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**ARMENIAN PERIODICAL “BAZMAVEP”. A BRIDGE OF LITERARY
AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN ARMENIANS AND
EUROPEANS**

Varduhi A. Baloyan

Institute of Literature after M.Abeghyan of NAS, Yerevan, RA

Abstract

Introduction: This article is focused on the study of translated English literature published in the Armenian periodical *Bazmavep*, between the 19th and early 20th centuries. *Bazmavep*, one of the oldest continuous Armenian periodicals, was initiated in 1843 by the Armenian Fathers of the Mechitarist Congregation on the Island of San Lazzaro in Venice, Italy. *Methods and Materials:* Our primary objective is to perform a comprehensive analysis of the translated English literature featured in *Bazmavep*. We particularly focus on identifying the literary works that underwent translation, understanding the identities of the translators, and elucidating the methods employed for these translations, whether direct or indirect. *Analyses:* By closely examining the translations accomplished by Mechitarist scholars, we gain valuable insights into the intricate web of cross-cultural exchange that defined the 19th and early 20th centuries. *Results:* In conclusion, our study underscores the profound impact of *Bazmavep* on the literary landscape of Armenian secular literature. Furthermore, it explores the journal's substantial contributions to the broader realm of global literary exchange.

Key words: *Bazmavep, periodical, Armenians in Venice, reciprocal influences, English literature, translations, history, literature.*

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«ԲԱԶՄԱՎԵՊԸ» ՈՐՊԵՍ ԳՐԱԿԱՆ ԵՎ ՄՇԱԿՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ ԿԱՍՈՒՐՁ
ՀԱՅ ԵՎ ԵՎՐՈՊԱԿԱՆ ՄՇԱԿՈՒՅԹՆԵՐԻ ՄԻՋԵՎ

Վարդուհի Ա. Բալոյան

ԳԱԱ Մ. Արեւիյանի անվան գրականության ինստիտուտ, Երևան, ՀՀ

Անվտիում

Նախաբան. Մխիթարյանների ամենաերկարամյա պարբերականը՝ «Բազմավեպը», մեծ կարևորություն է տվել գրական թարգմանություններին և դարձել է հայ-եվրոպական գրական-մշակութային կապերի ինքնատիպ կամուրջ: 1850-ականներից «Բազմավեպի» խմբագիրները սկսում են տպագրել բազմաժանր աշխարհիկ ստեղծագործություններ՝ ընդգրկելով մեծածավալ թարգմանական գրականություն: Ուսումնասիրության նյութը մինչև 1920 թվականն ընկած ժամանակաշրջանում տպագրված անգլիացի գրողների ստեղծագործություններն են, որոնք հայ ընթերցողին են ներկայացվել ուղղակի կամ միջնորդավորված թարգմանությամբ: *Մեթոդներ և նյութեր.* Սույն հոդվածի շրջանակներում մեր ուսումնասիրության հիմնական նպատակն է համակողմանիորեն վերլուծել «Բազմավեպում» ներկայացված թարգմանական գրականությունը՝ հատկապես ներկայացնելով անգլիական գրականությունից կատարված թարգմանությունները, թարգմանիչներին և թարգմանական միտումները պատմահամեմատական մեթոդների կիրառմամբ: *Վերլուծություն.* Պարբերականում ներկայացված են նշանավոր հեղինակներ Ուիլյամ Շեքսպիրի, Ջոն Միլթոնի, Օսիանի, Ջորջ Բայրոնի, Օսկար Ուայլդի և այլոց ստեղծագործությունների թարգմանությունները, որոնց մի մասն է սկզբանե անստորագիր է եղել, և որոշ գործերի սկզբնաղբյուրը ու հեղինակը բացահայտվել են ժամանակի ընթացքում: *Արդյունքներ.* Հաշվի առնելով հեղինակների և ժանրային բազմազանությունը, ինչպես նաև թարգմանական նյութերի մեծ ծավալը, կարելի է փաստել, որ Մխիթարյան հայերն իրենց ջանքերով հայերենը վերածեցին համաշխարհային իմաստության գանձարանի:

Բանալի բառեր՝ *Բազմավեպ, պարբերական մամուլ, հայերը Վենետիկում, փոխազդեցություններ, թարգմանություն, անգլիական գրականություն, պատմություն, գրականություն:*

Ինչպես հղել՝ Բալոյան Ա. «Բազմավեպը» որպես գրական և մշակութային կամուրջ հայ և եվրոպական մշակույթների միջև // ՀՀ ԳԱԱ ՇՀՀ կենտրոնի «Գիտական աշխատություններ», Հ. 2 (26): Գյումրի: 2023: 180-189 էջեր: DOI: 10.52971/18294316-2023.26.2-180

INTRODUCTION: The article explores translated English literature published in Armenian periodical Bazmavep in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Reflecting on the enduring significance of these translations, we should point out that Mechitarists and their periodicals, particularly, Bazmavep were committed to cultural exchange with European literature. Bazmavep's transition from a religious and political periodical to one focused on literary translations in 1860s was a significant turning point. It increasingly featured literary-critical works and intriguing translations. This evolution marked a pivotal moment in the periodical's history, broadening its horizons and engaging a more diverse readership. The periodical featured translations of works by

notable authors, including William Shakespeare, John Milton, Ossian, George Byron, and others. Many of the translations were initially unsigned and hard to trace, adding an element of mystery to the publication's offerings.

In terms of the research field, this study contributes significantly by offering a comprehensive analysis of a relatively underexplored area of Armenian literature and the history of translations of outstanding world classics. Key papers in the field, including works on Armenian literature and cultural history, as well as some featuring European periodicals, will be referenced throughout this study to provide a solid foundation for our research. The primary aim of our study is to comprehensively analyze the translated E literature featured in *Bazmavep*, specifically focusing on what literary works were translated, their chronology, the role of translators and motives behind these translations, and the methods employed, whether directly or through intermediary translations.

Through their dedicated efforts, the Mechitarist Fathers transformed the Armenian language into a reservoir of world wisdom. During his stay at San Lazzaro, English poet George Byron wrote to his publisher Murray, "*There are some very curious MSS. in the monastery, as well as books; translations also from Greek originals, now lost, and from Persian and Syriac, &c.; besides works of their own people*" [1, p. VIII].

In conclusion, this study embarks on a journey through the pages of "*Bazmavep*" to uncover the profound impact of translated literature on Armenian reader of the 19th century. It aspires to enhance our understanding of Armenian literary history, particularly within the context of cultural revitalization. Through a meticulous analysis of this unique publication, we aim to contribute valuable insights to the broader field of literary studies, making our findings accessible and engaging to scholars beyond the realm of Armenian literature.

1. Armenian Language as a Repository of Wisdom

Through their dedicated efforts, the Mechitarist Fathers transformed the Armenian language into a reservoir of ancient wisdom. They undertook the monumental task of translating masterpieces, even those whose original texts had been lost to time. Notably, they translated Homer's "*Iliad and Odyssey*" into classical Armenian, with Tovmajian being the pioneer translator of the "*Iliad*." Their translations extended to include Horace's "*Art of Rhetoric*," Vergil's "*Aeneid*" translated by Hyurmyuzyan, Aesop's *Fables*, and Epicurus's "*Fables*".

2. Exploring the World of English Literature in Bazmavep

Mechitarist Congregations' literary engagements with English writers started with the translation of John Milton's "*Paradise Lost*" in 1824 and Defoe's "*Robinson Crusoe*", translated and published in 1818 and 1836 both in Classical and Western Armenian languages. It is worth to mention that "*The Life and Deeds of Robinson Crusoe*" was translated from a French version of the novel, thus French served as an intermediary language for introducing the novel to the Armenian reader. The translator was Minas Bzhshkian (1777-1851), one of the key members of the Congregation.

Although not within the primary scope of our research, it is essential to highlight the significant contribution of the Mechitarists to both translating and publishing children's literature, as evidenced by the 15 volumes of "*Matenadaran Mankants*" or "*Books for Children*." These volumes featured translations of works by world famous juvenile writers, including the publication of "*The Irish Cottage*" in 1867. Furthermore, their efforts extended to featuring serialized versions of foreign classics like "*Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*" by Harriet Beecher Stowe, initially serialized in "*The National Era*" in 1851. This underscores their instrumental role in spreading and preserving the best of foreign-language juvenile literature.

One of the first interactions of the periodical *Bazmavep* with the English literature was in 1848 through the publication of an article featuring Oliver Cromwell. This marked the beginning of a significant literary journey that would see the Mechitarist Fathers translating a vast array of both ancient and modern works from world classics. It made significant efforts to introduce Armenian readers to the English literature, emphasizing the importance of literary exchange.

2.1 Literary Translations

George Byron's translations found a natural home within the publications of the Mechitarists' periodicals, including *Bazmavep*. This placement can be attributed not only to the widespread popularity of Byron's works but also to his intimate interactions with the Order. His stay at San Lazzaro in 1816-17 marked an important juncture, during which he not only resided among the Armenian monks but also immersed himself in their culture and language. In his letter to his publisher, dated, 5 December, 1816, Byron writes; “By way of divertisement, I am studying daily, at an Armenian monastery, the Armenian language.... It is a rich language, however, and would amply repay any one of the trouble of learning it.” [1, p. VIII].

During his stay in Venice, Byron embarked on the composition of the fourth canto of “Childe Harold”, where certain segments unmistakably bear the imprint of his experiences the Armenians in St. Lazzaro. The Armenian translation of “Ode to the Ocean”, an excerpt from the final stanzas of “Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,” originally published in the early 1810s, was published in *Bazmavep* in 1858 [2, pp. 173-174].

As mentioned by A. Mesrobian, the culmination of Byron's diligence and devotion to the Armenian language and culture manifested in the publication of “Lord Byron's Armenian Exercises and Poetry”. As Mesrobian states, “Byron soon became sufficiently adept to translate (probably during January-February, 1817) several passages from the classical Armenian into English, with perhaps more help from the kindly Father Aucher than has been acknowledged. The results of his diligence, Lord Byron's Armenian Exercises and Poetry, were published by the Mekhitarist press in 1870.... The Mayfield collection contains two copies of the first edition, one each in cloth and paper bindings” [13, pp. 27-37].

Bazmavep featured more translated works of Byron in 1904. Readers were introduced to “Vision of Belshazzar,” translated by Yovhannes Palian [3, p. 295], “The Destruction of Sennacherib” (a piece initially published in 1815 under the title “The Destruction of Semnacherib” within “Hebrew Melodies”). Additionally, the verses of “Oh! Weep For Those” and “By the Waters of Babylon,” both derived from “Hebrew Melodies,” were skillfully translated and published by Palian [6, p. 380]. Further enriching the literary landscape, a portion of “Corsair” found its place in *Bazmavep* [5, pp. 284-285]. This translation, attributed to Mirzayan, was accompanied by an insightful preface. Praising Mirzayan's rendition, publishers notes; “Byron, Corsair, translated from the original by Y. Za. Mirzayan, published in Paros, Tehran, 1911. The ‘Corsair’ of Mizayean is a beautiful translation. There is a language and measure that slips, and they translate the sharp, passionate, fiery spirit of Byron. Along with the current, the meanings sparkle and slide, like a running vein of water under the sun... The Russian-Armenian [Eastern Armenian] language also contributed to the success. concise, accurate, simple, it allows you to see Byron's thoughts completely clearly” [5, p. 284].

Subsequent issues of *Bazmavep* continued to offer Armenian readers literary treasures from Byron's masterpieces. Nevertheless, our present study encompasses the translations that were published between 1843 and 1920. It is essential to recognize that Byron's literary contributions have transcended the boundaries of *Bazmavep* and Byron's works in Armenian translations have

been published extensively in numerous books and collections, as well as in a myriad of prominent periodicals from the 1840s to the present day.

Another noteworthy development is linked to the translation of literature specifically targeted at children and adolescents. As an example, Oscar Wilde's literary works come into focus. "Happy Prince" in Armenian translation was offered to the readers in 1904 [2, pp. 458-464]. Originally published in 1888, the full collection of "The Happy Prince and Other Stories" was intended for a youthful audience. The title "Happy Prince" holds significant intrigue in its Armenian translation, where it appears as "Prince Phelix". Our research has revealed that this was not a direct translation from the English original, but a mediated translation from Italian into Western Armenian, by Father Arsen Ghazikian. In Italian translation the title is "Il principe felice e altre storie". Given that both the English word "happy" and the Italian word "felice" have Armenian equivalents, and that the name "Felix" exists among Armenians, it appears that the Armenian translator made a deliberate choice to use the name "Փելիքս" (Felix) based on available Armenian equivalents and names. In this context, it could be considered a form of semantic adaptation, where the translator chose a name that conveys a similar meaning to the source language word "felice." *This approach is not uncommon in translation when there are multiple ways to convey a concept or name in the target language, and the translator selects an option that best fits the context and maintains the intended meaning.*

Bazmavep had a column for translated poetry called "Qertoghakan Tsaghkepoonj" (Bouquet of Poems) translated by Palian. Among English writers, it featured works from various periods, including works written as early as in the 18th -19th centuries. Through the columns, the readers notice a rise in poetry about national issues and love for the country. Under the "Bouquet of Poems", in various issues of Bazmavep, editors published the translations of poems written by Irish poet Thomas Moore (1779-1852) "Those Evening Bells" published twice. [16 p. 85, 17, p. 518]. Beneath the poem, a notation specifies that it was translated from English. Next was father Ghukas Bzhshkian's translation of "To the Fire-Fly" [18, p. 289], "Dear Harp of my Country", from "Irish Melodies" [19, p. 369].

American actor poet, playwright and author John Payne (1791 – 1852) was another notable poet featured in the same column of "English writers". His work, "Home! Sweet Home!" was published in Bazmavep in 1905 [22, p. 518]. The publishers noted that the translation was done from the original English text.

*Another famous writer whose works were introduced to the Armenian readers through translations, was the English poet and humorist Thomas Hood (1799 – 1845). Bazmavep published his poem "The Deathbed". The translator is Father Ghukas Bzhshkian [11, p. 182]. In Bazmavep's subsequent volumes, the readers are introduced with the English poet and translator Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti (1828– 1882), through the translation of his "The Blessed Damosel", first published in 1850 in the journal *The Germ*. The translator is M. J. Ananikian [23, pp. 166-168].*

The works of Ossian have enjoyed robust representation, with multiple translations into Armenian dating back to 1901-1902. This significant aspect should be duly acknowledged in the translation history of the author's works. Notably, within the pages of Bazmavep, "Fingal's" translation was expertly rendered by Fr. Arsen Ghazikian [21, pp. 294-303]. It should be noted that Ossian was the narrator and purported author of a cycle of epic poems published by the Scottish poet James Macpherson, originally as Fingal (written in 1761 and dated in 1762) and Temora (1763), and later combined under the title "The Poems of Ossian". As it is known, Macpherson claimed to have collected word-of-mouth materials in Scottish Gaelic from ancient sources, and

that the work was his translation of that material. However, there is no mention about it to the Armenian reader.

2.3 A Window to English Education, Society and Language

Throughout various volumes, Bazmavep offered its readers a unique perspective into the English and European educational systems, as well as their literature and readership. Noteworthy articles that shed light on educational matters include "Teaching Morals and Discipline in English Schools" [14, pp. 88-90], which was translated by H. G. Lazarian. This article emphasizes the importance of values, with the well-known proverb "Honesty is the best policy". The article refers to "prof. Emile Cann". They collectively provide a comprehensive view of English education, literature, and contemporary discourse, enriching the readers' understanding of these subjects. Another significant article on the same topic translated by H. V. Khambeghian, is "The School of Tomorrow". "Minerva journal" is marked as the primary source of both articles, however, we were unable to trace back to the original sources via available resources.

2.4 Biographies

Bazmavep dedicated space to biographies of famous English, Scottish and other European writers, providing Armenian readers with insights into the lives and works of prominent figures. In the article, "English Writers", the author writes, "Nineteenth-century English literature, akin to a magician's museum, remains somewhat unfamiliar to Armenian readers. Excerpts from the biographies of English poets reveal a land of treasures, a literary realm akin to Transvaal, one might say, where each individual possesses a tool for conquest — reading" [10, pp. 514-518]. The author of the article signed as H.A.Y., which is recognized by most scholars as Father Alexis Hovsepian (Hayr Alexis Yovsepian).

One of the early articles, featuring biographies is dedicated to the life of William Shakespeare, as one of the best writers of all time [12, pp. 81-85]. Bazmavep's readers had the privilege of exploring the lives and literary contributions of such renowned figures as Thomas Moore (1779-1852), James Thomson (1700-1748), George Byron (1788-1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), John Payne (1791 – 1852), Thomas Gray (1716-1771), etc. [10, p. 518], Walter Scott (1771-1832), Samuel Rodgers (1763-1855), John Keats (1795-1821) William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Mathew Arnold (1822-1888), Robert Browning (1812-1889), Bryan Waller Procter (1787-1874) and other (The 19th Century English Writers, 1906), Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) [9, pp. 87-91]. The article has several sections, First Steps, Military Collections, Imperial (Universal) Poems, Sea Songs, Songs to God; For the Children. Furthermore, Bazmavep also offered an unsigned article, titled as "On Writing Style of Some Great Writers", that delved into the distinctive writing styles of other great authors, such as Scottish poet George Douglas (1869-1902), American fiction writer Robert Chambers (1827-1911), English writer and politician Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873) [20, p. 30].

A 1907 issue features an article about "The Lake School of Poets", Biographies of English poets William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Robert Southey (1774-1843), John Wilson (1785-1854) are introduced [7, p. 159-164]. From Lake Poets' works, the readers are introduced to "Hymn before Sun-rise, in the Vale of Chamouni", composed by the founder of the Romantic movement in England, Samuel Coleridge (1772-1834). It was translated from English by Yeghia Yervand Meleqian as Armenian publishers wanted the Armenian readers to have access to the poem in Armenian [9, p. 268].

3. Materials and Methods

Our primary source of data and information was the extensive Bazmavep archives, housed in the Mechitarist Monastery on the island of San Lazzaro degli Armeni in Venice, Italy.

However, it should be noted that access to these archives was not directly sought, and instead, our research heavily relied upon publicly available volumes of *Bazmavep* from 1843 to 1920. A significant portion of our analysis was facilitated through online resources, including the Union Catalog of Armenian Continuing Resources. This digital repository provided access to a wide range of 19th-century Armenian literary materials, including manuscripts, published works, and correspondence, which were instrumental in our research.

To provide a broader context for our research, we consulted a wide range of secondary sources, including scholarly articles, books, and historical records particularly related to Armenian and English literary heritage. Through the examination of *Bazmavep*, it became evident that the journal encompassed a wide array of themes and emphasized its commitment to cross-cultural and intellectual exchange. It served as a bridge for Armenian readers to access and engage with Western literary and intellectual currents, fostering a sense of connectedness to the broader world of letters. The Mechitarist fathers' proficiency in various European languages and their connections with the Armenian worldwide communities allowed them to undertake both direct and intermediary translations of renowned works of world literature. For instance, the translation of "The Story of Robinson Crusoe's Deeds" in 1836, translated by Father Minas Bzhshkian from French, highlighted their versatility in bringing literary classics to Armenian audiences. Our research also suggested reciprocal influences between Armenian and European literature during this period. This bi-directional exchange enriched both literary traditions, fostering a more interconnected global literary landscape.

In conclusion, the results of our study underscore the significant role played by *Bazmavep* and the Mechitarist fathers in facilitating cross-cultural literary exchanges during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Looking ahead, there are several promising avenues for future research in this field. Firstly, a deeper analysis of specific translations and their reception in Armenian society could provide insights into the preferences and literary tastes of the time. Additionally, a comparative study of *Bazmavep* with other contemporary literary journals in Europe may illuminate further facets of cross-cultural exchange. Exploring the Mechitarist fathers' networks and interactions with other intellectuals of the era could also offer a more comprehensive understanding of their role. Translations of French, Russian, Italian and German classics will be presented in the next articles.

CONCLUSION: The story of *Bazmavep*, the venerable Armenian periodical, is one that transcends the boundaries of time and geography. It is a story of intellectual curiosity, cultural exchange, and the enduring power of literature to bridge divides. As we conclude our exploration of *Bazmavep* in terms of translated English literature, we are left with a profound appreciation for the pivotal role it played in the cross-cultural communicator of ideas between Armenians and the English speaking world.

Bazmavep's commitment to biographies of famous European writers served as a means to provide Armenian readers with deeper insights into the lives and works of prominent figures. Through these biographies, readers could glimpse into the worlds of such figures as Shakespeare, Byron, Shelley, Moore, Thomson. These biographical explorations were not mere historical accounts; they were windows into the intellectual and creative landscapes of Europe.

In essence, *Bazmavep* was not merely a publication but a beacon of cultural and intellectual exchange. Its pages served as bridges that spanned linguistic and cultural gaps, enabling Armenians to engage with European thought and literature in profound ways. The Mechitarist fathers, the guardians of this literary haven, played a pivotal role in fostering these interactions. Their dedication to translation and cultural adaptation allowed Armenian readers to access a vast repository of European literary treasures. The periodical's contributions to introducing Armenian

readers to 19th-century English literature are particularly noteworthy. Works such as John Milton's "Paradise Lost," Daniel Defoe's "Crusoe," found a home in Bazmavep's pages.

The translations of English literature played a vital role in preserving and reviving these works. Many of these literary treasures might have faded into obscurity if not for their inclusion in Bazmavep's publications. These translated versions provided a second chance for these works, granting them renewed recognition and accessibility to a broader audience. The availability of Armenian translations shed light on overlooked aspects of the original works, enabling scholars to refine their historical understanding. Surprisingly, the history of many renowned European works' translations has omitted mention of Armenian translations and publications. Therefore, the articles featured in Bazmavep serve as valuable resources that facilitate European scholars in their endeavors to amend and refine their understanding of these literary masterpieces.

In the ever-evolving landscape of global culture, Bazmavep remains a shining example of how literature can transcend boundaries, fostering connections that enrich the human experience. It serves as an invitation to future generations to continue exploring the uncharted territories of intellectual exchange, for it is in this exchange that the truest and most profound understanding of our shared humanity is found. In hindsight, Bazmavep emerges as more than just a periodical; it is a living record of the profound literary and cultural connections that blossomed between Armenians and Europeans.

Գ ր ա կ ա ն ու թ յ ու ն

1. Անգլիական տիեզերակալության քերթողը Բիտիարդ Քիբլինկ // «Բազմավեպ», Սբ Ղազար, Վենետիկ: 1915: հ. 3: 87-91 էջեր:
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3. Բժշկեան Ղ. Լճամոլ Դպրոցը // «Բազմավեպ», Սբ Ղազար, Վենետիկ, 1907, հ. 4, 159-164, էջեր:
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Information about the author

Varduhi Ashot Baloyan:

PhD student at the Institute of Literature after M. Abeghyan of NAS,
Western Editor at "Erzenka" Publishing House. Yerevan, RA,
e-mail: varduhi.baloyan@edu.isec.am <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5018-4045>

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Էլ. հասցեն՝ varduhi.baloyan@edu.isec.am <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5018-4045>