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An Armenian Inscription from Jaffa*

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ABSTRACT: The article publishes a long Armenian inscription of the year 1651, found in a caravanserai close to the Armenian Convent of St. Nicholas, on the waterfront in Jaffa. Following a survey of the archeological context, a transcription and a translation are provided, together with historical notes, placing the inscription in its historical context, identifying the donor, and so forth.

THE STRUCTURE IN WHICH THE INSCRIPTION WAS FOUND

An archaeological rescue excavation (IAA excavation A5888) took place in Jaffa Port during April–June 2010, inside an old building at 18 Netiv Ha-Mazalot Street, designated for conservation and for conversion into a luxury apartment building. Thirteen squares were excavated, their location, size and depth determined by the needs of the project and by the unusual safety requirements for excavating inside an unstable building.1

The excavation uncovered the remains of four archaeological strata (fig. 1). The earliest (stratum IV) consisted of a wall and a pier from the Byzantine period or perhaps earlier. In stratum III we uncovered a tower, a wall, a well and other remains, dating at the latest from the Crusader period, but probably from the early Islamic period. Stratum II contained a residential complex from the seventeenth–eighteenth century; it was here that the Armenian inscription under discussion was found. Stratum I featured a residential complex of the early nineteenth century, which survives, though after many renovations, to this day.

This paper addresses only the findings within strata II and I. The Armenian
The inscription published here was set in a wall within a building structured like a khan (caravanserai), featuring two rows of rooms with a courtyard between them. The eastern row is embedded in the steep slope of the archeological tel, and its foundations are in the bedrock. The western row is founded upon the ancient fortification with its western façade extending into the port.

*Stratum II*

We found no clear evidence of activity in the period between the destruction of Jaffa at the end of the Crusader period and the seventeenth century. The excavation revealed that during this time the stratum III fortifications still rose approximately one metre above the surface. When the site was resettled, extensive operations were undertaken to bring the ground level up to the height of the surviving wall and tower. The fill is composed mainly of seashells and some grey earth (probably taken from the nearby shore). Ottoman ceramics were found in this fill, alongside pottery from earlier periods. The complex that was erected upon this filled and levelled area included two rows of rooms: the eastern row consisted of rooms a1–a5, and the western row contained rooms c1–c5. The construction was massive, and all the rooms had walls 1–1.2 m thick. All the walls

Fig. 1. Excavation plan
that could be examined were built with two rows of dressed stone, with undressed stone filling between them. A large courtyard (over 20 m long; up to 7.5 m wide) separates the two rows of rooms. Rooms a1 and c1 are now part of a separate building beyond the scope of our excavation; therefore, it is unclear whether in the past these rooms were part of the building that we excavated. The southern wall featured an arch, now closed up, and the water channel in the courtyard seems to extend to the south too.

The complex was built during the second half of the seventeenth century and was in use until the end of the eighteenth century. The building may have been destroyed during Napoleon’s campaign or some other military event, as suggested by two 14-inch (35.6-cm) calibre cannonballs for Perrier cannons, two 12-pound cannonballs and one 6-pound cannonball uncovered at the site. These cannonballs — especially the Perriers (fig. 2), which were among the heaviest in the world at the time, requiring a concerted effort to lift — apparently struck the building during a heavy bombardment and inflicted great damage.

The eastern row of rooms. — Of the five rooms in this area, only square A1 inside room a2 was excavated. We discovered a calcareous sandstone (kurkar) floor under a modern concrete floor, with bedrock beneath that. This proves that the room was cut into the bedrock. No pottery was found beneath the sandstone floor; consequently, it was difficult to date the buildings in this area. The rooms in this area — especially room a5 — were constructed in several stages. The latest of these are Ottoman, but the earlier ones cannot be dated. We can only conclude that the row of rooms already existed at the beginning of the Ottoman period.

The western row of rooms. — This row of rooms was built after the area had been levelled with the seashell fill. While, as mentioned previously, the eastern row was built on the bedrock, the courtyard and western row of rooms were built on Ottoman fill, utilizing the earlier fortification as a foundation. W155 serves as the foundation of the eastern wall, while tower L200 serves as the foundation of the northern wall of structure W192, as well as that of the southern wall of the Greek Orthodox monastery (Mar Michael Church), located north of the excavation site. The date of the monastery’s construction is unknown, but it was probably built around the middle of the seventeenth century, since it appears on Gonsales’ map.
from the 1660s (Gonsales 1673: vol. 1.2 between pp. 212–213). In addition, the eastern end of the earliest floor of these rooms (a grey cement floor containing little stones/pebbles) is built upon the wall. In a later, secondary, phase, new floors were installed in these rooms. A grey flagstone floor laid on grey cement was constructed in rooms c2, c3 and c4. The flagstones are rectangular (0.5 m long; 25–30 cm wide). A floor of white paving stones was laid on grey plaster in room c5. Here, too, the tiles are rectangular (up to 0.5 m long). The ornate paving supports the assumption that the entrance to the building was in this area. Doorways were opened up between rooms c1, c2 and c3 at the time the floor was paved. These were sealed during the third and final stage of the habitation of the complex towards the end of the eighteenth century.

The courtyard (L203). — As aforementioned, there was a large courtyard between the two rows of buildings. A water channel ran from north to south through its centre. Two stages of the courtyard’s construction may be discerned. Of the earlier stage, only a segment of water channel L132 has survived, constructed of pebbles and covered with grey plaster. No paving has survived. Of the later stage, channel L130 has survived, as well as the pebble paving L129. This later channel was built of small and medium-sized (up to 40 cm) dressed calcareous sandstone and covered with grey plaster. Two Perrier class cannonballs were discovered in the paving of the second stage (fig. 2). Well L183, from the Crusader period, was still functional on the north side of the complex, and it was there that the water channels originated. The well was renovated and two new levels were added to it, thus making its opening oval.

Stratum I
The upper stratum is late Ottoman. As a result of Napoleon’s campaign and other wars in the early nineteenth century, the stratum II complex, or at the very least, its western side, was probably destroyed, for it was exposed to bombardment from the sea and was not supported by the slope of the tel. Consequently, the western row was completely rebuilt in stratum I. On the southern side, the building plan was unchanged, and the foundations of the new walls were laid upon the walls of stratum II. On the northern side, the stratum I walls deviate significantly from the stratum II walls, probably because of the need to accommodate the Greek Orthodox monastery into the building plan. Nonetheless, the number of rooms remained the same. The narrow passageway between the building and the monastery was sealed off and incorporated into the building. The two rows of rooms were united into a single structure by the arches erected in the courtyard area and by a second storey. The courtyard probably existed for a little while longer, but eventually the

2 Room c1, beyond the excavation area, was not investigated.
passageways between some of the arches were sealed with typical Ottoman stone and brown plaster construction.

During the excavation it became apparent that the building’s original façade had been destroyed and a new one installed in its place. On the basis of a photograph in the Matson collection, depicting the building without the façade (fig. 3), the replacement can be dated to the early twentieth century, since the photograph includes the Ottoman customhouse, which was built in 1894 and destroyed before 1934–1936. The well on the northern side of the building was still extant, although the channels in the courtyard no longer existed. New floors were laid in the rooms and in the courtyard, which was converted to rooms. Some of the earlier floors were built of calcareous sandstone blocks, whereas the later floors are of grey lime, concrete and floor tiles, all probably from the twentieth century. The building also underwent various changes. Walls and ceilings were removed, and the upper storey was removed. The well was probably sealed during the 1950s–1960s. Later floors around the well still contain water channels, and one has a metal grate. An Israeli ten prutot coin was discovered in a fill extracted from the well.

The Find Spot of the Armenian Inscription
The stratum II courtyard became a row of rooms (designated b) in the last phase. The inscription was discovered in the southern wall of room b5, near the now-sealed arch that had originally led to the courtyard.

An intact stairway leading to the second storey partially obscured the inscription. Only after the stairway had been dismantled in the course of the excavation
did the inscription (figs. 4–5; 53×99 cm) become clearly visible. In its current location it cuts into the stones of the arch, and it may have been moved east, probably during the early twentieth-century renovations of the façade. Its location, however, is not incidental. During the first stage of stratum I, the building’s entrance was in room c5; consequently, the inscription would have been visible to any visitor passing by. Since the inscription is older than the stratum I building, we may assume that it was originally set into a similar building in stratum II, which was constructed, according to the archaeological evidence, at the time the inscription was written. The layout of the stratum II building corresponds to the description in the inscription: a khan (caravanserai) with a courtyard (see below). The location of the building in the port area, in which the earliest Christian guesthouses in Jaffa were built, also accords with the details in the inscription.3

Reports of the inscription reached Jerusalem in 1996, and Roberta Ervine, Yoav Loeff, Michael Stone and Abraham Terian went to Jaffa to try to photograph it. Unfortunately, its position, high in the wall of a dimly lit room in Jaffa Port, made it impossible to take adequate photographs.

Recently, Alexander Glick (Israel Antiquities Authority), who is excavating in that area, sent very clear photographs of the inscription to Michael Stone (figs. 4–5). He immediately consulted Abraham Terian, and they divided the work of the inscription’s publication between them. Abraham Terian prepared the decipherment, translation and epigraphic notes, while Michael Stone is responsible for the discussion of the historical context, the individuals involved and all associated matters.

Transcription

In the transcription below ligatures are underlined. Where they are found side by side in a given word, they are separated by a bar. Damaged letters are enclosed within square brackets. In the inscription some letters were reduced in size and introduced between full-sized letters, in an effort to fit the largest possible amount of text into the space available. The relative size of these reduced letters is here replicated insofar as possible. Abbreviation marks over reduced (miniaturized) letters are transcribed with a diacritic like tilde, and all abbreviations are spelled out in full in the normalized transcription — with the omitted letters enclosed within square brackets. Epigraphic observations are delineated separately at the end.

1. ԲՀԿԱՄՈՒՀ ԵՆՈՒՄՈ ՏՀ ՔՐՆՈՔՈՒՄՈՆՈՒՄ ՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ ՈՐԴՈՒՄ ՈՐԴՈՒՄ
2. ԲՀ ԵՐԳԵՐՈՒՄՈՆՈՒՄ ՈՒՂՈՒՄՈՆՈՒՄ ՈՒՂՈՒՄՈՆՈՒՄ ՈՐԴՈՒՄ ՈՐԴՈՒՄ ՈՐԴՈՒՄ
3. ՈՒՌՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ ՈՌՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ
4. ՈՌՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ ՈՌՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ
5. ՊԵԲԲԸՆՈՒՄ ՈՌՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ
6. ՈՌՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ ՈՌՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ
7. ՈՌՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ ՈՌՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ
8. ՈՌՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ ՈՌՈՒՍՈՏԵՂՈՒՄՆԵՐՈՒՄ
9. 1100
Normalized Transcription
1. Բերանություն է տալիս ու գրքի գրանցային ժողովուրդ Արաբ–
2. գեր նշանակության ճանաչական տարրերն ու տեղեկություններ Մերձ–
3. կրկնակից անդամ ամեն մաս իրեն է մնում Արաբ–
4. էջում և գրքի գրանցային ժողովուրդ Արաբ–
5. նման է բերանության ճանաչական տարրերն ու տեղեկություններ Մերձ–
6. սկսվում է անդամ ամեն մաս իրեն է մնում Արաբ–
7. մերձական և անդամ ամեն մաս իրեն է մնում Արաբ–
8. մերձական և անդամ ամեն մաս իրեն է մնում Արաբ–
9. 1100 (= 1651)

Previous Readings of the Inscription
This inscription has been published twice in the past, by T. Sawalaneanc® and by M. Alawnuni (Sawalaneanc® 1931: 710; Alawnuni 1929: 467). Below we list these published sources’ alternate, clearly erroneous readings. These normalized transcriptions differ from ours at several points, due both to the difficulty of decipherment and, in some instances, to inaccurate historical assumptions (discussed below). Deviations from the text of the normalized transcription provided above are indicated below. The departures by Sawalaneanc® are referred to by his initial ‘S’; the departures by Alawnuni are referred to by his initial ‘A’.

Fig. 5. The inscription: detail (IAA)
Translation
1. This inn and the garden near the graveyard are a memorial for
2. the late pilgrim Manuel's son, the pilgrim Sebestros Erewaneancª of Akn, who
3. set this memorial of his recent deeds for Sts. James, Holy Sepulchre, Holy
   Nativity, Holy
4. Bearer of God, Holy Saviour, and Holy Archangel monasteries, on condition
   that my
5. kin deceased of old and of late be remembered daily, at every Holy Eucharist,
   and that from the rental income
6. a certain amount (be allocated) for those officiating at the services of the hours
   and a certain amount (be allocated) for the oil-fund of the monasteries, and the
   rest
7. be spent on provisions for the inn and the garden, and be given for the bread-
   fund of the brotherhood of Sts. James.
8. Whoever waters down this memorial of my will, may God blot him out of the
   Book of Life. 1100 (AE = 1651 CE).
9. 1100 (AE = 1651 CE).

Epigraphic Notes

Line 1. — Unlike much of the rest of the inscription, which is replete with liga-
   tures, there are but three such combinations in the first line: the commonplace
   conjunction ¥Ã (passim) and the two ligatures in the word ¥¾áº­ç½ª, joining
   ¥Ã, a recurring ligature in lines 2 and 4 (cf. the identical ligature ¥¾áº­ in lines
   5, 6 and 7) and ¥Ã, as in lines 4 and 7. The opening word is spelled out, but abbre-
   viated differently in lines 3 and 8. The line ends with a divided word, as do lines 5
   and 6.

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Line 2. — The line begins with the rest of the divided word and contains the personal names that identify the benefactor. In the family name Άγιος Ιωάννης, the letters άγιος are joined as a single glyph, as when they form the conjunction ‘and’ (lines 1, 4–7). The bottom left corner of the first ά and the bottom right corner of the first ύ are broken, hence the loss of the reduced ά that must have followed. The superimposition of one reduced letter over another (as the ά in the family name) is attested in line 5 (άν). Similarly, in the second word, the letters άγιος are joined as a single glyph, as when they are the conjunction ‘and’ (lines 3, 4 and 6, thrice in the latter). The line contains two identical, abbreviated words (Άγιος Ιωάννης), with the abbreviation mark hanging over the first four letters which are reduced in size, the first two of which constitute a ligature (άν as in lines 1 and 4), as do the last two letters of the word (άν). In the personal name, Αγιος Ιωάννης, the letters άγιος are joined somewhat similarly. In the preceding personal name, Άγιος Ιωάννης, note the second ligature of four letters, a *hapax* in this inscription. As for the letters άγιος, which appear twice in this line, they are not joined in ligature, as they are thereafter (see lines 4, 5, 7 and 8).

Line 3. — Similarly, letters that are often joined in ligatures are not always joined; note the ligatured άγιος of the first word and the separate letters άγιος of the third word; the separate άγιος of the second word and the joined άγιος of the last full word; also the abbreviation άγιος (as in ‘St.’ for ‘Saint’) is not ligatured when it first appears, but thereafter it is always ligatured (three in this line). In the middle of the line, the abbreviated άφαντης has the abbreviation mark over the reduced letters άφαντης (cf. the further abbreviation of the same word in line 8 and its unabbreviated form at the beginning of the inscription). Equally noteworthy is the identical recurrence of the abbreviated name άφαντης, here and in line 7, a commonplace in abbreviations of the genitive name James.

Line 4. — The line begins with the standard abbreviation of the word ‘God’ (as in the middle of line 8) in the Marian name Άγιος Ιωάννης (genitive), with the abbreviation mark over the first two letters. The last two letters άγιος are joined in ligature (as in lines 1 and 7). The line contains two more of the ‘short for saint’ abbreviation άγιος and an abbreviation in Άγιος Ιωάννης with the mark over the reduced second letter. Seven more ligatures follow in the balance of the line: άγιος (twice), άγιος, άγιος, άγιος (as in lines 1 and 2), άγιος and άγιος (as in lines 5, 7 and 8; not joined in line 2, where they are found twice). Note the recurrence of the word Άγιος Ιωάννης in line 6, where the arrangement of letters differs slightly.

Line 5. — The omissions of the vowel ά are noteworthy in this line, which abounds in ligatures: άγιος (as in lines 4, 7 and 8), άγιος (as in the next two lines; see also the note to line 1, above), άγιος, άγιος (as in line 8), άγιος (passim) and άγιος. Three abbreviations stand out here: άγιος (mark over the reduced ligature άγιος), άφαντης (mark over the reduced άγιος), and άφαντης (mark over the reduced άφαντης). The line ends with a divided word, as do lines 1 and 6.
Line 6. — The line begins with the continuation of the divided word. The repetitious, identical sets of abbreviations  are conspicuous with their recurring abbreviation mark. The ligatures are  (as in lines 5 and 7; cf. the identical ligature  in lines 1, 2 and 4),  (cf.  in the next line), the thrice-repeated diphthong  and the equally common  Note the recurrence of the word  in line 4, where the arrangement of the letters differs slightly. The line ends with a divided word, as do lines 1 and 5.

Line 7. — The line begins with the continuation of the divided word, with a thinly executed follow by the ligature  (as in lines 4, 5 and 8). There are three borrowed Turkish words in this line (four if the word  is to be so considered), successively: bahçe (cf. the use of the Armenian word  for ‘garden’ in line 1), merhamet and harca, with a ligature in each:  ,  ,  and  , respectively. The pair of ligatures, beneath the abbreviation marks that follow, are standard for St. James ( , genitive, as in line 3). The abbreviated word that follows, for the ‘brotherhood’ ( ), begins with the ligature  (cf. the repeated  in line 2), followed by the ligature  (cf.  in the previous line). Since the word omits only , it does not carry the abbreviation mark (as is usual with most words that omit but one letter).

Line 8. — There are five ligatures in this line, which echoes Exod. 32:33, Ps. 69:28 (68:29 LXX and Arm.) and Rev. 3:5: the comparable ,  and  (see also line 5),  (as in lines 4, 5 and 7), and  (cf.  in lines 1, 4 and 7;  in line 2;  in line 4;  in line 6; and  in line 7). Were it not for the abbreviation mark over  , it could have been read as , a ligature joining five letters, which would have been a hapax in this inscription. Either way, the reading is certain — more so with the abbreviation mark. Of the two other abbreviations, the first omits the three vowels in  (see the same word in line 3, where only two vowels are omitted; cf. the abbreviated verbal form of the word in line 5); the second,  , has a parallel at the beginning of line 4. The date at the end of the line, 1100 (= 1651 CE), is an integral part of the original inscription, reinforced through repetition and centrality below.

Line 9 (bottom frame). — Traces of faint unintelligible graffiti on either side of the more deeply engraved (raised) number 1100.

HISTORICAL AND PROSOPOLOGICAL REMARKS

Content of the Inscription

1. The inscription is a dedication of a khan, i.e., a pilgrim hostel, and a garden (orchard) adjacent to a tomb or a graveyard. It is dedicated by the pilgrim Selbestros Erewaneanc of Akn, son of the late mahtesi (‘pilgrim’) Manuel (lines 1–2).

2. The family line of this Selbestros, as far as we can learn from combining the
evidence of this inscription with that of others found in Jerusalem, is illustrated in the genealogical table below.

3. The khan and the garden are to be a memorial for Selbestros who helped restore four important churches — the Holy Sepulchre, the Church of the Mother of God (i.e., the Virgin) in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Church of the Holy Saviour and the Church of the Holy Archangels. The last two are in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem (lines 3–4).

4. In addition, the income from the pilgrim hostel is to be devoted to the upkeep of ‘the monasteries’, clearly the Armenian monastic institutions in Jerusalem, which may here mean the Monastery of Sts. James and, perhaps, of the monastic clerics resident in the sanctuaries enumerated in the preceding paragraph (line 4). In exchange, Selbestros also asks that his deceased family members be mentioned in the Mass (lines 4–5).

5. This support is specified in the following lines: of the rental income (a) some is designated for the order of the celebrants of the Mass; (b) some for the oil fund of the monasteries (churches); and (c) the rest for provisions of the inn and garden; (d) and for the bread-fund of the brotherhood of Sts. James (lines 5–7). Specifics were probably recorded in a documentary contract. A closing supplication and a date follow this.

6. The inscription bears the date 1100 in Western numerals at the end, and this date is repeated on the frame that surrounds it.

Date

The date is by the Great Armenian Era, which is the usual, but not the only, reckoning in Armenian usage. This started in 551 CE according to Gregorian reckoning. The date is written in Western numerals, which is unusual in Armenian inscriptions where the date is usually written by the Great Armenian Era in Armenian numerals. Nonetheless, it is impossible to think that this inscription was written in 1100 CE, for at that time, the Western numerals were not used. Therefore, the date of this inscription is 1100 of the Armenian Era + 551 = 1651 CE.

The Names

1. Akn is Ottoman Eghin or Eğin, and modern Kemaliya.4

2. Erewan, which is the source of Selbestros’ family name, Erewaneancª, is an uncommon personal name. Açaîryan mentions only three persons of this name, one of 1265 CE, a second of 1382 CE and a third of 1609 CE (Açaîryan 1972: 2.142. Aâwnuni’s prosopography has no entry for anybody of this name (Aâwnuni 1929), but as shown in the next section, inscriptions from Jerusalem imply that such a person existed.

4 See Hewsen 2001: map 177, coordinates E1. It is in Western Armenia and was in the vilayet (province) of Mamuretülaziz.
3. Similarly, Selbestros (Graecized form of Sylvester) is not common in Armenian. Aćaryan mentions only four persons of this name: one of 1271 CE, a second of 1307 CE, a third of 1425 CE, and a fourth who is undated — but late (Aćaryan 1972: 4.476–477).

The Two Selbestroses

The Selbestros of the Jaffa inscription lived in the seventeenth century. There was another well-known individual of the same name who lived in the eighteenth century. We dub the Selbestros of the Jaffa inscription Selbestros I and the eighteenth-century Selbestros (nicknamed Selbos) Selbestros II. The argument for differentiating the two individuals is that Selbestros I made his donation to Jaffa in 1651, while the latest published inscription of Selbestros II (see item 1 below) mentions him making a donation in Jerusalem in 1746. Both men bear the same family name, Erewaneancª, and both are from Akn. They were clearly related.

The inscriptions of Selbestros II are the following:

1. EAH Inscription 22 (Stone 1981: 78–79 and fig. 21) of 1730 is from the time of Patriarch Grigor Šltªayakir (Gregory the Chainbearer, in office 1715–1749). It is the dedication of the altar marble in the Cathedral of Sts. James. It mentions ‘saraf mahtesi Selbestros of Akn Erewaneancª’. The title saraf (‘banker’) indicates a member of the Armenian oligarchy that evolved under Ottoman rule in the eighteenth century.5 Indeed, Sanjian, in his study of the Armenians under Ottoman rule, discusses Selbestros II and adds certain details about him and his role: he was bashbazirgan or chief procurer of the Grand Vizier (Sanjian 1965: 144).6

2. EAH Inscription 28 of 1742 on the ironwork of the Cathedral of Sts. James simply records its donation by the mahtesi Selbestros. This is most likely the same man, i.e., Selbestros II, for both the title and the dates coincide and he had a considerable history as a donor to the Armenian institutions in Jerusalem (Stone 1984: 565–566).

3. In 1743 Selbestros II set up a stone cross (xaēªkªar) to celebrate his role in the construction of the wall of the Armenian Convent of Sts. James in Jerusalem. This is published as EAH Inscription 76 (Stone 2005: 345–346 and fig. 10). He is titled there ‘Selbestros mahtesi of Akn’.

4. EAH Inscription 12 of 1746 (Stone 1980: 60 and fig. 4). It is on the marble slabs below the altar of St. Ejmiacin Chapel. The chapel itself was created in 1666. The slabs, EAH 12 records, were donated by Selbestros (II) mahtesi of Akn of the Erewaneancª family in 1746.

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5 See Sanjian 1965: 36–37, who describes the development of the aristocratic amira class, which included the sarafs.

6 Sanjian, dependent on Sawalaniane, attributes the Jaffa inscription to this Selbestros, which is erroneous, as is demonstrated below.
Aławnuni 1929 dedicates a long entry to Selpestros II, giving numerous biographical details, many of which are connected with EAH Inscriptions 28 and 76 (items 2 and 3 above). Here, we shall not repeat this information, except to observe that Aławnuni records that Selpestros II spent two years in Jerusalem in 1727–1729 as a pilgrim visitor. This is the earliest mention of him, before any of the published inscriptions, and we do not know whether he returned to Jerusalem at a later time or not. Regardless, he donated the items mentioned in the inscriptions above. In addition, we note that he seems to have had a connection with Patriarch Gregory the Chainbearer, since all his donations were made in Gregory’s time. He died, Aławnuni says, on February 5, 1754.7 Selpestros I and II’s family line, as far as we can tell by combining the various sources, is the following:

| Manuel mahtesi (d. by 1651) |
| Selpestros I mahtesi Erewaneanc® of Akn |
| Minas |
| Selpestros II saraf mahtesi Erewaneanc® of Akn — P®arvar® |
| (b. before 1722–d. 1754) |
| Xaë¢atur — Gëorg — Merkerios — Nurin (daughter) |

This interesting individual is doubtless worthy of a separate study. However, he is discussed here only because of the mention of his namesake, the seventeenth-century Selpestros I, in the Jaffa inscription. These two individuals, who bear the same name, clearly belong to the same Erewaneanc® family.

Clearly, then, the study of the dates shows that Selpestros I of Akn, mentioned in the Jaffa inscription in 1651, is not the Selpestros II of Akn mentioned in EAH Inscription 11, etc., although Selpestros II was likely a descendant of Selpestros I or, at the very least, a member of the same family. The Erevaneanc® family had a history of benefactions both in Jerusalem and Jaffa.

This apparently obvious conclusion needs to be reasserted because not only Sanjian (see n. 6), but also two significant historians of the Armenians in the Holy

7 There are also many details about the eighteenth-century Selpestros II in Ormanian 1913–27: especially vol. 2, §§1923, 1927, 1967, and others (s.v. ‘Selpestros 3’ in Tërvišean 2001: 226). He was a prominent, active and philanthropic member of the Armenian amira class of Constantinople. For example, he used his position to assist the community there after the fire of 1731, see Ormanian 1913–27: §1967. A detailed discussion of Selpestros is also to be found in Sawalaneanc® 1931: 708–710.

8 Alias ‘Nazlè’; see n. 10.
Land writing in Armenian, imply that they are one and the same, consequently redating the Jaffa inscription to the mid-eighteenth century. Alawnuni, on the one hand, cites memorial inscriptions and colophons and says that Selbestros II’s father was Minas and his wife was Parvar and the names of his children, all mahtesis (pilgrims), were Xačatur, Gəorg and Merkerios, and his daughter Nurin. Yet, as we have observed above (‘Previous Readings of the Inscription’), he identifies the two. Sawalaneanc cited the Jaffa inscription as dated to 1651, but notes: ‘This date is an error’ (Sawalaneanc 1931: 710, note at foot of the page). He also equates Selbestros I and Selbestros II and dates this individual to the eighteenth century.

Finally, the existence of Armenian holdings in Jaffa in 1651 at the time when Selbestros I made his donation is witnessed in the History of Jerusalem by Yovhannyaš vardapet of Jerusalem. Yovhannyaš, who was often called Hannē vardapet, worked together with Patriarch Gregory the Chainbearer in the eighteenth century to restore the institutions of the See of Jerusalem. Yovhannyaš mentions the acquisition of rooms, shops, warehouses and a bakery in Jaffa. He goes on to mention the redemption of several properties in Jaffa, which had been seized by creditors during the last decades of the seventeenth century, when the See of Jerusalem was heavily in debt (Sawalaneanc 1931: 694), and the restoration and expansion of the local monastery of St. Nikolayos (Nicholas) after the liquidation of the debts (Sawalaneanc 1931: 694).

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9 Alawnuni 1929: 467 dates the inscription to 1750, following his transcription, from which he omits the date and gives (1750) in parenthesis. His decipherment has been collated above.
10 Alawnuni 1929: 466 quotes another unspecified dedication, which gives his wife’s name as Nazelē.
11 He cites the Preface of a Breviary (duuluqhp) printed in Constantinople in 1754, endowed by Selbestros. This is no. 551 in Osyan, Korkoyan and Savalyan 1988: 430. The text of the colophon is given there, with his father’s and wife’s names explicit.
12 To the above considerations, mention might be made of the absence of Holy Çjmacin Chapel from the list of holy places, which according to the Jaffa inscription were endowed by Selbestros I. This sanctuary’s construction is posterior to the Jaffa inscription. The chapel, adjoining Sts. James Cathedral, was built by Patriarch Eliazar (Eleazar) Ayntapç in office (1666–1681). He was later Catholicos in Çjmacin (d. 1691). See Covakan (Bogharian) 1985: 22–23.
13 Yovhannyaš (Hannē) Vardapet Erusaŭmaç 1807: 129. The book, completed in 1727, was first published in 1734, a year after the author’s death.
14 Sawalaneanc 1931: 696, utilising archival documents, remarks that eight shops were demanded as collateral for a small loan of 11,000 dahekan (‘piastres’), cited by Ervine 1995: 110, n. 27.
15 Sawalaneanc elaborates by enumerating five rooms, five shops, three warehouses, a bakery and a coffee house. Both this and the preceding are cited by Ervine 1995: 109–110 and nn. 24, 27.
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