

THE BEGINNING OF ARMENIAN MONASTICISM
AND THE PRIMARY SOURCES OF THE GOLDEN AGE

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This presentation takes issue with those who place the rise of cenobitic or communal monasticism in Armenia at a time after the fifth century, or who dwell on but a certain meaning of the word VANK' in this period (following Ep'rikian: Akinian and Garsoĭan). After tracing the scholarly debate to its beginning and inviting attention to all the primary sources from the second half of the fifth-century, beginning with certain canons of Shahapivan, the overview clearly shows a transition from diverse forms of asceticism to cenobitic monasticism in Armenia during the period in question. Among other sources considered are the canons attributed to Sahak Part'ew (with a short discussion on their origin and date), little-known homilies by Mandakuni, the last discourse in the *Yachakhapatum*, and the letter of Ghazar P'arpets'i. Corroborating evidence is drawn from the Armenian factor in fifth-century monasticism in the Holy Land and a re-reading of Anastas Vardapet's *Vasn vanorēits'*.