РОЗДІЛ 8
ПОРІВНЯЛЬНО-ІСТОРИЧНЕ І ТИПОЛОГІЧНЕ МОВОЗНАВСТВО

EPIGRAPHIC TERMINOLOGY ACROSS CULTURES:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH, UKRAINIAN,
AND ARMENIAN PERSPECTIVES

ЕПІГРАФІЧНА ТЕРМІНОЛОГІЯ КРІЗЬ РІЗНІ КУЛЬТУРИ:
ПОРІВНЯЛЬНЕ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКИХ, УКРАЇНСЬКИХ
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The digital era has revolutionized cultural heritage preservation and research, offering unprecedented opportunities and challenges. Digital technologies have transformed how we access, analyze, and represent cultural resources, particularly inscriptions rich in historical and cultural significance. This transformation not only protects these artefacts from physical degradation but also makes them globally accessible, fostering a broader appreciation of our shared heritage.

Digitization is the first critical step in preserving inscriptions, converting physical artefacts into digital data for easier sharing, analysis, and long–term preservation. Ensuring that these digital collections adhere to Linked Open Data (LOD) principles is essential for integrating data across various platforms and enhancing global academic collaboration. The Simple Knowledge Organization System (SKOS) framework plays a pivotal role in organizing this knowledge in a machine-readable and human-understandable format.

Our research focuses on compiling a structured vocabulary of terms related to Ukrainian and Armenian epigraphic inscriptions, forming the basis for a comprehensive SKOS framework. Precision and uniformity in terminology are vital in academic disciplines, particularly in epigraphy, where the study of ancient inscriptions intersects with history, archaeology, and philology. Clear and consistent terminology ensures effective scholarly communication and accurate knowledge transmission across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Terminological discrepancies can lead to misunderstandings and hinder collaborative research. This challenge is amplified by the linguistic diversity in global academia, where English often serves as the lingua franca. Translating and harmonizing specialized terms across languages is complex, especially for terms with nuanced meanings or historical evolution. The field of epigraphy exemplifies these challenges, requiring a specialized vocabulary that accurately reflects the artefacts' characteristics and broader contexts. Standardizing this terminology while respecting linguistic diversity is crucial for clarity and consistency in academic discourse, ultimately facilitating a more integrated understanding of our cultural heritage.

Key words: epigraphy, inscriptions, terminology, grafiti, translation of terms.

Цифрова ера докорінно змінила збереження та дослідження культурної спадщини, відкриваючи безпрецедентні можливості та виклики. Цифрові технології трансформували спосіб доступу, аналізу та представлення культурних ресурсів, зокрема написів, які мають надзвичайну історичну та культурну цінність. Ця трансформація не лише захищає ці артефакти від фізичного зношення, але й робить їх доступними для всього світу, сприяючи ширшому розумінню та оцінці нашої спільної спадщини.

Оцифровування є першим важливим кроком у збереженні написів, перетворюючи фізичні артефакти на цифрові дані для легшого обміну, аналізу та довгострокового збереження. Забезпечення того, щоб ці цифрові колекції дотримувалися принципів Linked Open Data (LOD), є важливим для інтеграції даних на різних платформах, підвищуючи глобальну академічну співпрацю. Система Simple Knowledge Organization System (SKOS) відіграє важливу роль в організації цих знань у машиночитуваному та зрозумілому для людини форматі.

Наше дослідження зосереджується на складанні структурованого словника термінів, пов'язаних з українськими та вірменськими епіграфічними написами, що служить основою для розробки всеосяжної SKOS-структури. Точність та одноманітність термінології є життєво важливими у наукових дисциплінах, особливо в епіграфіці, де вивчення стародавніх написів перетинається з історією, археологією та філологією. Чітка та послідовна термінологія забезпечує ефективне наукове спілкування та точну передачу знань через мовні та культурні межі.

Термінологічні розбіжності можуть призводити до непорозумінь та перешкоджати спільним дослідницьким зусиллям. Цей виклик посилюється мовною різноманітністю в глобальній академічній спільноті, де англійська часто

служить лінгва-франка. Переклад та гармонізація спеціалізованих термінів між мовами є складним процесом, особливо для термінів з нюансованими значеннями або історичною еволюцією. Сфера епіграфіки є яскравим прикладом цих викликів, вимагаючи спеціалізованого словника, який точно відображає характеристики артефактів та ширші контексти. Стандартизація цієї термінології, з повагою до мовного різноманіття, є важливою для ясності та послідовності в наукових дискусіях, що зрештою сприяє більш інтегрованому розумінню нашої культурної спадщини.

Ключові слова: епіграфіка, написи, термінологія, графіті, переклад термінів.

1. Introduction. The digital era has not only brought about unprecedented opportunities and challenges but has also sparked a transformative revolution in preserving and researching cultural heritage. The advances in digital technologies have completely reshaped how we access, analyze, and represent diverse cultural resources, including inscriptions that hold invaluable historical and cultural information. This transformative process goes beyond traditional conservation methods, safeguarding invaluable resources against time and degradation while making them accessible globally. This accessibility fosters a broader understanding and appreciation of our shared heritage.

The initial and crucial step in the preservation of these invaluable artefacts from both natural and human-made disasters is digitization. This process not only shields these artefacts from physical degradation but also opens them up to researchers worldwide. By transforming physical inscriptions into digital data, we create a resource that can be easily shared, analyzed, and preserved indefinitely. To effectively decipher and share these assets with the global academic community, it is imperative to adopt the principles of Linked Open Data (LOD). These principles ensure that data is interconnected and can be used across different systems and platforms, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of the data. The Simple Knowledge Organization System (SKOS) [23] plays a pivotal role in this process by providing a framework for organizing knowledge in a manner that is both machin-readable and human-understandable.

The initial step in this process is the compilation of a structured vocabulary. Our research aims to compile a vocabulary that includes a diverse range of terms and concepts related to Ukrainian and Armenian epigraphic inscriptions. This vocabulary serves as a foundation for developing a comprehensive SKOS framework. The advancement of academic disciplines heavily relies on the precision and uniformity of the language used to describe concepts, phenomena, and methodologies. The clarity and consistency of terminology are crucial in fields like epigraphy, where the study of ancient inscriptions intersects with history, archaeology, and philology. This is not only to facilitate effective communication among scholars but also to ensure the accurate transmission of knowledge across different linguistic and cultural contexts.

In the realm of academic discourse, terminological discrepancies can lead to significant misunderstandings and pose as barriers to collaborative research efforts. This challenge is further complicated by the inherent linguistic diversity in global scholarly communication. With English serving as the lingua franca of modern academia, the translation, harmonization, and mapping of specialized terms from various languages into English and vice versa are of utmost importance. However, these processes are riddled with complexities, particularly when dealing with terms that carry nuanced meanings in their original language or have evolved over time.

The field of epigraphy serves as a pertinent example of these challenges. As a discipline that studies inscriptions, often from ancient civilizations, epigraphy requires a highly specialized vocabulary. For instance, the term 'stela' is commonly used to refer to a stone or wooden slab, but it can also be used more broadly to refer to any upright monument. Terms used in this field not only describe physical artefacts and their characteristics but also encompass broader historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts. Translating these terms into and mapping them with a universally understood academic language like English requires careful consideration of their original intent, contextual usage, and historical evolution.

The introduction of synonyms or related terms by different authors further complicates the terminological landscape. While synonyms enrich the language, they can also lead to ambiguity and confusion, especially for non–native speakers or scholars new to the field. This necessitates the development of a standardized terminological framework that respects the diversity of linguistic expressions while ensuring clarity and consistency in academic discourse.

The Main Goals: This article, therefore, aims to address the critical need for a harmonised system of terms within the academic field of epigraphy. The multilingual examination of the definitions and translations of the key terms 'epigraphy' and 'epigraphic inscriptions' across three different languages, English, Ukrainian (графіті), and Armenian

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(Վիմագիտություն, վիմագրագիտություն, վիմագրություն, վիմագիր արձանագրություն), aims to highlight the diverse interpretations and nuances these terms carry in different academic and cultural contexts. Moreover, it seeks to highlight the importance of linguistic precision and standardisation in facilitating effective and accurate scholarly communication.

2. Epigraphy as Discipline. Epigraphy, a scholarly field dedicated to the study of inscriptions or epigraphs as written records, has progressively developed since the 16th century, adapting its principles to different cultural contexts, with early European studies mainly focusing on *Latin inscriptions* ("Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum") [24], and *Greek epigraphy* ("Inscriptiones Graecae") [25].

The field of *Ukrainian epigraphy*, delving into the historical inscriptions of the region, has a rich and diverse history. It began to take shape with the study of ancient texts inscribed on enduring materials like stone and metal, found throughout Ukraine. These inscriptions, often in languages such as Old Church Slavonic, Greek, and later Cyrillic script, offer a window into the region's past.

The study of Old Russian epigraphy began with the discovery of the Tmutarakan Stone at the end of the 18th century [1, pp. 8–14]. The discipline gained significant traction in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with scholars like Mykhailo Hrushevsky, Dmytro Yavornytsky and others contributing to its development [19, p. 41]. Their works shed light on Ukraine's historical narratives, particularly through analysing inscriptions from various epochs, ranging from the Kyivan Rus' period to the Cossack era. The work in this field continues to evolve, with modern researchers employing advanced techniques to decipher, preserve, and interpret these historical treasures [2, pp. 3–9; 3, pp. 4–11; 4, pp. 3–8; 5, pp. 4–8; 6, p. 5; 7, pp 3–10; 8, pp. 3–12].

Ukrainian epigraphy artefacts often include religious texts, decrees, and commemorative writings, providing invaluable insights into the linguistic, cultural, and political landscapes of different periods.

Ukrainian epigraphy, thus, stands as a testament to the region's rich historical tapestry, offering a unique perspective on the evolution of language, culture, and society in Eastern Europe.

Armenia boasts a rich cultural heritage marked by a wealth of epigraphic inscriptions. The country's oldest petroglyphs date as far back as the 12th century BC followed by inscriptions from the Akkadian and Urartian eras. These were later succeeded by various inscriptions in languages such as Aramaic, Greek, Pahlavi, and Latin.

The creation of the Armenian script, attributed to the development of the Mesropean script in the 5th century, marked a pivotal advancement in the region's epigraphic heritage. The 18th and 19th centuries experienced a significant effort to collect and document these inscriptions, spearheaded by notable figures such as Catholicos Nerses E. Ashtaraketsy [26], scholars like Shahkhatunyants [20, pp. 7–12], H. Jalalyants [14, pp. 5, 6], M. Brossen [15, pp. 198–213], G. Alishan [16, pp. 213, 218–221, 223–224] and A. Mkhitaryan [16, p. 418] who meticulously transcribed and published thousands of these inscriptions. However, it was Academician Hovsep Orbeli [9, pp. V–XXX] whose exceptional work laid the foundation for further exploration and analysis in this field, with archaeologists and epigraphists such as S. Barkhudaryan, K. Ghafadaryan [10, pp. 75–89], A. Kalantar [18, pp. 482–495] and the Armenologist S. Avagyan [11, pp. 5–10] building upon his legacy. Pivotal was publishing the series "Corpus of Armenian Epigraphy" [9, pp. V–XXX].

As a scholarly field, epigraphy is inherently multidisciplinary, weaving together the threads of archaeology, history, and philology. This rich tapestry of disciplines is not just a surface-level combination; it is deeply embedded in the very essence of epigraphic studies.

In the realm of archaeology, epigraphy plays a crucial role in shedding light on the material culture of past civilisations. Inscriptions found on monuments, tombs, and other artefacts are key to unlocking insights into the socio–political structures, religious practices, and everyday life of ancient societies. The location and context of these inscriptions often provide critical information that aids in their interpretation, offering clues about their intended purpose, audience, and societal significance.

From a historical standpoint, epigraphic texts are invaluable. They serve as primary sources that offer a direct glimpse into past events, governance, and societal norms. These inscriptions often help fill in the blanks in historical records, especially in cases where other forms of documentation are scarce or have been lost to time. Analysing the chronology of inscriptions is integral to constructing historical timelines, aiding historians in dating events and understanding how cultures and languages have evolved.

In the field of philology, epigraphy provides a treasure trove of material for the study of ancient languages and scripts. The process of deciphering these inscriptions contributes significantly to our understanding of linguistic development, dialects, and the emergence of writing systems. Epigraphic evidence often reveals how words were used, their nuances,
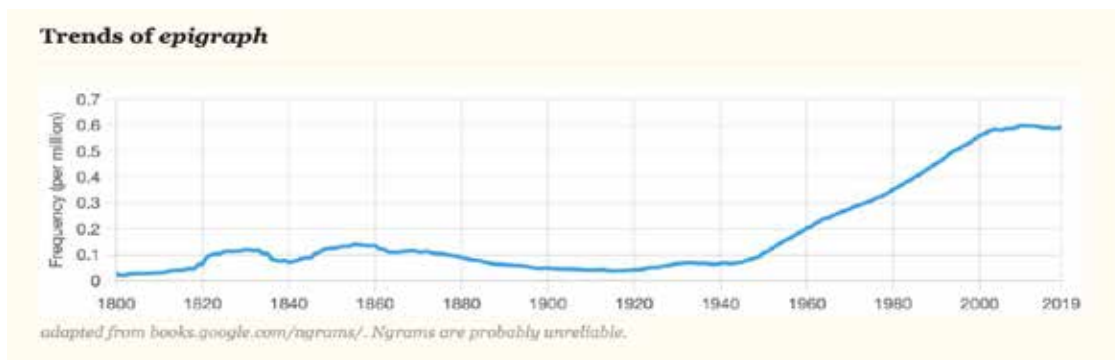
Chart 1. Frequency Trend of the Term 'Epigraph' in Published Literature (1800–2019) [27]

and how their meanings may have changed over time, offering a unique perspective on the linguistic landscape of ancient civilisations.

Therefore, the study of epigraphy goes beyond just deciphering ancient scripts; it involves a holistic interpretation of these inscriptions' socio-cultural and historical contexts. The growth in the term's usage also reflects a broader public interest in cultural heritage and preservation, along with more widespread dissemination of knowledge through books and, later, digital means. This necessitates a lexicon that is not only precise but also expansive enough to cover the diverse aspects of the field. Such a lexicon must be capable of accommodating the specific terminologies of each intersecting discipline while maintaining clarity and coherence for effective interdisciplinary communication.

3. Methodology. Given the specific focus of this research on terms that define the academic discipline and the subject/object of study within the disciplines of epigraphy in Ukrainian, Armenian, and English, our methodology has been tailored to address these particular aspects. The methodology encompasses a targeted approach, examining the terms central to epigraphy in these three languages.

We begin with a detailed linguistic analysis of the key terms – epigraphy (epigraphic inscription), graffiti, епіграфіка, графіті, and վիմնագրագիտություն, վիմնագրություն, վիմագիր արձանագրություն, գրաֆիտի that define the academic discipline of epigraphy and its study's subject/object in English, Ukrainian, and Armenian. This involves an in-depth exploration of the etymology, historical usage, and evolution of these specific terms. By focusing on these critical terms, we aim to understand their origins, how they have been adapted and used in different academic and linguistic contexts, and how their meanings have evolved over time. This part of the study is crucial in revealing the depth and breadth of these terms in various cultural and academic settings.

Accompanying the linguistic analysis is a focused cross-cultural comparison. This comparison is specifically tailored to examine how the key terms defining the discipline and its subject/object are used and understood in different cultural and linguistic contexts. This comparison is instrumental in uncovering the diverse interpretations and applications of these terms in Ukrainian, Armenian, and English. It highlights the influence of cultural and academic traditions on the understanding and application of these central terms in epigraphy.

This tailored methodology, focusing on the critical terms that define the discipline of epigraphy and its study's subject/object in three different languages, provides a comprehensive understanding of these terms' linguistic, cultural, and practical dimensions. It aims to uncover the nuances and complexities involved in these terms, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of epigraphic terminology in a multilingual and multicultural academic landscape.

4. Challenges in Standardising Epigraphic Terminology. Given its multidisciplinary nature, one of the challenges in epigraphy lies in its terminology. Terms in epigraphy are more than just technical labels; they are imbued with complex historical, cultural, and linguistic nuances. A term may carry different meanings and implications across archaeology, history, and philology disciplines. For example, the term 'inscription' might be analysed for its physical characteristics, such as medium and style in an archaeological context, whereas in historical studies, the same term might be scrutinised more for its content and what it reveals about socio-political dynamics. From the historical linguistics perspective, the inscriptions' texts are invaluable resources. They offer a snapshot of language at specific points in time and space, allowing linguists to observe the state of a language at a given moment and trace its evolution over time. These texts serve as crucial data

points for understanding how languages change and develop across different epochs and regions.

The endeavour to standardise epigraphic terminology encounters other significant challenges, primarily stemming from the diversity of source languages and the historical evolution of terms. As a scholarly field, epigraphy draws from a vast array of languages and cultures, each contributing unique terms and concepts. This linguistic and cultural richness, while undoubtedly enriching the field, introduces a level of complexity that poses particular challenges in standardisation efforts.

One notable issue arises when *terms originating in one linguistic context are translated or used in another*, often leading to subtle shifts in connotation. These shifts can result in misunderstandings or misinterpretations, particularly in a field as nuanced as epigraphy. This challenge is exacerbated by the dynamic nature of language evolution, where meanings and usages of terms continually adapt over time.

Consider the term 'epigraphy' itself. Universally recognised in the academic community, its interpretation varies subtly across different academic traditions. In some instances, 'epigraphy' is associated predominantly with studying ancient inscriptions in specific scripts or languages. In other contexts, it is interpreted more broadly to encompass the study of all historical inscriptions, irrespective of their age or origin. Such variations in interpretation necessitate careful consideration of the term's origins, its historical usage, and how it has evolved across various languages and cultures.

Standardising epigraphic terminology extends beyond merely agreeing on definitions; it involves *bridging gaps between diverse academic cultures and linguistic traditions*. This task demands understanding the historical and cultural contexts in which these terms are employed and a deep appreciation for the subtleties and nuances they carry in different languages.

Furthermore, *the role of synonyms and linguistic variations in epigraphy* significantly impacts both the enrichment of its vocabulary and the challenges in standardising terminology. The epigraphic lexicon is marked by its diversity, reflecting the field's extensive historical and cultural background. For instance, terms such as 'epigraphic inscriptions', 'ancient writings', and 'historical inscriptions', though potentially used interchangeably, each bears distinct connotations and historical contexts.

'Epigraphic inscriptions' typically refer to texts engraved or carved on durable materials within archaeological studies [28]. 'Ancient writings' might include a wider array of materials like papyrus or parchment, significant for their historical value rather than their durability. Moreover, they can even be used in the sense of 'ancient literature' [29]. 'Historical inscriptions' could imply a focus on the historical relevance of the content over its physical form or linguistic characteristics.

Such diversity, while showcasing the field's depth, can lead to ambiguity and confusion, especially for newcomers or those from varied linguistic backgrounds. The challenge intensifies when *translating these terms, as direct equivalents may not exist in other languages, or the terms might acquire additional cultural or contextual meanings.*

Therefore, establishing a standardised terminology in epigraphy requires careful navigation through these linguistic nuances. It involves acknowledging the historical and cultural contexts in which these terms have developed and their current usage. A standardised lexicon should strive not only for clarity and uniformity in academic discourse but also for respect towards the linguistic diversity and cultural richness inherent in the field.

Balancing uniformity with diversity in terminology is pivotal for effective communication within epigraphy. It enhances understanding among scholars from various academic traditions and linguistic backgrounds. It supports the comparative study of inscriptions from different cultures and eras, fostering a more nuanced comprehension of the historical narratives they unveil.

Moreover, the process of standardising terminology in epigraphy is dynamic, needing adaptability to accommodate discoveries and evolving scholarly perspectives. As the field grows and intersects with other disciplines, its vocabulary will inevitably expand and evolve. A practical terminological framework in epigraphy should thus be flexible enough to incorporate new terms and concepts, maintaining a core set of standardised terms to ensure continuity and coherence in scholarly communication.

5. Terms denoting the concept 'Epigraphy' and 'Epigraphic inscriptions' in English, Ukrainian and Armenian. Epigraphy, as a scholarly field, is grounded in the Ancient Greek term ἐπιγραφή (epigraphḗ), meaning 'inscription' [30]. The term "Epigraph", referring to inscriptions is derived from the Greek "epigraphē", which translates to an inscription. This comes from "epigraphein"," meaning "to etch lightly on a surface; to write upon; to record; to endorse with one's name", derived from "epi" (meaning "on") and "graphein" (meaning "to write").

The term 'epigraphy' as a name of an academic discipline was first recorded between 1850 and 1855 [30]. A closer examination of how the term

'epigraphy' is defined across various dictionaries and languages provides insightful perspectives into the subtleties of academic translation. This exploration is not just an exercise in linguistics; it reveals the diverse interpretations and applications of a key term in epigraphy, demonstrating the complexity involved in reaching a universal understanding.

Consider, for instance, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, which focuses on epigraphy as the study of inscriptions, with a particular emphasis on ancient ones. *"Epigraphy is the study of inscriptions or epigraphs, which are written matter recorded on hard or durable materials. It involves deciphering, interpreting, and classifying these inscriptions, particularly those from ancient times. Epigraphy is closely related to the fields of philology, archaeology, and history, but it does not concern itself with the historical significance or artistic value of an inscription as a document or a literary composition"* [31]. This definition aligns closely with the traditional view of epigraphy, emphasising its focus on inscriptions as historical artefacts rather than as artistic or literary works and highlighting its role in deciphering and interpreting historical inscriptions.

However, we find a broader interpretation when we turn to the Cambridge Dictionary. *"Epigraphy is the study of words written or cut into hard materials such as clay or stone. This field often involves examining evidence derived from epigraphy and iconography, and it is closely connected to studies in archaeology and art history"* [32]. This definition extends the scope of epigraphy beyond just ancient inscriptions, linking it closely to archaeology and art history and suggesting a more inclusive view of the field that encompasses any durable written records, regardless of their age.

According to Dictionary.com, *"epigraphy is the study or science of epigraphs or inscriptions, particularly those that are ancient"*. It also refers to inscriptions collectively [33].

Collins English Dictionary dictionary describes *"epigraphy as both the study or science of epigraphs or inscriptions, especially those from ancient times, and as a term referring to inscriptions collectively* [34]".

Vocabulary.com simplifies the definition of epigraphy to the study of ancient inscriptions, categorising it under palaeography, the study of ancient writing and its decipherment [35].

Additionally, epigraphy encompasses the study of ideographic inscriptions, which represent ideas or concepts. This aspect of epigraphy intersects with fields like numismatics (the study of coins), palaeography (the study of ancient handwriting), and iconography (the study of images), maintaining a distinct focus on symbols with meaningful messages [36].

These definitions collectively highlight that epigraphy is a scholarly field focused on the study of writings on durable materials, with a significant emphasis on ancient inscriptions. It intersects with various disciplines, including archaeology, history, and art history, underscoring its multidisciplinary nature.

However, this variation in definitions goes beyond linguistic differences; it reflects diverse academic traditions and perspectives within the field of epigraphy. While some definitions prioritise the historical and ancient aspects of inscriptions, others embrace a wider spectrum, including more contemporary inscriptions or those written in less traditional materials.

"Epigraphic inscriptions" or inscriptions refer to the texts studied within the field of epigraphy [35]. These inscriptions can range from single characters or graphemes to extensive documents such as treatises or literary works. Epigraphy involves identifying these graphemes, understanding their meanings, and classifying their uses based on dates and cultural contexts. The character of the writing in epigraphy is distinct from the nature of the text itself, which is also an object of study.

Epigraphic inscriptions can be diverse in their content and purpose. They can be publicly displayed texts inscribed in stone, often differing significantly from the culture's other written texts. Some epigraphic texts are private or used for economic and administrative record-keeping purposes, such as those in Mycenaean Greece [36].

In Ukrainian, the term «епіграфіка» (epigraphy) refers to an auxiliary historical and philological discipline that studies ancient inscriptions on hard materials, such as stone and metal. The definition highlights epigraphy's focus on understanding and interpreting ancient writings and their significance in historical and linguistic research [38].

Interestingly, in Ukrainian, an utterly different term is used to refer to the object of study of «епіграфіка». The term «графіті» (graffiti) is used to refer to ancient text scratched on solid materials. This term originally referred to a technique of wall painting. It is derived from the Italian word "graffiti", which comes from "grafficare", meaning "to scratch", literally translating to "scratched". Over time, archaeologists adopted the term as a general descriptor for all kinds of casual writings and drawings on the walls of buildings. This usage reflects the broader understanding of graffiti as informal, often spontaneous markings, illustrations, or text applied to surfaces, typically in pub-

lic spaces [39]. In the «Великий тлумачний словник сучасної української мови» (The Great Explanatory Dictionary of Modern Ukrainian Language) the term is described as «Стародавні написи й малюнки різного змісту, зроблені гострими предметами на посудинах, пряслицях, стінах тощо» [21, с. 353]. Korniienko V.V. notably adopted this definition as a foundational basis in his series of books on the epigraphic heritage of the Saint Sophia's Cathedral in Kyiv, among other publications [5, p. 9]. Intriguingly, in the introduction of one of his works, Korniienko V.V. remarks, «Слова "напис" та "запис" вживаються нами як синоніми з метою уникнення повторювання» [6, p. 11]. While using synonyms enhances the aesthetic and stylistic quality of a book or article, it presents a challenge for digital publications, cataloguing, and the creation of Open Linked Data, where standardised vocabulary is essential [13, pp. 92–110].

However, English dictionaries offer slightly different interpretations of "graffiti". According to the Britannica Dictionary, *"Graffiti refers to pictures or words painted or drawn on a wall, building, or similar surfaces, usually done without permission and intended for public viewing. It is often considered illegal and typically includes markings like initials, slogans, or drawings"* [40].

In Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "graffiti" is defined as *"the act of drawing graffiti on a surface or defacing it with graffiti"*. The noun form refers to *"the drawings or writings themselves that cover surfaces like the walls of buildings"* [41].

According to Dictionary.com, *"graffiti" is the plural form of "graffito" and is used to describe markings such as initials, slogans, or drawings. These are written, spray-painted, or sketched on surfaces like sidewalks, walls of buildings, or public restrooms. Such graffiti often reflect the social or environmental state of a neighbourhood"* [42]. Here the focuses are also on the public and unauthorised aspects of graffiti.

In Collins English Dictionary graffiti is described as *"words or pictures written or drawn in public places, like on walls or posters"*. It, like the previous two dictionaries, emphasises the public and often unauthorised nature of graffiti [43].

Vocabulary.com defines graffiti as *"a word, phrase, or image painted or drawn in a public space, such as on the side of a building or on restroom walls"*. It highlights the ongoing debate about whether graffiti is an art form or an act of vandalism [44].

These definitions depict graffiti as a form of expression involving words, phrases, or images, typically displayed in public spaces and often created without official permission. Depending on the context and content of the graffiti, the perception of graffiti can range from being viewed as an art form to being considered vandalism.

In Armenian academic circles, the term 'Graffiti' is traditionally associated with the earliest forms of human artistic expression. These are the images etched with stones by our ancestors on cave walls, depicting hunting scenes, animals, and human figures. This usage of 'Graffiti' aligns with its original meaning as the primal steps of human painting, capturing the very inception of artistic endeavour in human history.

In contemporary culture, however, the definition of 'Graffiti' has evolved significantly [45]. Today, it typically refers to images painted on street walls, often perceived as acts of vandalism. This modern interpretation of 'Graffiti' in Armenian culture mirrors its usage in English, where graffiti is viewed as a form of street art or act of vandalism, showcasing the dichotomy in the perception of graffiti by society and academic literature.

Despite their common etymological roots, "graffiare," meaning" to scratch reflecting the method of inscribing or scratching designs, words, or images onto surfaces, the contemporary meaning and usage of the terms have diverged. In English and Armenian, 'graffiti' often carries connotations of unauthorised or illegal street art, while in Ukrainian, 'графіті' has retained a closer association with its original sense, referring to ancient inscriptions and epigraphs. This divergence in meaning, despite shared etymology, illustrates how words can evolve differently across languages and cultures.

In the Armenian language, we encounter two terms related to the study of epigraphy: 'Վիմագիտություն' [vimagitutyun] and 'վիմագրագիտություն' [vimagragitytyun] When we delve into the Explanatory dictionary of the modern Armenian language, we find that under the entry for 'վիմագրագիտություն', it directs readers to the third meaning of 'վիմագրություն' [vimagrutyun] [46]. The term 'վիմագրություն' itself encompasses three meanings, the first of which aligns with the concept of lithography. Google translates 'վիմագրություն' as Lithography, a method of printing from a plane surface, such as stone or metal, with a design etched or drawn on it with a greasy substance [22, с. 785], [47] (photographs 1; 2). The second meaning pertains closely to the first, denoting the art of creating lithographic prints.

The third definition describes the collection, study, and printing of epigraphic inscriptions. In the Dictionary of Armenian Synonyms, the only synonym listed for 'վիմագրություն' is 'վիմագրություն', which translates to lithography [12, p. 609]. Yet, in the

same source, 'վիմատպություն', is initially defined as lithography, and only the secondary definition connects to epigraphic inscriptions. However, on Wikipedia, 'վիմագրություն' is described as pertaining to epigraphic inscriptions [48].

The etymology of 'վիմագիտություն' [vimagitutyun] races back to Pahlavi: 'vem'-denoting stone or statue-and the Armenian 'գիտություն' [gitutyun], meaning knowledge or understanding. The related term 'վիմագրություն' [vimagrutyun] combines the Pahlavi 'vem' with the Armenian 'գրություն'գիր' [grutyun], derived from 'գիր' [gir],

which signifies writing or script. Another term frequently used to describe epigraphic inscriptions in Armenian is 'արձանագրություն,' with the stem 'արձան' meaning statue in Armenian, suggesting that the original Pahlavi word 'vem' has been replaced by its Armenian equivalent. Traditionally, this refers to inscriptions carved on stone, but its use has broadened to encompass inscriptions on various objects and memorials carved onto any solid surface [48]. This broadening of meaning suggests a dynamic evolution of language and terminology in Armenian epigraphy.
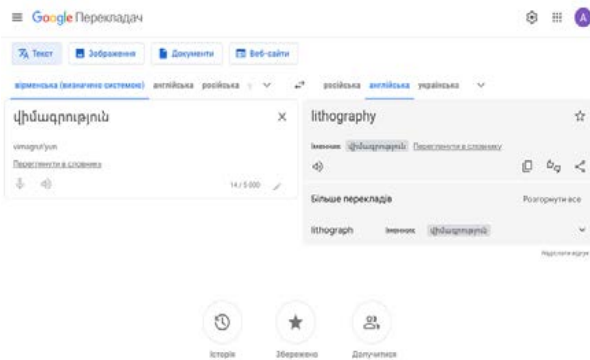
Photograph 1. The screenshot was taken on Dec. 15, at 11:05 CET
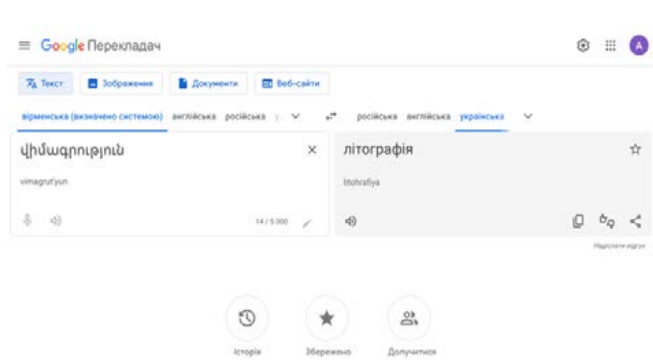
Photograph 2. The screenshot was taken on Dec. 15, at 11:07 CET.

6. Conclusions. This comprehensive analysis of epigraphic terminology across different languages, primarily focusing on the terms 'epigraphy', 'epigraphic inscriptions,' and their counterparts in Ukrainian and Armenian, illuminates the intricate nature of academic language in the field of epigraphy. The diverse interpretations and nuanced meanings of these terms in various cultural and linguistic contexts underscore the challenges inherent in achieving a harmonised and standardised academic lexicon.

The study reveals that while 'epigraphy' and 'epigraphic inscriptions' have a relatively uniform understanding in English as the study of inscriptions, particularly ancient ones, their equivalents in Ukrainian and Armenian exhibit notable differences. In Ukrainian, 'епіграфіка' ('epigraphy') and 'графіті' ('graffiti') have distinct meanings, with the latter retaining a closer association with its original sense of ancient inscriptions and epigraphs. Conversely, in English and Armenian, 'graffiti' often implies unauthorised or illegal street art, demonstrating a divergence in meaning despite shared etymological roots.

The Armenian language presents a unique scenario with terms like 'Վիմագիտություն' ('vimagitutyun') and 'վիմագրագիտություն' ('vimagragitytyun'), which encompass meanings ranging from

lithography to the study and printing of epigraphic inscriptions. This multifaceted usage reflects the dynamic evolution of language and terminology in Armenian epigraphy and highlights the importance of context in interpreting these terms.

The challenges posed in translating these terms further emphasise the necessity of a standardised terminological framework in epigraphy. Direct equivalents may not exist in other languages, or the terms might acquire additional cultural or contextual meanings, leading to ambiguity and potential misinterpretation. Therefore, establishing a standardised terminology in epigraphy requires a deep understanding of the historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts in which these terms are used.

It is imperative to balance uniformity with respect for linguistic diversity to foster effective communication within the multidisciplinary field of epigraphy and support comparative studies. This includes accommodating new discoveries and evolving scholarly perspectives and maintaining a core set of standardised terms to ensure continuity and coherence in academic discourse.

In conclusion, while the richness and diversity of epigraphic terminology add depth to the field, addressing the challenges of standardisation necessi-

tates a dynamic and thoughtful approach. Developing a standardised epigraphic lexicon that balances clarity and uniformity with respect for the linguistic and cultural diversity characterising the field is crucial for advancing academic research and collaboration in epigraphy.

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