

The Trojan War and Founding of Rome According to a Recently Discovered Armenian Epitome

In the aftermath of Alexander the study of Hellenic culture spread throughout the major cities of the eastern Mediterranean and Near East. At its core was the study of Homer and the Trojan War, which occupied a central position in the grammar and rhetoric components of the *trivium*. As literacy spread under the impact of various religious movements in Late Antiquity, this lore also began to infiltrate the various indigenous traditions of the region. Thus Armenians, following the Cappadocian perspective on pagan literature, acquired a general acquaintance with the heroes and episodes of the Trojan war and its aftermath, the founding of Rome, from references and citations in several of the school textbooks rendered into their language in the 6th-7th centuries (e.g. Dionysius Thrax, Theon of Alexandria, the *Book of Chries*) as well as from the earlier *Alexander Romance*.

Despite Frick's suggestion that perhaps a complete Armenian translation of the *Iliad* existed with affinities to MS 186 of the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, only individual lines and bistichs are adduced in the above works. Moreover, Movsēs Xorenac'i's well-known treatment of the war (Bk 1, 32) is clearly not dependent on Homer, but mediated *inter alia* by Eusebius' *Chronicle*. Indeed, it is only under the impulse of Armenian Classicism that the epics of Homer and Virgil receive an Armenian rendering in the 18th-19th centuries, beginning with the activities of Gēorg dpir Balatac'i.

Nevertheless, the letters of Grigor Magistros and writings of the vardapets at the various monastic academies reveal the recondite interest they shared in abstruse aspects of classical mythology, promoted in part by the renewed contacts with Greek learning they had access to from the Middle Byzantine period onward, which then gave rise to a new series of translations. This seems the provenance of a very striking epitome of the Trojan War and Founding of Rome found in a manuscript of Glajor currently in the Matenadaran collection, Erevan, which concludes the narrative by highlighting the role of Constantine in the creation of New Rome.

Although partly dependent on Eusebius for pegging the war to the date of the first Olympiad, and following 'Aristotle' in the tradition of the war victors, not the vanquished, as laying the earliest foundations of Rome, the Armenian account diverges from the mainstream sources in several key respects. These include the location of Troy (Ilion), the background of Helen, the duration of the war, and the description of the Trojan horse. The paper will discuss each of these features in turn.

S. Peter Cowe
UCLA