia from the Sasanian court, it offered a

³⁷² de Jong, 'Regional Variation', p. 19.

³⁷³ Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 43-48.

³⁷⁴ P. Ananian, 'La data e le circostanze della consecrazione di S. Gregorio Illuminatore', *Le Muséon* 84 (1961), pp. 43-73, 319-360.

³⁷⁵ T.W. Greenwood, 'Oversight, Influence and Mesopotamian Connections to Armenia across the Sasanian and early Islamic periods', *Mesopotamia in the Ancient World: Impact, Continuities, Parallels: Proceedings of the Seventh Symposium of the Melammu Project Held in Obergurgl, Austria, November 4-8, 2013*, eds. R. Rollinger and E. van Dongen (Munster, 2015), pp. 11-14, 18 (sic). For Sasanian royal debates, see Walker, *Legend of Mar Qardagh*, pp. 181-190; R.E. Payne, 'Iranian Cosmopolitanism: World Religions at the Sasanian Court', in *Cosmopolitanism and Empire: Universal Rulers, Local Elites, and Cultural Integration in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, eds. M. Lavan, R.E. Payne and J. Weisweiler (Oxford, 2016), pp. 209-230.

model of identity separate to the Sasanian world, particularly in the wake of Awarayr when narrative histories touted the faith as an opposition to Iranian heathenism.

Christianity did not inherently bring Armenians into communion with Byzantium. While the *kat'olikos* was initially consecrated in Caesarea, mainstream Armenian Christendom rejected Chalcedon and by the fifth century had thrown off explicit Syriac connections, with Armenian sources stressing their faith's 'national' character.³⁷⁶ Between 572-653 CE, five *kat'olikosk'* were summoned by five different emperors or pressured into complying with the Byzantine system, but all attempts at communion were abortive.³⁷⁷ Nina Garsoïan suggested that Byzantine secular authority over Armenian ecclesiastical affairs was considerably overstated even in earlier periods.³⁷⁸ There is no evidence Greater Armenia was represented at the 381 CE Council of Constantinople, excluding a tradition anachronistically placing Nersēs I there. The attendance of one Isakokis of Greater Armenia at 364 CE Synod of Antioch should similarly be seen exceptional, resulting from Byzantium's loss of Armenian territories following Emperor Julian's disastrous 363 CE Persian campaign.³⁷⁹ After the fourth century, overt imperial influence over the church in Greater Armenia appears only during crises, with a two-century gap between Byzantine intrusions in the fourth and late sixth century.³⁸⁰

Nor did Armenians see Christianity as making them more Byzantine, even if it could distance them from the Persians. Byzantine joint councils were considered abusive, with Kat'olikos Movses II famously denouncing Emperor Maurice's summons by claiming he

³⁷⁶ *Narratio*, pp. 56-57; Garsoïan, 'Secular Jurisdiction', p. 220; C.A. Frazee, 'The Christian Church in Cilician Armenia: Its Relations with Rome and Constantinople to 1198', *Church History* 45.2 (1976), p. 166; F.C. Conybeare, 'Canons of St Sahak', p. 828; Thomson, 'Eastern Neighbours', p. 159.

³⁷⁷ Greenwood, 'Oversight, Influence and Mesopotamian Connections', p. 16; Garsoïan, 'Secular Jurisdiction', pp. 224-225.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

would not cross the Azat river and eat Byzantine fermented bread.³⁸¹ The clergy more often looked to the Sasanians as authorities, despite their religious differences. Of the Armenian councils listed in a letter attributed to Yovhannēs Awjñec‘i only one, the 555 CE Council of Dwin, referenced Byzantine imperial authorities.³⁸² This same letter adopted Sasanian regnal dating and denounced Emperor Heraclius’ appointment of Ezr I, claiming he was only empowered to raise the *kat’olikos* because of Husraw II’s death.³⁸³ The 645 CE Council of Dwin dates by Byzantine year, but references both Byzantine and Sasanian rulers incumbent at the time and cites the authority of a, likely fictive, Persian archive.³⁸⁴

Observance of a non-imperially backed form of Christianity discouraged Armenians from integrating or identifying with either empire. Furthermore, it may have made the *naxarar* system more visible within the Parthian Commonwealth, as Armenian was systematised as a written language for evangelistic purposes and welcomed an influx of Christian-related terms in Greek, Latin and Syriac.³⁸⁵ Aside from natural factors of geography and position, Armenia existed within a cultural framework that insulated it from imperial forces.

³⁸¹ R.W. Thomson, ‘The Origins of Caucasian Civilization: The Christian Component’, in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, ed. R.G. Suny (Ann Arbor, 1996), p. 35.

³⁸² *GT* 57, p. 221.

³⁸³ *c’Ezr kat’olikos k’alkedonik, zor oč’ ənduni surb ekerc’i. vasn zi ays Ezr ənkəlaw zhayrapetut’iwnn hramnaw Herakli t’agaworin Hořomoc’ [...] t’agaworēn Heraklē, or tirelov t’agaworeac’ Hayoc’ ew Hořomoc’, vasn zi span zXosrov ark’ayn Parsic’ ew ebarj zt’agaworut’iwn nora, k’anzi c’ayn vayr hnazandeał ēin Hayk’ ənd jeřamb Xosrovow ark’ayin Parsic’* (‘Ezr, the Chalcedonian Kat’olikos, who was not acceptable to the holy church, because this Ezr had received the patriarch by the order of Heraclius, king of the Romans [...] from King Heraclius, who was ruling the kingdoms of Armenia and Rome, because Xosrov, king of the Persians, had been killed and lost his sovereignty, since until that time the Armenians were subject to the hand of Xosrov, king of the Persians’), *GT* 57, pp. 222-223; Garsoian, ‘Secular Jurisdiction’, pp. 227-228.

³⁸⁴ *KH* vol. 2, 38.0, 38.8-9, pp. 200, 208-210.

³⁸⁵ Areshian, ‘Sasanian Imperialism’, pp. 151-152.

2.5 – Social Depth of the Clan

The social depth of the clan system is difficult to gauge, as Armenian sources rarely discussed non-*naxarar*. It does not necessarily follow that a clan system existed at all levels of society, given how socially and physically distinguished Armenian nobles were from the classes below them. Šahapivan exempted *naxarar* and their peers from normal punishments, for example.³⁸⁶ Childhood nutritional differences also caused individuals from noble backgrounds to be physically larger than their subordinates.³⁸⁷ Giant stature was a frequent focus of Armenian heroes, and a false account of Vasak Mamikonean and Sahak Bagratuni's survival that is told to Vahan Mamikonean in Łazar included a priest identifying the pair as *azat* through their *jew* ('shape') and *kerparan* ('appearance, comportment', MP. *kirb*, body).³⁸⁸ One might argue then that the *naxarar* clans were sufficiently different from other Armenians that they could have been organised following different models. It is possible that clans were adopted clans were adopted by the *naxarar* alone to accrue privileges and interact with the broader Iranian high elite whose clans spread throughout the Parthian Commonwealth. However, Parthian influence does not preclude significant social depth, and the balance of evidence suggests *azat* and perhaps *anazat* families were arranged in clans. Indirect support for this is found in the local priesthood, whose organisation within a clan structure is difficult to justify without a firmly embedded secular equivalent.

Evidence for surnames among non-*naxarar* is ambiguous. Israyēl Gorāłcec'i, a *vanac* 'erēc' ('priest of the monastery') is referred to on an inscription commemorating the 631 CE construction of a church in Bagavan, but it is unclear whether Gorāłcec'i is his name or the region he was from.³⁸⁹ A similar case, a 636 CE inscription commemorating one Grigor

³⁸⁶ *KH* vol. 1, 18.20, pp. 464-466.

³⁸⁷ Compare Payne's discussion of *wuzurgān*, R. Payne, 'Sex, Death, and Aristocratic Empire: Iranian Jurisprudence in Late Antiquity', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 58.2 (2016), pp. 519-522.

³⁸⁸ Łazar 77.5, p. 2336; A. Petrosyan, *The Indo-European and Ancient Near Eastern Sources of the Armenian Epic: Myth and History* (Washington, DC, 2002), pp. 28-29, 53.

³⁸⁹ T.W. Greenwood, 'A Corpus of Early Medieval Armenian Inscriptions', *DOP* 58 (2004), A.5, p. 82.

elustr and his wife Miriam at a church he built in Ałaman, bears no surname.³⁹⁰ Such examples may indicate surnames were exclusive to the *naxarar*. This may be why Movses Xorenac'i sought the origin for clan surnames (Dimaksean, Spanduni etc.) in their roles prior to their promotion, which suggests he believed they were adopted when the clan received *naxarar* status.³⁹¹ This could explain why, despite the early development of *naxarar* surnames, modern Armenian surnames are not congruent with them. These formed instead in the seventeenth century and do not use the *-(t)uni* suffix common in *naxarar* surnames but were constructed like Persian patronymics in *-ān* ('son of') – around a patronym, toponym or occupation suffixed *-ian* ('son of').³⁹²

However, *azat* at least likely did organise through clans, since they and the *naxarar* were frequently referred to as *azat* collectively, implying they operated in the same system. The raising of *azat* families to *naxarar* status that Movses Xorenac'i envisioned would have been difficult to imagine if there was such a sharp distinction between *naxarar* and other *azat* as one not being organised in clans, whether or not they actually occurred in practice.³⁹³ It is possible it was merely the *azats* lesser prestige that caused their surnames to be unrecorded or avoided in preference to official rank. Tomanoff compared the *azat* semantically and sociologically to their Iberian equivalent, the *aznaurn*, who had developed from the heads of small clans, and proposed a similar origin for the *azat*.³⁹⁴ *Girk' T'it'oc'* saw no issue

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, A.4, pp. 81-82.

³⁹¹ MX II.7.14-17, II.47.6, pp. 1857, 1923.

³⁹² James Howard-Johnston, personal communication. See also R.H. Hewsen, 'Armenian Names in America', *American Speech* 38.3 (1968), pp. 214-215; N. Seferian, 'What's in an Armenian Name?' [accessed online at <https://armenianweekly.com/2011/01/27/seferian-what%E2%80%99s-in-an-armenian-name/> 04/01/2023].

³⁹³ On these promotions, see MX II.7.14-17, II.47.6, pp. 1857, 1923.

³⁹⁴ Toumanoff, *Studies*, pp. 124-126. On the etymology of Georgian *aznaurn* (likely from MP. *āznāwar*, 'noble'), see U. Bläsing, 'Turkish *aznavur* "A Nobleman" or "A Ruffian": Review of an Etymology', in *Cultural, Linguistic and Ethnological Interrelations In and Around Armenia*, eds. J. Dum-Tragut and U. Bläsing (Cambridge, 2011), p. 38.

providing a surname for a Khuzistani merchant, Sergis Abdišoyean, for whom a definition of faith was prepared at Dwin in 505 CE.³⁹⁵

2.5.1 – Linguistic Evidence

The *naxarar* system's existence within a wider Parthian clan network does not prove clans were an elite feature, as five centuries of Parthian control affected Armenia at all levels of society. Iranian elements are so pervasive in Classical Armenian that it was considered an Iranian dialect until Heinrich Hübschmann displayed its Indo-European origins in 1877.³⁹⁶ Parthian loanwords are especially common, appearing across the language's basic and specialised lexicon, without restriction to any part or grammatical category.³⁹⁷ Toumanoff is right to caution that such borrowed words do not imply a borrowed concept.³⁹⁸ However, the nuance displayed suggests a lasting period of functional bilingualism at all levels of Armenian society, even if historical data cannot reconstruct this period's extent.³⁹⁹ The Armenian lexicon, derivational morphology, phraseology and syntax were all heavily affected by Parthian, while in most Indo-European languages these categories were entirely the product of internal developments. Adjectival borrowing and the invasion of closed categories such as prepositions and numbers are especially significant and suggest an intense linguistic relationship.⁴⁰⁰ Structural transfer, a practice only likely in situations where speakers of both languages are in very close long-term contact, is also apparent in the

³⁹⁵ *GT* 8, p. 47; Greenwood, 'Oversight, Influence and Mesopotamian Connections', p. 518.

³⁹⁶ E. Kettenhofen and R. Schmitt, 'Hübschmann, (Johann) Heinrich', *EIr*; R. Matsović, *A grammatical sketch of Classical Persian, MS.*, University of Zagreb, p. 2 [<http://mudrac.ffzg.unizg.hr/~rmatasov/ARMENIAN2.pdf> accessed 14 February 2019].

³⁹⁷ Meyer, *Iranian-Armenian Language Contact*, pp. 13-20.

³⁹⁸ Toumanoff, *Studies*, p. 114, n. 184

³⁹⁹ Meyer, *Iranian-Armenian Language Contact*, p. 262; Kettenhofen and Schmitt, 'Hübschmann', pp. 551-553; Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, pp. 496, 512 n. 81.

⁴⁰⁰ A few examples include – *seaw* 'black' <Parth. *syāw*; *spitak* 'white', cf. Parth. *ispēd*, MP. *spēd*; *vasn* 'because of' <Parth. *wasnāō*, MP. *wašn*, OP. *vašnā-* 'by the greatness of' (itself likely a derivative of OP. *vazarka-* 'great', from which MP. *wuzurg*, 'great [man]', derives; *hazar* '1,000' <WMIr. *hazār*, '1,000'; *biwr* '10,000' <WMIr. *bēwar*, '10,000'. Meyer, *Iranian-Armenian Language Contact*, p. 20.

construction of the Armenian periphrastic perfect, which seems influenced by the ergative construction of the West Middle Iranian past tense.⁴⁰¹ Iranian names were also common. Hübschmann's 1897 *Armenische Grammatik* identified 217, despite limited knowledge of Old and Middle Iranian languages at the time.⁴⁰² The literary nature of surviving evidence may mean Iranian elements permeated the nobility to a higher degree than the lower classes and ensures the Partho-Armenian situation resists neat categorisation, but intense contact – of which Meyer suggests at least two phases – is undeniable.⁴⁰³

No other language, even other Iranian dialects, was as productive as Parthian. Some Armenian terms (eg. *tohm*, 'family, tribe') compare better to Sasanian Middle Persian than Parthian forms and several *Doppelentlehnungen* exist that were borrowed from Parthian and Middle Persian at different stages (Arm. *mogpet*, 'archmagician', < Parth. *maybed* and Arm. *movpet*, '[Zoroastrian] priest', < MP. *mowbed*).⁴⁰⁴ However, Middle Persian borrowings were restricted to nouns and primarily technical terms like honorific titles, professions and administrative units (e.g. *marzpan* 'margrave' < MP. *marzbān*), suggesting a more basic level of language contact.⁴⁰⁵ Seemingly Middle Persian terms may represent Parthian borrowings altered in the Sasanian era. The small number of Eastern Iranian loans in Armenian, most closely corresponding to forms exclusively attested in Sogdian, likely also entered Armenia through Parthian.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-160; S.G. Thomason and T. Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 167.

⁴⁰² Schmitt and Bailey, 'Armenia and Iran iv'.

⁴⁰³ Meyer, *Iranian-Armenian Language Contact*, pp. 257-258, 262.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23; G. Bolognesi, 'L'Armenia tra oriente e occidente: incontro di tradizioni linguistiche nei secoli che precedono e seguono la prima documentazione scritta', *Transcaucasia 2* (1980), p. 33. Meyer and Garsoïan suggest Armenian/Sasanian religious differences accustomed fewer borrowings. N.G. Garsoïan, 'The Aršakuni Dynasty (A.D. 12-[180?]-428)', in *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1: *The Dynastic Periods, from Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century*, ed. R.G. Hovannisian (New York, 1997), pp. 63-94.

⁴⁰⁶ W.B. Henning, *Mitteliranisch* (Leiden, 1958), p. 93; B.A. Olsen, *The Noun in Biblical Armenian: Origin and Word-Formation – With Special Emphasis on Indo-European Heritage* (Berlin, 1999), pp. 860-861; Meyer, *Iranian-Armenian Language Contact*, pp. 25-26.

Non-Iranian languages show a comparatively minor impact. Comparing the influence of Iranian, Greek and Syriac, Brigitte Olsen's appendices dedicated sixty-four pages to the Iranian elements in Armenian, ten to Greek and three to Syriac.⁴⁰⁷ Greek is particularly illustrative due to its use as a prestige language throughout the Arsacid-era Parthian Commonwealth. Excluding a few early issues, Parthian coins exclusively bore Greek legends and so did many surrounding kingdoms.⁴⁰⁸ *Basileōs megalou* (Gk. 'great king') was used by the Arasacids, Seleucids, Tigran the Great of Armenia and Pharnaces of Pontus; while *philellēnos* (Gk. 'Greek-lover') appears on several dynasties' coinage, including those of Armenia and Parthia, following its introduction c. 141/140 BCE under Mihrdād I (r. 165-132 BCE).⁴⁰⁹ Greek was likely spoken at the Aršakuni court and its prominence in Armenian intellectual circles is demonstrated by the fact twenty of Classical Armenian's thirty-six characters bore Greek prototypes.⁴¹⁰ However, while Greek was the closest Indo-European language to Armenian, its productivity was dwarfed by Parthian. Greek loans were heavily

⁴⁰⁷ Olsen, *The Noun in Biblical Armenian*, pp. 857-934. Some noteworthy Syriac loans include *k'ahanay* ('priest', Syr. *kāhnā* 'priest'), *k'urm* ('pagan priest', Syr. *kumra* 'pagan priest', cf. Georgian *kurumi* 'pagan priest) and possibly *erēc* ('elder, priest', from PIE **pre(y)sgʷu-*, cognate with Gr. *présbus* 'old') which gained its clerical usage as 'priest' either from Gr. *presbúteros* or Syr. *qaššīšā* ('elder, priest'). *Ibid.*, p. 931; Petrosyan, 'State Pantheon of Greater Armenia', p. 183.

⁴⁰⁸ For these exceptions see D.G. Sellwood, *An Introduction to the Coinage of Parthia* (London, 1980), types 3-4, pp. 23-24. These coins include the name of Arsaces I in Greek, but also Aramaic which Abgarians and Sellwood identify as *krny* (Karen, 'general'), a translation of the Greek *AUTOKRATOROS* ('autocrat') found on Arsaces' earlier issues. They argue non-Greek script was adopted to emphasise the early Arsacids' anti-Seleucid position. M.T. Abgarians and D. Sellwood, 'A Hoard of Early Parthian Drachms', *The Numismatic Chronicle* 11 (1971), pp. 104-105, 113.

⁴⁰⁹ Fowler, 'Most Fortunate Roots', pp. 142, 153-154; Sellwood, *Introduction*, type 13/1-4, p. 42; E. Dąbrowa, 'Phihellēn. Mithridate Ier et les Grecs', in *Ancient Iran and the Mediterranean World: Proceedings of an international conference in honour of Professor Józef Wolski*, ed. E. Dąbrowa (Krakow, 1998), pp. 35-44. For Pharnaces: R.D. Sullivan, *Near Eastern Royalty and Rome 100-30 B.C* (Toronto, 1990), pp. 156, 387, n. 38. On Tigran: *Ibid.*, p. 96-105. Use of *philellēnos* should not be seen to imply subservience to the Romans, any more than early Sasanian inscriptional use of Parthian implies subservience to the Arsacids. The Parthian Arsacids used a variety of Akkadian, Aramaic, Seleucid and novel forms in their expression of power, which often resisted the Achaemenid/Alexander successor dyarchy the Romans preferred. The clearest Achaemenid parallel in comparison – the appearance of a seated archer on the reverse of Parthian coinage – may reference the Hellenistic Apollo motif or simply the practical importance of archery in Parthian military strategy. See Fowler, 'Most Fortunate Roots', pp. 140-142, 145-149; T. Daryae, 'Parthian, Greek and Middle Persian: the hierarchy of languages in the Early Sasanian Empire', in *Arj-e Xrad: Dj. Khalegh-Motlagh Fest*, ed. F. Arslani (Tehran, 1396 AH), pp. 5-7, 9.

⁴¹⁰ For alphabet development, A. Donabédian, 'Quelques remarques sur l'alphabet arménien', *Slovo* 14 (1994), p. 14, fig. 1. For inscriptional Greek, A. Kéfélien, 'The Roman Army and the Transmission of Latin Loan Words in Old Armenian', in *Greek Texts and Armenian Traditions: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, eds. F. Gazzano, L. Pagani and G. Traina (Berlin, 2016), p. 143.

associated with Christianity, only consisting about one-hundred stems when derivatives in the Biblical corpus are excluded.⁴¹¹ We thus see with Greek the relatively blunted impact of a language used primarily for elite communication, which did not heavily affect Classical Armenian until it entered broader circulation through association with Christianity.

2.5.2 – Priestly families

The existence of a hereditary clan structure within the priestly administration suggests the continuation of clan structures beyond the *naxarar* elite. During the early Christian period clerical offices were inherited at every visible level, including the *Kat'olikosate*. Although the *kat'olikos* was technically chosen by the king, the position consistently returned to the Gregorids following ruptures until the line's exhaustion c. 441 CE.⁴¹² So well-established was

⁴¹¹ H.K. Martirosyan, 'The Place of Armenian in the Indo-European Language Family: the Relationship of Greek and Indo-Iranian', *Journal of Language Relationship* 10 (2013), pp. 85-137; Olsen, *The Noun in Biblical*, p. 921. A small number of primarily military-related Latin loans (e.g. *arkl* 'chest, box, coffin' < Latin *arcūla*; cf. Gk. *hárkla*) attested in Classical Armenian may have come through Greek. Kéfélien, 'Roman Army and Transmission', pp. 143-162. A common ancestor between Greek and Armenian has been posited, but recent surveys by James Clackson, Robert Beekes and Ronald Kim all considered this hypothesis lacking due to an absence of conclusively exclusive morphological innovations and an inability to reconstruct intermediate preforms for shared linguistic innovations. Martin Kümmel argues that the speech variety demonstrated by Armenian consonant changes suggests the language had already distinguished itself from other dialects by the end of the third millennium BCE. J. Clackson, *The Linguistic Relationship Between Armenian and Greek* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 199-202; R.S.P. Beekes, 'Historical Phonology of Classical Armenian: A Survey', in F.H.H. Kortlandt, *Armeniaca: Comparative Notes* (Ann Arbor, 2003), pp. 152-153; R.I. Kim, 'Greco-Armenian: The Persistence of a Myth', *Indogermanische Forschungen* 123.1 (2018), pp. 247-271; M.J. Kümmel, *Konsonantenwandel. Bausteine zu einer Typologie des Lautwandels und ihre Konsequenzen für die vergleichende Rekonstruktion* (Wiesbaden, 2007), pp. 319-327.

⁴¹² Of these ruptures, Daniel the Syrian (347 CE) was a disciple of Gregory and P'arēn Aštišatc'i (348-352 CE) a collateral relative, with the only true rupture from the Gregorid line being the three claimants who held the *kat'olikosate* from 373-386 CE, who were from the clan of one of Gregory's companions, Albanus Manazkertc'i. Adontz argues that their installation suggests a swing of power between pro-Byzantine and pro-Sasanian parties, although Garsoïan argued instead that Byzantine influence was generally more significant. Demonstrations of Byzantine control can be seen in Constantius' exile of Nersēs I and perhaps the forced installation of Yovhannēs Bagaranc'i (r. 590-611), which is attributed to Emperor Maurice (although it was instigated by Bishop T'ēodoros of Karin and other local bishops according to a near contemporary letter of the controversial theologian Yovhannēs Mayragomec'i and the pro-Chalcedonian *Narratio de rebus Armeniae*). Garsoïan, 'Secular Jurisdiction', pp. 226, 231-235, 251-252; Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 275, 281, 287-288; *Narratio*, pp. 251-252; M. Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia: Her History, Doctrine, Rule, Disciple, Liturgy, Literature and Existing Condition*, ed. and trans. G. Marcar Gregory (London, 1955), pp. 18-19, 230-231. On the election of the *kat'olikos* more generally, see K.V. Maksoudian, *Chosen by God: The Election of the Catholicos of All Armenia from the Fourth Century to Present* (New York, 1995); J.-P. Mahé, 'Le rôle et la fonction du catholicos d'Arménie du VII^e au XI^e siècle', in *Des parthes au califat: Quatre leçons sur la formation de l'identité arménienne* (Paris, 1997), pp. 79-105.

this claim that the see's return to the clan, alongside the re-ascension of Aršakuni monarchy, was a theme in Armenian eschatological accounts.⁴¹³ Heredity also occurred at lower ranks. *Epic Histories*' claim Bishop Xad of Bagrawand and Aršarunik⁴ was succeeded by his son-in-law because he only had two daughters implies that bishops were normally succeeded by their sons.⁴¹⁴ The fifth canon of the 645 CE Council of Dwin, concerning inheritance of clerical property, spoke of it in familial terms and forbade property from being altered or given outside of the family.⁴¹⁵ Canon nine, condemning *azats* who divided church estates among their own kin, imagined 'houses of priests' (*zeric' uneac' tunsn*) set down by Gregory the Illuminator and Trdat III and recorded by the Persian court.⁴¹⁶

It is improbable such families existed unchanged from the fifth to seventh century, but Dwin's eighth canon did include advice for inheritance that both demonstrates the importance of hereditary logics to the Armenian clergy and somewhat alleviated the risk of heirlessness. The canon advised that, when filling vacancies left by the death of a man or woman from a clerical family, their possessions should pass to a close relative or else a *ordegir* ('adopted child', lit. 'child by writing') should administer their land and position.⁴¹⁷ The inclusion of women demonstrates clerical identity permeated further than the individual cleric, embracing relations irrespective of sex. The presence of the *ordegir* is likewise significant since adoption is otherwise unattested in Armenia during the period. This means it cannot be confirmed whether the *ordegir* was a feature of inheritance generally or peculiar to clerical families. Regardless, the passage's stipulation that inheritance return to the original cleric's

⁴¹³ See, for example, the Vision of Sahak in Łazar or the fifteenth-century CE vision of Arak'el of Bitlis. Łazar 17, pp. 2225-2234; A.K. Sanjian, 'Two Contemporary Armenian Elegies on the Fall of Constantinople, 1453', *Viator* 1 (1970), pp. 223-261.

⁴¹⁴ *Epic Histories* IV.12.35, p. 336.

⁴¹⁵ *Ew mi əst cxoc' bažanesc'en zšnorhn* [...] *Ard' ziwrak'ančiw'r haranc' zžar'angut'iw'n kalc'en ew srboy ekelec'woy paštamann hpatak kac'c'en, ew vardapetin i hnazandut'ean' amenayn yawžarut'eamb*, ('And let them not divide the grace beyond the family [...] Now, they should hold the respective inheritance of their fathers and stand subordinate to the worship of the holy church and to the *vardapet* in obedience, with all willingness'), *KH* vol. 2, 38.5, pp. 204-205.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.9, pp. 209-210.

⁴¹⁷ *KH* vol. 2, 38.8, p. 207. The term *ordegir* could suggest the existence of written wills in the seventh century CE, otherwise unattested in Armenia during this period.

relatives within two generations implies influence from Sasanian law.⁴¹⁸ In the *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān*, an adopted son (*pus ī padīrīftāg*) was contracted in writing and he or his natal family could thereafter be made responsible for the estate and debts of his adopted father.⁴¹⁹ However, Dwin's focus on the deceased's heirs when the canon explicitly dealt with childless couples seems to suggest that heirs were being produced for the deceased in a similar manner to another Zoroastrian institution, *stūrīh* ('trusteeship, substitute succession'). This term *stūrīh* denotes a constellation of practices that used intermediaries to produce heirs for heirless men that, while biologically unrelated to that individual, were nonetheless considered legally his sons and daughters.⁴²⁰ Unlike the model seen in Dwin, *stūrīh* could last far longer than two generations, at least in theory. The mythic Īraǰ, for example, was separated from his "son" and heir Manuš by ten generations of women according to the *Bundahišn* and *Abdīh ud Sahīgīh ī Sīstān* (*Wonders and Magnificence of Sīstān*).⁴²¹ The *ordegir*'s role in administering property and producing heirs is unfortunately not clear in Dwin due to the brevity of the reference. Nonetheless, the council's claims fit with Agat'angēlos' assertion in the fifth century that Gregory and Trdat trained the pre-Christian priests of Armenia and their minor sons as Christian officials, insinuating a system where sons ideally replaced fathers.⁴²² Such agreement implies that local priests ideally inherited their positions throughout the late antique period. This indicates a greater diffusion of the

⁴¹⁸ *amenayn isk šnorhn merjaworac 'n elic 'i, et 'ē oč' ordis kam t 'oruns unic 'in, zi č 'vayeli zsrboy ekelec 'woy zžarāngut 'iwn yaržanawor merjaworac 'n awtarac 'oyc 'anel ew tal heřaworac ' ew awtarac*, ('Yet all the grace shall pass to the relatives, if they have no children or grandchildren, since it is not proper to alienate the inheritance of the holy church from the worthy relatives and offer it to distant relatives and foreigners'), *KH* vol. 2, 38.8, p. 207.

⁴¹⁹ *MHD* 16.2-5, 26.10-12, 69.9-70.2; Shaki, 'Children iii'.

⁴²⁰ For a useful overview of *stūrīh*, see B. Hjerrild, 'Some Aspects of the Institution of *stūrīh*', in *Religious texts in Iranian languages: symposium held in Copenhagen May 2002*, eds. F. Vahman and C.V. Pedersen (Copenhagen, 2007), pp. 165-174; *idem*, 'The Institution of *Stūrīh* in the Pahlavi *Rivāyat* of Āturfarnbag. Trust Settled Property', in *Iranica Selecta: Studies in Honour of Professor Wojciech Skalmowski on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. A. Van Tongerloo (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 91-107.

⁴²¹ *Bundahišn* 35.13, p. 393; M. Macuch, 'Descent in Frēdōn's Line: An Epic Narrative in the Light of Zoroastrian Law', *Zaraθuštrōtāma. Zoroastrian and Iranian Studies in Honor of Philip G. Kreyenbroek*, ed. Shervin Farridnejad (Leiden, 2020), pp. 258-259.

⁴²² Agat'angēlos 120.1-7, pp. 1703-1705.

hereditary model in society beyond just the *naxarar* class and supports the hypothesis that *azat* and *šinakan* families were arranged in a clan model also.

Church positions were not owed to relatives irrespective of merit. *Epic Histories* emphasised the unworthiness of Kat'olikos Yusik I's sons to their father's position and canonical literature sought to ensure clerical relatives were held to a high moral standard.⁴²³ Šahapivan required priests to eject adulterous relatives from their homes; while 645 CE Dwin exhorted clerics to send their sons to school, deprived clergymen who spent more than three years as horsemen their privileges, and permitted *vardapets* to sell church offices at the expense of a cleric's closest relatives (presumably if said relatives were considered unworthy).⁴²⁴

However, immoral individuals did not lose their identity as members of clerical families. The sixth-century Council of Nersēs and Meršapuh barred twice-married men and the unlearned from priestly positions but exhorted them to concentrate on maintaining their paternal lands and outfitting their sons for the priesthood, permitting them also to hold the lesser ranks of *paštōneay* ('minister') or *drakardac* ('lector') provided they did not receive shares of church revenue.⁴²⁵ Such continued inclusion might have been required to maintain the priests themselves, since the same council strictly distanced the priest from his own household's upkeep, forbidding him from performing liturgy in his home or raising live sheep

⁴²³ *Epic Histories* III.5, 15, 19, pp. 281-282, 300-303. The denigration of Yusik's sons may connect to Sasanian-era anti-twin rhetoric evident in the depiction of Nersēs older brothers on his Paikuli inscription. M.R.

Shayegan, 'Bardiya and Gaumāta: An Achaemenid Enigma Reconsidered', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, n.s. 20 (2006), pp. 71-72; *Idem*, 'Old Iranian Motifs in *Vīs o Rāmīn*' in *Essays in Islamic Philology, History and Philosophy*, eds. A. Korangy, W.M. Thackston, R.P. Mottahedeh and W. Granara (Berlin, 2016), pp. 30-34

⁴²⁴ *KH* vol. 1, 18.2, pp. 431-432; vol. 2, 38.5-6, 8, pp. 204-209. *Vardapet* is an Iranian loan, ultimately rooted from OP. **vard-* 'work' (PIr. **warj-* 'to work') and PIr. **pāti-* 'master', thus 'master of works'. After the tenth century it was an honorary title awarded to celibate priests, usually reserved for teaching priests, but before this it was used in a general sense. It is also often used to render Greek *didaskalos* and *epistates* and Hebrew *rabbi*.

Ačārean, *Hayerēn armatakan bařaran*, vol. 4, pp. 318-319; K.H. Maksoudian, 'Vardapet', *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 12: *Thaddeus Legend – Zvart'noc*, ed. J.R. Strayer (New York, 1982), p. 360; R.W.

Thomson, 'Vardapet in the Early Armenian Church', *Le Muséon* 75 (1962), pp. 367-384.

⁴²⁵ *KH* vol. 1, 20.5, p. 480.

and cattle.⁴²⁶ The high priest (*glxawor k'ahanay*) was further restricted, banned from leaving the church to perform household functions by both Nersēs and Meršapuh and the canons attributed to Sahak Partew, despite his home acting as a communal centre where alms were stored and travelling ascetics exhorted to stay if they could not find a local monastery.⁴²⁷ The result was a clan structure where individual clerics were separated from household management and supported by wider networks of relatives. These clans were set apart from lay clans by their higher moral standards, a pattern mirroring the Zoroastrian priestly 'caste', who were discouraged from marrying lay women until the mid-twentieth century.⁴²⁸

That clerical clans existed may not imply *šinakan* clans existed, since clerics positioned themselves closer to the *azat*. The 645 CE Council of Dwin forbade selling a church to *šinakan*, for instance.⁴²⁹ Indeed, the only mention of a *šinakan* in an official position in Šahapivan is identified by Aram Mardirossian as a later interpolation.⁴³⁰ Since *šinakan* were barred from most official functions, the use of clans to concentrate privileges for individual families would not apply and it is plausible that they would thus not utilise a clan structure.

Nonetheless, canon eight, which concerned abuses of power by members of the *azat* class, complained that clerics were being treated as if they were undifferentiated *šinakan*.⁴³¹ If clerics could be conflated with *šinakan* by the nobles governing them despite being

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.7, 28, pp. 481, 488. Contrast the Pahlavi *Hērbedestān*, which required Zoroastrian priests to value material property over religious study. *The Hērbedestān and Nērangestān*, vol. 1: *Hērbedestān*, ed. and trans. F.M.P. Kotwal and P.G. Kreyenbroek (Paris, 1992), 3.1-4.7, pp. 32-39; A. Hintze and M. Macuch 'Disseminating the Mazdayasnian Religion. An Edition of the Avestan Hērbedestān Chapter 5', in *Exegisti Monumenta: Festschrift in Honour of Nicholas Sims-Williams*, eds. W. Sundermann, A. Hintze and F. de Blois (Wiesbaden, 2009), pp. 172-173.

⁴²⁷ *KH* vol. 1, 17.15, 20.14, 20.34, pp. 377, 484, 489-490.

⁴²⁸ M. Stausberg and R.P. Karanjia, 'Rituals', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, eds. M. Stausberg and Y.S.-D. Vevaina with A. Tessmann (Chichester, 2015), p. 367.

⁴²⁹ *KH* vol. 2, 38.8, p. 207.

⁴³⁰ *Episkopos ok' kam erēc' kam azat ok' i dataworac' ew kam šinakan vasn arājnords kargeloy ew hoviws patarasteloy ekelec' woy ew žolovrdapets ew awrēnsdirs kac' uc'aneloy* ('A bishop or elder or nobleman who is among the judges, or even a peasant, concerning assigning leaders and preparing pastors for the church and parish priests and establishing legislators'), *KH* vol. 1, 18.16, p. 455; Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, p. 144.

⁴³¹ *KH* vol. 2, 38.9-12, pp. 209-213.

organised in a clan structure, this implies that *šinakan* were arranged into clans also. While the clan structure seems to have persisted throughout the period, separation between priests and laity in general was likely inconsistent. *Epic Histories* praised the long military career of Kat'olikos Nersēs I – which the 645 CE Council of Dwin would have considered disqualifying – and did not complain of his position as the son of a woman who was presumably not from a clerical family: an Aršakuni princess named Bambish (MP. *bāmbišn*, ‘queen’; alt. *bānbišn* from **māna-pašnī*, corresponding to Av. *dəmənō.paθnī* ‘mistress of the house’).⁴³² The consistent appearance of clerical clans may therefore be more representative of the structure of lay society than the broad separation witnessed in canonical literature.

⁴³² *Epic Histories* IV.3, pp. 311-313; *KH* vol. 2, 38.6, p. 205.

2.6 – Conclusion

Ultimately, the clan was perhaps the most significant political identity group in Armenian socio-political life and a critical element to noble self-justification and power accumulation. Evidence suggests the *naxarar* class was the predominant power in the region, with the Aršakuni royal family acting (prior to their destruction) in a *primus inter pares* position to the aristocracy. The existence of a royal court with official positions, and particularly one utilising eunuchs, challenged the *naxarar* structure but was never sufficient to subsume it. An absence of evidence renders the search for clans among classes with less-visibility than the *naxarar* inconclusive. However, examination of the church structure and language supports the idea that, even if the clans originated due to Parthian influence (which is by no means a given), it is likely that a clan system was in effect at all free levels of Armenian society from the earliest sources of the fifth century until the end of the Sasanian era and well into the Medieval period.

Chapter 3 – The Household: Adults, Children and *Dayeakut'iwn*

3.1 – Introduction

Late antique Armenian households were not simply isolated descent groups composed of portions of a single class-bounded clan, but rather incorporated individuals from numerous clans and social classes. *Naxarar* households especially imposed upon others, requiring slaves and members of lower social classes to contribute to their maintenance while also exporting their children to other households through *dayeakut'iwn* (lit. 'wet-nursing'), a collection of interrelated child-raising strategies that were heavily influenced if not borrowed from Iranian practice. This ensured that children were often raised in geographically distant households of another clan and expanded household membership beyond the heirs of a particular husband and wife, creating fictive kinship bonds between the household and children they cared for. Similarly, less powerful households relied on the contributions of children and co-resident relatives for upkeep. While most authority was exercised by adult men, most notably the household *tanutēr* ('master of the house', *paterfamilias*), his wife possessed authority both in his absence and in general due to the requirements of household operation.

Such a structure, wherein clan and household overlapped, was mutually reinforcing. The household, as the domestic group and primary model in which children were raised, served to replicate primarily Iranian (albeit heavily Christianised) visions of Armenian society. Such domestic groups are vital to social reproduction, as no system can continue without producing offspring and adequately emplacing and incorporating them into the culture.⁴³³ Discussion of the household is also necessary to locate the previous chapter spatially, as clan acted as a group identity not a space, even if it claimed a specific geographical unit and structured the normative organisation of that unit. It was through

⁴³³ Fortes, 'Introduction', pp. 1-2.

households – logistic and legal collectives based around an embodied living arrangement – that this entity was realised and operated, putting the claims of the clan system into motion at local levels.

This chapter begins by discussing the authorities and maintainers of the household – men, women and slaves in that order – followed by examining children, who were dependants and ultimate purpose of a household. Such an ordering is for clarity's sake and does not indicate the relative importance of household members. Arguably, children were the most important participants in the unit. Finally, *dayeakut'awn* is discussed. This both extends the boundaries of household/clan overlap and demonstrates links between Armenia and the Iranian world, which practised a similar set of institutions called *dāyag* in Middle Persian (from which the term *dayeak* derived). For clarity, child-rearing spaces existing outside the clan structure, such as orphanages and religious communities, are not discussed. Ultimately, this chapter aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the household than simply being akin to the modern nuclear family or a smaller portion of the clan unit.

3.2 – Source Base

While the household offers a useful lens for examining the late antique Armenian family, several issues frustrate comprehensive study. Despite the birth of children by women being one of the household's primary functions, neither group is regularly examined. This is in part because the field of historical childhood studies has only recently emerged, meaning little overlap has been achieved by Armenianists. Useful work has been done on the position of women by David Zakarian and Zara Pogossian, and on children in nearby Georgia by Cornelia Horn.⁴³⁴ Similarly, Bedrosian's close examination of *dayeakut' iwn* has drawn interest and can be further supplemented by cross-cultural studies by Peter Parkes – who examines the Abkhazian institution of *atalyk* fosterage, Arabic *rida'a* milk-kinship and Hindu Kushan cliental fosterage among others.⁴³⁵ However, for the most part, Armenianists have privileged the experiences of men operating in the political sphere of the clan.

Such a focus follows late antique sources, which were composed by and concerned themselves with the experiences of a minority of powerful, Christian, adult men. Women and children rarely appear mentioned unless interacting with this elite sphere and were often included monolithically or because they, in some way, broke from stereotype. Many women included in Armenian hagiography, for example, were non-native virgin evangelisers acting outside of typical household roles.⁴³⁶ The heroic child Artawazd Mamikonean, depicted in *Epic Histories* bravely entering the battle between the pro-Aršakuni Manuēl Mamikonean

⁴³⁴ Zakarian, "'Epic' Representation', pp. 1-28; *idem*, 'Women on the Throne', pp. 23-38; *idem*, *Representation of Women*; Pogossian, 'Women at the beginning of Christianity in Armenia', pp. 355-380; Horn, 'Lives and Literary Roles of Children', pp. 262-297.

⁴³⁵ Bedrosian, 'Dayeakut' iwn in Ancient Armenia', pp. 23-47; P. Parkes, 'Fostering Fealty: A Comparative Analysis of Tributary Allegiances of Adoptive Kinship', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45.4 (2003), pp. 741-782; *Idem.*, 'Fosterage, Kinship and Legend: When was Milk Thicker Than Blood?', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46.3 (2004), pp. 587-615; *Idem.*, 'Milk kinship in Southeast Europe. Alternative social structures and foster relations in the Caucasus and the Balkans', *Social Anthropology* 12.3 (2004), pp. 341-358; *Idem.*, 'Milk Kinship in Islam. Substance, structure and history', *Social Anthropology* 13.3 (2005), pp. 307-329.

⁴³⁶ On the place of female evangelistic missionary saints in the Armenian national tradition, see Pogossian, 'Women at the beginning of Christianity', pp. 355, 366-367.

and the Sasanian-aligned Meružan Arcruni in 380/381 CE, appears precisely because he transgressed adult spaces unsanctioned.⁴³⁷ Standard practice cannot be constructed by simply assessing exceptional cases. As Zakarian warns, the appearance of women and minors tells us what attracted authorial attention, not what their lived experiences were.⁴³⁸ Only a few households, mostly those of the Aršakuni royals and Mamikonean *tanutēr*, shall be analysed and there are many specifics that this study cannot illuminate.

We inherently engage with children in adult-constructed spaces as opposed to within their own peer context.⁴³⁹ The household was an area defined by adults and sources typically concentrated on household activities that served adult needs. Hunting had recreational functions, but primarily served as an important part of male education which reinforced social placement and provided skills for warfare.⁴⁴⁰ Hence, Łazar depicts young *naxarar* learning hawking under the instruction of *dastiaraks* ('teachers').⁴⁴¹ There is no late antique equivalent to *Datastanagirk*'s laws concerning children, whose unclear provenance and use of geographical markers indicative of the Armenian highlands suggest they may represent genuine depictions of children during unsupervised play.⁴⁴² When approaching children in late antique household, we ultimately view them in the adult world.

Girls are often doubly obscured by Classical Armenian's tacit assumption that children are boys (*ordi*, *ustr*, both 'son, child'; *gawak*, 'son, infant'; *tlay*, 'lad, infant', compared to *dustr*, 'daughter') and women are adults (*kin*, 'woman, wife' compared to *aljik*, 'girl'). Because of this, the following chapter adopts a man/woman/child tripartite divide,

⁴³⁷ *Epic Histories* V.43-44, pp. 413-417.

⁴³⁸ Zakarian, "'Epic" Representation, p. 3.

⁴³⁹ Berry Mayall et al. suggest children should be conceptualised as a minority group, albeit one unempowered to enact their own interests. B. Mayall, G. Bendelow, S. Baker, P. Storey and M. Veltman, *Children's Health in Primary Schools* (London, 1996), pp. 228-229.

⁴⁴⁰ A. Shapur Shahbazi, 'Hunting in Iran i. In the pre-Islamic Period', *Elr*.

⁴⁴¹ *Ew šatk' i manr mankanc' naxararac' ordwoc' n dastiarakōk' ew carayiwk' zayl ew ayl serš i t'oč' noc' n oršac' eal bazayiwk'* ('And many of the little sons of the *naxarars*, with their teachers and slaves, hunted diverse kinds of birds with falcons'), Łazar 7.13, p. 2209.

⁴⁴² *Girk' Datastani*, 22-26, pp. 44-45. For analysis of *Datastanagirk*'s sources, see *Datastanagirk'*, trans. Thomson, pp. 23-32, 40-41.

acknowledging that it is often impossible to differentiate boys and girls but that the theoretically ‘ungendered’ child category often implicitly refers to male children. Where possible, boys and girls are differentiated.

The chapter does not concern itself with the embodied residential patterns of Armenians, but a little should be said here before discussion continues. Most Armenians were rural. Elišē – describing the church’s response after the *naxarar* apostatised at the court of Yazdgerd II – references chorepiscopi visiting villages, farms and isolated forts, but makes no mention of cities.⁴⁴³ Traditional Armenian houses were thick-walled (due to high earthquake risk) and possessed two entrances: a door and smoke-hole, hence the use of *cux* (lit. ‘smoke’) and *erd* (lit. ‘roof, sky-light’) to mean ‘household’.⁴⁴⁴ Such dwellings were likely the norm for *šinakan* and possibly *azat* families, but other arrangements existed. A Sasanian coin found in the Areni-1 Cave suggests this late fifth millennium BCE cave dwelling was inhabited during Late Antiquity.⁴⁴⁵ Similarly, the 645 CE Council of Dwin claimed *azat* sometimes imposed upon local monasteries in preference to their own homes, both temporarily and permanently.⁴⁴⁶ These examples demonstrate a plurality of residential forms, although insufficient evidence survives to assess them as part of normative practice.

Naxarar more typically resided in heavily fortified, multi-building estates, often far from population centres in remote mountainous areas. These residences were large enough to

⁴⁴³ *Yaynm žamanaki sp’rec’an episkoposk’n yiwrk’anč’iwr išxanut’iwns, ew aṛak’ec’in zk’orepiskoposs i geawls ew yagaraks ew i bazum amurs leṛnayin gawaṛac’n. Drdec’in žolovec’in zbazmut’iwn aranc’ew kananc’, šinakananc’ew azatac’, zk’ahanayic’ew zmenakec’ac’,* (‘Then the bishops scattered to each one’s principality, and they sent chorepiscopi to the villages and farms and to many forts in mountainous places. They urged the populace – men and women, *šinakan* and *azats*, priests and monks – to assemble.’), Elišē 3.33, p. 585.

⁴⁴⁴ S. La Porta, ‘Sorcerers, Witches and Weasels: Grigor Tat’ewac’i’s Definitions of the Magical Arts’, *REArm* 28 (2001), p. 189.

⁴⁴⁵ A. Zohrabyan, B. Gasparyan and R. Dan, ‘A Sasanian Coin of Khosrow I and an Abbasid Coin of Al-Manṣur from the Areni-1 Cave, Armenia’, *Aramazd* 12.2 (2018), pp. 182-187.

⁴⁴⁶ *Omank’yazatac’i veray vanac’išxanut’iwn arnen [...] ew omank’əntaneawk’i van<s>n nstin, arhamarheal zekelec’<e>awn Astuacoy,* (‘Some among the *azats* execute authority over a monastery [...] others reside in the monasteries with their families, despising the church of God’), *KH* vol. 2, 38.10, pp. 210; *Omank’yazatac’ew yṛamik heceloc’hasanelov i geawls urek’, t’oleal zgeawln i vansn arnen zijaṽansn ew i yarks srboc’n* (‘Some *azats* or *ramik* cavalymen arriving in some villages, they leave the village and, in the monastery and houses of the holy, they make inns’), *ibid.* 38.12 pp. 211-212.

sometimes be used as landmarks.⁴⁴⁷ The stronghold of the fourth-century prince of ʔštunikʻ was implied to comprise the entire Island of Altʻamar, the second largest island in Lake Van at 0.7 km² approximately.⁴⁴⁸ Many *naxarar* probably had multiple addresses serving different functions. Elišē distinguishes between *aparankʻ* (‘courts, palaces’), likely used for entertainment given the passage’s position following a section on banqueting, and forts for refuge (*amurkʻ apastani*) when describing the tribulations that followed Awarayr.⁴⁴⁹ The Siwni appear in our earliest sources at the fortified town of Šalatʻ in the middle of their principality but are later based in a village called Siwnikʻ nearby.⁴⁵⁰ Bishops followed *naxarar* example, establishing large dwellings away from urban centres. The palace of Katʻolikos Nersēs III in Zvartnocʻ incorporated two wings including two halls, a church, throne room and hypocaust-heated bath.⁴⁵¹ The basilicas of Aruč and Tʻalin were built near their local lords, perhaps speaking to the bishops’ position as court prelates.⁴⁵²

However, this thesis avoids deeper research of living arrangements due to a lack of relevant, representative archaeological data. No thorough archaeological excavation of a *naxarar* estate has so far been attempted and modern interests and political issues disincline this from changing.⁴⁵³ Archaeologists have primarily focused on military and urban locations,

⁴⁴⁷ *zgetn xonarh minčʻew yaparansn Tiknuniʻ tnkecʻin zkalinn: Ew kočʻeacʻ zanun nora Tačar mayri*, (‘They planted oak trees below the river as far as the Tiknuni palace. And he called this the Tačar forest’), *Epic Histories* III.8.4-5, p. 285.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ew zazg nora ew zkin ew ordis gtanēr yamrocʻi and išxanin ʔštuneacʻ yamuanealn yAltʻamar klzwoj. i naw eleal Vačʻē sparapetn, ancʻeal i klzinʻ ar hasarak očʻ zēg toloyr ew očʻ zaru*, (‘And [Databe Bznuni’s] family, wife and children were found there in the fortress of the prince of ʔštunikʻ, which was called the island of Altʻamar. *Sparapet* Vačʻē got into a boat, crossed to the island and left neither female nor male alive’), *Ibid.* III.8.23, p. 286.

⁴⁴⁹ *ankan korcanecʻan aparankʻ nocʻa, ew tapaleal awerecʻan amurkʻ apastani nocʻa* (‘Their palaces decayed and fell, and their sheltered forts were demolished and overturned’), Elišē, *Anuankʻ Naxararacʻn* in *MH* 1, 85, p. 762.

⁴⁵⁰ Hewsén, *Atlas*, p. 121.

⁴⁵¹ ‘Zvartnots 7: The Palace. Palace Western Wing. Palace Eastern Wing. Roman Bath (14). 5th-6th century (15).’ [accessed online at <http://www.armenianheritage.org/en/monument/Zvartnots/41/> 22/09/2021]. Combined with the temple and other constructions, Zvartnocʻ covers approximately 18.8 hectares (0.188 km²), Unesco, ‘Cathedral and Churches of Echmiatsin and the Archaeological Site of Zvartnots’ [accessed online at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1011/> on 22/09/2021].

⁴⁵² N.G. Garsoian, ‘The Early-Medieval Armenian City: An Alien Element?’, *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 16-17 (1984-1985), p. 79.

⁴⁵³ Zakarian, *Women, Too, Were Blessed*, p. 51, n. 57.

particularly partial excavation of capital cities in the Ayrarat Plain, representing a top-down approach that obscures non-elite social life and typically prioritises the Classical and Medieval eras over Late Antiquity.⁴⁵⁴ The fort of Zak‘ari-berd and city of Artasat, where houses have been excavated, preserve no late antique dwellings, respectively being abandoned and seeing a sharp decline in building activity in the fourth century CE.⁴⁵⁵ Even if late antique homes were discovered, Armenia’s non-urban character means urban excavations would have limited value for a general study.

Furthermore, there is little overlap between archaeological and textual sources to facilitate a more embodied examination of the lived realities of domestic groups. Texts offer only scant details on what residences may have typically contained, and generally only when such contents were unavailable. Elišē refers to flower gardens and vineyards as niceties families did not have after Awarayr.⁴⁵⁶ Therefore, I focus on how households were perceived and their members roles, emphasising the cultural underpinnings and social construction of the household without claiming to represent its actual daily activity.

⁴⁵⁴ Talalay and Alcock, *In the Field*, p. 89. For the archaeology and chronology of Artasat, see A.V. Tonikian, ‘The Layout of Artashat and its Historical Development’, *Mesopotamia* 27 (1996), pp. 161-187; *idem*, ‘Architecture of Dwelling Houses of Artashat, Capital of Ancient Armenia’, *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia: An International Journal of Comparative Studies in History and Archaeology* 3.1 (1996), pp. 15-37.

⁴⁵⁵ Areshian, ‘Sasanian Imperialism and the Shaping of Armenian Identity’, p. 155; Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Armenia, *Environmental Impact Assessment: Armenia: North-South Road Corridor Investment Program Tranches 2: Ashtarak-Talin Road* (2011), pp. 102-105; Tonikyan, ‘Architecture of Dwelling Houses’, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁵⁶ Zorac ‘an azazec ‘an burastank’ calkoc ‘ac ‘ noc ‘a, ew taštaxil elen ort ‘k’ gineber aygeac ‘ noc ‘a, (‘Their flower gardens dried up and turned to sand, and the wine-bearing vines of their vineyard were uprooted.’), Elišē, AN 86, p. 762.

3.3 – Adults

Late antique Armenian families were typically heteronormative and patriarchal at all stages of society, with the lady of the house possessing some authority over the education of children or when her husband or guardian was otherwise unavailable. The household's core was a husband and wife with their children, but the surrounding constellation of relatives, guests and slaves was often extensive, depending on the unit's financial needs and its ability to extract service from others through prestige. When Movses Xorenac'i enumerated the household who accompanied the eponymous Armenian mythic hero Hayk' from Babylon to Armenia, it was envisioned as containing his effects, sons and daughters, sons' sons and approximately three hundred martial men, domestic servants and outsiders.⁴⁵⁷ The epic nature of Hayk''s journey means this is likely grander than usual for a *naxarar* retinue, but the account nonetheless demonstrates households contained both agnates (direct descendants sharing a consanguineous link to Hayk') and cognates (his wives, slaves and others), as well as household property.⁴⁵⁸ The unit's size also neatly displays that the difference between household and clan was not that one is small and the other large. Rather, the clan linked Hayk''s relatives together through a shared identity and the household was the unit of necessarily related individuals that lived and, in this instance, travelled together.

3.3.1 – Men in the Household

The household in its most simple form usually centred on a single adult man and his wife, of which the former was household *tanutēr* ('master of the house') and acted as guardian of all the unit's women and children.⁴⁵⁹ Men held most of the household's authority. Specifically,

⁴⁵⁷ MX, I.10.6, p. 1776.

⁴⁵⁸ Stepanyan, 'Household/Family', p. 40.

⁴⁵⁹ For discussion on the nature of the term *tanutēr*, see Chapter 1.4, pp. 34-44.

decisions were entrusted to fathers, who Christianity considered the guarantor of family harmony before God.⁴⁶⁰ Šahapivan urged clerics to hold a father responsible for his householders' actions and excommunicate the whole family if he did not satisfactorily punish guilty individuals or refused to repent for his own misdeeds.⁴⁶¹ The excommunication of entire households not only gave powerful men incentive to conform to canonical regulations, but demonstrates men were viewed as responsible for the behaviour of other householders, who were considered typically unable to act without their tacit or explicit consent. King Vałaršak is an exemplar of fatherly control, praised by Movses Xorenac'i for establishing rules over his household and determining the proper periods for certain activities to take place.⁴⁶²

Not all men were heads of households and many households likely contained more than one free adult man at times, including corollary relatives and guests. Of these, only the head of household had an official position over dependants. One example is the position of Gnel Aršakuni, who lived in Kuaš in Ayrarat with his blind and retired grandfather, King Tiran, in an arrangement that seems similar to that of a stem family.⁴⁶³ In stem family practice a married child – usually a younger son who wed after the homestead finished expanding and when its continuation beyond the lives of his parents needed to be considered – remained in their natal household to care for elderly parents.⁴⁶⁴ That the household was Tiran's and not Gnel's can be inferred since Gnel's residence contravened prescriptions against corollary relatives of the Aršakuni dwelling in Ayrarat.⁴⁶⁵ This arrangement cannot be

⁴⁶⁰ Stepanyan, 'Household/Family', p. 38.

⁴⁶¹ *KH* vol. 1, 18.2, 18.20, pp. 430-432, 462-466.

⁴⁶² *Ew awrēn imn hastatē i tan t'agaworut'ean iwroy, ew žams oršē elic' ew mtic' ew xorhrdoc' ew xraxčanut'eanc' ew zbōsanac'* ('And he established some laws in his royal house, and he distinguished the times of going out and coming in and for councils, feasting and diversions'), *MX* II.8.36, p. 1863; Stepanyan, 'Household/Family', p. 41.

⁴⁶³ *MX* III.22.3, pp. 2033-2034.

⁴⁶⁴ S. Ruggles, 'Stem Families and Joint Families in Comparative Historical Perspective', *Population and Development Review* 36.3 (2010), pp. 563-564; Fortes, 'Introduction', p. 4.

⁴⁶⁵ *MX* III.22.12-13, p. 2035.

read as an unproblematic stem family arrangement, as Gnel did not inherit from Tiran but rather took the Šahapivan estate of his maternal grandfather and namesake, Gnel Gnuni, in Całotn nearby.⁴⁶⁶ Nor is it possible to establish how commonly multiple adult men lived under the same roof, but it clearly did happen.

Elderly widowers and senior relatives likely retained headship of their household or clan when cohabiting, even if only symbolically. This would explain why Manuēl Mamikonean retained *tanutēr* status during his son's adulthood, only giving the position to his heir, Artasir, at his deathbed.⁴⁶⁷ Although adulthood gave men full access to the political theatre, juniors continued to have the 'child' social identity reinscribed upon them by comparison to their seniors, including expectations of obedience to parents.⁴⁶⁸ *Epic Histories* lauds Hmayeak and Artasēs Mamikonean for heeding their father's command not to slay King Varazdat of Armenia, even though their clans were warring.⁴⁶⁹ More general discourses of social seniority would have also likely been imposed on younger brothers living in their older brother's household.

In this outline, Armenia shows a similar model of male responsibility to that seen in Sasanian legal and post-Sasanian Zoroastrian texts. Sasanian law considered only free-born, adult (over 15), Zoroastrian noblemen who were both subject (*bandag*, 'servant', likely from OP. *baⁿdaka-*, 'bondsmen') to the *šāhān-šāh* and citizens of *Ērānšahr* to hold full legal capacity (*tuwānīgīth*, lit. 'ability').⁴⁷⁰ Fathers were thus both guardians and owners of their wives and children, who he could sell if faced with *adwadād* ('an inability to maintain [his

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ *Epic Histories* V.44.7, p. 415.

⁴⁶⁸ D. Umberson, 'Relationships between Adult Children and Their Parents: Psychological Consequences for Both Generations', *Journal of Marriage and Family* 54.3 (1992), pp. 664-666.

⁴⁶⁹ *Epic Histories* V.37.35-37, p. 407.

⁴⁷⁰ M. Macuch, 'Law in Pre-Modern Zoroastrianism', *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, eds. M. Stausberg and Y.S.-D. Vevaina with A. Tessmann (Chichester, 2015), p. 292.

dependants]’) and were removed from him like property if he committed a capital offence.⁴⁷¹ Other householders were required to defer to their household lord. Wives had to pay their husband obeisance thrice daily and the *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* ruled it a legal offence for a dependant to refuse to perform a task their household lord ordered three times.⁴⁷² The *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* also condemned such disobedience in religious terms, declaring perpetrators *marg-arzān* (lit. ‘deserving of death’), the highest form of Zoroastrian abnegation and typically only conveyed upon those who refused to repent of the most severe form of Zoroastrian sin – *tanābuhl* (Av. *tanū.pərəθa-* and *pəšō.tanū-*, ‘whose body is forfeited’) – for over a year.⁴⁷³

In the other direction, men were responsible for householders’ conduct and upkeep. The *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* held a man liable for half the fine incurred by violent acts performed in his presence by his wife, slave or any women under his authority.⁴⁷⁴ Similarly, if a man’s menstruant wife committed theft because he had deprived her of food, he was considered a thief.⁴⁷⁵ While a father could transfer guardianship over his children to another, he could not disinherit them, and inefficient guardians were removed and required to reimburse damages they caused.⁴⁷⁶ A father who denied his son’s sonship three times was declared *marg-arzān* and removed from his fatherhood position.⁴⁷⁷ Fathers were required to make special provisions for disabled children or even disabled daughters-in-law; and if his

⁴⁷¹ *MHD* 33.6-9, 33.13-17, 97.15-98.1; M. Shaki, ‘Children iii. Legal Rights of Children in the Sasanian Period’, *EIr*; M. Macuch, ‘The *adwadād* Offence in Zoroastrian Law’, in *Shoshannat Yaakov: Jewish and Iranian Studies in Honor of Yaakov Elman*, eds. S. Secunda and S. Fine (Leiden, 2012), pp. 259-260.

⁴⁷² *MHD* 97.14-98.1; *MHDA* 5.6-15.

⁴⁷³ *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* [henceforth *PRDD*], 2 vols., ed and trans. A.V. Williams (Copenhagen, 1990), 34c.4-5, 39b.2, vol 1., pp. 142-143, 152-155, vol 2. pp. 61, 67.

⁴⁷⁴ *Zan ud anšahrīg hamē pad dād ud wēnišn ī xwādāy ud sardār zaxm ayāb stahm kunend tāwān dō ēwag xwādāy ayāb sardār ēwag ōy kē wināh kard* (‘A wife and slave [lit. ‘not of the land’, perhaps originally a foreign captive], always in the sight and view of their lord and guardian, inflicts a wound or an act of violence. The fine is two: one the lord or guardian [shall pay], one they who committed the offence’), *MHD* 1.4-6.

⁴⁷⁵ *MHDA* 35.7-9; Macuch, ‘The *adwadād* Offence’, pp. 257-258.

⁴⁷⁶ *MHD* 20.6-7, 27.16-29.3; Manuščīhr, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg: transcription, translation and commentary*, Part 1, ed. and trans. M. Jaafari-Dehaghi (Paris, 1998), 54.6. For English translation of the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, see *Pahlavi texts: pt.2. The Dādistān-ī-Dīnīk and the Epistles of Mānūškīhar*, trans. E.W. West (Delhi, 1965).

⁴⁷⁷ *PRDD*, 34c.6, vol. 1, p. 61, vol. 2, pp. 142-143.

wife, daughter or slave was subject to an ordeal as part of a criminal investigation he had to arrange the ordeal and continue maintaining the accused throughout the process.⁴⁷⁸ Junior males may also have been responsible for senior males in a similar manner to the example of Gnel Aršakuni above. The *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* did, after all, require sons to support indigent fathers and they could not refuse guardianship of their minor siblings or coresidents if they inherited their father's estate.⁴⁷⁹ As such, the requirements made of adult men in Sasanian and Armenian practice appear similar, although evidence is insufficient to draw more than suggestive parallels between them.

3.3.1.2 – Military Service

While male authority was integral to household management, Armenian men also possessed military responsibilities. This was often connected to his duty to protect his dependants. *Epic Histories* depicted Garegin Rštuni's ignominious death at the hands of a likely non-noble *gumapet sparakrac* 'n ('colonel of [mounted] shieldbearers') named Danun as vengeance for Garegin abandoning his wife to a Persian army.⁴⁸⁰ However, participation in combat separated men from their households and limited their ability to maintain and manage them. Demand for Armenian troops increased as the period progressed. Byzantium began paying increasing attention to Armenia in the sixth century, with Justinian creating a field army there under a *magister militum*, resulting in an influx of Armenians into the Byzantine Empire.⁴⁸¹ This probably increased the likelihood of paternal absence. As such, women and unfree men were required to adopt male household roles. Therefore, the picture often reflected in

⁴⁷⁸ On disability: *MHD* 53.1-3; *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 62.4. Cf. E. Sachau, *Syrische Rechtsbücher III: Corpus juris des persischen Erzbischofs Jesubocht* (Berlin, 1914), 6, p. 250. On ordeals: *MHD* 33.1-3, 9-13; Shaki, 'Children iii'.

⁴⁷⁹ *MHD* 26.7-8; 32.16-33.1.

⁴⁸⁰ *Epic Histories* V.37.50-53, p. 408.

⁴⁸¹ A. Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA, 2019), pp. 155-156.

Armenian and Sasanian sources of a single adult man managing households of dependant women and children must be expanded, to acknowledge that Armenian households often contained other members with maintenance roles.

3.3.2 – Women in the Household

Women in Armenia were actively subordinated to men, as is typical in patriarchal societies.⁴⁸² The Armenian system – where wives were under the guardianship of their husbands, unmarried daughters their fathers and mothers their sons – is particularly reminiscent of the situation seen in Sasanian legal practice. Zoroastrian women exercised no legal ownership over their children; husbands could not gift their wives land, water, plants or the family home; and a woman could only possess a maximum of two slaves in her own right.⁴⁸³ Whether Armenian women were under similar restrictions is not clear, but certainly this subordination extended beyond legal matters to the realm of ideology.

Women were often judged by different standards to men, with discourses of honour and shame being especially fundamental. A man and his household's reputation was closely related to his wife's, while a queen represented the honour of her people and a *tantikin* may have similarly represented her clan's honour.⁴⁸⁴ As such, *Epic Histories* describes the mistreatment of women in more detail than any other violent act.⁴⁸⁵ Šābuhr II is depicted taking *azat* and *naxarar* women to Zarewan to be raped or leveraged to ensure their husbands' surrender, while *šinakan* women and children were impaled upon carriage-poles.⁴⁸⁶ Zakarian contrasts this with Mušel Mamikonean's later treatment of the Iranian

⁴⁸² S.L. Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York, 1990), pp. 83-84.

⁴⁸³ *MHD* 33.9-11; Shaki, 'Children iii.'

⁴⁸⁴ Zakarian, *Women, Too, Were Blessed*, pp. 195-196.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁴⁸⁶ *Epic Histories* IV.58, p. 374.

queen-of-queens and her retinue, as he killed the captive men in gruesome fashion, but returned Šābuhr's wives unharmed.⁴⁸⁷ Whether or not this reflects reality or, as Garsoïan suggests, was an epic parallel to Plutarch's account of Alexander sparing Darius III's female relatives, it demonstrates a high moral value placed on the compassionate treatment of female captives.⁴⁸⁸ The double standards imposed on the genders often especially restricted women. For example, the Letter of Sevantos ruled that, if a young man committed fornication, his wife was barred from communion until they had 'united'.⁴⁸⁹

Such subordination often resulted in women and children being associated in Armenian thought. For example, Šahapivan held a father should be responsible for the immorality performed by his wife and children.⁴⁹⁰ However, an adult woman's dependant status differed meaningfully from that imposed on children in that she participated in household management and had greater access to the public sphere. This was partly required to provide for other dependants in cases of male absence. *Epic Histories* depicts queens Zarmanduxt and P'arānjem acting as regents for their sons and husbands and elsewhere shows *naxarar* women adopting decision-making roles in a fourth-century context, choosing to be killed by Persian forces rather than convert to Zoroastrianism when their husbands abandoned them.⁴⁹¹ Julitta, the wife of St Gregory, similarly acted as an interim administrator for sanctuaries of the Hrip'simian virgins according to the Greek *Life of St Gregory*, a translation of a more archaic Armenian text.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, V.2, pp. 378-379; Zakarian, *Women, Too, Were Blessed*, p. 198.

⁴⁸⁸ *Epic Histories*, trans. Garsoïan, p. 308. Cf. Plutarch, *Lives*, vol. 7: *Demosthenes and Cicero, Alexander and Caesar*, ed. and trans. B. Perrin (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 21, pp. 282-285.

⁴⁸⁹ *Eridsard t'ē poṛnikesc 'i' kin nora awrēns mi aṛc 'ē minč'ew xaṛnesc 'in* ('If a young man should fornicate, his wife shall not take Communion until they have united'), *KH* vol. 1, 19.6, p. 472. This likely applied only to unbaptised men, as the previous canon subjected baptised men who fornicated to a total eleven years of community exclusion. *Ibid*, 19.5, p. 472.

⁴⁹⁰ *KH* vol. 1, 18.20, p. 464.

⁴⁹¹ *Epic Histories* IV.55, 59, V.38, pp. 370-375, 409-411.

⁴⁹² G. Garitte, *Documents pour l'étude du livre d'Agathane* (Vatican, 1946), pp. 71-72, 307-308; Z. Pogossian, 'Women at the beginning of Christianity', p. 363.

Female power was particularly noticeable following the calamitous 451 CE Armenian defeat at Awarayr, when women whose husbands and fathers had been killed or captured adopted male responsibilities. Łazar declared Juik Mamikonean and her sister Anuř-Vram of Iberia integral to his and the Mamikonean heirs' education, specifying that they were responsible for their physical (*marmnapēs*) and not just spiritual (*hogepēs*) education.⁴⁹³ These accounts masculinised their subjects, who Łazar described *ibrew zk'ajayr' zařajikay qōgtaber šk'elabar hrahangs mankanc'n hogac'eal lnuin* ('like brave men took care of the whole education of these children in useful and noble accomplishments') and Eliřē characterised as *vardapets*.⁴⁹⁴ While women adopting male roles temporarily during military action may have been common, we should not overrepresent the amount to which they did this more permanently as widows. Modern females live longer due to their body's average lower protein and calorie requirements and higher disease resistance, but this was offset in antiquity by pro-male biases in food distribution and male control over family resources, meaning men typically lived longer excluding deaths from war or disease.⁴⁹⁵

Female mobility in domestic and public spaces still depended on their status within the extended family. Upon marriage, a woman received a title according with her husband's authority: *tantikin* ('lady of the house') if he was a *tanutēr*, and *tikin* ('lady') if he held a position such as *nahapet* ('patriarch').⁴⁹⁶ Koriwn applied the term *iřxanakin* ('prince's wife') to the noblewoman Dastur Mamikonean, but no female derivative of *naxarar* or *nahapet* is known.⁴⁹⁷ A married woman was therefore separated from her childhood position by a title associating her with her husband and his household. Provided the pair had married in the

⁴⁹³ Łazar, *T'ult* '94, p. 2386. The name Anuř-Vram is likely from Iranian *anōř* ('immortal') and *ruwān* ('soul'), a similar compound to that appearing in the epithet of Šāhān-řāh Husraw I (*anōřag-ruwān*).

⁴⁹⁴ Łazar 62.3, p. 2306; Eliřē, *AN* 98, p. 763. Cf. Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 114-115.

⁴⁹⁵ P. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 100-101. For estimations of caloric and protein requirements, see J. Kresta, 'Energy Demands: Sedentary Versus Active Individuals', in *Nutritional Guidelines for Athletic Performance: The Training Table*, ed. L.W. Taylor IV (Boca Raton, 2012), p. 13, Table 2.4; G. Wu, 'Dietary Protein Intake and Human Health', *Food and Function* 3 (2016), p. 1255.

⁴⁹⁶ Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 7, n. 30.

⁴⁹⁷ Koriwn 25.3, p. 253; Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 7-8.

normal manner, she possessed some access to the economic system in the form of a dowry (*awžit*) given by her natal clan, which acted as joint possession of the couple during the marriage but returned to her if they divorced.⁴⁹⁸ Women may also have exerted authority over certain household tasks, like plant and vineyard cultivation.⁴⁹⁹ A woman's power was primarily concentrated within the domestic sphere but, depending on her husband's level of access, could expand into the political world of the clan.

Access to the public sphere was likewise affected by life-stage. Zakarian, based on Łazar's description of the apostatising *naxarars* return to Armenia, identified five categories of woman which he grouped based on degree of separation from the public sphere and claimed likely represented a pre-Christian arrangement.⁵⁰⁰ These consisted of newlywed brides, who were confined to the home; established wives and widows, who had more recourse to public space; and younger married and unmarried women, who were generally confined to the home but occasionally appeared in public.⁵⁰¹ The difference between *mankamard arnakanayk* ('young married women') and *harsn* ('brides') is obscure. Zakarian suggests *harsn* denoted the more recently married, but *mankamard arnakanayk* may instead be intended to imply an age-based distinction against *kanayk* 'awag azatac 'n ('the wives of great nobles'), explaining the term's association with the presumably unmarried *ōriord* ('girl, virgin').⁵⁰²

All women show a modicum of access to the public sphere. They are uncritically depicted as present in public spaces during celebrations and disasters, such as when

⁴⁹⁸ *KH* vol. 1, 18.4, pp. 435-436.

⁴⁹⁹ Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 122.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107-111.

⁵⁰¹ *Vasn amenayni aysorik sug a'real kocēin kanayk' awag azatac 'n ew ayrik' i hraparaks, mankamard arnakanayk' ew ōriordk' i srahs drnap' akeals, harsnk' i seneaks* ('Because of all this, the wives of the great nobles broke into mournful laments, as did the widows in the marketplaces, the young married women and virgins in locked chambers (*srah*) and brides in their chambers') Łazar 29.6, p. 2253; Zakarian, *Women, Too, Were Blessed*, pp. 140-143; *Idem, Representation of Women*, pp. 107-110.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, n. 14.

Armenian bishops gathered their communities following the apostasy of the *naxarar* under Yazdgerd II.⁵⁰³ The third/fourth-century Princess Xosroviduxt, described by Agat'angēlos as *awriord mec* ('the great maiden'), was an important political figure.⁵⁰⁴ Both the daughters and wives of prominent *naxarar* are depicted attending the burial of the Hrip'simian virgins.⁵⁰⁵ However, the freedom of unmarried women was largely dependent upon prestige, derived from the identities of their male relatives. Xosroviduxt, for example, was the sister of King Trdat III and daughter of Xosrov II. Unmarried women were veiled in public, as demonstrated by Łazar's criticism of flirtatious women casting their eyes about *and k'awlov* ('from under the veil').⁵⁰⁶ More powerful women were perhaps also sometimes veiled – Manuēl Mamikonean is depicted investing Queen Zarmanduxt with the *šuk* ('veil, glory') of her station – but the ambiguous meaning of *šuk* renders this inconclusive.⁵⁰⁷ Regardless, the combination of veiling unmarried woman and placing greater constraints on their freedom created a public/private divide that confined unmarried women especially to the domestic sphere. This was reinforced by an age-based hierarchy within the household, indicated by Elišē's complaint that 'the younger [women] did not offer the older towels' (*oč' krtserk awagac' dastaraks matuc'anēin*) when bathing following the disruptions of Awarayr.⁵⁰⁸

Female freedoms were complicated by several periods of seclusion from the broader community. *Amawt' harsnut'ean* (lit. 'bridal shame'), a period of obligational modesty wherein a newlywed bride veiled in her husband's family's presence and was confined to a room (*seneak*) allocated to the couple prior to the birth of her first child, is attested in the fifth

⁵⁰³ Elišē 3.33-34, p. 585; Zakarian, *Women, Too, Were Blessed*, p. 140. Cf. Elišē *op cit.*, n. 443.

⁵⁰⁴ Agat'angēlos 112.12, pp. 1686.

⁵⁰⁵ *kin t'agaworin ew awiordk' t'agaworazounk' ew kanayk' patuakanacn' ew mecamecac'n dsterk'* ('The queen and the royal princesses and the wives of the venerable and the daughters of magnates'). Agat'angēlos 104.6, p. 1667.

⁵⁰⁶ Łazar 61.9, p. 2305; Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 110.

⁵⁰⁷ *Znosa ar Manuēln sparapetn ibrew zsan snuc'anēr, ew zmayr noc'a zZarmanduxt i meci šk'i tiknut'ean patuēr* ('Sparapet Manuēl nourished them like *sans* and honoured their mother, Zarmanduxt, in the great honour (lit. great veil) of the ladyship.') *Epic Histories* V.37.62, p. 408.

⁵⁰⁸ Elišē, *AN* 83, p. 761.

century and survived until the early twentieth in some regions.⁵⁰⁹ Ehišē and Łazar depict brides within their nuptial chambers, the latter describing how they forwent their modesty to celebrate Vahan Mamikonean's confirmation as *marzbān* of Armenia alongside their community.⁵¹⁰

Epic Histories implies the practice of menstrual seclusion, depicting Nersēs I ordering Christians not to approach *daštānik* ('menstruating women', MP. *daštān*, 'menstruation').⁵¹¹ The taboo also appears in tenth/eleventh-century canons unique to Armenia attributed to Apostle Philip and Epiphanius of Salamis, which condemned menstrual sex and ordered menstruating women to remain outside the community.⁵¹² The Persian origins of *daštānik* may suggest Zoroastrian precedent. However, menstrual seclusion was widely attested, also appearing in Jewish practice, while Bishop Timothy of Alexandria banned menstrual women from communion and baptism in the fourth century.⁵¹³ That Epiphanius's canon focused on the common contemporary belief menstrual sex produced defective children while expressly refuting the common Jewish and Zoroastrian idea that menstrual effluvia caused spiritual uncleanness may indicate Armenian seclusion practices emerged from a separate

⁵⁰⁹ Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 108-109; R. Nahapetyan, 'Kinə Hayoc' Avandakan Ētanik'um (əst Sasunc'ineri Azgagrakan Sovoruyt'neri)', *Patma-Banasirakan Handes* 1 (2009), p. 81.

⁵¹⁰ *P'ošotec'an ew cxotec'an srahakk' ew srskapank' norek harsanc', ew sardi ostaynk' jgec'an i seneaks aragastac' noc'a*, ('The hangings and nuptial bed of the newly-married brides became dusty and sooty, and spiders webs stretched through their nuptial chambers'), Ehišē, *AN* 85, p. 762; *Ew lueal qays mardkann or i k'alak'in ēin, groh tueal ar hasarak amenayn mardoy, naxararac' ew azatac', ostankac' ew ramkac', aranc' ew kananc', ceroc' ew tlayoc', ayl ew harsunk' angam yařagastac', nořac'eal ar vayr mi ar xndin zamawt' harsnut'ean dimeal ənt'anayin yekelec'in* ('And when the people in the city heard this, the people all rushed together – *naxarars* and *azats*, *ostaniks* and commoners, men and women, the elderly and children, even brides from their nuptial couches, forgetting for a moment in celebration the modesty of bridehood – running to the church'), Łazar 99.5, p. 2371.

⁵¹¹ *Epic Histories* IV.4.43, p. 316.

⁵¹² *KH* vol. 2, 27.6-7, 46.2, pp. 44-45, 272-277.

⁵¹³ Lev. 12; *Wrestling with the Demons of the Pahlavi Widēwdād: Transcription, Translation and Commentary* [henceforth *Phl Vd.*], ed. and trans. M. Moazami (Leiden, 2014), 5.45-58/7.58-67; Timothy of Alexandria, 'Apokriseis Kanonikai Timotheou tou Agiōtatu Episkopou Alexandreias', in *Syntagma tōn theiōn kai hierōn kanonōn*, vol. 4, eds. G. Rhallēs and M. Potlēs (Athens, 1854), 6-7, pp. 334-335. For overviews of Zoroastrian and more broadly Sasanian menstrual law, see S. Secunda, 'The Fractious Eye: On the Evil Eye of Menstruants in Zoroastrian Tradition', *Numen* 61 (2014), pp. 83-108; *Idem*, *The Talmud's Red Fence: Menstrual Impurity and Difference in Babylonian Judaism and its Sasanian Context* (Oxford, 2020), pp. 51-66.

tradition.⁵¹⁴ Regardless, all these seclusions impacted a woman's ability to wield household or political power, effecting particularly young women who were still at the stage of marrying, menstruating and having children.

Zakarian depicts widows as having the most public power, but this is debatable. He interpreted their appearance in public spaces, while most other female householders are depicted primarily in the home, as reflecting the greater social mobility of widows after their husbands' deaths.⁵¹⁵ However, this may instead indicate *naxarar* widows were often reduced to begging. *Epic Histories* contains reference to the construction of *ayrenoc* ('[shelters] for widows', from *ayri* 'widow') by Kat'olikos Nersēs I, which would not have been necessary if widows were consistently socially active and housed with members of their own family.⁵¹⁶ In describing Pap's destruction of these projects, *hiwandanoc* ('hospitals') were explicitly associated with the return of begging to the region in the paragraph directly after he destroyed the *ayrenoc*, *orbanoc* ('[shelters] for orphans', from *orb* 'orphan', PIE **h₃órb^hos* 'orphan') and sanctuaries built to protect virgin women from kidnap.⁵¹⁷ The Canons of Nersēs and Meršapuh make similar charitable measures, allocating virtuous widows shares of church revenues equal to that received by scribes.⁵¹⁸ There is also evidence of this after the period.

⁵¹⁴ *KH* vol. 2, 46.2, pp. 272-277. Cf. Lev 15:24, 18:19, 20:1; Secunda, 'Fractious Eye', p. 87, n. 14; M.L. Satlow, *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality* (Atlanta, 1995), p. 305; Secunda, *Talmud's Red Fence*, pp. 61-62.

⁵¹⁵ Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 107-110. Cf. *Epic Histories* IV.15, V.37-38, pp. 340-345, 405-411; Łazar 16.1, p. 2224.

⁵¹⁶ *Epic Histories* IV.4.51, V.31.2-5, pp. 317, 399.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, V.31.6-9, pp. 399-400. Horden suggests these foundations should be understood in the context of hospital foundations by ascetic groups in Constantinople and Byzantine Asia Minor during the 350s CE, which could offer economic and social advantage by providing employment and support to those who might otherwise be forced into begging. Zoroastrianism likewise lauded charitable work for the public good and especially helping widows and orphans, but hospital foundation is not evidenced until after the period. The first known Sasanian hospital foundation is recorded in sixth century CE by ps.-Zacharias Rhetor and attributed to Catholicos Joseph of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (552-567 CE), previously court-physician under Husraw I, with ps.-Zacharias claiming such foundations were unknown in the empire before this. Thus, Nersēs' foundation efforts more probably looked to external Christian exemplars of charity than Zoroastrian ones, P. Horden, 'Poverty, Charity and the Invention of the Hospital', in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. S.F. Johnson (Oxford, 2012), pp. 722, 725, 734-735, 738, n. 65; *Zachariah of Mitylene*, trans. Hamilton and Brooks, 12.7, pp. 331-332. For a summary of Sasanian charitable foundations, see M. Macuch et al., 'Charitable Foundations', *Elr*.

⁵¹⁸ *glxawor k'ahanayic 'n, 2 masunk' ew kēs masin, ew ayl k'ahanayk', mēn 2 masuns, ew sarkawagunk'n, mi masn ew kēs masin, ew dpirk'n ew ayri kanayk'n t'ē ic'en parkešt'k', mi masn aranc' amenayn hakarakut'ean.*

Step'anos Tarōnec'i claimed the mother of Kat'olikos Esayi I (775-788 CE) resided in the Kat'olikos's palace during Esayi's childhood because she had been reduced to begging.⁵¹⁹

Such evidence is inconclusive, but the association of widows with religious virgins and orphans – groups defined by their exclusion from family structures and reliance on charity – implies widows appearance in public space may have been a sign of insolvency rather than increased household status.

Nonetheless, established wives and mothers typically held greater influence over their male relatives than more junior women, perhaps involving official, systematised roles in the household. Elišē and *Epic Histories* both reference wives possessing *gah* ('throne, chair') of honour in their husband's household. The former mentions *korcanec'an barjragahk' tačarac' noc'a* ('chairs of honour in their houses') among the luxuries Awarayr widows lost.⁵²⁰ *Epic Histories* depicts Vardan Mamikonean's wife hearing of his death *minč' deṛ i ver i berdin nster i gahoyis iwrum* ('when she sat on her throne in the fortress above').⁵²¹ These thrones perhaps imply a formalised authority.

We should be wary of accounts of jealous women directing their spouses' actions, as this was a *topos* of Armenian histories.⁵²² Movses Xorenac'i is likely appealing to stereotype when he claimed King Artasēs' sons were compelled to oppose their brother Artawazd by their wives, or that the *naxarar* opposed King Trdat for the same reason.⁵²³ The same is true of Łazar's assertion that conflict under Yazdgerd II (r. 438-457) stemmed from Vasak Siwni

Apa t'ē ic'ē ok', or hakaṛakic'ē ew aṛnic'ē xrovut'iw, aynpisin dadareal lic'i yiwr kargēn, ew ankerk' iwr mi iṣxesc'en and aynpismn halordel, ew žolovrdakank', aṛ k'ahanays unel zna ('To the head of the priests: two and a half shares. And other priests: only two shares. And the deacons: one and a half shares. And the scribes and widowed women if they should be virtuous: one share without any quarrel. Then if there is someone who opposes [this] and sows confusion, as much should be given over from his rank and his companions shall not be authorised to share with the same. And the laity, [are] to give it to the priests'), *KH* vol. 1, 20.13, pp. 483-484.

⁵¹⁹ Step'anos Tarōnec'i, *Universal History*, trans. Greenwood, 2.2, p. 172.

⁵²⁰ Elišē, *AN* 85, p. 762.

⁵²¹ *Epic Histories* IV.18.19, pp. 348.

⁵²² Pogossian, 'Women at the beginning of Christianity', p. 368.

⁵²³ *MX* II.53.11, 92.7, pp. 1932, 1998.

resenting his son-in-law Varazvaŋan Siwni for mistreating his daughter.⁵²⁴ However, this does not refute all instances of female engagement in the political sphere. Pogossian suggests Agat‘angēlos’ inclusion of Queen Ašxēn and Princess Xosrovduxt reflected an inability to completely erase the part these women played.⁵²⁵

3.3.2.1 – Mothers and Children

Beyond performing roles through their relation to male relatives, adult women also held authority over the household’s children and were particularly associated with religious education. *Epic Histories* asserts that P‘aŋanjem dedicated her son Pap to demons at birth, which Zakarian and Garsoġian interpret as referring to providing him a Zoroastrian education.⁵²⁶ Łazar particularly emphasised the role of mothers in representing a religious orthodoxy that children looked to for guidance.⁵²⁷ He depicted them instructing *dastiaraks* (‘teachers’) to ensure their children received the right education.⁵²⁸ Elišē similarly focuses on Yazdgerd II’s order to his *mowbeds* to instruct *naxarar* wives and children of other classes, the association between these two groups indicating the importance of women in preparing the next generation.⁵²⁹ Critically, this was not a role exclusively assigned to the children’s

⁵²⁴ Łazar 20.1-2, p. 2237.

⁵²⁵ Pogossian, ‘Women at the beginning of Christianity’, p. 369.

⁵²⁶ *Epic Histories* IV.44, V.22, pp. 362, 391-392; Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 118. Garsoġian similarly interprets Pap’s natal dedication as to Zoroastrianism. N.G. Garsoġian, ‘Les éléments iraniens dans l’Arménie paléochrétienne’, in *Des parthes au califat: Quatre leçons sur la formation de l’identité arménienne*, eds. N.G. Garsoġian and J.-P. Mahé (Paris, 1997), pp. 25-26.

⁵²⁷ *Tlayk‘ anjkoŋk‘ i grkac‘ hare‘ iwreanc‘ pakuc‘ ealk‘ p‘axč‘ēin [...] stēp hayelov yeress marc‘n, qors tesanēin kolkolagins mist ew artawsrabulxs. yalags oroy ew ink‘eank‘ yartasus hareal tlayk‘n’ oč‘ ok‘ karer lřec‘uc‘anel i dayekac‘n kam i dastiarakac‘n*, (‘Anxious children fled terrified from their fathers’ embrace [...] they looked quickly at their mothers’ faces, which they saw constantly wailing and shedding tears. Thus, the children also burst into tears themselves. No-one – *dayeak* nor teacher – could silence them’), Łazar 29.3, p. 2253; Pogossian, ‘Women at the beginning of Christianity’, pp. 373-374.

⁵²⁸ *kanayk‘ naxararac‘n, zors karcēin mogk‘n ašakertel‘ ayнк‘ ew tesanel angam garšēin znosa, ayl zordis iwreanc‘ ew zdsters‘ patuirēin stēp dastirakac‘n’ č‘anc‘uc‘anel erbēk‘ ar nok‘awk‘ mawt*, (‘For the *naxarar* wives, whom the *magi* thought to instruct, were repulsed at their very sight. But they frequently instructed the teachers of their sons and daughters never to let them near [the *magi*]’), Łazar 32.1, p. 2257.

⁵²⁹ *kanayk‘ naxararac‘n kalc‘in zusumn vardapetut‘ean mogac‘n. Usterk‘ ew dsterk‘ azatac‘ ew sinakanac‘ krt‘esc‘in i hrahangs noc‘un mogac‘* (‘The wives of the *naxarar* shall receive the *mowbeds*’ instruction. Sons

biological mothers. Łazar's letter to Vahan Mamikonean indicates that both the author and the Mamikonean children were taught by Vahan's mother and aunt, indicating that educational responsibilities were entrusted to co-resident women in general.⁵³⁰ They may also have been undertaken broader religious teaching responsibilities, since Agat'angēlos discussed female teachers and justified them on the grounds a woman had been responsible for Jesus' birth.⁵³¹

Heavy female involvement in religious education was generally condemned by Christianity, with the third-century CE *Didascalia Apostolorum* barring women (especially widows) from teaching and John Chrysostom excusing Adam's part in the Biblical Fall the result of his wife who 'taught once and ruined all'.⁵³² However, the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers evidence female teachers within a household context. Gregory of Nyssa depicted his older sister Macrina as a spiritual teacher to her four brothers and their mother, Emmelia – referring to her as *'ē adelphē kai didaskalos* ('our sister and teacher') in his *Dialogus de animae et resurrectione*.⁵³³ Gregory's older brother, Basil of Caesarea, likewise attributed his early spiritual education to his mother and grandmother, Macrina the Elder.⁵³⁴ While Chrysostom stipulated women were to be saved through child-bearing not teaching, he

and daughters of the *azat* and *šinakan* should train in the tuition of those same *mowbeds*'), Elišē, 2.304-305, p. 579.

⁵³⁰ *snuc'anē mayrn jer awrhneal ew Anuš-Vram əst iwreanc' hogesirut'eann ew zmeq ənd jez, orpēs ew zjer* ('your blessed mother and Anuš-Vram in their devotion to us also raised me along with you, as they did you.') Łazar, *T'ult'* 29, p. 2379.

⁵³¹ *Zi oč' miayn i jern aranc', ayl ew i jern kananc' srboc' k'arozec'aw Awetarann kendant'ean ənd tiezers amenayn. zi ew kanayk' awrhneac'an vasn kusanin cnndeann or i noc'anēn* ('For not only by men, but also by holy women, the Gospel of life was preached through the whole world, since women were blessed because of the virgin birth which was from among them.'). Agat'angēlos 92.17, p. 1629.

⁵³² *The Didascalia Apostolorum in English*, trans. M.D. Gibson (London, 1903), XV, p. 72; John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. J.H. Parker (Oxford, 1853), pp. 70-71. Cf. 1 Tim. 2:11-15.

⁵³³ A.M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God* (Turnhout, 2008), p. 171.

⁵³⁴ Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, vol. 3: *Letters 186-248*, ed. and trans. R.J. Deferrari (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 204, 223, pp. 168-169, 298-299; Silvas, *Macrina*, p. 12.

nonetheless accepted they could ‘instruct by discourse’ in a domestic context in his fourth *Homily* on Titus 3:2-5.⁵³⁵

Childhood religious education could also often be female-led in Zoroastrianism, although it was less concretely gendered. The Sasanian legal scholar Dād-Farrox ruled that sons who disobeyed their father would be barred from Paradise, but also cautioned *ka zan guft andar frazandān rāstīh ī ān ī guft āmār* (‘when a woman has said something, her children should consider the truth which she has said’), suggesting female involvement in education.⁵³⁶ Until Zoroastrian children of either sex were old enough to begin formal education, their mother was ultimately responsible for raising them, but the *Hērbēdestān* argued the obligation to offer religious instruction to one who sought it fell on the priest most closely related to him.⁵³⁷ A minor who converted to Zoroastrianism was to be adopted by the most important Zoroastrian in the land and curate that individual’s property if they died without male heir.⁵³⁸ As such, involvement by women in the religious education of children in their household was unexceptional in Late Antiquity, but the level of involvement acceptable to the Armenian Church is significant.

Women also appear to have involved themselves in a child’s religious upbringing even when it was not acceptable to the faith. The canons attributed to Sahak Part‘ew and

⁵³⁵ Chrysostom, *Homilies*, pp. 69-72, 302.

⁵³⁶ *MHDA* 5.2-5.6.

⁵³⁷ */kē ōh az wasān hērbedan (a)frāz-gōwišnīh āstārēd? ā-š nabānazdišt/* (‘who thus among the many priestly teachers then sins by failing to instruct? The one who is his nearest kinsman’), *Hērbēdestān* 15.2; J. Rose, ‘Gender’, in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, eds. M. Stausberg and Y.S.-D. Vevaina with A. Tessmann (Chichester, 2015), p. 285.

⁵³⁸ */aburnāyag ī agdēn ka pad wehdēnīh āyēd [...] ā-š sālārīh pad ōy kas kē andar ān deh meh ud weh, u-š kār windēd xwad pad xwad (ay parwarišn nē pādixšāy bē ka-š dahēd) [...] ka awēšān bē mīrēnd ā-šān xwāstag pad im ī bē mīrēd ā-š stūr be gumārišn/* (‘When a non-Zoroastrian child comes to the Good Religion [...], then guardianship of them is by he who is great and good in that land/village and he should find them a position whether he likes it or not (that is to say it is not authorised if he gives them [only] education/nourishment) [...] when they die, then they [the former non-Zoroastrian] are appointed curator of their property on behalf of the one who is deceased’), *Hērbēdestān*, 11.6, pp. 60-61. The *Hērbēdestān* further considered it a *tanābuhl* sin for a Zoroastrian accompanying the minor child of *dēwēsān* (‘demon worshippers’), *tanābuhlagān* (‘*tanābuhl* sinners’), *anērān* (‘non-Iranians’), *agdēnān* (‘non-Zoroastrians’) or *ēd ka ō marg-arzānān* (‘those if deserving of death’) to return them to their parents unless he had given his word that he would, in which case he could return the child without penalty only if he was unable to kill said child, *Ibid.*, 11.1-3, pp. 58-59.

those of Nersēs and Meršapuh both complain of the level of maternal involvement in baptisms. Both condemned priests allowing women to assist in the baptism, Sahak arguing women should seclude themselves and pray, while Nersēs and Meršapuh also bemoaned priests who gave a woman water to baptise in her own home or performed baptism in a *šinakan*'s house when it was not feared that the recipient might die before reaching the church.⁵³⁹ With the exception of the final canon, these presumably refer to infant baptism. This was not a universal practice in Late Antiquity. *Epic Histories* includes a story where the villainous Bishop Yovhan forcefully ordained an unbaptised married man as pretext to take his horse from him.⁵⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the practice was widely attested in Late Antiquity even before it was sanctioned at the fourth-century CE Council of Elvira.⁵⁴¹ Armenia appears to have treated failing to baptise deceased infants especially harshly. One canon attributed to Gregory the Illuminator excommunicated the parents, guardians (*hogabarjk* ') and priests responsible for the child for eight years.⁵⁴² The equivalent Byzantine ruling, a canon attributed equally spuriously to sixth-century Patriarch John IV Nesteutes of Constantinople, only excommunicated negligent parents for three years, reduced to forty days if the child died in the first seven days of life.⁵⁴³ Unsurprisingly, infant baptism was assumed in Armenia by the fourteenth century, when Bishop Aṛakel of Siwnik' and Grigor Tat'ewac'i assumed in their curriculum for priests that children would be baptised before they could speak.⁵⁴⁴ It is equally unsurprising that women, heavily involved in childhood religious education, also involved themselves in one of their child's earliest religious observances. The practice

⁵³⁹ *KH* vol. 1, 17.16, 20.9, 20.15-16, pp. 377-378, 482, 485.

⁵⁴⁰ *Epic Histories* VI.8, pp. 420-421.

⁵⁴¹ S. Currie, 'Children', in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, eds. G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown, O. Grabar (Cambridge, MA, 1999), p. 372.

⁵⁴² *KH* vol. 1, 11.14, pp. 246-247

⁵⁴³ John the Faster, 'Kanonikon', in *Syntagma tōn theiōn kai hierōn kanonōn*, vol. 4, eds. G. Rhallēs and M. Potlēs (Athens, 1854), 24, p. 443; Baun, 'Fate of Babies', pp. 115-125.

⁵⁴⁴ A. Aljalian, S. Odabashian and H. Tchilingirian, 'Curriculum for Educating Infants Who Are Called to The Rank of Priesthood: Necessary and Useful Advice Written by Lord Aṛak'el, Bishop of Siwnik', and Grigor [of Tat'ew], the Great Rhetor', *St Nersess Theological Review* 1.2 (1996), p. 235.

perhaps bears parallels to the role female deaconess played assisting the baptisms of other women and educating the newly baptised, according to the *Didascalia Apostolorum*.⁵⁴⁵

3.3.3 – Slaves

So far, the thesis has concerned itself with individuals bearing real or fictive kin connections to household members, but elite households were also supported by slaves: at once household members and household property. Slavery was never as prominent in Armenia's economy (or indeed in the Caucasus more generally) as it was in the Greco-Roman world, since *šinakan* performed most production.⁵⁴⁶ However, slaves were an important part of wealthier households and were owned by *naxarar*, *azats* and individual clerics, as well as churches and monasteries.⁵⁴⁷ After Awarayr, Elišē complained it was no longer possible to distinguish women from their maids and outlined several presumably common servile facilities that *naxarar* households had lost, including confectioners, bakers and ushers to welcome guests.⁵⁴⁸ Movses Xorenac'i records two stories involving likely-slave women, one explicitly identified as the host's *harč* ('concubine'), performing at banquets.⁵⁴⁹ Armenian elite households then relied on slaves both for general maintenance and for more specialised functions, such as the preparation of particular foods. Their inclusion within the household

⁵⁴⁵ *Didascalia Apostolorum* XVI, pp. 78-79.

⁵⁴⁶ Toumanoff, 'Introduction to Christian Caucasian History', p. 47, 71.

⁵⁴⁷ H.A. Manandyan, *The Trade and Cities of Armenia in Relation to Ancient World Trade*, trans. N.G. Garsoïan (Lisbon, 1965), p. 72.

⁵⁴⁸ *Zi t'ēpēt ew unēin zirak'anč'iw r jeŋnasun spasawor, oč' ok' erewēr i noc'anē' t'ē or tikinn ic'ē ew kam or nažištn [...]* *Oč' goyr noc'a xaxammok' anušarar aranjinn, ew oč' hac'arark' orošeal i pēts spasu əst azatac' kargi [...]* *č'ekac' uruk' noc'a nuirak ar durs, ew oč' koč'ec'an patuakank' yaranc' i tačars noc'a.* ('For although they each still possessed domestic servants, none could be distinguished among them who was the mistress or who the maid [...] They had no confectioners for delicacies nor separate bakers to provide them meals in accordance with their noble rank [...] no usher stood at their door and no venerable men were called to their courts.'). Elišē, *AN* 1 79, 81, 84, pp. 761-762.

⁵⁴⁹ MX II.63.6, III.55.22, pp. 1944, 2086; Pogossian, 'Women at the beginning of Christianity', pp. 370-371. *Harč* is borrowed from a Middle Iranian form attested in the first element of the Sasanian title *harzbed* ('chief eunuch, guardian of the harem'), reflecting Old Persian **harč/*harčī-* (Av. *hā'rišī*, 'woman'), G. Asatryan, 'Baṛak' nnakan-stugabanakan ētyudner V [Lexical-etymological studies V]', *Iran-namē: Armenian Journal of Oriental Studies* 26-27-28 (1997), p. 37; A. Shapur Shahbazi, 'Harem i. In Ancient Iran', *EIr*.

was dependant upon the clan structure providing sufficient economic access to acquire slaves, meaning that just as the household enabled the clan to exist by replicating clan-aligned worldviews, so did the clan position the household within the social fabric and gave it greater coercive potential.

Slaves were called *struk*, or *alaxin* for a female domestic slave, with a separate category for those born into slavery: *struk andocin* ('a slave born in the master's house').⁵⁵⁰ They were classified not as *anazat* ('unfree'), like *ramik* or *šinakan*, but *ankarg* ('unclassified').⁵⁵¹ This suggests that slaves and non-slaves were considered quantifiably different. Such a position was perhaps adopted from Greek thought. Aristotle imagined slaves to be entirely missing their soul's rational part rendering them, like women and children, inferior to free men and categorically incapable.⁵⁵²

Slavery could be permanent or temporary and was contracted in several ways. They were primarily captives of war, as was the case in Persia where *wardag* ('captive') and *anšahrīg* (lit. 'not of the land') were commonly used terms for slaves.⁵⁵³ However, slaves could also be purchased, inherited or reduced to the position as punishment for wrongdoing. Šahapivan 6 ruled that a woman who fled her husband could be sold by him or kept as a slave if he did not wish to remain married to her.⁵⁵⁴ Most punishments imposing slavery were exclusively applied to *šinakan*. Šahapivan condemned *šinakan* who practised *diwt'ut'iwn* ('divination') or sexually immoral *šinakan* women to periods of service in a leprosarium ranging from one to ten years, with the most severe for a woman who willingly had sex with

⁵⁵⁰ Payaslian, *The History of Armenia*, p. 29.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵⁵² Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. J. Sachs (Indianapolis, 2012), I.13.1260a, p. 24.

⁵⁵³ Toumanoff, 'Introduction to Christian Caucasian History', p. 71; M. Macuch, 'Barda and Barda-dāri ii. In the Sasanian Period', *Elr*.

⁵⁵⁴ *ew t'ēpēt ew kačāresc'ē, t'ēpēt ew yalaxnut'iwn kalc'i* ('And he may either sell her or keep her as a maid-servant'), *KH* vol. 1, 18.6, p. 438.

a husband's relative.⁵⁵⁵ Churchmen repeatedly found in unspecified *mchnēut 'iwn* ('filthiness') or individuals above a certain age engaged in *aland* ('false doctrine') were confined in the leprosarium also, although a duration is not given and the fact they were branded and hamstrung may imply they were not expected to serve.⁵⁵⁶ While *azat* men and women typically escaped service in a leprosarium, it is not impossible that nobles could be enslaved also. Šahapivan 6 makes no comment on the class of the fleeing woman. Similarly, Agat'angēlos' account of the romance of Ardašīr and Artabanus found in the Greek recension of that text describes the maidservant Artaduxt as a noblewoman's daughter without comment, although it justified other aspects of the narrative – namely her practice of sleeping in the same tent as the king and his wife – as exceptional Parthian elements.⁵⁵⁷

Both the Byzantine and Sasanian texts considered slaves property. The *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān*, for example, explicitly designated slaves *xwāstag* ('property') and compared them to sheep, pricing the former 500 *dram* or 125 *stēr* and the latter as 10 *dram* or 3 *stēr*, while the Pahlavi *Vīdēvdād* contended a good piece of land was worth more than either.⁵⁵⁸ On the other hand, the fact slaves were people meant they had access to certain limited rights. Aristotle defined slaves as 'animated possessions'.⁵⁵⁹ Sasanian law protected slaves from ill-treatment in a similar way to women and showed a degree of concern for their choices, arguing a Zoroastrian slave could not be sold to an infidel and an infidel's slave who converted to Zoroastrianism was to be freed.⁵⁶⁰ Still, being considered possessions gave their

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.4-5, 18.10, 18.12 pp. 435-438, 442, 444-446. *Diwt* ('diviner') is of uncertain etymology and its fifth-century meaning is unclear. The Grigor Tat'ewac'i in the fourteenth century defined a *diwt* as *or jerawk' ew niwt 'ov gorcē, orpēs gari, ew aliwr, ew awaz, ew jur ew k'ar* ('he who works with his hands and a substance such as barley, flour, water and stone'), in the context of divining the future from these substances. La Porta, 'Sorcerers, Witches and Weasels', p. 178.

⁵⁵⁶ *KH* vol. 1, 18.19, pp. 461-462.

⁵⁵⁷ Muradyan and Topchyan, 'Romance of Artaban and Artašīr', p. 3.

⁵⁵⁸ *MHD* 64.9-14, 69.3-9. For the price of a slave: *MHD* 12.7-9; *Phl Vd.* 7.41. The price of a sheep: *MHD* 104.6; *Phl Vd.* 4.2. The price of land: *Phl Vd.* 4.2. Cf. Ph. Gignoux, 'Dirham i. In Pre-Islamic Times', *EIr* VII.4.

⁵⁵⁹ Macuch, 'Barda and Barda-dāri'.

⁵⁶⁰ *MHD* 1.13-15. The *Hērbedestān* described slave conversion: *bandag-ēw ī agdēn ka bē ō wehdēnīh āyēd šāhān-šāh bandag ā-š wahāg abāmīha pad-iš* ('a slave (lit. 'servant') of evil religion, when he comes to the Good Religion becomes a slave of the King of Kings. Then his value is as a loan by it.'), *Hērbedestān* 11.7, pp.

masters' significant powers over slaves. They could be bound to an estate and alienated along with it; sold or leased by an owner; given as gifts; or handed to a creditor as security for a loan.⁵⁶¹ Any gift or income given to the slave automatically belonged to that slave's master unless he abdicated his right to ownership over it and granted it to the slave specifically.⁵⁶² Slaves' dual position as person and property could lead them to act as defendants, plaintiffs or witnesses in civil suits concerning their own ownership, even being required to return property to their master if that property was the slave himself!⁵⁶³ Such a dual status of slave as person and property was almost certainly a feature of their treatment in Armenia too, given its appearance throughout the ancient world.

3.3.4 – Others

Finally, a combination of non-co-resident extended family and non-kin individuals were required by Armenian households in the period. Such a practice is not unusual. It is the norm, for instance, among rural Sub-Saharan African communities in the modern day, where the work of these individuals is required for household survival and to plan contingencies.⁵⁶⁴ Corollary relatives of either spouse, such as aunts or grandmothers, may have resided within a given household and be involved in childcare outside of formal capacity. The existence in Armenian of specific terminology for step-relation, developed in line with the Greek *mētruiá* ('step-mother'), implies complex arrangements may have been relatively common.⁵⁶⁵

60-61. Macuch suggests this passage concerns an actual loan given to the slave for the purpose of buying his freedom, Macuch, 'Barda and Barda-dāri'.

⁵⁶¹ *MHD* 18.9-10, 39.2-9; *MHDA* 36.16-37.1.

⁵⁶² *MHD* 106.1-4; *MHDA* 2.11-14, 3.6-13. Persian Christian law permitted slaves thus empowered to dispose of their peculium according to their will. Sachau, *Corpus juris des Jesubocht*, 5.13, pp. 176-179; Macuch, 'Barda and Barda-dāri'.

⁵⁶³ *MHD* 1.4-6, 107.9-12; Macuch, 'Barda and Barda-dāri'.

⁵⁶⁴ For bibliography, see T.W. Myroniuk and C.F. Payne, 'The Longitudinal Dynamics of Household Composition and Wealth in Rural Malawi', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 50.3 (2019), pp. 243-244.

⁵⁶⁵ É. Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society* (London, 1973), p. 209.

Households might support corollary relatives or guests for significant amounts of time, although generally sources only record this in cases where one household had been forced to abandon their position due to political instability and take shelter with an ally. Łazar describes Juik Mamikonean's children – with the exception of the youngest, Vard, who was raised in the Mamikonean heartland of Tayk' – being 'nourished and educated' (*snuc' eal* [...] *ew useal*) at the house of her Georgian brother-in-law *bdeašx* Ašuša of Iberia after her husband died at Awarayr.⁵⁶⁶ The Bznuni clan took refuge on Alt'amar with the Prince of Řštunik' after their *tanutēr* Dat'abe was stoned to death for treason against King Xosrov Kotak.⁵⁶⁷ Whether the Bznuni and Řštuni were related or how long-term the relationship was intended to be cannot be established, as the Bznuni were wiped out soon after.

Elite Armenian households were also maintained by free individuals with less social power, who were not incorporated into the household but were expected to enable their superiors' lavish lifestyles. Łazar records *azats* assisting the sons of *naxarar* during hunting and children of fishermen bringing food to their banquets to exchange for game.⁵⁶⁸ Anania Širakac'i referred to a group composed of his relatives as *dramkunk'* ('courtiers') in his mathematical problems, perhaps indicating a model of the household that extended outside of just direct relations, and likewise depicted himself commanding fishermen, servants and stone-cutters, indicating that a man who was probably of *azat* station was capable of controlling a host of different social inferiors.⁵⁶⁹ Even quite powerful individuals might serve to upkeep powerful *naxarar* households. Sebeos refers to a member of the Dimak'sean *naxarar* clan called Mihru, who Smbat Bagratuni II, *marzbān* of Vrkan, employed to manage his house and later entrusted with a fragment of the Cross of Christ in the early seventh

⁵⁶⁶ Łazar 62.5-6, p. 2306.

⁵⁶⁷ *Epic Histories* III.8.23, p. 286.

⁵⁶⁸ Łazar 7.9-11, pp. 2208-2209.

⁵⁶⁹ Greenwood, 'Mathematical Problems of Anania Širakac'i', pp. 163-164.

century CE.⁵⁷⁰ The use of social inferiors to support hunts, banquets and manage households was an effective means of encoding structures of power. It likewise demonstrates the permeable nature of households, which made demands on surrounding peoples in exchange for limited inclusion in household activities.

Less powerful households were also imposed upon by individuals with greater prestige. The Canons of Nersēs and Meršapuh commanded laypeople to invite priests into their houses to bless them or risk depriving clerics from the bread of the covenant, but also forbade them from taking the Eucharist within their own homes even if they were in the process of hosting guests or officials.⁵⁷¹ Those with more power were authorised to impinge upon the functions of lay houses, but the demands of these households could not interfere with clerical practice. Such a system reinforced social categories and legitimised the priesthood through imposition upon the household resources, possibly demanding meals in return for purportedly more valuable divine service. The appearance of presumably secular officials as guests in Nersēs and Meršapuh 23 suggests similar impositions were also carried out by the civil administration. There is a double imposition here: social inferiors being imposed upon by social superiors in their own household and, in turn, contributing to the maintenance of households with greater social capital.

Less wealthy multi-family households likely also formed for economic or defensive reasons, although these are not recorded in narrative histories due to their perceived unimportance. It is possible widows often resided in the household of their children, but an absence of general late antique information on Armenian widowhood makes this a possibility that can be only tenuously suggested. Regardless, households could extend outside the typical

⁵⁷⁰ *Ew taylor i jeṛn Mihru i urumn arn eranelwoy, zor ew kargeal ēr i veray tann iwroy hawatarim ew kamakatar, or i tanē Dimak'senic* ('And he [Smbat] entrusted [the Cross] to Mihru, a certain blessed man from the house of the Dimak'sean, a faithful and obedient [person] whom he had also placed in charge of his house'), Sebeos 27.8, p. 498.

⁵⁷¹ *KH* vol. 1, 20.4, 20.23 pp. 479-480, 487.

bounds of a single co-resident descent group, through the incorporation of slaves, biologically unrelated children or even entirely different descent groups.

An examination of their adult membership indicate households were more than isolated fractions of a single clan. Rather the picture that emerges is of a complex of individuals from different clans and social groups who shared the responsibilities of household management. While free adult men possessed most power, free adult women also performed maintenance roles, educating children and adopting responsibility over the household in their husband's absence. Noble households were further reliant on the labour of slaves and unrelated social inferiors. A household therefore connected across clan boundaries, incorporating individuals who shared no biological relation as members, guests, compelled labour or even property. A similar cross-clan incorporation is discernible in the children involved in the household, as the next section's discussion of child-rearing arrangements shall display.

3.4 – Children

3.4.1 – The Place of the Child

It is important not to only consider the household's adult component. As Jacques Gélis notes, birth was the main way individuals were recruited into a family, excluding the recruitment of women through marriage.⁵⁷² Without children there was no way of safeguarding clan titles or holdings in perpetuity, nor securing existing householders security in old age. Beyond being important to the family practically, children were also invariably considered in household terms, excluding a few scattered references to orphans. Even here, most narrative sources considered orphaned children to be appendages to their deceased relatives or simply did not address them. *Epic Histories* contains no record of the buildings or occupants of Nersēs orphanage building project.⁵⁷³ Movses Xorenac'i's depiction of the Kat'olikos providing for provincial poorhouses (*alk'atanoc'*) in emulation of Greek hospitals (*hiwandanoc'ac'n Yunac'*) – through designating towns, fields and herds funded through tax (*hark*) – could perhaps be applied to orphanages, but orphanages were typically built at the more local level of the village and the lack of detail regarding them renders analysis highly speculative.⁵⁷⁴ As such, children must be examined in a household context and study of the child is a necessity to understand the family.

A tangible anxiety surrounding childbirth appears in all cultures in the era, likely resulting from the threat of infant mortality. Exact figures do not exist for Armenia, but Peter Garnsey conjectured 28% of children died before their first birthday in antique Italy, while as much as half died before their tenth.⁵⁷⁵ The Caucasus may not have been comparable but

⁵⁷² J. Gélis, *History of Childbirth: Fertility, Pregnancy and Birth in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1991), p. xi.

⁵⁷³ *Epic Histories* IV.4, V.31, pp. 313-318, 402-403.

⁵⁷⁴ MX III.20.7-10, p. 2031. On Byzantine hospitals, see T.S. Miller, 'Byzantine Hospitals', *DOP* 38 (1984), pp. 53-63.

⁵⁷⁵ P. Garnsey, 'Child Rearing in Ancient Italy', in *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, eds. D.I. Kertzer and R.P. Saller (New Haven, 1991), pp. 51-52. A slightly lower percentage of 30-40% is given by M. Golden, 'Did the Ancients Care When Their Children Died?', *Greece and Rome* 35.2 (1988), p. 155.

anxieties concerning child production and survival are recorded. Perhaps ironically, procreation was considered more a male issue in most cultures, due to the need for men to pass on titles to future generations. A child's physical beauty was associated with the character of their father in Zoroastrianism.⁵⁷⁶ Agat'angēlos records Trdat praying to Ohrmazd for fertility – a characterisation that is perhaps designed to illustrate the significance of fertility by having the king pray to the pantheon's supreme god as opposed to Anahit, a popular god in Armenia commonly associated with fertility.⁵⁷⁷

Christian conversion created an ambivalence to children due to its emphasis on chastity, virginity and the sinfulness of the world. The *Passion of St Šušānik* includes the titular saint thanking God for the death of one of her children, since it prevented him from being converted to Zoroastrianism by her husband.⁵⁷⁸ Nonetheless, the need to produce children persisted. Šušānik is depicted giving children to the childless first among her listed miracles in both its long Armenian and Georgian recensions of the *Passion*, fitting a broader pattern Cornelia Horn identified in Early Georgian hagiography of associating God's efficacy with bringing children to the childless.⁵⁷⁹ A homily on John the Baptist attributed to seventh-century polymath Anania Širakac'i likewise described the infertile wombs of the Biblical Sarah and Elizabeth as analogous to Hell, comparing God's intervention to produce children to John being sent to Hell to redeem sinners.⁵⁸⁰ Adults were also required to protect children.

The canons attributed to the Apostle Thaddeus commanded an individual who killed a child

⁵⁷⁶ /u-š frazand ī *winastag zišt aziš zāyēnd ēd rāy čē wināh kunēd ud kirbag nē kunēd [...] u-š frazand ī frahixt ud xwēš-kār ud dādestānīg ud hanjmanīg aziš zayēnd ēd rāy čē kirbag *kunēd ud wināh nē *kunēd/, ('And defective and ugly children are born of him, because he sins and does not perform good deeds [...] and well-instructed, dutiful, law-abiding and community-minded children will be born of him, because he does good deeds and does not sin'), *PRDD* 3.5-3.8, vol. 1, pp. 42-43, vol. 2, p. 7. Line 3.8 contains *kardan* with the X₂ ending (usually *kunēnd*) when X₁ would be expected, but here rendered *kunēd* to agree with the enclitic -š. *Hanjmanīg* is translated 'community-minded' instead of William's 'sociable' to indicate this refers to community involvement and not personal charisma.

⁵⁷⁷ Agat'angēlos 12.2, p. 1369.

⁵⁷⁸ *The Passion of Saint Shushanik: The Martyrdom of St. Vardan Mamikonian's Daughter*, trans. K. Maksoudian and C.H. Zakian (Arlington, 1999), VII, p. 19.

⁵⁷⁹ *Passion of Saint Shushanik*, XI, p. 29; Horn, 'Lives and Literary Roles of Children', pp. 275-276. For the historical setting of the *Passion*, see P. Peeters, 'Sainte Sousanik, martyre en Arméno-Géorgie (†13 Décembre 482-484)', *Analecta Bollandiana* 53 (1935), pp. 5-48, 245-307.

⁵⁸⁰ F.C. Conybeare, 'Varia Armenia', *The Harvard Theological Review* 17.2 (1924), p. 185.

produced through adultery should repent for the rest of his life, despite adultery also being sin.⁵⁸¹ Armenia is unexceptional in stressing the importance of childbirth. For example, Zoroastrian literature is replete with exhortations to produce and protect children. The Avesta claimed Ahura Mazdā (Pahl. Ohrmazd) and his daughter-wife Spənta Ārmaiti (Pahl. Spandarmad) preferred men with children.⁵⁸² The *Mihr Yašt* and *Hom Yašt* considered Mithra, cattle and the sacred plant Haoma capable of cursing those who mistreated them with childlessness, while *Sad-Dar* claimed attributed similar powers to fire.⁵⁸³ The Pahlavi *Nigādūm Nask* compared refusing to protect an abandoned minor to robbing the man who had abandoned them.⁵⁸⁴

Armenian children were characterised by Christian views on sin: vain, cunning and frivolous, but also pure to the point that baptism was lauded as a return to childhood.⁵⁸⁵ This is because their innate sinfulness was considered a corruption of their natural purity, caused by the taint of Original Sin and existence in the world. The Armenian recension of the story *Zoroaster's Laughter*, collected by thirteenth-century fabulist Vardan Aygekc'i explained infants cried upon birth due to the trauma of entering a sinful world.⁵⁸⁶ Several passages in *Epic Histories* contain the idea of a virtuous individual having begun that virtue as a child

⁵⁸¹ *KH* vol. 2, 26.23, p. 36.

⁵⁸² *The Zend-Avesta*, vol. 1: *Vendīdād* [henceforth *Vd.*], trans. J. Darmesteter (Oxford, 1895), 3.2, 3.33.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, vol 2: *The Sīrōzahs, Yasts and Nyāyis*, trans. J. Darmesteter (Oxford, 1883), 10.38, 10.108-110, pp. 129, 148-149; *Ibid.*, vol 3: *The Yasna, Visparad, Āfrīnagān, Gāhs and Miscellaneous Fragments*, trans. L.H. Mills (Oxford, 1887), 11.1-3, pp. 244-245; *Sad Dar, or The Hundred Subjects in Pahlavi Texts*, vol. 3: *Dīnā-ī Maīnôg Khirad, Sikand-Gūmānīg Vigār, Sad Dar* [henceforth *Sad-Dar*], trans. E.W. West (Cambridge, 1885), 11.6, p. 271; M. Pourhamzeh, *Critical Edition and English Translation of the Šad Dar Naẓm* [henceforth *Šad Dar Naẓm*] (MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 2021), 11.16-17, pp. 48-49.

⁵⁸⁴ *Dēnkard* 8 in *Pahlavi Texts*, vol. 4: *Contents of the Nasks*, trans. E.W. West (Delhi, 1892), 8.20.110, pp. 68. For an overview of the *Dēnkard* and its contents, see P. Gignoux, 'Dēnkard', *Elr.*, VII.3, pp. 284-289.

⁵⁸⁵ Horn, 'Lives and Literary Roles of Children', p. 262; Currie, 'Children', pp. 372-373; Aljalian, Odabashian and Tchilingirian, 'Curriculum for Educating Infants', pp. 234-235. Cf. *Epic Histories* III.13, V.34, pp. 294-296, 403.

⁵⁸⁶ *Darjeal asen imastunk'n, t'ē sahmank'n ē bnut'eamb, zi manukn lalov cnani, ew minč' i 40 ōrn zlaln gitē ew zk'neln ew oč' gitē cicalil. ew mi omn cicalec'aw, or anuann Zruastr ew katarac nora č'ar elew, zi dewk'n ayrec'in zna hrov:* ('Again, say the wise men, that boundaries are natural; thus, the child is born weeping, and until the fortieth day he knows tears and sleep and does not know to laugh. And one laughed, whose name was Zoroaster, and his deed became evil, so the demons burn him with fire'), A. Hambartsumian, 'The Armenian Parable "Zoroaster's Laughter" and the Plot of Zoroaster's Birth in the Literary Tradition', *Iran & the Caucasus* 5 (2001), pp. 27-28. The anecdote of Zoroaster's laughter is found already in Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 2, VII.16.72, pp. 552-553.

and remained consistent into adulthood.⁵⁸⁷ A negative description of Aršak II contrasted his obedience to divine wisdom in youth to his debauchery during adulthood.⁵⁸⁸

Despite these anxieties, the creation of heirs was essential even to Armenian clerics. Gregory the Illuminator had two sons, the younger inheriting the Kat'olikosate and the elder producing twins to continue the clan.⁵⁸⁹ The younger twin, Yusik I, also had twins. This follows the common cross-cultural stereotype of twins being fractions of an individual who fulfil segments of an heir's obligation.⁵⁹⁰ Yusik fulfilled his father's noble obligations by producing children and adopted his ecclesiastical role as Kat'olikos, while his older brother Gregoris received his grandfather's position as Kat'olikos of the Caucasian Albanians. The division of *naxarar* and ecclesiastical power between twins may reflect the idea, prominent in Greek and Indo-Iranian myth, that one twin was the child of the mother's mortal husband and the other of a deity.⁵⁹¹ The production of twins permitted a holy man to produce multiple heirs and thereafter pursue a life of ascetic virtue, having secured his inheritance with a minimum of sexual activity. In Yusik's case, the compiler expressly claimed that the bishop impregnated his wife on their first night of marriage and then never slept with her again, but immediately assured readers that this was the result of his vision and not because he perceived marital intercourse as immoral.⁵⁹² Their births often contained miraculous elements legitimising the parent's (although not always their child's) claim to special relationship with

⁵⁸⁷ *Epic Histories* III.5.2, IV.3.7-8, V.5.20, 24.7, 37.18, 44.14, pp. 281, 311, 385, 393, 406, 416.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, IV.12.8, p. 334.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, III.5-6, pp. 281-283.

⁵⁹⁰ Consider the figure of the 'pair-less' or solitary twin in Indo-European myth, whose depiction often included an androgyne's separation into two sexes, with intercourse being this primal twin symbolic reunification. S. Secunda, 'The Construction, Composition and Idealization of the Female Body in Rabbinic Literature and Parallel Iranian Texts: Three Excurses', *Nashim: A Journal of Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 23 (2012), pp. 65-66.

⁵⁹¹ Stewart, *Exploring Twins*, pp. 7-9.

⁵⁹² *Ew minč' deř manukn ēr, yet miangam yařajnum giřerin mtaneloy, ylac'aw kinn [...] Ew yet mioy giřeroy i kinn merjenaloy ayl oč' ews merjec'aw i na, vasn arak'inut'e an mankut'e an. ibrew oč' et'ē zamusnut'iwnn inč' alteli hamarēr, ayl kaskacēr na i teslenēn, zor etes* ('And [while Yusik] was still a child, his wife became pregnant after only the first night he entered her [...] And after drawing near to his wife on that one night he did not approach her again, because of his youthful virtue. It was not that he considered marriage obscene, but he doubted because of the vision he had seen'), *Epic Histories* III.5.9-14, p. 281.

God. Vrt'anēs' sons were born during his old age, while Yusik I foresaw the unworthiness of his children in a vision.

Theoretically, underage children were the primary dependants of the household and possessed few responsibilities for its maintenance beyond surviving into adulthood.⁵⁹³ However, a coherent labour separation between purely dependent children and adults within the household was likely a privilege of *naxarar* boys. The labour of *anazat* and slave children would be required for households with fewer means to function and was expected by *naxarar* households also. Łazar depicts the children of fishermen delivering foods they had collected while accompanying their fathers at work to provide for *naxarar* banquets.⁵⁹⁴ He speaks elsewhere of his own service carrying Vahan Mamikonean's cloak as a child, in what appears to have been a form of minor house-supporting labour.⁵⁹⁵ The utilisation of child work among the lower echelons of society is common historically and, absent the Victorian concept of 'child labour' as distinct from adult labour, it is probable that children were considered economic assets whose work was necessary to meet household labour demands.⁵⁹⁶ Such contributions are generally unrecognised in Armenian sources, which characterised children as what Nieuwnehuys dubbed 'inactives'.⁵⁹⁷

3.4.2 – Finding Childhood and Adulthood in Armenia

The boundaries of Armenian childhood are not immediately apparent, although it is easier to identify one side than the other. Just as the end of adulthood was death, the beginning of childhood was birth. The position of foetuses was unclear. While foetuses were protected in Zoroastrian law – which required both parents to care for even illegitimate offspring from the

⁵⁹³ Horn, 'Lives and Literary Roles of Children', p. 285.

⁵⁹⁴ Łazar 7.11, p. 2209.

⁵⁹⁵ Łazar, *T'ult'*, pp. 2377-2395.

⁵⁹⁶ For overview of the limitations of the modern concept of child labour outside of a modern, Western context, see Nieuwnehuys, 'Paradox of Child Labor', pp. 238-246.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 243-244.

moment of conception, delayed the execution of women who were pregnant until after the birth, and punished both parents and facilitators if an abortion occurred – there is evidence of such protections in Armenia during the period.⁵⁹⁸ Furthermore, that a foetus was protected did not necessarily imply they were considered people in the same way a child was. Iranian protection of foetuses may have emerged from Zoroastrianism's emphasis on the benefit of procreation more than a belief that unborn children were alive.⁵⁹⁹ An allusion in the *Dēnkard* to the mythical Kayanian Frēdōn rebuking the monstrous Dahāg from within his mother's womb could refer to his *frawahr* ('pre-soul'), a part of the soul that could act even before conception, since the *Sūdgar Nask* depicted Kay Husrōy's *frawahr* interceding to protect his grandfather Kay Us's life and secure his own father's conception.⁶⁰⁰ The prenatal coronation of Šābuhr II, if it indeed occurred, may similarly have been a depiction of *stūrīh*, wherein placing the crown upon his mother's pregnant stomach represented her role providing an heir for her late husband, not the conferring of royal status onto an unborn child who the priests had foretold would be a boy, as Agathias depicted it.⁶⁰¹ Given the complexity of formulations around foetuses and the lack of evidence for their consideration as children in late antique Armenia, it makes most sense to consider children from the point of birth.

The point at which an individual ceased to be a child and became an adult is less clear, as is how this was accomplished. As in the modern day, no single definition existed that entirely encapsulated child nor adult. The two categories were delineated through legal

⁵⁹⁸ *Vd.* 15.9-14; *Phl Vd.* 15.9-14; S.K. Mendoza Forrest, *Witches, Whores and Sorcerers: The Concept of Evil in Early Iran* (Austin, 2011), pp. 80-82; J. Jany, *Judging in Islamic, Jewish and Zoroastrian Legal Traditions: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Surrey, 2012) p. 66.

⁵⁹⁹ Mendoza Forrest claims abortion was condemned primarily because it created polluting dead matter, Mendoza Forrest, *Witches, Whores and Sorcerers*, pp. 81-82.

⁶⁰⁰ *Dēnkard* 7.25-26; M. Boyce, 'Fravaši', *EIr*; Y.S.-D. Vevaina, 'Hubris and Himmelfahrt: The Narrative Logic of Kay Us' Ascent to Heaven in Pahlavi Literature', in *Ancient Middle Iranian Studies: Proceedings of the 6th European Conference of Iranian Studies, held in Vienna, 18-22 September 2007*, eds. M. Macuch, D. Weber and D. Durkin-Meisterernst (Wiesbaden, 2010), p. 239.

⁶⁰¹ Agathias, *History of Justinian*, ed. and trans. J.D. Frendo (Berlin, 1975), IV.25.2-5, pp. 127-128. Cf. T. Daryaei, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London, 2014), p. 16. Alireza Shapur Shahbazi considered this tale a fiction, although Šābuhr's long seventy-year reign makes it probable that he ruled from birth. A. Shapur Shahbazi, 'Sasanian Dynasty', *EIr*. With thanks to Daniel Nogueira Feijo for highlighting this case to me.

rights, biological assumptions, appearance, terminology and age in an overlapping structure where no one distinction operated universally, and all could be waived for political or ideological reasons such as family propriety. Childhood's position as an assumed category means it is rarely examined and the double disadvantaged nature of underage girls renders them practically invisible. Nonetheless, a limited reconstruction is here attempted.

Boys were characterised by an absence of beards and a specific hairstyle. Artawazd Mamikonean is described as a beardless youth, further denoted by his shaved head with a single long braid, which the compiler identified as a mark of immaturity.⁶⁰² Łazar's description of Ałan Arcruni also focuses on the *naxarar's* 'downy beard' (*tēg muruac 'n*) when highlighting the young age at which he started pursuing a life of Christian virtue.⁶⁰³ Girls do not have a recorded characteristic haircut. The fourth-century CE Council of Gangra's ruling against women cutting their hair short may have been known in Armenia, but the more relevant distinction was likely that adult women publicly wore veils.⁶⁰⁴ The appearance of a beard and adoption of head coverings were important watersheds in the Byzantine exit from childhood and differentiated adolescents from adults in art, but they also acted as status symbols.⁶⁰⁵ This makes it difficult to establish the position of an individual purely based on appearance. An absence of fifth- to seventh-century Armenian visual sources also makes physical denotations of this kind of limited use. It is therefore important to go beyond appearance in understanding Armenian childhood in this era.

⁶⁰² *Ew ēr na i tioc' tlay. ew əst mankut'eann awrini [...] i žamakin gerceal ēr zglux mankann Artawazday, ew c'c'uns ēr t'oleal ew gēs arjakeal [...] Ew nšanakir mi' i Meružanay ibrew etes zArtawazdn, yənc'ac'k' ebac'. zi tesanēr zna pataneak mi kaytař anmurus, eresōk' gelec'ik* ('He was a child. And on account of his youth [...] he was in the time of shaving the head of the child Artawazd, and there was a plume left and a long hanging hair untied [...] When one of Meružan's emblem-bearers saw Artawazd, he ridiculed him. For he saw an agile, beardless youth with handsome face'), *Epic Histories* V.43.23-40, pp. 413-414.

⁶⁰³ Łazar 4.7, p. 2205.

⁶⁰⁴ For an Armenian translation of this canon, see *KH* vol. 1, 8.17, p. 197.

⁶⁰⁵ Caseau, 'Too Young to be Accountable', p. 19; D. Ariantzi, 'Introduction: Approaches to Byzantine Adolescence (6th – 11th Centuries)', in *Coming of Age in Byzantium: Adolescence and Society*, ed. D. Ariantzi (Berlin, 2017), p. 16; L. Brubacker, 'Images of Byzantine Adolescents', in *Ibid*, pp. 143-145.

The age of adulthood for boys in Armenia was probably fifteen. This appears to have been a significant delineating age, as *Epic Histories* considered it exceptional that St Gregory's grandson, Grigoris, became an ascetic at fifteen instead of marrying.⁶⁰⁶ Unfortunately, no late antique legislation survives to conclusively demonstrate that this was the age of majority, but its appearance throughout later Armenian texts is indicative. *Datastanagirk'* glossed a canon of Basil of Caesarea, which upheld the sins of a youth were not remembered, as meaning those under fifteen were only criminally responsible in cases that caused bodily harm.⁶⁰⁷ Fifteen is also prevalent in the Armenian apocrypha, despite an absence of Biblical precedent. Step'anos Siwnec'i's eighth-century CE *Commentary on Genesis* claimed Isaac was fifteen during his Binding, as were the youths who entered Sodom, Joseph when he became a shepherd and Abraham in most Armenian versions of the story of Abraham and the Ravens (*Jubilees* 11 instead made him fourteen).⁶⁰⁸ The Armenian version of Michael the Syrian's banishment of ravens had Michael as seventeen instead, but this may represent a common graphic error of confusing $\check{Z}\bar{E}$ (ԺԷ, 17) and $\check{Z}E$ (ԺԵ, 15).⁶⁰⁹ All of this implies fifteen marked the point a boy ceased to be a child, or at least was a highly significant moment in male childhood.

That fifteen was the Armenian age of majority is also supported by comparison to the practices of its Byzantine neighbours. The *Syro-Roman Code*, a 529 CE law within the *Code of Justinian* and Justinian's *Institute* I.22 all considered a boy no longer a minor and capable of marrying at fifteen.⁶¹⁰ The age of adulthood among the Sasanians was also fifteen, as

⁶⁰⁶ *Oč' amusnac'aw na, ayl i hngetasanamenic' ehas yastičan episkoposut'ean ašxarhin Vrac' ew Ahuanic', ays ink'n saħmanac'n Mazk't'ac'* ('He did not marry, but at fifteen became bishop of the land of Iberia and Ałuan, that is the borders of the Mazk'ut'k'), *Epic Histories* III.5.6, p. 281.

⁶⁰⁷ *Girk' Datastani* 22, p. 44; *KH* vol. 2, 36.131, pp. 131-132.

⁶⁰⁸ M.E. Stone, *Armenian Apocrypha Relating to Abraham* (Atlanta, 2012), pp. 23, 37, 42, 83, 157, 193.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42, n. 21.

⁶¹⁰ *The Syro-Roman Lawbook*, vol. 2: *A Translation with Annotations*, trans. A. Vööbus (Stockholm, 1983), §2, p. 4; *The Codex of Justinian. A New Annotated Translation, with Parallel Latin and Greek Text* [henceforth *CJ*], vol. 2, trans. F.H. Blume, eds. B.W. Frier et al. (Cambridge, 2016), V.60.3, pp. 1358-1359; *The Institutes of*

indicated by the *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān*, which claimed items leased until a child came of age had a maximum term of transfer of fifteen years unless the child died before reaching that age.⁶¹¹ Fifteen was also the age after which Zoroastrians were required to wear a *kustīg* ('sacred cord') – a compulsory garment for adults whose name is an MP. gloss on Av. *aiβiiānhana-* ('holy cord, girdle').⁶¹² Although the *kustīg* could be adopted earlier (and it is nowadays typically invested at age seven at the earliest) it was a sin to not wear one after this point.⁶¹³ The Pahlavi *Vendīdād* depicts the demon Druz informing the good deity Srōš that anyone older than fifteen who took four steps without one empowered demons and irreversibly cursed themselves.⁶¹⁴ It was so important for fifteen year olds to wear a *kustīg* that both the *Šāyest nē Šāyest* and the uncertainly-dated *Sad-Dar* stipulated children should receive theirs before the age of fourteen years and three months old, to account for their time spent *in utero*.⁶¹⁵ There may have been a biological component to this cross-cultural focus on the age of fifteen. Later Armenian practice often associated exit from childhood with semenarche (*sermanel* 'to procreate' and *ordecnut'iwn* 'the age of begetting').⁶¹⁶

Justinian, ed. and trans. T.C. Sanders (Chicago, 1876), I.22, p. 136; Ariantzi, 'Approaches to Byzantine Adolescence', p. 1; A. Moffatt, 'The Byzantine Child', *Social Research* 53.4 (1986), p. 706.

⁶¹¹ *MHDA* 32.15-17.

⁶¹² Mary Boyce suggests the *kustīg* shared heritage with the *yajñopīṭva* ('sacred thread') given to Hindu Brahmans in the *upanayana* ritual, which also includes a *mékhalā* ('sacred girdle'). However, Stausberg rightly notes a lack of evidence and numerous differences between the practices – including cord placement, its uses and the universal requirement of the *kustīg* in Zoroastrianism – render Boyce's conclusion pure speculation. M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 1: *The Early Period* (Leiden, 1989), p. 257; M. Stausberg, 'The Significance of the *Kusti*: A History of Its Zoroastrian Interpretations', *East and West* 54.1/4 (2004), pp. 9-11. The *kustīg*'s importance is emphasised by its extensive discussion within the *Nērangestān*, which dedicated eight chapters to the exact specifics of how and when it should be worn and put on, how it was made and repaired and its uses in ritual, *The Hērbēdestān and Nērangestān*, vol. 4: *The Nērangestān, Fragard III*, eds. and trans. F.M.P. Kotwal and P.G. Kreyenbroek (Paris, 2009), 67.1-69.8, 73.1-78.3, pp. 26-35, 40-53. Cf. J.K. Choksy and F.M. Kotwal, 'Kustīg', *EIr*.

⁶¹³ T. Naidoo, 'Human Rights: A Zoroastrian Perspective', *Journal for the Study of Religion* 2.2 (1989), p. 32; D. Weaver, 'Zoroastrians at Large: Intermarriage in New Zealand', *Indian Anthropologist* 44.2 (2014), pp. 21-22; J.S. Palsetia, *The Parsis of India: Preservation of Identity in Bombay City* (Leiden, 2001), p. 340; J.J. Modi, *The Navjote Ceremony of the Parsis* (Bombay, 1914), I.3.

⁶¹⁴ *Phl Vd.* 18.56-59.

⁶¹⁵ *Šāyast-nē-Šāyast: A Pahlavi Text on Religious Customs* [henceforth *ŠnŠ*], ed. and trans. J.C. Tavadia (Hamburg, 1930), 10.13; *Sad-Dar* 46.1-3, pp. 309-310; *Šad Dar Naẓm* 50.1-3, p. 132. Cf. *Sad-Dar* 10.1, p. 268; *Šad Dar Naẓm* 10.1, p. 42.

⁶¹⁶ *Girk 'Dataštani*, 7, pp. 12-13; Nersēs Šnorhali, *T'ult' Ĕndhanrakan*, ed. E.M. Bałdasaryan (Erevan, 1995), p. 133; M. Macuch, 'Judicial and Legal Systems iii. Sasanian Legal System', *EIr*.

Finding the age of adulthood for women in late antique Armenia is more challenging. Women remained effectively in a child state until marriage, so the deciding line was not the point they were considered physically mature, but the minimum marital age. Unfortunately, minimum marital age is difficult to establish for late antique Armenia. Discounting the exceptional betrothal of Vałınak Siwnik‘ and an infant survivor of King Xosrov III Kotak’s (r. 330-339 CE) purge of the Ałjnik‘ dynasty, which is the only instance of infant betrothal in Armenian sources and does not tell us when or whether the pair wed, it still appears girls were considered mature at a younger age than their male counterparts.⁶¹⁷ The canons attributed to Sahak argued a woman should not be betrothed to a child, perhaps indicating a dislike for older women marrying younger, as was certainly the case in the medieval period.⁶¹⁸

The practice of marrying women at an earlier age than men finds comparison in Byzantine legislation, which considered girls adults at thirteen and able to marry at twelve, arguing they matured faster than boys.⁶¹⁹ Twelve was also the age at which the twelfth century Armenian Kat‘olikos Nersēs Šnorhali considered girls eligible to marry, although this may have been adopted from Byzantium or elsewhere at a later date and cannot be backdated to Late Antiquity.⁶²⁰

In contrast, Pahlavi texts focus on the age of fifteen for women just as they did for men. Women, like men, took the *kustīg* by fifteen. They are explicitly included in the *Sad-Dar*’s and *Šāyest nē Šāyest*’s discussions of the crime of *wišād-dwārišnīh* (‘not wearing the *kustīg*’, lit. ‘going about open’), although later texts occasionally discouraged women from

⁶¹⁷ *Epic Histories* III.9, p. 287.

⁶¹⁸ *Patuēr ararēk‘ noc‘a, zi tlayoc‘ kanays mi xawsesc‘in*, (‘Make this command to them, so they shall not betroth women to children’), *KH* vol. 1, 17.27, pp. 382.

⁶¹⁹ *Syro-Roman Lawbook*, vol. 2, §4, p. 4; *CJ* V.60.3, pp. 1358-1359; Moffatt, ‘Byzantine Child’, p. 706.

⁶²⁰ Nersēs Šnorhali, *T‘ult‘ Ĕndhanrakan*, p. 133.

wearing their *kustīg* during menstruation.⁶²¹ The *Hērbēdestān* permitted girls under fifteen to forgo the usual menstruation rites while being escorted to undergo religious education, but did not give the same permission to older girls.⁶²² Such rulings suggest women, like their male counterparts, adopted rites associated with adulthood at fifteen. This is supported by the age's obvious significance in Zoroastrian cosmology for both genders. The *Bundahišn* and the fragmentary *Hādōxt Nask* cast the personified *dēn* of a righteous man – who appeared to him after death and represented his good works, thoughts and deeds – as a fifteen-year-old girl.⁶²³ Byzantine legislation thus had girls reaching the end of childhood at a younger age, while Pahlavi treated them like boys.

However, this distinction was the result of the differing focus of Byzantine and Zoroastrian sources and does not necessarily indicate that Armenian practice agreed with the former over the latter. Byzantine law concerned itself with the minimum age at which a girl *could* marry, while Zoroastrian literature instead concentrated on the maximum age she *should* be betrothed. Pahlavi sources vary considerably when discussing a girl's minimum marital age. The Pahlavi *Vīdēvdād* considered it fifteen, but the *Pahlavi Rivāyat of Ādurfarbay*, the *Pahlavi Rivāyat of Farrbay-srōš* and the *Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* all claimed a nine year old girl could be pledged in marriage, although the former stressed she had to have begun puberty and the latter indicated it was improper to consummate the union before she was twelve.⁶²⁴ The legal scholar Sōšyāns even contended a physically mature nine-year-old girl could consummate a marriage.⁶²⁵ Such variations

⁶²¹ *Sad-Dar* 10.1; *Šad Dar Naẓm* 10.1, p. 42; *ŠnŠ* 4.9; Stausberg, 'Significance of the *Kusti*', p. 14, n. 21.

⁶²² *Daštān-māh tā 15 sālag pādixšāy ka nē wizārēd; pancadasaiia sarəide daštān hamē dār ud hamē rēman/* ('Until she is fifteen years old it is permissible for her not to perform [the rites of] the menstrual cycle, *pancadasaiia sarəide* (Av. 'in her fifteenth year') consider her in menstruation for as long as she is impure'), *Hērbēdestān* 6.7, pp. 46-47.

⁶²³ *Bundahišn* 30.13-20, pp. 347-349. *Hādōxt Nask* in *Zend-Avesta*, vol. 2, 12.1.9-14, pp. 315-317.

⁶²⁴ *Phl Vd.* 14.15; *Pahlavi Rivāyat of Ādurfarbay and Farrbay-srōš*, ed. and trans. B.T. Anklesaria (Bombay, 1969), 13.1-14.2; *PRDD* 34b.1-3, vol. 1, pp. 140-141, vol. 2, p. 60.

⁶²⁵ *Hērbēdestān*, 6.7, pp. 44-45. Zoroastrian sources as late as the seventeenth century still debated female marital age. Bahman Punjya, writing in India, argued children could marry upon reaching puberty, at fourteen

suggest minimum marital age was comparatively unimportant for Zoroastrian authors, so they did not develop as coherent a model as for maximum betrothal age.

This reading is supported by the heavier sanctions imposed for failing to wed adult women compared to those for marrying underage girls. The final sections of the *Nīgādūm Nask* and *Sagādūm Nask*, two no longer surviving religious legal texts whose contents are enumerated in *Dēnkard* Book 8, declared it sinful to fail to wed a girl by a certain age: fifteen in the first *Nask* and capable of producing a son in the second.⁶²⁶ *Dēnkard* 8 records no legislation against taking a child bride and later Zoroastrian authorities treated men who wed girls with considerable leniency compared to those who failed to betroth adult daughters. Taking a child bride constituted a single *framān* sin, one of the most minor grades of sinfulness, according to sixteenth-century CE Zoroastrian scholar Šābuhr Bharuči.⁶²⁷ The same scholar ruled if a fifteen-year-old girl was not wed both she and her guardians received *marg-arzān* (lit. ‘deserving of death’) status, each accruing an additional *tanābuhl* sin every time she menstruated until she married.⁶²⁸ One *tanābuhl* incurred a three hundred *stēr* fine, seventy-five times the four *stēr* fine *Šāyest nē Šāyest* charged for a *framān* sin.⁶²⁹ This lax approach towards child brides and harsh condemnation of unwed adult women may reflect Zoroastrianism’s changing fortunes in the Islamic era more than the Sasanian situation, increasing the importance of safeguarding the community and its property. However, the possibility that Zoroastrian women married earlier than men in Sasanian Persia, as they did in the Byzantine world, cannot be discounted. In Armenian practice, it seems probable that boys exited childhood at fifteen and girls a little earlier, perhaps at twelve or the beginning of

years old, and not before twelve years old. Suratya Adhyārus believed girls could be betrothed at nine but could not marry until after menarche. These variations were likely intended to account for female puberty’s typically earlier onset. Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, p. 192.

⁶²⁶ *Dēnkard* 8.20.95, 8.43.20, pp. 66, 148.

⁶²⁷ Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, pp. 192-193. The *Šāyest nē Šāyest* considers a *framān* the most minor grade of sin, *ŠnŠ* 1.1.

⁶²⁸ Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, pp. 192-193. Heavy penalties for failing to wed a fifteen-year-old girl are also provided in the *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd ī Ašawahištān*. See *REA* 31.

⁶²⁹ *ŠnŠ* 1.2.

puberty. However, the exact moment of female exit from childhood cannot be confirmed due to an absence of contemporary native evidence and the ambiguities caused by the differing focuses of Byzantine and Sasanian texts.

There is likewise insufficient evidence to posit that late antique Armenia possessed an adolescent stage, although one did exist by the twelfth century. *Datastanagirk* 'depicted men gradually accumulating rights upon entering adulthood: being competent to marry at fifteen, join the army at twenty, and become a priest and testify in court at twenty-five.'⁶³⁰ In inverse with the modern characterisation of adolescents as children, this accords with Byzantine law, which considered adolescents adults but did not access full adult powers unless they received an imperial dispensation until they were twenty-five (when they could witness in court and exercise guardianship over their minor relatives).⁶³¹

However, while *Datastanagirk* ' bears comparison to late antique Byzantine material, this cannot be backdated. This model may have entered Armenia only through the influence of medical authors such as Galen and Asclepiades, first translated into Armenian in the fifth century, and there is no guarantee Byzantine understandings of adolescence were adopted just because the model of adult responsibility they spawned was.⁶³² Furthermore, the extent to which adolescence was articulated in the fifth century cannot be assessed due to the ambiguous language used by fifth-century sources. The young married man Bishop Yohan's ordained is dubbed *patani* ('youth') by *Epic Histories*, but so is the child Artawazd Mamikonean, who is also referred to with the more juvenile *tlay* ('infant').⁶³³ This does not necessarily prove an absence of adolescence either. Byzantium possessed the concept despite Greek likewise conflating *meirakion* ('boy') and *neaniskos* ('youth'), terms Günter Prinzing

⁶³⁰ *Girk* ' *Datastani*, 7, p. 12.

⁶³¹ Moffatt, 'The Byzantine Child', p. 706; *Syro-Roman Lawbook*, vol. 2, §4, 129, 145, 156, pp. 4, 47, 53-54, 58; *CJ* vol. 1, IL44.3, pp. 564-565. The latter is dated to the same day (6th April 529) and addressed to the same individual (Menas, the Praetorian Prefect) as *CJ* V.60.3, pp. 1358-1359.

⁶³² S. Vardanyan, 'The Medical Heritage of Medieval Armenia. Its Theoretical and Practical Value in the Light of Modern Science', *The New Armenian Medical Journal* 1.1 (2017), p. 17.

⁶³³ *Epic Histories* V.43.40, VI.8.5, pp. 414, 420.

encountered applied to individuals as young as six or as old as twenty.⁶³⁴ Adolescence's role as a category laid over the adult/child binary often renders it invisible even in societies where it existed.⁶³⁵ Nonetheless, the vagueness of Armenian terms means a coherent Armenian adolescence cannot be isolated before the medieval period. It is dangerous to assume one existed just because it is a feature of many other societies.

Armenia may instead have followed Sasanian Zoroastrian precedent, wherein children transitioned immediately from childhood to adulthood through a coming-of-age rite. Boys became full parts of the adult religious community upon completing the *nawīd-zādīh* ceremony and taking the *kustīg* at fifteen. The *Supplementary Texts Accompanying the Šāyest nē Šāyest* describes such boys as *rēdag ī purnāy* ('young adult'), but this does not appear to imply the limited responsibility associated with adolescence.⁶³⁶ The *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd ī Ašawahištān* ruled fifteen-year-olds, like older men, could be responsible for property and guardianship of others.⁶³⁷ *Bundahišn* similarly distinguishes young and old men, respectively depicted as fifteen and forty, without indicating this connoted partial rights for the former.⁶³⁸ Husraw I exempted individuals under twenty from tax requirements, perhaps evidencing a distinction between early and established adulthood.⁶³⁹ However, Iranian works generally suggest a coming-of-age model that Armenian children could have followed without needing

⁶³⁴ G. Prinzing, 'Observations on the Legal Status of Children and the Stages of Childhood in Byzantium', in *Becoming Byzantine: Children and Childhood in Byzantium*, eds. A. Papaconstantinou and A.-M. Talbot (Washington DC, 2009), p. 19.

⁶³⁵ C. Galatariotou, 'The Byzantine Adolescent: Real or Imaginary?' in *Coming of Age in Byzantium: Adolescence and Society*, ed. D. Ariantzi (Berlin, 2017), p. 211.

⁶³⁶ *mard ī pānzdah sālag kū māzdēsān pus ud brād ka māndag ō radān garzēd u-š aštar ud srōšočarnām barēd u-š ēn pañ gāh srūd ud āb ī weh yašt u-š hamāg nawīd-zādīh kard ēstēd rēdag ī purnāy ud nē aburnāy* ('A man of fifteen years, a son and brother of the Mazdeans, who confesses his sins to the *rads* and a whip and *srōšočarnām* is brought to him and he recites these five *Gāthās* and he worships the best water and has performed the whole new birth [ceremony], he is a young adult and not a child'), *The Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest Nē-Šāyest* [henceforth *Supp.ŠnŠ*], ed. and trans. F.M.P. Kotwal (Copenhagen, 1969), 13.2, pp. 40-41.

⁶³⁷ *ud pus ēw zāyēd ō purnāyīh rasēd ziyānag sālārīh ān ī-š kunēd [...] pus duxt andar 15 sāl ān pus zāyēnd hamāg pus duxt ī ān pus bāwēnd*, ('And if a son is born and comes of age, the [role of] woman's guardian is that which he does [...] Sons or daughters born within fifteen years of that son, they will all be the sons and daughters of that son'), *REA* 43.2.

⁶³⁸ *Bundahišn* 34.24, pp. 384-385.

⁶³⁹ Rubin, 'Reforms of Khusro', p. 240.

an adolescent period. This would explain *Epic Histories*' praise of Grigor Gregorid's rise to episcopal rank at fifteen, which is unlikely to have been included if common practice held a priest should be twenty-five at minimum.⁶⁴⁰

Often the metrics identifying adults were co-occurrent. An Armenian man might adopt an adult haircut, achieve semenarch and start beard growth all around fifteen; or an Armenian woman might marry upon reaching menarche. However, none of these identifiers were exclusive to adults and exceptions appear in all categories. Zuit', an Armenian martyred by *Šāhān-šāh* Šābuhr II, is described as *i tioc' manuk* ('in years a child') despite having a black beard and grey hair.⁶⁴¹ His justification for his appearance, that his beard had grown fifteen years after his hair, displays he was of age. The attribution of *manuk* status may be related to Origen's claim asceticism offered a kind of prolonged childhood, but this seems unlikely.⁶⁴² *Manuk/mankut' iwn* is also used to describe King Xosrow IV and Kat'olikos Nersēs at their respective marriages, with no indication either married underage.⁶⁴³

Childhood was not a single, simple state. Just like adulthood includes young adults, the middle aged and elderly, most cultures distinguish between children at several developmental, age or appearance-based milestones that did not involve transition to adulthood. Classical Roman law, for example, established simplified funerary forms and decreased or removed periods of formal mourning for children under ten, six, three or a year of age.⁶⁴⁴ *Datastanagirk*'s ruling on injury cases gave different rules twelve-year-olds, who were treated as adults, and younger children, who were approached with varying degrees of

⁶⁴⁰ *Epic Histories* III.5.6, p. 281.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, IV.56, p. 373.

⁶⁴² Currie, 'Children', p. 372. Origen was known in Armenia by at least the seventh century. See M. Papazian, 'Origen's Commentaries as Sources for Step'anos Siwnec'i's Commentary on the Gospels', *Le Muséon* 117.3-4 (2004), p. 507.

⁶⁴³ *Epic Histories* IV.3.7, VI.1.4, pp. 311, 418.

⁶⁴⁴ M. George, 'Family and Kinship, Roman: The Roman Family', *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. M. Gagarin (Oxford, 2010); M. Carroll, 'Infant Death and Burial in Roman Italy', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 24 (2011), p. 100; K. Tremelin, 'Ephemeral Creatures: Infant Death and Burial in Ancient Rome', *Chronika* 8 (2018), pp. 41-42.

leniency dependant on whether they were older than ten.⁶⁴⁵ The extent to which these laws were practised is less important than the fact that internal category differences were perceived. Unfortunately, our ability to reconstruct these perceptions is profoundly limited in Armenian Late Antiquity due to a lack of precise information.

One threshold whose contours may be suggested was the age at which children, or at least boys, were deemed competent to begin formal education outside the household. This moment had tangible effects. Šahapivan spared unlearned children from the punishments associated with being in a cult.⁶⁴⁶ Hovhanessian has identified this as a distinction between of-age and underage children, but the exact wording (*iragēt mankanc'n*, 'knowledgeable children') suggests it distinguished two underage groups.⁶⁴⁷ That education was undertaken by children is further implied by the contents of Anania Širakac'i's seventh-century mathematical questions, which including comic and fantastical stories. Problem 6 involves a greedy Roman stealing from Anania's garden, problem 13 depicts his pupils playing a prank on him, and problem 23 sees Anania interrogate a talking mouse.⁶⁴⁸ Agat'angēlos and Koriwn depict children summoned for education by royal or noble decree and have the ascetic *vardapet* Gind accompanied by a *manuk* student, Muše.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁵ *Girk' Datastani*, 22-25, pp 44-45. This may relate to Persian practice, as the medieval *Rivāyats of Hormazyar Framarz* considered twelve the age a deceased child received an adult-sized iron funerary bier. However, their late date and tangential connection renders this comparison too slight for a link to be definitively established. Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, p. 179.

⁶⁴⁶ *Apa t'ē ark' kanambk' ordwovk' gtc'in yalandin, zaranc'n ew zkananc'n ew ziragēt mankanc'n zjilsn ktresc'en, aluēdrošm i čakatn dic'en ew i godenoc' tac'en yapašxarut'iwñ. Ew mankunk'n or č'ew ic'en gitac'eal zplcut'iwñn, kalc'in tac'in i ješs surb paštawnēic' Astuacoy, or snusc'en ew ususc'en znosa i hawats čšmarits ew yerkiwl Tearn*: ('Then if men with their wives and children should be found in a cult let the sinews of the men and women and knowledgeable children be cut, a fox-mark put on their foreheads and let them be delivered to the leprosarium for penance. And the children, who did not know the defilement, let them be taken and given into the hands of the holy ministers of God, who shall nourish and teach them in true beliefs and fear of the Lord'), *KH* vol. 1, 18.19, pp. 461-462.

⁶⁴⁷ Hovhanessian, 'Council of Šahapivan', pp. 92-93.

⁶⁴⁸ Greenwood, 'Mathematical Problems of Anania Širakac'i', pp. 162-164, 166.

⁶⁴⁹ Koriwn, 15.4, 16.7, 17.9, 17.16, 18.3 pp. 242-243, 245-246; Agat'angēlos 120.1-7, pp. 1703-1705; *Epic Histories* VI.16.6, p. 423.

The most likely age for education to begin is seven, which accords with later medieval Armenian practice.⁶⁵⁰ Jenny Rose and David Zakarian instead suggest five for Late Antiquity, which Robin Meyer also accepts, based on the Armenian translation of the *Life of Marutha of Maipherkat* stating its protagonist began his education at that age.⁶⁵¹ However, seven would make more sense cross-culturally. The Byzantine world considered seven an important delineating point between older and younger children; the Pahlavi *Vendīdād* viewed boys over seven as requiring less minding; and Stoic thought similarly separated life into seven-year blocks.⁶⁵² The *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* even claimed children under seven were sinless and did not go to hell if they died, since their souls were attached to their parents and their good and bad deeds belonged to these adults.⁶⁵³ The *Life of Marutha*'s focus on age five may represent the same 𐎠/𐎡 conflation discussed earlier, as Ralph Marcus noted the existence of a manuscript instead identifying Marutha as seven.⁶⁵⁴

Interestingly, seven is also the beginning of the earliest concrete operational stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development, although this agreement with a model formulated from studying children parented in a contemporary Western context is surely little more than coincidence.⁶⁵⁵ Ultimately, seven appears a good contender for the age at which children could leave their home for formal education. However, many would have already moved far from this residence, as we see when we turn to the institution of *dayeakut'awn*.

⁶⁵⁰ *ew ewt 'nameni usaneln ē*, ('And the seventh year is [the age] of learning'), *Girk' Datastani*, 7, p. 12; Aljalian, Odabashian and Tchilingirian, 'Curriculum for Educating Infants', p. 238; Currie, 'Children', p. 372.

⁶⁵¹ J. Rose, 'Three Queens, Two Wives, and a Goddess: Roles and Images of Women in Sasanian Iran', in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage and Piety*, ed. G.R.G. Hambly (New York, 1998), pp. 36-37; Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 111-120; Meyer, *Iranian-Armenian Language Contact*, p. 309, n. 475. Cf. R. Marcus, 'The Armenian Life of Marutha of Maipherkat', *Harvard Theological Review* 25.1 (1932), p. 57.

⁶⁵² Currie, 'Children', p. 372; *Phl Vd.* 15.45.

⁶⁵³ *PRDD*, 8d7-8d9, 34a.1, 43.5, vol. 1, pp. 52-53, 140-141, 158-159, vol. 2, pp. 12-13, 60, 70-71. *Šāyest nē Šāyest* and its *Supplementary Texts* also contended fathers accrued merit for their sons' good deeds, citing precedent in the Avestan *Nasks*. The much later Hormazdyar Framarz argued a child's soul separated from their parents at seven, but their good deeds belonged to their parents until age eleven. *ŠnŠ*, 10.22; *Supp.ŠnŠ*, 12.15, pp. 30-31; Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, pp. 174-175.

⁶⁵⁴ Marcus, 'Armenian Life of Marutha', p. 57. Cf. Stone, *Armenian Apocrypha Relating to Abraham*, p. 42, n. 21.

⁶⁵⁵ H. Ginsburg and S. Opper, *Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, 1988), pp. 123, 129.

3.5 – Dayeakut‘iwn

Children within an individual household were not always biologically related to that household’s adults, particularly in the fifth century when the practice of *dayeakut‘iwn* (lit. ‘wet-nursing’) is most frequently attested. *Dayeak* could refer to a literal wet-nurse (a woman of lower social rank delegated the responsibility of nursing and weaning the infant); to a guardian entrusted with educating and nurturing a child; or to a tutor.⁶⁵⁶ The first two generally raised the children in their own household as opposed to the child’s natal household, while the third is only identifiable from their presence within the child’s natal household. Since the *dayeak*-guardian especially was also associated with the education of their *san* (‘pupil, foster child’), the *dayeak*-tutor may not represent a separate institution but simply a *dayeak*-guardian or *dayeak*-wet-nurse residing in their *san*’s household. While references are concentrated in the fifth century, *dayeakut‘iwn* is attested in Armenia until the fifteenth century and in neighbouring Georgia and the surrounding Caucasus until the nineteenth.⁶⁵⁷ The practice may have declined after the fifth and it almost certainly altered in appearance to an extent over its long span, but it did not disappear entirely.

All surviving recorded *dayeak* arrangements involve *naxarar*. It is unlikely other households possessed the necessary social capital to require, establish and maintain such relationships. The canons attributed to Sahak Partew do briefly reference *azat* houses alongside *išxani tuns* (‘princely houses’) in the context of preventing members of priestly families from exiting service to their community to take on *dayeakut‘iwn* or other responsibilities in a household.⁶⁵⁸ This suggests *azat* could establish *dayeak* arrangements, but it is unclear whether the canon imagined them sending their children to other houses or merely receiving *san* from *naxarar* households. There is no further reference to *dayeakut‘iwn* in church canons nor does any historical source discuss it in detail, since the role was part of

⁶⁵⁶ Bedrosian, ‘Dayeakut‘iwn in Ancient Armenia’, p. 23.

⁶⁵⁷ R.W. Bedrosian, ‘Dayeakut‘iwn’, *EIr*.

⁶⁵⁸ *KH* vol. 1, 17.22, p. 380.

normal practice that did not require explanation for contemporary audiences.⁶⁵⁹ The cultural prominence of the practice in the fifth century is implied by the appearance of all three forms of *dayeakut'iw*n within the Armenian Bible.⁶⁶⁰

*Dayeakut'iw*n of all types fits what Lloyd deMause called an 'abandonment' mode of parent-child relation, which he characterised as especially common cross-culturally between the fourth and thirteenth centuries CE.⁶⁶¹ While this model is too universalising for our discussion, it is worth considering that *dayeakut'iw*n was not exceptional, but within the normative parenting strategies of the late antique world.

3.5.1 – Dayeak as 'Wet-Nurse'

Wet-nursing is widely attested as a means of managing breastfeeding and weaning, some of infancy's most crucial processes, throughout the Mediterranean and Iranian worlds – from Egyptian and Babylonian wet-nurse contracts to Avicenna's eleventh-century CE Persian *Canon of Medicine*.⁶⁶² In the Classical period, the hiring of wet nurses was treated as routine among the wealthier classes by medical authors.⁶⁶³ Byzantine experts advocated for mothers to nurse their own children, but in practice surrogates were common among the nobility of both Byzantine and Sasanian Empires.⁶⁶⁴ The practice was especially common in clan-based

⁶⁵⁹ Łazar, trans. Thomson, p. 95, n. 1; Bedrosian, 'Dayeakut'iw in Ancient Armenia', p. 24.

⁶⁶⁰ For *dayeak* as 'wet-nurse': Exodus 2:7, 35:8, Numbers 11:12, Ruth 4:6, IV Kings 11:2, II Chronicles 22:11. For *dayeak* as 'teacher': Genesis 35:8, I Thessalonians 2:71. For *dayeak* as 'guardian': Isaiah 49:23, Acts 13:1, I Maccabees 6:14-15. See Bedrosian, 'Dayeakut'iw in Ancient Armenia', p. 23.

⁶⁶¹ *The History of Childhood*, ed. L. deMause (Oxford, 1974), pp. 51-52.

⁶⁶² F. Fulminante, 'Infant Feeding Practices in Europe and the Mediterranean from Prehistory to the Middle Ages: A Comparison between the Historical Sources and Bioarchaeology', *Childhood in the Past* 8.1 (2015), pp. 24-27; V.A. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh, 1986), p. 12; Sánchez Romero, 'Landscapes of Childhood', p. 18.

⁶⁶³ Garnsey, *Food and Society*, p. 103.

⁶⁶⁴ Currie, 'Children', p. 372. It should be remembered that both Classical and Byzantine medical sources were prescriptive and not documentary, providing advice but only occasionally claiming to reflect actual practice. T.L. Prowse et al., 'Isotopic and dental evidence for infant and young child feeding practices in imperial Roman skeletal sample', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 137 (2008), pp. 297-298. Wet nursing outside the home was also forbidden by early Muslim scholars but was, in practice, appears to have been common. Giladi, 'Nurture and Protection of Children in Islam', p. 589.

societies peripheral to patrimonial or bureaucratic states, including both Armenia and Georgia.⁶⁶⁵

In Armenia, *dayeak* of this type were also dubbed *stəntuin* (lit. ‘breast giver’). They appear as late as the twelfth century, when the *Penitential of David of Ganjak* legislated against Christian women nursing non-Christian babies.⁶⁶⁶ Due to breastfeeding being generally unrecorded in historical sources, it is not known for how long wet-nursing typically occurred or how it was contracted. However, it seems probable that the hiring of individual nurses was generally done by men, especially if the *dayeakut’iwn* ‘wet-nurse’ and ‘guardian’ functions were performed by members of the same household.⁶⁶⁷ Hagiographical and archaeological evidence would suggest that cross-culturally in the sixth to fifteenth centuries CE, breastfeeding was not concluded until the child was approximately four years old.⁶⁶⁸ *Dayeakut’iwn* of this type was typically conducted by a woman of lower social standing and is likely the kind intended in the story of the Mamikonean martyr Hamazspuhi, whose bones were collected by her *dayeak*, described as *kin mi* (‘a woman’) in an apron (*parēgawt, anakiwls*).⁶⁶⁹ This further reinforced if the passages use of *coc* ‘is to be read ‘bosom’ as opposed to ‘lap’ or ‘pocket’.

Wet-nursing arrangements of this type may have gone further than being practical attempts to delegate the nursing of children to social inferiors, and perhaps created a kind of quasi-kinship relation between child and wet-nurse that associated the pair even after the

⁶⁶⁵ Parkes, ‘Fostering fealty’, pp. 743, 758-761; *Idem.*, ‘Milk kinship’, p. 342.

⁶⁶⁶ Davit’ Alawkay, *The Penitential of David of Ganjak*, trans. C.J.F. Dowsett (Louvain, 1961), 20, p. 18.

⁶⁶⁷ S. Balkrishan, ‘Exploring Gender: Islamic Perspectives on Breastfeeding’, *International Research Journal of Social Sciences* 2.6 (2013), p. 31.

⁶⁶⁸ C. Bourbou, B.T. Fuller, S.J. Garvie-Lok and M.P. Richards, ‘Nursing Mothers and Feeding Bottles: reconstructing breastfeeding and weaning patterns in Greek Byzantine populations (6th–15th centuries AD) using carbon and nitrogen stable isotope ratios’, *Journal of Archaeological Science* 40.11 (2013), pp. 3903-3913.

⁶⁶⁹ *Yays tesil tiknojn Hamazspuhi ēar kin mi dayeakn norin, agaw na parēgawt mi’ zor anakiwls koč’en, ew ēac gawti and mēj iwr, ew vayr ar barjr gahun k’arin i nerk’oy aštarakin’ zormē kaxeal ēr zsann iwr [...] na yiwr coc’n žolovēr bovandak zamenayn zoskers sanin* (‘Seeing the sight of the *tikin* Hamazspuhi, a woman, a *dayeak* of hers, wearing an apron which they call *anakiwls*, and a belt around her middle, and at the elevated precipice under the turret, from which her *san hung* [...] she gathered to her bosom all the bones of her *san*’), *Epic Histories* IV.59.12, p. 375. *Ankiwl* is from Gr. *agkulos* (‘curved, hook-shaped’), but the exact article of clothing this refers to is unknown.

arrangement ended. Such a connection, called ‘milk-kinship’ by Soraya Altorki, is found in many cultures that practiced wet-nursing.⁶⁷⁰ It originated in Greek medical and philosophical traditions, which considered breastmilk a purified refinement of uterine blood able to transmit characteristics to co-nursing children just as blood-relation did.⁶⁷¹ Such beliefs allowed milk-kinship to fill a similar affiliative niche to adoption, expanding the number of men and women who could meet freely without suspicion of inappropriate conduct due to these individuals being considered relatives of each other.⁶⁷² This appears to have existed in contemporary Georgia, as the fifth-century Palestinian monk and Georgian Chosroid Peter the Iberian included his foster family in the liturgical commemoration for his blood relatives.⁶⁷³

Evidence of Armenian adoption of milk-kinship is unfortunately only available in folklore and outside sources addressing Armenians. Iakob C‘urtaveli’s Georgian version of the *Vita Šušanik* refers to the Mamikonean saint’s otherwise unidentified *žuzuys-mtē* (‘foster brother’, lit. ‘partaker of the breast’), the Georgian equivalent of *dayeakordi* (‘foster brother’), which refers to a prominent Armenian figure and so may reflect the presence of a kin association within wet-nursing in the seventh century.⁶⁷⁴ Similarly, Armenian folk tales such as *Sunset Lad* and several works within Surmelian’s compendium involve the trope of a hero kissing a giantess’ breast in order to receive her protection from her hostile sons.⁶⁷⁵ This practice is associated with milk-kinship establishment in the Caucasus and beyond as far as

⁶⁷⁰ S. Altorki, ‘Milk-Kinship in Arab Society: An Unexplored Problem in the Ethnography of Marriage’, *Ethnology* 19.2 (1980), pp. 233, 241.

⁶⁷¹ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, ed. and trans. A.L. Peck (Cambridge, MA, 2014), IV.viii; Parkes, ‘Fosterage, Kinship and Legend’, p. 590; Balkrishan, ‘Exploring Gender’, pp. 31-32.

⁶⁷² Balkrishan, ‘Exploring Gender’, p. 32.

⁶⁷³ Horn, ‘Lives and Literary Roles of Children’, p. 289.

⁶⁷⁴ Rapp, *Sasanian World*, p. 89.

⁶⁷⁵ *100 Armenian Tales and their folklorist relevance*, ed. S. Hoogasian-Villa (Detroit, 1966), p. 79, 431; L.Z. Surmelian, *Apples of Immortality: Folktales of Armenia* (London, 1968).

Malay, where it appears in a folk tale explaining Islam's arrival in Java.⁶⁷⁶ However, while such breast-biting was identified in the nineteenth century CE in Georgian, Circassian, Kabardian, Abkhazi, Chechen, Ingush, Avar and Ossete practice, Armenia does not evidence the practice outside of folklore.⁶⁷⁷ Folklore's undatable nature makes its relevancy for Late Antiquity impossible to assess. The trope may well have entered the region from a different culture.

Furthermore, restrictions on marrying of milk-kin, widely attested in cultures that both practised wet-nursing and subscribed to an incest taboo, are not evident in Armenia.⁶⁷⁸ If *dayeak*-wet-nursing and *dayeak*-guardianship was typically carried out by the same family, then several instances of marriage between *san* and *dayeak*'s children exist. Kat'ohikos Yusik married Tiran's daughter despite having been raised by him.⁶⁷⁹ Tačat Ğštuni and Šawasp Arcruni both likewise married daughters of their Mamikonean *dayeaks* and Manuēl Mamikonean wed his daughter to Aršak Aršakuni, one of the royal princes whom he had *ibrew zsan snuc 'anēr* ('nourished like *sans*').⁶⁸⁰ Elišē meanwhile spoke of *sireli dayeakasund bnakac* ('dear foster friends'), recalling the similar *dayekac 'bnakac* ' used in the Armenian version of 2 Maccabees 15:18, and elsewhere complained that individuals could not distinguish their relatives from wet-nurses in the aftermath of Awarayr.⁶⁸¹ Such references and marriages support the idea that *dayeak* were close to their *san*, but not that they shared a bond believed akin to kinship.

⁶⁷⁶ E. Cosquin, 'Le lait de la mère et le coffre flottant. Légendes, contes et mythes comparés à propos d'une légende historique musulmane de Java', *Revue des Questions Historiques* 83 (1908), pp. 398-400; Parkes, 'Fosterage, Kinship and Legend', p. 597.

⁶⁷⁷ A. Grigolia, 'Milk Relationship in the Caucasus', *Bedi Karlisa* 41-42 (1962), pp. 152-155; Bedrosian, 'Dayeakut'iwn in Ancient Armenia', p. 34.

⁶⁷⁸ J. Schacht, J. Burton and J. Chelhod, 'Rađā', *Encyclopedia of Islam* 8 (Leiden, 1995), pp. 361-362; M. Clarke, 'The Modernity of Milk Kinship', *Social Anthropology* 15.3 (2007), pp. 292-293; L. Rahbari, 'Milk Kinship and the Maternal Body in Shi'a Islam', *Open Theology* 6.1 (2020), p. 47; Altorki, 'Milk Kinship', pp. 240-241.

⁶⁷⁹ *Isk zYusik snuc 'anēr Tiran ordi t'agaworin Xosrovu*, ('Tiran, son of King Xosrov, nourished Yusik'), *Epic Histories* III.5.8, p. 281.

⁶⁸⁰ *Epic Histories* III.18, V.37.62, pp. 302, 408.

⁶⁸¹ Elišē, 2,241, AN 84, pp. 568, 762. Cf. Elišē, trans. Thomson, p. 95, n. 7.

A quasi-biological milk-kinship connection therefore cannot be conclusively identified. The wet-nurse relationship may have held continued relevance past the point breastfeeding had concluded, especially given the effects early care has on both the infant and primary caregiver.⁶⁸² However, our evidence is insufficient to conclude Armenians recognised milk-kinship.

3.5.2 – Dayeak as ‘Guardian’

More may be said about the other use of the term *dayeak*, referring to the practice of entrusting the raising and education of children (dubbed *san*, ‘pupil, foster child’) to often quite geographically distant male allies. This is a prime example of what Esther Goody called ‘alliance fosterage’ – wherein children were delegated to non-kin or non-proximate kin to establish political alliance and reciprocal claims of loyalty between kin-groups in the form of a patron-client bond expressed in quasi-kinship terms.⁶⁸³ *Dayeaks* also performed a protective function, ensuring the survival of the *san*’s clan should his natal household be wiped out. It is in this capacity where *dayeakut’iwn* is most visible.

Stories of *dayeak* guardians shepherding away young children during the slaughter of their clan are common, especially in *Epic Histories*. The infant Xeša Ałjnik‘ was raised in secret by Vač‘ē Mamikonean after his clan’s destruction on King Xosrov III Kotak’s orders and regained his territories upon reaching adulthood, thwarting the king’s plans to marry Xeša’s sister to his favourite, Vałinak Siwnik, and transfer the Ałjnik‘’s privileges.⁶⁸⁴ The next two generations of Mamikoneans performed similar functions. Brothers Artawazd and

⁶⁸² R. Sullivan, R. Perry, A. Sloan, K. Kleinhaus and N. Burtchen, ‘Infant Bonding and Attachment to the Caregiver: Insights from basic and clinical science’, *Clinics in Perinatology* 38.4 (2011), pp. 645-647. There is slight evidence that breastfeeding itself might affect attachment, K.D. Gribble, ‘Mental Health, attachment and breastfeeding: implications for adopted children and their mothers’, *International Breastfeeding Journal* 1.5 (2006), pp. 6-8; K. Linde, F. Lehnig, M. Nagl, A. Kersting, ‘The Association between Breastfeeding and Attachment: A Systemic Review’, *Midwifery* 81 (2020), pp. 1-16.

⁶⁸³ E.N. Goody, *Parenthood and Social Reproduction* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 114. The place of hostage taking in such formulations is discussed below.

⁶⁸⁴ *Epic Histories* III.9, p. 287; Bedrosian, ‘Dayeakut’iwn in Ancient Armenia’, p. 26.

Vasak Mamikonean saved Tačat Řštuni and Šawasp Arcruni from purges under King Tiran, and Vasak again protected and raised Spandarar Kamsarakan from Aršak II.⁶⁸⁵ Tačat and Šawasp were raised in Mamikonean strongholds in Tayk‘, but not all *dayeaks* raised their *san* in their own household, especially when responding to crises. Agat‘angēlos – describing the rescue by *dayeaks* of the future King Trdat, Gregory the Illuminator and Gregory’s brother after their respective fathers killed one another – claimed the first two were taken to Byzantium and the last to Iran.⁶⁸⁶

However, *dayeakut‘iwn* was not merely a spontaneously contracted safeguard, and evidence exists of the institution operating even when no immediate risk of a clan’s extinction existed. Łazar envisioned the villainous Vasak Siwnik‘ rounding up the children of the Mamikonean and Kamsarakan clans from their *dayeaks* as opposed to their parents on the eve of the Battle of Awarayr.⁶⁸⁷ The Mamikoneans appear to have frequently acted as hereditary *dayeaks* for the Aršakuni crown prince, a role Meyer suggests was connected to their *sparapet* position.⁶⁸⁸ King Varazdat’s promotion of his own *dayeak*, Bat Saharuni, to *sparapet* seems to support this, although *Epic Histories* attributes the move to Bat slandering the Mamikoneans instead of any connection between the positions.⁶⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the frequent investment of Aršakuni *dayeak* responsibilities in the Mamikoneans demonstrates that this form of *dayeakut‘iwn* comprised both longer term and spontaneous arrangements, with the latter overriding the former in situations where an allied clan was in immediate danger of destruction.

Ancillary evidence suggests *dayeak*-guardians were used for daughters, who would not have conferred the same clan preserving benefits but were useful for cementing alliances.

⁶⁸⁵ *Epic Histories* III.18, IV.19, pp. 302, 348.

⁶⁸⁶ Agat‘angēlos 2.23-3.6, pp. 1322-1323.

⁶⁸⁷ Łazar 36.2, p. 2263.

⁶⁸⁸ *Epic Histories* III.18, IV.2.2, 11.3, 47.3, 53.8 pp. 302, 310, 333, 363, 367; Meyer, *Iranian-Armenian Language Contact*, p. 308.

⁶⁸⁹ *Epic Histories* V.35, 37, pp. 403-409. Cf. MX II.82, pp. 1973-1975; *Epic Histories*, trans. Garsoian, p. 521.

Awtay Amatuni is called the *snuc'ol* ('nourisher') of King Trdat's sister Xosroviduxt, perhaps indicating *dayeak*-guardianship.⁶⁹⁰ Metaphorically, Agat'angēlos dubbed the Greek Gayane *dayeak* and *snut'ič* ('nourisher') of a group of female ascetics, with Hrip'simē described as her *san*.⁶⁹¹

*Dayeakut'iw*n-guardianship is less frequently recorded after the crisis periods of the fourth and fifth centuries but is present. A 608/609 CE letter from Kat'olikos Abraham Ałbat'anec'i warned the Albanians not to establish relationships of 'friendship and *dayeakut'iw*n' (*mi i barekanut'iw*n *mi i dayeakut'iw*n) with Iberians.⁶⁹² An inconclusive reference in Anania Širakac'i's seventh-century CE *Tiezeragitut'iw*n *ew tomar*, describes the moon as 'dayeak and nourisher of plants' (*dayeak ew snuc'ič' busac'*).⁶⁹³ Movses Dasxuranc'i's tenth-century CE *Patmut'iw*n *Ałuanic'* did not reference Armenian *dayeaks*, but briefly used the term in the context of three different monarchies: ascribing the plot to overthrow Husraw II to his son's *dayeak*; depicting a messenger sent to Kat'olikos Viroy of Albania after the 627 CE fall of Tiflis as a *dayeak* of the Khazar prince Šat'; and having the cavalryman P'usan-Veh produce documents claiming priorship to the monastery of Nersmihir as reward for having been *dayeak* to Prince Varaz-Trdat of Albania.⁶⁹⁴ *Dayeaks* are thus attested into the medieval period, but not in Armenia itself. If this indicates a decline after the

⁶⁹⁰ MX II.77.3, 82.4-5, pp. 1965, 1974.

⁶⁹¹ Agat'angēlos 20, p. 1407, n. 4.

⁶⁹² Abraham Ałbat'anec'i, *T'ult šrjagayakan Tearn Abrahamu Hayoc' Kat'olikosi*, in *MH* vol. 4: 7 *Dar* (Antilias, 2005), 45, p. 20; *GT'* 54, p. 194.

⁶⁹³ Anania Širakac'i, *Tiezeragitut'iw*n *ew tomar* [Cosmography and the Calendar], ed. A.G. Abrahamyan (Erevan, 1940), p. 43.

⁶⁹⁴ *Apayareal omn mi i hawatarin əntaneac' nora naxarar mi, or ēr dayeak andrankann Xosrovu, or Kawatn koč'iw*r [...] *Ew xotoreac' yankarcaki zsirtamenec'un zhet sanun iwroy Kawatay* ('Then one of his [Husraw's] trusted household arose, a nobleman, who was the *dayeak* of Husraw's eldest son, who was called Kawad [...] And he suddenly led astray the hearts of all men with his *san* Kawad'), Movses Dasxuranc'i, *Patmut'iw*n *Ałuanic' ašxarhi*, ed. V. Ařak'elyan (Evan, 1983), II.12. For English translation see, *Idem, The History of the Caucasian Albanians*, trans. C.J.F. Dowsett (London, 1961), II.12; *Xorhelov valvalaki ararēk' inj patasxani* [...] *k'anzi stipē zis ekeal patgamm, ew sa zi oč' i ramkac', ayl naxarar zors t'snameac'n ew hawatarim dayeak ew dastiarak t'agaworordvoyn Šat'aye*. ('Having considered it, quickly render an answer to me [...] for the messenger who has come to us presses me and he is not one of the commoners, but a *naxarar* of the enemy's army and the loyal *dayeak* and teacher of the king's son, Šat'.'); *Isk ayžm P'usan Veh anun, hecelak ašxarhavar* [...] *gracs berē yařaj, t'ē inj tueal ē zekelec'id Ałuanic' išxani vanakanut'eamb vasn deakut'ean imoy* ('But now a cavalryman called P'usan-Veh [...] produces documents to the effect that the Prince of Albania gave to him the church, with the priorship, because he had been his *dayeak*'), *Ibid.*, 14, III.11.

fifth century CE, then *dayeakut'iw*n ended unusually early compared to similar fictive kinship practices elsewhere in the Caucasus.

3.5.3 – Dayeakut'iwn interrelation

An individual's *dayeak*-wet-nurse and *dayeak*-guardian were likely often members of the same household. Zenob Glak's account of the infant King Trdat's flight to Byzantium, which was based on that of Agat'angēlos, expressly associated the two practices. The aptronymic *dayeak* Burdar (MP. *burdār*, 'carrier, bearer') married a Byzantine Christian, Sop'i, who nursed Trdat.⁶⁹⁵ Similarly, Vard Mamikonean, Juik and Hmayeak Mamikonean's youngest son, was raised from infancy by plural *dayeakk'* in Tayk', suggesting his weaning and raising were undertaken by one household.⁶⁹⁶ Vard is later shown at the Persian court, which might imply his residence in Tayk' represented only a wet-nurse arrangement, but the context of his presence in Persia makes it clear he was a political hostage.⁶⁹⁷ While his escape confirmed he had a personal retinue of servants during this time, such luxuries were not unusual in instances of noble captivity.⁶⁹⁸

The operation of wet-nursing and education within the same foster household in Armenia would agree with the contemporary Georgian example of Peter the Iberian, who was nursed at birth by his foster-father's daughter Ota.⁶⁹⁹ From comparison to modern Caucasian practice, Bedrosian suggested *san* were typically introduced to a *dayeak*-wet-nurse at birth and raised by her until age seven, when they passed to the host *dayeak* for training, before

⁶⁹⁵ Zenob Glak, pp. 21-22. Cf. Agat'angēlos 3.3-6, pp. 1323-1324.

⁶⁹⁶ *Vard, or ēr mnač'eal tlay i dayeaks iwr i Tays* ('Vard, who was an infant, was staying with his *dayeaks* in Tayk'), Łazar 62.6, p. 2306.

⁶⁹⁷ *Sksaw xawsel Mamikoneann Vahan ew asē. «Duk' gitēk', zi Vard im elbayr i drann ē»* ('Vahan Mamikonean began to speak, and he said, "You know that my brother, Vard, is at the [Persian] court"'), Łazar 66.16, p. 2315.

⁶⁹⁸ *Isk zayrn Mamikonean zVard oč' miayn lok anjamb, ayl ew caṙayiwk, dramb ew kazmacov, yamur teleac' šahastanin [...]* *aceal hasuc'anēr xalalut'eamb i yerkins Hayoc'*, ('For the man Vard Mamikonean not only personally, but also with slaves, money and household effects, from the fortified places of the *šahastan* [...] he peacefully arrived in the land of Armenia.'). *Ibid.*, 72.4, p. 2326.

⁶⁹⁹ Horn, 'Lives and Literary Roles of Children', pp. 287-289.

returning to their natal home at fifteen (or perhaps earlier for girls).⁷⁰⁰ Such reconstructions may tentatively suggest that *dayeak*-wet-nurse and *dayeak*-guardian were often members of one household.

Most recorded *dayeakut* 'iwn of either type involved fosterage of children by less socially powerful adults.⁷⁰¹ The royal family had *naxarar* act as their *dayeaks* and Vard's anonymous *dayeaks* were likely of lesser status than his natal family since Tayk' was a Mamikonean powerbase. Unless the *dayeaks* that Łazar records in his account of the apostate *naxarars* represent a separate institution, wet-nursing or *dayeak*-guardianship may have been delegated to in-residence slaves.⁷⁰² Georgia and Byzantium attest similar practice, where fosterers appear to have received payment.⁷⁰³ The Syriac *Life of Peter the Iberian* gives Ota's husband, Khuronios, two additional foster sons who are not implied to be related to the saint, suggesting fosterers might support multiple clans' children for financial reasons.⁷⁰⁴ Gnel Arřakuni appears to have been *dayeak* for multiple unspecified families, although the term is never used to describe him.⁷⁰⁵

Armenian sources do not record payments, although the social position of known *dayeaks* mean they may well have occurred. Even if they did not, *dayeakut* 'iwn could offer social opportunities to *dayeaks*. *San*-children were understood to share particularly close bonds with their *dayeak*, often more so than their natal family. It is noteworthy that Łazar chose to express the inconsolability of children of apostatised *naxarar* by focusing on their *dayeak* and *dastiaraks* inability to comfort them and not the efforts of their also present

⁷⁰⁰ Bedrosian, 'Dayeakut 'iwn in Ancient Armenia', pp. 23, 38.

⁷⁰¹ However, some were contracted between families of equivalent rank, which Parkes dubs 'kinship fosterage'. Parkes, 'Fosterage, Kinship and Legend', pp. 606-607.

⁷⁰² Łazar *op cit.* n. 527.

⁷⁰³ Horn, 'Lives and Literary Roles of Children', p. 290.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

⁷⁰⁵ *Oroc' hačēal and na ew sireal, etun ar na zzawaks iwreanc' . zors areal, mecapēs handerjeac' zinu ew zardu. ew yawelin ews sirel zna* ('[The *naxarars*] were pleased with him and loving. They gave him their children. These he accepted and greatly clothed with arms and finery, so that they loved him even more'), MX III.22.5, p. 2034.

mothers.⁷⁰⁶ The *dayeak* relationship often continued into adulthood. Adult kings and lords were depicted seeking advice from their *dayeaks*, who acted as trusted members of their *sans* inner-circle and could be sent as ambassadors, to organise marriages or fight alongside their *sans* in battle.⁷⁰⁷ Children raised in the same household due to a *dayeak* arrangement, sometimes dubbed *snndakic* ('nursed together'), possessed a similar connection.⁷⁰⁸ Sebeos depicts *snndakic* 's T'ēodoros R̄štuni and Varaztiroc' Bagratuni crying on each other's necks in a display of affection after the former was cleared of charges against him made by the Persian official T'umas and helped the latter return from exile in Africa.⁷⁰⁹ A warrior named Xurs is identified twice by Łazar through his position as the *dayeakordi* of Nerseh Kamsarakan.⁷¹⁰

Dayeak relationships occasionally offered significant social advancement. Movses Xorenac'i claimed that Nersēs Dimak'sean had been promoted to *naxarar* status by King Artašēs for being the paternal grandson of the king's wet-nurse (*stəntuin*).⁷¹¹ The additional folk etymology rooting Dimak'sean in an injury his father sustained protecting the royal (*dēm* 'face' and *kēs* 'half') likely just explained their surname and should not discredit the idea wet-nursing was a significant enough relationship to warrant such social advancement.

The opportunities *dayeakut'iw*n offered should not be overrepresented. Peter Parkes contended that, cross culturally, such fosterage arrangements, which he dubbed 'allegiance fosterage' or 'cuckold consanguinity', often used the ties of symbolic kinship they created to

⁷⁰⁶ Łazar *op cit.* n. 527.

⁷⁰⁷ *Epic Histories* IV.2.2-10, p. 310; Łazar 83.11, p. 2345; MX II.50.8, p. 1927. Compare Movses Dasxuranc'i *op cit.*, n. 694.

⁷⁰⁸ Sebeos trans. Thomson, p. 48, n. 297.

⁷⁰⁹ Sebeos 44.69, p. 536. Varaztiroc's childhood at the Persian court and role as goblet-bearer for the *Šāhān-šāh* is mentioned earlier in the same source. *Ibid.* 27.10, p. 498.

⁷¹⁰ Łazar 81.10, p. 2343.

⁷¹¹ *Ew Nersēs zordi orwoyn iwroy stəntuin Gisakay, azg zna serelov' anun kočē znahatakuwt'eanc' hawrn – Dimak'sean, k'anzi [...] zkēs dimac'n suseraw i vayr berin i veray Artašisi* ('And Nersēs, the son of the son of his wet-nurse Gisak, the family descending is called Dimak'sean on account of his father's bravery, because [...] half his face was injured with a sword in place of Artašēs'), MX II.47.6, p. 1923.

disguise clientelism.⁷¹² Fosterers suffered incomparably more from the expectations of mutual aid the bond created than the nobles they fostered, since they were expected to defend their lords in feuds but had little recourse to ensure their social superiors reciprocated.⁷¹³ Islamic evidence similarly shows a tendency towards manipulative deployments of milk-kinship aimed at enlarging the relational network upon whom nobles could rely for assistance.⁷¹⁴ Thus, while noble-focused narratives and folklore idealised these relationships, collective memory tended to be more critical. Parkes noted an enmity towards milk-kinship practices in the Hindu Kush and throughout Islamic Asia more generally; as did Richard Emerson in Baltistan and Shalva Inal-Ipa and A. Grigolia, both studying modern Abkhazia.⁷¹⁵ Nor is this an exclusively modern phenomenon. Colin Ireland, discussing the characterisation of *altramm* fosterage practices in early Irish literature, identified a disconnect between the extremely positive portrayal found in narrative works and the more critical attitude of wisdom literature, the latter of which often reflected broader cultural norms.⁷¹⁶ Similar ambivalence is not attested in Armenian sources, focused as they are on the experience of elite families who saw most of *dayeakut' iwn*'s benefits. However, such feelings may explain the institution's neglect in historical and ethnographic scholarship, which led both Adontz and Toumanoff to completely overlook its role in Armenian society.⁷¹⁷ While *dayeakut' iwn* guardianship was thus theoretically mutually beneficial, it may have been viewed less positively by those lower in the social order than available sources portray.

⁷¹² Parkes, 'Fosterage, Kinship and Legend', pp. 606-607.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 591.

⁷¹⁴ Balkrishan, 'Exploring Gender', p. 31; Altorki, 'Milk-Kinship', pp. 240-243.

⁷¹⁵ Parkes, 'Fosterage, Kinship and Legend', pp. 604-607; R.F. Emerson, 'Charismatic Kinship: A study of state formation and authority in Balistan', *Journal of Central Asia* 7.2 (1984), pp. 118-119; Grigolia, 'Milk Relationship', pp. 148-167; S.D. Inal-Ipa, *The social reality of the Atalychestvo in Abkhazia in the 19th and Start of the 20th Century*, trans. Z.K. Hewitt and G. Hewitt (Sukhumi, 1955).

⁷¹⁶ C. Ireland, 'The Ambiguous Attitude toward Fosterage in Early Irish Literature', in *Studies in Honour of Jaan Puhvel*, vol. 1: *Ancient Languages and Philology*, eds. D. Disterheft, M. Huld and J. Greppin (Washington, DC, 1997), pp. 93-96; C.G. Yocum, 'Wisdom Literature in Early Ireland', *Studia Celtica* 46 (2012), pp. 51-52.

⁷¹⁷ Parkes, 'Fosterage, Kinship and Legend', p. 606; Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*; Toumanoff, 'Introduction to Christian Caucasian History', pp. 1-106; Bedrosian, 'Dayeakut' iwn in Ancient Armenia', pp. 23-25.

3.5.4 – Dayeakut‘iwn and Persia

The term *dayeakut‘iwn* formed from a Middle Persian loanword, *dāyag* (‘wet-nurse’, from) Avestan *daēnu-*, ‘that which gives milk’, Cf. Skt. root *dhay-* ‘to suckle, nourish’), which implies a high level of Persian influence compared to similar institutions elsewhere in the Caucasus that paired wet-nursing and child fosterage.⁷¹⁸ The equivalent Georgian terms, *mamamžuže* (‘foster father’, from *mama* ‘father’ and *žužu* ‘breast’) and *dedamžuže* (‘foster mother’), bore no Iranian linguistic influence.⁷¹⁹ This difference need not imply that *dayeakut‘iwn* emerged from the Iranian world. Movses Xorenac‘i characterised the relationship between noblewoman Sanota Arcruni and King Abgar V of Edessa’s nephew, Sanatruk, in the first century CE as *dayeakut‘iwn*, demonstrating that Armenian audiences perceived it happening outside of the Persian milieu.⁷²⁰ However it does suggest a relatively strong degree of interaction between Armenian *dayeakut‘iwn* and Iranian *dāyagīh*, which is further suggested by Armenian texts identifying similar arrangements in the Sasanian Empire with the *dayeak* term. In addition to the seventh-century CE reference in Movses Dasxuranc‘i, Łazar references a *dayeakordi* (‘son of a *dayeak*’) of the fifth-century *šāhān-šāh* Pērōz named Yəzatvšnasp, who freed the Armenian *naxarars* imprisoned after the Battle of Awarayr on Pērōz’s orders.⁷²¹ A *dayeak* of the same *šāhān-šāh* and possibly Yəzatvšnasp father, Āham Mihrān, is credited with securing Peroz’s victory over his older brother.⁷²² That such individuals were recognised as *dayeaks* suggests *dāyagīh* survived throughout the

⁷¹⁸ Parkes, ‘Fostering Fealty’, pp. 751-753; Bedrosian, ‘Dayeakut‘iwn’; Rapp, *Sasanian World*, p. 89. Note also Kurmanji Kurdish *dāye* and Sorani Kurdish *dāyak*, both ‘mother’ (as ‘nurse’), who also share an etymology from *dāyag*, with the *-e* and *-ak* both go back to MP. *-ag*. With thanks to Yuhan Vevaina for highlighting this to me.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89, 239.

⁷²⁰ MX II.36.6, p. 1909.

⁷²¹ Łazar 60.3, p. 2303.

⁷²² *Isk krtser ordwoyn Yazkerti dayeakn, Āham anun i Mihran tohmēn [...] satakeac‘ zgundn ew jerbakal arareal zordi t‘agaworin andēn i telwojn hramanayēr spananel [...] ew t‘agaworec‘uc‘anēr ziwr sann, orum anun ēr Pērōz*, (‘But the younger son of Yazdgerd’s *dayeak*, named Āham from the seed of Mihrān [...] he slew his battalion and capturing the king’s son [Hormizd III] ordered him to be put to death in that place [...] and he crowned his own *san*, who was named Pērōz’), Elišē, AN 53-54, p. 757.

Sasanian period, but these might have represented multiple institutions whose subtleties have been obscured by outside observation.

Dāyagīh exact influence on *dayeakut 'iwn*, beyond etymology, is difficult to establish due to a paucity of Iranian references. The third-century CE Sasanian epigraphic record contains reference to what appear to be *dāyag* arrangements, although the term is not used. The Parthian inscription of Šābuhr I on the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt structure contains two princes, both named Sāsān, who are uniquely described as having been 'brought up' (*derd*) in the houses of the sons of Farrag and Kadug respectively.⁷²³ All other individuals are described in terms of their jurisdiction or who their father was, implying these two Sāsāns were defined by their *dāyags*. Such an attribution does not appear to have damaged their prominence, since the pair were the second and third names mentioned in Šābuhr's list of princes (*wispuhr*) 'who lived under the rule of Ardašīr, king of kings' (*kē abar Ardašīr šāhān šāh xwadāyīf būd ahēnd*) after one Vologases Pābagān.⁷²⁴ In the first Sāsān's case, and perhaps the second also, this was probably the result of the Farragān family's personal power. Farrag Farragān was listed second among the followers of Pābag, father of the Sasanian founder Ardašīr I, but the Kadugān are otherwise unattested.⁷²⁵ Nevertheless, for such a connection to have been recognised without noticeably damaging the individual's status in the early Sasanian period suggests *dāyagīh* was deeply embedded and probably bore Parthian precedents. Albert de Jong suggested the eleventh-century CE Persian romance *Vīs u Rāmīn* reflects such a Parthian *dāyagīh* formulation, prominently featuring a nurse (*dāya*) who raised the titular protagonists in her home in Khūzān and facilitated their relationship.⁷²⁶ The nurse is ascribed

⁷²³ /*Sāsān wispuhr, čē pad Farragān derd, any Sāsān wispuhr čē pad Kadugān derd*/ ('Prince Sāsān, who was brought up (in the house of the sons of) Farrag, the other Prince Sāsān, who was brought up (in the house of the sons of) Kadugān'). Transcription based on *Die dreisprachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I an der Ka'ba-i Zardušt* (ŠKZ), vol. 3.1, ed. and trans. P. Huyse (London, 1999), 45.

⁷²⁴ ŠKZ 41.

⁷²⁵ *Ibid.* 41, 43.

⁷²⁶ de Jong, 'Regional Variation', p. 24; V. Minorsky, 'Vīs u Rāmīn: A Parthian Romance', *BSOAS* 11.4 (1946), pp. 745-751; D. Davis, 'Vīs o Rāmīn', *EIr*.

magical powers, but Vladimir Minorsky noted this was justified as due to her Khūzāni origin, as opposed to a stereotype of either her class or station.⁷²⁷

Dāyagīh also occurs in Iranian epic. A *dāyag* of the mythical king Karsāsp (Pers. Garšāsp) was among the victims kidnapped by the monstrous Gandarw in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*.⁷²⁸ However, nothing about *dāyagīh* can be extracted from this passage except that it was still known at the time these texts were codified. Even Karsāsp's *dāyag*'s gender is unclear. Their position as substitute child-raisers is suggested by a metaphorical usage in the *Supplementary Texts accompanying the Šāyest nē Šāyest*, where Ohrmazd tells Zoroaster that he and his divine aids, the Amahraspandān ('Bounteous Immortals', Av. *Amāša Spənta*), had each given a *dāyag* to the material world through whom they could be worshipped.⁷²⁹ That the *dāyags* of the Fourth Amahrspand, Spandarmad, were 'earth and the virtuous woman' (*zamīg ud nāirīg ī nēwag*) implies women could perform *dāyagīh*.⁷³⁰ However, Spandarmad is the only Amahraspand to have two *dāyags* and women were mentioned second among them, they were perhaps not considered capable of fulfilling the role as anything more than assistants.

It is unclear how long *dāyagīh* survived. Milk-kinship-based cliental affiliation existed in the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, but these more likely emerged from Arab

⁷²⁷ Minorsky, 'Vīs u Rāmīn', p. 756. On the stereotype of crafty nursemaids, see F. Milani, 'The Mediatory Guile of the Nanny in Persian Romance', *Iranian Studies* 32.2 (1999), pp. 185-187.

⁷²⁸ /*Gandarw Āxrūrag ī dōst kešīd u-š ēd ī man zan kešīd u-š pid ud dāyag ī man kešīd*/ ('Gandarw dragged off (my) friend Āxrūrag, and dragged off this my wife, and he dragged off my father and nurse'), *PRDD* 18f.12, vol. 1, pp. 104-105, vol. 2, p. 40.

⁷²⁹ /*Ohrmazd guft kū [a]šnawē ō tō gōwam Spitāmān Zarduxšt kū amāh harw tan ī dāyag-ēw ī xwēš ō gētīg dād ēstēd, xwēš-kārīh ī pad mēnōg kunēd pad gētīg andar tan ī ōy rawāg kunēd*/, ('Ohrmazd said, "Listen! I say to you, Spitāmān Zarduxšt, each of us has given a *dāyag* of his own to the material world. What duty [lit. 'proper function'] they would make in the spiritual world, they set forth in the material world in its body'), *Supp.ŠnŠ* 15.4, pp. 57-58.

⁷³⁰ /*gētīg ān ī man kē Ohrmazd ham mard ī ahlaw ud Wahman gōspand ud Ardwhišt ātaxš ud Šahrewar ayōšust ud Spandarmad zamīg ud nāirīg ī nēwag ud Hordād āb ud Amurdād urwar*/ ('In the material world that which is mine, who am Ohrmazd, is the righteous man and Wahman's is cattle and Ardwhišt's fire and Šahrewar's metal and Spandarmad's earth and the virtuous and Hordād's water and Amurdād's plant(s)'), *Ibid.*, 15.5, p. 56.

practice.⁷³¹ The modern Persian terms for milk-kinship – *reza*’ and *širi* – are not cognate to *dāyagīh*, but the former is cognate with Arabic *riḏā*’a (‘milk kinship’).⁷³² Bedrosian suggests some details of *dāyagīh* are preserved in ‘guardianship’ formulations in the *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān*, which would suggest *dāyagīh* continued into the late Sasanian era.⁷³³ However, Bedrosian appears to refer to *stūrīh* (‘trusteeship, substitute succession’), which could involve the guardianship, education and raising of minor children, but was not comparable to *dāyagīh*. Unlike *dāyagīh*, *stūrīh* was primarily a means safeguarding inheritance that came into effect when a man died without an adult heir. It neither required the presence of children nor for children to enter their *stūr*’s household, instead the *stūr* took over the management of the deceased’s estates. A *stūr* was usually the nearest willing kinsman to the deceased and their function required them to be geographically close to the family’s holdings.⁷³⁴ Provision for raising of minors was a subsidiary part of *stūrīh* and not, as in *dayeakut*’*iwn*, its purpose.

Stūrīh was required for individuals with far fewer means than *dayeakut*’*iwn* and *dāyagīh* arrangements required, likely due to Zoroastrian anxieties surrounding childlessness. *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* calculated the minimum amount needed to institute a *stūr* as 60 or 80.⁷³⁵ It is unclear if these figures refer to *stēr* or *drahm*, but either amount represented a relatively insignificant property – equivalent to 30% or 40% of the value that the same text gave for one adult slave, or between 240-1280 grams of silver following Bodil Hjerrild’s

⁷³¹ B. Shivram, ‘Milk Kinship – Interim Reflections on Mughal “Fosterage”’, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 68.1 (2007), pp. 370-371.

⁷³² Balkrishan, ‘Exploring Gender’, p. 30; L. Rahbari, ‘Milk Kinship and the Maternal Body in Shi’a Islam’, *Open Theology* 6.1 (2020), p. 44.

⁷³³ Bedrosian, ‘Dayeakut’*iwn* in Ancient Armenia’, p. 45, n. 40.

⁷³⁴ *MHD* 41.2-44.12.

⁷³⁵ *MHD* 45.17-46.2, 82.12-14. For explicit amounts in *drahm* in *MHD+A*, see *MHD* 12.7-9, 59.12, 73.9, 81.5-14, 85.3-5, 88.10, *MHDA* 16.2-4, 18.13-15, 19.13-20.3. For *stēr*, see *MHD* 73.7. The amounts given for *stūrīh* have typically been assumed to be in *stēr*, despite fewer appearances of this denomination in *MHD+A*, due to the *drahm*’s comparatively small value. Cf. M. Macuch, ‘The Hērbedestān as a Legal Source: A Section on the Inheritance of a Convert to Zoroastrianism’, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, n.s. 19 (2005), p. 97; Y. Elman, ‘Marriage and Marital Property in Rabbinic and Sasanian Law’, in *Rabbinic Law in Its Roman and Near Eastern Context*, ed. C. Hezser (Tubingen, 2003), p. 259.

estimations.⁷³⁶ Evidence of a comparable Armenian practice shows management of Vač'ē Mamikonean's underage son, lands and *sparapet* position being entrusted to his *p'esayk'* ('brothers-in-law'), Aršawir Kamsarakan and Andovk' Siwni, after his death.⁷³⁷ There is no indication Aršawir or Andovk' were *dayeak* of Vač'ē's heir, Artawazd. *Stūrīh* was therefore different to *dayeakut'awn* and cannot be incorporated into analysis of Persian *dāyagīh*.

Still, Armenian *dayeakut'awn* probably cleaved closer to Iranian practice than its Byzantine equivalents. Byzantium did attest an association between wet-nursing and fosterage, and *dayeakut'awn*'s purpose of ensuring survival of the *san*'s clan bears parallels to a variety of late antique concepts of *xenia* ('guest-friendship'), but the form of ritual brotherhood most akin to a *dayeak* arrangement did not arise until the seventh century CE.⁷³⁸ Basil of Caesarea had been raised by a wet-nurse and claimed her family still supported him as an adult in a letter he wrote on her son's behalf.⁷³⁹ Like in Armenia, this arrangement involved nursing by a social inferior's family. Basil records that most of his *syntrophos*' ('foster brother', lit. 'nursed together') slaves came from Basil's parents as a lifetime loan.⁷⁴⁰

It may tentatively be suggested *dayeakut'awn* and *dāyagīh*, even if they represented subtly different institutions, were part of a mutually comprehensible network of fostering practices that could cohere households on an international level. Ferdowsī claims Wahrām V was raised and tutored in the Lakhmid court of Monder b. No'mān.⁷⁴¹ At least two instances of *xenia* crossed borders at an imperial level, the appointment of Yazdgerd I as regent during Theodosius II's minority and an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to see the Persian prince Khosrow adopted by Justin I, although neither involved co-residency of the junior imperial

⁷³⁶ *MHD* 54.13; Hjerrild, 'Some Aspects', p. 170.

⁷³⁷ *Epic Histories* III.11.19, p. 291.

⁷³⁸ C. Rapp, 'Ritual Brotherhood in Byzantium', *Traditio* 52 (1997) p. 290.

⁷³⁹ Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, vol. 1: Letters 1-58, ed. and trans. R.J. Deferrari (Cambridge, MA, 1926), 37, pp. 192-195.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 37, pp. 194-195.

⁷⁴¹ Ferdowsi, *The Shahnama of Firdausi*, vol. 6, trans. A.G. Warner and E. Warner (London, 1912), pp. 375-389.

claimant.⁷⁴² There is some indication of overlap into Caucasia also. The Georgian version of the *History of the Kings of K'art'li* claimed King Mirian III of K'art'li, depicted as eldest son of *šāhān-šāh* Ardašīr, was raised from age seven by a tutor named Mirvanoz.⁷⁴³ Robin Meyer contended the fifth-century CE Sasanian *marzbān* Šābuhr Mihrān had been raised by Armenians.⁷⁴⁴

It is possible that other forms of childhood co-residence, such as fosterage as part of an adoption arrangement or fosterage as part of craft training (what Parkes called 'apprentice fosterage'), also occurred but are unrecorded due to the bias of surviving Armenian sources towards the *naxarar*.⁷⁴⁵ Regardless, the evidence of *dayeakut'iw*n alone demonstrates that children were more than exclusively confined to and dependant upon their natal household. *Dayeakut'iw*n spread children throughout a wider household/clan network, strengthening the clan system by cementing inter-clan and household alliances and distributing heirs to frustrate eradication attempts. The oft-unequal nature of households involved in *dayeakut'iw*n further reinforced the social hierarchy on which *naxarar* clans and households depended. Finally, *dayeakut'iw*n bore heavy Iranian influence, but the extent to which this affected Armenian practice is obscured by a paucity of Iranian evidence.

⁷⁴² J. Arthur-Montagne, 'Exported Sons: Hospitality and Adoption in the Roman and Sasanian Empires' (The Ohio State University, delivered 30 March 2013) [accessed online 23/07/2020 at https://www.academia.edu/3685014/Exported_Sons_Hospitality_and_Adoption_in_the_Roman_and_Sasanian_Empires_2013_].

⁷⁴³ Leonti Mroveli, *History of the Kings of K'art'li*, in *Rewriting Caucasian History: The Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles, The Original Georgian Text and the Armenian Adaptation*, ed. and trans. R.W. Thomson (Oxford, 1996), pp. 76-78.

⁷⁴⁴ Meyer, *Iranian-Armenian Language Contact*, p. 308, n. 470.

⁷⁴⁵ For discussion of adoption in Armenia, see above pp. 121-122. For apprentice fosterage, see Parkes, 'Fostering Fealty', pp. 742-743; Goody, *Parenthood and Social Reproduction*, pp. 124-142.

3.6 – Conclusion

Overall, noble households were not simply discrete units contained within a single clan or social class. Although households typically centred on individuals of the same class whose relation was either biological (i.e. mother and son) or marital (husband and wife), they extended further than modern nuclear families to include members from other clans and social classes associated by fictive relationships like *dayeakut 'iwn*. Slaves, being simultaneously individuals charged with maintaining the house and household property, expanded the manpower available to the grouping and *naxarar* households especially were further supported by less socially significant labourers. This gave the household a significant role in embedding clan power and reinforcing the structure of Armenian society, beyond merely representing a segment of the clan-group. The responsibilities imposed on households by their social superiors encoded social hierarchy, often under the guise of kin allegiance. *Naxarar* households especially were neither self-sufficient nor isolated, but connected multiple clans through bonds of marriage, nurturing, education and protection. They formed an overlapping foundation for clan authority, with a nucleus of related individuals surrounded by a constellation of guests and corollary relatives from other powerful clans and a support of slaves and social inferiors imposed upon to enable their lifestyles.

Such constructions bear similarities to Armenia's imperial neighbours, with a general greater adherence to Iranian than Byzantine norms. The available information does not permit genetic connections to be established, but the integration of features familiar to both empires should remind us that Armenian family practice was neither hermetically sealed from influence nor copying a single exemplar, but rather innovatively utilised scripts from a variety of sources.

The biological fact of birth and the institution of *dayeakut'awn* meant households were permeable entities capable of welcoming new individuals and conferring clan status, but individuals did not inherently enter the clan of their co-residents, nor could this structure create new houses. A *dayeakut'awn* arrangement merely transferred children without breaking their existing clan bond or creating a new unit. Only one institution constructed new households, joining two adults and squaring the clan allegiance issues this created by subordinating the wife's natal clan membership under a new identity in her husband's clan. This will be discussed in our final chapter: the institution of marriage.

Chapter 4 – Armenian Marriage, Wedding and Betrothal

4.1 – Introduction

Marriage's moral and legal implications made it of interest to state and church bureaucracies throughout the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires but in Armenia the practice came under control of the religious institution far earlier than it did elsewhere. Armenian marriage was already a Christian institution by the fifth century. Clerics conducted weddings, which were explicitly declarations of Christian faith, and the bounds of acceptable union were defined by church canon. This was unusual when compared to other contemporary Christian communities, who instead deferred responsibility for the marital union to their relevant civil authorities. On the other hand, Armenian church legislation shows a marked leniency towards practices their coreligionists deemed unacceptable. This tension between the clergy's relative power and leniency was likely the result of pre-Christian Armenia's Zoroastrianised character. In the short-term this allowed several Zoroastrian practices, most notably *čagar* marriage ('auxiliary marriage'), to persist among the fourth-century elite. Longer-term, Zoroastrian influence also affected clerical organisation. Christian priests appear to have adopted the Zoroastrian priesthood's role as arbiters of local justice, including marital law, and had a greater access to punitive powers because of this, allowing early integration of Christian theology with the civil apparatus.⁷⁴⁶ However, they also had to engage with the practical realities of the communities they governed, particularly the *naxarar* clans' need to produce heirs and curry favour with Sasanian elites, and could not merely defer to other administrations, as clergy elsewhere did. The overall result was a highly Christianised marital process that nonetheless contains evidence of compromise with and continuation of Zoroastrian practices.

Marriage was integral to the operation of both the household and clan aspects of

⁷⁴⁶ Weitz, *Between Christ and Caliph*, pp. 24-25.

family.⁷⁴⁷ The union was the only mechanism by which new households capable of producing legitimate offspring could be established, rendering sex licit and organising children into specific houses and clans.⁷⁴⁸ This made the practice vital to the replenishment of the clan system and, like *dayeakut'awn*, an affiliative institution for creating ties between clans. Legitimate unions were especially significant for women and girls, providing a girl membership to their husband's clan and transferring her from a child role in her natal household to an adult role in his. Understanding the marital union is therefore a necessary part of understanding how the various categories of gender, age, household and clan dealt with in earlier chapters connect into the larger family.

⁷⁴⁷ Fortes, 'Introduction', p. 6.

⁷⁴⁸ Weitz, *Between Christ and Caliph*, pp. 18-19.

4.2 – Source Base and Approaches

Defined in its broadest terms, marriage is the legalisation of mating practices, but this study requires more specificity.⁷⁴⁹ I distinguish between marriage, the wedding and betrothal, engaging with them in this order (the reverse of how they would be contracted) to prevent unnecessary re-explanation. The foremost refers to the union itself and its legal and social implications, as well as being the generic term for the entire institution; wedding is the celebratory event that commonly marked the beginning of a marriage; and betrothal, or marital strategies, contains the methods available to individuals and families in arranging marriages for themselves and others. This model allows certain patterns to be isolated. The types of marital union historically available in Armenia were closer to Sasanian than Byzantine forms, but weddings do display Byzantine parallels. An absence of information makes betrothal practices hardest to examine, but the normative form appears to have broadly accorded with both empires, and the condemned practice of abduction betrothal was likely locally derived. Ultimately it is hoped this separation, much like the separation of clan and household core to this thesis, will render a complex and often assumed area manageable.

Our discussion is based largely on the 444 CE Council of Šahapivan, which dedicates over a third of its canons to condemning unacceptable forms of betrothal and marital conduct and contains further information pertaining to nuptial practice and church punitive measures.⁷⁵⁰ The Council of Nersēs and Meršapuh and councils attributed to Saint Gregory the Illuminator and Sahak Part'ew also include relevant information, although Šahapivan remains the fullest, most surely-dated and well-studied of these councils.⁷⁵¹ Other councils shall therefore serve primarily to offer historical depth, demonstrating the structure Šahapivan depicted did not exist in isolation. Canonical sources are particularly relevant for non-*naxarar* nuptials as, unlike its Byzantine and Sasanian neighbours, no Armenian marriage

⁷⁴⁹ Mace, 'Evolutionary Ecology of Human Life History', p. 5.

⁷⁵⁰ *KH* vol. 1, 18, pp. 422-466; Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, p. 71.

⁷⁵¹ *KH* vol. 1, 11, 17, 20, pp. 243-249, 363-421, 475-490.

contracts survive.

However, while Šahapivan contains much on the normally ignored *azat* ('local elite') and *šinakan* ('peasant') classes, as well as on marriage among clerics, the council addresses the *naxarar* only non-specifically in a single canon.⁷⁵² Analysis can be supplemented by several individual instances of historical *naxarar* and royal marriage found within the corpus of Armenian narrative histories, although a lack of overlap between social classes frustrates comparison. *Epic Histories* records the fourth-century CE marriages of Kat'olikos Yusik I and King Aršak II.⁷⁵³ Movses Xorenac'i's account of the abduction and marriage of Sat'enik, daughter of the King of the Ałans, by King Artasēs I (r. 189-160 BCE) is useful for demonstrating Armenian perceptions of marriage, despite being distant from the period it reconstructed.⁷⁵⁴ Foreign sources are also used to examine Armenian marriage within its context. Justinian's *Novel* 21, promulgated in 536 CE, while primarily aimed at reforming inheritance, justified its reforms based on an (in my opinion) heavily flawed Byzantine understanding of Armenian betrothal.⁷⁵⁵ The Syriac synods of the Sasanian Christian community found in *Synodicon Orientale* and the in-depth explanations of Zoroastrian marital forms in the tenth-century Pahlavi *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd ī Ašawahištān* and seventeenth-century Persian *Rivāyats* collected by Hormazdyar Framarz all aid our understanding of the roots and unique qualities of Armenian practice.⁷⁵⁶

These sources should not necessarily be taken to accurately reflect social practice. They were moral, legal and narrative documents establishing norms as part of either control or narrativization projects. They thus aimed at systematising practice rather than demonstrating what 'actually happened'. However, this does not mean they never reflected

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, 18.20, pp. 464-466.

⁷⁵³ *Epic Histories* III.5, IV.15, pp. 281-282, 340-345.

⁷⁵⁴ MX II.50, pp. 1926-1928. On the name Sat'enik, see T. Dalalyan, 'On the Character and Name of the Caucasian Satana (Sat'enik)', *Aramazd* 1 (2006), pp. 239-253.

⁷⁵⁵ *Novels* vol. 1, 21, pp. 229-230.

⁷⁵⁶ *Synodicon Orientale*; REA; Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*.

practice. Armenian identities and activities were constructed within systems containing these expectations and influenced by prevailing attitudes and authorities. The reality of each Armenian's marriage cannot be reconstructed through text or archaeology for so distant a period, so the chapter seeks to sketch the framework within which these individual decisions would have operated and confines those actual operations to the obscurity of history.

This chapter utilises several previous studies on fifth-century Armenian nuptial practice. Alessandro Orenco's reconstruction of marriage from canons 6 and 7 of Šahapivan, posits three different recourses a man had to procure a wife: payment of bride wealth, abduction marriage and cohabitation.⁷⁵⁷ I accept David Zakarian's identification of this third form with Iranian *čagar* ('auxiliary') marriage.⁷⁵⁸ However, the threefold model proposed by Orenco and unaltered by Zakarian requires modification, since *čagar* was a separate form of union while the other two were betrothal practices that typically formed normative full-right marriages.⁷⁵⁹ To illustrate this difference, a model similar to that used by Albert Stepanyan is adopted, distinguishing between full-right and partial-right marriage.⁷⁶⁰ 'Partial-right' has been chosen over Stepanyan's own 'conditional/half-right marriage' to allow for broader variation than a half/full distinction allows, and also prevents confusion with the Jewish practice of conditional marriage.⁷⁶¹ Barnes's distinction between *genitor* (a culturally understood biological father) and *pater* (an individual socially recognised as a child's father

⁷⁵⁷ A. Orenco, 'Forme di matrimonio fra gli Armeni del IV-V secolo: il conflitto fra usi pagani e norme cristiane', in *Il matrimonio dei cristiani: esegesi biblica e diritto romano. XXXVII Incontro di studiosi dell'antichità Cristiana, Roma, 8-10 maggio 2008* (Rome, 2009), pp. 646-647.

⁷⁵⁸ Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 167-171.

⁷⁵⁹ Conflation between marriage and betrothal arrangement is not uncommon. Elias Bickerman identified it as endemic to discussions of Jewish *mohar* ('bride-price') practice. E. Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History: A New Edition in English including The God of the Maccabees*, vol. 1, ed. A.D. Trooper (Leiden, 2007), pp. 195-196.

⁷⁶⁰ Stepanyan, 'Household/Family', pp. 30-66.

⁷⁶¹ On conditional marriage, see M. Landau, *Tradition and Equality in Jewish Marriage: Beyond the Sanctification of Subordination* (London, 2014), pp. 95-125.

for the purposes of inheritance and familial right-accumulation) is also helpful for explaining these marriage types.⁷⁶²

This dissertation is critical of essentialist understandings of family practice that over-emphasise biological factors or the cultural universality of the institution of marriage. While often understood as a cultural universal, there is no feature of marriage that holds between all societies.⁷⁶³ Robin Fox's idea of an incest taboo, while no longer uncritically accepted, is still oft repeated by historians unaware of pre-modern Zoroastrian practice.⁷⁶⁴ For example, Michael Satlow begins his chapter on incest restrictions in Rabbinic Judaism by asserting that 'all societies restrict contact between members of the same kinship group [...] the taboo, though not the form it takes in each society, is universal'.⁷⁶⁵ Such largely anachronistic biogenetic assertions about defect avoidance must be discarded based on Persian and Armenian evidence that suggest a more nuanced approach to consanguinity based on the specific community's needs and moral outlooks.⁷⁶⁶ In the following chapter, I use the term 'incest' only to refer to practices expressly condemned as incestuous by the community examined, on the grounds that incest is defined in part by its prohibition.⁷⁶⁷ When discussing *xwēdōdah*, a Zoroastrian practice involving marriage between direct blood relatives, I instead translate as 'endogamous marriage' or 'consanguineous marriage' to demonstrate its systematised nature as part of an acceptable formal marriage and to distance the practice from modern assumptions that consider incest intrinsically abusive and particularly associated with child abuse. This approach ensures that the chapter functions as a specific attempt to reconstruct

⁷⁶² The *genitor* is not necessarily the individual responsible for fertilising the egg that becomes the child (who is referred to as the *genetic father* and can rarely be established). Instead, *genitor* is the person believed to have physically fathered the child based on the prevailing cultural assumptions about how children were produced within the given group. J.A. Barnes, 'Physical and Social Kinship', *Philosophy of Science* 28.3 (1961), pp. 296-299.

⁷⁶³ L. Stone, *Kinship and Gender: An Introduction* (Boulder, CO, 2010), p. 189. On cultural universals more generally, see Geertz, 'The Impact of the Concept of Culture', pp. 37-43.

⁷⁶⁴ R. Fox, *Kinship and Marriage: An Anthropological Perspective* (Middlesex, 1967), pp. 31, 63.

⁷⁶⁵ Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, p. 17.

⁷⁶⁶ Payne, *State of Mixture*, pp. 108-117.

⁷⁶⁷ D. Willner, 'Definition and Violation: Incest and the Incest Taboos', *Man* 18.1 (1983), pp. 136-137.

Armenian marital theory at its earliest accessible point and is not intended to speak on all marriage across all societies that possess the institution.

While the chapter primarily engages with marriage as an institution that created political alliances, this was not its only role. Political considerations were important and particularly visible, especially among elites, but the religious, psychological and emotional meanings of the union are also relevant. Even if these meanings cannot be reliably recaptured, to not acknowledge them would be reductive. For instance, Barbara Taylor contends that romantic love was often an integral part of reinforcing patriarchal systems and that the belief love cannot exist in societies displaying sexual inequality has been overstated.⁷⁶⁸ As such, my political focus matches the interests of the sources as opposed to being intended as a complete explication of the roles that marriage and its associated practices had in Armenia.

⁷⁶⁸ B. Taylor, 'Feminists Versus Gallants: Manners and Morals in Enlightenment Britain', *Representations* 87.1 (2004), pp. 135-136. Cf. K. Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power: Marriage and Patriarchy in Scotland 1650-1850* (Manchester, 2011), p. 70.

4.3 – The Marriage

4.3.1 – Full-right Marriage

Normative marriage in Šahapivan was full right, meaning the wife and children produced within it were entitled to the legal and social benefits of membership in the husband's clan and the husband in turn held legal claim over them. In this formulation the husband adopted guardianship over his bride from whoever had previously possessed it, usually a member of her natal clan, and she took the position of *tantikin* ('mistress of the house', lit. 'great wife of the house') in his household. While a woman's membership in her new clan was created by this arrangement, it was not entirely contingent upon her husband. Widows remained part of their marital clan. Tirit' Aršakuni asked for the hand of his kinsman Gnel's widow P'aranjem from the Aršakuni *tanutēr* and P'aranjem's eventual spouse, King Aršak II, rather than the lord of her natal Siwni clan.⁷⁶⁹ Women whose husbands abandoned them likewise appear to have remained in their husband's clan, albeit with caveats. Šahapivan 4 gave half the property of a man who abandoned the mother of his children to her, even permitting her to bring a new man into the household, but the other half of the possessions (curiously, explicitly including children and the house itself) was apportioned to the community.⁷⁷⁰ Such a policy may have been an acknowledgement of the community's requirement to assist the woman in absence of her husband, a practical measure to protect the inheritance claims of her children to their father's property, or a statement regarding her rights to her marital clan in the absence of a still living but unfit spouse. Regardless of the motivations for this ruling, it nonetheless

⁷⁶⁹ *Epic Histories* IV.15, pp. 340-345.

⁷⁷⁰ *Et'ē ok' zkin tolc'ē, zordwoc' mayr, ařanc' bani pořnakut'ean, ew kam t'ē arat inč' č'ar i mamni č'ic'ē, ayl or et'ē ayrn řnabaroy ic'ē ew aylum akn edeal ic'ē, datastan ays lic'i' zordis ew ztun ew zkeansn ew zhozn ew zjurn ew zamenayn inč' bařanesc'en hasarakac', zkēsñ knořn tac'en: Ew t'ē kamk' en [knořn] ayr i tun acel yink'n' hamarjak acc'ē* ('If one leaves his wife, mother of his children, without a word of fornication, or else she doesn't have an evil blemish in her body, but the man becomes dog-hearted and lays his eyes on another, the judgement shall be this: the children, the house, the wealth, the earth, the water and all [else] shall be divided to the community, giving half to the wife. And if the wife's desires are to bring a man into the house herself, she may bring him freely'), *KH* vol. 1, 18.4, p. 435.

demonstrates women whose living husbands had ended their union in an unacceptable manner retained possession of their marital holdings and likely their clan membership also.

However, the union did not entirely and irreversibly remove a woman from her natal clan. Divorced women were to return to their natal houses with their dowry, which represented their share of that clan's belongings.⁷⁷¹ Similarly, historical sources associate both Hamazaspuhi and Šušanik Mamikonean with their natal and not their marital clans (the Řštuni and Georgian *bdeašx* respectively), despite being married at the point their martyrdom narratives began.⁷⁷² While this was likely the result of eagerness by Mamikonean sponsors to associate themselves with saints, combined perhaps with the husband's dishonourable actions trumping the more common practice of identifying a wife with her husband's clan, the very fact that married women could be claimed by their birth clan demonstrates that the marriage did not completely sever them from this identity group. Women were therefore positioned at the limits of a social group, capable of being detached from, and sometimes reattached to, a kin group in a way men could not be.⁷⁷³

Children could not be similarly detached from their father's clan. He was considered both their *pater* and *genitor* unless adultery was suspected. Unlike Zoroastrian marriage – where unions were divided into *pādixšāy* ('full-right' lit. 'authorised') and two main forms of 'partial-right' marriage: *čagar* (where a woman's children were legally and socially heirs of a man other than her husband) and *xwāsrāyūn* (a marriage contracted through the wife's desire as opposed to her guardian's) – in Armenia full-right and partial-right unions were not distinguished terminologically but both termed *amusnut'iw*n ('marriage'). This lack of distinction may merely result from types of sources available, but nevertheless means full- and partial-right unions cannot always be delineated. Given full-right marriage's function

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 18.5, p. 436.

⁷⁷² *Epic Histories* IV.59, pp. 374-375; *Passion of Saint Shushanik*, p. 1.

⁷⁷³ B. Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (London, 2009), p. 73.

producing legitimate heirs and the necessity of this for clan continuation, it is assumed marriages assessed were full-right unless evidence exists to suggest otherwise.

Šahapivan records full-right marriages conducted at all free levels of society, with canons addressing proper practice among *šinakan*, *azat* and *naxarar*. Slaves likely could not be married with full-rights, as Byzantine law did not permit marriage between slaves until the eleventh century and comparison with later Armenian law reflects a partial-right formula at best.⁷⁷⁴ Furthermore, *Datastanagirik*'s formulation of slave marriage – which did not transfer guardianship from a female slave's master to her husband and so cannot be considered full-right – was taken from Exodus and so need not have been preceded by a late antique formulation for marriage between slaves.⁷⁷⁵

The legal implications of Armenian full-right marriage resemble Zoroastrian *pādixšāy* (lit. 'authorised') marriage, which also involved a woman leaving her prior agnatic group to enter a 'lady of the house' position, and they placed husbands as guardians over both her and any produced children.⁷⁷⁶ Byzantine marriage instead had wives remain under their father's power as long as he was still alive, with Roman *manus* marriage – in which she ceased to be under his authority – being long obsolete by the late antique period.⁷⁷⁷ This does make it seem more likely that the normative form of marriage depicted in Šahapivan was influenced by Iranian practice rather than their Roman neighbours. The broad needs of the union to establish the rights of marital partners to one another and ensure that children were unproblematically considered heirs of their parents remained the same across all three

⁷⁷⁴ J. Meyendorff, 'Christian Marriage in Byzantium: The Canonical and Liturgical Tradition', *DOP* 44 (1990), pp. 101, 105. For the development of slave rights in Byzantium, see N. Lenski, 'Slavery in the Byzantine Empire', *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 2: *AD 500-AD 1420*, eds. C. Perry, D. Etis, S.L. Engerman and D. Richardson (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 453-481.

⁷⁷⁵ *Girk 'Datastani*, 54, p. 56. Cf. Exodus 21:2-6; Deuteronomy 15:12-16.

⁷⁷⁶ *MHD* 32.12-14; Macuch, 'Law in Pre-Modern Zoroastrianism', p. 292; *Idem*, 'The Pahlavi Model Marriage Contract in the Light of Sasanian Family Law', in *Iranian Languages and Texts from Iran and Turan. Ronald E. Emmerick Memorial Volume*, eds. M. Macuch, M. Maggi and W. Sundermann (Wiesbaden, 2007), p. 196; Stepanyan, 'Household/Family', p. 43.

⁷⁷⁷ Anonymous, 'Manus' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [accessed online 17/05/2023 at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/manus-Roman-law>].

cultures, but the exact way this was expressed reflects more Sasanian practice than the Byzantines.

4.3.2 – Partial-right Marriage

Pre-Šahapivan evidence further indicates that Armenian unions were heavily influenced by Persian practice. Partial-right marriages among the *naxarar* are attested into the Christian era but cannot be confidently identified after the fourth century CE. The fourth-century *tanutēr* Trdat Bagratuni, who married Aršakuni princess Eraneak[‘], is described by Movses Xorenac[‘]i as the son of Smbat Bagratuni’s daughter Smbatuhi.⁷⁷⁸ Such a description implies that the Bagratid *tanutēr* had inherited from his maternal grandfather via his mother, suggesting the marital union that had produced him had associated itself to Smbatuhi’s natal clan and not her marital one. Another account of transfer through a woman, this time the position of a widow’s husband to her new spouse, appears when King Tiran the Elder (d. 8 BCE) gave both the rank and house of his childless predecessor Artavazd to Eraxnavu Anjewac[‘]i, the husband of Artavazd’s widow.⁷⁷⁹ These formulations were unusual in an Armenian context, where *tanutēr* status rarely travelled through female lines and land only did if no male offspring survived.

Both marriages are best explained as Armenian adoptions of the Zoroastrian practice of *čagar* marriage (‘auxiliary marriage’). This was one of a constellation of connected Zoroastrian practices called *stūrīh* (‘guardianship’) that aimed to retain the property of heirless men within their clan. *Čagar* wives were typically the widows or wives of infertile men, who contracted a separate marriage for the sake of producing heirs for their husband. A man’s sister or daughter could also perform a similar function, in which case she was called *ayōgēn*. *Ayōgēn* marriage had become a distinct form by the seventeenth century, when

⁷⁷⁸ MX II.63.2, pp. 1943-1944.

⁷⁷⁹ MX II.62.9-11, p. 1943.

Hormazdyar Framarz included both it and *čagar* as two of the five kinds of marriage he distinguished.⁷⁸⁰

However, manuscript differences in the *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd ī Ašawahištān*'s treatment make it hard to determine whether *ayōgēn* was considered separate or a subcategory of *čagar* in the tenth century. The T.D. Anklesaria manuscript renders the relevant passage / *kas pad pādixšāyihā pus ud duxt ī-š aziš zāyēnd pādixšāyihā fraزند :: pidar bawēd* / ('A person, any sons or daughters, who are born of a *pādixšāy* marriage from her, will be [her] father's *pādixšāy* children').⁷⁸¹ This implies *ayōgēn* functioned as a modification to a *pādixšāy* marriage. However, B.T. Anklesaria provides a different text: / *kas pad zanīh griftan ud dāštan nē pādixšāyihā pus ud duxt ī-š aziš zāyēnd pādixšāyihā fraزند :: pidar bawēd* / ('No one is authorised to take her and keep her as *pādixšāy* wife. Sons and daughters who are born from her will be [her] father's *pādixšāy* children').⁷⁸² Given what is known of *pādixšāy* marriage elsewhere the former manuscript probably represents a jump omission, as a man who contracted *pādixšāy* marriage for the sake of creating heirs for somebody else would be unable to provide heirs for himself while his *pādixšāy*-wife lived.

Either way, children produced by these marriages were considered heirs of the man who the marriage had been conducted for the sake of, even if this 'father' had died generations ago.⁷⁸³ The *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* allowed women to contract *čagar* marriages for their maternal grandfathers.⁷⁸⁴ The same source demonstrates the importance of such unions permitting a *pādixšāy* husband to give his wife in *čagar* marriage to a childless,

⁷⁸⁰ Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, pp. 195-202.

⁷⁸¹ *Rivāyat-i Hēmīt-i Ašawahistān*, ed. and trans. after B.T. Anklesaria (Bombay, 1962), 44.3, p. 164.

⁷⁸² *REA* 44.3, pp. 289-290.

⁷⁸³ Payne, *State of Mixture*, p. 112.

⁷⁸⁴ *MHD* 22.9, 24.3-7; Hjerrild, 'Āyōken: Woman Between Father and Husband', pp. 84-86; *Idem.*, 'Succession and Kinship', p. 482.

unmarried man without her consent; and a *pādixšāy*-wife to leave her husband's guardianship and be given authority over herself in order to establish a *čagar* marriage.⁷⁸⁵

Queen P'aranjem's marriage to Aršak II may be an example of a *čagar* union entered on behalf of her first husband Gnel Aršakuni. Zakarian and Stepanyan both note that *Epic Histories* refers to P'aranjem as *kin t'agaworin* ('the king's wife') until Aršak's imprisonment by Šābuhr II (r. 309-379 CE), in contrast to Aršak's second wife Olympia, who was titled *tikin* ('queen').⁷⁸⁶ This difference in terminology suggests P'aranjem's marriage did not involve the full rights of *tantikin* status, but the fact she was nonetheless a *kin* works against Josef Markwart's hypothesis that her relationship with Aršak was one of concubinage.⁷⁸⁷ There are issues with the *čagar* reading. P'aranjem is referred to as *tikin* after Aršak's imprisonment and her son Pap inherited the king's position.⁷⁸⁸ However, this may be an example of *pādixšāy* status being conferred to a *čagar* wife, a practice the *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* notes was accepted by the Sasanian jurist Māhdād Gušnasp ī Gyānabzūd (although another, Ardašīr Xwarrah, rejected it) and so may have been done in Armenia.⁷⁸⁹ Alternatively, Pap may simply have been adopted by his *genitor* or gained his status through his *pater* Gnel.⁷⁹⁰ Ultimately, *čagar* marriage seems to best explain for P'aranjem's situation and the irregularities in Trdat Bagratuni and Eraxnavu Anjewac'i's inheritances. This suggests Iranianised marital practices continued into the early Christian era.

⁷⁸⁵ *MHD* 3.10-11; 101.4-8. However, note that the woman was not permitted to live with her *čagar* and *pādixšāy* husbands simultaneously. B.H. Carlsen, 'The Cakar Marriage Contract and the Cakar Children's Status in *Mātiyān I Hazār Dātistān* and *Rivāyat I Ēmēt I Ašavištān*', in *Medioiranica: Proceedings of the International Colloquium organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 21st to the 23rd of May 1990*, eds. W. Skalmowski and A. van Tongerloo (Leuven, 1993), p. 105.

⁷⁸⁶ *Epic Histories* IV.18, 55, pp. 347-348, 370-373; Zakarian, "'Epic" Representation', pp. 14, 16-17. The order of Aršak's marriages is controversial. Movses Xorenac'i asserts P'aranjem was his second wife, while *Epic Histories* and the *Life of St Nersēs* both claim she was his first. See MX III.21-24, pp. 2032-2037; *Epic Histories* IV.15, pp. 340-345; *Patmut' iwn Srboyn Nersisi Part' ewi Hayoc' Hayrapeti*, vol 1. (Venice, 1853), pp. 43-53; Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 148-154.

⁷⁸⁷ J. Markwart, *Die Entstehung der armenischen Bistümer: kritische Untersuchung der armenischen Überlieferung* (Rome, 1932), p. 231.

⁷⁸⁸ *Epic Histories* IV.55, pp. 370-373.

⁷⁸⁹ *MHD* 40.9-14, 70.9-12.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 42.9; *MHDA* 40.9-14; Carlsen, 'Cakar Marriage Contract', pp. 106-107.

Čagar marriage was designed to prevent *abēnāmīh* (‘sonlessness’, lit. ‘namelessness’), a state that was considered sinful in Zoroastrianism. The Pahlavi eschatological text *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* depicted childless men as unable to cross the Činwad Bridge into Paradise due to their failure to support Ohrmazd through creating heirs.⁷⁹¹ Such anxieties did not exist so explicitly in Christianity, but equivalents are apparent among the Christian communities in Sasanian Iran. The letter of response from Catholicos Išo‘yahb I of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (r. 582-595 CE) to Bishop Jacob of Darai declared only a madman would knowingly marry a sterile woman and expounded about lines of inheritance running from Creation until ‘that admirable transformation’, paralleling the Zoroastrian impetus to keep lineages unbroken until the end of time.⁷⁹² Despite this similarity, sonlessness appears not to have been as urgent an issue for Christians as it was for Zoroastrians. Jacob specified that his question of whether a man was sinful for marrying a sterile woman was not urgent and Išo‘yahb responded that he initially considered not answering the question on the grounds the Church had nothing to say on the matter and ultimately judged that a man who married a sterile woman accidentally was not at fault nor at liberty to send her away.⁷⁹³

Armenian Christianity did not consider sonlessness an eschatological threat in the same way the Zoroastrians did. This means that *čagar* marriage’s survival likely stemmed from its usefulness in protecting *naxarar* inheritance and was not the result of eschatological anxieties. There is some evidence the practice was stigmatised. Eraneak‘ Bagratuni is

⁷⁹¹ *The Zand ī Wahman Yasn: a Zoroastrian apocalypse*, ed. and trans. C.G. Cereti (Rome, 1995), 3.17, p. 84 (transliteration), p. 135 (transcription), p. 151 (translation).

⁷⁹² *Synodicon Orientale*, p. 449. The ‘Seleucia’ this episcopal title refers to was Weh Ardašīr, a part of the imperial conurbation on the other side of the Tigris River from Ctesiphon. The Hellenistic city of Seleucia-on-Tigris was by this point abandoned. See C. Hopkins, *Topography and Architecture of Seleucia on the Tigris* (Ann Arbor, 1972); R. Göbl, ‘Der Sasanidische Munzfund von Seleukia (Weh Ardašēr) 1967’, *Mesopotamia* 8/9 (1973-4), pp. 231-237; A. Invernizzi, ‘Ten Years of Research in the Al-Madā’in Area: Seleucia and Ctesiphon’, *Sumer* 32.1-2 (1976), pp. 171-172.

⁷⁹³ *Synodicon Orientale*, pp. 448-449.

depicted bemoaning her husband's 'ignoble origin'.⁷⁹⁴ Neither the *azat* nor *šinakan* classes held the property or political weight to significantly benefit from *čagar*'s inheritance-protecting capabilities or the cultural ties it created with Sasanian elites.⁷⁹⁵ This may explain why, although *čagar* persisted for a time in Christian Armenia, it is unattested after the fourth century.

Post-fourth-century CE evidence for partial-right marriage in general is inconclusive. Šahapivan 6 does distinguish between a wife who had been married through dowry payment and one acquired *bozabar* ('like a harlot'), which may suggest a distinction between a full- and partial-right union, especially since the non-*bozabar* wife is considered more important.⁷⁹⁶ However, there is no further information offered to help contextualise what a *bozabar* wife was. Zakarian suggests this represents *čagar* practice, on the grounds that Queen P'aranjem was berated *ibrew zboz mi* ('like a harlot') by the *hayr mardapet* in *Epic Histories*, although the fact *ibrew* is used makes this reading doubtful if P'aranjem was indeed in a *čagar* marriage.⁷⁹⁷ Orengo instead envisions *bozabar* as cohabitation devoid of legal formalities, which would be closer to the Sasanian partial-marital type of *xwāsrāyūn*, wherein the woman chose a partner without her guardian's sanction and the new partner did not take guardianship over her or hold legal claim to their children.⁷⁹⁸ Ultimately, neither interpretation can be confirmed. Šahapivan 4 perhaps implies the existence of sanctioned cohabitation, allowing a mother whose husband abandoned her to bring another man into the house, with no reference to the contraction of a new marriage or wedding.⁷⁹⁹ Yet this may represent a *bozabar*; an unstated but assumed full-right marriage; or a simple guardianship

⁷⁹⁴ MX II.63.3, pp. 1943-1944.

⁷⁹⁵ Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 127.

⁷⁹⁶ *KH* vol. 1, 18.6, p. 438. *Boz* ('whore') is a Zan borrowing. Compare Georgian *bozi* ('whore') and Laz *bozo* ('girl'), Ačārean, *Hayerēn armatakan bařaran*, vol. 1, p. 459.

⁷⁹⁷ *Epic Histories* IV.55.20, p. 371; Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 140-141.

⁷⁹⁸ Orengo, 'Forme di matrimonio', pp. 646-647.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ew t'ē kamk' en [knojn] ayr i tun acel yink'n' hamarjak acc'ē* ('And if the wife's desires are to bring a man into the house herself, she may bring him freely'), *KH* vol. 1, 18.4, p. 435.

arrangement where the man managed the house but did not necessarily bear a kin relationship to the household. Since there was no difference beyond urgency in Šahapivan 6's ruling for a *bozabar* wife who fled her husband compared to a dowered bride, this may simply represent a distinction of the betrothal arrangement through which the union was contracted and not a different union itself.⁸⁰⁰

Overall, evidence suggests the marriage types practiced in Armenia were influenced by those seen in the Iranian world. There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that these practices originated from the Iranian milieu nor whether partial marriage forms continued after the fourth century. The practice of Armenian marriage types was not as significant a conflict with the wedding ceremony's Christian integration as it first appears, as the Armenian church's handling of nuptials was likely an outgrowth of an Iranianised clerical structure also.

4.3.3 – Priests and marriage

Armenian canonical literature frequently distinguished between married and unmarried priests, giving different powers and sometimes using different terms. Although *k'ahanay(ut'iwn)* ('priest(hood)'), could be used as a general term, Šahapivan typically distinguished between unmarried priests as *k'ahanay* and married priests as *erēc'* ('priest, elder'), affording more privilege to the former.⁸⁰¹ *K'ahanay* discovered in immoral acts were demoted to the rank of *dpir* ('scribe'), and could regain *k'ahanay* status if they performed their penitence and were re-established by the bishop without committing the sin again, while a *knawor erēc'* ('married priest') committing the same sin was simply removed.⁸⁰² The discussion of clerical relatives in the same canon envisioned a *erēc'* possessing both a wife and a son, while a *k'ahanay* is only associated with an *əntaneac' dustr k'ahanayi* ('a daughter

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.6, p. 438.

⁸⁰¹ For use of *k'ahanay(ut'iwn)* to refer to a *erēc'*, see *Ibid.*, 18.2, 18.7, 18.9, pp. 431, 439, 441.

⁸⁰² *Ibid.*, 18.2, pp. 430-432.

from the family of the *k'ahanay*').⁸⁰³ This latter description may refer to the *k'ahanay*'s daughter, but the inclusion of *əntaneac* ('from the family') suggests it denotes merely a member of the same natal clan. *K'ahanays* were also banned from having a co-resident 'fornicating maidservant' within their homes, the canon obscurely quoting Exodus 29:34 'it is the holiness of the Lord', regarding the mandatory burning of leftover food intended for consecration.⁸⁰⁴

The celibate status of the *k'ahanay* in this period is supported by several other early or purportedly early Armenian canons. *Sevantos* only spoke of *erēc* ' and *sarkawag* ('deacon') in the context of marriage and *erēc* ' was also used for married priests in the Armenian translation of the Council of Gangra.⁸⁰⁵ In comparison, the canons attributed to Gregory the Illuminator explicitly forbade *k'ahanay* from marrying and marriage may even have been the distinction point between the two ranks.⁸⁰⁶ Notably, a celibate *k'ahanay* would represent the opposite of later practice when *k'ahanay* came to refer to a married priest.

Later canons in the *Kanonagirk' Hayoc* ' do not retain the separation of *k'ahanay* and *erēc* ', but a distinction between married and unmarried priests, both referred to as *k'ahanay*, continued. The canons attributed to Sahak mentioned married *k'ahanay* several times and distinguished between feasts appropriate to be observed by *amesnac'eloc' k'ahanayk'* ('married priests') and those that were not.⁸⁰⁷ The *Regulations of the Apostle Thaddeus to Edessa*, which is unique to the Armenian corpus, similarly limited the authority of an *amusnac'eal k'ahanay* ('married priest'), who was required to refrain from sleeping with his wife for three days before performing communion.⁸⁰⁸ These canons' uncertain dating renders

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, 18.2, pp. 431-432.

⁸⁰⁴ Exodus 29:34; *KH* vol. 1, 18.2, p. 432.

⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.11, p. 473; *Oyk' erkmtē ew xoršen yerkič'u, or amusnac'eal ic'ē, orpēs t'ē oč' ic'ē aržan i noc'anē awrēns arnul, lic'in nzoveal* ('Whoever distrusts and shuns the priest, who is married, as if he is not worthy to offer the Eucharist to them, let them be anathema'), *Ibid.*, 8.4, p. 193.

⁸⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.2, p. 245.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.43, pp. 400-402. Cf. *Ibid.* 17.22-24, 17.38, pp. 380-381, 393-395.

⁸⁰⁸ *KH* vol. 2, 26.12, pp. 30-31.

it impossible to sketch a trajectory of the loss of distinction between *erēc*‘ and *k’ahanay* roles, but it likely occurred before the Council of Dwin in 645 CE, which refers to *k’ahanayn ew kin nora* (‘the priest and his wife’), with *k’ahanay* or equivalent appearing in all manuscripts known to Hakobyan.⁸⁰⁹ By the mid-seventh century CE then, the division between married and unmarried priests was no longer terminologically delineated. This change can unfortunately not be used to securely date other councils, as it is probable that acceptance and refusal of certain grades of priests contracting marriage and the terms attached to them varied throughout Armenian history based on community needs.

Šahapivan 14 deposed clerics of any level who had a *tantikin kin* (lit. ‘housewife woman’), a phrase otherwise absent from Šahapivan which could be understood as a form of partial marriage.⁸¹⁰ Clergymen were held to a higher marital standard than their lay peers. Šahapivan allowed neither a *erēc*‘ nor his wife to remarry if they were widowed or divorced, a ruling that reflected St Paul and Tertullian’s condemnation of twice married clerics and was itself reflected in Nersēs and Meršapuh’s ruling that bigamists should be excluded from clerical rank and from receiving shares in church revenue.⁸¹¹ Clergy also could not have an *alxin poṛnik* (‘fornicating maidservant’) and were expected to eject family members who committed adultery from their home or else give up their rank.⁸¹² Given these high standards, it is possible that clerics also practised a partial-right marital form where their wives were denied *tantikin* status, perhaps to prevent them from adopting clerical duties or inheriting clerical land. This would be an unusual example of high moral standards for priests arising

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.8, p. 207.

⁸¹⁰ *KH* vol. 1, 18.14, p. 450. Orengo renders *tantikin kin zok’ mi išcesc’ē unel* as ‘una donna come amministratrice della casa’ (‘a woman as administrator of the house’), Orengo, ‘Canoni Conciliari Armeni’, p. 565.

⁸¹¹ *KH* vol. 1, 18.2, 20.13, pp. 430-432, 480. Cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; D.G. Hunter, ‘Single Marriage and Priestly Identity: A Symbol and its Functions in Ancient Christianity’, in *The Symbolism of Marriage in Early Christianity and the Latin Middle Ages: Images, Impact, Cognition*, ed. L.C. Engh (Amsterdam, 2019), p. 112.

⁸¹² *KH* vol. 1, 18.2, pp. 430-432. The Syriac Synod of Ezekiel condemned men who withheld necessities from maidservants to coerce them into sex, but Šahapivan does not discuss whether this is what is intended by *alxin poṛnik*, *Synodicon Orientale*, 8.8, p. 378.

from a pre-existing priestly class, as opposed to these standards ultimately creating a priestly identity, as David Hunter argued was the pattern witnessed in the Christian West.⁸¹³

However, Šahapivan 14 more likely refers to a form of Syriac pseudo-marriage – a union not culturally or legally understood as marriage but using marital language metaphorically to contextualise itself – called *syneisaktism*. *Syneisaktism* referred to cohabitation between two ascetics or an ascetic woman and cleric. The practice does not appear to have attracted many followers in Armenia, as all observable references address it as a Syriac custom brought into Armenia by the Syriac Kat‘olikoses Brk‘išo and Šmuel.⁸¹⁴ Indeed, the Armenian version of the 325 CE Council of Nicaea replaces the text’s condemnation of *sneisaktism* with an elaboration on the prohibition against ordaining the unworthy found in 2 Timothy’s 5:22.⁸¹⁵ Nonetheless, Zakarian suggests that this is what is intended by Šahapivan’s use of *tantikin*, noting that the same word was used by Łazar in his one reference to *syneisaktism*, while the tenth-century CE Kat‘olikos Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc‘i used *tantikin kanayk‘*, and Movses Xorenac‘i the similar *kanayk‘ tnkaluč‘k‘* (‘housekeeping women’).⁸¹⁶ This pattern continues in translations from Greek. The Armenian version of Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Ecclesiastical History* rendered *syneisaktous gynaikas* as *k‘ors tantiknays* (lit. ‘sister mistresses of the house’), while the canon of Nicaea missing from

⁸¹³ Hunter, ‘Single Marriage and Priestly Identity’, pp. 111-130.

⁸¹⁴ *Xdrec ‘in aynuhetew iwreanc‘ naxarark‘n Hayoc‘ yark‘unust kat‘olikos, ew t‘agaworn Vřam et noc‘a zBrk‘išo zomn anun, ayr yazgē Asorwoc‘, or ekeal yašxarhn Hayoc‘ iwrovk‘ gawařake‘awk‘, ork‘ kēin loyž krawniwk‘, ekealk‘ and nma yAsorestanē, ašt sovorut‘ean iwreanc‘ ašxarhin‘ tantiknawk‘*, (The Armenian *naxarars* at that time requested a *kat‘olikos* from the royal court, and King Wahrām sent them a certain Brk‘išo, a man of the Syrian race, who came to the land of Armenia with his compatriots coming from Syria, who were living by dissolute religion according to the custom of their land, with *tantikin*), Łazar 15.8, p. 2223; Zakarian, ‘Syneisaktism’, p. 133.

⁸¹⁵ *KH* vol. 1, 4.3, pp. 118-119. Aram Mardirossian suggests the Caesarea’s change was performed by Julianist theologian Yovhannēs Mayragomec‘i. Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk‘ Hayoc‘*, p. 363. For the Greek canon, see *The Seven Ecumenical Councils, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, vol. 14, eds. Ph. Schaff and H. Wace (Peabody, MA, 1995), p. 11.

⁸¹⁶ Łazar 15.8, p. 2223; *MX* III.64.12, p. 2104; Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc‘i, *Yovhannu Kat‘olikosi Drasxanakertc‘woy Patmut‘iwn Hayoc‘*, in *MH*, vol. 11: 10 *Dar Patmagrut‘iwn Erku Grk‘ov, Girk‘ 1*, ed. Z. Ekawean (Antilias, 2010), 14.22, p. 391; Zakarian, ‘Syneisaktism’, pp. 123-138; *Idem, Women, Too, Were Blessed*, pp. 126-134.

its Armenian translation – which was included in *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'* as a canon attributed to Epiphanius of Salamis – also used *tantikin*.⁸¹⁷

The absence of a specific term and focus of references to *syneisaktism* on a single event, the short period (428-437 CE) of Sasanian-backed Syriac control of the Kat'olikos following Sahak Part'ew's death, suggests that Šahapivan 14 was responding to a recent political situation as opposed to a widely practised marital form. This is further suggested by Šahapivan's association of *tantikin* with *mclnēut'iwn* ('filthy ones').⁸¹⁸ Nina Garsoïan identifies this group as the Paulicians and Zakarian the Messalians, the latter being a Syriac group associated with sexual misconduct and suppressed in Siwnik' the year before Šahapivan convened, but not one known to have practised *syneisaktism*. As such, it is hard to establish the exact context of the Šahapivan's relation to *syneisaktism*, but it seems more likely that this is the intended focus of Šahapivan 14 than the sanctioning of an otherwise unattested form of clerical marriage.

Overall, the type of union available to Armenians by the time of the first surviving Armenian council is too broadly like other forms to be clearly connected to any source. However, the apparent historical presence of the partial-right *čagar* marriage into the Christian era and likely short-lived encouragement of *syneisaktism* both demonstrate a historic and continued influence on acceptable marital forms by the Sasanian world. Iranian influence appears to have dwindled after the fourth century, likely because Christianity's emphasis on celibacy and (at least serial) monogamy impinged on the benefits partial-right or pseudo marriages offered.⁸¹⁹ Still, Zoroastrian practice continued to impact on Armenian

⁸¹⁷ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Patumt'iwn ekelec'woy: yealeal yasorwoyn i Hay i hingerord daru*, eds. A. Charean (Venice, 1877), 7.30, p. 590; *KH* vol. 2, 31.1, p. 62.

⁸¹⁸ Zakarian, 'Syneisaktism', pp. 128-130; N.G. Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy: a study of the origin and development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire* (Paris, 1967), p. 209-210; cf. C. Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart: the Messalian controversy in history, texts and language to AD 431* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 15-16.

⁸¹⁹ Payne, *State of Mixture*, p. 112.

marriage even when it was not adopted, a feature that is most notable in the Armenian approach to endogamous marriage.

4.3.4 – Endogamous marriage

Endogamous marriage holds an awkward place in Armenian practice, being heavily condemned as incestuous but along a narrower definition of incest than is seen elsewhere in the Christian world. The zealotry with which Šahapivan and other Armenian sources condemned both marriage between in-laws (fictive incest) and blood relatives (actual incest) must be understood in the context of their proximity to the Sasanian Empire. The dominant Zoroastrian community of this empire practised *xwēdōdah* ('consanguineous marriage', Av. *x^vaētuuadaθa-*), the contraction of marriage between blood relatives in the direct descent group (most commonly parent-child or brother-sister) which was widely condemned as incestuous by neighbouring communities from Greece to Armenia to Korea.⁸²⁰

4.3.4.1 – Fictive Endogamous Marriage

Šahapivan 12 and 13 delineated the bounds of incest in Armenian society to include both fictive and actual relations, the latter canon containing a lengthy upbraiding that appears to apply to both. Marrying either was considered immoral, but the two practices were not identical. Taking the wife of a relative was treated more lightly than marrying a blood relative, requiring a decade of repentance and two fifty-dram fines (one to the poor and one to the church) to extirpate, which represents a particularly long period of penitence but one of the smallest financial exactions in Šahapivan.⁸²¹ The wife herself was under the same

⁸²⁰ J.A. Silk, 'Putative Persian perversities: Indian Buddhist condemnations of Zoroastrian close-kin marriage in context', *BSOAS* 71.3 (2008), pp. 433-464. For a survey of the relevant literature, see Y.S.-D. Vevaina, 'A Father, a Daughter, and a Son-in-Law in Zoroastrian Hermeneutics', *Sasanian Iran in the Context of Late Antiquity: The Bahari Lecture Series at the University of Oxford*, ed. T. Daryaei (Irvine, CA, 2018), pp. 121-147.

⁸²¹ *KH* vol. 1, 18.12, pp. 444-445.

punishment if she had consented to sex with her husband's relative, and was also required to spend ten years as a servant in a leprosarium or pay 300 *dram* to the lepers, depending on whether they were a *šinakan* or *azat*, to extirpate her sin.⁸²²

This passage could be interpreted as a condemnation of *čagar* marriage but may also or additionally have been associated with the Jewish practice of Levirate marriage, which was similarly the practice of widows marrying their husband's relatives as a means of creating heirs for him.⁸²³ No evidence suggests Levirate marriage was still practised in the fifth century. However, Christianity commonly associated marrying a relative's widow with Judaism. The sixth-century Persian bishop Mar Aba, writing in nearby Azerbaijan, distinguished between marrying blood relatives 'like the Magians' and a brother's widow 'like the Jews.'⁸²⁴ The association would make sense of Šahapivan 13's assertion, apparently referring to the contents of both that canon and the one before it, that those who contracted endogamous marriages returned *i het'anosut'iwn ew i hrēut'iwn* ('to heathenism and Judaism').⁸²⁵ A large but often obscured Jewish minority existed in Armenia, first evidenced by *Epic Histories'* account of Jewish families being deported by Šābuhr II from seven Armenian cities to Isfahan c. 368/369 CE, an event also recounted by Movses Xorenac'i and T'ovma Arcruni.⁸²⁶ *Epic Histories* claims more Jews than Armenians were exiled from these centres, 95,000 compared to 82,000 families in total. While these figures are likely inaccurate – T'ovma Arcruni reverses the figures of Jews and Christians *Epic Histories* gives for Van in Tozp (18,000 and 5,000) and thus the relative proportions of these groups overall – the

⁸²² *Ibid.*, pp. 445-446.

⁸²³ On Levirate marriage, see Deuteronomy 22:15; Payne, *State of Mixture*, p. 112. Contrast Lev. 18:16, 20:20, which condemn marriage to the wife of one's brother.

⁸²⁴ Payne, *State of Mixture*, p. 108; Y. Kiel, *Sexuality in the Babylonian Talmud* (New York, 2016), pp. 151, 203.

⁸²⁵ *KH* vol. 1, 18.13, p. 448; Payne, *State of Mixture*, p. 112.

⁸²⁶ Jacob Neusner instead places this in 386 CE, in Šābuhr III's reign, J. Neusner, 'The Jews in Pagan Armenia', *JAOS* 84.3 (1964), pp. 231-232.

impression is of a significant Jewish population concentrated in Armenia's urban centres.⁸²⁷ It is not impossible these communities continued Levirate practices, perhaps even exporting it to Armenian Christians. However, it seems more probable that the inclusion of in-law marriage as 'Jewish' reflects merely the memory of a dead practice mediated to Christian communities through the Old Testament and used to 'other' the Jews. As such the active practice opposed by Šahapivan 12 would thus be *čagar* union.

4.3.4.2 – Real Endogamous Marriage

Šahapivan gave harsher condemnation to marriage between blood relatives. Those who married anyone within four degrees of relation to them were excluded from the church for life.⁸²⁸ Neither sacrifices nor penance were accepted from them and they were only readmitted into the community upon death if they ended their marriage, repented for the rest of their lives and donated half of their *kenac* ('patrimony') and *anč'ic* ('property') to the poor and church.⁸²⁹ Clergymen who attended or, worse, officiated such weddings were stripped of their rank and could not regain clerical position unless the couple separated and the cleric paid a fine of 500 *dram* for a bishop and 200 *dram* for a *erēc*, with an additional 200 *dram* for whoever blessed the wedding.⁸³⁰ The canon does not make it clear whether these penalties were imposed upon priests who married in-laws also. The prescriptions placement after Šahapivan 13 discussed heathen and Jewish marriage may imply its strictures applied to both kinds of union.

⁸²⁷ *Epic Histories* IV.55.33-43, p. 372; MX III.35.8-9, p. 2053; T'ovma Arcruni, I.10, p. 73; M.E. Stone and A. Topchyan, *Jews in Ancient and Medieval Armenia: first century BCE to fourteenth century CE* (New York, 2022), pp. 20-28. Garsoïan suggests Jews were the majority population of urban centres, but this likely overstates the accuracy of *Epic Histories* projections. *Epic Histories*, trans. Garsoïan, p. 380-381.

⁸²⁸ A useful summary of the calculation of degrees of relation is found in W. Burge, *The Comparative Law of Marriage and Divorce* (London, 1910), p. 21.

⁸²⁹ *KH* vol. 1, 18.13, pp. 446-449.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.13, p. 448-449.

Šahapivan was not the only Armenian source to attack endogamous marriage. Movses Xorenac'i and *Epic Histories* both claimed Nersēs I specifically condemned incest at the 365 CE ps.-Synod of Aštišat, although they do not expand on the measures imposed.⁸³¹ Marriage between in-laws was particularly singled out, leading Mardirossian to suggest it was more denounced than blood relative incest.⁸³² However, real endogamous marriage was also widely condemned. In what may have been an ironic reference to Zoroastrianism's veneration of fire, the canons of Bishop Sevantos claimed men who married their mothers or daughters should be burned in a fire, likely referring to branding or the death penalty for both husband and wife (given the plural *nosa* 'them' for those punished).⁸³³ If this is intended to be execution, then Sevantos here matched Leviticus' death penalty for incestuous liaison.⁸³⁴ Less proximate kin, such as in-laws, grandparents, grandchildren or the man's sister, were instead considered *aniceal* ('cursed'), subject to twenty years penitence and excluded from communion for three years.⁸³⁵ In a letter expanding on one written to all priests under his authority in 609 CE, Kat'oġikos Abraham Aġbat'anec'i (r. 607-615 CE) outlined restrictions towards marriage between blood-relatives, in-laws or *xort'* ('step-relations') until the fifth degree of relation.⁸³⁶ Real and fictive consanguinity were thus both condemned, albeit with a greater emphasis on the former.

Condemnation of endogamous marriage was a feature of Christianity, but Armenian canons condemned it especially harshly.⁸³⁷ Excluding a death penalty imposed on

⁸³¹ *Epic Histories* IV.4.42, p. 316; MX III.20.12, p. 2032.

⁸³² Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, pp. 79-80.

⁸³³ *Or kin aġnē zmayr kam zdustr, i hur ayrec'ēk' znosa* ('He who marries his mother or daughter, you should burn them in a fire'), *KH* vol. 1, 19.3, p. 471.

⁸³⁴ Lev. 20:14.

⁸³⁵ *KH* vol. 1, 19.3, pp. 471-472.

⁸³⁶ Abraham Aġbat'anec'i, *Yalags Datastanac' Amusnut'ean ew K'anionut'ean Azgakanac'* [Concerning the judgements of marriage and the measure of kinship], in *MH* vol. 4, pp. 38-41.

⁸³⁷ J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 204-205; Payne argues Goody oversimplified a complex process where Christians often accepted and even advocated restrictions on a range of permissible marriage. Payne, *State of Mixture*, p. 221, n. 83. See M. de Jong, 'To the Limits of Kinship: Anti-incest Legislation in the Early Medieval West (500-900)', in *From Sappho to de Sade: Moments in the History of Sexuality* ed. J. Bremmer (London, 1989), pp. 36-59.

unrepentant apostates and sorcerers, Šahapivan 13 is the harshest canon in the council.⁸³⁸ The canon even defended its sentencing, arguing Nicaea had not condemned incest as harshly because it was believed unnecessary at the time.⁸³⁹ The Armenian approach to incest then requires context, with the most likely explanation being that this represented opposition to *xwēdōdah*.

Marriage to a direct relative in Zoroastrianism were not merely tolerated, but actively praised as one of the greatest works a Zoroastrian could perform. It was seen as in emulation of a trio of mythological kin-marriages – Ohrmazd to his daughter Spandarmad, the earth; Spandarmad to their son, the primordial giant Gayōmard; and their own children, the first humans Mašyā and Mašyānē, to one other – and ascribed a variety of spiritual powers.⁸⁴⁰ *Xwēdōdah* was capable of saving sinners from Hell, equal to a non-believer converting to the faith and the only good deed that could not be subverted by Ahrimen and his servant Xešm (the demon, ‘Wrath’).⁸⁴¹ The Pahlavi *Vendīdād* even claimed the urine of a *xwēdōdah* couple could purify corpse-bearers.⁸⁴²

The extent to which *xwēdōdah* represents genuine incest has been controversial, not least because it contradicts anthropologist Robin Fox’s widely repeated theory that an incest taboo was a universal feature of human society only exempted through noble privilege (as in Ptolemaic Egypt).⁸⁴³ There is some value to this. Maria Brosius rightly cautions that *čagar*

⁸³⁸ *KH* vol. 1, 18.8, p. 440.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.13, p. 450.

⁸⁴⁰ *Dēnkard*, 3.80.0-8, 3.41, in P.O. Skjærvø, *The Spirit of Zoroastrianism* (New Haven, 2011), pp. 202-204; *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 36.68; P.J. Frandsen, *Incestuous and Close-Kin Marriage in Ancient Egypt and Persia: An Examination of the Evidence* (Copenhagen, 2009), pp. 79-80.

⁸⁴¹ *ŠnŠ* 8.18; *PRDD* 8a1-8b3, 56.16, vol. 1, pp. 48-51, 200-201, vol. 2, pp. 10-11, 94; *Supp.ŠnŠ* 18, pp. 76-77. Cf. N. Dhaval, *The Book of the Mainyo-i Khard: The Pazand and Sanskrit Text (In Roman Characters)*, ed. and trans. E.W. West (London, 1871), 4.4, pp. 14, 74, 138.

⁸⁴² *Pahlavi Vendīdād (Zand-ī Juît-Dêv-Dât)*, ed. and trans. B.T. Anklesaria (Bombay, 1946), 8.12-13, p. 192; *Phl Vd.* 8.13a-b.

⁸⁴³ Fox, *Kinship and Marriage*, pp. 31, 63. In contrast to Fox’s view, Walter Scheidel has argued for ‘copious and unequivocal’ evidence of endogamous marriage among common people in Egypt in the first to third centuries CE. Sabine Huebner, on the other hand, contended that most Egyptian endogamous marriages were fictive in nature. W. Scheidel, ‘Brother-Sister and Parent-Child Marriage Outside Royal Families in Ancient Egypt and Iran: A Challenge to the Sociobiological View of Incest Avoidance?’, *Ethology and Sociobiology* 17

marriage could create fictive consanguinity, so not all *xwēdōdah* relations need have represented biological incest.⁸⁴⁴ There is some evidence of Persian anxiety surrounding the contraction of *xwēdōdah* unions. The ninth-century Persian Christian writer Jesubōkht claims Zoroastrians practised incest only unwillingly and Zoroaster himself expresses astonishment at the revelation that Ohrmazd's wife was his daughter in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, encouraging the deity to explain the excellence of the practice.⁸⁴⁵

However, *xwēdōdah* is simply too widely recorded to be excused purely as a symbolic fiction. It is mentioned in the third-century inscription of high priest Kerdīr as an improvement he brought to the land.⁸⁴⁶ Accusations that Iranians married their direct family members are found in Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Jain and Indian, Chinese and Korean Buddhist accounts from the sixth to twelfth centuries CE, while the earliest foreign account is Clement of Alexandria citing a fifth-century BCE source, Xanthus the Lydian.⁸⁴⁷ That *xwēdōdah* could be so widely known and practised for so long with no suggestion it was merely symbolic would be implausible unless at least some cases constituted genuine consanguineous marriage. Several foreign condemnations demonstrate familiarity with

(1996), pp. 319-340; S.R. Huebner, ‘“Brother-Sister” Marriage in Roman Egypt: A Curiosity of Humankind or Widespread Family Strategy?’, *The Journal of Roman Studies* 97 (2007), pp. 21-49.

⁸⁴⁴ M. Brosius, *The Persians: An Introduction* (London, 2006), p. 173.

⁸⁴⁵ / *zarduxšt guft kū ka andar gēhān tis-ī ēn škefttar gōwēnd čiyōn tō kē ohrmazd hē agar be ō tō guft. ohrmazd guft kū zarduxšt pahlom nōšīd tis ī mardōmān ēn būd hē* / (‘Zoroaster said: “Since in this world they say this thing [*xwēdōdah*] is most distressing, how do you, who is Ohrmazd, [answer] if it is said to you?” Ohrmazd said: “Zoroaster, this should have been the best thing known to humanity’), *PRDD* 8a5-8a6, vol. 1, pp. 48-49, vol. 2, p. 10; J. Jany, ‘The Four Sources of Law in Zoroastrian and Islamic Jurisprudence’, *Islamic Law and Society* 12.3 (2005), p. 305.

⁸⁴⁶ *Quatre inscriptions du mage Kirdīr*, §17 [KKZ 14/KNRm 44-45/KSM 21-22], pp. 64, 72.

⁸⁴⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis: Books One to Three*, ed. and trans. J. Ferguson (Washington, D.C., 1991), 3.11.1, p. 263; Kiel, *Sexuality in the Babylonian Talmud*, pp. 245-266; G.J.H. Van Gelder, *Close Relationships: incest and inbreeding in classical Arabic literature* (London, 2005), p. 73; S. Kawasaki, ‘A Reference to Maga in the Tibetan Translation of the Tarkajvālā’, *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 23.2 (1975), pp. 1102-1100 (sic); C. Lindtner, ‘Buddhist References to Old Iranian Religion’, in *A Green Leaf. Papers in Honour of Professor Jes. P. Asmussen*, eds. W. Sundermann, J. Duchesne-Guillemin and F. Vahman (Leiden, 1988), p. 439, n. 18; Xuanzang, *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist records of the western world*, vol.2 (London, 1884), XI, p. 278; Hye Ch’o, *The Hye Ch’o Diary: Memoir of the Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India*, eds. and trans. H. Yang et. al. (Berkeley, 1984), pp. 54, 104-105; K.K. Handiqui, *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture, or, Somadeva’s Yaśastilaka and aspects of Jainism and Indian thought and culture in the tenth century* (Solapur, 1949), p. 99; J.A. Silk, *Riven by Lust: Incest and Schism in Indian Buddhist Legend and Historiography* (Honolulu, 2009), pp. 85-86. For an overview of Classical Greek and Roman sources, see A. de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 424-432.

aspects of the practice. The first-century Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria and Justinianic historian Agathias both focused especially of mother-son marriage, which the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* accompanying the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*'s declared was the most meritorious form.⁸⁴⁸ *Xwēdōdah* is unlikely to have been a mere noble privilege, as no indication is made in Zoroastrian that it should be practiced by only some of the community. Furthermore, legislation under Justin II indicates that he believed illicit marriage was occurring among the peasantry of Byzantine Mesopotamia and Osroene due to the influence of their Persian neighbours, which may suggest consanguineous unions among non-nobles.⁸⁴⁹ Nor could adoption, the most obvious form of fictive kinship, have generated *xwēdōdah* unions under Persian law.⁸⁵⁰ Adoptive sons were considered lesser than biological ones, equal to a *pādxšāy* daughter and bearing no formal kin relation to his adopter according to Sasanian legal scholar Rādohrmazd, and whether girls should be adopted at all was debated.⁸⁵¹

Zoroastrian nervousness should be understood as a late – likely post-Sasanian – development. *Dēnkard* Book 3 made no distinction between marriage within the household and more broadly endogamous relationships, suggesting no special concept of incest

⁸⁴⁸ / *ēn-iz paydāg kū mard-ēw xwēdōdah ēk [abāg] burdār ud ēk abāg zahag ī duxt ān ī abāg burdār abar ōy ī did radān [gōwēnd] ēd rāy čē-š ān ī az tan be āmad nazdīktar* / ('This too is revealed: a man [performs] one *xwēdōdah* with his mother and one with his child, his daughter, the one with [his] mother is superior; the spiritual authorities [say it is] because he who has come from her body is nearer [to her].') *PRDD*, 8d1, vol. 1, pp. 52-53; vol. 2, p. 12. Philo, *Philo VII: On the Decalogue. On the Special Laws*, Books I-III, ed. and trans. F.H. Colson (Cambridge, MA, 1937), III.19, pp. 484-485; A. Cameron, 'Agathias on the Sassanians', *DOP* 23 (1969-1970), pp. 80-81. Interestingly, mother-son incest is the least reported form in the modern day, although this may be because patriarchal narratives surrounding sexual abuse that downplay male victims and excuse female offenders doubly obscure it. C. Lawson, 'Mother-Son Sexual Abuse: Rare or Underreported? A Critique of the Research', *Child Abuse and Neglect* 17 (1993), pp. 261-269; L. Stemple, A.R. Flores and I.H. Meyer, 'Sexual Victimization Perpetrated by Women: Federal Data Reveal Surprising Prevalence', *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* 34 (2017), pp. 302-311.

⁸⁴⁹ *Novels* vol. 1, 154, pp. 975-977; A.D. Lee, 'Close Kin Marriage in Late Antique Mesopotamia', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 29.4 (1988), p. 404. *Novel* 139, which addressed illicit marriage among Jewish communities in Tyre may likewise be an example of conflating obsolete Levirate marriage with Iranian-style consanguineous or *čagar* arrangements. See *Novels* vol. 1, 139, pp. 923-934.

⁸⁵⁰ *UK Public General Acts, 2002 c. 38: Adoption and Children Act 2002*, Part 1, 4.67.1.

⁸⁵¹ *MHD* 42.9, 70.13-14. Sasanian legal scholar Pusānwēh ī Burzādūr Farnbagān mentions adopted daughters in the Anklesaria manuscript of *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān*, but the later *Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest nē Šāyest* argued daughters should not be adopted, since this brought the family no benefit. This difference probably resulted from changes brought by the Arab conquests, which required Zoroastrian legislation to prioritise keeping property within the community. *MHDA* 40.9-14; *Supp.ŠnŠ* 12.14, pp. 30-31; Carlsen, 'Cakar Marriage Contract', pp. 106-107.

existed.⁸⁵² The *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* similarly includes father-daughter and brother-sister marriage as an ancillary detail on cases primarily concerning inheritance, without feeling the need to justify the practice.⁸⁵³ Even the *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, despite depicting Zoroaster's hesitancy, declared more closely-related *xwēdōdah* more meritorious and includes what appears to be an attack on exogamous marriage.⁸⁵⁴ The marriage of Ĵam and his sister to demonic outsiders rather than one another resulted in the birth of a variety of noxious animals and monsters.⁸⁵⁵ *Xwēdōdah* may also have positively impacted the estimation of endogamous unions among Sasanian minority communities. The *Bavli* contains a passage absent from the Palestinian Talmud that implies sexual temptation towards kin was natural, a variant form of a *midrash* citing Rabbi Nehurai's claim that the people wept when Moses told them to restrain from marriage to their sisters and paternal or maternal aunts.⁸⁵⁶ Developmental arguments of a universal incest taboo thus fail to explain *xwēdōdah*. It should be viewed as a tradition in opposition to the equally cultural claim, held by Greek writers like Plato and Seneca, that consanguineous unions were unnatural.⁸⁵⁷

Armenian literature explicitly associated close-kin marriage with the Iranians. Elišē attributes a call for women to marry their male relatives to Yazdgerd II and Šahapivan

⁸⁵² *Dēnkard* 3.80.

⁸⁵³ *MHD* 44.8-14; 104.9-11; 105.5-10; *MHDA* 18.7-12; M. Macuch, 'On Middle Persian Legal Terminology', in *Middle Iranian Lexicography: Proceedings of the Conference held in Rome, 9-11 April 2001*, eds. C.G. Cereti and M. Magi (Rome, 2005), pp. 375-386; *idem.* 'Judicial and Legal Systems iii.', pp. 185-187; *Idem.*, 'Incestuous Marriage in the Context of Sasanian Family Law', in *Ancient and Middle Iranian Studies. Proceedings of the 6th European Conference of Iranian Studies, held in Vienna, 18-22 September 2007* eds. M. Macuch, D. Weber and D. Durkin-Meisterernst (Wiesbaden, 2011), p. 136.

⁸⁵⁴ *PRDD* 8d1-8d6, vol. 1, pp. 52-53, vol. 2, p. 12.

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 8e6-8e9, vol. 1, pp. 54-55, vol. 2, p. 13.

⁸⁵⁶ *B. Shab.* 103a; Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, pp. 76-77. Other Iranianised marriages were also practised by the Babylonian Jewish community. Both Rav Nahman b. Yaakov and the Palestinian rabbi Rav contracted temporary marriages without criticism while in the vicinity of Ctesiphon and Rava permitted polygamy, cautioning men to marry three as opposed to two wives, so they would not plot against their husband. *BT Bava Batra* 173 a-b, *Bava Kamma* 58b, *Shevuot* 34b, *Yevamot* 65a.

⁸⁵⁷ Plato, *Plato*, vol. 11: *Laws, Books VII-XII*, ed. and trans. R.G. Bury (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 8.838A-C, pp. 156-157; E. Fantham, 'Nihil iam Ivra Natvrae Valent: Incest and Fratricide in Seneca's *Phoenissae*', in *Ramus* 12.1-2 (1983), pp. 61-76; Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, p. 77.

associated the practice less specifically with ‘ungodly, unholy nations’.⁸⁵⁸ Although pre-Christian Armenia may well have practised *xwēdōdah*, following Armenian conversion marriage to direct family members appear only in anti-Zoroastrian polemic. For example, Vazgen’s apostasy in the short version of *Passion of Šušānik* is partially ascribed to his lust for his daughter, likely a salacious addition given that this accusation appears in no other version of the martyrology.⁸⁵⁹ This does not mean that *xwēdōdah* could not have been practised, since its position as an effective means of keeping inheritance from fragmentation may have made it attractive to the *naxarar*. This may explain Movses Xorenac’i’s claim that Kat’olikos Nersēs attacked incest because it had been restricting the *naxarar* class for the sake of accumulating possessions.⁸⁶⁰ However, currently there is no definitive evidence for willing marriage among the elementary family unit in Christian Armenia, which was typically what *xwēdōdah* comprised and which Armenian canons condemned as incest.

Marriages the Armenians defined as incestuous may have persisted on an individual basis through Late Antiquity and beyond. Kat’olikos Abraham Ałbat’anec’i in the early seventh century CE felt the need to compose a letter specifically about consanguineous marriage, reminding its anonymous recipient of another he had written to all their colleagues c. 609 CE.⁸⁶¹ These indicate either a continuation or resurgence of consanguineous marriage, and Zakarian has argued that Nersēs Snorhali’s inclusion of close-kin marriage in his *T’ult’ Ĕndhanrakan (General Epistle)* indicates the practice survived well into the medieval era.⁸⁶² However, there is a substantive difference between the contraction of individual unions despite condemnation and the absence of condemnation, especially among the *naxarar*, who

⁸⁵⁸ *Dsterk’ haranc’ linic’in, ew k’ork’ elbarc’. mark’ mi elc’en yordwoc’, ayl ew t’orunk’ elc’en yankolins hawoc’*, (‘Daughters shall be [wives] for fathers, and sisters for brothers. Mothers shall not withdraw from sons, and grandchildren shall ascend bed of their grandparents’), *Elišē* 2.307, p. 579.

⁸⁵⁹ *Passion of Saint Shushanik*, I, p. 42.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ew zerkuss zaysosik yazgac’ naxararac’n barnay. mi’ zmerjaworac’ xnamut’iwn, zor vasn agaheloy sephakan azatut’eann arnēin*, (‘And these two things he removed from the *naxarar* families, first: the marriage (lit. relationship) of close relatives, since they were making the illustrious nobility greedy’), *MX* III.20.12, p. 2032. Cf. Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 144.

⁸⁶¹ Abraham Ałbat’anec’i, *Yarags Datastanac’ Amusnut’eān ew k’anionut’eān Azgakanac’*, in *MH* vol. 4, p. 38.

⁸⁶² Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 147. Cf. Nersēs Snorhali, *T’ult’ Ĕndhanrakan*, pp. 118-141.

could use their power to manipulate the law. In Byzantium, Emperor Heraclius was able to marry his second wife Martina despite being her maternal uncle.⁸⁶³ The Armenian approach to incest is not tolerant simply because endogamous unions occurred.

Indeed, the Armenian definition of incest as four degrees of consanguinity had Mosaic precedent and was cross-culturally normative practice among Christians.⁸⁶⁴ Several Armenian families did practice successive marriages between two families. The twin sons of Yusik I married sisters of King Tiran, Yusik's aunts by marriage, and Vardan Mamikonean wed his daughter to Ašuša of Gugark's son, who was the niece of Vardan's sister-in-law.⁸⁶⁵ These successive marriages served a similar practical function to *xwēdōdah* of keeping property within the clan and could also reaffirm long-term alliances between clans. However, they were likely not recognisable as *xwēdōdah*, which overwhelmingly referred to marriage within the first degree of relation (between the elementary family unit of parents, children and siblings).

4.3.5 – Separation

Šahapivan includes three sequential canons concerning unacceptable separation and references the practice in multiple other canons. Canon 4 discusses a man who leaves a woman with whom he has children, canon 5 a man who divorces a sterile woman, and canon 6 a woman who leaves her husband.⁸⁶⁶ These include modifications for if a man left his wife for another woman or if a woman left an immoral husband. Further, Šahapivan 5's conclusion makes it clear canons 4 and 5 represent a binary, and were perhaps originally a single canon, distinguishing protocols for women with children and those without on the assumption that

⁸⁶³ J. Lascaratos and E. Poulakou-Rebelakou, 'Child Sexual Abuse: Historical Cases in the Byzantine Empire (324-1453 A.D.)', *Child Abuse and Neglect* 24.8 (2000), pp. 1089-1090; E. Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford, 2001), p. 31, n. 84.

⁸⁶⁴ Lev. 18:6-17; Deut. 23:1, 27:20-22.

⁸⁶⁵ *Epic Histories* III.15.5, p. 300; Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, p. 504; Maksoudian, *Šušanik*, pp. x-xi.

⁸⁶⁶ *KH* vol. 1, 18.4-6, pp. 435-438.

women without children were sterile.⁸⁶⁷ Only Šahapivan 5 strictly depicts divorce, as opposed to abandonment or flight. Here the woman left with the property that she had brought into the household from her natal clan and, if there was no reason for the divorce beyond sterility, she also received significant compensation from the man divorcing her to cover the insult he had caused her.⁸⁶⁸

Armenian legislation allowed mutual divorce and divorce based on only male consent. Gregory the Illuminator and his wife Miriam agreed to mutually divorce following a three-year marriage that produced two heirs.⁸⁶⁹ However, separation was not entirely uncontroversial. The canons attributed to Gregory excommunicated those who left their wife without cause or abandoned her to pursue piety but permitted a man to leave an adulterous wife provided he did not remarry for a year after.⁸⁷⁰ A similar distinction existed in Šahapivan 4 and 5, which criticised men who divorced *ařanc' bani pořnkut'ean* ('without grounds of fornication').⁸⁷¹ *Epic Histories* associated leaving a spouse with thieves. Both women who fled their husbands and men who abandoned their wives for others are depicted among the criminals Arřak II treated with unjust leniency when administering justice from his *dastakert* in Kog while Nersēs was exiled in the 360s CE.⁸⁷²

Women did not have the same recourse to divorce unfaithful or otherwise disappointing husbands. Šahapivan 6 argued such men should be punished, but that their wife should remain with them in the hopes this would improve them, while Šahapivan 3 set harsh

⁸⁶⁷ *Or zordwoc' mayr t'olc' ē kam zamul [...] kanon ew sařman ayd kac'c' ē* ('Someone who leaves the mother of his sons or a sterile woman [...] this canon and regulation shall remain.'). *Ibid.*, 18.5, p. 438.

⁸⁶⁸ *Et' ē kin ok' arar ew amul pataheac', ew ařrn hanc' ē zna vasn amlut'eann, or inč' knořn karasi bereal ē i tun, t' ē alaxin t' ē anasun, et' ē handerj et' ē arcac' arnul iřxesc' ē ew gnal: Ew et' ē k'an zamlut'iwnn ayl arat č'guc' ē i [kinn] mardn tujan ews tac' ē knořn, vasn anarganac'n, et' ē azat ē' 1200 dram, ew et' ē řinakan' 600.* ('If someone took a wife and she happened to be sterile, and the man divorces her (lit. draws her out) because of her sterility, the wife's property which she brought into the house – whether a maidservant, animal, clothing or money – let her be empowered to take it and to leave. And if, beyond sterility, there is no fear of another blemish in the wife, let the man give an amend to the wife because of this offence. If he is an *azat*, 1200 dram, and if a *řinakan*, 600 dram.'). *Ibid.*, 18.5, pp. 436-437.

⁸⁶⁹ MX II.80.7, p. 1970.

⁸⁷⁰ *KH* vol. 1, 11.23-24, p. 248.

⁸⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 18.4-5, pp. 435, 438.

⁸⁷² *Epic Histories* IV.12.8-12, pp. 334-335.

punishment upon adulterers but did not call for their marriage end.⁸⁷³ The bishop who attended Saint Šušanik in her *Passion*, alongside her brother-in-law Ĵojik, implored her to return to her apostate husband despite his violent, ultimately fatal, treatment of her.⁸⁷⁴ In instances where a wife fled, Šahapivan empowered her husband to keep her as a slave, sell her, or, if she consented, re-establish the marriage.⁸⁷⁵ The council elsewhere allowed the husband's will to be ignored if a marriage had been contracted without the knowledge of the bride's parents or between close relatives, but separation remained ultimately in the hands of men.⁸⁷⁶ Šahapivan's discussion of adulterous married priests did not mention his wife at all, let alone permit her to leave him.⁸⁷⁷ In matters of separation then, a wife could agree with her husband or be divorced against her will, but she could not leave without his consent. Control over divorce was with either the man or the priesthood, and the wife could not remove herself.

This fits a broader pattern where male sexual autonomy was valued over female. King Aršak II's unrequited love was seen as justifying his union in *Epic Histories*, but P'aranjem's personal disdain for him was not grounds to annul it.⁸⁷⁸ Šahapivan 3 imposed a 100 *dram* fine on men who engaged in pre-marital sex regardless of their partner's consent, suggesting a lack of differentiation between consensual and non-consensual premarital sex.⁸⁷⁹ The fact this fine went to the family of the virgin if she had been raped demonstrates a concern for her consent, but one that was more interested in how her household's social standing was affected than her, although she was punished with a 50 *dram* fine if she had consented.

⁸⁷³ *KH* vol. 1, 18.3, 18.6, pp. 432-434, 438.

⁸⁷⁴ *Passion of Saint Shushanik*, pp. 11-13.

⁸⁷⁵ *Et'ē kin ok' yarñē elanic'ē, kalc'in ew andrēn yayr iwr tac'en [...] ew t'ēpēt ew vačāresc'ē, tēpēt ew yalaxnut'iwñ kalc'i, et'ē kamk' ic'en' hogewor ew bari xratu ew sirov kalc'in* ('If a woman leaves her husband, they should seize her and give her again to her husband [...] He can either sell her or keep her as a slave. If they desire, let them live with spiritual and good advice and with love.'). *KH* vol. 1, 18.6, p. 438.

⁸⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.7, 18.13 pp. 439-440, 446-450.

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.2, pp. 430-432.

⁸⁷⁸ *Epic Histories* IV.15, pp. 340-345.

⁸⁷⁹ *KH* vol. 1, 18.3, pp. 432-433.

Šahapivan 5 does not mention whether women were expected to return to their pre-marital households after divorce, but this seems probable. That the amend in Šahapivan 5 was paid directly to the woman rather than her natal household does not suggest she necessarily became a free agent.⁸⁸⁰ Šahapivan 3 also required a girl be directly compensated if she was raped before she was wed, but her parents decided the amount and the following discussion of a parallel situation where the girl had been willing stated that no compensation was to be given to the parents.⁸⁸¹ This implies fines went to the girl's natal household as opposed to the girl herself by default, which may also have been the case if she married but later left her husband and returned to her parents. The legislation surrounding separation thus suggests that women were not entirely separated from their natal clan, even if their marital clan typically superseded that relationship.

⁸⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.5, pp. 436-457.

⁸⁸¹ *Apa et 'ē ok' yařaj k'an zamusnut 'iwnn i pořnkut 'ean ztaw kam ənd awtari kam or nma xawsealn ēr, ənd anarganac 'n tujan tac 'ē zinč' ew arke 'en hayr ew mayr kusun. orpēs ew Movsēs hramayec' yAwrēnsn [...]* *Apa et 'ē aljkann kamawk' ē pořnkut 'iwnn, tujanin hayr ew mayr aljkann mi iřxesc 'en, ayl 100 dram ayrn ew 50 dram aljkn tujan tac 'en yekelec 'in ew yalk 'ats bařxesc 'en* ('Then if someone is found in defilement even before the wedding, either with a stranger or the one who was betrothed to him, in exchange for the dishonour he must give as a fine what the father and mother of the virgin demand, as Moses ordered in the Laws [...] Then if the fornication occurred with the girl's consent, don't dare [to give] the amend to the father and mother of the girl, but let the man give a 100 dram amend and the girl a 50 dram amend to the church and let it be distributed to the poor.'). *Ibid.*, 18.3, pp. 434.

4.4 – Wedding Ceremonies



*The Marriage of Cana depicted in the Gladzor Gospels. The married couple appear crowned at the centre. (Source: T.F. Mathews and A. Taylor, *The Armenian Gospels of Gladzor: The Life of Christ Illuminated* (Los Angeles, 2001), p. 106, plate 53.).*

Despite showing signs of Iranian influence, the Armenian marital system was monopolised by the church far earlier than their Byzantine contemporaries. Weddings acted as declarations

of Christian faith irrespective of whether the couple were virginal or not and were conducted in a church and presided over by a bishop or priest. While pre-Christian practices remained, like the symbolic act of throwing money depicted in Movses Xorenac'i's description of the royal marriage of Artasēs and Sat'enik, these were relocated to the church threshold.⁸⁸² Such developments cannot be understood through merely a study of comparative Christianity, but rather must be considered in the wider context of Armenia's Iranianised background and particularly the priestly monopoly over local justice it created. Christian clerics had an unusual degree of control in what were otherwise non-religious matters, including the wedding, but also required the clergy to compromise on matters they might have elsewhere avoided. This feature of Armenian society resembles the Sasanian administration and was likely the result of the clergy emerging from the Zoroastrianised religious establishment of pre-Christian Armenia.

Šahapivan addresses the wedding ceremony twice, in canon 3 on extra-marital sex and canon 7 on the practice of abduction betrothal.⁸⁸³ Neither fully explicate the practice, but the fact it was dubbed *psak* ('crowning') indicates the primary ceremony involved placing nuptial crowns on the couple, as remains common in the Armenian wedding today.⁸⁸⁴ Already by the fifth century this was performed by a priest, seemingly in all instances.⁸⁸⁵ When describing illegal weddings conducted without the consent of the bride's parents, Šahapivan 7 addresses only the possibility that a *erēc* had performed it and contained no discussion of weddings outside this context.⁸⁸⁶ Šahapivan 13, in condemning those who

⁸⁸² MX II.50.16, 65, pp. 1928, 1948-1949; Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, p. 76; J.-P. Mahé, *Moïse de Khorène, Histoire de l'Arménie* (Paris, 1993), p. 365, n. 14.

⁸⁸³ *KH* vol. 1, 18.3, 18.7, pp. 432-435, 439-440.

⁸⁸⁴ See, for example, T.F. Mathews and A. Taylor, *The Armenian Gospels of Gladzor: The Life of Christ Illuminated* (Los Angeles, 2001), pp. 47, 106, pl. 53; D. Cabelli and T.F. Mathews, 'The Palette of Khatchur of Khizan', *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 40 (1982), p. 38, fig. 1.

⁸⁸⁵ Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, p. 77; K. Ritzer, *Le mariage dans les Églises chrétiennes du I^{er} au XI^e siècle* (Paris, 1970), pp. 163-170; Zakarian, *Representations of Women*, p. 135.

⁸⁸⁶ *Apa et 'ē eric 'u uruk' galt psak edeal ic 'ē aranc 'hawr ew mawr aljākann , erēc 'n zk'ahanayut 'iwnn č 'iṣxē paštel ew 100 dram tugan kalc 'in ew karawteloc' tac 'en ew psakn, zor ed, anvawer lic 'i*, ('If some priest (*erēc*) secretly establishes the crown [of marriage] without the knowledge of the girl's father and mother, the priest

blessed an incestuous wedding, used the nonspecific *ok* ‘(anybody)’, but the fact that the individual was to lose their *karg paštawnēic* ‘(religious rank)’ makes it clear that some form of cleric was intended and the next sentence clarifies that this referred to a bishop or *erēc*.⁸⁸⁷ Such a model makes little sense if the priesthood only considered itself one of several avenues for marriage or if blessing was merely an additional grace added to certain high-prestige weddings.

Modifications were provided to the *psak* formula to allow it to operate unproblematically in church space. Priests performed a reduced ceremony for individuals whose virginity was suspect, described as *ibrew erkakin* ‘(like a second [marriage])’.⁸⁸⁸ The title implies it was generally used for remarriages, although its appearances in Šahapivan related to premarital intercourse, either between the betrothed with a third-party, during elopement or as a victim or perpetrator of kidnap. Instead of a *psak*, the participant received an *ur* ‘(vine branch)’.

The undeclined nature of *ur* in both canons and the use of the infinitive *tearṅagrel* ‘(to bless with a cross)’ in Šahapivan 3 makes the exact form of the *ibrew erkakin* wedding difficult to reconstruct. Vahan Hovhannessian, in his recent English translation of Šahapivan, suggests a cross-shaped branch of vine was pressed to the head instead of the individual receiving any form of crown.⁸⁸⁹ Such a reconstruction implies *ibrew erkakin* was not a modified *psak* ceremony but a different ceremony entirely, whose existence requires explanation. Some parallels exist in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Zoroastrian weddings, where a twig, dubbed *māndav-saro* (lit. ‘house cypress’) was planted near the door of the

may not have the authority to administer the priesthood and they should take a 100 *dram* amend and distribute it to the needy. And the crown, which he established, shall be invalid’), *KH* vol. 1, 18.7, p. 439.

⁸⁸⁷ *Et’ē ok’ aynpiseac’n psak awrhnesc’ē, kam i harsanis ert’ic’ē, kc’ord elic’i č’areac’ gorcoc’ noc’a’ ew i kargē paštawnēic’ herac’eal elic’i: Ew et’ē ok’ episkopos kam erēc’ gtc’i i xorhrdeann’ yat’o’royn ew i k’ahanayut’enēn ankeal elic’in ew i karg paštawnēic’n mi merjesc’in* ‘(If anyone shall bless the crown in this way or goes to the wedding, he becomes party to their evil works, and he shall be removed from his religious rank. And whether a bishop or *erēc*’ is found in this counsel, let him be removed from the throne and the priesthood and they should not approach the religious rank’), *Ibid.*, 18.13, pp. 448-449.

⁸⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.3, 18.7, pp. 432-433, 439.

⁸⁸⁹ Hovhannessian, ‘Council of Šahapivan’, pp. 81, 83.

building where the wedding would be held in and a mark on the forehead called *kun kun* was used as a part of the nuptial blessing.⁸⁹⁰ However, the latter of these at least emerged from Indian custom and it is dangerous to backdate such late practices onto Armenia when then contemporary Zoroastrian wedding practice is not known.

It seems better to suggest *ibrew erkakin* was a modified form of *psak*, with *ur̄* likely referring to a wreath or lesser crown that was placed on the head and then blessed with a cross. This would require *tear̄nagrel* in Šahapivan 3 to be amended to *tear̄nagreal* ('being blessed with a cross'), which is how three manuscripts known to Hakobyan rendered it and accords with Šahapivan 7, but would explain the former canon's stress that the couple should *ibrew erkakin tear̄nagresc'en lok* ('only have the sign of the cross made, like a second marriage').⁸⁹¹ Viewing *ibrew erkakin* as a modification of the standard ceremony explains its invisibility outside of Šahapivan. The use of a wreath makes sense of canon 3's claim that the *ur̄* was placed *vasn yalt'ut'ean t'snamwoyn* ('because of the victory over the enemy') if the *ur̄* was intended to be a wreath, given the utilisation of that symbol as an image of victory.⁸⁹² However, the passage could alternatively be rendered 'because of the victory of the enemy', in which case it is possible the *ur̄* acted as a form of public chastisement for partners who contravened sexual norms. Regardless of which reading is accepted, it is evident *psak* and *ur̄* ceremonies did not lead to different forms of marital union. Šahapivan called for the wedding types to be performed on an individual basis in cases where one betrothed remained a virgin and the other did not, with one receiving a *psak* and the other having the ceremony *ibrew erkakin*.⁸⁹³ If these led to different unions such a request would have been impossible.

Beyond the wedding's broad features of taking place in church, being officiated by the priest and involving crowning, little can be established about either form of ceremony.

⁸⁹⁰ J.J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay, 1922), pp. 17-19.

⁸⁹¹ *KH* vol. 1, 18.3, pp. 434-435, n. 3. The manuscripts are listed as e, No. 783; f, No. 8006; and z.

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 435.

⁸⁹³ *Ibid.*

However, features of individual weddings do appear in narrative sources. The fastening of a crown (*t'ag kapel*) is recorded in the royal weddings of Trdat III to Ašxēn and Aršak II to P'aranjem and *Epic Histories* refers once to a nuptial *k'awl* ('veil').⁸⁹⁴ Neither the *t'ag* nor *k'ol* appear to have been part of a normative wedding form, unlike *psak* and *ibrew erkakin* that were both recognised by the church establishment. I suggest the *t'ag* refers to a monarchical crown, present due to the royal status of the couples and mirroring the dual crowning attested in Byzantine imperial weddings.

One accordance is seen between later Zoroastrian practice and Šahapivan. The Classical Persian *Rivāyat* of Kaus Kamdin dictated only a married priest who had held the position of *kadag-xwadāy* ('lord of the house') could officiate a wedding.⁸⁹⁵ This accords with Šahapivan's use of the word *erēc*, the term typically used for a married priest, to refer to the priest that performed the ceremony. An absence of information on the Zoroastrian wedding contemporary to Šahapivan means that a link unfortunately cannot be more firmly established, but it is nonetheless interesting to note.

4.4.1 – The Armenian wedding and the wider Christian world

A hard distinction between virgin and non-virgin marriage is in keeping with Christianity more broadly. A remarkable consensus formed among Christian communities in the first millennium regarding the importance of pre-marital virginity, with Peter Brown famously declaring the concept had a 'moral and cultural supremacy' in the faith's doctrine.⁸⁹⁶ This was the result of sexual morality built on Biblical and likely Stoic precedent that cast marriage as indissoluble, sex as unlawful outside monogamous marriage, and stressed the

⁸⁹⁴ MX II.83; *Epic Histories* V.31.10, p. 400; C. Renoux, 'Le mariage arménien dans les plus anciens rituels', *BEL Subsidia* 77 (Rome, 1994), pp. 294-295.

⁸⁹⁵ Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, p. 196.

⁸⁹⁶ P. Brown, 'The Notion of Virginity in the Early Church', in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* eds. B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff and J. Leclercq (New York, 1985), p. 427.

procreative purpose of sex.⁸⁹⁷ It represented a significant departure from broader Greco-Roman rulings on licit sexuality, where divorce was relatively simple and extramarital sex with slaves or prostitutes acceptable for men.⁸⁹⁸ The reproductive imperative of marriage, while present in Christianity, also did not receive the same primacy that it did in Greco-Roman, Zoroastrian, Jewish and later Islamic traditions.⁸⁹⁹ For Christians it was virginity that received greatest emphasis. Armenia was no exception. Šahapivan condemned all sex before marriage, since Adam and Eve were virgins when married, following their Byzantine contemporaries in associating the first couple with the couple during wedding ceremony.⁹⁰⁰

This focus may represent a significant departure from pre-Christian Armenian practice. Strabo claimed Armenian nobles in the last century BCE saw no shame in sending their daughters as prostitutes to the temple of Anahita in Acilesene, nor marrying women who had performed this task.⁹⁰¹ Curiously, accounts of prostitution are absent from Armenian conversion narratives, where Anahita was instead characterised as chaste and frequently associated with the similarly virginal Greek goddess Artemis.⁹⁰² Strabo's account may be rendering the Zoroastrian role of *ātaxš-bandag/ādurān-bandag* ('servant of a fire [temple]', lit. 'fire-bound, bondsman of a fire [temple]'), a role where a man dedicated himself or a household member to the service of a fire temple which did not connote prostitution.⁹⁰³ Despite the name, these individuals were likely not genuine slaves. Partially free individuals

⁸⁹⁷ K. Harper, 'Marriage and Family', in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. S.F. Johnson (Oxford, 2012), pp. 679-684; Weitz, *Between Christ and Caliph*, pp. 22, 256 n. 15.

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21. The Manichaeans, who viewed childbirth and likely sexual differentiation as sinful, are an outlier, G.R. Evans, 'Neither a Pelagian nor a Manichee', *Vigiliae Christianae* 35.3 (1981), pp. 238-239; J.K. Coyle, 'Prolegomena to a Study of Women in Manichaeism', in *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and its World*, eds. P. Mirecki and J. BeDuhn (Leiden, 2001), p. 83.

⁹⁰⁰ *KH* vol. 1, 18.3, 18.7, pp. 432-433, 439-440; Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk 'Hayoc'*, pp. 77.

⁹⁰¹ Strabo, *Geography*, vol. 5: *Books 10-12*, ed. and trans. H.L. Jones (Cambridge, MA, 2014), XI.14.16, pp. 340-341.

⁹⁰² Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, pp. 248-249; S. Javadi and A. Nikoei, 'Studying the Goddess Anahita in Ancient Iran and Armenia', *Journal of Art and Civilization of the Orient* 12 (2016), pp. 58-59.

⁹⁰³ *MHDA* 40.3-6

could only perform the *ātaxš-bandag* function to the extent they were free.⁹⁰⁴ While *bandag* could mean ‘slave’ (as in *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*’s *bandag paristār*, ‘maidservant’) it did not always.⁹⁰⁵ The less ambiguous *anšahrīg ī ātaxš* (‘slave of the fire’) more likely denoted genuine slaves (*an-šahrīg* meaning ‘not from the land’ and presumably a foreign captive or deportee).⁹⁰⁶ *Ātaxš-bandag* meanwhile could be of very vaunted origins. The *wuzurg-framādār* Mihr-Narseh, one of the most powerful figures in fifth-century CE Zoroastrianism, served as *ātaxš-bandag* in the fire temples of Ardwhišt, Afzōn-Ardašīr and Ohrmazd-Pērōz.⁹⁰⁷ The fact that Strabo envisioned temple slavery as an honour may suggest this was the role being envisioned, although he does not mention whether these obligations descended to their children, as was the case for an *ātaxš-bandag*.⁹⁰⁸

Armenian use of crowning as part of the wedding ceremony is unremarkable. It is probable it emerged from the same Antique custom as the Byzantine *stephanoma* (Gk. ‘crowning’) wedding ceremony, which also used crowns and was later rehabilitated into Christianity.⁹⁰⁹ However, the fact this crown was invested in the church by the mid-fifth century in Armenia is remarkable. Similar practice in Byzantium only developed much later. The location of the church as significant in the wedding ceremony is first attested in Justinian’s *Novel 74*, promulgated in 538 CE and rescinded four years later, where couples who wished to marry without dowry were obliged to receive a certificate confirming their

⁹⁰⁴ *MHD* 103.4-6. On partial freedom in Sasanian law, caused by slaves with multiple owners being manumitted or given peculium by one but not others, see *MHD* 1.6-7, 103.4-6; J. Jany, ‘The Legal Status of Slaves in Sasanian and Talmudic Law’, in *With Wisdom as a Robe: Qumran and Other Jewish Studies in Honour of Ida Fröhlich*, ed. K.D. Dobos and M. Kőszeghy (Sheffield, 2009), pp. 479, 483; idem, *Judging in Islamic, Jewish and Zoroastrian Legal Traditions: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Surrey, 2012), pp. 183-184.

⁹⁰⁵ *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 56. Like *bandag*, *rahīg* (‘young man, servant’) and *wīšag* (‘people’) could refer to slaves but did not exclusively. Macuch, ‘Barda and Barda-dāri; T. Daryaei, ‘Sasanian Persia (ca. 224-651 C.E.)’, *Iranian Studies* 31.3/4 (1998), p. 443.

⁹⁰⁶ Macuch, ‘Barda and Barda-dāri’.

⁹⁰⁷ *MHDA* 39.11-17; Macuch, ‘Barda and Barda-dāri’.

⁹⁰⁸ Strabo, XI. 14.16, pp. 340-341; Shaki, ‘Children iii.’. Ritual prostitution was widely attested in Asia Minor, but James Russell argues this does not accord with what we know of Zoroastrianism and particularly Anahita, who was associated with chastity and compared to Artemis by Armenian writers. There is thus reason to doubt Strabo’s veracity. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, pp. 248-249. See also M. Boyce, M.-L. Chaumont and C. Bier, ‘Anāhīd’, *EIr*.

⁹⁰⁹ Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk ‘Hayoc’*, p. 76; Renoux, ‘Le mariage arménien’, pp. 289-305; Meyendorff, ‘Marriage in Byzantium’, p. 104.

wedlock at the church from an *ekdikos*, a Constantinopolitan clerical/legal position designed to defend ecclesiastical rights in civil cases.⁹¹⁰ However, this was a requirement for only a small subset of people of senatorial rank or higher, not normative practice. The need for high-profile individuals to receive administrative documents from a clerical official, or merely present themselves to a cleric upon marriage once *Novel 74* was rescinded, is not comparable to church involvement in the legitimating practice of the crowning. This latter practice is not attested in Byzantium until the late sixth century CE, when Theophylact Simocatta records Patriarch John IV Nesteutes' crowned Emperor Maurice and his predecessor's daughter, Constantia in what appears to have been a special addition requested by the emperor to ensure divine favour as opposed to normal practice.⁹¹¹ The patriarch officiating imperial weddings had become traditional by the time Constantine VI remarried in 795 CE, but priestly involvement in nuptial crowning at lower levels of society did not occur until the eighth and ninth centuries, before which such ceremonies were conducted by imperial officials.⁹¹²

The fact that Byzantine weddings were not normally officiated in churches until the eighth century was not due to a lack of desire for church involvement on the part of the public. Gregory of Nazianzus in the fourth century CE noted couples were eager to have their nuptial crowning performed by their priest but held it should instead be done by the bridegroom's father.⁹¹³ The Church did weigh in on marital morality, condemning those who scorned marriage on the grounds of virginity's superiority in five canons of the c. 340 CE

⁹¹⁰ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 146. On Gr. *ekdikos*, see R.J. Macrides, 'Protekdikos', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, eds. A.P. Kazhdan et al. (Oxford, 1991), pp. 1742-1743.

⁹¹¹ Theophylact Simocatta, *Theophylacti Simocattae historiae*, ed. C. De Boor, compiled P. Wirth (Stuttgart, 1972), 1.10.2-3, p. 57. For English translation, see Theophylact Simocatta, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta: An English Translation with Introduction and Notes*, ed. and trans. M. Whitby and M. Whitby (Oxford, 1986), 1.10.2-3; K. Nikolaou, 'The Byzantines Between Civil and Sacramental Marriage', *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique moderne et contemporaine* 1 (2019) [accessed online <https://journals.openedition.org/bchmc/285> on 06/10/2021].

⁹¹² P. Henry, 'The Moechian Controversy and the Constantinopolitan Synod of January A.D. 809', *The Journal of Theological Studies* 20.2 (1969), p. 500; Meyendorff, 'Marriage in Byzantium', pp. 104-106.

⁹¹³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep 231: Eusebiō Philō*, in *Patrologiae Graecae*, vol. 37: *Gregorius Theologus*, ed. J.-P. Migne (1862), p. 374, BD.

Council of Gangra and later endorsing this in the 692 CE Council of Trullo, but it not attempt to claim authority over the wedding ceremony itself and in doing so challenge the state's control of this practice.⁹¹⁴

In the Sasanian Empire, the East Syrian Church does demonstrate a push towards Christianisation of the marital union more similar to that attested in Armenia. However, they did not make comparable claims over the crowning ceremony itself. The Letter of Mar Aba, 486 CE Synod of Mar Acacius, 576 CE Synod of Mar Ezekiel and 585 CE Synod of Išo'yahb I all praised legitimate marriage and condemned practices like forced celibacy, polygamy, consanguineous union and leaving one's wife without cause, but never legislated regarding the wedding.⁹¹⁵ The mid-seventh-century CE *History of Rabban Bar 'Edta* does depict a bride becoming possessed by demons after her groom, who had come to receive a blessing for his betrothal from the titular sixth-century monk, ignored his advice to man the wedding procession with priests and Levites instead of the traditional singers.⁹¹⁶ The tale indicates a desire for Church involvement in the wedding ceremony, but only to check the tone of festivities that occurred after the legitimisation of the union with pious modifications. The East Syrian Church did not go further and assert authority over the crowning act that conferred the wedding's legitimacy itself, as the Armenians did, until the Islamic era.⁹¹⁷

The festivities of the wedding, involving a procession and banquet, are largely invisible in Armenian canons and appear only in the context of warning clerics not to become overly involved. The Canons of Nersēs and Meršapuh anathematised priests who provided

⁹¹⁴ Nikolaou, 'Byzantines Between Civil and Sacramental Marriage'; Meyendorff, 'Marriage in Byzantium', pp. 99-100. The Council of Trullo condemned the Armenian Eucharist, priestly inheritance and dietary practices (Canons 32, 33, 56 and 99) and was not accepted by the Armenian Church. For Armenian translation of the relevant canons of Gangra, see *KH* vol. 1, 8.1, 8.4, 8.9-8.10, 8.14, pp. 192-196.

⁹¹⁵ *Synodicon Orientale*, 4.3, 8.1-8.2, 8.7, 9.13, pp. 303-306, 335-338, 374-375, 377-378, 409-411.

⁹¹⁶ Weitz, *Between Christ and Caliph*, pp. 17-18. On Rabban Bar 'Edta, see L. Van Rompay, 'Bar 'Edta, Rabban (d. 611-621) [Ch. of E.]', in *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of Syriac Heritage*, eds. S.P. Brock, A.M. Butts, G.A. Kiraz and L. Van Rompay (Piscataway, NJ, 2011), p. 56.

⁹¹⁷ Weitz, *Between Christ and Caliph*, p. 18.

nuptial couches to couples from church property.⁹¹⁸ The canons attributed to Sahak Part'ew raised the same issue, complaining particularly about the use of the church's *varagoyr* ('[altar] curtain') for the couple's nuptial couch.⁹¹⁹

Thus, the Armenian clergy was alone in the Near East in involving themselves in the legitimating part of the wedding ceremony during the fifth century. Requirement of a nuptial blessing from a priest as part of a normative ceremony did occur by the fifth century in the Christian West too, but this should be understood as a separate tendency since two such distant Christian communities are unlikely to have influenced one another.⁹²⁰ As a declaration of faith, Armenian practice was perhaps more like early rabbinic Judaism, wherein marital customs signified the continuity of an identity group (Israel or Christian Armenia) stretching into the Biblical past, than Byzantine custom.⁹²¹

4.4.2 – Remarriage

The phrase *ibrew erkaki* suggests the *ur* ceremony was primarily used for remarriage. That remarriage was sanctioned with clerical involvement is remarkable. Individuals often married multiple times in Late Antiquity, either due to the death of partners or divorce, which was acceptable in much of the Roman East. Justinian's lengthy *Novel 22* promulgated 536 CE characterised marriage as dissoluble.⁹²² Still, while the Byzantine church sanctioned the dissolution of marriage, they at best tolerated remarriage and saw it as contradictory to the monogamous character of the Christian union. St Paul had discouraged remarriage in his

⁹¹⁸ *ew zekelec 'oy aragast tanc' p'esayic' ew harsanc', zor ayl mi ixsesc'en arnel. zor t'ē gtc'i ok' arareal' t'ē k'ahanay ē' loycc'i, t'ē dpir' nzoesc'i*, ('And, moreover, [church property] shall not be permitted to form the nuptial couch of the houses of bridegrooms and brides. For if someone is found doing so, if a priest, he should be defrocked; if a scribe, he should be anathematised.'), *KH* vol. 1, 20.8, p. 482.

⁹¹⁹ *Ew lsem t'ē zekelec 'woy spas, manawand zvaragoyr i harsanis aragast p'esayi ew harsin, [...] vasn oroy zk'ahanayn zayn aržan ē xlel i kargē iwrme*, ('And I hear that [they use] the furniture of the church, especially the curtain (*varagoyr*) for the nuptial couch of the bride-groom and bride [...] because of which that priest is worthy to be extirpated from his rank.'), *Ibid.*, 17.21, p. 379.

⁹²⁰ J.A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, 1990), p. 88.

⁹²¹ M.L. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton, 2018), p. 76.

⁹²² *Novels of Justinian*, pp. 233-272.

second letter to the Corinthians and by the fifth century several prominent theologians had condemned the practice.⁹²³ The second-century apologist Athenagoras declared a widower who remarried *parakekalummenos* ('an adulterer in disguise').⁹²⁴ Augustine likewise depicted divorced men who remarried as adulterers on the grounds that the New Testament gave examples of separation from marriage but not termination of it.⁹²⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus claimed second marriages would have only been acceptable if there had been two Christs, while Basil of Caesarea went further in demanding that individuals who contracted multiple marriages should be excommunicated for as many years as the number they had contracted.⁹²⁶ John Chrysostom characterised opposition to divorce and remarriage as a distinguishing feature of Christian marriage less than fifty years before the Council of Şahapivan convened.⁹²⁷

Second marriages were concluded without church blessing until the ninth century and outside observers, like Arab writer Abu 'Uthman al-Jahiz, considered disapproval of remarriage characteristic of Christianity.⁹²⁸ The 325 CE Council of Nicaea did permit second marriage for widowed spouses, but this was an exceptional reaction to Manichaean condemnation of such remarriages, and Laodicea in 360 CE permitted remarriage only grudgingly after the surviving spouse had undergone a period of spiritual discipline.⁹²⁹ After 420 CE, clergymen were forbidden from dissolving their marriage on the pretext of chastity

⁹²³ 1 Cor. 7:39-40.

⁹²⁴ Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis*, in *Die älteste Apologeten: Texte mit kurzen Einleitungen*, ed. E.J. Goodspeed (Göttingen, 1914), 33.2, p. 355. For English translation, see C. Richardson, *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. I (Philadelphia, 1953), 337.

⁹²⁵ Augustine, *Sancti Aureli Augustini: De perfectione iustitiae hominis, De gestis Pelagii, De gratia Chrsiti et de peccato originali libri dvo, De nvptiis et concupiscentis ad Valerium comitem libri duo*, eds. K.F. Urba and J. Zycha (Vienna, 1902), III.1.10.11, pp. 222-223; Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 95. Those who dismissed their concubine to marry a different woman were similarly declared adulterous. J. Evans-Grubb, 'Concubinage', in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, eds. G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown and O. Grabar (Cambridge, MA, 1999), p. 388.

⁹²⁶ Meyendorff, 'Marriage in Byzantium', pp. 100-103.

⁹²⁷ Harper, 'Marriage and Family', p. 667.

⁹²⁸ Meyendorf, 'Marriage in Byzantium', p. 101; Weitz, *Between Christ and Caliph*, p. 2.

⁹²⁹ Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, pp. 97-98. For Armenian translation of these canons, see *KH* vol. 1, 4.8, 10.1, pp. 121-123, 229.

by Byzantine civil law.⁹³⁰ Justinian excluded married couples and those with children or grandchildren from becoming bishops, arguing their family would distract from their duties, while those in second marriages and their spouses were barred from clerical office altogether.⁹³¹

Armenian Christianity appears comparatively open to remarriage, especially in the fifth century. The 645 CE Council of Dwin implies some anxiety towards the practice existed, as its seventh canon imposed heavy (though unspecified) fines and seven years penance upon individuals who remarried without a *vardapet*'s consent within seven years of their spouse being enslaved.⁹³² However, the existence of *ibrew erkakin* in Šahapivan demonstrates that second marriages could be blessed which, even if the benediction offered was simpler, is exceptional and probably reflects the inability of the church to avoid interacting with the practical social realities of marriage. While Byzantine clerics bemoaned remarriage and threatened excommunication for those who contracted them, they did not dispute their legality or try to prevent them from occurring. Constantinian legislation did not impose restrictions on remarriage, while the first reform to divorce law by Theodosius II permitted divorced persons to remarry immediately.⁹³³ However, Armenian clerics could not similarly avoid remarriages as they were part of the region's civil apparatus and monopolised the wedding service. They therefore had to either engage with or attempt to oppose remarriage. Given the existence of non-Christian practices such as *čagar*, which required couples to contract multiple marriages to continue the lines of a third party, it is unsurprising that remarriage continued outside of the clergy.

⁹³⁰*The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions: A Translation with Commentary, Glossary, and Bibliography* [henceforth *CTh*], eds. and trans. C. Pharr, T.S. Davidson and M.B. Pharr (Princeton, 1952), 16.2.44, p. 448; S. Elm, 'Celibacy', in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, eds. G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown and O. Grabar (Cambridge, MA, 1999), p. 366.

⁹³¹ *CJ* 1.3.41; *Novels*, vol. 1, 6.1, 6.5-6, pp. 99, 104-106.

⁹³² *KH* vol. 2, 38.7, pp. 205-206.

⁹³³ Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, pp. 94-97.

4.4.2.1 – Multiple marriage

More surprising is the possibility that the Armenian church tacitly permitted multiple simultaneous marriages. Polygamy, the taking of multiple marital partners by one man, was heavily condemned in historical and hagiographical sources and often associated with the Persians. Elišē enumerated it among the changes Yazdgerd II forced on Armenia and polygamy was also the target of Eznik Kołbac‘i’s claim that Zoroastrians were *kinemol* (‘woman crazy’).⁹³⁴ Nevertheless, royal polygamy is evidenced in Armenia both before and after conversion. Plutarch claimed Tigran the Great supported multiple wives at his residence of Artaxata.⁹³⁵ In the Christian era, Aršak II was married simultaneously to Olympia and P‘aranjem, and *Epic Histories* even asserts he attempted to marry a third wife – a daughter of Šābuhr II – but was thwarted by P‘aranjem’s father, Andovk Siwni, who worried it would damage her relative prestige.⁹³⁶ Such a treatment implies that members of the royal house were empowered to take multiple wives even following the coming of Christianity.

It is unclear if polygamy was practised outside of the royal family. The royal’s role as *primus inter pares* among the *naxarar* may indicate their practices were similar, but references to polygamy among the *naxarar* are ambiguous. Mušeł Mamikonean is said to have captured the ‘women and daughters’ of the *bdeašx* of Gugark‘ and killed the women of the *bdeašx* of Ałjnik‘, in the same way King Tiran is described having multiple ‘women’ (*zkanays*) in his home.⁹³⁷ However, the multiple potential meanings of *kin* (‘woman, wife’) make it impossible to establish if this refers to genuine polygamy or merely polygyny, the practice of a man having multiple sexual partners to enhance his procreative abilities.

⁹³⁴ *p‘oxanak ənd knoĵ mioy, bazum kanays ařasc‘en. zi ačec‘eal bazmasc‘in azgk‘ Hayoc‘*, (‘instead of one wife, they should take many, so the Armenian race (*azg*) shall increase and abound’), Elišē 2.306, p. 579; Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, p. 151, n. 99.

⁹³⁵ Plutarch, *Lives*, vol. 2: *Themistocles and Camillus. Aristides and Cato Major. Cimon and Lucullus*, ed. and trans. B. Perrin (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 31, pp. 572-573; W. Scheidel, ‘Monogamy and Polygamy in Greece, Rome and World History’, *Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics* (2008), p. 2.

⁹³⁶ *Epic Histories* IV.20, p. 137.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*, III.21, IV.15, V.15-16, pp. 306-309, 340-345, 390.

Polygyny is not necessarily proof of polygamy. Polygyny has traditionally been the norm even for monogamous societies, with 93% of the 1,154 societies examined by the *Human Relations Area Files* recognising some degree of socially sanctioned polygyny.⁹³⁸ The multiple *kin* may instead indicate concubinage, which was officially an alternative to legal marriage and not a supplement.⁹³⁹ Concubines may be the target of Šahapivan's legislation against *k'ahanay* possessing *alaxin pornik* (lit. 'fornicating maid-servant'), since this grade of priest could not marry and such figures are not mentioned in reference to clergymen who could marry, like *erēc*.⁹⁴⁰ However, as the example of Pap, son of Yusik, demonstrates, individuals could have both wives and concubines. Children produced by concubines were likely of lower status than those produced through marriage, as was the case in Zoroastrian and Persian Christian law.⁹⁴¹

Zakarian has suggested an absence of attacks on polygamy in Armenian canon law imply the practice was extirpated by the fifth century, but this could instead represent tacit permission.⁹⁴² *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'* omits Basil of Caesarea's canon 80, concerning polygamy, despite compiling other canons of that bishop.⁹⁴³ Nor did the *Passion of Šušanik* suggest the saint's husband's second marriage was illegitimate, instead depicting his apostasy as the reason she considered her marriage revoked.⁹⁴⁴ Since only men of significant means likely had the resources necessary to support multiple wives, Armenian society probably practised what Walter Scheidel called Economically Imposed Monogamy.⁹⁴⁵ An absence of attacks on polygamy may therefore speak more to Šahapivan's lack of control over men of station than it does to *naxarars* no longer taking multiple wives.

⁹³⁸ G.A. Clark, 'Human Monogamy', *Science* 282.5391 (1998), p. 1047.

⁹³⁹ Evans-Grubb, 'Concubinage', p. 388.

⁹⁴⁰ *KH* vol. 1, 18.2, p. 432. Nersēs and Meršapuh went further, forbidding *k'ahanay* from purchasing maidservants or paying prostitutes. *Ibid.*, 20.32 p. 489.

⁹⁴¹ Stepanyan, 'Household/Family', p. 48. Cf. *MHD* 1.2-4; Sachau, *Corpus juris des Jesubocht*, 5.13, 6.13, pp. 177, 244-246; Shaki, 'Children iii.'

⁹⁴² Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 145-147.

⁹⁴³ Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, p. 82, n. 154.

⁹⁴⁴ *Passion of Saint Shushanik*, pp. 1, 42.

⁹⁴⁵ Scheidel, 'Monogamy and Polygamy', p. 4; Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 147.

4.5 – The Legal Function of Armenian Priests

The doctrinal explanation for priestly involvement in the wedding ceremony can be found in John Chrysostom, whose interpretation of the *stephanoma* crowns as representative of spousal purity offered a blueprint for incorporating nuptial crowning into Christian theology that Armenian Christianity adopted earlier than other Christian communities.⁹⁴⁶ However, such an explanation is unfulfilling. It does not explain why Armenia was the first region to involve clerics in the wedding, nor why this involvement was already so codified by the time of Šahapivan, less than forty years after Chrysostom's death when the general view of Christian authorities was one of suspicion towards the union. An analysis of Armenia's novel approach to the wedding must therefore look further than theology. Since marriage was a state issue as well as a theological one, it is necessary to examine church integration into the Armenian secular administration to understand its approach.

The high degree of clerical involvement appears best explained by the Armenian priesthood's involvement in the administration of local justice, which they monopolised following the fall of the Aršakuni monarchy if not before. No Armenian law code existed outside of church canons until the late twelfth-century *Datastanagirk'* of Mxit'ar Goš, which itself cannot be considered a truly secular code, as it heavily incorporated conciliar literature, was authored by a cleric and was more concerned with bringing sinners to penance than criminals to justice.⁹⁴⁷ Furthermore, the work empowered priests to administer law, given the absence of an Armenian king or prince at the time.⁹⁴⁸ Such an absence of central, non-religious authority is like Armenia's situation between the fifth and ninth centuries CE. A few references to a *datawor* ('judge') do appear in the fifth century but none suggest a coherent native administration, excluding a complaint regarding contemporary judges in Movses

⁹⁴⁶ Nikolaou, 'Byzantines Between Civil and Sacramental Marriage'.

⁹⁴⁷ R.W. Thomson 'From Theology to Law: Creating an Armenian Secular Law Code', in *Legalism, Community and Justice*, eds. F. Pirie and J. Scheele (Oxford, 2014), pp. 36-40.

⁹⁴⁸ *Girk' Datastani*, 1, p. 26.

Xorenac'i that more likely reflects eighth-century norms.⁹⁴⁹ Eznik Kołbac'i uses *datawor* in the Biblical sense.⁹⁵⁰ *Epic Histories* includes *datawor* among a list of official positions, but this should probably be understood as the Persian *dādwār* ('judge', lit. 'one who bears the law'), from which the word *datawor* derived, which was a category of Zoroastrian priests.⁹⁵¹ There thus appears to have been a lack of non-clerical judicial authorities.

It seems likely that *vardapets* played a significant role in this administration, as was the case in Mxit'ar Goš's time, although the exact functions of the position during Late Antiquity are unclear due to the earliest accounts of the training and status of *vardapet* being in the *Datastanagirk*.⁹⁵² Šahapivan 18 forbade another region's *vardapet*, *erēc* or bishop from undoing an excommunication or other penalties placed by a *vardapet* on somebody from his community.⁹⁵³ Similarly, Šahapivan 16 addressed *vardapets* directly in the second person during its exhortation to punish those who took bribes in return for positions in the local clerical or non-clerical administration.⁹⁵⁴ Such references suggest *vardapets* were the audience Šahapivan's compilers expected to be operating justice. The association of *vardapets* and justice is affirmed by other councils. 645 CE Dwin complained of those who had taken new spouses after their old ones had been abducted without their *vardapet*'s permission, suggesting an official capacity in sanctioning unions.⁹⁵⁵ Canon 49 attributed to Sahak was entitled 'concerning bishops and *vardapets*' but concerned bringing of a lawsuit

⁹⁴⁹ *Datawork* 'tmardik', *sutk*', *xabolk*', *kašararuk*', *anəntrolk*' *irawanc*', *anhastatk*', *hakarəkol*' ('Judges are barbarous, deceitful, fraudsters, accepting of bribes, imprudent in justice, pliable and contrary'), MX III.68.37, p. 2119.

⁹⁵⁰ Eznik Kołbac'i, *Elc alandoc*', ed. A.A. Abrahamyan (Erevan, 1994) II.9, IV.1, 9, pp. 114, 202, 216-218; Thomson 'From Theology to Law', pp. 27-28.

⁹⁵¹ *Epic Histories* III.21.2, p. 306; Shaked, 'Administrative Functions of Priests', pp. 261-271.

⁹⁵² *Girk* 'Datastani', 4, pp. 34-36; *Datastanagirk*', trans. Thomson, pp. 43-46.

⁹⁵³ *Et'ē vardapeti uruk*' *zašakert kam zžoovrdakan kam zk'ahanay nzoveal ic'ē kam banadreal kam kapeal baniw vardepetut'eal, ayloc*' *teleac*' *vardapet kam episkopos kam erēc*' *mi išxesc'ē zanicealn awrhnel ew zbaniw kapealn lucanel*, ('If a *vardapet* shall anathematise or excommunicate or bind with word of doctrine (*vardapetut'iwn*) a disciple or community member or *k'ahanay*; a *vardapet* or bishop or *erēc*' in another place is not permitted to bless the cursed one and unbind the one bound by word'), *KH* vol. 1, 18.18, pp. 460-461.

⁹⁵⁴ *K'anzi duk*', *vardapetk*', *dētk*' *žoovrdean, awrinak ēk*' *ašxarhi, and jez hayec'eal, zusumn jer yaraĵ beren. apa zgojš*, ('For you, *vardapets*, are generals of the community and are an exemplar to the world. Looking to you, they carry forth your teachings. Therefore, be careful'), *Ibid.*, 18.16, p. 459.

⁹⁵⁵ *KH* vol. 2, 38.7, pp. 205-206.

and did not mention either rank within its text, further connecting the *vardapet* to the administration of justice.⁹⁵⁶ The *vardapet* was likely not solely a judicial role. Both *vardapet* and *vardapetut'iw*n already appear in an educational context in Koriwn's fifth-century *Life of Maštoc'*.⁹⁵⁷ The *Rulings of the Apostle Thaddeus* refers to the *hastatec'in* ('confirmation') of *vardapets awrēnsusoyc's* ('legislative *vardapets*') implying that, while *vardapets* had a significant role in administering justice, non-legislative *vardapets* also existed.⁹⁵⁸

Non-clerical individuals perhaps exercised some jural power on a local basis. Šahapivan 16 included an *azat* and *šinakan* 'who are among the judges' in its condemnation of those who took bribes in return for offices, which included the position of *awrēnsdir* ('legislator', lit. law-setter', from Parth. *awdēn*).⁹⁵⁹ These figures may have administered *awrēnk'* ('customary law'), a culturally assumed body of law used to distinguish the Armenians from other groups.⁹⁶⁰ However, Mardirossian identified all three, alongside the reference to a *žolovrdapet* ('parish priest, rabbi', lit. 'leader of the community'), as later

⁹⁵⁶ *KH* vol. 1, 17.49, pp. 367, 411.

⁹⁵⁷ *Ew žoloveal makuns ar' i niwt' vardapetut'iw*n [...] *ew dayekabar snuc'anel ew xratel*, ('And he gathered children for the purpose of education [...] and to nourish and advise [them] like a *dayeak'*); *k'anzi sovor isk en čšmarit vardapetk'' zanjanc' arak'inut'iw*ns *kanon ašakerteloc' dnel*, ('For true *vardapets* are used to setting their behaviour as an example for their students'), Koriwn, 15.4-5, 22.11, pp. 242-243, 251. Cf. Maksoudian, 'Vardapet', p. 360.

⁹⁵⁸ *Yoržam lusaworec'aw k'alak'n mkrut'eamb, jernadrec'in episkoposuns, k'ahanays ew sarkawaguns, ew hastatec'in vardapets awrēnsusoyc's* ('When [Thaddeus] illuminated the city with baptism, they ordained bishops, priests and ministers, and confirmed *vardapets* of the law'), *KH* vol. 2, 26.0 p. 19.

⁹⁵⁹ *Episkopos ok' kam erēc' kam azat ok' i dataworac' ew kam šinakan vasn arajords kargeloy ew hoviws patarasteloy ekelec'woy ew žolovrdapets ew awrēnsdirs kac'uc'aneloy «Zi canic'en het'anosk', t'ē mardik en nok'a» ew vasn aysr irac' kašar' arc'en ew kam ač'aranawk' arnic'en* ('A bishop or elder or nobleman who is among the judges, or even a peasant, concerning assigning leaders and preparing pastors for the church and parish priests and establishing legislators "For the heathens shall know that they are human" [Psalm 9:20]) and concerning this they take a bribe or else show favouritism') *KH* vol. 1, 18.16, p. 455. The inclusion of a *šinakan* is particularly remarkable as *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'* elsewhere banned *šinakan* from being in clerical office. *KH* vol. 2, 38.8, p. 208.

⁹⁶⁰ J.-P. Mahé, 'Norme écrite et droit coutumier en Arménie du V^e au XIII^e siècle', *Travaux et Mémoires* 13 (2000), pp. 683-687; Zakarian, *Women, Too, Were Blessed*, pp. 55-57. *Awrēnk'* should not be characterised as a form of systematised law and appears to have been closer to cultural assumed knowledge. Elišē depicts Vardan Mamikonean characterising *awrēnk'* as comparable to but distinct from the Maccabees' *awrēnk'*, contrasted to the *anawrēn* ('unlawful') Yazdgerd II, while Movses Xorenac'i similarly uses *awrēnk'* in describing the Bagratuni's supposed Jewish roots. *Mart edeal krūesc'uk' and anōrēn išxanin vasn hayreni astuacatur ōrinac'n* [...] [*Makabēac'ik'*] *martuc'eal krūec'an i veray astuacatur ōrinac'n anddēm t'agaworin Antiok'ac'woc'* ('We shall fight, setting battle against the *anawrēn* prince for our natal, God-given *awrēnk'* [...] the Maccabees] fought and struggled against the king of the Antiochenes on behalf of their God-given *awrēnk'*'), Elišē, 5.24-48, pp. 638-642. *Ordik' Bagaratay* [...] *srov katarec'an ariabar i veray hayreni awrinac'n* ('The sons of Bagrat [...] died by the sword valiantly for their natal *awrēnk'*'), *MX* II.9.6, p. 1865.

interpolations that do not refer to specific fifth-century offices.⁹⁶¹ Even assuming they were original, all positions in Šahapivan 16 were explicitly religious offices, apart from *awrēnsdir* which was framed in a religious context also, since the list is followed by a quotation from Psalms.⁹⁶² Therefore, the passage does not suggest a separate secular hierarchy administered non-clerical justice, but rather that the local elite could impose upon the priesthood to influence the selection of officials. Similar integration of a clerical/legal structure into the secular elite perhaps also explains Agat‘angēlos’ reference to *atenakal dpirk‘n nšanagrac‘n* (‘scribes of the tribunal’) performing judicial functions in the Aršakuni court, since by his time *dpir* often referred to the clerical position.⁹⁶³ Movses Xorenac‘i’s reference to the appointment of *irawarar* (‘justices’) in his treatment of the fourth-century CE reforms of King Vałaršak to the kingdom of Armenia may suggest a non-clerical hierarchy under the control of the royal family, but his reference tells us little about the position, including whether they were part of the priesthood.⁹⁶⁴ Certainly, following the fall of the Aršakuni, judicial functions appear to have been primarily the preserve of priests.

This position granted Armenian clergymen greater access to punitive measures than their Byzantine coreligionists, which are particularly apparent in Šahapivan. While Byzantine Christianity typically restrained itself to penitential punishment and exclusion from the community, Šahapivan ordered a host of other penalties, most frequently financial. Derivatives of the word *tugan* (‘fine, amend’) appear thirty-three times in Šahapivan and fourteen of the council’s twenty canons called for some form of pecuniary exaction from

⁹⁶¹ Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk‘ Hayoc‘*, p. 144.

⁹⁶² *Awrēnsdir* also later became a standard term for the Prophet Muhammad. Sebeos, trans. Thomson, p. 96, n. 594.

⁹⁶³ Agat‘angēlos 8, p. 1357. The term *dpir* (‘scribe’) is itself a loan from MP. *dibīr* (‘scribe’). Cf. *KH* vol. 1, 18.2, pp. 430-431.

⁹⁶⁴ *Irawarars i tann ark‘uni, irawarars ew i k‘alak‘s ew yawans* ([Vałaršak appointed] justices in the royal house and justices in the cities and towns’), MX II.8.40, p. 1864. Note again the difficulties with using Xorenac‘i’s account of Vałaršak’s reform, which was ascribed to the fictitious Parthian archives. See Garsoïan, ‘Movsēs Xorenac‘i’.

perpetrators, with *azat* generally paying twice the amount of *šinakan*.⁹⁶⁵ More serious penalties were also applied to *šinakan*. They were beaten for practicing *diwt'ut'iwn* ('enchantment'), fornicating, abandoning their wives or consulting soothsayers; while unrepentant practitioners of *kaxardrut'iwn* ('sorcery') and *urac'ut'iwn* ('apostasy') were sentenced to death.⁹⁶⁶ Non-noble women especially were often condemned to periods of service at leprosariums, with a one year penalty for those who married a man less than a year after he had unfairly divorced his wife and ten years for one who willingly slept with a close relative.⁹⁶⁷ Šahapivan 10 and 19 demonstrate particularly violent combinations. The former ordered *šinakan* who practised *diwt'ut'iwn* should receive two sets of fifteen lashes, be blackened and burned', have a limb broken, and work at the leprosarium for two years.⁹⁶⁸ Clerics who performed unspecified *mclnēut'iwn* ('filthiness') and families found in cults received an *aluēsdrošm* ('mark of a fox') on their forehead and could also have their sinews cut, and be interred in a leprosarium – presumably for life.⁹⁶⁹ Both the *aluēsdrošm* and reference to being 'blackened and burned' likely refer to branding, which would match Biblical precedent and accord with Aristakēs Lastivertc'i in the eleventh century, who used the compound *aluēsaxaranawk' [...] drošmel* ('to mark with a fox-brand').⁹⁷⁰

Such powers remained in the clergy's hands until at least the seventh century CE. The 645 CE Canons of Dwin subjected individuals who remarried within seven years of their spouse being abducted to lashing and having their property confiscated by *vardapets* and distributed to the poor.⁹⁷¹ The Canons attributed to Sahak likewise imposed an unspecified number of lashings and fines upon rural bishops who failed to visit every church in their

⁹⁶⁵ *KH* vol. 1, 18.0-13, 18.16, pp. 428-449,

⁹⁶⁶ On beatings: *Ibid.*, 18.3-4, 18.9-10, pp. 432-438, 441-442. On death penalty: *Ibid.*, 18.8, p. 440.

⁹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.4, 18.12, pp. 436, 445. Compare John Chrysostom's hiring of staff for leprosariums or Mar Ezekiel's talk about donating servants and maidservants to hospices upon death in *Synodicon Orientale*, 8.11, 8.26, pp. 378-379, 384.

⁹⁶⁸ *KH* vol. 1, 18.10, pp. 442.

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.19, pp. 461-462.

⁹⁷⁰ Aristakēs Lastivertc'i, *Patmut'iwn Aristakisi Lastivertc'woy*, ed. K.N. Yuzbašyan (Erevan, 1963), 22-23, pp. 124-129. Cf. 3 Maccabees 2:29; 1 Timothy 4:2; Hovhanessian, 'Council of Šahapivan', pp. 75, 84, 92-93.

⁹⁷¹ *KH* vol. 2 38.7, pp. 205-206.

diocese regularly.⁹⁷² Thus punitive powers, while most prominent in Šahapivan, appear throughout fifth to seventh centuries Armenian clerical literature. This gave the region's clerics a wider remit than typical for contemporary clergymen.

In theory, the clergy lacking competing civil administrations and possessing broad penal powers removed roadblocks to Christian reform. Yet in practice, clerics were placed in the precarious position of juggling Christian morality and the expectations of the powerful *naxarar* elite on whom their power rested.⁹⁷³ While Byzantine clerics could condemn remarriage (for example) in principle and then defer the necessity of establishing them to the civil administration, Šahapivan did not have this ability except in cases where an individual's personal power might protect them from clerical authority. In his survey of Byzantine divorce law, James Brundage stated that Justinianic legislators struggled 'to reconcile the contention of Christian doctrinal writers that couples should remain married for life with the practical realities of civil society'.⁹⁷⁴ In Armenia, priests were both these doctrinal writers and legislators and had to find that compromise within a single coherent legal structure.

Šahapivan's final canon anathematised the families of a *naxarar*, *ostikan* ('court officer'), bishop and other powerful individual found contravening church teachings, but its imposition of penalties if the authority refused to surrender the defiler to the bishop is tantamount to an admission that the church did not have power to impose their rulings over them.⁹⁷⁵ The 365 CE ps.-Synod of Aštišat purportedly dealt with crimes among the *naxarar* according to both Movses Xorenac'i and *Epic Histories*, but its canons do not survive and Šahapivan appears to have superseded it.⁹⁷⁶ That *naxarar* could effectively avoid punishment is perhaps related to the position of the clergy as court prelates to the nobility, demonstrating

⁹⁷² *KH* vol. 1, 17.4, p. 370.

⁹⁷³ For an analysis of the foundations of the power of Armenian bishops, see Chapter 2.3.2, pp. 78-83.

⁹⁷⁴ Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 117.

⁹⁷⁵ *KH* vol. 1, 18.20, pp. 464-466.

⁹⁷⁶ *Epic Histories* IV.4, pp. 313-318; MX III.20.12, p. 2032.

the power of the elite rather than necessarily the weakness of the clerical administration attached to them.

A particularly remarkable display of elite influence on Christian authorities is the example of child marriage. The sixth-century Canons of Nersēs and Meršapuh condemned such marriages as ‘untimely’.⁹⁷⁷ Likewise, the canons attributed to Sahak argued underaged children should never wed.⁹⁷⁸ Nonetheless, two of Sahak’s ancestors and predecessors as *kat’olikos* – Gregory the Illuminator and Yusik I – married age twelve.⁹⁷⁹ Gregory’s wedding may merely represent an instance of biological markers trumping age norms in an individual instance of noble marriage, since Movses Xorenac’i placed it at *arbunk’*.⁹⁸⁰ However, Yusik explicitly married while underage and may have further contravened Sahak’s canon if his bride was an adult when they were betrothed.⁹⁸¹ Perhaps because his Gregorid status made him an ideal marital candidate to bolster royal power, the union was never dissolved and legitimate children were produced from it. Such an explicit example of a nobleman forcing a lauded holy man into a union Christianity generally found abhorrent reflects the clergy’s wider need to balance their roles as Christian exemplars with secular elite expectations.

Armenian clerics likely inherited their judicial role from their Zoroastrianised predecessors, as the Zoroastrian priestly establishment held a similar monopoly over Sasanian non-religious justice. Agathias depicted Zoroastrian priests presiding over private and public affairs, involving themselves in the making of agreements and conducting of suits, and

⁹⁷⁷ *Tlayoc’ psak mi iṣxec’ en awrhnel [...] zi aypisi anžam harsaneac’ gnac’ in vnask’ mahaberk’*, (‘They are not authorised to bless the marriage of children [...] for death-bringing sins shall overflow from such untimely weddings’), *KH* vol. 1, 20.24, p. 487.

⁹⁷⁸ *Ew duk’ k’ahanayk’ tlayoc’ amenewin isk psak mi awrhneḱ’ minč’ew i katarumn hasaki*, (‘And you priests are by no means to bless the crown of children until they have reached maturity’), *Ibid.*, 17.27, p. 382.

⁹⁷⁹ Zenob Glak, p. 22; *Epic Histories* III.5.8-20, pp. 281-282.

⁹⁸⁰ *MX* II.80.7-8, p. 1970. The passage uses *arbunk’* for the age which Gregory’s younger son exited the *vans kananc’* (‘nunnery’, lit. ‘monastery for women’) he and his mother had retreated to following her divorce, perhaps demonstrating this was the age children were expected to separate from their mothers.

⁹⁸¹ *KH* vol. 1, 17.27, p. 382.

claimed the Persians considered nothing to be legal unless it had been ratified by a *magus*.⁹⁸² Hagiographic evidence attest a *mowbed* ('priest') governing Adiabene and another, named Ādur-Šāpur, headed a court of law, although Shaul Shaked notes this may simply express their great influence and not represent official governance.⁹⁸³ Nonetheless, the Anklesaria manuscript of the *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* offers native support for Agathias' characterisations. The text empowered the *mowbedān-mowbed* ('high priest') to issue decrees in his own name and with his own seal but clarified this was done *pad gōwišn šāhān šāh* ('by the word of the *šāhān-šāh*').⁹⁸⁴

The Armenian clergy would have been intimately familiar with this system. Agat'angēlos characterised the first two generations of Christian priests as re-instructed pagan priests and their sons, a policy Mardirossian identifies as a practical step to prevent reprisals against the infant faith by dispossessed priestly families, most notably the Vahewuni.⁹⁸⁵ However, a side benefit was that the new establishment was familiar with the structures of the old, and there is evidence of Zoroastrian mechanisms of control being used in Šahapivan's attempts to extirpate non-Christian practices. The highest fine in Šahapivan, 1200 *dram* – which was imposed on *azat* who abducted or unfairly divorced a woman, and on bishops caught in extra-marital affairs – was not only double that required from *šinakan* for the same crime but was equal to the among required to extirpate a *tanābuhl* sin in Zoroastrian law.⁹⁸⁶ *Tanābuhl* was the highest grade of sin typically punished by fine, behind *marg-arzān* (lit. '(sins) deserving death') which typically occurred only when a *tanābuhl* sin had not been

⁹⁸² Agathias, *History of Justinian*, II.26.5, p. 61; A. Cameron, 'Agathias on the Sassanians', *DOP* 23/24 (1969/1970), pp. 86-87.

⁹⁸³ *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*, vol. 2, p. 371; *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*, vol. 4, ed. P. Bedjan (Paris, 1894), p. 135f; Shaked, 'Administrative Functions of Priests', p. 268.

⁹⁸⁴ *MHDA* 36.7, following Shaked, 'Administrative Functions of Priests', p. 269.

⁹⁸⁵ Agat'angēlos 120.1-7, pp. 1703-1705; Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk 'Hayoc'*, p. 49. Cf. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, pp. 113-152; de Jong, 'Armenian and Georgian Zoroastrianism', pp. 119, 123-125.

⁹⁸⁶ *KH* vol. 1, 18.1, 18.4-5, 18.7, pp. 430-432, 435-440; ŠnŠ 1.2-3, p. 28. Amount calculated according to Yishai Kiel's evaluation of the value of a 300 *stēr* fine. Y. Kiel, 'Redesigning *Tzitzit* in the Babylonian Talmud in Light of Literary Depictions of the Zoroastrian *Kustig*', in *Shoshannat Yaakov: Jewish and Iranian Studies in Honor of Yaakov Elman*, eds. S. Secunda and S. Fine (Leiden, 2012), p. 200.

atoned for within a year.⁹⁸⁷ As such, the concordance of *tanābuhl* and the highest fined amount in Šahapivan implies Zoroastrian influence on early Armenian Christian practice.

Other fines in Šahapivan do not match Zoroastrian sin grades so neatly, but this does not preclude the possibility that they bore Iranian influence. Šahapivan contains fines of 50, 100, 200, 300, 500 and 600 *dram*, while Kiel calculated the prices imposed in *Šāyest nē Šāyest* for the lesser Zoroastrian grades of sin (*adruš*, *xwar*, *bāzāy* or *yāt*) as respectively 120, 240, 360 and 720 *dram*.⁹⁸⁸ However, *tanābuhl* price appears to have crystallised earlier than lesser grades, which show more variation across the sources.⁹⁸⁹ Furthermore, the doubling effect demonstrated by Šahapivan's fines matches Zoroastrian practice, where sins were commonly calculated as multiples of lesser sins. The Persian-language *Rivāyats* collected by Hormazdyar Framarz calculated a *xwar* as worth two *adruš*, a *bāzāy* as three *xwar* and a *yāt* as two *bāzāy*.⁹⁹⁰ An alternate influence to Zoroastrianism and the Iranian world cannot be ruled out for the values given. The Armenian translation of the second Canons of Basil contains a 100 *dram* fine imposed on priests who officiated child marriages, which may indicate a particular sin price entered Armenian usage from the Byzantine world.⁹⁹¹ Ultimately, the comparison between Zoroastrian and Armenian fining is not sufficient to draw a direct line of cultural influence from one to the other, but features such as the price of the highest fine levied and relative values of fines to one another are suggestive of Zoroastrian exemplars, which, in turn, are themselves inherited from ancient Iranian – Avestan – prototypes.

⁹⁸⁷ Macuch, 'Judicial and Legal Systems iii.', pp. 191-193; J. Jany, 'Criminal Justice in Sasanian Persia', *Iranica Antiqua* 42 (2007), pp. 347-386. A fine for *marg-arzān*, equivalent to 8-15 *tanābuhl*, appears only in two late manuscripts and likely reflects a post-Sasanian development. 15 *tanābuhl* is the fine for having sex with a woman during her *daštān-māh* ('menstrual period') in *Šāyest nē Šāyest*, while *Ardā Wirāz-Nāmag* instead has 15.5 *tanābuhl*. Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, pp. 193, 288; ŠnŠ 16.5; *Ardā Wirāz-Nāmag: the Iranian "Divina Commedia"*, ed. and trans. F. Vahman (Curzon, 1986), 25.12, pp. 124-125, 203.

⁹⁸⁸ ŠnŠ 1.2, 11.2, 16.5.

⁹⁸⁹ For comparison of the sin prices given in ŠnŠ with other Zoroastrian sources, see *Supp.ŠnŠ*, pp. 114-115.

⁹⁹⁰ Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, p. 288.

⁹⁹¹ *KH* vol. 2, 35.219, pp. 160-161.

Non-financial punishments may also have Iranian origins. The most probable candidate is the practice of splitting lashings into two equal sets, which is found in Šahapivan 9 and 10.⁹⁹² This practice occurs frequently in the *Pahlavi Vīdēvdād* – where the first was performed with an *asp aštar* (‘horsewhip’) and the latter a *srōšōčaranām* (‘bastinado’) – and the amounts Šahapivan required, fifteen strokes twice, is equal to the punishment for a man who committed an *āgrift* sin for the third time or someone who struck another with an ‘*adruš* blow (a one-fifth wound)’.⁹⁹³ Branding, imposed in Šahapivan 10 and 19, was practised in both the Sasanian and Byzantine Empires, but the form adopted in Armenia bears closer comparison to Iranian practice, since Šahapivan 19’s *aluēsdrošm* contravened Constantinian legislation against facial disfigurement.⁹⁹⁴ Finally, Mardirossian cast Šahapivan 4’s requirement for a man to reimburse a woman he divorced for sterility as originating in local customary law, but it may have had precedent in Iranian divorce law, which stipulated a woman received her *kābēn* (‘dowry’) and personal possessions if her husband terminated their marriage but that he did not regain his bridewealth.⁹⁹⁵ The late sixth-century Syriac Letter of Išo‘yabh I, written in the Sasanian milieu, contained a similar passage urging men not to divorce a sterile wife since God might heal her.⁹⁹⁶

⁹⁹² *KH* vol. 1, 18.9-10, pp. 441-442.

⁹⁹³ *Phl Vd.* 4.18-4.32, 4.40. It is possible this formula was not used in all instances, as in the discussion of a man striking another with a ‘one-fourth blow’, the man received thirty blows from a horsewhip and thirty with the bastinado the first time but only fifty from a horsewhip the second. However, this is most likely just an omission in the text. *Ibid.*, 4.32, pp. 110-111.

⁹⁹⁴ Š. Sajjādī, ‘Dāg’, *Elr*; S. Bond, ‘Altering Infamy: Status, Violence, and Civil Exclusion in Late Antiquity’, *Classical Antiquity* 33.1 (2014), p. 19.

⁹⁹⁵ *KH* vol. 1, 18.5, pp. 436-438; Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk ‘Hayoc’*, pp. 87-88. *Kābēn* (New Persian *kābīn*) has been translated following MacKenzie, while Perikhanian identified it as equivalent to Byzantine *donatio propter nuptias* and Ilya Yakubovich considered it the wife’s share of her husband’s property. Some confusion may have emerged between *kābīn* ‘dowry’ and *kālīn* ‘bridewealth’, given the former is used for the latter practice in Abū Sa‘īd Gardīzī’s mid-eleventh-century description of marital customs among Eurasian steppe nomads. I. Yakubovich, ‘Marriage i. The Marriage Contract in the Pre-Islamic Period’, *Elr*; A. Perikhanian, ‘Iranian Society and Law’, in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 3: *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanid Periods*, part 2, ed. E. Yarshater (Cambridge, 1983), p. 648; Mackenzie, *Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, p. 47; cf. I. Zimonyi, *Muslim Sources on the Magyars in the Second Half of the Ninth Century: The Magyar Chapters of the Jayhānī Tradition* (Leiden, 2015), p. 360.

⁹⁹⁶ *Synodicon Orientale*, pp. 448-449.

Byzantine clerics did possess judicial functions in the form of *episcopalis audientia*, but the Armenian system does not appear to owe much to this structure. *Episcopalis audientia* is outlined in a 318 CE constitution of Constantine, which required judges to accept and pronounce a bishop's verdict as their own if parties in a lawsuit wished to have the case judged following Christian morality as opposed to civil law.⁹⁹⁷ A verdict reached in this manner was unappealable. However, *episcopalis audientia* does not represent a system comparable to the Armenian structure as Byzantine bishops were both subordinated to and separate from the imperial administration. Imperial proclamations in 398 and 408 CE required both parties' agreement before the bishop could arbitrate civil cases, while a third proclamation from 399 CE restricted their authority to religious matters.⁹⁹⁸ Furthermore, although the bishop's decision was enforced by a secular judge, they were critically arbitrators in non-ecclesiastical cases and the unappealable nature of their decisions came from their position as private persons to whom the case had been deferred.⁹⁹⁹ Byzantine bishops retained their status as private persons after Emperor Anastasius (491-518 CE) officially invested them with public charges, despite representing an increasingly powerful clerical organisation systematised through canons and provincial synods.¹⁰⁰⁰

The *Sirmondian Constitutions*, a seventh-century text from Lyons purportedly issued by Constantine in 331 or 333 CE, invested greater powers in bishops.¹⁰⁰¹ They were granted full authority to judge civil cases of both adults and minors even if one party opposed the suit being taken to them. However, this text is likely a forgery. Its claim, that a bishop's testimony was enough evidence to prove a fact, conflicts with two proclamations of Constantine, one dated before its purported date and another just over a year after it, as well as basic tenets of

⁹⁹⁷ *CTh*, 1.27.1, p. 31. Cf. A.J.B. Sirks, 'The *episcopalis audientia* in Late Antiquity', *Droit et Cultures: Revue internationale interdisciplinaire* 65 (2013), p. 84, n. 1.

⁹⁹⁸ *CJ*. 1.4.7; *CTh* 1.27.2, 16.11.1, pp. 32, 476; Sirks, 'The *episcopalis audientia*', pp. 83-84.

⁹⁹⁹ *CTh* 1.27.2, p. 32. Sirks, 'The *episcopalis audientia*', pp. 80-81.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁰¹ *CTh*, *Sirm.*1, p. 477.

Roman and Biblical law.¹⁰⁰² Armenian clerical justice therefore did not conform with Byzantine *episcopalis audientia* but was rather more like the practice attested among the Sasanian *dādwarān* ('judges').

The role Armenian clerics performed was not a feature throughout Sasanian society, although Syrian clerical practice in Mesopotamia displays similarities. The 486 CE Synod of Mar Acacius was even more permissive of remarriage than Šahapivan, allowing clerics whose wives died to remarry without sanction and counting them as married to only one woman.¹⁰⁰³ The same canon, like Šahapivan 5, condemned men who divorced their wives on grounds of infertility.¹⁰⁰⁴ The sixth-century CE letter of Mar Aba condemned illegitimate marriages – including polygamy, fictive and actual consanguineous marriage, and marriage to non-Christians – and the 576 CE Synod of Mar Ezekiel and 585 CE Synod of Išo'yahb I also addressed the topic, the latter explicitly citing Mar Aba.¹⁰⁰⁵ Mar Aba showed uncertainty regarding whether a man could marry his sibling's daughter and permitted laymen to remain married if they had taken a brother's widow believing it a moral good and found it too difficult to separate, provided the couple fast for a year and donate a befitting amount of their inheritance to the poor.¹⁰⁰⁶ The concerns of Mesopotamian and Armenian clerics were therefore similar.

Clerics also performed official functions within the imperial administration. Bishops acted as ambassadors for the Sasanian Empire following Yazdgerd I's 410 CE declaration of tolerance towards Christians.¹⁰⁰⁷ Catholicos Yahballaha I of Seleucia-Ctesiphon was envoy to Constantinople in 418/419 CE; Catholicos Išo'yahb II led the delegation that concluded peace

¹⁰⁰² Sirks, 'The *episcopalis audientia*', p. 81. Cf. Numbers 35:30; Matthew 22:21.

¹⁰⁰³ *Synodicon Orientale*, 4.3, p. 305.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.7, 9.13, pp. 335-338, 377-378, 409-411.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹⁰⁰⁷ S. McDonough, 'Bishops or Bureaucrats?: Christian Clergy and the State in the Middle Sasanian Period', in *Current Research in Sasanian Archaeology, Art and History: Proceedings of a Conference Held at Durham University, November 3rd and 4th, 2001*, eds. D. Kennet and P. Luft (Durham, 2008), p. 87.

between Kavād II and Emperor Heraclius in 628 CE; and the fifth-century Bishop Barsauma of Nisibis was complimented for his diplomatic service by a court *marzbān* according to a letter preserved in *Synodicon Orientale*.¹⁰⁰⁸ Bishops were also called upon to collect tax, a role that was resisted by Simeon of Seleucia-Ctesiphon under Šābuhr II, resulting in the bishop's martyrdom, but was so successfully established by the seventh century that Išo'yahb III of Seleucia-Ctesiphon both presumed facilitating tax organisation was a fundamental episcopal responsibility and sought to arrogate additional privileges levying land- and poll-taxes.¹⁰⁰⁹

Such practices are comparable to the way the Sasanians used the Jewish and Zoroastrian priestly administrations, with the exception that neither *magi* nor rabbis were used as ambassadors.¹⁰¹⁰ The Church of the East's expanded role likely resulted from their great distribution, which stretched to India and Ceylon according to Cosmas Indicopleustes in the sixth century and to China according to a post-Sasanian stele attesting a community associated with Hnanisho' II of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (773-780 CE).¹⁰¹¹ The Church of the East was geographically speaking the largest Christian community in the world, which perfectly positioned them to be useful to the Sasanian administration.

Critically, such administrative charges rested on the Sasanian state as the dominant power. Several canons in the 410 CE Synod of Mar Isaac assert that perpetrators would face

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Synodicon Orientale*, 3.1.4, pp. 536-537; N.G. Garsoïan, 'Le rôle de l'hierarchie chrétienne dans les rapports diplomatiques entre Byzance et les Sassanides', *REArm* 10 (1973-74), p. 124; S.H. Moffett, *Christianity in Asia*, vol 1, pp. 252, 263.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *The Martyrdom and the History of the Blessed Simeon bar Sabba'e*, ed. and trans. K. Smith (Piscataway, NJ, 2014); Išo'yahb III, *Išo'yahb Patriarchae III Liber epistularum*, ed. and trans. R. Duval (Paris, 1904-1905), pp. 268-269.

¹⁰¹⁰ Sh. Shaked, 'Administrative Functions of Priests in the Sasanian Period', in *Proceedings of the First European Conference of Iranian Studies*, eds. G. Gnoli and A. Panaino (Rome, 1990), pp. 261-273; G. Herman, 'Jewish Leadership in the Babylonian Diaspora: Second to Sixth Century', *Encyclopaedia of the Jewish Diaspora*, vol. 2: *Origins, Experiences and Culture*, ed. M.A. Ehrlich (Santa Barbara, 2008), pp. 762-767; J.S. Mokhtarian, *Rabbis, Sorcerers, Kings and Priests: The Culture of the Talmud in Ancient Iran* (Oakland, 2015), esp. pp. 94-123.

¹⁰¹¹ Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. and trans. W. Wolska-Conus, P. Lemerle (Paris, 1968), 2.24; E.C.D Hunter, 'The Persian contribution to Christianity in China: Reflections in the Xi'an Fu Syriac inscriptions', in *Hidden Treasures and Intellectual Encounters 2: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, eds. D.W. Winkler and L. Tang (Piscataway, NJ, 2009), p. 73.

the king's judgement alongside exclusion from the Christian community.¹⁰¹² Such claims were akin to Armenian practice in that they rallied judicial support to serve Christian morality. However, this synod critically grounded its authority in the Zoroastrian king as opposed to clerical authority itself. The same synod ordered future synods could only gather when the *šāhān-šāh* was present in Ctesiphon.¹⁰¹³ While later synods do not show as great an integration of state authority, they still demonstrate considerable deference to royal power. Every Sasanian-era synod after Mar Aba I in 544 CE included pronouncements of divine blessing over the current Iranian monarch, excluding the 554 CE Synod of Joseph (which used the Greek calendar and nowhere refers to the *šāhān-šāh*).¹⁰¹⁴ Nor did any synod claim the ability to issue fines or punishments outside religious sanctions. Išo'yahb I's lengthy condemnation of polygamy and consanguineous union contained no explicit punishments, while Mar Aba simply excluded those who contracted illegitimate marriage from the community until the marriage was dissolved, setting a grace period of three months or a year in which to dissolve the marriage or beg the priests for a delay.¹⁰¹⁵ The donation Mar Aba required from those who married their brother's widow should not be compared to Šahapivan's financial exactions as it was at the penitent's discretion not a fixed amount.¹⁰¹⁶ Rather, the letter primarily ordered exclusion for wrongdoers, requiring them to be interred 'like donkeys' after their death and forbidding priests from accompanying their coffin.¹⁰¹⁷ The Synod of Mar Acacius's focus on marriage gave bishops less control over the institution, banning them from forcing celibacy upon priests, as it led to sexual immorality that damaged the community's reputation.¹⁰¹⁸ These treatments imply that the church's judicial authority

¹⁰¹² *Synodicon Orientale*, 1.0, 1.17, pp. 261, 269-270, 273.

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid.*, 1.6, pp. 264-265. The frequency of synod meetings was readdressed in 576 CE without mention of the *šāhān-šāh*'s presence. *Ibid.*, 8.15-8.16, pp. 380-381.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-10, pp. 310-311, 318, 320, 334, 352-368, 390-391, 456.

¹⁰¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.13, pp. 335-338, 409-411.

¹⁰¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.3, pp. 303-306.

was borrowed from the more powerful Sasanian state and could not, in practice, be operated separately to it.

Still, service to the Sasanian state could benefit Mesopotamian clerics. The metropolitan of Seleucia-Ctesiphon's primacy came from their proximity to the royal court, and both this and the assemblies of synods in 410 and 497 CE were attributed to orders from *šāhān-šāhs*, Yazdgerd I and Zāmāsp.¹⁰¹⁹ Mashiha-Zakha's Syriac *Chronicle of Arbil* scorned Bishop Papa bar Aggai of Seleucia-Ctesiphon's claims to clerical supremacy but admitted 'the other bishops needed his help in outward affairs' and further ascribed Archdeacon Shim'un's inheritance of Papa's position to Shim'un's father's position at court.¹⁰²⁰ Church leaders could benefit from imperial service. When Yazdgerd I sent Ahaī of Seleucia-Ctesiphon to Fārs to investigate the disappearance of trade goods, the holy man used the visit to record the stories of martyrs under Šābuhr II and his subsequent imperial promotion to incite his community against sorcery.¹⁰²¹ Yazdgerd also placed *marzbāns* at the disposal of Ahaī's predecessor, Ishāq, to disseminate his proclamations and convene bishops.¹⁰²²

Christian and Zoroastrian administrations thus did not operate in competition. The dioceses of Asōrestān appear to have been based on the *šahr* system used by the Sasanian administrative and Zoroastrian priestly administrations, with disparities representing imperial (not Christian) innovations.¹⁰²³ McDonough argues Sasanian control of religious administrations in general was largely passive and they remained in practice semi-autonomous from the state hierarchy.¹⁰²⁴ However, the Mesopotamian church still had to

¹⁰¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.12, 1.17, 5.0, pp. 266-267, 269-270, 310-311.

¹⁰²⁰ Mashiha-Zakha, *Chronicle of Arbil*, in *Sources syriaques*, vol 1: *Mšiḥa-Zkha (Catalogue de 'Ebēdjesu), Histoire de l'église d'Adiabene sous les Parthes et les Sassanides*, ed. and trans. A. Mingana (Leipzig, 1907-1908), 44-45; W.G. Young, *Patriarch, Shah, and Caliph: a study of the relationships of the Church of the East with the Sassanid Empire and the early caliphates up to 820 A.D., with special reference to available translated Syriac sources* (Rawalpindi, 1974), p. 21.

¹⁰²¹ P. Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq* (Oxford, 2013), p. 9; McDonough, 'Bishops or Bureaucrats', p. 87.

¹⁰²² *Synodicon Orientale*, pp. 260-261; McDonough, 'Bishops or Bureaucrats', pp. 87-88.

¹⁰²³ Gyselen, *Géographie administrative*, p. 77.

¹⁰²⁴ McDonough, 'Bishops or Bureaucrats', p. 89.

couch their rulings in the authority of the state, since it was established in a region already containing a more powerful Zoroastrian priesthood and state apparatus. Armenian practice in contrast was caused by the church adopting this priesthood's role in the absence of a more powerful systematised local authority, meaning they could, in practice, operate without challenge.

The Armenian Church's position was perhaps more comparable to the rabbinic courts of the better-established Jewish community of Mesopotamia, which were empowered to try secular crimes. However, these were more reliant upon state authority than Armenian sources suggest their clergy were.¹⁰²⁵ The rabbi Rav Shela received his right to serve as judge directly from the *šāhān-šāh*.¹⁰²⁶ The *Babylonian Talmud* depicted the exilarch, head of the Babylonian Jewish community who possessed considerable judicial powers, as a Persian stooge. He was condemned for his reliance on Persian law, broke Jewish dietary standards, praised Persian table manners, and potentially even wore a *kustīg*.¹⁰²⁷ The rabbis' relationship to the Sasanian administration may have been comparable to that between the Armenian Church and Aršakuni, but this cannot be confirmed, as the Aršakuni's removal rendered their support a non-issue in the clerical administration of justice.

Šahapivan heavily integrated Christian scripture into its punishments and did not merely replicate Zoroastrian practices. Branding heretics with a fox likely roots from Song of Songs 2:15, representing an early example of an association that became common in medieval Christianity.¹⁰²⁸ The death penalty imposed on those who unrepentantly engaged in

¹⁰²⁵ G. Herman, *A Prince Without a Kingdom: The Exilarch in the Sasanian Era* (Tübingen, c.2012), pp. 194-209. Cf. S. Gross, 'Reassessing exilarchal authority between Sasanian and early Islamic rule', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 73.2 (2022), pp. 263-287.

¹⁰²⁶ Herman, *A Prince Without a Kingdom*, p. 195.

¹⁰²⁷ *Bava Kamma* 58b; *BT Berakhot* 46b, *Gittin* 67b, *Zevahim* 19a; Elman, 'Persian Culture', p. 181. On the exilarch, see Herman, 'Jewish Leadership in the Babylonian Diaspora', pp. 762-767. On the *kustīg*, Rabbi Sheshet's claim Jews should stand unbelted when they pray suggests Babylonian Jews practised this in general, *BT Shabbat* 9b.

¹⁰²⁸ L.J. Sackville, *Heresy in Thirteenth Century Catholic Texts* (PhD diss., University of York, 2005), pp. 184-186. Also compare the phrase 'a head among foxes', attributed to the second-century CE Judean rabbi Mathia ben Harash, referring derisively to taking up a role of importance among an insignificant group. *Pirkei Avot*

sorcery (*kaxardut'awn*, from Av. *kax^varəda-* 'sorcerer'), apostasy (*urac'ut'awn*) or other evil works (*čaragorcūt'awn*) may reflect a survival of Zoroastrian *marg-arzān*.¹⁰²⁹ However, if this was the case, the practice had been heavily Christianised. Šahapivan explicitly demanded stoning, justified on Scriptural grounds.¹⁰³⁰ Firm connection to *marg-arzān* cannot be established, since the punishment Zoroastrians inflicted on sorcerers is unknown. *Yasna* 8.4 imposed the 'punishment for sorcerers' on whoever did not recite the *Aməša Spənta* prayer during a *drōn* ritual, but did not define this, nor did *Nērangestān*'s explanation of the passage.¹⁰³¹ The *Pahlavi Vīdēvdād*'s glowing description of Ērmān (Av. *Airiīaman-*, deity of peace and good social relations) smiting sorcerers suggests their punishment was death, but any connection that existed by Šahapivan's time had been overlaid by Christianity.¹⁰³² Šahapivan thus represented a dialogue between a powerful Christian church and a preceding Iranian system that had formed the basis of this power but continually became less relevant to its operation as the period progressed.

There also existed a dialogue between Armenian and Sasanian administrations, which the church was not entirely divorced from. Catholicos Yahballaha I of Seleucia-Ctesiphon claimed Armenia as part of his jurisdiction in his 420 CE synod, although this claim was not repeated elsewhere.¹⁰³³ An Armenian representative attended the Synod of Mar Acacius in 486 but was not a signatory to the document.¹⁰³⁴ In fact, the earliest instance of Sasanian monarchs using Christian clerics for administrative business may be Šābuhr II's use of the

4.15. Zoroastrianism instead depicted wolves as the archetypal agents of Ahrimen. S. Azarnouche, 'Le loup dans l'Iran ancien: Entre mythe, réalité et exégèse zoroastrienne', *Anthropology of the Middle East* 11.1 (2016), pp. 1-19.

¹⁰²⁹ *KH* vol. 1, 18.8, p. 440. For the connection between Arm. *kaxard* and Av. *kax^varəda* see H. Hübschmann, *Perische Studien* (Strasbourg, 1895), p. 162, n. 291.

¹⁰³⁰ *ast groc' hramani k'arkoc lic'in*, ('according to the order of the Scriptures they should be stoned'), *KH* vol. 1, 18.8, p. 440. For Biblical precedent for stoning sorcerers Lev. 20:27.

¹⁰³¹ **aētataṃ ā yātumanache jasaiti* ('[He] deserves the punishment of one who engages in sorcery'), *The Hērbedestān and Nērangestān*, vol. 3: *Nērangestān, Fragard II*, eds. and trans. F.M. Kotwal and P.G. Kreyenbroek (Paris, 2003), 53.13, pp. 246-247. For an examination of sorcery in Zoroastrianism, see Mendoza Forrest, *Witches, Whores, and Sorcerers*, esp. pp. 62-82.

¹⁰³² *Phl Vd.*, 20.12.

¹⁰³³ *Synodicon Orientale*, 2.0, p. 276.

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.0 p. 299.

Armenian Kat'olikos Nersēs I as an intermediary with the Roman praetorian prefect Musonianus in 358 CE.¹⁰³⁵ Šābuhr's ready dealing with Armenian clerics, despite persecuting more proximate Christians, displays the Armenian clergy's international position was more complicated than a total control over justice.¹⁰³⁶ Rather, their liminal context between empires and origins in an Iranianised priestly system gave them unrivalled status as local judicial authorities which provided them influence in the Sasanian Empire more broadly. This added another consideration to their attempts to provide their Christian community, whose elites often played roles in the Sasanian Empire, a coherent system that allowed for lived nuptial realities that were perhaps Iranian-rooted. The Armenian Christian establishment's position in many ways prefigured the judicial roles priests and bishops adopted in later centuries elsewhere in Christendom, but in the late antique period it was unique.

¹⁰³⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus 17.5.2, p. 112; N.G. Garsoïan, 'Quidam Narseus – A Note on the Mission of St. Nersēs the Great', in *Armeniaca: Mélanges d'études arméniennes*, ed. P.M. Djanachian (Venice, 1969), pp. 148-164; *idem*, 'Le rôle de l'hierarchie chrétienne', pp. 119-138.

¹⁰³⁶ On Šābuhr's persecution of Christians, see J. Neusner, 'Babylonian Jewry and Shapur II's Persecution of Christianity from 339 to 379 A.D.', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 43 (1972), pp. 77-102; N.G. Garsoïan, 'La Perse: l'Eglise d'Orient', *Les Églises d'Orient et d'Occident (432-610)*, vol. 3, ed. L. Pietri (Paris, 1991), pp. 1103-1124.

4.6 – Betrothal Arrangements

Individuals were betrothed before either the wedding or marriage was decided, a practice that sometimes established a special status if performed in the normative manner. Proper betrothal practice in *Datastanagirk*¹⁰³⁷ required a priest and at least two witnesses, following a formula *Kanonagirk*¹⁰³⁷ *Hayoc*¹⁰³⁷ attributed to Basil of Caesarea.¹⁰³⁷ However, an absence of evidence means this practice cannot be backdated. Fifth-century sources attest only an exchange of bridewealth and dowry, without explaining how these were decided or before who. Bridal abduction, theoretically outlawed, may also have occurred as a tacitly recognised social practice. Examining Armenia in relation to Byzantium and Sasanian practices suggests these betrothal methods represent local forms and not borrowings, although it is unexceptional for exchange of nuptial gifts to be normative and abduction an alternative mode.

4.6.1 – Bridewealth and dowry

The only betrothal method Armenian Christianity accepted was an exchange of nuptial gifts. *Varjank*¹⁰³⁸ ('bridewealth', lit. price'), an amount paid by the suitor or his family to his intended's family, was mirrored by *awžit* ('dowry'), which the bride's family gave to her.¹⁰³⁸ This occurred at all levels of society, with payment size depending on the clan's means.

Neither practice was exceptional cross-culturally. Reciprocal payments kept wealth in the kin-group by exchanging between the two clans, and is attested widely (for example, among the modern Balkan Roma).¹⁰³⁹ *Varjank*¹⁰³⁹ likely had the role of recouping the cost of the outgoing woman's labour for her natal household and guaranteeing the patrilineality of children produced by the new household for their paternal clan. However, the practice was controversial. It attracted criticism in Emperor Justinian's *Novel* 21, promulgated 536 CE and

¹⁰³⁷ *Girk*¹⁰³⁷ *Datastani*, 188, pp. 109-110; *KH* vol. 2, 36.209, p. 157.

¹⁰³⁸ Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 128-129.

¹⁰³⁹ A. Pamporov, 'Sold Like a Donkey? Bride-Price among the Bulgarian Roma', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13.2 (2007), p. 473.

primarily aimed at reforming Armenian inheritance, which justified itself by claiming Armenians married without dowries and reduced women from their God-given positions by purchasing them.¹⁰⁴⁰

Conflation of bridewealth and outright purchase is relatively common for societies confronted with minority groups whose marriages involved bridewealth, but it misunderstands what these payments entailed.¹⁰⁴¹ In most bridewealth societies these payments were merely symbolic gestures too small to feasibly represent literal purchases, although they perhaps began as such given Levi-Strauss' argument that exogamous bridal exchange was the foundational 'gift' upon which gift-giving societies were based.¹⁰⁴² Justinian's criticism of *varjank*' is particularly unusual since Byzantine *donatio*, a nuptial donation from bridegroom to bride, was functionally indistinguishable from *varjank*'.¹⁰⁴³ *Donatio* likely developed late, as the consistent mistranslation of *mohar* ('bridewealth') as *phernē* ('dowry') in the Septuagint's Greek translation demonstrates bridewealth was an unfamiliar concept.¹⁰⁴⁴ Nevertheless, *donatio* had fully developed by the late fourth century CE and was addressed by Justinian just three years after *Novel 21* in *Novel 97*, which renamed the practice from *donatio ante nuptias* ('a gift before the wedding') to *donatio propter nuptias* ('a gift for the wedding'), officially making it a reciprocal equivalent to dowry.¹⁰⁴⁵

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Novels of Justinian*, p. 230.

¹⁰⁴¹ See, for example, twenty-first-century Turkish attitudes towards the Bulgarian Kalaydjies. Pamporov, 'Sold Like a Donkey?', p. 474.

¹⁰⁴² Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 145; C. Levi-Strauss, *Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté* (Berlin, 1967), pp. 72-73. For an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of Levi-Strauss' location of the oppression of women within social systems, see Grant, *The Captive and the Gift*, pp. 73-76.

¹⁰⁴³ A. Arjava, *Women and Law in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 52, 56-57.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, vol. 1, pp. 203-207.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Novels of Justinian*, pp. 646-656; Arjava, *Women and Law*, p. 56-57; Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 145-146. This represents the first known instance of *donation* being required to equal dowry, although *Novel 97* claims to be based upon earlier law and the testimony of a 537 CE papyrus suggests *donatio* and dowry may have already been equivalent in many cases. C.J. Kraemer Jr, *Excavations at Nessana*, vol. 3: *Non-Literary Papyri* (Princeton, 1958), pp. 54-59, 63-65.

Justinianic legislation's inability to recognise *varjank*'s similarity to *donatio* was likely due to the recipient of the payment. While in instances of *varjank* the bride's family received compensation for their daughter's hand, *donatio* was given to the wife herself.¹⁰⁴⁶ The view that *varjank* was purchase may have been reinforced if Justinian was aware of Šahapivan's ruling that a man should not be reimbursed his bridewealth if he divorced a sterile but otherwise unproblematic wife.¹⁰⁴⁷ This undermined a justification for bridewealth common to societies that had the practice, which was that the money given to a woman's family did not objectify her since it was seen as 'buying' not the woman but her reproductive capabilities.¹⁰⁴⁸ The distinction does not mitigate the accusation to the ears of modern audiences and possibly makes bridewealth more objectifying, but it was meaningful to societies that practiced bridewealth. The fact it was not an excuse that could be made in the case of *varjank* may have caused a late antique Byzantine audience to see the practice as an even less acceptable form of purchase.

Novel 21's complaint surrounding dowry is less understandable. *Dos* ('dowry') was not an indispensable part of Byzantine wedding formula and Armenian *awžit* was not so different from it as to be unrecognisable.¹⁰⁴⁹ Both had the exact same functions of being the bride's family's contribution to the expenses of the new household, representing the daughter's share in the paternal estate and providing for her after widowhood or divorce.¹⁰⁵⁰ It was – and remains in the modern day – inalienable and returned entirely to her family if she was repudiated for sterility, securing her against mistreatment by her marital home.¹⁰⁵¹ Šahapivan's examples of dowry objects – servants, cattle and money – would have been

¹⁰⁴⁶ M.T. Fögen, 'Donatio Propter Nuptias', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, eds. A.P. Kazhdan et al. (Oxford, 1991), pp. 649-650.

¹⁰⁴⁷ *KH* vol. 1, 18.4, pp. 435-436.

¹⁰⁴⁸ W. Shapiro, 'Marriage Systems', in *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, ed. T. Barfield (Oxford, 1997), p. 306.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Shapiro, 'Marriage Systems', p. 306; Arjava, *Women and Law*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁰⁵¹ *KH* vol. 1, 18.4, pp. 435-436; Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 130.

unremarkable in a Byzantine context.¹⁰⁵² *Awžit* appears long-established, since the word's origin in a non-Indo-European stratum of the Armenian language linked to Syriac *zabhdā* ('dowry') suggests an early development.¹⁰⁵³ Canon four of Nersēs and Meršapuh did condemn clerics giving *varjank'* to their wives, but this likely refers to them portioning salaries from church funds and not to dowry, since it appears in a section regarding misuse of church property and referring to dowry as *varjank'* would be irregular.¹⁰⁵⁴ There is thus little justification for Justinian's claim Armenians did not give dowry.

It seems most logical to accept Adontz's hypothesis that *Novel 21* represented part of a Justinianic project to weaken the power of the *naxarar* through disrupting their clan domains, and perhaps also his theory that Armenian *varjank'* followed the Iranian practice of being half *awžit*, not equivalent to it.¹⁰⁵⁵ Dowry amount, calculated as half the daughter's inheritance in *Datastanagirk'*, bears parallels to the *Wizīrkard ī Dēnīg*, which cites the lost and very early Avestan *Hādōxt Nask* in claiming daughters should receive half the share of their brothers and mother.¹⁰⁵⁶ The *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* also connected dowry and the share a child inherited from their father's estate, using the term *wāspuhragān* to refer to both.¹⁰⁵⁷ Justinian may not have recognised *awžit* due to cultural differences or ignored it in service of imperial narratives.

No example of Armenian betrothal negotiations survives but, in most cases, these were likely contracted primarily by the groom and his intended's parents. General studies of

¹⁰⁵² *KH* vol. 1, 18.5, p. 436.

¹⁰⁵³ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 148.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Kēšk' vačārec 'in ənkerac' iwreanc' orpēs carāys ew aylk'n etun varjans kananc' iwreanc' amparštealk' amenewin*, ('Some sold [church property] to their companions like servants and others gave salaries to their wives completely impiously'), *KH* vol. 1, 20.4, p. 479.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 141-154, 427-428, nn. 41-42; cf. Toumanoff, 'Introduction to Christian Caucasian History II', pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Girk' Datastani*, 180, p. 105; *Pahlavi Texts*, vol. 4, pp. 485-487. For the dating and authenticity of *Wizīrkard ī Dēnīg* see D.J. Sheffield, 'The *Wizirgerd ī Dēnīg* and the Evil Spirit: Questions of Authenticity in Post-Classical Zoroastrianism', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, n.s. 19 (2005), pp. 181-189. The summary of *Hādōxt Nask* (now only 2 fragmentary chapters) in *Dēnkard* 8.45.1 is insufficient to provide a clear understanding of whether the *Wizīrkard ī Dēnīg* reflects its genuine contents, J. Kellens, 'Hādōxt Nask', *EIr*.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *MHD* 4.11, 106.8; *MHDA* 2.9-11.

bridewealth societies have typically depicted the arrangements as social/political pacts made between the couple's fathers or the heads of their respective clans without the betrothed as active participants.¹⁰⁵⁸ This model draws heavily on the Alliance Theory of marriage, which sees affiliation as the central component of the marital agreement and was particularly influential in twentieth-century anthropology. However, Warren Shapiro has criticised this theory as an androcentric fantasy unfit for general study.¹⁰⁵⁹ Indeed, men did not have a complete monopoly on betrothal in Armenia. Šahapivan considered the knowledge of both the girl's parents necessary for a wedding in its discussions of premarital sex and kidnap, implying the mother's consent was at least theoretically required.¹⁰⁶⁰ The girl's intent was also relevant in deciding whether she paid fines for extramarital sex or wed a man who had previously abducted her.¹⁰⁶¹

Comparatively, the groom's parents are almost entirely absent from contemporary historical and canonical discussion, appearing only in cases of illegitimate union. Sahak Partew ordered parents who forced their children to marry to be punished and a similar condemnation is implied in the Canons of Nersēs and Meršapuh.¹⁰⁶² *Datastanagirk* mentions the groom's parents only in the context of a child marrying an adult and punished both more harshly than the *xawsol* ('betrother'), a figure who facilitated the union for the groom but bore no necessary relation to him.¹⁰⁶³ The legal text elsewhere depicts men as invested in arranging their own marriages, arguing a boy of fourteen could be trusted to make trade deals because he was competent 'to sell himself and his procreative ability for a wife and to buy a wife for marriage'.¹⁰⁶⁴ Late antique narrative sources often also depict this, even in instances

¹⁰⁵⁸ J. Evans-Grubb, 'Abduction Marriage in Antiquity: A Law of Constantine (CTh IX.24.1) and Its Social Context', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 79 (1989), p. 61.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Shapiro, 'Marriage Systems', pp. 304-305.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *KH* vol. 1, 18.3, 18.7, pp. 434, 439.

¹⁰⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶² *Ibid.*, 17.27-28, 20.24, pp. 382-383, 487. Sasanian law also condemned forcing a girl to marry. See Perikhanian, 'Iranian Society and Law', p. 647.

¹⁰⁶³ *Girk* 'Datastani', 249, p. 153.

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7, p. 13; Macuch, 'Judicial and Legal Systems iii'.

of child marriage. The marriages of Gregory the Illuminator and Yusik I are both depicted as arranged between the boy and his wife's guardian, albeit under duress in Yusik's case. The infant betrothal Bakur Aljnik's daughter to Vařinak Siwinik' conducted by Xosrov III Kotak also follows the standard pattern of an arrangement between an adult groom and his bride's guardian, since Xosrov filled this role for the girl.¹⁰⁶⁵ Movses Xorenac'i depicts King Artasēs sending his *dayeak* Smbat Bagratuni to request the hand of Sat'enik, which may have represented a surrogate of the father given the paternalistic relationship between *dayeak* and *san*, but it is more probable Smbat was functioning as a *xawsoł*.¹⁰⁶⁶ Betrothal thus represented an arrangement of family, political and personal interests commonly agreed between the bride's parents and the groom himself. It is probable that, like the Roman practice of *consilium*, betrothal agreements between *naxarar* households at least also involved the wider clan given a match's potential political ramifications.¹⁰⁶⁷ However, the evidence does not permit a reconstruction of what clan negotiations may have looked like and allows us only to demonstrate that the system was more complex than the negotiation between established householders depicted in Alliance Theory, involving a dialogue that occurred at least ideally between the bride's parents and the suitor himself, with the bride, wider clan members and the priest who oversaw the arrangement also playing roles.

In many cultures, betrothal arrangements of this kind created what legal historians call 'inchoate marriage' wherein a woman was considered in some sense already married before the wedding. This was the case among Sasanian Jewish and Christian communities and may have occurred in Armenia too.¹⁰⁶⁸ Bishop Sevantos distinguished men who had premarital

¹⁰⁶⁵ Epic Histories III.9, p. 287.

¹⁰⁶⁶ MX II.50.8-9, p. 1927. For more on *dayeak* see Chapter 3.5, pp. 176-194. The practice of sending a delegation to negotiate marriage is still practised in modern Armenia and is called *gnal aljik ugelu* (lit. 'to go to ask for the girl'), for which, see Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 129-130.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, pp. 193-194.

¹⁰⁶⁷ George, 'Family and Kinship, Roman'.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Satlow, *Jewish Marriage*, p. 69; Weitz, *Between Christ and Caliph*, p. 112.

sex with their betrothed with those who copulated with other women.¹⁰⁶⁹ The former were treated more harshly, being permanently removed from the community and having any children they produced cursed, but critically were not banned from marrying the woman as those who had sex with a woman they weren't betrothed to were. This implies the wedding would go ahead, suggesting a betrothal could not be stopped by the couple's moral failings. On the other hand, Šahapivan never distinguishes premarital sex between betrothed individuals from premarital sex more generally, nor did Łazar include the betrothed in his enumeration of different kinds of women who responded to the return of the apostatised *naxarar*.¹⁰⁷⁰ The unclear dating of Sevantos means betrothal's development into a special state is unreconstructible. Further, his ban on men marrying women they had slept with but were not betrothed to may have been targeted not at distinguishing the betrothed, but at an alternative betrothal strategy in which rape or its implication was used to secure consent to a union from unwilling parents: bridal abduction.

4.6.2 – Bridal Abduction

Nuptial payments were the only normative method for betrothal Šahapivan accepted, but this was not the only strategy used. Methods dubbed *ařewang* ('abduction, rape') were also practised. This referred to a constellation of terminologically undistinguished alternative marital practices that included both elopement and abduction, wherein a man took woman without her parents' permission and either raped her, had them wed by a priest or secured parental consent in exchange for her return. This form of betrothal had Biblical precedent in the Benjamites God-ordered kidnap of the women of Shiloh, but Armenian canons nonetheless universally condemned *ařewang*, irrespective of the girl's consent.¹⁰⁷¹

¹⁰⁶⁹ *KH* vol. 1, 19.9-10, p. 473.

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.3, p. 434; Łazar 29.6, p. 2253. See Chapter 3.3.2, p. 141.

¹⁰⁷¹ Judges 21:20-23.

Šahapivan ordered an abductor to return his victim and pay an amend either 600 or 1,200 *dram* to her family, although it is unclear from the grammar whether this was dependant on the social standing of the victim or perpetrator.¹⁰⁷² Additional payments of 100 *dram* were charged to the man if he slept with the girl; to a priest who wed the pair without the girls' parents' consent; and to anyone who helped the abductor.¹⁰⁷³ Respectively, these lesser fines went to the Church, the destitute or both in equal measure, with the priest also being removed from his position. This suggests the affront was one against the community and not the family alone. Weddings conducted secretly as part of an *ařewang* were considered illegitimate, although further punishment was not provided and the abductee could marry who she wanted thereafter, including her abductor.¹⁰⁷⁴

Penalties against those who abducted betrothed women are not discussed, either because there was no difference or because the topic had been dealt with in the 314 CE Syriac Council of Ancyra, which appears in Armenian translation in *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'* and called for such women to be returned to their betrothed.¹⁰⁷⁵ The canons attributed to Gregory and the Armenian translation of the Canons of Basil also discuss *ařewang*, declaring marriages invalid in the former and imposing fines and penance in the latter.¹⁰⁷⁶ The 645 CE Council of Dwin's orders concerning the remarriage of people whose spouses were abducted may also refer to this, but the canon's opening lines suggest it was written in reaction to the contemporary Arab conquests and not internal *ařewang* practice.¹⁰⁷⁷ No canon discusses the age of perpetrators, but the physical outlay required for genuine kidnapping would suggest

¹⁰⁷² *KH* vol. 1, 18.7, pp. 439-440.

¹⁰⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.8-9, p. 246.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.11, pp. 161-162.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *T'ē ok' ařewank arasc'ē, psakn anvawer lic'i ew psakealn um kamic'i lic'i* ('If someone shall perform a kidnapping, the marriage shall be invalid, and she may be wed to whomever she wishes'), *Ibid.*, 11.9, p. 246. Cf. *KH* vol. 2, 36.52, 36.216, pp. 115, 159.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ayl vasn meroy melac' yoržam ašxarhs gerac'aw i t'ašnameac', bazum ark' ew kanayk' i gerut'ean ēin* ('But since, because of our sins, this land was made prisoner by our enemies, many men and women were taken prisoner.'). *Ibid.*, 38.7, p. 205. A canon attributed to Sahak the Last (r. 677-703 CE) also includes reference to imprisonment, albeit in the context of providing prayer if a priest was unavailable. *KH* vol. 1, 23.10, p. 511.

that those involved were generally young. The virtues associated with successful abduction and the emphasis on communal male activity outside a household structure similarly conform to this age category.

Mardirossian depicts *arëwang* not as a form of betrothal, but as a semi-obligatory performance conducted as part of the *varjank*‘ agreement, wherein the father’s evasiveness and suitor’s abduction acted as symbolic justification for clans to negotiate compensation for the bride’s hand.¹⁰⁷⁸ Performative bridal abduction, which is distinguished from elopement by its inclusion of feigned resistance, is not unheard of and was, for example, common practice among Old Believer populations in Russia.¹⁰⁷⁹ The non-survival of clan negotiation accounts means that the existence of performative denials in practice cannot be proven, but they are attested in epic material. The fable of Vardgēs (‘Rose-locks’) alluded to its hero’s marriage to the King of Eruand’s sister by depicting him hammering upon the king’s gate.¹⁰⁸⁰ Šahapivan’s condemnation of *arëwang* make a symbolic reading implausible. Šahapivan 11 punished those who mourned excessively at funerals, despite this being symbolic display.¹⁰⁸¹ Indeed, that Šahapivan permitted full *psak* ceremonies if abductor and abductee remained virginal and later negotiated marriage may imply *arëwang* operated in a fictive kidnap capacity.¹⁰⁸²

However, it seems improbable that *arëwang* was merely fictive. Bridal abduction was attested widely through the late antique world and addressed by Basil of Caesarea and 576

¹⁰⁷⁸ Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk ‘Hayoc’*, pp. 73-75; J.-P. Mahé, ‘Remarques philologiques sur l’arménien *astem* «Demander une femme en mariage» et *Tarm* «Binde (d’oiseaux)»’, *REArm* 22 (1990-1991), pp. 23-28.

¹⁰⁷⁹ J. Bushnell, *Russian Peasant Bride Theft* (London, 2021), pp. 67-106.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *krel kop ‘el zdurmn Eruanday ark ‘ayi*, (‘he beat and hammered on the door of the King of Eruand’), *MX* II.65.4, p. 1949.

¹⁰⁸¹ *KH* vol. 1, 18.11, pp. 443-444. Note that the Zoroastrian *Ardā Wirāz Nāmāg* also condemned excessive lamentation: / *ašmā ka pad gētīg šēwan ud mōyag ud griyistan adādihā ma kunēd cē ēn and anāgih ud saxtīh ō ruwān ī widardagān /*, (‘When you are in this world, do not lament, weep or cry unlawfully, for this [accrues] much evil and hardship to the souls of the deceased’), *Ardā Wirāz-Nāmāg*, 20.11-20, p. 200. *Epic Histories* attests performative grieving involving the pulling out of hair and ripping of clothes in its account of P’āranjem mourning for Gnel and is attested among Central Asian Buddhist, Manichaeans and Zoroastrian communities (MP. *šēwan ud mōy/mōyag*, ‘lamenting and hair [pulling]/weeping’). *Epic Histories* IV.15, pp. 340-345; T. Daryae and S. Malekzadeh, ‘The Performance of Pain and Remembrance in Late Ancient Iran’, *The Silk Road* 12 (2014), pp. 57-64.

¹⁰⁸² *KH* vol. 1, 18.7, pp. 439-440.

CE Synod of Mar Ezekiel, the latter claiming it often led to violence and death.¹⁰⁸³ Modern cross-cultural comparison suggests fictive abduction was relatively uncommon and usually practised in societies that also practised real bridal kidnap. Of fifty-three modern societies Barbara Ayres studied, only six practised mock bride theft and four of these also attested genuine abduction.¹⁰⁸⁴ *Epic Histories* condemnation of Aršak II welcoming abductors to Kog or of Pap destroying *kusastans* ('residences for virgins') designed to protect their occupants from kidnap strongly imply abduction was a genuine threat, although this does not mean performance abduction never occurred.¹⁰⁸⁵ That Šahapivan treated a variety of *arawang* possibilities – wherein sentence was based on whether the abductee was willing or unwilling; remained virginal or did not; or the wedding was carried out in the process of the abduction or performed after – should lead us to suspect a constellation of practices including genuine kidnap, elopement and performance abduction.

Sexual violence was often an assumed part of abduction, although the additional punishments required by Šahapivan demonstrate it was not universal.¹⁰⁸⁶ In this and its inclusion of a band of men, *arawang* matches a form of bridal abduction identified by Judith Evans-Grubb in her cross-cultural anthropological analysis of modern *raptus* in the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰⁸⁷ In this, suitors gathered comrades to assist in kidnap aimed at lowering the victim's social reputation by bringing her virginity into question and forcing parents to accept marriage with a smaller or non-existent exchange of nuptial gifts, or risk their daughter being unmarriageable. Bridal abduction is prevalent in areas where parents put regulatory control on their daughters' marriages and arranged marriages are commonplace.¹⁰⁸⁸ Abduction could

¹⁰⁸³ Basil of Caesarea, *Letters*, vol. 3, 199.22, 199.30, pp. 112-115, 122-123; *Synodicon Orientale*, 8.8, p. 378.

¹⁰⁸⁴ B. Ayres, 'Bride Theft and Raiding for Wives in Cross-Cultural Perspective', *Anthropological Quarterly* 47.3 (1974), pp. 238-239.

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Epic Histories* IV.12.8-12, V.31.2-5, pp. 334-335, 399.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 128-129, 134.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Evans-Grubb, 'Abduction Marriage', p. 62. For the wide attestation of this practice see *Anthropology Quarterly* 47.3 (1974) entitled 'Kidnapping and Elopement as Alternative Systems of Marriage'.

¹⁰⁸⁸ C. Werner, 'Bride Abduction in post-Soviet Central Asia: Marking a Shift Towards Patriarchy Through Local Discourses of Shame and Tradition', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15.2 (2009), p. 326.

also be produced by financial concerns, and appears as a means to expediate the process of reciprocal gift giving in almost every society in the Caucasus.¹⁰⁸⁹

Armenian bridal abduction was likely a non-elite practice, meaning such concerns may have been relevant. The private armies and dispersed estates of *naxarar* clans rendered abduction and elopement impractical.¹⁰⁹⁰ Epic accounts, such as the second-century BCE monarch Artasēs' abduction of Sat'enik, daughter of the King of the Alans, highlighted their heroes' masculinity but took place in exceptional settings such as battlefields, and cannot be considered evidence of widespread practice of *ařewang* among the *naxarar*.¹⁰⁹¹ Economic worries may have commonly led to *ařewang*, and the possibility that girls who had been abducted were married without dowry may explain *Novel 21*'s curious supposition if *ařewang* betrothal was commonplace, although the reference to bridewealth would then need to be accounted for.¹⁰⁹²

However, historians should be cautious not to adopt an attractive universal theory to fill an absence of evidence. All the factors associated with structuralist models of bride abduction, namely the existence of polygyny and bridewealth, a high social value of virginity, parental control of marriage and high wealth differential in society, existed in late antique Armenia. It is thus tempting to explain bridal abduction as the result of these practices. However, Barbara Ayres noted in her own study that none of these factors could be considered causal cross-culturally.¹⁰⁹³ While bridal abduction was common in cultures where parents controlled their daughters betrothal, it was most common in ones with moderate but not complete control and, although bridewealth encouraged abduction, most bridewealth-practicing societies did not practice kidnap betrothal.¹⁰⁹⁴ Even when bridal abductions were

¹⁰⁸⁹ Grant, *The Captive and the Gift*, pp. 17, 73, 77-82.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, p. 142.

¹⁰⁹¹ MX II.50, pp. 1926-1928.

¹⁰⁹² Zakarian, *Representation of Women*, pp. 135-136; Evans-Grubb, 'Abduction Marriage', p. 63.

¹⁰⁹³ Ayres, 'Bride Theft and Raiding for Wives', pp. 241-245.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.

motivated by avoidance of bridewealth payments, as among the Bulgarian Roma, examples exist where payments were still made after kidnap occurred.¹⁰⁹⁵ Historians and audiences may also find the structuralist approach uncomfortable, as it often views bridal abduction as primarily a theft of property and underprivileges the emotional damage the practice caused.¹⁰⁹⁶

Nor is the psycho-dynamic model Ayres proposed capable of explaining bridal kidnap universally. Ayres aimed at recognising kidnap's emotional aspect, as an act of aggression by unestablished adults against established betrothal restrictions displaying their bravery and contempt for women and authority.¹⁰⁹⁷ However, of the factors Ayres proposed, the only commonality found in all bridal abduction societies was a tendency for mothers and infants to share beds.¹⁰⁹⁸ Her suggestion that bride abduction was thus the result of a delayed and displaced Oedipus conflict is pure natal stage determinism, fitting a long tradition of excusing oppressive actions as natural, choiceless and made on biological/quasi-biological grounds.¹⁰⁹⁹ The Oedipus Complex hypothesis rests on shaky foundations despite its high permeance in modern pop culture, involving little actual analysis of children.¹¹⁰⁰

E.B. Tylor's theory, that abduction betrothal was associated with patrilocal residence because it emerged from a transition between maternal and paternal forms of social organisation, is also of little help.¹¹⁰¹ Any such transition that occurred in Armenia so predated the fifth century that it would be difficult to reconstruct and of limited value for

¹⁰⁹⁵ Pamporov, 'Sold Like a Donkey?', p. 473.

¹⁰⁹⁶ A.L. Moorhead, *A Thorough Glance at the Social Framework of Bride Abduction from a Feminist Lens: Themes of Power, Dominance, and Shame* (Undergraduate Thesis, Wittenberg University, 2014), p. 19.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Ayres, 'Bride Theft and Raiding for Wives', pp. 245-246.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 248. The practice of post-partum isolation of mother and child means this was likely true in Armenia also.

¹⁰⁹⁹ See, for example, Jenny Kitzinger's discussion of how dialogues of childhood weakness have been used to deny children knowledge and rights by reducing them to helpless entities who must be protected on account of the very ignorance that this formulation fosters, Kitzinger, 'Defending Innocence', pp. 81-83.

¹¹⁰⁰ For the Oedipus Complex's significance, shortcomings, controversies and context, see L. Birken, 'From Seduction Theory to Oedipus Complex: A Historical Analysis', *New German Critique* 43 (1988), pp. 83-96.

¹¹⁰¹ E.B. Tylor, 'On a Method of Investigating the Development of Institutions; applied to laws of marriage and descent', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 18 (1889), pp. 245-272.

scholars of Late Antiquity. Shame was likely a key factor in bridal abduction's efficacy, as it is in modern societies attesting the practice, but the absence of female-focused accounts of kidnap from the period make the way this operated difficult to examine.¹¹⁰² Furthermore, since Armenian canons were aimed at outlawing *arëwang* and not understanding the perpetrators they did not discuss its potential motivations. It is possible that abduction betrothal could have resulted from economic fears, desire to fit the culture's masculine values or response to rejection by the girl's father (although this last reason was often a feature of epic depictions of abduction and may represent a literary *topos* inherited from elsewhere). Nevertheless, we are bereft of accounts of actual abduction and should exercise caution before applying any universal model to fill the gap.

Bridal abduction appears in modern Armenia, and much of the Caucasus, as a minority practice for contracting valid marriages, but it cannot be confirmed that this represents the same institution surviving in spite of Christian scrutiny.¹¹⁰³ Movses Xorenac'i's explanation of Artasēs abduction of Sat'ënik as a narrativization of *varjank'* may demonstrate ignorance of the practice as early as the eighth century.¹¹⁰⁴ However, it seems more probable Movses's explanation is an attempt to sanitise the tale for Christian audiences and that abduction continued as a means of making legitimate marriage. Mardirossian detected ritual formulae surrounding *arëwang* as late as the fourteenth century.¹¹⁰⁵ The eighteenth-century CE *Chronicle of Abraham of Crete* also recorded the abduction of the daughter of a Christian in region of Naxijewan by a servant called Dawit', who forced her to renounce her faith and marry him.¹¹⁰⁶ Whether such practices are identical to the *arëwang* of

¹¹⁰² Moorhead, *A Thorough Glance at the Social Framework of Bride Abduction*, pp. 19-20.

¹¹⁰³ Amnesty International, *No Pride in Silence: Countering Violence in the Family in Armenia* (London, 2008), pp. 17-18; C. Thomas, 'Forced and Early Marriage: A Focus on Central and Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union Countries with Selected Laws from Other Countries', *United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women* 8 (2009), pp. 7-10; M. Nkosi and T.M. Buthelezi, 'The Nature and Causes of Bride Abduction Cases in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa', *Studies of Tribes and Tribals* 11.2 (2013), p. 162.

¹¹⁰⁴ MX II.50.13, p. 1928; Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 148.

¹¹⁰⁵ Mardirossian, *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*, p. 74, n. 126.

¹¹⁰⁶ *The Chronicle of Abraham of Crete*, ed. and trans. G.A. Bournoutian (Costa Mesa, CA, 1999), 51, p. 130.

Šahapivan, they are nonetheless demonstrations that some form of bridal abduction remained in Armenia as an alternative marital strategy until modern times.

Structures rendering abduction an invalid betrothal strategy in the eyes of the law may have removed much of its practical benefit, but provided the community still tacitly accepted it, *arëwang* or *arëwan*-like institutions could continue. This would accord with practice in the modern day. Bridal abduction is illegal in most regions where it operates, yet marriages formed through it continue to be recognised.¹¹⁰⁷ Cynthia Werner noted a paradox in modern bridal abduction-practicing cultures that held abduction to be immoral but simultaneously shamed kidnapped women who returned to their natal home as stubborn, questioning their virginity.¹¹⁰⁸ This permitted abduction to continue to be effective despite sanctions.

Although the related fines may have its origin in Iranian law, Šahapivan's legislation against *arëwang* does not have definite Byzantine or Sasanian precedents. Notably, Šahapivan did not punish the abductee or her family and she was permitted to marry her abductor if desired, with a full *psak* ceremony if they were believed to have remained virgins and *ibrew erkakin* if they were not.¹¹⁰⁹ This contrasts the ruling for non-abductive premarital sex, where the woman was charged 50 *dram* if she had consented (half the amount a man had to pay), but also differs from more typical practice throughout the Mediterranean.¹¹¹⁰ Assuming the abductee was complicit and punishing her was standard practice, with a 326 CE edict of Emperor Constantine preserved in the *Theodosian Code* being particularly vicious.¹¹¹¹ Here the victim was sentenced to the same unknown fate as her abductors unless she could prove she had resisted, and even then she was had her right to legal succession

¹¹⁰⁷ Ayres, 'Bride Theft and Raiding for Wives', p. 245.

¹¹⁰⁸ Werner, 'Bride Abduction in post-Soviet Central Asia', p. 322. Note the similar implication in Šahapivan's claims that women who fled her husband should be returned and the dual meaning of *arëwang* as both 'abduction' and 'rape', *KH* vol. 1, 18.6-18.7, pp. 438-440.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.7, pp. 439-440.

¹¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.3, pp. 432-433.

¹¹¹¹ Evans-Grubb, 'Abduction Marriage', p. 65.

from her parents removed.¹¹¹² Her parents were banished if they consented to the abductors demands for marriage and nurses believed complicit were to have molten lead poured down their throats.¹¹¹³ It is likely both abductor and abductee were burned to death, as a later canon upheld abductors should merely receive capital punishment to insure justice was not delayed due to the severity of the sentence required, but argued involved slaves should be burned.¹¹¹⁴ Later Byzantine legislation was not as harsh, culminating in Justinian's reforms of 533 CE, but an absolute refusal to allow a woman to marry her abductor was a consistent feature.¹¹¹⁵ Theodosius II even permitted engagement in kidnapping as grounds for an divorce.¹¹¹⁶ The *Syro-Roman Code* similarly labelled abductors of virgins and widows as adulterers and called for capital punishment.¹¹¹⁷ In allowing abductors and abductees to marry, Šahapivan shows a significant disconnect from Roman policy.

Iranian practice was more like Šahapivan. The *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* claimed women who were seduced and abducted without their guardian's consent were officially supposed to be punished according to Sasanian *čāštag* ('legal teaching'), but no charges were brought in practice.¹¹¹⁸ Macuch supposed this was because the abduction was followed by a *pādixšāy* marriage, which would make Iranian practice concord closely with Šahapivan.¹¹¹⁹ However, this is not the only solution. Seduction and abduction may instead have resulted in a *xwāsrāyūn* ('consensus') marriage, also dubbed *gādār kardan* ('taking a lover'), a form of Sasanian partial-right union with no known Armenian cognate.¹¹²⁰ *Xwāsrāyūn* marriage empowered an adult woman to marry against her father's will or even reject his choice of

¹¹¹² *CTh*, 9.24.1.2, p. 245.

¹¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.24.1.1-5, p. 245.

¹¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.24.1.5, 9.24.2, p. 245.

¹¹¹⁵ *CJ*, 9.13.1, *Novels*, vol. 1, 143, 150, pp. 937-939, 967.

¹¹¹⁶ *CJ*, 5.17.8.

¹¹¹⁷ *Syro-Roman Lawbook*, vol. 2, §60, p. 28.

¹¹¹⁸ *MHD*, 36.2-5; Jany, 'Four Sources of Law', pp. 311-312.

¹¹¹⁹ M. Macuch, *Rechtsskasuistik und Gerichtspraxis zu Beginn des siebenten Jahrhunderts in Iran: Die Rechtssammlung des Farroḫmard i Wahrāmān* (Wiesbaden, 1993), p. 271.

¹¹²⁰ Carlsen, 'Cakar Marriage Contract', p. 105.

groom for one she found more suitable.¹¹²¹ These unions could be contracted temporarily, in which case the daughter remained under her father's guardianship even if she had contracted *xwāsrāyūn* without his consent.¹¹²² If *xwāsrāyūn* was contracted with no definite ending, she transitioned from her father's guardianship but did not enter that of her *gādār*, nor were resultant children considered heirs to either man.¹¹²³ Instead, the eldest son born in the arrangement had no *pater*, was considered *pater* to subsequent children, and became his mother's guardian upon reaching fifteen, at which point he was empowered to marry her to whomever he chose in a *pādixšāy* marriage.¹¹²⁴ The *gādār* only had claim to the wife's profits while the son was underage, in effect making him *stūr* ('guardian') of his own child's estate, while the wife's father was excluded altogether for his failure to find her a spouse. *Xwāsrāyūn* was likely not regularly utilised, since *Mādagān ī Hazār Dādestān* claimed the *Dādestān-nāmag* ('Book of Laws') declared marriage conducted by the daughter's will without her guardian's consent was invalid.¹¹²⁵ However, it seems the most probable solution for elopement in Sasanian Iran.

Two of the three examples of *gādār kardan* depicted in *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd ī Ašawahištān*'s discussion of when the legislative term *bayaspān* (lit. 'messenger') could be

¹¹²¹ / *zan būd ī-šān sazagān rāy pādīranēnīd u-šān pad šōy bē nē dad u-šān Xwadāyduxt-iz Weh Šābuhr rāy ōh pādīranēnīd* / ('There were women who refrained for the sake of one more fitting to them and were not given to a husband, and Xwadāyduxt refrained for the sake of Weh Šābuhr), *MHDA* 14.12-13. The description of *xwāsrāyūn* marriage contained within Hormazdyar Framarz's *Rivāyat* collection refers to a girl who rejected an arranged marriage to select her own spouse. Such a marriage suggests elopement, although the text's seventeenth-century date renders it problematic for study of the late antique period. Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, pp. 195-196.

¹¹²² *MHD* 24.7-10. Cf. M. Macuch, 'The Function of Temporary Marriage in the Context of Sasanian Family Law', in *Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europæa: held in Ravenna, 6-11 October 2003*, vol. 1: *Ancient and Medieval Studies*, eds. A. Panaino and A. Piras (Milan, 2006), pp. 585-597.

¹¹²³ *REA* 43.2.

¹¹²⁴ *Ibid.* Dhabhar interprets the normative practice as marrying the woman to her *xwāsrāyūn*-husband, to establish that union as a normative one of the *pādixšāy*-type. Hormazdyar Framarz, *Persian Rivayats*, p. 196. Fifteen was the Zoroastrian age of majority and marriageable age for both genders, while Armenian women may have married younger. See Chapter 3.4.2, pp. 161-175.

¹¹²⁵ *MHD* 36.2-4. The *Dādestān-nāmag* was one of various sources cited by the *MHD* for which, see Macuch, 'Mādayān ī Hazār Dādestān'.

applied to women involved elopement.¹¹²⁶ One describes a girl of fifteen leaving home without her guardian's consent and taking a lover by her own free will, while the other empowered her to do the same if her guardian failed to arrange a marriage for her by fifteen and thus sinned against her.¹¹²⁷ Between these is described a form of *xwāsrāyūn* plausibly reflecting abduction, as it is similar to the first instance but mentions neither the girl's age nor part in the marriage.¹¹²⁸ She is still said to 'take a *gādār*', as opposed to being taken by him, but this may represent the tendency to assume a girl's acquiescence in her own kidnap.¹¹²⁹ The passage could instead represent child marriage, but the last sentence stipulates it also applied to girls who had reached maturity. Ambiguity surrounding the meaning of a key verb in context, *niwistan* (lit. 'to announce, consecrate'), means the reaction of the girl's male relatives cannot be gauged, which renders conclusive identification of the described practice impossible. Regardless of whether *xwāsrāyūn* was the resultant union of genuine kidnap, it was certainly the marital form that came from elopement. The fact *Rivāyat ī Ēmēd Ašawahištān* distinguished between these two things suggests a very different outlook to Armenia. Zoroastrian texts also permitted abduction in other, non-marital, contexts. The *Hērbedestān* allowed a woman to be escorted by a man to receive religious teaching without her husband's permission, provided the escort did not sleep with her.¹¹³⁰ Thus, even though Armenian practice was heavily inspired by Iranian nuptial practice, their approach to *aREWANG* cannot be said to represent an unproblematic recreation of Iranian practice, but more likely represents local approaches and developments. Iranian Zoroastrian influence was a

¹¹²⁶ *REA* 31.12-14. For a discussion of the meaning of *bayaspān* in a Sasanian legal context, which probably denoted a girl who had married for the first time and did not have *ayōgēn* obligations at the point of marriage, see B.H. Carlsen, 'Who is the *Bayāspān* Daughter?', in *Medioiranica: proceedings of the International Colloquium organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 21st to the 23rd of May 1990*, eds. W. Skalmowski and A. van Tongerloo (Leuven, 1993), pp. 115-121.

¹¹²⁷ *REA* 31.12, 31.14.

¹¹²⁸ *REA* 31.13.

¹¹²⁹ Evans-Grubb, 'Abduction Marriage', p. 65.

¹¹³⁰ *Hērbedestān* 6.1-6.7, pp. 40-47. The stipulation that the pair should not share a dwelling (*ham-xānagīh-iz nē kunēd*) and women over fifteen still had to observe menstrual purity rites (*daštān-māh*) implies that such escorting could often take considerable time. See *Ibid.*, 6.5, 6.7, pp. 42-43, 46-47.

particularly important influence on Armenian marital practice but was ultimately part of a constellation of influences that also contained Christian and local pre-Christian elements.

4.7 – Conclusion

The Armenian marital union was a vital apparatus in allowing clan and household structures to function, permitting the creation of new households and the organisation of affiliations between households and clans. Its forms and functions were cross-culturally comparable to Byzantine and Sasanian forms, and evidence suggests pre-fifth-century marital practice may have adopted Zoroastrian forms. Nonetheless, the church's practical monopoly over local justice, which included the marriage institution, rendered Armenian practice distinct from its imperial overlords. Weddings were already clerically led professions of Christian faith and canonical literature condemned unacceptable practice with penalties their coreligionists did not have access to.

Strong substrata of local and Zoroastrian practice, especially among the elites, persisted into and in some cases throughout the period due to the practical benefits they provided individuals or communities in dealing with each other and the powerful Sasanian administration. Church leniency towards many of these survivals was exacerbated by the role of priests as justices whose authority was partially dependent on the *naxarar*, which required them to engage with the realities of Armenian marriage on an applied social level as opposed to simply as theological or intellectual observers. It bears restating that the clergy's position in this scenario had itself resulted from their descent from a Zoroastrianised pre-Christian priesthood.

Chapter 5 – General Conclusion

The clan and household present a binary that is particularly revealing for studying the family in late antique Armenia. While these anthropological categories would have been alien to Armenians themselves, viewing family as an overlapping and self-supporting structure composed of an extended political identity group and a smaller co-resident group nonetheless helps explain an institution that would otherwise be too complex and contain too much assumed information to examine. The clan/household binary does obscure elements of the family, such as the emotional ties between its members, but its emphasis on the durability and influence that the institution could possess is especially helpful for engaging with the noble families that made up the hereditary *naxarar* elite.

Within this model the clan is particularly visible, being drawn upon by Armenian narrative histories to locate individual *naxarar* and justify their claims to power. Armenia's elite was not unique in the period for organising around clans. Instead, the region represents a particularly visible example of a clan structure that existed throughout the historic Parthian Commonwealth, in Mesopotamia and the Caucasus. Whether this structure was the result of Iranian influence or pre-existed it cannot be established with present evidence and would not profitably add to a study of Late Antiquity. Rather, by the time the *naxarar* clan system became visible in the fifth century, it had been heavily Parthianised by centuries of membership in the Parthian Empire regardless of when it first emerged.

In addition to existing among the nobility of the Iranian world, it is likely that clans also existed at every free level of Armenian society. While the *naxarar* dominate narrative sources, making it difficult to render a conclusive verdict on the social depth of clan, the fact that this aspect of family was heavily Parthianised does not inherently imply that the clans were simply an Iranian feature adopted by the elite to better engage with the wider Iranian

milieu. Robin Meyer's analysis of Parthian elements in Armenian indicate that the region was heavily Parthianised at all levels of society, and indirect evidence for clans as an organising structure among the non-elite is found in the *Kanonagirk' Hayoc'*. The fact that the clergy normally inherited their positions in the seventh century, and canonical references to clerical families more generally, suggest that the clan system was adopted more broadly and was likely a model through which *azat* and perhaps *anazat* were organised.

Given the existence of clans both throughout the Parthian Commonwealth and Armenian society, the importance of the *naxarar* clan system is not its uniqueness, but the primacy of the *naxarar* themselves relative to other institutions. The fact that the claim of this class to influence was justified primarily through hereditary ownership of clan land made these clans arguably the most powerful institutions in the region, and a valuable resource from which other institutions could recruit and draw on to support their own power. The diocesan administration is a particularly vivid example of this. Most bishops attached to *naxarar* clans in place of more traditional urban centres, which were largely absent from Armenia. The clan system here effectively undergirded the clerical administration, providing legitimacy that bishops in some cases still claimed centuries after their relevant clan's extinction.

Naxarar clans were not the only source of prestige in the period of course. Appointed *ostikan* in the Aršakuni royal and imperial administrations challenged the clan structure by offering different avenues to power that were, at least in theory, insulated from hereditary control. However, these administrations were never as relevant in the region as membership in a *naxarar* clan and, especially prior to the dissolution of the Aršakuni monarchy in the early fifth century CE and in Sasanian Persarmenia thereafter, many of the most important official positions were considered owed to a specific *naxarar* family as a hereditary right. Armenian princes monopolised specific titles – the Mamikoneans as *sparapet*, for instance, or

the Siwni as *marzbān* – which consistently returned and were passed down like inherited rights. While the Byzantine administration especially made attempts at various periods to curtail *naxarar* power, these clans remained the predominant group in whom power in the region was concentrated.

No single factor can explain why noble clans were so visible and durable in Armenia compared to neighbouring regions, especially in the face of theoretically more powerful institutions. However, their influence appears to have been a combination of geographical and political factors. Armenia's fertile but mountainous geography and extreme weather – similar to the environment identified by James C. Scott in his analysis of the Zomia Highlands – created a region that was naturally difficult for centralising powers to exert and maintain control over, but which was well-suited to the more local powerbases that clans often represented. Additionally, the strategic importance of the region to both Byzantine and Sasanian Empires encouraged both powers to divide Armenia and adopt policies which courted the *naxarar* rather than trying to integrate them entirely. This was particularly the case for the Sasanians, who pursued a similar policy of fostering elite and royal power in concert when dealing with the Parthian *wuzurgān* elite clans of Northern Mesopotamia. The Byzantines meanwhile at no point controlled enough of the region for long enough to effectively disenfranchise the *naxarar*, although Justinian's reforms do appear to have impacted Armenian inheritance and successfully integrated the province of Lesser Armenia. It is possible that the dominant role of Armenian Christianity as a local faith also increased Armenian resistance to being incorporated into either empire, offering a model of identity outside the empires whose growth had been fostered under the *naxarar* clans.

As the unit in which the clan's claims to power were put in practice, the household also played an important role in reinforcing the clan structure. Households served to produce heirs to replenish clan membership; imposed prestige through making demands on the

resources of less powerful individuals and households; and distributed women and children for the purposes of alliance building, protection and childcare. However, the household's connection to the clan was more complicated than merely a resource for ensuring the clan survived and maintained its prestige. Just as the household served to preserve the identity of a clan, so too did the clan emplace specific households in specific positions within the social fabric, allowing them to claim resources and prestige for the purpose of their continued maintenance or for securing marriage and *dayeak* arrangements. The relationship between clan and household was thus mutually supporting.

Such a relationship was also overlapping, as individuals from multiple clans co-operated within a single household. *Naxarar* households especially were reliant on the labour of slaves and social inferiors to function, and regularly delegated responsibility for childcare to *dayeak* wet-nurses and teachers either on their property or in a different household entirely. Such practices likely ensured frequent movement of individuals in and out of households, with individuals from multiple clans being co-resident for the purposes of care, marriage, alliance, protection, education or labour. Women especially often lived in households associated with multiple clans throughout their life, as marriage and widowhood might move them into the household of a husband or son, adopting a new role and at times a new clan identity without necessarily completely severing their connections or responsibilities to their natal clan.

The importance of women to household upkeep, reveals one of the most illuminating features of the household as a structure. Unlike the clan – whose position in the political sphere ensured that analysis of it was confined largely to examining adult, male *naxarar* – the household's position as a domestic unit means that to study it required acknowledging the contributions of women, non-noble individuals and children. Unfortunately, the emphases of narrative sources and the absence of representative archaeological material means that these

contributions are most visible in the rare instances where women involved themselves in clan affairs also, such as in the case of Queen P'aranjem during the imprisonment of Aršak II or following the disastrous defeat of the *naxarar* at Awarayr. Still, the visible contributions of these noblewomen played – which ranged from educating children to managing the house during their husband's absences – are a valuable addition to our vision of Armenian life, even if they likely do not represent a full appraisal of female contributions to the household.

Children meanwhile have been largely overlooked in Armenian Late Antiquity, and it is hoped that the greater sensitivity to age categories *Kin and Culture* presents will allow further research to be more aware of the roles children played in society. Children in this period were likely identified following Byzantine and Sasanian precedent as individuals under the age of fifteen (or perhaps twelve in the case of girls), although metrics for assessing adulthood also contained physical markers and biological development and were likely not purely decided based on age alone. While children are visible in this thesis purely as dependants in an adult world, their survival was nonetheless integral to both clan and household, making them one of the most important aspects of the family. They were the recipients of inheritance and required to carry on the clan's name and position. Anxiety surrounding procreation was likely not as pronounced in Armenia as in the Iranian world, where the Zoroastrian fear of *abēnāmīth* made childlessness a moral failing with cosmological implications. Nonetheless, the practice of *dayeakut'awn* – which was clearly closely associated with the similarly-named institution of *dāyagīth* in the Sasanian world, even if it is unknown exactly how the two were related – demonstrates a concern for protection of children in the instance that a clan was eradicated. In addition to delegating the raising and education of children to an often geographically distant ally, *dayeakut'awn* also created networks of (at least theoretically) reciprocal alliances and trust across clans and gave the *san* access to the resources and support of their *dayeak* in the instance that the child's clan was

ousted from their lands. The institution may also have played a role in securing spouses for children of the households involved.

The final chapter of the thesis addresses marriage, which was an integral institution to both the clan and household. A normative marital union was the only legitimate means recorded in Armenian sources through which new households could be created and the wife recognised as part of her marital clan, rendering sex between the couple licit and any children produced their heirs. The commonality of marriage of this type throughout the late antique world means that the possible influences on this union cannot be easily sketched. While the appearance of Zoroastrian *čagar* marriage types in Armenia until the fourth century may suggest that Armenian marriage was influenced by the types of union available in the Sasanian world, but this likely became less relevant as the period progressed under the increasing influence of Christianity. Furthermore, the fact that inheritance could travel through the female line in Armenia was counter to the exclusively direct inheritance model that birthed Iranian partial-right marriages of this type. It remains probable that the Armenian institution of marriage did not have a single influence, being rather a mixture of Iranian, Byzantine, Zoroastrian, Christian and native Armenian influences. This was certainly the case when we turn to the practices surrounding the marital union: the wedding and betrothal strategy. Betrothal legislation demonstrates primarily native formulae while the central crowning of the wedding ceremony is comparable to the Byzantine *stephanoma* (Gk. ‘crowning’) ceremony.

One of the most notable features of the Armenian marriage though was the heavy involvement of the church in issues of marital morality. Armenian weddings were officiated in a church and nuptial crowning conducted by a priest seemingly universally already by the time of the 444 CE Council of Šahapivan, which represents an unusually early Christianisation of the process. Additionally, issues such as remarriage and betrothal that

were elsewhere considered outside the remit of canonical literature were legislated by Armenian canons, including modified marriage formulae for non-virgins, issuing of fines and property confiscation. Such a situation appears to have not been an eccentricity of the Armenian Church's approach to marriage, but rather reflected a clergy that possessed a far wider legal remit than their contemporary coreligionists, able to impose beatings and even the death penalty. This was likely the result of the region's pre-Christian priesthood, whose Zoroastrianised priestly establishment probably possessed a judicial function similar to that of Zoroastrian *dādwar* or Jewish and Christian religious leaders in the Sasanian Empire. This legal function was made even more important following the fall of the Aršakuni, when the region was left without a single central authority and the clergy became the only systematised and region-wide administration capable of supplying a uniform system of justice. The church's jural role enabled them access to punitive powers beyond the scope of other Christian communities, but it also required careful balancing of the mores of Christian morality against the needs of the communities these priests served. Such a predicament would explain both the Armenian church's extremely harsh condemnation of incestuous marriage, which was a lauded practice in Sasanian Persia, and their relatively permissive attitude towards remarriage. The insights that the approach of Armenian canons to marriage provide are also a clear demonstration of the value of studying Armenia through a family lens, as a treatment of the institution illuminates seemingly unrelated areas.

In many ways, *Kin and Culture* represents an important first step in analysing the *naxarar* families that dominated Armenia in the fifth to seventh centuries and the networks and structures that surrounded them through a kinship lens. Future research could expand on this work in several ways. For example, the thesis' examination of clan construction could be extended to place the portrait I have sketched into its wider temporal context, compare how the *naxarar* changed through the destruction of the Sasanian Empire and the birth of the

Islamic world. Future expansion in research could likewise perhaps allow study of the Armenian household to go further. Greater engagement with non-urban archaeology in the Armenian highlands might provide data that could be useful for reconstructing the lived realities of the region and not simply the theoretical models provided by textual sources. Similarly, a fuller picture could be provided by a greater awareness of the position of children, examining their roles outside the household in Sasanian Persia and Armenia or providing models that could be applicable to these regions in studies further afield. There is also the possibility to extend analysis of the household beyond just the unit's human members. Considering the built environment in which Armenians lived or the role of domestic animals as resources or even members of a household could prove profitable avenues for future study that acknowledge the reliance of Armenian (and indeed all) households on contributions beyond the immediate human actors within them. As with all families, an individual cannot hope to provide everything all on their own. It should be remembered that the household/clan binary adopted by this thesis represents just one way of reconstructing the family, which by its nature requires a degree of generalisation, and other models will likely highlight different facets of this institution.

Chapter 6 – Bibliography

6.1 – Primary Sources

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