

*Abstract:* The era in which I conduct research is the late antique and medieval period (3rd-15th centuries CE), in the Near East and Mediterranean region. I work with sources in Latin, Greek, Arabic, Armenian, Syriac, and Hebrew. My dissertation is guided by the following research questions: given the fact that ascetic practices and spiritual disciplines were an integral part of the educational system in medieval religious institutions (which were often the centers of intellectual production), and training of the mind was inconceivable without being accompanied by training of the body, how can we explain the central place given to ascetic and spiritual practices in medieval theories of knowledge and systems of education? What was the view of the relationship between the life of the body and its regulation and the life of the mind and its education? What were spiritual practices seen to contribute to intellectual endeavors, and what were intellectual pursuits seen to contribute to the spiritual life? My dissertation will be the first major study of its kind to bridge the fields of spirituality, literature and intellectual history by addressing these research questions, in a multidisciplinary approach that will reveal the complexity and interrelation of different ethnolinguistic and religious communities in the medieval world.

*Statement:* I am a third-year Ph.D. student in the Near Eastern Languages & Cultures (NELC) department at UCLA within the Armenian Studies specialization, who conducts research on literature, spirituality, and intellectual history in the late antique and medieval Near East and Mediterranean region. My previous two M.A. degrees in Historical Theology and Early Christian Studies, as well as my B.A. degree in Linguistics, allows me an interdisciplinary approach to my research, with access to primary sources in a number of the relevant languages of the region. My career goal of becoming a research professor at a university, as well as my personal and professional goal of writing and publishing in Western Armenian (an endangered language according to a 2010 UNESCO report), are both well-served by my location within the NELC department at UCLA, as it is one of the premier

departments in the nation, and also due to the fact that Los Angeles is also home to the largest community of Western Armenian speakers in the western hemisphere.

My graduate study has offered me significant research training and opportunities, professional development, and teaching experience. I have both been a teaching assistant to a faculty member for undergraduate courses, and have also taught my own course (Latin) to both undergraduate and graduate students at the University level. More teaching experience will come at UCLA in subsequent years of my degree. I have extensive experience presenting my research at the leading academic conferences in my field, and have been an invited speaker at several academic conferences and workshops, at times being the only graduate student presenter among a group of tenured professors. My wide research experience has resulted in a number of publications already, both as articles in peer-reviewed journals and books, including published volumes of conference proceedings. I have also published several pieces of creative and intellectual writing in Western Armenian, both prose and poetry. As an endangered language, Western Armenian is in need of a critical mass of young, creative and intellectual writers to help advance the language and bring it to a state of health in its diasporan setting. I have actively contributed towards this goal, adding to a growing body of contemporary Armenian literature.

My academic research has focused on literature, intellectual history, and spiritual practices within the medieval world, which my dissertation will further explore. In my research on this time period, I have been particularly struck by the fact that ascetic practices and spiritual disciplines were an integral part of the educational system in medieval institutions of learning, and that training of the mind was inconceivable without being accompanied by training of the body. Such an educational system and theory of knowledge is quite different from that of the contemporary western world, which tends to bifurcate spiritual and intellectual life into two distinct and often unrelated pursuits. My dissertation will seek to explain the

central place given to ascetic and spiritual practices in medieval theories of knowledge and systems of education, by interrogating medieval views on the relationship between the life of the body and its regulation and the life of the mind and its education. My dissertation seeks to uncover what spiritual practices were seen to contribute to intellectual endeavors, and conversely what intellectual pursuits were seen to contribute to the spiritual life.

To achieve this goal, my dissertation will focus upon the representative, significant, yet understudied corpus of works of the twelfth-century Armenian figure Nersēs Lambronats'i, who wrote in Armenian but had knowledge of Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Arabic as well. Among other things, he is significant for having interacted with intellectuals from these various traditions, located as he was within the dynamic and complex world of medieval Cilicia (located near the northeast coast of the Mediterranean Sea) during the Crusader period, which brought western Europe and the Near East into contact with one another, with Armenians often serving as intermediary or in-between figures in these cross-cultural exchanges. My dissertation will examine his theory of knowledge and spirituality as well as what his works and those of his contemporaries witness to medieval systems and theories of education. I will conduct comparative study on contemporary figures and sources in Latin, Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Persian, and Hebrew. My integrated approach to this topic in this region and time period will reveal a complex and interrelated world of ethnolinguistic and religious communities, that have often been studied in isolation from one another, due more in part to the difficulty of mastering the relevant languages needed to study them together, rather than any genuine isolation of these communities from one another. My dissertation then in addition to contributing to the intellectual and spiritual history of the medieval world, will contribute to our understanding of a number of different peoples' shared history of this multifaceted region.