

**AN ARMENIAN COPPER BOWL IN CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
(INSCRIPTION J71)**

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On a visit to Cambridge, Massachusetts in November, 1999, I was shown a handsome copper bowl bearing an Armenian inscription which is in the possession of Dr. Paul Hanson, Master of Winthrop House, Harvard University. Dr. Hanson bought the bowl on the antiquities market in Jerusalem in the early 1970s. The bowl is of interest as part of the documentation of Armenian Jerusalem and is, in itself, a well-crafted, handsome, and well-preserved piece of eighteenth-century Armenian copper work. Armenian copper work is little known, and few pieces have been published. Articles showing some copper pieces in the context of publishing their inscriptions are listed at the end of this article. It cannot be determined in our present state of knowledge whether it was made in Jerusalem since during this period, many copper votiva were brought to Jerusalem from Asia Minor, notably from Tokat.

The tinned copper bowl is flat, with a wide, raised lip. It is not remarkable among the vessels of this period as we have observed them.

Two crosses, with equal arms, each 2.5 cm long are separated by a space of 0.8 cm before and after the inscription. The total inscribed and decorated area found along the edge of the dish is 58.8 cm long. Deducting the crosses and their separation leaves a net inscribed length of 52.2 cm. The letters are 1-1.5 cm high. The circumference of the bowl is 116.8 cm and the diameter 37.4 cm; the lip is 8.7 cm wide. The diameter of the flat, circular center is 22.3 cm. It is decorated with three grooves, a deeper one at 1.2 cm from its edge and two less deeply incised ones, 0.3 cm apart, of which the outer is 5.8 cm from the edge of the central, circular part.

The bowl has been assigned a number in the Epigraphica Armeniaca Hierosolymitana series (J71), as it forms part of that corpus. It bears an inscription in Armenian uncial script which reads as follows:

**ՅԻՇԱՏԱԿ Է ՕՎԱԿԻՄ Ա[ՄՏՈՒԱ]ԾԱՅԲՆ ՊԱՏՐԻԱՐԻՆ
Ի Դ[ՈՒ]ՌՆ Ս[ՈՒՐ]Բ յԱԿՈԲԱՅ ՌԻԷՆ**

It is a memorial of Patriarch Ovakim, theologian, for the church of St. James in 1227 (A.E. = 1778).

Patriarch Yovakim K‘anak‘ec‘i held the See of Sts. James between 1775 and 1793. None of the dedicatory inscriptions we have published so far stem from the period of this Patriarch.

The inscription is in Armenian uncial characters. The spelling of the Patriarch’s name, omitting the initial ‘Y’ and with a long \bar{o} , and of *աստուծայբան* with an additional *j*, is consonant with the orthography of the period. Examples may be seen in Stone and Ervine (in press). However, *ՊԱՏՐԻԱՔԻՆ* ‘Patriarch’ without the second *ր* is an error. We may observe the abbreviations of the *nomen sacrum* and of the word *սուրբ* ‘saint,’ which is also ligatured, as are the first two letters of the word *սաստրիա[ր]քին*. The initial and final letters of the word *յԱԿՈԲԱյ* ‘James’ are not majuscule, but minuscule and written on the line as is the same letter in *աստուծայբան* ‘theologian.’ The same phenomenon may be observed on comparatively dated dedicatory inscriptions, such as Jerusalem Inscription no. J201 (JHA 1) (Stone and Ervine, in press). The bowl was dedicated to the Cathedral of St. James in the Armenian quarter of Jerusalem.



Photograph by the author

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