

Dayeakut'iwn in Ancient Armenia

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Footnotes

Dayeakut'iwn was a form of childrearing practiced in Armenia and other parts of the Caucasus. In Armenia it involved the young sons of the country's lords or *naxarars*, who were sent to the sometimes distant districts of other lords, to be raised and educated there. Probably at age fifteen the youth returned to his own home, perhaps with a bride from his "adopted" family. Between the youth (called the *san* "pupil," "foster child," "protege") and the host *naxarar* (called the *dayeak*), a life-long bond existed; should the youth go home with a wife, the mutual interests of two *naxarar* Houses might be advanced. How ancient this practice was among the Armenians cannot be determined accurately. The earliest historical sources written in Armenian date from the fifth century A.D.; but *dayeakut'iwn* may have been practiced in Armenia many centuries earlier. In one form or another, *dayeakut'iwn* endured into the nineteenth century, though information on the more modern survivals of the custom comes from Georgia and other parts of the Caucasus rather than from Armenia.

Etymologically, the word *dayeak* is borrowed from Iranian; cognates are also found in the Kurdish, Afghan, and Baluchi languages (1). The word *dayeak* is still used in modern Armenian, with the limited meaning of "wetnurse." But to classical Armenian writers of the fifth century, the term had more than one meaning. The translators of the Bible into Armenian (A.D. 430s) used *dayeak* to refer to: (1) a wetnurse (e.g.: Exodus 2:7, Numbers 11:12, Ruth 4:16, IV Kings 11:2, 11 Chronicles 22:11); (2) a governess or tutor to a child (Genesis 35:8, 1 Thessalonians 2:71; and (3) a special guardian entrusted with educating and nurturing a child for an extended period (Isaiah 49:23, Acts 13:1, 1 Maccabees 6:14-15). It is in this last sense, most likely, that the early fifth-century biographer Koriwn (Koriun) used the word. Koriwn used the adverb *dayekabar* ("as a *dayeak*," i.e., "solicitously") to describe how Mesrop Mashtots labored to teach the Armenian alphabet to the illiterate inhabitants of the district of Goght'n (2).

While one may ascertain the meaning of the term *dayeak* in fifth-century Armenian literary histories, any investigation of the institution of *dayeakut'iwn* faces serious obstacles. These obstacles result from the nature of the sources themselves. First, none of the Armenian historical sources which have survived actually discuss this institution in any detail. Authors such as P'awstos Buzand and Ghazar P'arpec'i (fifth century) wrote for their contemporaries who already knew the features and implications of the *dayeak* relationship in their own day; these writers felt no need to define terms. Consequently, in a number of cases, testimonies concerning *dayeakut'iwn* are not direct references but allusions, i.e., a *dayeak* relationship is implied though the term *dayeak* is not used. Another problem is that *dayeakut'iwn* functioned as part of the customary rather than the normative laws of the Armenians. Thus, a document of great importance for the juridical history of early Armenia—such as the *Canons of the Council of Shahapiwan* (A.D. 444)—makes no mention of *dayeaks* or *dayeakut'iwn*. Finally, like any enduring institution, *dayeakut'iwn* undoubtedly underwent subtle changes over the centuries. But the sources provide no information on them. Most likely it was this paucity of

information that caused N. Adontz and C. Toumanoff (the twentieth century's two most prominent investigators of ancient Armenian society) to completely ignore the role of *dayeakut'iwn* in Armenian history (3). However, the existence of kindred institutions in Georgia and other parts of the Caucasus has not gone unnoticed by scholars. Such late nineteenth to early twentieth century investigators as K. Machavariani, A. Khakhanov, M. Kovalevskii, M. Janashvili, V. Vasilkov, I. Stepanov, and N. Derzhavin commented on related practices among the Abkhazes, Ossetes, Temmirgois, the Georgians, Mingrelians, Svanetians, the Khevsurs, and the Pshavs. More recently, A. Grigolia collected and analyzed references to "milk-brotherhood" in the accounts of seventeenth to nineteenth century European travellers to Caucasia. The present study will examine classical Armenian references to *dayeakut'iwn* and child custody, and then evaluate them in the light of information presented in Grigolia's article, "Milkrelationship in the Caucasus" (4).

Before turning to an investigation of the Armenian sources, a few words are in order about the *naxarar* (lordly) society which practiced *dayeakut iwn*. From most ancient times, the *naxarars*, or lords of the Armenian highlands, were not a homogeneous group. Long before the Arsacid (Arshakuni) clan was established on the Armenian throne (ca. A.D. 63), other clans ruled large parts of the Armenian highlands as independent rulers. In some instances the lineages of particular clans extended far back into Uartian times (pre-sixth century B.C.) . In the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., the *naxarar* heads of these clans may have constituted a part of the prevailing court nobility, but in a number of cases individual families were militarily as powerful and politically as influential as the royal Arsacids, or more so. One part of the nobility, thus, was composed of dynasts, *i.e.*, the descendants of the ancient clan leaders who held authority by hereditary right. Another part of the nobility was a "created" aristocracy of officials appointed by the Crown.

As the Arsacid family attempted to exert its authority over larger parts of the Armenian highlands, it tried to deal with the dynasts as though they were merely royal appointees. This legal fiction was recognized for what it was by such ancient clans as the Mamikoneans, Bagratids, and Artsrunids who actually predated the Arsacid monarchy in Armenia and were well aware of it. Thus, as the Arsacids tried to centralize control over the districts of historical Armenia, they invariably came into conflict with the prominent *naxarars* who saw the Arsacids as "first among equals," rather than as the omnipotent monarchs they aspired to be. Such a political reality was by no means unique to Armenia. It was also characteristic of Armenia's powerful neighbor to the east, Iran. Indeed, the title of Iran's monarch, *shahnshah*, as the Armenian *ark'ayits' ark'ay* (king of kings), reflected in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. and long before, not so much the grandeur of absolute sovereignty as an acknowledgement of the fact that these monarchs were kings of other kings. When these "other kings" were the monarch's own nobles, the king's role often was merely to preside, not to govern (5).

In both Armenia and Iran, internal conflicts took the form of open and covert warfare against the Crown by the lordly clans, either singly or in confederations. In both societies, the Crown (when it was strong enough) attempted to physically annihilate rebellious or insubordinate families. In fourth to fifth century Armenia the Arsacid family tried to exterminate recalcitrant *naxarar* families on more than one occasion. But this was no easy matter. To eliminate a *naxarar* clan/family (which sometimes included thousands of related individuals) and to confiscate its land for the Crown meant that every male clan member had to be killed. Should but one male baby survive, he could (on reaching his majority) reclaim all of his clan's lands; and, under the customary law operating in Armenia, the Crown could be forced to fully restore and reinstate the sole survivor (see below)

Under such potentially uncertain circumstances of life, the great *naxarar* clans took precautions to prevent total annihilation. In the opinion of this writer, it was concern for clan survival which initially led to the institution of *dayeakut'iwn* among the lords. For if a *naxarar's* little sons lived in distant parts of the country, a massacre directed against the center of the *naxarardom* might cause great loss of life, but the children (and thus the future clan) would be safe. Custody of sole-surviving noble children was of paramount importance in

naxarar Armenia, especially to the guardian Houses (*tuns*) which stood to gain from merging their lines with those of their dependent wards. Beyond insuring a clan's survival in dangerous times, *dayeakut'iwn* served as a means of drawing *naxarar* families together in times of relative peace. The influence of the *dayeak* on his charge was deep and profound; similarly, the *san* (foster child) in later life often did his utmost to assist his *dayeak* or *dayeak*-family. Armenian historians of the fifth century, such as Agat'angeghos, P'awstos Buzand, and Ghazar P'arpets'i, have preserved several interesting references to *dayeakut'iwn* which confirm the double nature of this institution.

I. Agat'angeghos

Information on *dayeakut'iwn* in fourth-century Armenia is found in a fifth-century compilation, Agat'angeghos' *History*, which describes in epic style Armenia's conversion to Christianity. According to Agat'angeghos, it was thanks to *dayeaks* that the lives of the future king Trdat (Armenia's first Christian king, ruled ca. 303-330) and the future Gregory the Illuminator or Grigor Lusavorich were saved. Both Grigor and Trdat were rescued in their infancies from extermination attempts directed against their clans. Agat'angeghos narrates how the shah of Iran plotted the murder of Trdat's father, King Xosrov, in the late third century. The shah sent to Armenia an Iranian noble named Anak the Parthian who vowed to endear himself to King Xosrov and then to kill him at an opportune moment. When that moment presented itself some months later, Anak assassinated Xosrov. But, with his dying breath, Xosrov

ordered that [Anak's] clan be exterminated. Then (the Armenians) began to destroy and kill them, not even sparing the children who did not yet know their right from their left. They also put the women to the sword. Only two infant sons of [Anak] the Parthian were saved by someone who rescued them by means of their *dayeaks*. They took [the babies] and fled, taking one to Iranian territory, and the other to Greek [Byzantine] territory (6).

The son of Anak who was spirited away to the city of Caesarea was baptized Grigor and given a Christian education. As for the future king Trdat, the shah of Iran searched for this heir of his old adversary:

But someone saved and rescued from destruction one of the sons of [the slain] king Xosrov of Armenia, an infant named Trdat. His *dayeaks* took him and fled to the court of the emperor in Greek territory (7).

By a twist of epic fate, both Trdat and Grigor grew up in the same geographical area. According to Agat'angeghos, when Grigor's *dayeaks* informed him of his true parentage, Grigor sought out Trdat wishing to enter his service, to expiate for his father's crime (8). Grigor concealed his past and his religion from Trdat for some time. But eventually Trdat learned that Gngor's father was the regicide Anak. It was then that the imprisonment of Grigor began (9).

Who were the *dayeaks* mentioned in Agat'angeghos? Later Armenian tradition has supplied probably fictitious names for Grigor's *dayeaks* (10). As for the saviors of baby Trdat, the *dayeaks* may have been Mamikoneans, a family with which the royal Arsacids of Armenia subsequently had *dayeak* relations. Trdat's personal guardian may have been the *sparapet* (commander-in-chief) Artawazd Mamikonean (11).

In Agat'angeghos, the institution of *dayeakut'iwn*, though seldom mentioned, has a crucial importance. Not only do *dayeaks* prevent the annihilation of the royal clan and the Parthian clan of Anak/Grigor, but they educate both of their wards to recognize their responsibilities—atonement for Grigor, vengeance for Trdat.

II. P'awstos Buzand

Information pertinent to the study of *dayeakut'iwn* and child custody in fourth-century Armenia is found also in P'awstos Buzand's *History of Armenia*. P'awstos, about whom almost nothing is known, was a fervent supporter of the ambitions of the fourth-century Mamikoneans. As a result, his *History*, despite its title, is less a history of Armenia than a partisan account of the role of the Mamikonean family in Armenian affairs. Despite this bias, P'awstos' work is our major source for the political, military, religious, and social history of fourth-century Armenia, a society which practiced *dayeakut'iwn*. This exposition shall follow P'awstos' own chronological approach which describes in order the reigns of Armenia's kings from 330-387.

Allusions to *dayeakut'iwn* abound from the period of King Xosrov II Kotak (ruled 330-339), the son and successor of Trdat. During this monarch's turbulent reign, when Iran militarily and culturally sought to dominate the Armenian highlands, a number of important Armenian lords sided with Iran and tried to withdraw from allegiance to the Armenian Crown. In addition, warfare among the Armenian lordly clans threatened Arsacid rule. King Xosrov, supported by his *sparapet* (commander-in-chief) Vach'e Mamikonean moved against the rebels with the aim of exterminating their clans. P'awstos Buzand records several instances of this:

In that period a great agitation arose in the land of Armenia. For two great *naxarars* and princes, holders of districts and lords of lands (*gawarhakalk ashxarhateark'*), became each other's enemies and with great rancor stirred up a fight, warring with one another without justice. The prince of the Manawazean *tohm* and the *nahapet* of the Orduni *tohm* thus disturbed the great land of Armenia. They engaged each other in warfare and many people were killed...[The reconciliation attempts of King Xosrov and Archbishop Vrt'anes fail]... With great anger and wrath the king sent against them Vach'e, son of Artawazd, *nahapet* of the Mamikonean *tohm* from the *azg* of the *sparapetut'iwn* of Armenia, a great general with his troops to kill and destroy those two *azgs*. The general Vach'e went and struck at those two *azgs* and did not leave a single male child alive (12).

Apparently the extermination was complete, since no more is known of either House. A similar fate befell the House of Bzhnunik' after the desertion to the Iranians of Databe Bzhnunik', the commander of an Armenian army (13). King Xosrov also encountered resistance from the rebellious prince of Aghdznik', a district in southwestern historical Armenia:

In that period there rebelled from the king of Armenia one of his servants, the great prince of Aghdznik' who was called the *bdeashx*, [an individual] who occupied one of the four senior *gahs* [thrones] in the royal chamber. He extended his hand in alliance to the king of Iran and betrayed the royal *tun* [House] which he himself had supported. The king of Iran sent troops to support him and [Aghdznik'] was separated from the authority of Armenia. He warred with the king of Armenia using the power of the kingdom of Iran... [King Xosrov's supporters attack Aghdznik'] They went and conquered the Iranian troops, putting all of them to the sword, and killing the *bdeashx* with his brothers and sons. But they brought to the king the head of Bakur the *bdeashx*, and also one of his newborn daughters. Since there were no other survivors of that *azg*, the king gave the girl in marriage to his favorite, Vaghinak Siwnik', and also gave him the *tun* of Aghdznik', making him *bdeashx* and inheritor of [Bakur's] *tun*. The heir increased and the *bdeashx* Vaghinak remained in service to the king constantly, with the land and all its might. However, a certain small son of Bakur the *bdeashx* fled and landed by Vach'e, the general of Armenia where he was concealed and spared in [Vach'e's] *tun*. Subsequently [the child] returned and seized his own *tun*. His name was Xesha (14).

The above quotations shed light on the practice of confiscation of land by the Crown and on the role of the *dayeak* in fourth-century Armenia. Apparently, if the Crown successfully eliminated a recalcitrant House, it could do as it pleased with that House's properties and even hereditary offices—if the Crown was strong enough and if there were no surviving children (15). In the last quotation, King Xosrov designated lord Vaghinak of the House of Siwnik' as the inheritor of Aghdznik' and of the title of *bdeasx*. This was legitimized by the "marriage" of Vaghinak to an infant daughter of the slain *bdeasx* Bakur. Such an expansion of power for the House of Siwnik' probably was resented by the other *naxarar* Houses, including the Mamikoneans. Thus it was Xosrov's loyal *sparapet* Vach'e Mamikonean (who had exterminated three other clans at Xosrov's orders) who now protected and supported the rights of the sole-surviving male heir of the legitimate *bdeashx* of Aghdznik'. With the aid of the Mamikoneans, the property and title of the *bdeashx* of Aghdznik' were returned to Xesha, and (equally or more important) repossessed from the lord of Siwnik'.

At the end of Xosrov's reign (ca. 338/39), *sparapet* Vach'e died fighting Iran. The importance of the guardianship of noble children is seen once more in P'awstos' account of Vach'e's small son, Artawazd. In this instance, the child's guardians also controlled the Mamikoneans' hereditary office of *sparapet* during their ward's minority:

...General Vach'e had a son who was a very small boy, named after his grandfather, Artawazd. They placed him on the pillow of his patrimonial *gah* [throne], and in the presence of the king, they placed his father's *patiw* [diadem] on his head and put him in the *sparapetut'iwn* of his father. For [Artawazd] was the son of a very meritorious [individual], and of a very meritorious *azg* and [furthermore] there was no other [individual] in that *azg* who was robust, since they had died in the great war. The affairs of the generalship were assumed by Arshawir Kamsarakan, prince of Shirak and the district of Arsharunik', and by Andovk, prince of Siwnik', since they were brothers-in-law of the *tun* [House] of the Mamikonean *tohm*. The great archbishop Vrt'anes and the king ordered Arshawir and Andovk to raise the lad Artawazd so that he might occupy the position of his ancestors and of his father...(16).

Information from the reign of King Tiran (339-350), son and successor of Xosrov, also reflects the importance of child custody, in times of peace and conflict. According to P'awstos, Tiran himself (before he ruled as king) served as the "guardian" of Yusik, Gregory the Illuminator's only grandson and heir to Armenia's hereditary *kat'oghikosate* (17). Tiran gave his daughter in marriage to Yusik (who was still a child) in the hopes that his own grandsons would occupy the *kat'oghikosate* after Yusik. Later, Yusik's two sons married Tiran's sisters (18). King Tiran shared the Iranian cultural-religious sympathies of many of his *naxarars*. Yusik, as head of the Armenian Church, reprimanded and denounced the king and the lords for turning from Christianity. But Tiran did not brook any insubordination and he had his former ward, Yusik, murdered. Tiran's assistant in trying to break the power of the *naxarar* Houses and the Church was an official named Hayr:

...There was one impious and diabolical man who surpassed all the rest, and who aggravated king Tiran against the *naxarar azgs*. This was the eunuch Hayr, who held the *patiw* of the great *mardpetut'iwn*, a wicked-hearted, malicious malefactor. Through slander he effected the destruction of many *naxarars* who had committed no crimes, and he disrupted the great lordship of the kingdom. In particular through his slander he managed to have two senior *tohms*—the Rheshtunik' *tohm* and the Artsrunik' *tohm*—put to the sword and [almost] entirely wiped out, without them committing any crime or fault, and they even destroyed the women of [those] *azgs*. Then two children, caught in the scandal had found refuge by fleeing to *dayeaks*: one was Tachat, son of Mehendak Erheshtunik', the other, Shawasp, son of Vach'e Artsrunik', both suckling children. They were brought before the king. When [Tiran] saw them, he ordered that they be beheaded, for they were the only progeny of those *azgs*. Now it happened that Artawazd and Vasak, men of the

Mamikonean *tohm*, were present. They seized the little boys, each one taking one under his arm, and rushed out with their weapons aloft, ready to fight and die for those children. Although [the Mamikoneans] had been raising the king's son Arshak, nonetheless, angered at the deeds of that time, they left their charge Arshak and quit the royal *banak*. They went to their land, to the strongholds of Tayk', remaining there many years with their families, leaving their other home. They raised those children, Shawasp and Tachat, married their daughters to them, and regenerated those *azgs*. And they did not engage in Armenian councils for many years (19).

The passage above describes two instances of *dayeakut'iwn*, both involving the Mamikonean family. In the first case, the Mamikonean lords Artawazd and Vasak rescued the doomed infant survivors of the Rheshtunik' and Artsrunik' Houses, and (with Mamikonean women) regenerated both Houses. In the second instance, the Mamikoneans (who had been serving as *dayeaks* of the crown-prince Arshak) returned Arshak to the king and withdrew from the Arsacid court in protest.

King Arshak, son of Tiran, ruled from ca. 350-367. Upon ascending to the throne, one of his first acts was to repair relations with the various *naxarar* Houses which had been alienated by Tiran:

At that time king Arshak raised the question of the *tohm* of the generals, the *azg* of the Mamikonean braves, especially since they had been his *dayeaks* and nourishers. He went and found them in the strongholds of their land of Tayk' and brought them back into confidence; for during the period of Tiran's madness, they had split away and broken off communication, and had withdrawn from all Armenian affairs. The king established the senior brother Vardan in the *nahapetut'iwn* of his *azg*; the middle brother, Vasak, his *dayeak*, in the *sparapetut'iwn*, the generalship in charge of military affairs; and the youngest was appointed [to look after] the needs of the troops. Similarly, all the *azgs* of the troops of the grandee *nahapets* were returned, as had been the case under former kings, each to his proper level (20).

However, Arshak too, like his father before him, had problems with certain *naxarar* families. Arshak also tried to exterminate a house. But in this he was thwarted by his own *dayeak*, who became the preserver of yet another lordship:

Now, when the blessed archbishop Nerses had quit the royal *banak*, there was no one to reproach the king or give contrary counsel, and so [Arshak] went along according to his evil wishes. He destroyed many of the *naxarars*, extirpated many *azgs*, and confiscated many *tuns* for the court. He extirpated the *tohms* of the Kamsarakans who were the lords of districts, of Shirak and Arsharunik', and he made [their] districts *ostan*. However, the general of Armenia, the *sparapet* Vasak, concealed and saved a tiny child from that *azg*, named Spandarad, who subsequently became the inheritor of [their] land (21).

King Arshak's reign was characterized by frequent Iranian invasions, the most destructive of which (in 364-367) ruined eight Armenian cities. Many of the prominent Armenian lords, weary of fighting against Iran, joined the enemy until King Arshak was almost completely deserted and was forced by his own *naxarars* to go to Iran to make peace with the shah. Taking along his *dayeak* Vasak Mamikonean, Arshak went to Iran, where both died in captivity (22).

The heir to the Armenian throne Pap, son of Arshak, was in Byzantium (as a royal hostage) at the time of his father's arrest in 367. *Sparapet* Mushegh Mamikonean, (son of the former *sparapet* Vasak) led a delegation of Armenian *naxarars* to Byzantium requesting Pap's release (23). The request was granted and the delegation returned to Armenia with the new king. During Pap's reign as king (368-374), *sparapet* Mushegh Mamikonean recaptured or conquered a number of Armenian districts which had rebelled from the Arsacids

as well as Albanian/Aghuanian, Iranian, and Iberian (Georgian) territories (24). Mushegh participated in the partial extermination of the rebel *bdeashx* houses of Gugark' and Aghdznik' (25).

King Pap was assassinated by Byzantine generals who resented his increasingly pro-Iranian posture (26). After Pap's murder, the Byzantines placed on the Armenian throne an Arsacid named Varazdat (374-378). "He was a youth, full of bravery, with powerful hands and a brave heart, but light-minded, with a child's capricious cunning" (27). *Sparapet* Mushegh Mamikonean is described as "offering good advice to the young king Varazdat" (28), but it was Varazdat's *dayeak* Bat Saharhuni who directed Varazdat's actions:

Bat, the *nahapet* of the *azg* of the Saharhuni *tohm*, was the *dayeak*-nourisher of king Varazdat. He wanted to appropriate for himself Mushegh's position of general-*sparapet*. Consequently, he began to slander [Mushegh] to his *san* [foster-child], king Varazdat... [People] were constantly provoking the king with such words secretly, until [Varazdat] agreed with their wishes, to kill the *sparapet*-general of Armenia (29)."

Varazdat had Mushegh murdered and "put his *dayeak* Bat, *nahapet* of the Saharhunik' *tohm*, the slanderous tale-bearing murderer of Mushegh, in the position of the generalship-*sparapetut'iwn*" (30). However, this arrangement did not last long. Manuel Mamikonean (Mushegh's brother), having returned from military service in eastern Iran, "seized for himself the generalship-*sparapetut'iwn* without the order of King Varazdat" (31). Soon thereafter Manuel expelled King Varazdat from Armenia and killed Bat Saharhuni (32).

From 378 until his death in 385, Manuel Mamikonean was the real ruler of Armenia. He ruled not as king, but as a "trustee" of the monarchy. According to P'awstos:

[Manuel] took king Pap's wife, *tikin* Zarmanduxt with [her] Arsacid sons, keeping [them] in the king's place [and] causing them to circulate around in honor. As long as Manuel lived he greatly led the land of Armenia with great wisdom and much success. Of the two Arsacid lads, the senior one was named Arshak, and the junior one Vagharshak. *Sparapet* Manuel nourished them as *sans* (foster-children) and honored their mother Zarmanduxt in the great glory of the *tiknut'iwn* (33).

Manuel was serving as the *dayeak* of the royal princes. And he planned to deepen his family's relations with the royal House:

After all of this, general *sparapet* Manuel went to the district of Karin taking along the Arsacid *tikin*, the two youths Arshak and Vagharshak, and all the Armenian *banak* with the grandee nobility of *naxarars*, and all the *tanuters*. *Sparapet* Manuel married his own daughter Vardanduxt to the youth Arshak Arshakuni, making him his son-in-law (34).

But after Manuel's death in 385, a group of influential *naxarars* went to the shah of Iran and requested another king from Armenia's royal Arsacid line. This group returned to Armenia with an Iranian army and Arshak fled to the western districts of historical Armenia. By agreement between Byzantium and Iran, Armenia was thus divided (387) into sectors of Greek and Iranian overlordship. P'awstos' *History* ends with an account of the division of 387.

The few but important quotations from P'awstos pertaining to *dayeakut'iwn* point to the pervasiveness of this institution in *naxarar* life of fourth-century Armenia. There is at least one reference for the reign of each of the fourth-century Armenian kings. P'awstos' focus on the Mamikonean family somewhat conditions the information presented, but even so, the function of *dayeakut'iwn* among the *naxarars* is clear: *dayeak* relations protected the clan from domestic and foreign threats to its physical existence. Whether in times of warfare or of relative peace, the *dayeak*'s influence over his ward was substantial. Sometimes motivated by

kinship, altruism, and humanity, the fourth-century Mamikoneans (and others) often appear to have used *dayeakut'iwn* to further their own clan's ambitions.

III. Ghazar P'arpets'i

Information on *dayeakut'iwn* and child custody in the fifth century is found in the *History of Armenia* by Ghazar P'arpets'i. P'arpets'i himself, about whom little is known, seems to have been raised by Mamikonean and/or Artsrunid *dayeaks* (35). He wrote his work in the late fifth century as a panegyric to the Mamikonean family generally and specifically to glorify Vardan Mamikonean (d. 450/51) and the latter's nephew Vahan (d. early 500s), the leaders of two anti-Iranian uprisings in Armenia.

P'arpets'i's *History* contains eight references and allusions pertinent to this study. In the first reference, P'arpets'i describes the impression made on the Armenian *naxarars'* children by the appearance of their newly-apostate fathers (ca. 449):

But on this occasions [*i.e.*, the return from Iran of Vardan Mamikonean and the Armenian *naxarars* who had converted to Zoroastrianism to extricate themselves from the shah] one could hear the sounds of weeping and moaning, cries of lament and shrieking. Anxious children fled terrified from their fathers' arms, frightened that a transformation had occurred, not considering [their fathers'] appearance to be the same as before. They quickly looked at their mothers' faces which were constantly grieving and streaming with tears. As a result, the children also began to cry, and no one—neither *dayeak* nor instructor—was able to quiet them (36).

Here P'arpets'i uses the term *dayeak* in the sense of nurse, governess, or tutor. In a second reference, the usage is less clear; the *dayeaks* may have been nurses or else the guardian/protectors who raised noble children at some distance from their actual homes. In the following passage, P'arpets'i describes the activities of the pro-Iranian *naxarar* Vasak Siwnik' at the time of his break with the rebel Vardan Mamikonean and his partisans, on the eve of the Battle of Awarayr (450/51):

...Suddenly an emissary reached the venerable general of Armenia, Vardan, and the entire brigade with him. He gave them gloomy and wicked news: "The impious Vasak has betrayed the covenant of God and duplicitously broken the oath on the Gospel. He has rebelled from the alliance of Truth. The Armenian nobles who are with him have also rebelled and, turning their faces from the path of justice, they have erred after Satan. They sent an emissary to Iran and made vows to them in letters. They took the fortified strongholds of Armenia, placed their fortress-commanders in them and told them to keep watch. [Vasak] had the children of the Mamikonean *tohm*, of the Kamsarakans, and of other *tanuters* gathered from each of their *dayeaks*, and taken to secure fortresses in the principality of Siwnik' which he ordered carefully held. Furthermore, the treacherous Vasak had the boys sent to the Iranian king (37)."

Concern for the safety of these hostage children was uppermost in the minds of the Vardanians, although it did not stop the war (38). But the fate of the noble children became even more important after the defeat of the Mamikonean alliance in the Battle of Awarayr, since with the deaths of many of their fathers, these boys became the potential heirs to their Houses' Armenian prerogatives. Of course, the rebels' children were not the only captives taken by the Iranians. In addition some forty prominent princes, as well as the Armenian *kat'oghikos* Yovsep', bishops, and priests were sent to trial before the Iranian shah Yazkert II (439-57):

...The king, angered, commanded that the following day a great *atean* should be held in his presence, and that everyone, Aryan and non-Aryan and whoever held the king's honor should come in dress,

while all the captives should be led into his presence. But he ordered the impious [Iranian official] Mihrnerseh to take the boys and youths of the Mamikonean *tohm*, the Kamsarakans, and other *tohms*, and to give them to whomever he pleased (39).

The captive *naxarars* and their children were sent into exile in eastern Iran where the *naxarars* were forced to perform military service fighting Iran's enemies for some years before their ultimate release (40).

But the Mamikonean children remained at the shah's court. Their custody was sought and obtained by the lord Ashusha, whose wife's sister was the boy's mother:

In the seventeenth year of Yazkert [A.D. 456], the Iberian [Georgian] prince Ashusha—after spending an incalculable amount on each person and especially on the impious *hazarapet* Mihrnerseh—beseeched the court nobility and, after great effort, convinced them to say to king Yazkert that he [Ashusha] should be favored with the sons of the venerable champion Hmayeak of the Mamikonean *tohm*, whom the treacherous prince of Siwnik' had taken from their *dayeaks*—as the sons of people condemned to death—and had taken to court to be killed. They were extremely young. Benevolent God, through the intercession of the holy blood of his fathers, persuaded the king to bestow upon Ashusha his great request, which was more unbelievable than all others, since [Ashusha] was a very dear and deserving man (41).

The children were raised by their mother, Dzuik Artsruni-Mamikonean, in the home of the *bdeashx* of Georgia, Ashusha:

The lads who were nourished and schooled there became proficient in everything, and renowned. While still in their childhood they seemed capable and marvelous. The first was named Vahan, the second, Vasak, and the third, Artashes. But they had yet another younger brother, named Vard, who was still a small boy, and was staying with his *dayeaks* in Tayk' (42).

Also raised with the Mamikonean children was the historian Ghazar P'arpets'i himself, who was Vahan's lifelong friend and supporter (43). The contents of Book III of Ghazar's *History* describe the exploits of the adult Vahan Mamikonean, first as a victorious guerrilla warrior against Iran (481-84), and then as Iran's designated governor (*marzpan*) of Armenia (485 to ca. 506). In the remainder of P'arpets'i's references, *dayeaks* are mentioned incidentally, though always appearing as fervently loyal to their former wards. For example, among those urging Vahan Mamikonean to go to rescue a doomed brigade in Iberia were the warriors' "dear ones, relatives, *dayeaks*, and servants" (44).

Another reference mentions "Armenia's general, Vahan Mamikonean, and the *naxarars* of Armenia who were with him, together with each one's *dayeaks* and beloved servants" (45). The "foster-children" are shown aiding their *dayeaks* in battle in other references (46); they are among a small loyal inner circle grouped around Vahan Mamikonean and the brothers Nerseh and Hrahat Kamsarakan (47).

Finally, in 485 Iranian policy toward Armenia changed, and the successful rebel Vahan was to be rewarded by the Iranian shah Valash (Vologaesius, 484-88). After receiving back his family's hereditary office of *sparapet* and the Mamikonean lordship, Vahan considered the affairs of his relatives and *dayeaks*:

King Vagharsh inquired: "Now tell us in plain words what you need, so that we will know." The *sparapet* of Armenia, lord Vahan Mamikonean, said: "Were it possible for you to grant [me] the Kamsarakan *terut'iwn* [lordship] [I would be] fully favored by you, and would see the death in all of my limbs turn to life."

King Vagharsh replied to Vahan, the *sparapet* of Armenia, and lord of the Mamikoneans, saying: "So that you will not be very saddened now, and also because you sought that present from us first and foremost, let the Kamsarakan *terut'iwn* be given to you. But regarding the Artsrunid *terut'iwn* wait awhile until people from [that] *tohm* know [about this matter]. Perform some service for us worthily and some merit to benefit the Aryan world, and then we will look to what is fitting (48)."

The sources examined thus far demonstrate beyond doubt that *dayeakut'iwn* was an important feature of *naxarar* life across the Armenian highlands during the fourth and fifth centuries. However, the trail of *dayeakut'iwn* becomes more difficult to follow in subsequent centuries. To some extent this is conditioned by the sources. For example, no Armenian language history of sixth-century Armenia has survived; thus for a century when *naxararism* may have reached its apex there is no information about childrearing customs practised by the lords. The seventh-century Sebeos, the eighth-century Ghewond, and the ninth-century John Kat'oghikos do not utilize the term *dayeak* in reference to their own times. The same may be said for Armenian historians of the eleventh to fifteenth centuries. This does not mean that *dayeakut'iwn* was not practised in Armenia in the sixth to fifteenth centuries, since the term *dayeak* does in fact appear in a few Armenian sources (49). Nonetheless, these few scattered references in no way compare to the relatively numerous references found for the period of the fourth and fifth centuries.

IV. *Dayeakut'iwn* in the Caucasus

It is of the greatest interest that institutions in some ways similar to *dayeakut'iwn* are known from other parts of the Caucasus. In the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries some European travelers to the Caucasus were struck by what seemed to them peculiar customs, and they described these customs in their diaries. For example, in the early nineteenth century the French merchant traveller Taibout de Marigny wrote about the Circassians of the northwest Caucasus:

It is very rare for a boy to receive his education under the parental roof; the right of educating him is granted to the first person who presents himself; and if more than one arrives at the same moment, there are arbiters who determine how long each of them shall instruct the child. The *atalyk* [tutor or foster-father] carries off the infant, sometimes secretly, and confides it to a nurse; and, as soon as it can dispense with her care, his education begins. It consists of all bodily exercises adopted to increase strength and agility: riding, wrestling, shooting with the bow, the gun, or the pistol, etc.; in the art of conducting an incursion with success; in skill in theft, and in being able to brave hunger and fatigue; they endeavor also to render them eloquent, and to form their judgment in order to enable them to be influential members of the assemblies. This education, which reminds us of that of the heroic times of Greece, was held in such high estimation by the khans of Tartary, that they used to send their children to be brought up by the *atalyks* in Circassia. The young man's return to his parental home is celebrated by a grand fete, to which all the relations are invited, and to which he is brought in triumph. The *atalyk* returns home loaded with presents and henceforth enjoys in the family of his pupil a degree of relationship which is always preserved, and which nothing can destroy (50).

The Englishman J. A. Longworth, a correspondent of the London *Times*, spent a year among the Circassians (1838/39). In describing the education of boys, he wrote: "Boys are banished at an early age from the paternal roof to that of the foster-father, or *atalyk*, that no parental indulgence may interfere with the austerity of their education. But, though perhaps the great object in its establishment, hardihood is not the sole result of this discipline. I have more than once alluded to the strong social feeling that seems to unite the Circassians into one family (51)."

The same custom was observed among the Abkhaz people in the western Caucasus according to nineteenth-century Russian ethnographers. Among the Abkhazes, the nurse or "foster-mother" was chosen with great care, long before the child's birth. Usually a woman of lower economic class than her ward, custom required that she be rewarded by the child's parents when she accepted her duties. Once the nurse had taken the child to her own village, she became known as *anadz'dzei* (nurse or mother-nurse); her husband was called *abadz'dzei* (father-nurse), while the baby was called *akhopha* (pupil or foster-child). Custom dictated that when the children were three years and five to seven years of age, they be taken home and shown to their parents. Since girls as well as boys were raised in this fashion, appropriate gifts were given to them, and their "foster-parents" were rewarded again. When the girl was twelve and the boy fifteen, their education was considered completed, and they were taken to their real homes to stay. This occasion was marked by a special ceremony. The Georgians and Ossetes also practised variations of the same custom (52).

If European travelers and ethnographers were surprised by the "adoption" and upbringing of children by persons other than their parents, another related practice in the Caucasus surprised them even more. This was the adoption—not of children, but of mature individuals — by members of the opposite sex, a custom which was observed in practice among the Circassians, Kabardians, Abkhazes, Chechens, Ingushes, Avars, Ossetes, and Georgians. Common to all these groups was an element of the adoption ceremony which involved the biting or kissing of the "adopting" woman's breast by the "adoptee." The seventeenth-century Catholic missionary, Arcangelo Lamberti, described this ceremony among the Mingrels of western Georgia: "When two persons wish to enter into close relationship with each other, and they are of different sexes, then the man presses gently with his teeth the nipple of the woman's breast, and after this procedure they regard each other as mother and son, or as brother and sister, according to their age (53)." Among the Svans, this custom (known as *linturali*) was particularly elaborate; one nineteenth-century Russian ethnographer compared it to the gallant services performed by medieval European knights for their chosen ladies:

When a Svan wished to enter into a fictitious relationship with a certain lady by adoption, with the aim of serving and protecting that lady, he had the right to fulfill his desire by observing the custom of *linturali*. The first step, according to the custom, was to inform the chosen lady of his intention; it depended upon her decision whether she would accept or reject the proposition. If she gave her consent with the understanding of her relatives and husband (if she was married), the Svan went into her home accompanied by a friend and carrying a quantity of brandy. He was welcomed and cordially entertained. When the whole family was assembled in one room of the house, the Svan approached his chosen lady with a full cup of brandy in his hand and asked God's blessing upon the *linturali*. He knelt on one knee before her, and with his head submissively lowered, he asked her humbly if it was her wish to touch his breast with her teeth, or whether she wanted him to touch her breast in the same way, which meant: Did she wish to be his foster-mother, or he her foster-father? If she was adopting him, the Svan strewed a little salt on her bare breast, and, touching the place three times with his teeth, he said: "*Si di mi gezil*," meaning in the Svan language: "Thou art mother, I am son." The ceremony was concluded with the exchange of warm kisses between the new relatives. On the day after the ceremony the Svan received from his foster-mother a present consisting usually of one sheep or cow, or some other head of cattle, and in return, he tried to send her better gifts. After the exchange of gifts, they regarded each other as blood relatives, visited each other, and even could sleep together in one bed without anyone questioning the moral purity of their relations. Sometimes this custom was performed with a view to putting an end to gossip or bad rumors about the morality of a woman, married or single (54).

The modern sources reviewed above raise an interesting question about *dayeakut'iwn* in ancient Armenia. It will be noted that in the seventeenth to nineteenth century descriptions of the Caucasian customs of *atalychestvo* (adoption of children) and *linturali* (adoption of mature individuals by members of the opposite sex), women appear to have played an important role. In the case of *atalychestvo*, the infant was entrusted to

a chosen "foster-mother" (designated by a special term) who nursed the child and directed its education. Both boys and girls were raised by such adoptive women at some distance from their homes. Similarly, the custom of *linturali*, with its ceremony of adoption through breast-biting or breast-kissing, was predominantly centered around the woman. Recalling the fifth-century classical Armenian sources introduced in the first part of this study, one is struck by the fact that these sources characterize the male as the significant figure around whom the preservation and education of a boy child revolved.

To what may this discrepancy be attributed? Before trying to answer this question, it should be pointed out that it is not our purpose to try to establish a genetic link between ancient Armenian *dayeakut'iwn* and nineteenth-century Caucasian manifestations of related practices. To do so would require information presently not available (55). Yet, it would be a mistake to ignore the information available about Caucasian *atalychestvo/linturali*. In the process of contrasting institutions separated by geography and by a time factor of more than a thousand years, therefore, certain methodological conventions must be cast aside.

V. The Role of Women

In addressing the question of the woman's role in Armenian *dayeakut'iwn*, it is important to note at the outset that all the Armenian sources examined in this study were written or compiled by male clerics. Although the status of women in Armeno-Iranian society of the fourth and fifth centuries was quite high, it was the men—and only the noblemen at that—whose deeds were considered worthy of record. Not only are Armenian noblewomen usually left out of the historical sources, but so are the non-*naxarar* men (the middle-class, the peasantry, and the indigent), to say nothing of non-noble women. Thus, in addition to a class bias, the modern reader will find a definite bias against women and their activities in the classical Armenian sources, a bias of silence. For this reason, it is impossible to know, for example, whether fourth and fifth century girls too were sent to *dayeaks* for raising. Of the classical Armenian sources, Agat'angeghos and P'awstos Buzand (both of whom described the fourth century) contain one reference each, which might be interpreted as representing younger women as *sans* (foster-children) of women *dayeaks*. Agat'angeghos described the woman Gayane (a Greek religious ascetic who sought asylum in Armenia in the late third to early fourth century) as the *dayeak* and *snuts'ich'* (nourisher) of a group of women ascetics, including Rhip'sime, (who is called her *san*). P'awstos Buzand described how a woman *dayeak* of Hamazaspuhi Mamikonean of Siwnik' gathered the latter's bones and buried them (56). But nothing conclusive may be drawn from such brief references.

If the classical Armenian histories do not describe the role of women in the *dayeak* relationship, the same is not true for Armenian epic and folk literature. A work of the eighth century, Movses Xorenats'i's political novel (the *History of Armenia*) as well as Armenia's epic (*David of Sasun*, created in the tenth to thirteenth centuries) both contain information of interest on this topic. Xorenats'i's novel, despite its late date (and despite innumerable other problems associated with it) provides a fleeting glimpse of the Armenian noblewoman's role in *dayeakut'iwn*—a role (or at least a presence) on which the historical sources are silent. The reference in question appears in chapter 36 of Movses' Book Two, in which (probably fanciful) information is provided about the birth of Sanatruk, a nephew of the famous king Abgar of Edessa (ruled ca. 4 B.C.-A.D. 50). The following passage describes an Armenian noblewoman as a *dayeak* (though not as a mere wet-nurse):

But we must say why he was called Sanatruk. Abgar's sister, Awde, was traveling to Armenia in winter when she encountered a snowstorm in the mountains of Korduk'. The tempest scattered them all until no one could descry his travelling companion. Now his *dayeak* Sanota, sister of Biurat Bagratuni and wife of Xoren Artsruni, took the child—for he was an infant—and put him in her bosom, remaining under the snow for three days and three nights. They tell a fable about this to the effect that a marvelous white animal was sent by the gods and protected the child. But as far as we

understand the matter, it happened like this: a white dog sent out to search for them, found the child and *dayeak*. So he was called Sanatruk, which is derived from the *dayeak*'s name, meaning "gift of Sanota (57)."

The assumption behind these words appears to be that the *naxarar* woman Sanota Bagratuni-Artsruni and her husband Xoren Artsruni were raising Abgar's nephew together—very much like the later Caucasian "mother-nurse" and "father-nurse."

The presence of women in Armenian *dayeakut'iwn* is also attested in the third cycle of the medieval epic, *David of Sasun*. This cycle describes the conflict between two half-brothers, the sons of Mher the Great of Sasun. Mher the Great and his Armenian wife, Armaghan, had a son David. But Mher also had a son (named Melik) by the Arab queen Ismil Khatun, the widow of Mher's former enemy. When Mher and Armaghan died, David was left an orphan. His uncles did not want to adopt him, nor would the child take milk from any woman in Sasun. Finally, the uncles decided to send the baby to be raised by Ismil Khatun:

Ismil Khatun rejoiced over David
She gave her breast to him;
David took the breast, suckled for a time
One day he refused to take her milk.
For three days and nights David took no milk.
Ismil Khatun wept; she was dismayed
And did not know what to do with him.
She called [her son] Msrah Melik and asked:
—This child has not taken my breast
For three days and nights,
What shall we do with him?
Msrah Melik said:
—He is stubborn like his race, Mother,
He will bring us grief.
He is an Armenian, we are Arabs,
Don't give him your breast.
Ismil Khatun said:—If he does not take my breast,
He will die.
We will be humiliated before his family.
We cannot neglect him, he is our responsibility (58).

As the boy David grew, his half-brother's jealousy and resentment deepened. Melik plotted to harm David many times, but each time David's fabulous strength or his "foster-mother" Ismil's actions prevented this:

Msrah Melik looked for David throughout the city,
But could not find him.
He went home and found David asleep by the stove.
Msrah Melik took the cord off his bow and started to strangle David.
Just then his mother walked in, held his hand
And asked:—What are you doing, Melik?
He has been trifling with my mace
And causing a commotion in the city.
His mother uncovered her breast,
Stood before Melik and said:—If you kill David,
May the milk of this breast be forbidden to you.

Melik said:—Mother, David is a snake-brat,
Any harm that comes to me, will come from him (59).

Eventually David was sent back to his uncles in Sasun, and in time he became the ruler of Sasun. Some years later his murderous half-brother Melik sent an army and officials to Sasun to demand seven years' tribute from the Armenians. David defeated the army, leaving alive only a few messengers to take the news back to Melik:

Hearing this, Melik became furious; he saw blood.
He went home [to his mother Ismil] and said:
—Mother, I wanted to kill David on that day,
But you did not let me.
Now, do you see how defiant he is?
In vain I did what you said.
—No, said his mother, you did not do what I said,
You did what Gosbadin said.
Melik asked:—What did you say that I did not do?
His mother said:—Had you done what I told you,
You would have gone to Sasun
To visit David, twice a year,
And you would have invited him to your home.
That would have pleased him,
He would have thought, 'I have a brother.'
Then no one could have spoken ill of you.
Melik said:—But Mother, I am an Arab,
David is an Armenian. How can he be my brother?
—Melik, said Ismil Khatun,
Don't you understand?
Many people, Arabs and Armenians, become brothers;
They visit each other and help one another.
David was the child we nursed and raised.
If you had treated him well,
He would have listened to you...
But you did not visit David,
You did not invite him to your home.
What right did you have
To demand seven years' tribute from him (60)?

In addition to its presence in Armenian epic literature, *dayeakut'iwn* also seems to lurk behind a curious motif found in some Armenian folktales. In these tales, the hero must befriend a giantess or ogress who stands in the way of his completion of some mission. An example is the story of the "Sunset Lad" who, for insulting the Sun, was condemned to sleep like a corpse during the day and to come to life only at night:

One day during his death-sleep period, he had a dream. An old man came to him and said "If you would see the Sun again, you must find the Sun's mother and ask for her forgiveness. Go to a far-away well and descend by climbing down carefully. You will see a cave, and at the entrance of it, there sits a huge giantess with her right breast thrown over the left shoulder and her left breast thrown over the right shoulder. You must quietly and quickly kiss her right breast. When you have done this, she will tell you that you are her child and to ask of her what you will. She will see to the rest. And he disappeared.

Dead during the day, alive at night, Sunset Lad walked for many, many months. Finally he reached the well. Climbing down carefully, he reached the bottom and saw the giantess sleeping. He quietly bent over and kissed her right breast which, as the old man had said, was thrown over her left shoulder. The giantess awakened with a start! "What are you doing here? I would have killed you immediately, but you have kissed my breast: you are my child. Tell me, why have you come here (61)?"

This folktale, and others like it, are symbolically describing a ceremony in the practice known as *linturali*, in which the "adoptee" kissed the breast of the "adopting" woman, thereby becoming her "son." The presence of this motif in Armenian folktales, as well as the information cited from *David of Sasun* suggests the existence of *dayeakut'iwn* in medieval Armenia (62). Equally important, epic literature and folktales—unlike the historical sources—affirm the presence of women in Armenian *dayeakut'iwn*. Most likely both women and men had roles in Armenian *dayeakut'iwn*. The child being "adopted" was probably presented to the *naxarar* woman who cared for the baby during its first few years within her husband's House. When the child was seven years old, the host *naxarar* or *dayeak* oversaw its training for the martial world of fourth and fifth century Armenia. Fifth-century Armenian historians concentrate exclusively on the latter phase.

Conclusions

This study has examined fifth-century Armenian historical sources as well as seventeenth to nineteenth century sources on the Caucasus for information on a form of child upbringing practiced in ancient Armenia. To a remarkable extent, the old Armenian sources and the more modern sources complement each other. Certainly it would be possible to draw conclusions about Armenian *dayeakut'iwn* based solely on the material found in Agat'angeghos, P'awstos Buzand, and Ghazar P'arpets'i. From their accounts of fourth and fifth century Armenia it is clear that *dayeakut'iwn* served a dual function: to preserve the physical existence of a clan in dangerous and uncertain times, and to cement and strengthen relations between and among clans in times of relative peace. Although fifth-century Armenian authors use the term *dayeak* to mean "wet-nurse," the picture they present of the *institution of dayeakut'iwn* includes only men: the "adopting" lord is called the *dayeak* and his ward is a boy from another noble clan. The modern sources, on the other hand, emphasize the important role of the woman in both the "adoption" and raising of children, and in the "adoption" of mature individuals. The difference in emphasis between the modern sources and the classical Armenian sources suggests that an aspect of Armenian *dayeakut'iwn* might have been obscured by the nature of the sources themselves. The presence of women in Armenian *dayeakut'iwn* was found—not in the fifth-century literary historians — but in Armenian epic literature and folktales.

Just as the modern sources illuminate a dim aspect of the ancient sources, so the fifth-century Armenian sources complement the modern sources when it comes to the question of the function and origin of *dayeakut'iwn* and *atalychestvo*. Grigolia described "Milkrelationship" as "a form of fictitious bloodrelationship rooted in the adoption of an individual by another, or by a social group as a family, community, clan or even a whole tribe (63)." Later he wrote "the custom created economic, socio-political and psychological interdependence between individuals, families and communities, thus forming rules of solidarity and unity necessary for the survival of the social group itself (64)." Both statements are as true for fourth and fifth century Armenia as for seventeenth to nineteenth century Caucasia. But the fifth-century Armenian sources describe an element not visible in the nineteenth-century sources. The European travelers and nineteenth-century ethnographers who described the institution of *atalychestvo* characterized it primarily as a social institution concerned with the rigorous education of children. The "foster-parents" usually were of a lower economic class than their wards and thus, not surprisingly, the seventeenth to nineteenth century accounts mention a strict exogamy between the "adopting" family and the child's family (65). The classical

Armenian sources, on the other hand, leave no doubt that the protection of a clan's physical existence was of supreme importance in the establishment of *dayeak* relations. Far from avoiding marriage relations with the "adopting" family, in fourth and fifth century Armenia such intermarriage was the usual and desired result of *dayeakut'iwn*, which was practiced among clans of comparable status.

The nineteenth century was the last century in which *atalychestvo* was practiced in the Caucasus. The practice was swept away by the socio-political changes of the twentieth century and by the triumph of the nuclear family. The nineteenth century, then, is a terminus beyond which "milkrelationship" did not survive. The fifth-century Armenian sources are also a terminus, but a less absolute one. Certainly, fifth-century references to *dayeakut'iwn* in fourth century Armenia are the earliest recorded evidence of the practice for the Caucasus. However, as was pointed out at the beginning of this study, Armenians did not begin to write in the Armenian language until the early fifth century. *Dayeakut'iwn* may have been a feature of life across the Armenian highlands many centuries before the Christian era. Such is the suspicion of this author and such, it seems, also was the belief of the epic writer Movses Xorenats'i. Xorenats'i projected *dayeakut'iwn* far back into Armenian prehistory—to the times of the legendary kings Vagharsh and Eruand (66). Indeed, given the worship in ancient Armenia of a fertility goddess (Anahit), known as the protectress and benefactress of pregnant women and young children, (67) it does not seem unlikely that *dayeakut'iwn* (with specific roles for both females and males) was practiced among the Armenians long before the fifth-century sources were compiled or written.

Footnotes

1 Hr. Acharhyan, *Hayeren armatakan barharan* [*Dictionary of Armenian Root Words*], vol I (Erevan, 1971):618-19.

2 Koriwn, *Patmut'iwn varuts' arhn eranelwoy Mashtots' vardapeti* [*Narration of the Life of the Venerable Vardapet Mashtots'*], N. Akinean, ed., text in *Handes Amsoreay* (Vienna, 1949), 209-74.

3 N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian* (Lisbon, 1970); English trans. of 1908 Russian edition); C. Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Georgetown, 1963). These works, in addition to Toumanoff's many articles in *Traditio* and the *Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge, 1966), and A. Perikhanian's "*Agnaticheskije gruppy v drevnem irane* [*Agnatic Groups in Ancient Iran*]," *Vestnik drevnei istorii*, 3(1968), 28-53, are essential reading for an understanding of the evolution of Armenian *naxararism*.

4 A. Grigolia, "Milkrelationship in the Caucasus," in *Bedi Karthlisa*, 41-42(1962), 148-67.

5 On Iran see [at Internet Archive] A. Christensen, [L'Iran sous les Sassanides](#), 2nd ed. (Copenhagen, 1944) and R. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (New York, 1963). For an annotated bibliography of shared and/or parallel religious, political, and cultural institutions in Armenia and Iran, see [at Internet Archive] N. Garsoian, "[Prolegomena to a Study of the Iranian Aspects in Arsacid Armenia](#)," *Handes Amsoreay* (1976) cols. 177-234. As will be seen, the classical Armenian sources cited in the present study contain a welter of terms for "clan" and/or "family" such as *azg*, *azgatohm*, *tohm*, etc., the precise nuances of which are no longer fully understood. Before modern times (and specifically in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. and earlier), the Armenian family was the extended family, which included large numbers of related individuals. For this reason, the term "clan" may be preferable to "family" when speaking of the major *naxarar* groups, though we are unsure of the extent of tribal and/or caste structures within these clan/families (specifically in

the fourth and fifth centuries). Similarly, in the fourth and fifth centuries the terms *tun* (usually translated "House," *naxararut'iwn* (*naxarardom*), and *terut'iwn* (lordship) referred not to a dwelling place, but to the clan's properties and prerogatives. Some terms (such as *nahapet*, *bdeashx*, *banak* "army," *mardpet*, *atean* "court," *ostan*) we have not translated in the quotations. See note 3 above and the notes to the passages cited.

6 *Agat'angeghay patmut'iwn* [*Agat'angeghos' History*], Robert Thomson, ed. (Albany, 1976; repr. of the classical Armenian text of Tiflis, 1909, with an English translation by Thomson), Arm. text, #34, pp. 48, 50. Hereafter *Agat'angeghos*.

7 *Agat'angeghos*, #36 p. 50.

8 *Agat'angeghos*, #37 p. 52.

9 According to *Agat'angeghos* #121, p. 132, it was the son-in-law of *sparapet* "Artawan" (i.e., Artawazd) named Tachat who revealed Grigor's lineage to Trdat. But in the version presented in Movses Xorenats'i, II, 82, it was Trdat's *dayeak* Artawazd (Mamikonean) himself who informed Trdat.

10 See, for example, the spurious traditions in *Zenobay Glakay Asorwoy episkoposi Patmut'iwn Taronoy* [*The Syrian Bishop Zenob Glak's History of Taron*] 2nd ed. (Venice, 1889) pp. 21-22 wherein Grigor's *dayeak* was an Iranian acquaintance of Anak's, named (fittingly enough) Burdar (Ir. "Carrier") who was married to a Christian noblewoman of Caesarea, named Sop'i. According to Zenob, Sop'i became Grigor's nurse, while Grigor's supposed baby brother "Suren" was carried to safety in Iran, again thanks to Burdar.

11 Cf. H. Hambarean, "*Xorenats'woy keghdzik' men al Artawazd Mandakuni t'e Mamikonean* [*Another Falsification by Xorenats'i, Artawazd Mandakuni or Mamikonean*]," *Handes Amsoreay* (1910), pp. 17-18. On the *sparapet* see R. Bedrosian, "*The Sparapetut'iwn in Armenia in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries*," *Armenian Review*, 2(1983), pp. 6-46.

12 *P'awstosi Buzandats'woy Patmut'iwn hayots'* [*P'awstos Buzand's History of Armenia*] (Venice, 1933, 4th printing), III. 4 p. 21 [PB].

13 PB, III. 8 p. 31: "...The *sparapet* Vach'e and brave Vahan Amatuni arrested Databe, brought him before the great king Xosrov, and killed him by lapidation as a man who would betray his land, brigade, and the troops of his lord. [Databe's] *azg*, wife and children were located there in the stronghold of the prince of Erhshtunik', which was called the island of Aght'amar. *Sparapet* Vach'e got into a boat, crossed over to the island, and left neither male nor female alive. Thus was the *azgatohm* of that *naxarardom* eliminated, and their *tun* was seized for the Crown."

14 PB, III 9 p. 32. On the office of *bdeashx* see J. Markwart, "[Hay bdeashxk'](#) [The Armenian *Bdeashxk'*]," *Handes Amsoreay* (1903) pp. 1-5, 114-19. [The original German also is available at Internet Archive: [here](#)]

15 On the confiscation of land for the Crown, see A.G. Perikhanian, "*Drevnearmianskiye vostoniki* [*The Ostanik's in Ancient Armenia*]," *Vestnik drevnei istorii* 2(1956) pp. 44-58. [available in English at Internet Archive: [here](#)] In the event of the extermination of all male clanmembers, sole-surviving female children, apparently, were able to pass their clans' properties and prerogatives to the clans of their husbands. see, e.g., PB, III 9 (cited in the text), Movses Xorenats'i, II 78, and Ghazar P'arpets'i, I. 37.

16 PB, III. 11 pp. 38-9.

17 PB, III. 5 p. 22.

18 PB, III. 15 p. 54.

19 PB, III. 18 pp. 57-8. Years later, the sole-surviving Shawasp Artsruni avenged his clan's extermination by murdering Hayr: "Now when he had reached this place, the judgment of the Lord's anger was visited upon the impious Hayr for his deeds and words. He was betrayed into the hands of a man named Shawasp, a remnant of the Artsrunik' *azg*. While [Hayr] was seated in a wagon and was travelling on the road, Shawasp approached and began to tell the *mardpet* a fictitious story, saying: 'I saw a bear as white as the snow'. And he charmed the *mardpet* into getting out of the wagon and mounting a steed. Then they entered the forest and lay in wait. When they were in the bushes, Shawasp remained somewhat behind. He hit the eunuch Hayr with an arrow from behind that went right through him. Hayr fell to the ground and perished." PB, IV. 14 p. 124.

20 PB, IV. 2 p. 76. Also see the list in IV. 11 p. 113.

21 PB, IV. 19 pp. 137-38.

22 PB, IV. 53 p. 171. During the Iranian invasions of the late 360s, the shah Shahpuhr II (310-379) tried to exterminate the House of Siwnik': "They killed all the mature males of the *azg* of the Siwnik' *tohm*, and killed all the women; and [Shahpuhr] ordered that all the young boys should be made eunuchs and be sent to the country of Iran." IV. 58 p. 183.

23 PB, IV. 55 p. 177.

24 PB, V. 8 p. 213: "Then *sparapet* Mushegh went against the king of Iberia [Georgia], greatly harassing him. He struck the country and defeated the entire land of Iberia. He put to the sword all the *azats* and *naxarar azgs* he could find. *Sparapet* Mushegh ordered that the P'arhawazeans be crucified in the land of Iberia. He seized and beheaded the *bdeashx* of Gugark', who previously had served the king of Armenia but had rebelled. He destroyed the males of [that] *azg* and took the women and daughters into captivity. Similarly, he beheaded all the *naxarars* in those parts who had rebelled from the king of Armenia. He took the entire district, taking hostages and putting the remainder under taxation. He conquered as far as the old boundary which existed between the country of Armenia and the country of Iberia, namely, the great Kura river, and then he turned back." V. 15 p. 215.

25 PB, V. 16 p. 216: "Then general Mushegh turned to the Aghdznik' country, striking the country with great blows, for they too had rebelled from the king of Armenia. He arrested the *bdeashx* of Aghdznik', destroyed his women in his presence, took their sons into captivity, put the survivors under taxation, left overseers and *ostikans*, and then departed the country of Aghdznik'. 17. After that, they invaded Greater Tsop'k', since [that district] had rebelled. Mushegh subjected the district of Greater Tsop'k' to pillage. He put its *azgs* to the sword, took hostages and put the people under taxation" V. 16-17, p. 216.

26 PB, V. 32 pp. 235-37.

27 PB, V. 34 p. 238.

28 *Ibid.*

29 PB, V. 35 pp. 238-40.

30 PB, V. 37 p. 242.

31 PB, V. 37 p. 243.

32 PB, V. 37 p. 245.

33 PB, V. 37 p. 247. On the term *tikin* ("queen") cf. C.J.F. Dowsett "Armenian *Ter, Tikin, Tiezerk*," *Ecole des langues orientales de l'Institut Catholique, Memorial du Cinquantenaire 1914-1964* (Paris, 1964), pp. 135-45.

34 PB, V. 44 p. 258.

35 GHP, *T'ught'* [Letter] p. 188. See following note.

36 *Ghazaray P'arpets'woy patmut'iwn hoyots' ew T'ught' arh Vahan Mamikonean [Ghazar P'arpets'i's History of Armenia and Letter to Vahan Mamikonean]*, G. Ter Mkrтч'ean and St. Malxasean, ed. [Tiflis, 1904] II. 29 p. 56. Hereafter GHP.

37 GHP, II. 36 pp. 65-66.

38 GHP, II. 36 p. 67.

39 GHP, II. 45 pp. 77-78.

40 GHP, II. 53 pp. 93-94. Apparently, the *naxarars* were imprisoned for some years in the city of Nishapuhr (II. 60 p. 108), though their children were at liberty in the same city (II. 58 p. 105). According to P'arpets'i, the captives returned to Armenia in the "sixth year of [shah] Peroz (464/65)," III. 61 p. 110. It is quite interesting that Ghazar also uses the term *dayeak* to refer to Iranians, apparently confirming the existence of this institution among the fifth-century Iranians: "In the same year of his reign (459) [shah Peroz] dispatched Yezatvshnasp, his 'foster-brother' (*dayeakordi*) whom he was especially fond of, and commanded that the Armenian *naxarars* be freed from bondage and that stipends be allocated for them at Hrew. He said: 'Let them remain there with the cavalry and do whatever work Yezatvshnasp's father Ashtat [the shah's *dayeak*], says and can observe them doing.'" II. 60 p. 108. See note 5 above. On the complicated question of "guardianship" in Iran, which apparently moved *dayeakut'iwn* from the realm of customary law to precise legal formulation, see *Sasanidskii Sudebnik. Matakdan i hazar datastan [The Sasanian Law Book. The Book of a Thousand Judgements]*, A. Perikhanian, ed. and trans. (Erevan, 1973).

41 GHP, III. 59. p. 107. On the office of *hazarapet* see J. Markwart, "*Hazarapet*," *Handes Amsoreay* (1898), pp. 316-20.

42 GHP, III. 62 p. 111.

43 See note 35 above.

44 GHP, III. 77 p. 142.

45 GHP III. 79 p. 145.

46 GHP, III. 81 p. 149.

47 GHP, III. 83 p. 151.

48 GHP, III. 96 pp. 175-76.

49 Among these references are: (1) a letter dating from the early seventh century (608/9) in which the Armenian *Catholicos* Abraham wrote to the Caucasian Albanians/Aghuanians that they should avoid contact with the Iberians (Georgians): "...do not commune with them, do not pray with them, do not eat or drink with them, do not [establish relations of] friendship or *dayeakut'iwn* (*mi i barekamut'iwn, mi i daekut'iwn...*)," *Girk' t'ght'ots [The Book of Letters* (Tiflis, 1901), p. 194; (2) an inconclusive phrase in the

work of Anania Shirakats'i (615-690?) which calls the moon "*dayak ew snuts'ich busats*" (the *dayeak* and nourisher of plants)," Anania Shirakats'i, *Tiezeragitut'iwn ew tomar [Cosmography and the Calendar]* (Erevan, 1940) p. 43; (3) a few dubious references in the early eleventh-century compilation by Movses Dasxurants'i, called the *History of the Caucasian Albanians* [English trans. by C.J.F. Dowsett (London, 1961). A more recent English translation is available on another page of this website: Movses Dasxurants'i's [History of the Aghuans](#)]. This work, which was based on authentic earlier sources also mentions *dayeaks* in the seventh century (e.g.: II. 12, II. 13, II.14) and early eighth century (III.11); (4) an entry in the twelfth-century *Penitential of David of Ganjak*, C.J.F. Dowsett, trans (Louvain, 1961), #20, p. 18: "Concerning those who feed the children of infidels at the breasts," which describes women wet-nurses rather than the institution of *dayeakut'iwn* which is the focus of this study.

50 The seventeenth to nineteenth century sources with extensive bibliography are available in Grigolia's important article, "Milkrelationship," *op. cit.* Grigolia, p. 149 citing E. Taibout de Marigny, *Three Voyages in the Black Sea to the Coast of Circassia* (London, 1837) pp. 56-57, 122.

51 Grigolia, p. 150 citing J.A. Longworth, *A Year among the Circassians*, vol. 2 (London, 1840), p. 285.

52 Grigolia, pp. 152-55.

53 Grigolia, p. 157.

54 Grigolia, pp. 157-58, based on the study by A. Khakhanov, "*Linturali: rytsarskoe sluzhenie dame v Svanetii (Linturali: Knightly Service to a Lady in Svanetia)*," *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1889) p. 138.

55 For example, the Armenian journals *Azgagrakan Handes [Ethnographic Review]* (Tiflis, 1895-1916) and *Ararat* (Etchmiadzin, 1868-1919).

56 Agat'angeghos, #156 p. 166, see also #138 p. 148, #201 p. 206, #759 pp. 296, 298, PB, IV. 59 p. 185.

57 Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, R.W. Thomson, trans. (Cambridge, Mass., 1978) II. 36 pp. 177-78. Movses notes that the lord Awtay Amatuni was the *snuts'ogh* ("nourisher") of King Trdat's sister Xosroviduxt, who is called his *san* (II. 77, II. 82). The Armenian historical sources also contain a class bias since they concentrate exclusively on the lay and Church nobility. This bias prevents us from knowing whether *dayeakut'iwn* was practised by non-noble Armenians.

58 *David of Sasun*, A. Shalian, trans (Athens, Ohio, 1964), pp. 159-60 [III. part I, "David's Fight against Msrah Melik," #7].

59 *David of Sasun*, p. 176 [III. part 1, #16].

60 *David of Sasun*, pp. 249-50 [III. part 1, "David Punishes the Tax Collectors of Msrah Mellik," #9].

61 *100 Armenian Tales*, S. Hoogasian-Villa, ed. (Detroit, 1966), p. 79 and p. 431.

62 See note 49.

63 Grigolia, p. 148.

64 Grigolia, p. 165.

65 Grigolia, p. 155.

66 Moses Khorenats'i, op. cit., II. 8 p. 144, II. 37 p. 179.

67 M. Ananikian, *Armenian Mythology* [in *Mythology of All Races*, vol 7] (New York, 1964; repr. of 1925 ed.) [pp. 24-29](#); K.V. Melik-P'ashayan, *Anahit dits'uhu pashtamunk'e* [*The Cult of the Goddess Anahit*] (Erevan, 1963) pp. 46-88.