

SHARAGANS IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH (HYMNS)

Definition · The word "sharagan" is the plural form of "shar"(hymn). Like "zor-agan" which means soldiers.

There is another expression - "sher hanel" which means to compose a song. The word sher or shar is derived from the Persian language, but over the centuries this word became Armenianized, especially with the word "sharagan" which is used in the church.

There is another definition--"sharagan" means shar-er - songs or hymns. shar-el means to put in order or to string something, agan, ag - precious jems = to string precious jems.

The sharagans were written by different Church personnel in different centuries. Definitely, it means to us, "precious jems", which with Divine inspiration were written by our Patriarchs, and we, the children of our forefathers, are the inheritors of them.

Uniformity In the middle of the Seventh Century, Nerses the Builder Catholicos, had gone to Pakavan, an Armenian province, in 645 A.D., where a huge crowd had gathered together to celebrate the feast of Transfiguration of Our Lord. The number of hymns were so numerous that the cantor from one province did not know the melodies sung in another province. Antiphonal singing on the feast day was not possible because there was no general knowledge of the sharagans. In order to correct this situation, Catholicos Nerses submitted to a special Council the task of selecting the important and useful ones from the multitude of hymns, and ordered uniformity in the hymns sung in the Church. To this end, singers and teachers were appointed to tour the Country and to generalize this Canon.

The historian, Vartan, adds that the selection of those sharagans was done by Jone Parsegh (Basil), the Abbot of the Seminary in Ani (Armenia). Those sharagans are called "Jonendeer" (selected by John).

Composers Starting from the Fifth Century to the Eleventh Century, twenty-three of our famous forefathers, with Divine inspiration, wrote God's words, which were called sharagans. I would like to mention a few names which you know or have heard:

1. Saints Sahag and Mesrob - Fifth Century
2. Moses Khorenatzi, pupil of Sts. Sahag-Mesrob - 5th C.
3. Hovhannes Mançagounie - Fifth Century
4. Gomidas I Aghtzetzi Catholicos - Seventh Century
5. Anania Shiragatzi - Seventh Century
6. *Isaac III Tzoraporetzi - End of 7th Century and the beginning of the 8th Century

* - A very interesting episode happened to Isaac Catholicos. It's worthwhile to mention it here.

Isaac the Pontiff, who was still a prisoner in Damascus, hearing of the calamities that awaited his countrymen, went to Mohmad, entreating his permission to accompany him in his expedition. His request was complied with, and he set out to join the Army, but

on reaching Chorran he was suddenly taken ill and died. Before he expired, however, he wrote with his own hand, a supplicatory letter to the Saracen general, praying that he spare the Armenians. He directed his Deacon, that when he heard his last sigh he should put this letter in his right hand. When Mohmad heard of the Catholicos's death, he ordered that his remains should not be interred until he had seen them, "for" he said, "If Isaac were alive he would come to me; and since he is dead, I will go to him." He then went to the place where the dead Catholicos lay, and on his arrival he approached the body and saluted it with words and gestures as if it were alive. The body of the Pontiff then, it is said, returned the salutation, and stretching forth its right hand, offered the letter which it held. Mohmad, exceedingly terrified, took the letter, and after reading its contents, exclaimed: "Yes! You are a man of God! - - His desires shall be fulfilled."

He then wrote a letter of peace and reconciliation to the Armenian Chiefs, and caused the remains of the Pontiff to be taken to that Country by a body of Saracen troops.

7. Hovhannes of Otzoon - Eighth Century
8. Nerses Graceful (Shenorhali) - 12th Century
9. Bishop Nerses Lampronatzi - 12th Century, etc.

Contents

I would like to say that the Book of Sharagans is a Religious Encyclopedia for the Armenian nation.

In general, the Sharagan Book has eight major parts:

1. Biblical - Old and New Testament
2. Dominical - The Resurrection of Christ and Armenian theological terms
3. Armenian History
4. St. Virgin Mary - Mother-of-God
5. Penitential Sharagans and Hymns for departed person's soul - Nunchetzelotz
6. Christian Kings, soldiers, Patriarchs and Armenian Patriarchs, prophets, Apostles, martyrs, hermits, virgins, Armenian doctors and translators, etc.
7. Armenian Church
8. Holy Cross

1. Biblical - Old Testament

Describe the exodus of Israel from Egypt and how the sea was torn in two and how safely Israel passed through, and the soldiers drowned in the sea with their horses.

New Testament

Birth of Christ, Baptism, presentation of the Lord, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, betrayal, passion, crucifixion, trihemeral burial, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost (9 days), Transfiguration, etc.

2. Dominical
All Sundays in Dominical Day--which describes the Glory of the Resurrected Christ. the theological beliefs of the Armenian Church, about God, Son and Holy Spirit, even the St. Virgin Mary.
3. Armenian Church History
About the newly built Cathedral of Ani (starts "Zores usd Badgerin) Vartanantz, Ghevontiantz, St.Gregory put into the Pit, Taken out of the Pit, Discovery of the Relics, great sons, etc.
4. Asdvadzadzin - St.Virgin Mary
Annunciation (April 7), Assumption (Closest Sunday to August 15**) Conception--parents, Anna and Hovagin (Dec. 9), Nativity of Mary (Sept. 8), Presentation to the Temple (Nov. 21) Discovery of Jewelry Box (Introduced in 1774 - The fifth Sunday after Pentecost), Discovery of Belt (Third Sunday after Assumption--1774, Simeon Catholicos)

** - Grapes are blessed on this day because the Holy Virgin has been likened to a vine and its fruit. Jesus said about Himself, "This wine is my blood."
5. Penitential
Starts from Baregantán (good-living day) for 40 days till the resurrection of Lazarus, Wednesday and Friday - week days. Also for the salvation of departed souls.
6. Christian Kings, Soldiers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Hermits, Virgins, Doctors & Translators, etc.
Each have special Sharagans which are sung on their proper days during the year.
7. Armenian Church
Sunday of the Catholic Church of Holy Etchmiadzin, Feast of Shoghagat.
8. Holy Cross
Apparition of the Holy Cross (this explains how the Cross appeared in the sky in Jerusalem), Exaltation of the Holy Cross (this explains how Christ's Cross was saved from exile), Holy Cross of Varag (how Totig and Hovel, two Hermits, found the piece of the cross), Invention of the Holy Cross (how the Empress Helena came to Jerusalem and found the Cross of Christ).

Rest Hour Service, and other Sharagans.

Let us take the order of Sharagans which are chanted during Jhamabashdootyun. They are six on Sunday including Evening Service, and seven during the regular day Service. They are:

1. "Sharagan of Praise"--start with Orhnestzook uz Der zi Parok eh Paravoryal (Psalm 148). This hymn is sung at Nocturn Service.

2. "God of our Fathers" -- Hartz (The passage called "the blessing of the three children"). This is the first sharagan of Morning Service - Daniel 3:26.
3. "Magnificent" - Medzatzoustek (This is from St. Luke 1:46) In this order the Virgin Mary is praised.
4. "Miserere" - Voghormia - 51st Psalm The main theme is always supplication and mercy.
5. "The Lord from on High" - Der Hergnitz (Psalm 148) This is followed by the Angelic Hymn
6. "The Children's Sharagan" - Orhnetzek Mangoonk (Psalm 113) This is only sung on Saint's days or on a fast day during the morning service; or Day of Saints - "I loved to have the Lord Hear the Voice of my Supplications" (Psalm 116)

Number 6th

Sharagans are never sung on a dominical day.

7. "I Have Raised" Sharagan - Hampartzi (Psalm 120/1) This is sung during evening service, Dominical fast and saints' days with different tones and modes.

As I mentioned, all sharagans are preceded by an anthem which represents the central theme of the psalm or a passage of the Bible is recited before the Sharagan is chanted.

Modes - I would like to clarify two words here. They are modes and Tone in chanting of sharagans.

The MODE regulates the use of certain variables in the course of the service.

The TONE refers to various and different tunes in which sharagans or other items in the service are sung.

Each day in the Armenian Calendar year is designated by a mode and under that mode certain items rather than others are said. These items, changeable in accordance with the modes, are called "variables", just as other items, changeable in accordance with the different feasts are also called "variables."

There are 8 Modes:

U2	U4	U2	U4
		First Mode - 1st Variable Mode	
		R2	R4
R2	R4	Second Mode - 2nd Variable Mode	
		Q2	Q4
Q2	Q4	Third Mode - 3rd Variable Mode	
		T2	T4
T2	T4	Fourth Mode - 4th Variable Mode	

Thus, for example, if a day is designated by, say, the first mode a certain psalm or a certain prayer or bible reading belonging to the first mode is said. If the day is designated by the second mode, then another psalm. Prayer, Bible reading falling under the second mode is said instead.

The system of modes starts with the first day of Lent which is designated by the eighth mode and the first Monday of Lent is always designated by the first mode.

Modes - Bible Reading

for Matthew

for Mark

for Luke

for John

These modes are usable for Psalms, Litany, etc.

Tones - Tones represent tunes with a given scale. Each tone has its own key. There are eight tones. Some of these tones also have their variants.

The signs or marks for writing down these tones were well-known until the 14th Century. Although these signs are still printed in Order Chant Books, we do not know their meaning, and we have not found the way of reading them. So far no precise rendering is possible at the present time, unless they have been written down in later times with European notations.

Armenian notes arranged about 80 or 90 years ago in Istanbul by Baba Hampartzoom as follows:

		F
		B
		D
(European Notes)		C
		A
		B
		G
		F
		B

DI	E	F	G	A	B	C	DI	E	F	G	A	B	C
eh	veh	neh	kho	neh	ba	po							

Famous Composers and Cantors

St. Sahag Catholicos, Nerses Great Barteved, Hovhan Imasdaser,
Gomidas Catholicos, Nerses Shenorhali, etc.

Dagh No. 1 (Carol) - "How marvellous is the great mystery which has
been revealed; God the Creator comes to the
River Jordan.
-- O, River, fear not, I am thy Creator; I am
come to Baptism in order to wash away the sins
of men.
-- Today the voice of the well-pleased Father
resounds from heaven in testimony of the
beloved Son: Behold, it moves, the river moves,
Jordan moves: Thus sang in moving tones, John,
the great forerunner."

Sharagan No. 2 - Second Mode

" Christ is risen from the dead!

Early in the morning (at dawn) the ladies
roused to go to the cemetery, saying --
Christ is risen from the dead!"

Sharagan No. 3 - Fourth Tone

" Lo, the power of Thy holy Cross, O Christ,
Which thou hast set up, for the Salvation
of the World; May this holy sign (Criss)
preserve us from all temptation."

Sharagan 4 - First Mode

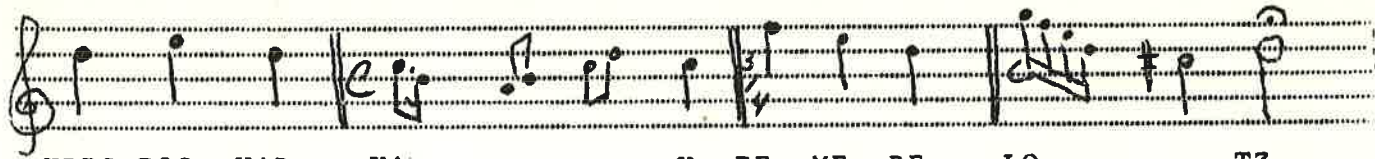
" Those who adorned by Divine guidance, the
meaning of the increated God, establishing
on this earth vivid letters to shepherd
new flocks of Israel.

Let us praise the Lord with a song of
sweetest sound."

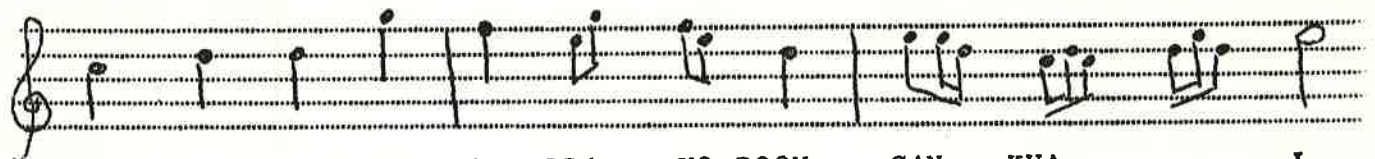
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KRISDOS HARIAV BE MERBLOTZ

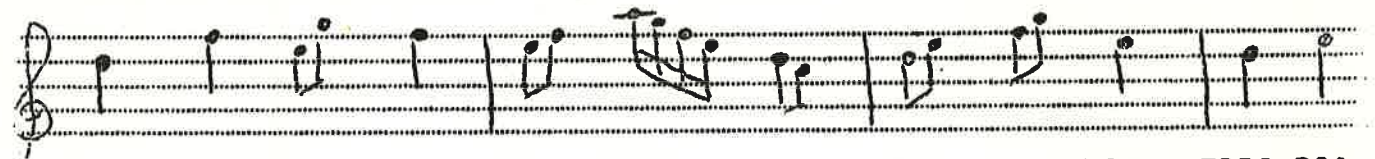
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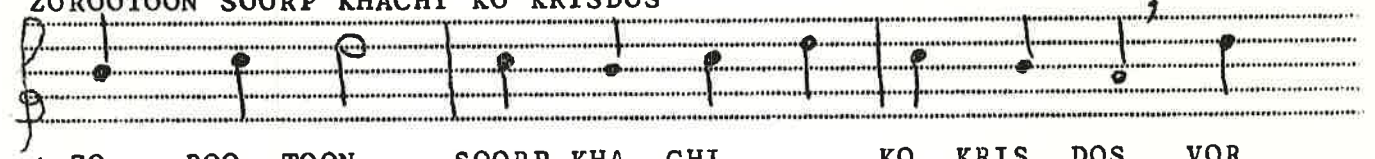


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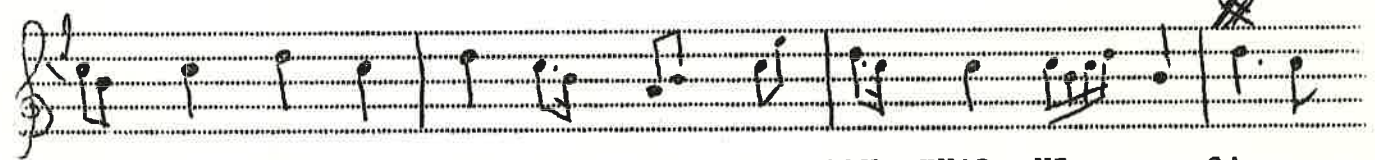
SHARAGAN NO. 3 (Fourth Tone) 29

ZOROOTOON SOORP KHACHI KO KRISDOS

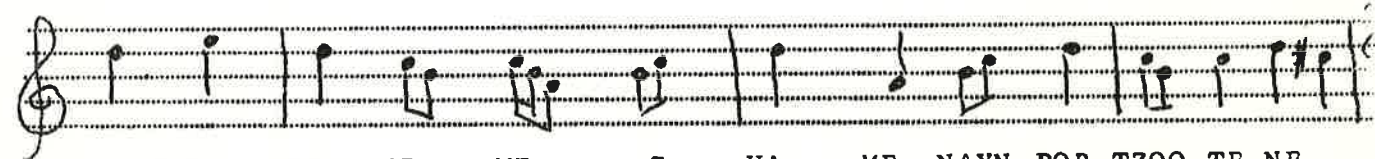
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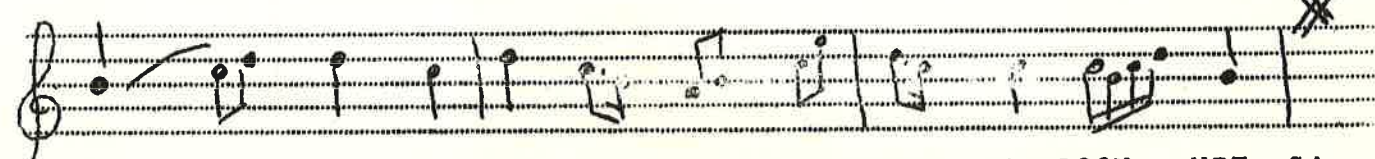
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BA HES TZE UZ ME Z HA ME NAYN POR TZOO TE NE



2/KAN ZI BE SMA\ PARTZRA TZA R AS DE VA DZ YEV BE SMA



HE GHER UZ BAD VA GA N SOORP ZA ROON NET SA..

SHARAGAN 4 (FIRST MODE) 4/4

VORK ZARTARETZIN

ՎՐԱԿԱՆ ՔԱՐԳՍԱՆՉԱՅ
ՈՐԷ ՉԱՐԴԱՐԵՑԻՆ

VORK ZAR TA RE TZIN DE NO RI NA PA R ZI

MASDS A NE GHIN HAS DA DE LOV

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