A UNIQUE DOCUMENT OF THE CONSTANTINOPLE
LIBRARY DATED TO 695 AD

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At the end of the 7th century of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) Asia Minor and Greece had hardly remained within it under the blows of the Arab Caliphate. The signs of the former glory of the Romans were merely the appellation of Constantinople as a *Universal capital city* and “The Ecclesiastical History” (in Greek) of the 5th century church historian Socrates Scholasticus\(^1\) where he mentioned the name “deutevran \(\text{iRwvmhn}\)\(^2\) (“the Second Rome”) or “nevan \(\text{iRwvmhn}\)\(^3\) (“the New Rome”)\(^4\) given to Constantinople by Emperor Constantine in 324.

“The Ecclesiastical History” of Socrates Scholasticus was much respected in the Byzantine Empire and for the Emperor Justinian II (685-695/705-711), who acted in a passionately fanatic manner, its translation into any other foreign language was equal to recognition of the domination of the Byzantine Empire. Because of that he made the Armenian Catholicos Sahak III Dzoraporetsi (677-703) (who together with his five bishops was held in Constantinople) to take part in the (Quinisext) Council of Trullo (692 AD), which conformed to the Creed of Chalcedon\(^5\). At the same time the Emperor Justinian wished to keep the Greek to Armenian skillful translator Philon Tirakatsi as a hostage in Constantinople to translate “The Ecclesiastical History” of Socrates Scholasticus. Then Justinian II allowed Catholicos Sahak Dzoraporetsi to return to Armenia.

In 695 Philon Tirakatsi was allowed by the Emperor Leontios (695/6-698) to return to Armenia from Constantinople. He brought with him the Armenian translation of “The Ecclesiastical History” of Socrates Scholastocus and handed it to Catholicos Sahak Dzoraporetsi in Dvin. The translation of “The Ecclesiastical History” had the following colophon: «Եմի վեցհազարերրորդի երկե[ւ]րերորդի չորրորդի կենցաղում անցավորի որպէս ունի ժամանագրութիւն սուբ Սոփի աւագ եկեղեցի տիեզերական մայրաքաղաքին Կոստանդնուպաւլիս, եւ յեւթն հարիւրերրորդի չորրորդի Քրիստոսի»


\(^2\) Historia ecclesiastica, ΣΩΚΡΑΤΟΥΣ ΣΧΟΛΑΣΤΙΚΟΥ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΗ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ, I.16, p. 22.

\(^3\) Ibid., I.17, p. 23, V.8, p. 126.


M. Ter-Movsesyan, I. Orbeli, R. Blake, N. Adontz, P. Mouradyan and R. Vardanyan paid attention to this colophon. M. Ter-Movsesyan was sure of the originality of the four system dating in the colophon and tried to correlate with each other. I. Orbeli considered the synchronism of dates as the most vulnerable point in this colophon 7. He suggested that there was denoted only a kind of original date the rest were developed later. R. Blake considered quite the possible existence of a chronology based on the Birth of Christ in the Christian Orient in the 7th century 8. And it had been proved by the studies of a cryptographic inscription from Eghvard, a colophon notion by Anania Shirakatsi and the colophon of the translation of Socrates Scholasticus’ work 9.

As noted by R. Vardanyan, according to M. Ter-Movsesyan, R. Blake and P. Mouradyan 10, Philon writes about 6204 (5508+696) as the date of Creation following the “Constantinople (Byzantine) calendar” (the date of Creation at 5509/8 before the Birth of Christ), but the Christian date calculated 704, i.e. 6204-5508 is equal to 696 and not 704, and 6204-704 is equal to 5500 11. At the same time, R. Vardanyan suggested that Philon while computing the indiction was basing on the “Byzantine date” of the Creation (5508, which was introduced later than the Greek one) 12.

N. Adonts noted: “Philon’s proper colophons have not been preserved, but one of the subsequent scribes summed up their content and added on his behalf the date of the Coming of Christ according to the Alexandrian calendar 13 contrary to the Constantinople calendar used by Philon. Justly, according to the latter, from the beginning of the world until 696 are counted 6204 years, which is completely correct: 6204-5508=696. The Alexandrian calendar counts 5500 years and not 5508, thus an unknown scribe denoted 704 as the Coming of Christ (6204-5500=704) without noticing

6 See “Արշալոյս Արարատեան”, օրագիր Զմիւռնիայ, 23 նոյեմբերի 1868, թիվ 845։ Սոկրատ Սքոլաստիկոսի եկեղեցական պատմութիւն, թարգմանեաց Փիլոն Տիրակացի եւ Պատմութիւն վարուց սրբոյն Սեղբեստրոսի եպիսկոպոսի Հռովմա, թարգմանեալ սրբասուն Գրիգոր Ձորափարեցւոյ, աշխատասիրութեամբ Մ.Վ. Տեր-Մովսէսեան, Վաղարշապատ, 1897, էջ ԺԷ:
8 Р. Блейк, По поводу даты армянского перевода «Церковной истории» Сократа Схоластика.- Христианский Восток, т. VI, вып. II, Петроград, 1918, с. 188.
10 Р. Блейк, ук. соч., с.173-185, П. Мурадян, ук. соч., с. 78-79.
11 Р. Л. Чёрмадян, Մատենա Էրասուս, իրենցային հիշատականական միավորման ժամանակ և մեծ սրբազան-հռուսականական հարցեր, - ՊԲՀ, 1987, N 1, էջ 198-199:
12 Հայկ Նեղնեց, էջ 201:
that it does not correspond to the other dates: ‘the ninth year of indiction’=696 and the first year of the Emperor Leontios = 696\(^{14}\).

It might be a colophon-like unique reference of an early medieval library file which was usual in Byzantium. It could be given out on the occasion of finishing the translation of the work of Socrates Scholastocus in the Constantinople library. Thus it may be supposed that, according to the accepted order, the library inspector gave Philo Tirakatsi a reference in Greek stating that he finished the translation of the book of Socrates Scholastocus in 695/6, indicating the date by the calendar of the Creation of the World and the Coming of Christ accepted in Byzantium. That date is followed by information about the year 144 [695, according to the Armenian calendar (551+144); there is mentioned a date according to the calendar of the country where the visitor of the library had arrived from] and ‘the ninth year of indiction’, i.e. the first year of the reign of the Emperor Leontios, Augustus (695-698) [with almost similar names (in Armenian: Ղեւոն) before him were: Leo I (457-474) and Leo II (474), and after: Leo III (717-741)].

Unlike the remark of N. Adonts that “the year of the Coming of Christ was not in use not only in Philon’s time but also in the following centuries”\(^{15}\), now, involving the “Chronology” of the Byzantine chronicler of the 8\(^{th}\) century, Theophanes the Confessor, may be seen that there is no distortion in our document.

The “Chronography” of Theophanes the Confessor proves that Philo’s colophone in reality is the above mentioned translated Armenian reference. The dates mentioned there are in complete cohesion with the official Byzantine chronology of the end of the 7\(^{th}\) century. In the reference it is called «Սբերգրավին ձայնարկող Հայաստանագետե Սուրբ Սոփի ավագ եկեղեցու կենցաղում անցաւորի ժամանագրութիւն»:

The Greek original reference had to contain a real trap in the Byzantine Chalcedonic manner. It is possible to think that the translated into Armenian expression «կենցաղում անցաւորի»\(^{16}\) in the Greek original, in Chalcedonic sense, referred to Christ. Thus, this expression could be used while mentioning 704 (“the Coming of Christ”). Meanwhile, translating the reference into Armenian, in order to avoid the Chalcedonic trap, Philon moved the expression «կենցաղում անցաւորի» to the beginning of the reference\(^{17}\).

In fact, the chronologies of St. Sophia church and Theophanes accept only the Alexandrian calendar of the Creation of the world which lasted 5500 years, because

\(^{14}\) Ն.Ադոնց, Փոքր Սոկրատի հեղինակը, Երկեր հինգ հատորով, հ. Բ: Պ.Հ. Հովհաննիսյանը, Երևան, 2006, էջ 355:
\(^{15}\) Ն. Ադոնց, Փոքր Սոկրատի հեղինակը, էջ 355:
\(^{16}\) This expression of the Armenian reference P. Muradyan translated: “мира переходящего” (Պ. Մուրադյան, Հронология систем летосчислений по армянским источникам, с. 82).
\(^{17}\) From this reference some researchers wrongly concluded that while being in Constantinople the translator had adopted Chalcedonism.
according to Theophanes, the year 6188 of Creation is “the year 688 of Christ becoming Human (Incarnation)”\textsuperscript{18}: 6188-688=5500, and similarly the year 6204 according to the St. Sophia chronology (in the Armenian reference) is the year 704 (Coming of Christ): 6204-704=5500. It means that it is the Alexandrian calendar and not a “Constantinople calendar”.

By an interesting concidence the above mentioned reference of the Constantinople library and Theophanes the Confessor both mention the first year of the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Leontios, which by the indication calculation corresponded to 695 AD, according to Theophanes, to the year 688 of Christ’s Becoming Human\textsuperscript{19}.

It is also noteworthy that the Byzantine chronology is not synchronic with the Roman one. Since the Alexandrian calendar of the Creation of the World was borrowed by the Byzantine church from the Roman church, in order to show the independence of the universal capital Constantinople from Rome, the year of the Creation was dated seven years later than the Alexandrian calendar of Rome, i.e. the year 5500 of the Roman or Alexandrian calendar corresponds to the year 5493 of the Byzantine chronology. That year is justified by the calendar used by Theophanes the Confessor; and according to the data almost contemporary to him the Armenian reference under consideration: 6188-695=5493. Thus, the year 5501 of the Roman or Alexandrian calendar (which is the year 5494 of the Byzantine calendar) is 1 AD. And in the Byzantine Chalcedonian calendar the first year of the Coming of Christ is the 8 AD.

It can be inferred from the above-mentioned that while using the so-called Roman chronology it is necessary to add seven years to the year mentioned by Theophanes the Confessor in order to determine the right year corresponding to the Christian era\textsuperscript{20}. It is surprising that this unique document of the Byzantine library work with its incomprehensible dates remained unaffected in Armenian literature for 13 centuries, being copied and subjected to every kind of assessment\textsuperscript{21}.

\textsuperscript{18}Թեոփանես Խուստովանող, Ժամանակագրություն, էջ 81:
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20}It is possible to say that there was no Constantinople calendar (5508) though there were a number of interpretations on that.
\textsuperscript{21}As a result of different assessments even Philo of Tirak and others were unjustly accused of adhering to Chalcedonism.