

THE ARMENIAN SOUNDS SYSTEM & VOCALIC ALTERNATION

(notes on Thomson, R. W. (1989), "An Introduction to Classical Armenian")

- (p.14) The preposition ի + acc./abl/.loc. will show as յ when followed by a word beginning with a vowel: ի քաղաքն, (to the city) but յաստեղացն (from the stars); note, however, that both will happily occur together, as well: ի յԱստուծոյ (from God). Furthermore, ի often combines with ւն without any significant change in meaning: ւն ի քաղաքն = ի քաղաքն
- (p.15) Word-finally and before vowel, իւ is indeed pronounced as suggested by Thomson, i.e. /iv/; in other cases, e.g. before consonant, the more common pronunciation is /yu/, for example in իմաստութիւն (wisdom) /imastut^hyun/ - this is reflected in Modern Eastern Armenian spelling, too: իմաստություն.
- (p.15) The triphthong իայ should of course be pronounced /iay/.
- (p.16) Vocalic alternation
- vocalic alternation is the result of a shift in the stress pattern; no change happens if this pattern does not change
 - with few exceptions (cf. p.15), Armenian has a constant stress on the final full syllable of a word
 - ի > Ø / ը (ը is used to preserve polysyllabic structure) if it occurs
 - word-internally before consonant
 - word-initially before more than one consonant (not consistent for ն)
 - word-finally after more than one consonant (not for ն)
 - alternation is avoided to preserve full syllables, i.e. full vowel + consonant, or weak vowel (ը) + more than once consonant
 - thus, հիւսիս, հիւսիսոյ, and not *հիւսոյ
 - alternation is further avoided when the accent shifts to a formerly weak syllable
 - thus, ինքն, ինքեան, and հիմն, հիման
 - finally, alternation as such only operates in inflectional, not in derivational formations
 - է > ի/է, ոյ > ն and եւ > է, ել > իլ are as explained by Thomson
 - since you need not compose in Grabar, it is sufficient to be aware of these alternations, and have in mind the common rules listed above;
- (p.18) Rhotic alternation
- the common rule is that ր changes to ռ before ւ; there are, however, etymological and analogical ռ as well
 - where the form in ռ was particularly prominent, ռ may have been analogically adopted in places where ր is expected.