

# **Translations into Armenian 1991-2013**

*A Study on the Translations into Armenian  
from 1991 to 2013*

*by Arqmenik Nikoghosyan*

***Research methodology, data collection,  
and analysis by Arqmenik Nikoghosyan***

***Chapters 4 and 5 by Ashot Gabrielyan***

***Recommendations by Arqmenik Nikoghosyan and  
Ashot Gabrielyan***

***Comments on the study  
by Armen Martirosyan***

***English language translation  
by Nazareth Seferian***

***English language editing by Angela  
Rodel***

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## SCOPE, GOAL AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study is dedicated to analyzing translations done in Armenia from 1991 to 2013. On the basis of the available data, the objective is to present the development trends of translation work in Armenia, analyze the trends, reveal existing shortcomings, recommend practical steps to improve the sector, as well as to study the trends in publications of translations, the relationships between translators, authors, publishers, literary agencies, financing bodies and other organizations, and their impact on translation flows, presenting specific tables which comprehensively reflect the issue and help undertake the required action.

The study is based on the information available from existing databases for translations in Armenia from 1991 to 2013. The main sources used are bibliographic data from the National Library, the National Book Chamber and elsewhere, as well as earlier research, analyses and interviews with major stakeholders in the literary sector, which have been analyzed alongside our own observations.

We have based the study on the methods of bibliographic data collection, comparative analysis and critical analysis. In this sense, one should consider first of all that the bibliographic data available in Armenia is different in quality from the rest of the region. In particular, data from the 1990s remains incomplete because of the turbulence of that period.

While it is true that since 1925, the Armenian National Book Chamber has been publishing the *Annals of Armenian Publications*, which presents bibliographic lists of the books published in Armenia by category, this information has only in recent years been made digitally available to

everyone. This, naturally, fills in lots of blanks and helps to get the necessary information quickly. Besides the data published by the National Book Chamber, there are also huge bibliographic lists available on the website of the “Union Catalog” ([www.armunicat.am](http://www.armunicat.am)).

The National Book Chamber has published a book<sup>1</sup> summarizing the bibliographical data, which is also available in electronic format and is directly relevant to our subject of study. However, due to various circumstances, many of these bibliographic databases are far from being complete or reliable. As mentioned on the official website of the National Book Chamber ([www.book-chamber.am](http://www.book-chamber.am)) – *“The degree of reliability and completeness of the data in the anthology summarizing the publishing activities in the country depends on the number of books for which the National Book Chamber has received a mandatory copy for bibliographic recording, statistical registration and archiving. Because the law on receiving a free mandatory copy does not yet function in Armenia, publishers do not always follow relevant standards on providing details regarding publication and release, and there are no procedures established by publishers concerning the regular reporting of their products, hence the data presented in the anthology are incomplete and not fully reliable. The available data reflects around 70–75 percent of the total volume of published products. For the same reason, for about 15–20 percent of the publications the figures indicating volume and print run are approximated,*

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1 See Hay Targmanakan Gegharvertsakan Grakanutyun. Matenagitutyun [Armenian Translated Literature – Fiction: A Bibliography] (1981–2010) Bibliographer and compiler T. V. Sinanyan and others. Editor M. S. Hakobjanyan. Yerevan. Armenian National Book Chamber, 2011. Also available in Armenian at [http://www.book-chamber.am/pdf/2011\\_targm.pdf](http://www.book-chamber.am/pdf/2011_targm.pdf)

*because the publication data for those books lacked details about quantities and publishing volumes<sup>2</sup>."*

On the other hand, the data that is available is also not reliable and often contains numerous mistakes. There are also objective and subjective reasons for this. Wrong or mistaken attributes frequently slip through in bibliographic lists; for example, a book by a French author may be listed as translated from French, while in reality the book was translated from Russian, and in fact the printed copies of the book do mention that this is from a Russian source. The following listing is an example – *Queen Margo (a novel) / A. Dumas; French translation D. Yesayan, Editor G. Khachatryan, Yerevan. Nairi 1991<sup>3</sup>*. Or, in other cases, the book makes no mention of the language from which it has been translated, yet the bibliographers have made an assumption based only on the country of origin or the native language of the author. The following listing illustrates such a case – *The Legacy of Mr. Šafránek: Satirical Stories / Jaroslav Hašek. Czech translation R. Petrosyan, G. Galstyan. Yerevan, Shushan, 1992<sup>4</sup>*. In that case the book was translated from Russian. But the distortions propagated by publishers and

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2 See [http://www.book-chamber.am/statistics\\_am.htm](http://www.book-chamber.am/statistics_am.htm) (in Armenian)

3 See Hay Targmanakan Gegharvertsakan Grakanutyun. Matenagitutyun [Armenian Translated Literature – Fiction: A Bibliography] (1981–2010) Bibliographer and compiler T. V. Sinanyan and others. Editor M. S. Hakobjanyan. Yerevan. Armenian National Book Chamber, 2011, page 158. Also available in Armenian at [http://www.book-chamber.am/pdf/2011\\_targm.pdf](http://www.book-chamber.am/pdf/2011_targm.pdf), page 158.

4 See Hay Targmanakan Gegharvertsakan Grakanutyun. Matenagitutyun [Armenian Translated Literature – Fiction: A Bibliography] (1981–2010) Bibliographer and compiler T. V. Sinanyan and others. Editor M. S. Hakobjanyan. Yerevan. Armenian National Book Chamber, 2011, page 92. Also available in Armenian at [http://www.book-chamber.am/pdf/2011\\_targm.pdf](http://www.book-chamber.am/pdf/2011_targm.pdf), page 92.

translators are greater in number. When translating a book via an intermediary language, they sometimes neglect to mention the source language of translation or sometimes purposefully falsify the information, noting the desired language as the source.

There are also errors which arise due to the incompetence or irresponsibility of publishers, which automatically make their way into the bibliographic lists without any follow up. Let us provide an example, in order to make this clear. *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow: A Japanese Fairy Tale / Translator H. Tumanyan, Yerevan. A. h. 1993 [18] pages*<sup>5</sup>. This is not a translation of the fairy tale, but rather a retelling of the story, and it can therefore not be considered in bibliographic listings or studies of translations.

In addition, some books which are obvious translations lack any information about the source language or the translator.

These circumstances, naturally, make it difficult to have any clear data. In the case of our study, errors of the kinds listed above have been minimized through careful follow-up and verification. But we nevertheless consider it necessary to mention that all the statistical, chronological and bibliographic data are approximate and may need further verification and correction.

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5 See [http://armunicat.am:8991/F/G7UGQL874VPL5V41B64YA95SJQMDR9APXQRFJN71S335NDK68U-33315?func=item-global&doc\\_library=ALC01&doc\\_number=000385609&year=&volume=&sub\\_library=NLA](http://armunicat.am:8991/F/G7UGQL874VPL5V41B64YA95SJQMDR9APXQRFJN71S335NDK68U-33315?func=item-global&doc_library=ALC01&doc_number=000385609&year=&volume=&sub_library=NLA):

The compilers of the National Book Chamber bibliographic lists had a critical approach towards this book and did not include it in their bibliographic listing of translated works.

## INTRODUCTION

### ***a) Periods in the history of Armenian translations***

The history of Armenian translated literature spans over centuries. As early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century, after the creation of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrop Mashtots, a large cultural movement began in Armenia with translation as one of its priority areas. It later gained the name the *Targmanchats* [Translators'] Movement. Overall, the translations done in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century can be classified as follows – 1. Liturgical-ceremonial works (Missal, Euchologia, prayer books and so on); 2. Patristic (the writings of the Church fathers); 3. Martyrology and hagiography – accounts of the lives of saints and other figures; 4. Canonical (regulations and guidelines outlined by Church assemblies and holy fathers); 5. Historical works. From the creation of the Armenian alphabet to the 440s A.D. a large number of works were translated from Assyrian and Greek. The most noteworthy of these are the following – the Holy Bible (405–408 A.D. and the 430s), *The Art of Grammar* by Dionysius Thrax, *Introduction* by Porphyry, *Church History* by Eusebius of Caesarea (416–420 A.D.), *On the Death of Prophets* by Epiphanius of Cyprus, *The Six Days of Creation* by Basil of Caesarea, Plato's writings, The Apology of Aristides by Aristides the Athenian (420–430 A.D.), *The Chronicle* of Eusebius of Caesarea (430s A.D.), and many others. Moreover, many of these today are every bit as valuable as their originals, since the source language text has been lost over the centuries. This historic era was memorialized with a place in the Church Calendar known as the Feast of Holy Translators. The Feast of Holy Translators (the Feast of our Holy Priests the Translators, in full) is one of the feasts

of the Armenian national church and is celebrated on the Saturday following the fourth Sunday after the Feast of the Holy Cross.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, alongside a revival of spiritual culture in Armenia and various Armenian migrant communities, the traditions of the *Targmanchats* movement were restored.

In the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Mkhitar of Sebastia established the Mechitarist Congregation on the island of San Lazzaro in Italy. This congregation carried out various philological activities including undertaking a large body of translation. In particular, various masterpieces of world literature were translated from Latin and Italian. However, it is true that those translations were written in Classical Armenian (*Grabar*), which was the only written version of the language in use at that time. From the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the development of modern Armenian literature also saw a new stage of progress in Armenian translated literature. It was seen as the best way to develop the nation's own literature and introduce new topics, ideas and styles, as well as to link it to ongoing processes in world literature. Due to historical circumstances, the Armenian people have ended up divided into Western Armenian and Eastern Armenian regions, each of which had specific cultural conditions in which to develop. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this had an impact on Armenian translators' preferences for language and literature. While Eastern Armenian writers would mainly translate from Russian and German, the Western Armenian writers preferred French and, to some extent, English.

In the Soviet period, translation work was managed by the state, through the placement of special orders. The

situation was similar to that in most of the former Soviet countries. Of course, a number of valuable translations were done at that time as well, but some circumstances suggest the need for a certain wariness towards the translated literature from those times. This is especially true since some of the bad habits formed in that period continue to this day. In particular, this refers to the tendency to not publish a number of renowned Western European and American writers (such as Franz Kafka, Herman Hesse, William Faulkner and others) because of certain ideological and other considerations, and also to translate through an intermediary language, mainly Russian.

After the independence of Armenia in 1991, translations into Armenian entered a new stage which had its own specific characteristics, to which this study is dedicated.

### ***b) Specific characteristics of the publishing industry in Armenia***

In the independence period, along with the formation of a new social order, the publishing industry changed dramatically as well. The publishing industry during Soviet times was based solely on state propaganda and government orders, i.e. it was completely under party supervision. However, the very beginning of the Karabakh movement and again with largely the same propagandistic intentions saw the beginning of *samizdat* (dissident self-publishing) and the publication of booklets, flyers and other material propagandizing the new national liberation struggle.

A number of new publishing houses appeared in the independence period which set new tasks for themselves.

In the area of translation in particular, there was one main goal. The translation of many books had been hampered, if not altogether forbidden, during the Soviet period. Preference had been given to other books. In the first years of independence, the government continued to direct funds to the old publishing houses, but this did not stop new ones from arising as well.

The formation and development of the new publishing market was also helped by the establishment of diplomatic ties between the Republic of Armenia and other states or international organizations. For example, the French Embassy supported the translation of a number of books from French. One should also note that books from other Soviet republics, which were actively published earlier, were now pushed into the background. Just as an example, even Georgian literature which had the closest literary ties with Armenia disappeared for a while and a translation from Georgian appeared only in 1997.

In conditions of free speech and lack of censorship, many publishers also began to accept orders from individuals. Many individuals were ready to pay publishers to print their works, without any real expectations of sales. In such cases, the main motivation for the publishers was to make money without necessarily adhering to a consistent selection policy for publications.

Because intellectual property and other legal issues were largely neglected in the first few years of independence, actual printing contracts were the main source of income for publishing houses, which turned the publishing industry into simply a technical service provider. This tendency has been declining over the past two to three years. Thanks in particular to the efforts of publishing houses like *Sargis Khachents*, *PrintInfo*, *Antares*, *Zangak*

and *Edit Print*, the real meaning and functions of the concept of ***publishing*** are beginning to take shape in Armenia.

Due to the significant influence of international grants, a sense of healthy competition is beginning to grow between publishers. Fulfilling the requirements of donor organizations and gaining trust are becoming issues of primary concern for publishers. There is already competition among publishers for who will first get the rights to a certain book, which is significantly transforming the industry.

Beginning in 2002, the role of state orders and state support in the formation of the publishing industry has also been quite significant. This has been a big boost to the book publishing industry. Every publisher is attempting to get a piece of the orders paid by the state budget, which is encouraging them to produce better quality work.

The activities of various foundations have also had a big impact on the formation of the publishing industry in Armenia. For example, the Yerevan State University publishing house has published and republished numerous books with the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. The same can be said for the Armenian General Benevolent Union and other associations.

The foundations' support depends largely on the policies of the given association. One can state with certainty that the Armenian publishing industry is supported mainly by international grants, local foundations and state funding. While this helps the formation of the publishing industry, it is not enough for the development of the market for literature, because the books published through these means often end up gathering dust at the various points of sale. One of the most important issues before us is the

concordance of the market for books with the publishing industry. One should note that it is not just Armenian books that are being published in Armenia. Starting in Soviet times, numerous books have also been published in Russian. After independence, Russian was joined by English and French as well. Although limited in number, there are also books published in the languages of minority communities in Armenia, such as Kurdish, for example. Our study, naturally, is based on data concerning books published in Armenian.

## TRANSLATIONS INTO ARMENIAN FROM OTHER LANGUAGES – 1991–2013

### *a) Stages of development*

#### **1991–1996**

In Soviet times, that is to say up to 1991, almost all the publishing houses operating in Armenia belonged to the state and received state funding, and hence fulfilled the government's orders. This situation continued to persist due to inertia as a specific characteristic of the publication of translated literature in Armenia from 1991 to 1993. Some of the translated works that were published in this period were not so much the result of demands made by the new times that had arrived, but were simply the fulfillment of the state plan for translations that had been set in Soviet times.

The first years of Armenia's independence were overall a time of ambiguous feelings for the book publishing industry. On the one hand, publisher could now translate and publish numerous authors that had earlier been prohibited; on the other hand, there were very little or almost no financial or other resources, which the socialist state had once provided for such programs. If there was a certain level of activity in the publishing industry in 1991–1992, it was mainly due to the fact that the resources provided through the state plan a year or two earlier were still sustaining their operations. It is no coincidence that the publication of Armenian books declined from 1993 to 1995, even if this was mainly in absolute quantitative terms (see Table 1). Interestingly, this decline in the number of publications had virtually no effect on the quantities of

translated books, including fiction (see Table 1). These mostly remained at a stable level.

Unfortunately, some important projects, especially plans for translation, were discontinued as a result of the above mentioned reasons. In particular, the state publishing house *Nairi*, earlier called Soviet Writer, had begun a fifty-volume anthology of world literature in 1990, having large print-runs (30,000 copies, on average) and with all the translations being done from the original source language. Only ten volumes were published, the remaining ones never saw the light of day. On the other hand, in 1990, the magazine *Garun* established Apollon Publishers, which was a leader in the field of translation, particularly in those first years after independence and especially for translated fiction. Their projects involved large print-runs as well. Using a subscription model helped them reach print-runs of more than 40,000 copies, especially in their early years.

*Apollon* was a promising start, especially considering that it was trying to solve two major problems left over from Soviet times. First, they were translating authors who had never appeared before in Armenia in volumes of their own (Franz Kafka, Herman Hesse, Albert Camus, Thomas Wolfe and so on). Second, the translations were done from the original languages (English, French, German, Spanish and so on).

The establishment of the *Sargis Khachents* and the *A&M* publishing houses was also very productive. While the former translated mainly non-fiction literature on culture, art and philosophy from a range of languages, the latter focused mainly on the translation of works of fiction from French.

In this period, 3,908 books were published in Armenian, of which 364 (9.3%) were translations, including 91 (25%) works of fiction.

### **1997-2001**

This period can be considered a period of self-actualization for the publishing industry. Some of the publishers went out of business, while others entered the industry. However, many of these were publishers only in a conditional sense, as they did not have a clear policy and would print whatever was ordered, particularly by individuals and organizations. In any case, this stage is important because the number of Armenian books published annually began to grow once again. There was also a purely quantitative increase in the area of translations. But upon examining this from a content-based point of view, one can see that the majority of these publications consisted of the translations of various guides, instructions, communication material for various international organizations and so on.

Perhaps the only exceptions in this period were the volumes on philosophy and cultural studies, published by *Sargis Khachents*. One can say that it was this publishing house that led the field in the area of translations, maintaining high standards. While there were also other publishers who worked well in this period, their activities were more sporadic in nature and less coordinated.

It is no coincidence that during this period, which seemingly witnessed an increase in activity as far as book publishing is concerned, the publication of fiction translations was very limited. For example, if this subgroup on average constituted 25% of annual translations from 1991 to 1996, then from 1997 to 2002, this figure dropped

to 18.4%. In total, 6,055 Armenian books were published during this period, of which 482 (7%) were translations, including 89 (18.4%) works of fiction.

### **2002-2013**

This was the period which saw a significant change not just in the publishing industry in Armenia, but also in the organization of translation work. First, state support and government demand once again entered the scene in 2002, offering significant support to publishers. Second, publishers began to actively collaborate with various donor organizations. Table 1 shows clearly how this led to a notable increase in the numbers not just for Armenian language publications, but also for translations, including works of fiction.

It is a different issue entirely that these financial resources were often not used conscientiously. In particular, the print-run mentioned in the book was often markedly higher than the actual number of copies published. Sometimes, the books were only published in a few sample copies, which were given to the donor. On the other hand, there were no marketing activities focusing on those books and since the grants covered all the costs of printing the books, they were often not even put on the market to be sold. In short, they did not serve any particular purpose from a functional point of view.

Fortunately, the situation has significantly improved over the last four to five years. Several publishing houses have established themselves as having clear policies and programs, shaping the market for books through their operations. *Antares*, *Sargis Khachents*, *PrintInfo*, *Zangak*, *Edit Print* and, to some extent, *Aktual Arvest* are the publishing houses that maintain high publishing standards

today, along with the inclusion of a good approach to translation.

Naturally, each one of them has their own approach and a particular role to play. As a result of their work, a sense of competition has developed. The numbers also bear witness to this competition and the stability in the sector. In this sense, the drop in the number of Armenian books published in 2012 and 2013 is not of great concern. On the contrary, it suggests that publishers are no longer publishing books on a whim. It is no coincidence that the overall drop in number has occurred alongside an increase in the number of translated books, particularly fiction. Additionally, they differ greatly in content from previously published books. One should also note that there has been a significant improvement in the range of foreign languages included. In 2012 and 2013, translated works of fiction constituted the highest percentages since 1991.

*The Antares* publishing house established the “Mandatory Reading” series, which includes the best works from world literature in original translations (nineteen books have already been published), as well as the “Foreign Writing” series, which consists of books that are being translated into Armenian for the first time, and so on. *The Zangak* publishing house has a book series called “The World in Armenian,” while *Aktual Arvest* has published a series of French books, and so on.

In total, 25,247 Armenian-language books were published between 2002 and 2013, of which 1,864 (7.3%) were translated, including 718 (38.5%) works of fiction.

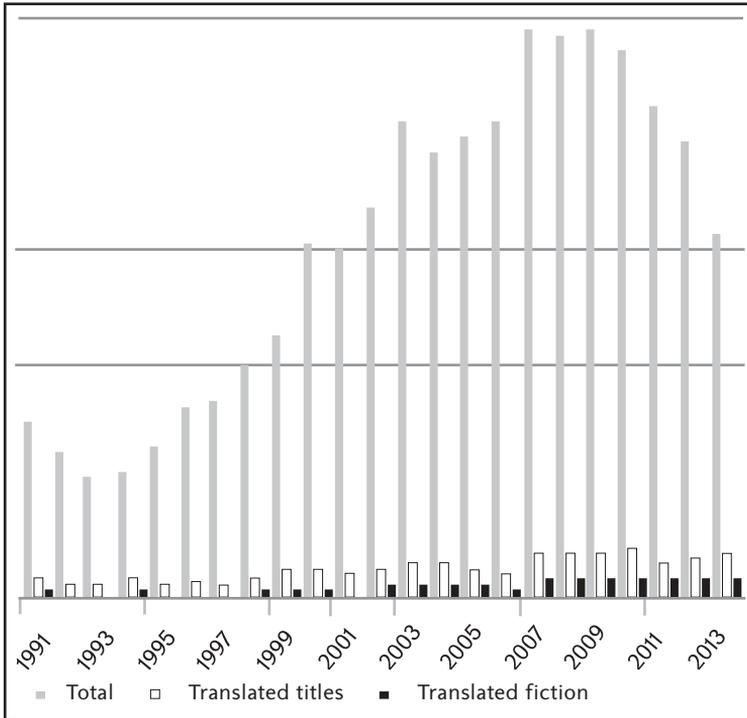
**Table 1. Number of Armenian books published in Armenia between 1991 and 2013 by year, number of translated books including works of fiction**

Year	Total number of books published in Armenian	Translated books N / %	Works of fiction among translated books N / %
1991	759	90 / 11.8	21 / 23.3
1992	620	52 / 8.3	16 / 30.7
1993	524	52 / 9.9	16 / 30.7
1994	533	61 / 11.4	17 / 27.8
1995	649	49 / 7.5	13 / 26.5
1996	823	58 / 7.04	8 / 13.7
1997	865	54 / 6.24	8 / 14.8
1998	1006	83 / 8.2	31 / 37.4
1999	1132	117 / 10.3	17 / 14.5
2000	1550	130 / 8.3	21 / 16.1
2001	1502	98 / 6.5	12 / 12.2
2002	1689	121 / 7.1	38 / 31.4
2003	2073	139 / 6.7	42 / 30.2
2004	1942	134 / 6.9	44 / 32.8
2005	1997	127 / 6.3	40 / 31.4
2006	2069	111 / 5.3	37 / 33.3
2007	2473	189 / 7.6	60 / 31.7
2008	2446	181 / 7.3	66 / 36.4
2009	2476	181 / 7.3	73 / 40.3
2010	2382	209 / 8.7	83 / 39.7
2011	2143	150 / 6.9	65 / 43.3
2012	1979	161 / 8.1	91 / 56.2
2013	1577	161 / 10.2	89 / 55.2

**Total**

Total number of books published in Armenian in the period 1991-2013	Translated books N / %	Works of fiction among translated books N / %
35209	2708 / 7.6%	908 / 33.5%

**Figure 1. Dynamics of Armenian-language books and translations published in Armenia by year (1991-2013)**



**b) Source languages and trends**

We would first like to note that when looking at the source languages, the numbers and their range do not correlate to the translations' real geographic coverage. Authors representing many more languages and countries

have been translated in Armenia than the statistical data on source languages suggest. This is further proof of the role of translations done through intermediary languages.

We present the distribution of translations into Armenian based on source language from 1991 to 2013. Naturally, the data are approximate here as well, due on the one hand to a lack of the source language being mentioned in the publication or the bibliographic list, and on the other hand, due to fraudulent practices by publishers and translators. We have tried to remove these irregularities to the extent possible, as well as to correct errors. In the remaining cases, the language has been noted in the list of translations as “unverified.” We consider it necessary to note that “unverified” source languages are usually either Russian or English. From the point of view of statistics, especially the proportional distribution of languages, this does not change the picture much, since Russian and English were, in any case, the most commonly used languages in the translations to Armenian from 1991 to 2013.

Graphing the distribution of languages by year helps reveal interesting patterns. First, the relationship between translators and publishers is interesting to see from the point of view of language. Judging from the press, and particularly the geography of the languages used in translations published by the journals *Garun*, *Artasahmanyayn Grakanutyun* and *Narcis*, one can say that they vary greatly. It is true that they do not become books later and remain only in the pages of the periodicals, creating a misleading impression. In particular, the periodicals publish many translations from Spanish, Italian and Arabic, while these languages do not have a strong foothold when it comes to published books.

In other words, the picture formed by translations in periodicals gives very different information from the one seen through books.

On the other hand, it is clear that, on average, each year sees translations into Armenian published from ten languages, with a tendency towards an increase in the number of languages every year. The smallest number of source languages is from 1991, 1993, 1994, 1995 and 1996 – six languages each. The largest number was in 2012 – seventeen languages (see Table 2). The level of activity for different foreign languages in different years has occurred due to various causes, often because of a specific project implemented in that area. Although they do cause a statistical shift, there is not much change in content or in the position of the dominant languages. For example, 1999 saw the largest number of books translated from Italian – 22. But they were all children's books consisting of 10-20 pages each.

In the general context of Armenian translations, languages are interesting from the point of view of practical information. For example, while all kinds of books are translated from Russian and English, French is exclusively a source language for fiction and books relating to the Armenian Genocide. With just a few exceptions, the same holds for German as well. The number of translations from Spanish and Italian are surprisingly limited; given the amount of fiction that has been written in these languages, they should have been among the most popular. Over the past five to six years, one can note an increase in interest in translations from the original language, especially for works of fiction. The tables below suggest that a shift has begun in this area as well.

**Table 2. Distribution of translations by language**

1991

1.	Russian	61
2.	English	12
3.	French	5
4.	Spanish	2
5.	German	2
6.	Ancient Greek	1
7.	Unverified	13

1994

1.	English	21
2.	French	14
3.	Russian	12
4.	German	2
5.	Farsi	1
6.	Greek	1
7.	Unverified	5

1992

1.	Russian	40
2.	English	8
3.	French	6
4.	German	3
5.	Farsi	2
6.	Spanish	1
7.	Ancient Greek	1
8.	Polish	1
9.	Unverified	10

1995

1.	English	13
2.	French	11
3.	Russian	7
4.	Norwegian	1
5.	Ancient Greek	1
6.	German	1
7.	Unverified	8

1993

1.	Russian	24
2.	English	14
3.	Italian	2
4.	French	2
5.	Farsi	1
6.	German	1
7.	Unverified	4

1996

1.	Russian	17
2.	French	9
3.	English	8
4.	Farsi	3
5.	Spanish	2
6.	Italian	1
7.	Unverified	10

## 1997

1.	Russian	20
2.	French	8
3.	English	7
4.	German	1
5.	Italian	1
6.	Latin	1
7.	Turkish	1
8.	Georgian	1
9.	Unverified	12

## 1998

1.	Italian	22
2.	Russian	19
3.	English	12
4.	French	8
5.	German	3
6.	Farsi	2
7.	Greek	1
8.	Georgian	1
9.	Bulgarian	1
10.	Norwegian	1
11.	Serbian	1
12.	Unverified	3

## 1999

1.	French	21
2.	English	20
3.	Russian	20
4.	Georgian	3
5.	Spanish	2
6.	Arabic	1
7.	Bulgarian	1

8.	German	1
9.	Ancient Greek	1
10.	Farsi	1
11.	Unverified	18

## 2000

1.	Russian	36
2.	French	21
3.	English	14
4.	German	4
5.	Farsi	3
6.	Chinese	1
7.	Danish	1
8.	Turkish	1
9.	Italian	1
10.	Kurdish	1
11.	Spanish	1
12.	Ancient Greek	1
13.	Unverified	21

## 2001

1.	Russian	26
2.	French	13
3.	English	11
4.	German	2
5.	Ancient Greek	2
6.	Italian	1
7.	Spanish	1
8.	Georgian	1
9.	Unverified	23

## 2002

1.	Russian	31
2.	English	23
3.	French	16
4.	German	7
5.	Spanish	2
6.	Lithuanian	2
7.	Swedish	1
8.	Farsi	1
9.	Basque	1
10.	Serbian	1
11.	Latin	1
12.	Georgian	1
13.	Unverified	17

## 2004

1.	Russian	40
2.	English	26
3.	French	14
4.	German	7
5.	Italian	3
6.	Farsi	3
7.	Swedish	1
8.	Lithuanian	1
9.	Arabic	1
10.	Danish	1
11.	Kurdish	1
12.	Unverified	12

## 2003

1.	Russian	52
2.	English	25
3.	French	9
4.	Georgian	5
5.	German	5
6.	Farsi	4
7.	Lithuanian	2
8.	Dutch	1
9.	Swedish	1
10.	Bulgarian	1
11.	Turkish	1
12.	Serbian	1
13.	Latin	1
14.	Unverified	14

## 2005

1.	Russian	23
2.	English	22
3.	French	12
4.	German	4
5.	Farsi	4
6.	Spanish	3
7.	Georgian	1
8.	Estonian	1
9.	Latvian	1
10.	Lithuanian	1
11.	Bulgarian	1
12.	Italian	1
13.	Hungary	1
14.	Japanese	1
15.	Arabic	1
16.	Unverified	21

## 2006

1.	Russian	24
2.	English	14
3.	French	9
4.	Farsi	8
5.	German	5
6.	Polish	2
7.	Lithuanian	2
8.	Georgian	2
9.	Bulgarian	1
10.	Ukrainian	1
11.	Spanish	1
12.	Turkish	1
13.	Ancient Greek	1
14.	Basque	1
15.	Greek	1
16.	Norwegian	1
17.	Unverified	13

## 2008

1.	Russian	46
2.	English	31
3.	French	18
4.	Farsi	7
5.	German	4
6.	Italian	3
7.	Latvian	2
8.	Greek	1
9.	Ancient Georgian	1
10.	Swedish	1
11.	Georgian	1
12.	Turkish	1
13.	Spanish	1
14.	Unverified	10

## 2007

1.	Russian	54
2.	English	25
3.	French	18
4.	Farsi	11
5.	German	9
6.	Georgian	2
7.	Italian	2
8.	Greek	2
9.	Spanish	1
10.	Basque	1
11.	Ancient Greek	1
12.	Dutch	1
13.	Arabic	1
14.	Unverified	12

## 2009

1.	Russian	63
2.	English	32
3.	French	13
4.	Portuguese	5
5.	Farsi	5
6.	Spanish	3
7.	Turkish	2
8.	Italian	2
9.	Greek	1
10.	Kurdish	1
11.	Japanese	1
12.	German	1
13.	Bulgarian	1
14.	Unverified	16

## 2010

1.	Russian	100
2.	English	20
3.	French	18
4.	German	6
5.	Georgian	4
6.	Portuguese	4
7.	Farsi	3
8.	Spanish	3
9.	Bulgarian	2
10.	Italian	2
11.	Ukrainian	1
12.	Arabic	1
13.	Hungarian	1
14.	Latvian	1
15.	Unverified	16

## 2011

1.	Russian	46
2.	English	23
3.	French	12
4.	German	5
5.	Farsi	4
6.	Spanish	3
7.	Dutch	2
8.	Ancient Greek	2
9.	Georgian	2
10.	Arabic	1
11.	Italian	1
12.	Serbian	1
13.	Unverified	10

## 2012

1.	Russian	48
2.	English	28
3.	French	16
4.	German	9
5.	Farsi	5
6.	Italian	5
7.	Spanish	4
8.	Greek	3
9.	Dutch	2
10.	Turkish	1
11.	Swedish	1
12.	Latvian	1
13.	Ukrainian	1
14.	Hindi	1
15.	Portuguese	1
16.	Georgian	1
17.	Bulgarian	1
18.	Unverified	13

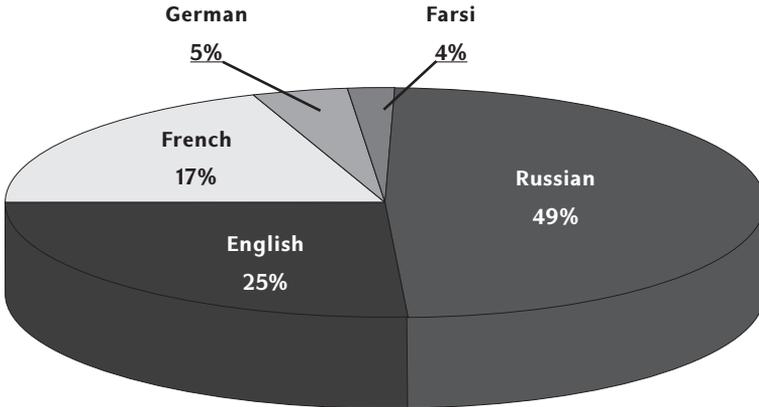
## 2013

1.	English	47
2.	Russian	39
3.	French	13
4.	German	6
5.	Italian	6
6.	Spanish	4
7.	Turkish	2
8.	Serbian	2
9.	Bulgarian	1

10.	Portuguese	1
11.	Georgian	1
12.	Latvian	1
13.	Swedish	1
14.	Arabic	1
15.	Dutch	1
16.	Farsi	1
17.	Unverified	5

Thus, 32 source languages were used for translations to Armenian and for publications as separate books from 1991 to 2013. Here is the list: 1. Russian, 31.1% of total translations; 2. English, 16.8%; 3. French, 10.8%; German, 3.2%; 5. Farsi, 2.5%; 6. Italian, 1.95%; 7. Spanish 1.25%; 8. Georgian, 0.96%; 9-10. Ancient Greek, Portuguese, 0.4%; 11-13. Greek, Bulgarian, Turkish, 0.36%; 14-16. Lithuanian, Dutch, Arabic, 0.25%; 17-18. Swedish, Serbian, 0.22%; 19. Latvian, 0.18%; 20-24. Norwegian, Basque, Kurdish, Ukrainian, Polish, 0.11%; 25-28. Hungarian, Latin, Danish, Japanese, 0.07%; 29-32. Ancient Georgian, Hindi, Estonian, Chinese, 0.03%.

**Figure 2. Top Five Source Languages for Translations into Armenian, 1991-2013**



This list of top five languages is largely expected, although perhaps the appearance of Farsi in these ranks may seem a bit surprising. It is worth noting that while Russian and English are clear leaders also in the sense that they are quite widely used in Armenia in general French, German and especially Farsi also have other reasons to be among the leaders. Let us first mention that for these three languages, the translations are mostly of fiction, academic literature, philosophical works and to a very small extent children's books. They do not often serve as intermediary languages for translations. On the other hand, the embassies of the countries that speak these languages are very active in Armenia and regularly implement grant programs. The Embassy of France in Armenia, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran with its cultural section in particular, as well as the German and Austrian embassies regularly initiate or fund Armenian translations.

If we describe the situation from a proportional point of view, it is as follows.

***Translations from Russian***

Fiction – 18.8%  
Academic literature – 31.1 %  
Children's literature – 31.5%  
Other – 18.6 %

***Translations from English***

Fiction – 11.2%  
Academic literature – 27.4 %  
Children's literature – 28.6%  
Other – 33.8 %

***Translations from French***

Fiction – 87.9%  
Academic literature – 2.2 %  
Children's literature – 8.7%  
Other – 1.2 %

***Translations from German***

Fiction – 48.8%  
Academic literature – 7.1 %  
Children's literature – 12.2%  
Other – 31.9 %

***Translations from Farsi***

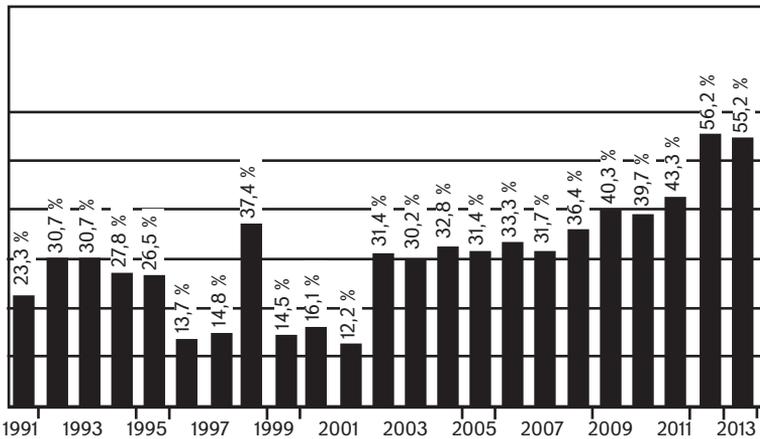
Fiction – 89.7%  
Academic literature – 0.7 %  
Children's literature – 8.4%  
Other – 1.2%

**c) Percentage of translated fiction and literature in relation to the total number of published translations**

Translation of fiction constitutes 33.5% of the total amount of translated works in this period. Moreover, it is mostly works of fiction that are translated from the original source language, because academic, informative and other kinds of texts are usually translated in Armenia from Russian or English. It is for that reason in particular that we have not included the numbers related to fiction in Table 2.

The data in Figure 3 show that translation of fiction is in a stage of progress in Armenia. Looking at genres, the largest number of translations are books of poetry, particularly for children (42.6%), followed by short prose forms – novellas, stories, fairy tales, including works for children (38.5%), followed by novels (18.9%).

**Figure 3. Dynamics of Fiction Translations in Armenia, 1991-2013 (%)**



## IMPORT OF RUSSIAN TRANSLATIONS: THE DEMAND FOR THEM AND THEIR ROLE IN THE BOOK MARKET

In the period of independence, despite the increase in books published in Armenian and their attempts to satisfy the needs of readers in Armenia, the dominant position in the market today is still held by imported translations from other languages into Russian. The issue, first of all, lies with the lack of resources for translating into Armenian. Moreover, Armenian readers had, over the years, not just grown used to Russian literature, but also to reading literature from other languages through their Russian translations, as a result of which a stereotype has arisen that Russian translations are of better quality. Naturally, this attitude has objective grounds, because by reading in Russian the reader is getting a direct translation, not a mediated one.

If one looks at the issue from the point of view of fiction, then one can see that it is mainly the major works of classical international authors that have been translated into Armenian. The other works by those same authors, which would complete their literary portrait, are missing. The reader is left with no choice but to search for those books in Russian.

On the other hand, the Armenian translation of a particular work is often neglected for a number of reasons. Very often, works of great value have been published with terrible external design and with a very low profile. One can give examples such as the translated books published by *Apollon* and *Lusabats*. The reader often wants to see books that also look good externally. In this sense, books

imported from Russia are often significantly different from the ones offered by publishing houses in Armenia.

There are other psychological pre-conditions as well, which lead readers towards choosing Russian versions. Even readers who are not very active sometimes give preference to books in Russian simply because they have the impression that Russian allows readers the possibility to read a wider range of better books. Of course, this thinking is true in part, but it is often simply used by individuals to create the appearance of being smarter and well-read. If we look at the ratio of translated books among all the literature published in Armenia, we see that they make up less than ten percent of the total. This creates the impression that you cannot enter into a dialogue with world literature through Armenian, that it is a language used mainly for communicating on local issues. Basically, it suggests that you cannot enter the world of global literature and learn what you need using Armenian.

In the case of specialized literature, there are a number of good reasons why Russian translations have gained preference. The first is that Armenian versions of the same works are often unavailable altogether. There are almost no books published in Armenian on the social and natural sciences. The main specialized literature published in Armenian pertains largely to Armenian studies. The absence of books on medicine, biology, physics, chemistry and other branches of science force the reader to give preference to Russian publications, which then require specialists to change their language of study and sometimes even their language of communication at the workplace. Some people are trying to fill this gap, but not by translating books directly into Armenian, but rather by “appropriating” these works and then presenting them as

their own. Naturally, this approach harms the reputation of specialized and academic literature in Armenian, and the user gives preference to Russian books. The long absence of specialized books in Armenian has also negatively impacted Armenian vocabulary. To this day, there are many mechanical phenomena and concepts that have no equivalent in Armenian, which is yet another reason why these topics are more often studied in Russian.

## THE SOCIAL POSITION OF LITERARY TRANSLATORS AND THEIR WORKING CONDITIONS

Particularly in the early years after independence, translations were done very sporadically, which also reflected the social status of translators in Armenia. Starting from the point when particular publishing houses developed a clear translation policy, the social status of translators began to show a tendency towards improvement. The small number of professional translators in Armenia allows for translators who are not well-trained or adequately prepared to find work in this area. There are also some languages, such as Swedish and Norwegian, which are spoken only by one or two people in the whole country. So translators from these languages do not have editors, which can lead to irresponsible work. Taking these issues into consideration, one can note that there is a small number of translators in Armenia who have been well-educated and trained. For example, there are virtually no cases here when a translator's work has been subjected to serious critique. Instead, the emphasis is placed on the reputation of the work being translated and whether or not it is well known. Publishers also take these factors into consideration, rather than the quality of the translation.

For example, the *Gitank* publishing house continues to prepare mediated translations to this day, even when this work is financed by funds for translation and dissemination from the corresponding native countries and when the translation rights have been purchased, which include the mandatory condition that the translation must be from

the original language. Works from various languages are translated (Norwegian, Danish, Finnish, Japanese and others) only through the mediation of English, French and Russian. It is true that all of that is done within the confines of the author's rights to the given works, i.e. an agreement is reached beforehand, but to speak of translation quality here would be wrong. Additionally, this slows down the inclusion of new languages into the translation work being done directly to Armenian.

Many individuals who have received a good education in various universities simply refuse to do written translation of fiction or other works, considering such tasks to be unprofitable. For this reason, the development of good translators for the written word is a major problem. Responsible work by publishing houses and the implementation of special translations programs by the state have a big role to play in the improvement of the social status of translators and the appreciation of the importance of their work.

Since we note that translation work in the country is more often conducted sporadically, without a clear program or policy, we must emphasize that in this case it does not seem appropriate to speak of the work conditions of translators and that it is outside of the author-publisher-translator chain, which should provide for normal working conditions. Authors' rights are often violated, leading to a number of translations of a single piece of literature. A good example of this is the publication in 2013 of Akram Aylisli's *Stone Dreams* by three different publishing houses, none of which purchased the copyrights. Working conditions of this kind are, naturally, do not make it easy for translators to properly organize their work, nor does

it support the correct organization of the industry in Armenia, with its limited resources.

Translators are often unaware of their own rights during their negotiations with publishers. This allows publishers to exploit their work. Translators often begin to translate authors whose copyrights belong to publishing houses with whom they do not have contracts, forcing them later to sell their translations cheaply. There are very few cases in which the publisher and translator come to an agreement beforehand to work on translating a piece. In this sense, the publishing houses in Armenia which distinguish themselves with positive practices are *Sargis Khachents*, *PrintInfo*, *Antares*, *Zangak* and *Aktual Arvest*. In other cases, the translator usually decides on the piece himself or herself, which often creates problems later. There are cases when the translated work ends up on the market illegally, and the translator is then forced to “clean it up” because a legal version has also appeared.

Literary agencies, which are newly developing in Armenia, and the *1<sup>st</sup> Armenian Literary Agency* in particular, should pay attention to translators’ working conditions. These agencies should raise translators’ awareness of their rights and do their best to regulate the field. Otherwise, translation turns into work being done for self-satisfaction, while very often illegal pieces of translated work end up published and available on the market. Publishers should also be consistent in their work with translators. They should present clear instructions to translators and not wait to see what the translator will offer before they decide whether or not it is something worth publishing.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- First, in order for such studies to be more representative of the real picture in the future, it is important for *publishers to record in a responsible manner the relevant data about the translated work they produce, and for the compilers of the corresponding statistical data to register this correctly as well.*
- *In universities, especially for the natural sciences, there should be an initiative to sponsor and encourage translations of original works that are internationally recognized in the given field, rather than offering the books written by the faculty of the given local institution, which are mainly “appropriated” versions of these works.*
- *Publishers should seek to ensure their own supply of translations not just by looking for translators, but also by sending them to courses for various languages so that they can be sure of the quality of the product that they offer.*
- *Courses should be organized to raise the awareness of translators on their rights, as well as to introduce them to possible legal issues related to the works that they are translating.*
- *Donor organizations should be stricter in their supervision and periodically monitor the outcomes of the books which are translated through their sponsorship, including whether they are printed in full and whether the original language has been used as the source for the translation.*

## COMMENTS

*by* **ARMEN MARTIROSYAN**  
*Director, Antares Publishing House*

The most important conclusion that one can come to on the basis of this study is about where we have come so far, where we are going and what we want to do. A question that should have been discussed long ago is finally taking shape – can an editorial office be called a publishing house? What is a publishing house, in general? Today in Armenia, everyone is trying to become a publisher – bookstores are publishers, translators are publishers, the state is a publisher... The study shows that all of these categories must be distinguished. In my opinion, a publisher is a producer – a person responsible for the creation of a book. Someone who is not willing to bear this responsibility cannot be called a publisher.

We also see the big impact that correct mechanisms can have.

Based on the mindset that was prevalent during Soviet times, the language for translations in Armenia for a long time and in the early years of independence was Russian. Today in Armenia, as the data in the study show, this is gradually being replaced by English. This is probably not what we wanted. We would have liked translations to Armenian to be from the original source language. And that is what we should be working towards achieving. At least the best literary work in every global language should be translated into Armenian.

On the other hand, the fact that we have had translations from 32 languages in 22 years is an admirable achievement. It does not matter that for many of these languages there

have just been one, two, six or seven books, while for the others, there have been 60, 100 or 500. A language is a bridge, a bridge of friendship. Even a single translation is the chance to communicate and interact. In the future, the more translations we have, the more interaction, and the more mutual recognition and development of relations. And our culture has every opportunity to communicate and interact with other cultures.

Regarding grants, which according to the study have quite a large role to play in Armenia today from the point of view of translation work, it is very important for publishers not to become victims of grants, so to speak. This means that they should not translate that which the donor organization is forcing upon them. Publishers who are not well-prepared to work with donor organizations will fall into their trap and will end up being used by them. On the other hand, a grant is tempting, and many are baited without realizing that they are the victims.

For those publishers who have clear programs and who, in one way or another, are going to translate and print specific works by a specific author these grants can be of great significance indeed, encouraging not just a translation of the work, but a whole new cultural reality.

This study contains a very densely packed body of information and is rich in content. It can be a good guide for a number of issues in the organization of not just translation work in Armenia, but also the work of publishers in general, because it provides almost a clear answer to the questions of what we currently have and what we must do.