




Recovering Hidden Texts: Palimpsests of the Matenadaran and their Disclosure*

▼ **ABSTRACT** On the basis of four sample cases, the present article illustrates the prospects of the application of multispectral imaging to the study of palimpsests that are preserved in the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran) in Yerevan. Taking into account the different physical structures of the samples, which comprise an isolated fragment (no. 647), two flyleaves (of manuscripts M2154 and M3938), and a fully palimpsested codex (manuscript M2130), it outlines the variety of Old Armenian materials in *erkat 'agir* script that were palimpsested, ranging from a colophon (M3938) via the *History of Armenia* by Movsēs Khorenats' i (M2154) and the *Commentary on the Psalms* by Theodoretus of Cyrrhus (Fragment no. 647) up to the treatise *Against Heresies* by Irenaeus of Lyon (M2130), and the insight into the history of the texts and the Armenian language that can be gained from these materials.

▼ **KEYWORDS** Palimpsest, Movsēs Khorenats' i, Theodoretus of Cyrrhus, Irenaeus of Lyon, colophon, *erkat 'agir*, M2154, M3938, M2130, Fragment no. 647.

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1. Introduction

In the early centuries of Armenian literacy, manuscripts were usually written on parchment, a material that was extremely well suited for being inscribed with ink but, at the same time, quite expensive, given that it was produced from the skin of animals (sheep, goats, calves). This is the reason why parchment codices were often not simply discarded when their contents were deemed obsolete but prepared for re-use, by rubbing, scratching or washing off the texts they contained and overwriting them with other, more up-to-date texts; a procedure that was widespread across all early Christian cultures and is usually denoted by the Greek term “palimpsest” (lit. “rubbed off again”). In this way, many extremely important texts of the first millennium of our era have been preserved even though they were no longer meant to be read in later times. However, depending on the efficacy of the “rubbing off”, special means are usually needed to recover them.

During the last 25 years, sophisticated imaging methods have been developed that have proven to facilitate the study of palimpsests enormously, namely, multispectral and transmissive light imaging. These techniques have for the first time been successfully applied to two Armenian palimpsests of St. Catherine’s monastery on Mt. Sinai, which had been detected in the erased layer of a bipartite Georgian codex of about the 10th–11th centuries among the so-called “New Finds” of 1975 (now catalogued as Sin. georg. NF 13 and 55); the same codex also contains the only manuscript remains in the Caucasian Albanian language in palimpsested form. The Albanian and the Armenian undertexts of this codex were the object of an international cooperation of scholars running from 1999 to 2008,¹ which resulted in a three-volume edition published in 2008–2010 (Gippert, Schulze, Aleksidze, and Mahé 2008; Gippert 2010). Enhanced photographic methods, especially the application of transmissive light imaging,² have since become available via the “Sinai Palimpsests Project”³ and yielded promising new insights, thus suggesting to extend the research on Armenian palimpsests beyond Mt. Sinai. In the following pages, I intend to illustrate the first results of investigations into the palimpsests of the Matenadaran, which have become possible by a generous grant of the Volkswagen Foundation,⁴ and which are at present

1 The projects “Caucasian Languages and Cultures: Electronic Documentation” (ARMAZI), 1999–2002, and “Palimpsest Manuscripts of Caucasian Provenance”, 2003–2008, both kindly funded by the Volkswagen Foundation; my thanks are due to Zaza Aleksidze and Jean-Pierre Mahé, who instigated the projects, and Wolfgang Schulze and Manana Tandashvili who participated in the decipherment. Unfortunately, both Zaza Aleksidze and Wolfgang Schulze have passed away meanwhile.

2 Cf. Gippert 2022 for a short description of the technique.

3 Cf. <http://sinaipalimpsests.org>.

4 In 2017, a multispectral imaging system (“Megavision”) was installed in the Matenadaran within the project “Palimpsest Manuscripts of the Matenadaran”, with kind support by Ken Boydston, Ivan Shevchuk, and Damianos Kasotakis. The processing software systems used are ENVI 5.5 by L3Harris Geospatial (cf. <https://www.l3harrisgeospatial.com/Software-Technology/ENVI>) and HOKU 1.1 developed by Keith Knox (cf. <http://www.cis.rit.edu/~ktpci/Hoku.html>).

carried out in cooperation of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, Hamburg, with the Matenadaran.⁵

2. Materials and Methods

According to Arshak Banouchyan (2002, 91), the Matenadaran holds about 1,000 manuscripts plus approximately 4,500 fragments that are palimpsests, while less “optimistic” estimates speak of 50 palimpsest codices with a total of 1,500 folios. A systematic assessment that has been undertaken since 2017 has revealed that there are indeed two different types of palimpsests that have to be envisaged here. In some cases, all or most of the body of a given codex turns out to be palimpsested, with either both the upper and the lower layer being Armenian or with other languages being involved. In other cases, it is only one or a few folios of a given codex that are palimpsested; usually these are folios that were added secondarily in binding, serving as front or back flyleaves. In the latter case, there is no systematic difference as to other parchment folios that were used in binding later codices, except for their having been erased and overwritten, e.g., with owner’s notes. Both types of flyleaves are usually much older than the codices they were bound with and require special attention.

Since 2017, a total of 2064 palimpsest pages of the Matenadaran have been captured with multispectral and transmissive light imaging and processed for being deciphered.⁶ 1988 of these pages are part of the body of larger parchment codices (M196: 3 pages; M963: 318; M1585: 63; M2130: 273; M3822: 40; M5568: 238; M6018: 546; M6141: 110; M6424: 48; M7079: 60; M8193: 166; M8352: 122; M10680: 1); the remaining 76 belong to flyleaves or other types of fragments. In most cases, both the erased layer and the overtext are in Armenian; however, there are also undertexts in Georgian (in M6141, M6705 and the flyleaves of M1071 as well as Fragment VP-037 with a Georgian overtext) and in Latin (in M3822). Table I illustrates the present state of the work.⁷

⁵ Involved have been, apart from the present author, Hasmik Sargsyan and Emilio Bonfiglio as members of the ERC-funded project “The Development of Literacy in the Caucasian Territories (DeLiCaTe)” in the Hamburg Centre, and Gurgun Gasparyan, Ara Gasparyan, Davit Ghazaryan, Hasmik Iritsyan, Albert Mkhitarian, and Gevorg Ter-Vardanean in the Matenadaran. The project members deeply regret Gevorg Ter-Vardanean’s untimely decease in March 2023.

⁶ From 2017 to 2022, Siranush Bardughimeosyan, Mariam Mats’oyan, and Anna Khach’atryan were involved in the work.

⁷ Abbreviations: c = captured, i = identified, t = transcribed; A = *asomtavruli*, B = *bolorgir*, E = *erkaťagir*, N = *nuskhuri*, S = *slanted*, U = *Uncial*.

Table I. Palimpsests of the Matenadaran processed by 12 February, 2024

SHELF NR.	FOLIOS CAPTURED	CONTENTS (UNDERWRITING)	LANGUAGE	SCRIPT	STATE
M196	60c, 60d, 65a	OT (Prov. 2.4–18)	Arm.	E	i
M470	Aa–Db	NT (Act. 25.9–13)	Arm.	E	i
M487	Aa–Bb	unident.	Arm.	ES	c
M963	1a–159b + Aa	NT (Mk., Lk.)	Arm.	E	(i)
M1071	Aa, Ab	OT (Ex. 5.21–6.13 and Joel 2.21–27)	Georg.	A	t
M1306	Aa–Db	Lectionary (21 meheki)	Arm.	ES	t
M1552	Aa–Bb	NT (Lk. 21.16)?	Arm.	E	(i)
M1585	12a–21b, 23a–40b, 43a–45b, 58b	John Chrysostom, Commentaries?	Arm.	ES	(i)
M2130	20a–39b, 54a–94b, 108a–118b, 130a– 158b, 168a–169b, 200a–211b, 218a– 224b, 240a–241b, 266a–267b, 279ab, 311a–315b, 351a– 353b, 396a–397b	John Chrysostom, Commentaries; Irenaeus, Adv. haereses and Epideixis; other homiletic works	Arm.	ES	(i)
M2154	Ba–Gb	Movsēs Khorenats'i, History	Arm.	ES	t
M2166	Aa, Ab	NT (Mt. 10.26–40)	Arm.	ES	t
M3822	145ab, 155ab, 158ab, 161ab, 163ab, 168ab, 170ab, 173ab, 175ab, 175ab, 182ab, 185ab, 192ab, 195ab, 197ab, 203a–204b, 206ab, 212ab, 218ab	Pontificale	Lat.	U	i
M3850	Ga, Gb	NT (Acts 15.40)	Arm.	E	i
M3938	Aa–Bb	Colophon	Arm.	E	t

SHELF NR.	FOLIOS CAPTURED	CONTENTS (UNDERWRITING)	LANGUAGE	SCRIPT	STATE
M4435	Ba-Gb	Lectionary (Gen. 1.5-6 and Ps. 117.26)	Arm.	E	t
M4945	Aa-Bb	Lectionary (Mt. 5.19-20 and Is. 7.10-11)	Arm.	E	(i)
M5167	Aa-Bb	unident.	Arm.	E	c
M5568	1a-119b	Pauline Epistles	Arm.	E	(i)
M6018	1a-273b + Aa-Bb	Lectionary	Arm.	E	(i)
M6141	80a-106b, 112a-117a, 120a-141b	Hymnography	Georg.	N	c
M6424	1a-24b + Aab	OT (Is. 45)	Arm.	E	c
M6531	Aa-Gb	unident.	Arm.	E	c
M6705	Aa-Bb	unident.	Georg.	N	c
M7079	30a-59b	unident.	Arm.	E	c
M8193	1a-5b, 7ab, 9a-18b, 20a-58b, 62a-65b, 68a-92b, 107a-115b	Lectionary (OT, NT)	Arm.	E	(i)
M8352	1a-61b	Gospels	Arm.	E	(i)
M10680	70b	NT (Mt. 28.13-20, Mk. 1.1-2)	Arm.	E	i
M11310	5a	NT (Jo. 1.12)	Arm.	B	i
Fragm. 35	1b	NT (Jo. 7.44-52)	Arm.	E	i
Fragm. 461	2a, 2b	NT (Lk. 4.8-11)	Arm.	E	i
Fragm. 647	1a, 1b	Theodoretus of Cyrrhus, Commentary on Ps. 44	Arm.	E	t
Fragm. VP-011	1a, 1b	unident.	Arm.	ES	c
Fragm. VP-037	1a, 1b, 2a, 2b	OT (Ps. 43.6-44.10)	Georg.	A	i



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Of the listed items, one is exceptional as it is no palimpsest. This is fol. 5a of M11310, a nicely illuminated page containing the beginning of the Gospel of John (see Fig. 1). What seems to be written underneath in *bolorgir* characters is not a palimpsested text but simply the continuation of the Gospel (up to John 1.12), shimmering through from the backside of the folio; this can easily be seen when the image is mirrored with the contrast enhanced as shown in Fig. 2.

3. First Results

To illustrate the prospects of the application of multispectral imaging to palimpsests, I shall briefly introduce four of the other items listed in Table I, namely, Fragment no. 647, the flyleaves of M2154 and M3938, and some parts of M2130.⁸

3.1. Fragment no. 647 consists of a single sheet that was obviously used as a double flyleaf after having been cut out of a larger folio with text in two columns; its overtext is a late note in cursive *bolorgir* script. The visible undertext (see Fig. 3

⁸ For a preliminary analysis of the flyleaves of M1306 containing materials from a lectionary (*chashots'*) for the 21 *meheki* with the legend of St. Eghishē, cf. Gippert 2022.

showing the “recto” in a pseudo-colour image)⁹ consists of 13 lines with an average of 22 letters per line per column. The “verso” (see Fig. 4, with a greyscale image)¹⁰ yields a similar picture but with much lower readability of the erased text, especially in the first lines of the left column. It is a typical characteristic of palimpsests that on one of the two sides of the parchment, usually the hair side, the palimpsested text is much harder to reveal than on the other side. In the given case, this effect might even have been enforced by the use of the folio as a flyleaf which may have been glued to a cover. Thanks to the good preservation of the “recto”, the lower text of Fragment no. 647 has nevertheless been identified with certainty, namely, as pertaining to the *Commentary on the Psalms* by Theodoretus of Cyrillus,¹¹ more exactly, the commentary on Psalm 44.¹² The text of the “recto” could be established in its entirety, including the assumption that c. 19 lines must have been cut off at the top of the original folio, which must have comprised a total of c. 32 lines per column; the upper lines of the left column of the “verso”, of which only a few characters have remained, could only be reconstructed.¹³ Table II shows the text of the Fragment as it has been read by now;¹⁴ the assignment of the present “recto” and “verso” matches the original distribution. The text of the palimpsest agrees to a large extent with the one edited by Ilia Abuladze in 1944; among the divergences, we may note, e.g., the word order change in the first visible line where *ընդ ոտիւք* (“with the feet”) follows [*կոխան*] *առնեն* (“[they] tread upon”), contrasting with *ընդ ոտիւք կոխան առնէ* in the edition (Abuladze 1944, 168, l.20).¹⁵ A remarkably “late” orthographic feature is the spelling *կա* instead of *կալ* in line 7 (= 26) of the left column of the verso,¹⁶ possibly induced by the following *ել* (with *լ* added above the line).

9 The red-cyan pseudo-colour image was produced with the HOKU software by the comparison of an ultraviolet image (365 nm) with an image in the red range (630 nm).

10 The greyscale image was produced with the ENVI software by the comparison of an ultraviolet image (365 nm) with an image in the orange range (560 nm) and further processing.

11 Theodoretus was determined as the author of the *Commentary* by Bernard Outtier (1977, 170–171).

12 A first edition of the Armenian text of the *Commentary* was provided, in parallel with the 10th-century Georgian translation by a certain Dachi as contained in the so-called “Shatberdi Collection” (ms. S-1141 of the Korneli Kekelidze National Centre of Manuscripts, Tbilisi), by Ilia Abuladze in his book on the mutual literary relations between Georgians and Armenians in the 9th–10th centuries (Abuladze 1944, 148–175; cf. his introduction ib., 0182–0193). He did not reveal which Armenian manuscript(s) his edition was based on; however, Outtier 1977, 172 suggests that it was ms. M1204 of the Matenadaran, where the *Commentary* is contained on fols. 16a–50a. In Abuladze’s edition, the passage on Ps. 44 of our palimpsest corresponds to pp. 168–171. Other editions of the Georgian text are found in Gigineishvili / Giunashvili 1979, 364–424, with the passage on Ps. 44 on pp. 389–390, and Jugheli 2008, 449–488. The Greek text of Theodoretus’ *Commentary* (CPG 6202), which is remarkably distinct from the Armenian, will be found in PG 80, 857–1997; the passage on Ps. 44 preserved in the palimpsest corresponds to PG 80, 1188A–1189C.

13 My sincere thanks are due to Bernard Outtier who is at present preparing a critical edition of Theodoretus of Cyrillus’ *Commentary* and kindly placed the given passage at my disposal.

14 In this and the following transcripts, square brackets [] denote badly readable characters, curly brackets {}, unreadable but supposed characters, and angle brackets <>, reconstructed characters in gaps and lacunae.

15 The plural form *առնեն* fits better into the given context than the singular *առնէ*.

16 Bernard Outtier (e-mail of 25 April 2023) kindly informs me that the same spelling occurs also in M1204 at the given position.

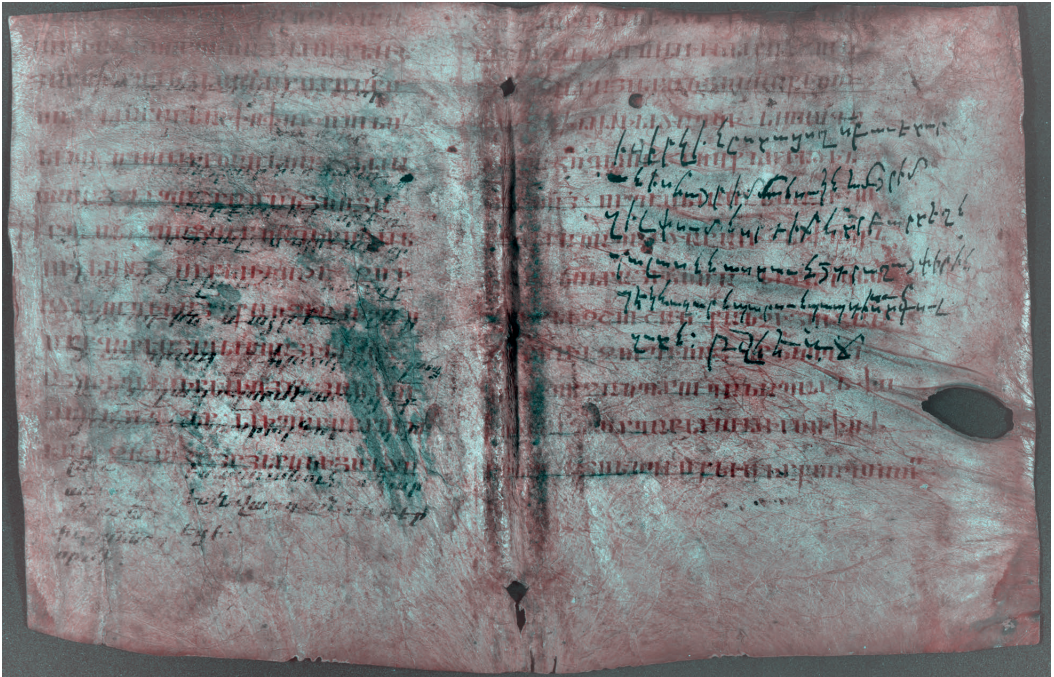


Fig. 3

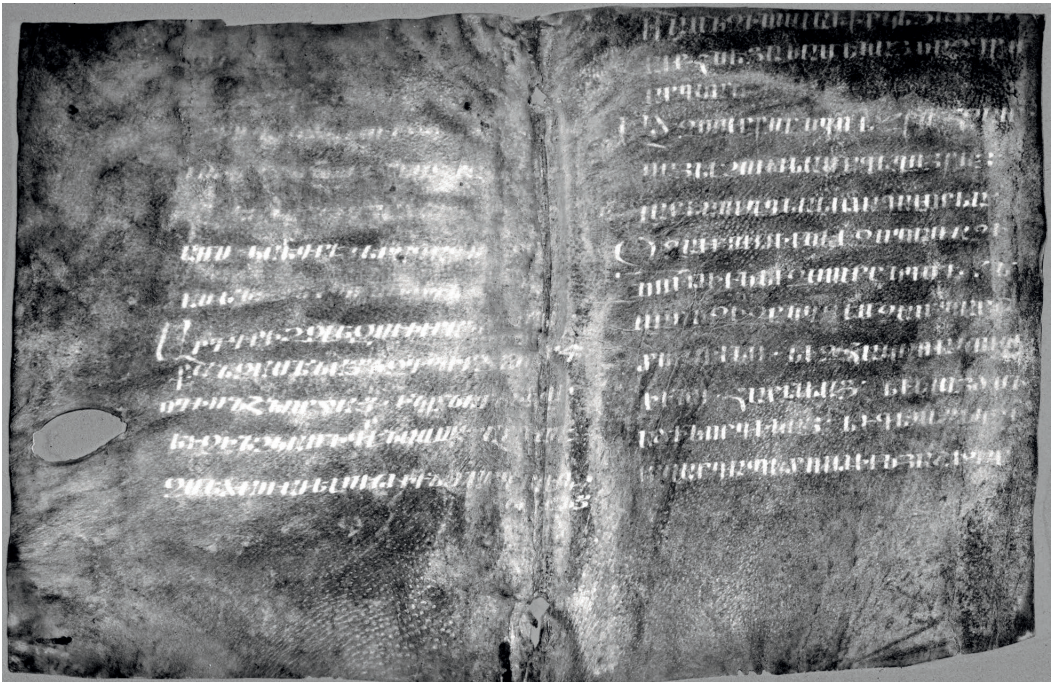


Fig. 4

3.2. Much harder to determine was the undertext of two flyleaves of ms. M2154, a 15th-century miscellany on paper (*Grand Catalogue* 2012, 231). Its parchment folios Բ and Գ are a typical palimpsest, with fragments of a *chashots'* written in bold *bolorgir* letters over a barely readable undertext in slightly slanted *erkat'agir* majuscules, both arranged in two columns. The overtext clearly reveals that the two folios constitute a bifolio, with pages Գւ = 5 + Բք = 4 representing the recto and Գք = 6 + Բւ = 3 the verso; the *chashots'* layer consists of a sequence of lections for Maundy Thursday that match the Jerusalem rite.¹⁷ The undertext, which was overwritten horizontally and thus covered to a large extent by the upper layer, has only been determinable for the recto (see Fig. 5 for fols. Գւ = 5 and Բք = 4); it contains a passage from book III, chapter 33 of Movsēs Khorenats'i's *History*, which is about the Council of Constantinople (381) and the 50 Fathers attending it.¹⁸ The content of the two columns of fols. Գւ = 5 + Բք = 4, each comprising 27 lines with an average of 14 letters, is displayed in Table III as far as it has been retrievable;¹⁹ it exhibits a few noteworthy differences as to the published text of the *History*, e.g. in omitting *ել ոչ երկրպագելի* between lines 18 and 19 of the first column (probably by haplography as the text continues with *ել ոչ փառաւորելի*), or in reading *Հաստատեցաւ* instead of *ստուգեցաւ* in line 13. The most remarkable difference appears at the end of the passage where the palimpsest inserts *սուրբք եւ ընտրեալ* between *յսուհ* (sic, for *յիսուհ*) and *Հարք*.

In contrast to this, the verso is desolate. Only a few words can be made out on fols. Գք = 6 and Բւ = 3, namely, *յաւրիսելոյն* (or *-ոյն*), *ել մեք*, and *ել քարոզ(ք?)* in lines 20–22 of the right column of fol. Բւ; in other cases, only parts of words are discernible as in lines 1 and 3 of the left column of fol. Գք where we read *-նեցին* and *-ութիւն*. As we cannot determine with certainty whether this was a recto or a verso in the original codex, these words could belong to both the preceding and the subsequent text in the *History*; however, neither chapter 32 nor chapter 34 contains any one of them. If we further consider that the text of the present recto (fol. Բք = 4) ends exactly with the last words of chapter 33, we may hypothesise that what we read about the Council in the palimpsest is just the given chapter from Movsēs' *History*, used as an excerpt in a different environment; as a matter of fact, the chapter is placed in the *History* rather independently between the legends concerning king Arshak II, his bishop Khad, and the Persian king Shapur II, so that it could be used in full for other purposes.²⁰ If we further consider that individual chapters of Movsēs' *History* have meanwhile been detected in the Greek-Armenian palimpsest Suppl.grec 1226 of

17 Sections XXXVIII, 119–120 and XXXIX, 121–122 in the edition by Renoux (1971, 266/128), comprising Is. 61.6, Acts 1.15–26, I Cor. 11.23–32, and Mt. 26.20–21 with Ps. 54.22 and 22.5 in between.

18 The passage covers p. 297, l.10–298, l.3 in the critical edition by Abeghean and Harut'yunyan (Movsēs Khorenats'i 1913).

19 The lines in the fold between Գւ and Բք are partially covered by a strip of cloth and can only be guessed at; the same is true for parts of the right column of which a strip comprising c. three characters per line was cut off.

20 A shorter account of the Council is found in the *Book of Letters* (*Book of Letters* 1994, 349–350) in the context of the correspondence between the Armenian Catholicos Abraham and the Georgian Catholicos Kyrion (within the latter's reply to the third letter); the section in question is missing in the second redaction of the Letter as published in the older edition (*Book of Letters* 1901, 185; cf. Aleksidze 1968, 104–105 and 162–164).

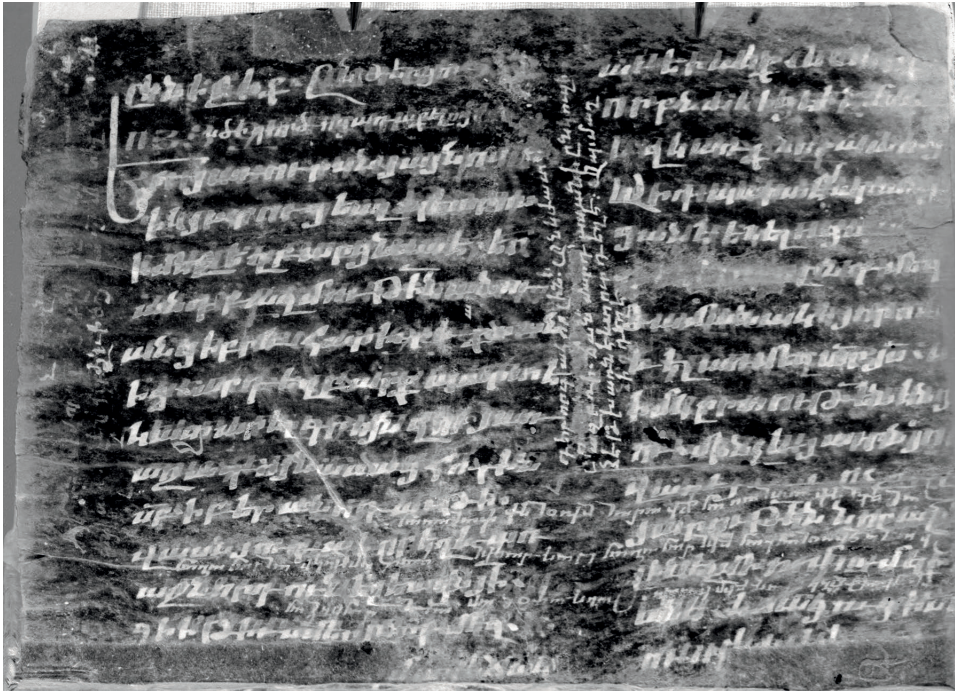


Fig. 5a

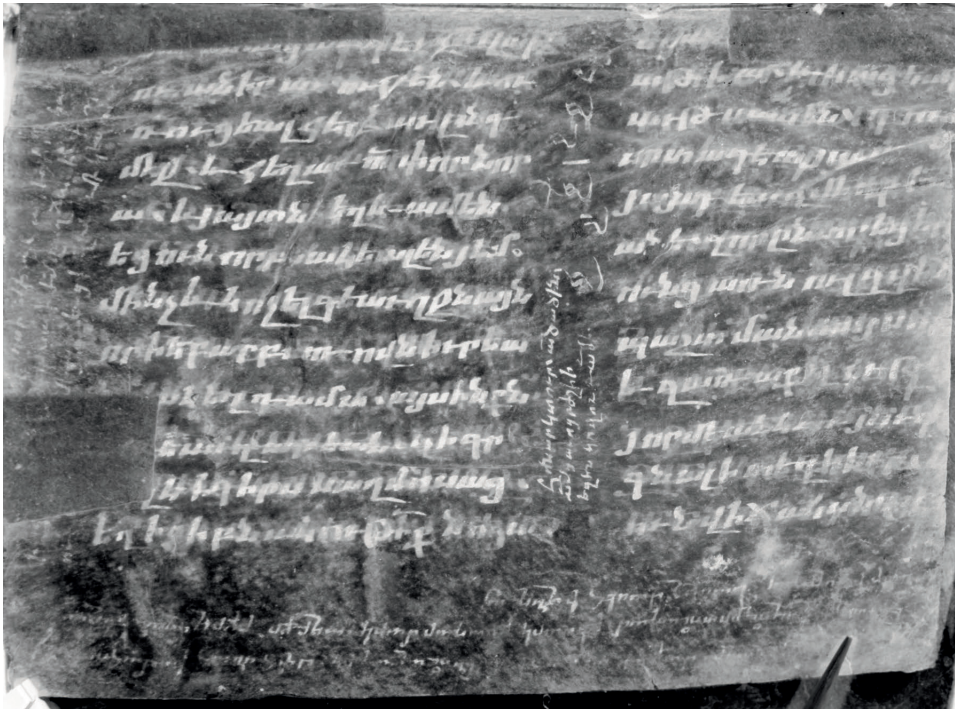


Fig. 5b

Table III: M2154, fols. Գււ + Բբ

LINE	COLUMN A	COLUMN B
	< ... ՋԵՐԵՔՔԱ>-	
Գււ 1	ԲԵՄԵՆ : ՍԱԴԱՐՉ-	ԷՌԻԹԻՒՆ Ա[ՆՉ]<ՆԱԻ>-
2	ՈՅՑ ՋԱՄԵՆԱՅՆ	ՈՐ·ԵԻ[ԺՈ]Ղ[ՈԱ]<ԵԱՂ>
3	ՎԱ[ՐՍ ՍՈՒՐԲՍ ՈՐՔ ՅԱ-	ՍՈՒՐԲ ՎԱՐՔՆ ԻԹ.<ԱԳ>-
4	ՂԱԳՍ ՈՒՂՂԱՔՐՈՒ-	ԱՌՐԷՆ Ի [Բ]ԻԻ[ՋԱ]<Ն>-
5	ԹԵՄԵՆ ԱՐՉԱՍԱՄԱ-	ԴԻՈԱՇ ՈՐ [ԿՈՉԵ]<ԱՂ>
6	ՆԵԱՂ ԷՒՆ Ի ՄԵՋԱՂՍ,	[Է ԿՈՍՄ]ԱՆԴԻ[Ն]<ՈՒ>-
7	ԸՆԴ·ՈՐՍ ԵԻ ՋՄԵԾՆ	[Պ]ՈՂԻՍ·[ԴԱՄԱ]<ՍՈՍ>
8	ՆԵՐՍԷՍ ԱԾԵԱ[ԱՌ]-	Ի ՎՈՒ[ԱՄԱ]Յ·Ն<ԵՔ>-
9	ԻԻՐ Ի ԲԻՋԱՆԴԻՈԱՇ	[Մ]ԱՐԻՈՍ Ի ԿՈՍ[Մ]<ԱՆ>-
10	ՊԱՄԷՐ ՄԵԾԱԻ [ՊԱ]Մ-	ԴԻ[Ա]ՆՈՒՊՈՂԱ[Ի] <ՄԻ>-
11	[ՈՒՈԱ : ՄԻՆՉԵՒԱՂՆ]-	ՄՈԹ.[ԷՈՍ Ի Ա]Ղ[Ե]<Ք>-
12	[ԴԱՌՈՐՈՒԹԵՄ Թ]ՈՂ-	[ԱՄՆ]ԴՐԻ·ՄԵ[Ա]ՆԻՄՈՍ>
13	ՄԱՆՆ [ՎԱՍՄԱՄ]ԵՑԱԻ-	[Ի Ա]ՆՄԻՈՐԱ·ԿԻ<ԻՐ>-
14	ՎԱՒՄՆ [ՈՐ ՅԱՂԱ]Գ[Ս]	[ԱՍ] Ի [ԵՂ]ՄԷ [·ԳՐԻ]<ԳՈ>-
15	{ԱՄԲԱՐՇՄԻՆ} [ՄԱ]-	[ՐԻ]Ո[Ս] <ԻՆԻՍԻԱՅ>
Բբ 16	{ԿԵԴՈԱՇԻՈՍԻ ՎԱՅ}-	Ե[Ա] <ԴԻՈՍ Ի ԿԵՍԱՐՈՒ>
17	{ՎՈՅՈՒ} [ԹԵՄՆՆ] :	Գ[ՐԻԳՈ]Ր [ԻՈՍ ԳՐԻ] <ԳՈՐԻ>-
18	ՋԻ [Ո]ՉՄ [ՐԻՈՍՄՈ]ԱԱ-	[ՈՍ Ի] ՆԱՆՉԻ[ԱՆ] <ՉՈՒ>
19	ՆԵՐ Ջ[ՎՈԳԻՆ Ս]ՈՒՐԲ	[ԱՆ] ՓՂԻՈՐ [ՈՍ Ի] <ԻԿՈ>-
20	ԵԻՈՉ ՓԱՌԱՌՐԵԼԻ	Ն[ԻՈ]Ա[ՈՒ, ԵԻ Ա]Յ<ԱԵ>-
21	ԸՆԴ· [ՎԱՐ ԵԻ ԸՆԴ·]	[ՊԻ]ՍԿ[ՈՊ]ՈԱՔ ՄԻ<ԱՆ>-
22	ՈՐԴ·[ԻՈՅ ԱՅՂԱԻ]-	[ԳԱ]ՄԱՅՆ [ՎԱՐԻ] <ԻՐ>
23	ՄԱՐ Յ[ԱՅ ԲՆՈՒ]ԹԵ-	ՅՍՈՒՆ [·ՍՈՒՐԲ] <ԵԻ>
24	ՆԷՆ Ե[ԻՍՄԱ]Յ[ԱԿԱՆ]	ԸՆ[Մ]ՐԵ[ԱՄԱՐ]Ք <ՈՐՔ>
25	<Ե>[ԻԾ]ԱՌԱՅ ԵԻ ՊԱՇ-	ՆՋՈԱԵԱՄԵՐԺ<ԵՑԻՆ>
26	{Մ}[ԱՐՆ]ԵԱՅ [·] ԵԻ ԱՋ-	ՋՄԱ[ԿԵ]Դ[ՈԱ]Ն [Ե] <ԻՋԱ>-
27	Դ[ՈՒՄՆ ԻՆՉ] [·] ԵԻՈՉ	ՄԵՆԱ[Յ] ՆՎՈԳ[Ե] <ՄԱՐՄՍ :>

the National Library of France, Paris, where they form part of a lectionary,²¹ we may assume a similar use for the present excerpt.

3.3. A totally different content has been revealed on the two parchment flyleaves of ms. M3938, a 14th-century paper codex containing the Armenian version of works by Thomas Aquinas (*Catalogue* 1965, 1114). Both the front and the back flyleaf are

21 Cf. Gippert forthcoming for the Paris palimpsest.

concerning Mt. 24.42–44 as published in the edition of 1826 but in contrast to the latter, which is an abridged version,²³ it is much more verbose, thus agreeing better with the Greek text.²⁴ Considering the paleographic features, it is likely that some more parts of the same original manuscript will be detected among the palimpsested folios of M2130, especially within the same quire.²⁵

A larger bulk of folios of M2130 has turned out to contain in its underwriting parts of the Armenian version of works by Irenaeus of Lyon. In contrast to John Chrysostom's *Commentary*, the palimpsest was in this case produced by turning the underlying folios by 90° or 270°, with one folio of the original yielding a bifolio of the present codex; the oertext was then applied across the lines of the undertext. The original folios must have comprised two columns with 36 lines each; in the re-use, about one half of one of the columns was cut off (see Fig. 8 showing the bifolio consisting of fols. 148v+153r). The undertext, written in a bold slanted *erkat'agir* with an average of 24 characters per line per column, can nevertheless be restored with great confidence, given that wherever it is readable, it agrees quite well with that of the published text version as contained in ms. M3710 of the Matenadaran, which comprises books IV and V of Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* and the same author's "Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching".²⁶ In the palimpsest, we have found passages from exactly these three texts;²⁷ the following parts have been identified so far:²⁸ *Adversus Haereses*, book IV, ch. XXVI.2 [15.2] (fol. 132r, probably continuing on fol. 143v); ch. XLII.4–5 [27.2–3] (fols. 141v+134r); ch. LX.2 [37.4–5] (fol. 353v, with uncertain partner folio); ch. LXI.2–LXII.2 [34.3–6] (fol. 85rv, with uncertain partner); ch. LXVIII.4 [42.4] – book V, ch. I.3 [1.3] (fols. 71rv and 78rv, both with uncertain partner); ch. V.2–VI.1 [5.3–6.1] (fol. 79rv, with uncertain partner); ch. VII.1–VIII.2 [7.2–8.1] (fol. 84rv, with uncertain partner); ch. VIII.2–IX.1 [8.1–9.2] (fols. 146v+155r and 146r+155v); ch. XIV.2–4 [14.2–4] (fols. 150v+151r); ch. XXV.4 [25.5] (fols. 152v+149r); ch. XXVI.1 [26.1] (fol. 80rv, with uncertain

²³ In the edition, the chapter bears the title *Ի քսանհորորդ չորրորդ ճառէն* (Yovhan Oskeberan 1826, 73); cf. Thomson 1975, 464, according to whom the "Armenian version represented by the published text is a very free rendering". The extracts from the *Commentary* in the *Seal of Faith* do not comprise the passage in question (*Seal of Faith* 1914, 319–323).

²⁴ The corresponding passage is found in *PG* 58, 704–705.

²⁵ A thorough investigation into the palimpsested witnesses of John Chrysostom's works in Armenian is at present being undertaken by Emilio Bonfiglio within the DeLiCaTe project (cf. note 5 above).

²⁶ For a short description of the manuscript, see *Catalogue* 1965, 1068–1069; cf. the editions by Ter-Mékérttschian and Ter-Minassiantz (Irenäus 1908 and Irenaeus 1910) and the French translation in Irénée 1933–1936. Cf. also S. Irenaeus 1919 and Irénée de Lyon 1965 and 1969. A new edition of *Adversus Haereses*, Book V has recently been prepared by Gabriel Képeklian (2020–2021); my sincere thanks are due to the author for sharing his thesis and discussing the palimpsest issues with me.

²⁷ Unless parts of chapters I–III of *Adversus Haereses* will be detected later on in the palimpsest (as suggested by the fragments from these books published in Renoux 1978, 30–73), this might be taken to indicate that the Armenian version was restricted to chapters IV–V (plus the *Demonstratio*) right from the beginning; cf. Képeklian 2020–2021, 32 as to this question.

²⁸ References to chapters and paragraphs are given in accordance with the editions by Ter-Mékérttschian and Ter-Minassiantz (Irenäus 1908 and Irenaeus 1910), which also agree with the edition of the Latin text by Harvey (Irenaeus 1857); references to chapter numbers of the editions by Rousseau *et al.* (Irénée de Lyon 1965 and 1969) are added in brackets.

partner); ch. XXX.1–2 [30.1–3] (fols. 148v+153r); ch. XXXV.1–2 [35.1–2] (fol. 86r, with uncertain partner); ch. XXXV.4 *Demonstratio*, ch. 41 (fols. 154v+147r); ch. 51 (fols. 140r+135v); ch. 58 (fols. 133v+142r). As the list shows, the distribution of the passages across M2130 is anything but straightforward; this is a typical effect of the re-use of folios in palimpsests. To illustrate what has been achieved, the text of *Adversus Haereses*, ch. XXX.1–2 as established for the bifolio consisting of fol. 148v+153r is displayed in Table V; note that the two lines between the two folios (lines 22 and 23) are reconstructed *in toto* as they are hidden in the fold.

Table V: M2130, fols. 148v+153r

LINE	COLUMN A	COLUMN B
148v		
1	<ԳԻՋԵԼ ԵՒ ԱՅԼ ԻՄՆ> {ՆԱ} ՈՒՍԵԼՈՎ Ե	ՆՈՐԱ ՅՈՐՄԷ ԳԱՆՅԸՆ Է ԱՉԳԵԱՅ
2	<ԿԵՍՑԷ ԴԻԻՐԱԲԻ ԻՎԵՆԱԼԻ ՊԱՐԲԵՍ	Ա[ՅՍՊԷՍ ԱՍԵԼՈ]ԱԻ ԴՎՆԵ ԼՈՒԻՑՈՒՔ
3	<ՅԻՆ ԱՌԻ ՆՄԱ> [ՆԷ] ԻԲՐ[ԵԻ] ՉԻ ՉԵԻ ԵԻ	ՉԱՅՆ ՉԱՐԱԳՈՒԹԵՆ ԵՐԻԻՐԱՅ ՆՈՐԱ
4	<ՆԱՍԵԼՈՅ ՆՈՐ>Ա ԵԻ ՄԱԻՐԵԼՈՅ ՉՈՐ	Ի ՉԱՅՆԷ [ՉԻԱՎԱՐՈՒԹԵՆ ԱՐԸ]ՔՄԱ
5	<ՊԱՅՆԵԼ ԵՒ ՉԳՈ>ԻՇՄՆԱԼ ԱՐ[ԺՎՆ Է]	ՆԸՆ [ՉԻՈՅ ՆՈՐԱ ՇԱՐԺԵՍՅ]Ի ԱՄԵՆԱՅՆ
6	<ԱՐԴ ՊԱՐԺ ԵԻ> [Ա]ՐԺՎՆ Է ՉԱ[ՅՆՊԻ]	ԵՐԿԻՐ ԵԻ [ԵԿԵՍՑԷ ԵՒ ԿԵՐԻՑԷ] ՉԵՐԿԻՐ ԵԻ
7	<ՍԻՍԸՆ ՇՐՔԵԼ Ե>Ի ՈՒՍՈՒՅՎՆԵ[Լ ԵԻ]	ՉԱԸՐ[ՈՒԹԻԻ]Ն ՆՈՐԱ ՉՔ[ԱՐԱ]ՔԸՆ ԵԻ ՉԲ
8	<Ի ՃՇՄԱՐԻՋԸ> [Ն] ԵՐԹԱԼ ԵԼԱ[ՆԵԼ]	ՆԱԿԻ[ՉԱ]ԸՆ Ի [ՆՄԱ ԵՒ ԱՎԱ]Ն [ԱՅ]ՍՈՐԻԿ
9	<ԱՆՈՒՎՆԸՆ Թ>ԻԻ ՉԻ ՄԻ [ՍՈՒՐ ՄԱՐ]	ՈՉ ՆԱՄ[ԱՐ]ԵԱԼ Լ[ԻՆԻ] {ՉԱՐՄԸՆ ԱՅՆ Ի}
10	<ԳԱՐԷԻՅԸՆ Ա>[Ա]ՅՐԻ ԿԱՐԳԵԱԼՔ ՆԱ	{ՅԱՅ}[ՋԸՆՈՒԹԻՆՆՍԸՆ ԸՆԴ- ԱՅՆՈՍԻԿ
11	<ՄԱՐԵՍՑԻՆ Բ>[Ա]ՅՑ ԳԻՋԱՅԵԱԼ ՆԱ[Ս]	{Ո}[ԸՔ] ԱՊՐԵԼՈ[ՅԸ]Ն {ԵՆ ԱՐ}[Դ- ՉԳՈՒՇ]ԱԳ
12	<ՋԱՋԱՊՊԵՍ ՉԻ> ԳԸՐՈՅԸՆ ՉԵԿՈՒ	{ՈՅՆ ԵՒ ՆԱՍՋԱՋԱԳՈՅ}[Ն ԵՒ ՄՆԱՋԱՆ]
13	<ՅԵԱԼ ԹԻԸՆ ԱՅ>[Ս]ԻՆՔՆ Է ՉԱԸՅ ՆԱՐ	[Գ Է] Կ[ԱԼ ՄՆԱԼ ԵՒ Ա]ՆՍԱԼ [ԵԼԻ] ՄԱՐ[ԳԱ]
14	<ԻԻՐ ԱՎԹՍՈՒ> [Ն] {ԵՒ ԱՎԹՍՈՒՆ}	[Ր]ԷՈՒԹԵՆ[ԸՆ] {ԵՒ Ա}[Ճ]ԱՐՄԱՆ ՔԱՆ Թ{Ե}
15	<ԵՒ ԱԸՅ ԿԱԼ Մ>ՆԱԼ ԵՒ ՍՊԱՍԵԼ {ՆԱԻԻԻ}	ՆԱՆ[Դ]ԻՊ[ԸՅ]ՈՒ[ՅԱ]ՆԵԼ [ԵԻ] ՆԸՄԱՅԱՔԱՐ[Ր]
16	<ԱՌԱՔԻՆ Ի Ջ>[Ա]ՍՈՒՆՍ ԹԱԳՎԻՈՐ	Գ[ԻՋ]ԱՆԱԼ ԴՈՒՉՆԱՔ[Ե]Ա[Յ ԵԻ] ԴԻՊԱԻ



Fig. 8a

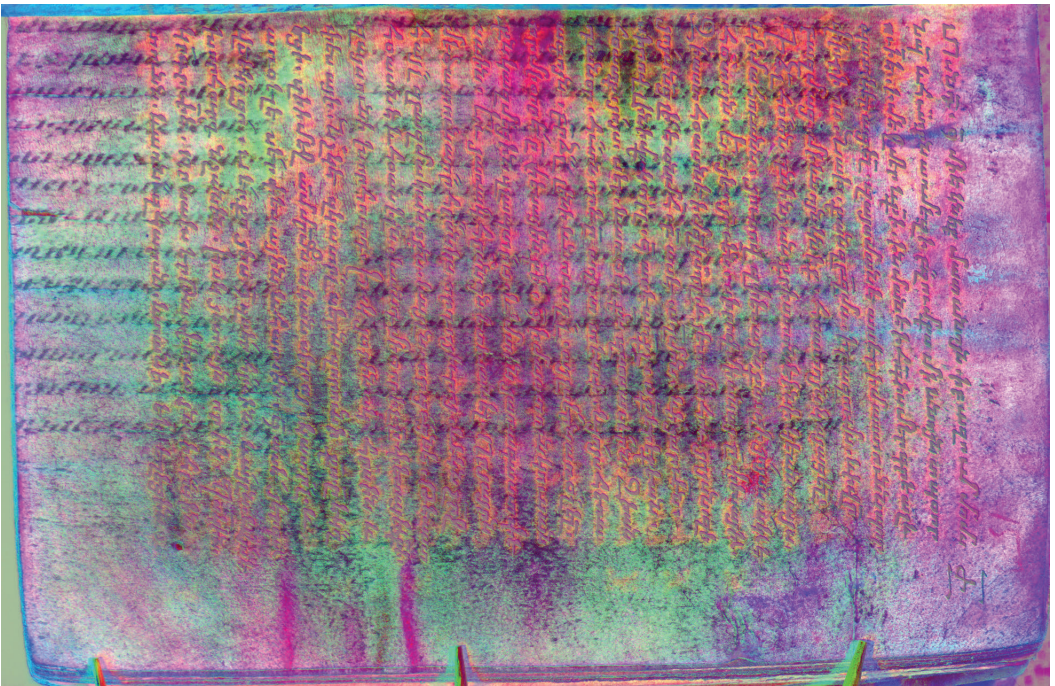


Fig. 8b

LINE	COLUMN A	COLUMN B
17	<ՈՒՌԱՆԵՆԸՆ Բ> ԱԺԻՆՍ ԵՒ ՎՊԱՆ ՆՈ	ՈՐ ՎՆՈ[ԻՄՆՍ ԻԲ]{ՐՈՒ Ջ}[Ի] ԲԱՋՈՒ[Մ ՎՆ]
18	<ՅԱ ԻՇԻԵՑՏԵԱԼ> [Ե] Ի ՋԻԲԵՑՏԵԱԼ ԵՒ ԿԱՐ	ՈՒ[Վ]ՆՔ [ԿԱ]ՐԻՆ {ԳՇՋԱ}{Ն} ԻԼ ՈՐՔ [ՈՒ]ՆԻՆ
19	<ՃԵՑՏԵԱԼ ՆՈՒ> [Ա] ՃԵԼ ԵՒ ՆԱՍՋԱՐՏԵԼ	[ՋՅԱՈՎ ՋԱՍԱՑ] ԵԱ[ԼՈ.] ԻԻԸ [Ս ԵՒ Ո] Չ[ԻՆՉ]
20	<ՋԻԲԵՆՆՑ ԻՐ> Ս ԵՒ ՎՃՅՈՒՑՎՆԵԼ	ՆՈ[ԻՎ]{Ջ ԿԱՑ} [Ե] ՄՆԱՑ ՆՈՑՆ ԻՇՆԳԻՐ
21	<ՋԻԲԵՆՆՑ ՋԻ> {ՇԻՎՆՈՒՌՈՒՄ} [ԸՆ]	{ՔՎՆ}{ՋԻ} {ԵՌԵ ԲԱՋՈՒՄ}[Ք] ԵՆ ՈՐՔ ԳՇՋԱ
22	<ՈՐ ՋԿՆԻ ԵԿԵՍ> {ՅԷ ԻՇԻՎՆՈՒՌԱԵԱ}	{ՆԻՆ ՎՆՈՒՎՆՔԸՆ ՈՐ ՈՒՆԻՆ ՋՈՒԻՇՆ}
23	<ՆԸՆ ՅՎՆԿԱՐԺ> {ՎԻՐԷՆ ՌԱՓԵԱԼ}	{ՋՈՐ ՈՔ Ի ՆՈՑՎՆԷԸՆ ԿՐԻՑԷ ՋԳԵՑՏԵԱԼ}
24	<ԵՒ ՅԻՆՔՆ ԱՋԱՐ> [Ե] ԱԼ ԵՒ ՊԱԿՈՒՑՏԵԱԼ	[ՈՐ ԳՎՅ]ՇՆ [ԻՇՆ] ԳՐԵՑԻ ԵՒ ՋԻ ՈՉ [ԱՎ]{ՄՆ}
25	<ՍԱՐՍԵՑՈՒՍ> [Ց] Է ՋՅԱՈՎ{Ջ}Վ[ՍԱՑԵ]	[ՋԱՐ]{ՎԿՈՒՍ}[Ի Վ] ՆՈՒՎՆՑԸՍ ՈՐ ՈՒ[ՆԻ]{Ն}
26	<ԱՎՄԸՆ ՈՒՆԵԼ> ՈՎ ՎՆՈՒ[Ն] Ն[ԵՐՊԱ]	{Ջ}[ՌԻԲ]ՎՆ[ՈՒՎՆՍ Ջ]ՎՅ[ՍՈՐԻԿ] ԱՍԵ{ՄՔ}
27	<ՐՈՒՆԱԿԱԿԱ> Ն Ի ՅԱՈՎ ՋՎ[ՍԱՑԵ]	[ՋԱՅ]{ԸՍ ԱՅՂ Ա}[ԱՍ]Ն [ԱՌ Ի Ց] {ՎՃՇՆ ԵՐԿԻԻ}
28	<ԼՈՅ ՌՈՒՈՅԸ> [Ն] ԵՒ ՋՍԱ ՃՇՄԱ[ՐԻՋԱ]	[ՂԻ ԵՆ ՆԱՎՆ] {Չ}[ՈՒ Ճ]{ԸՇ} [Մ]ԱՐ[Ը]{ՋՈՒՌԱԵ}
29	<ԳԻՋԱԵԼ ԳՈՒ Ջ> ԳՎՐՇԸՆ [ՎԻԵ] {ՐԱՃՈՅ}	[ՎՆ]ՇՆ [ԵՆՎՌԱՍ Ա] ՆՈ[ԻՆԸԳ ՈՒ]Ն[Ի]
30	<ՋԱՅՍ ԵՒ ՎՈՎՔ> [ԵԱ] ԱՍ[Է] {ՅՈՐՋԱՄ}	{ՋԻԸ}[ՆԳՇՐԵԱԼ ՌԻԻ]ՇՆ ԱՅ[Ղ ՈՉԻՆ] {Չ}
31	<ԱՎԱՍՑԵՆ Ի> [Ա] ՂԱՂՈՒ[ՌՈՒ]{Ն ԵՒ}	{Յ}[Ա]{Ղ}[Ա]{ԳՍ ԱՅՍՈ}[ՐԻԿ ՄԵ]Ք [Ա]{ԻՃԵԱԼՔ}
32	<ՆԱՍՋԱՐՈՒՌԱ> [Ի] ԻՆ ՅԱՅՆ[ՋԱՄ] {ՅՎՆ}	[ՆԱՍՋԱՐ] ԵՄՔ {ՋԻ ՆԱ ԵՒ ՂԱՋԻՆՈՍ}
33	<ԿԱՐՃԱԿԻ ՆՈ> [Ց] Ա Ի ԱԵՐԱՅ ՆԱ{ՍՑԷ ՍԱ}	ՎՆ[ՈՒ]Ն[Ը]{Գ} [ՈՒՆԻ Ջ]ԱԵ[Ց Ն]ԱՐ[ԻԻՐՈ]{Ա}
34	<ՋԱԿՈՒՄԸՆ> ԻՍԿ [ՅԵ] {ՐԵՄ}[ԻԱՅ ՈՉ ՄԻ]	ԱՎ[ՌՍ]{ՈՒՆ ԵՒ ԱԵ}[ՑԻ]{ՑԸՆ Ռ.}[ԻԻ ԵՒ]
35	<ԱՅՆ ՋՅՎԿԱ> ՐՃԱՐԻՆ[ԸՆ] {ՆԻՇԱ}	{ԿԱՐԻ ՔԱ}[Ջ Ա]{ՐՋԱՎՆ Է ՆԱՎՋԱ}
36	<ՆԱԿԷ ՋԻ Գ> [ԱԼ] Ն ԱՅՂ [ԵՒ ՋՋԱ] {ՄԸՆ}	{ԼՈՅ ԱՎՆ ՋԻ ԵՒ ԱԵՐ ՋԻՆ ՌԱԳՎՈՒ} [ՐՈՒ]

As stated above, there are not many differences from the published text of M₃₇₁₀. As a lexical divergence, we may note the use of *գարս* instead of *սոհս* in col. a, l.36 and col. b, l.9; minor deviations are the placement of *է* after *ել անվտանդ* in col. b, l.13 or the choice of *ռչինչ* instead of mere *ռչ* in col. b, l.19. In l.14 of col. a, about half of the line was obviously erased before the palimpsesting procedure, within the quotation of the number “666” (*զվեց հարիւր վաթսուն եւ վեց*) alluding to St. John’s *Revelation* (13.8); possibly the scribe thus corrected a dittography if he had written *ել վաթսուն* a second time instead of continuing with *ել վեց*.

In contrast to these single cases, the most remarkable feature of the palimpsested text is of a more regular nature: in a very peculiar way, the scribe applies the letter *լ* not only in word-initial position or within first or last syllables of words that are divided at line breaks, which would be a usual procedure, but everywhere where a *shewa* vowel is likely to have been pronounced. This is true, first of all, of the many cases where an article is suffixed to a given word as in *անուանցրս* (col. b, l.25), *թիւրս* (col. b, l.19), *անունըդ* (col. b, l.29), *վեցիցըն* (col. b, l.34) or *մարգարէութեանըն* (col. b, l.14), probably also in *գայըն* col. b, l.24); this is a very constant trait in the passages from Irenaeus that have been identified so far, and it even includes cases of the article attached to a word form in *-ի* such as *յանապատիրն* (book IV, ch. XLII.5: fol. 134rb, l.20), *յորդիրն* (book V, ch. VIII: fol. 146vb, l.2), or *հոգիրն* (*Demonstratio*, ch. 41: fol. 154va, l.2). Beyond that, the scribe inserts *լ* regularly where it is etymologically expected as a result of the “syncope” of former *i* or *u*; in our passage, this is visible in *գրտանիլ* and *գրտանին* (col. b, ll.18 and 21, vs. *եգիտ* etc.), *խընդիր* (col. b, l.20), *խընդրեցի* (col. b, l.24),²⁹ and even *գխընդրեալ* (col. b, l.30, vs. *խնդիր*), and also, with an article suffixed, in *գրոցըն* (col. a, l. 12, vs. *գիր*) and *ճշմարտութեանըն* (col. b, l. 28–29, vs. *ճշմարիտ*). Remarkable examples from the other passages are *մարդրկան* (*Demonstratio*, ch. 41: fol. 154va, l.14, vs. *մարդիկ*) or *սըրբոյ* and *սըրբութեան* (ib., ll. 20 and 33, vs. *սուրբ*). To what extent this feature is systematic and what it reveals with regard to the stratification of Old Armenian requires a more thorough investigation, all the more since it may be crucial for the question when and by whom Irenaeus’ works were translated into Armenian (Képeklia 2020–2021, 31–32).

4. Conclusions

Even though systematic research into the palimpsested heritage of Old Armenian has only just begun, the examples treated in the present article clearly suggest that it will yield many more intriguing finds, with texts of different genres showing up in hitherto unknown shapes and thus opening new insights into the history of Armenian literacy. With the further development of imaging and processing technologies, even endeavours that may seem hopeless at first sight may turn out successful. As an

²⁹ Note that the published text has a different subjunctive form here (*խնդրեցի*).

example, we may take the case of M1585 of which 32 folios have been imaged so far. On only one of them (fol. 35r), two consecutive lines of undertext could be made out, reading [տ]առ. [կոտ]որել and [հն]արեսց[ու].ք. գ, respectively. Assuming that each represents only a part of the given lines, this fragment could be restored to <եւ եթե գմարմինս պատար. պա>|[տ]առ. [կոտ]որել <գամհնայն հնարս>|[հն]արեսց[ու].ք. գ<ի აკნამ երկჳი...>, a passage that is found in John Chrysostom's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians* (Yovhan Oskeberan 1826, 404, l.14), which at least gives us a hint as to where to seek for the contents of the other palimpsested folios. However, the most striking question that remains with all these endeavours is the dating of the erased undertexts. Usually, they do not comprise colophons that would tell about their provenance, cases like that of M3938 (which represents just the remnants of a colophon) remaining exceptional, and a paleographical dating on the basis of character shapes alone cannot be reliable as there are not many dated manuscripts in *erkat'agir* that could be used for comparison. In order to determine the actual age of a palimpsested parchment manuscript (or even individual folios), it would be necessary to apply a scientific analysis as it is provided by the so-called radiocarbon (or ¹⁴C) dating method. It would mean a decisive step forward if this method could be applied to the palimpsests we are dealing with in the Matenadaran.

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