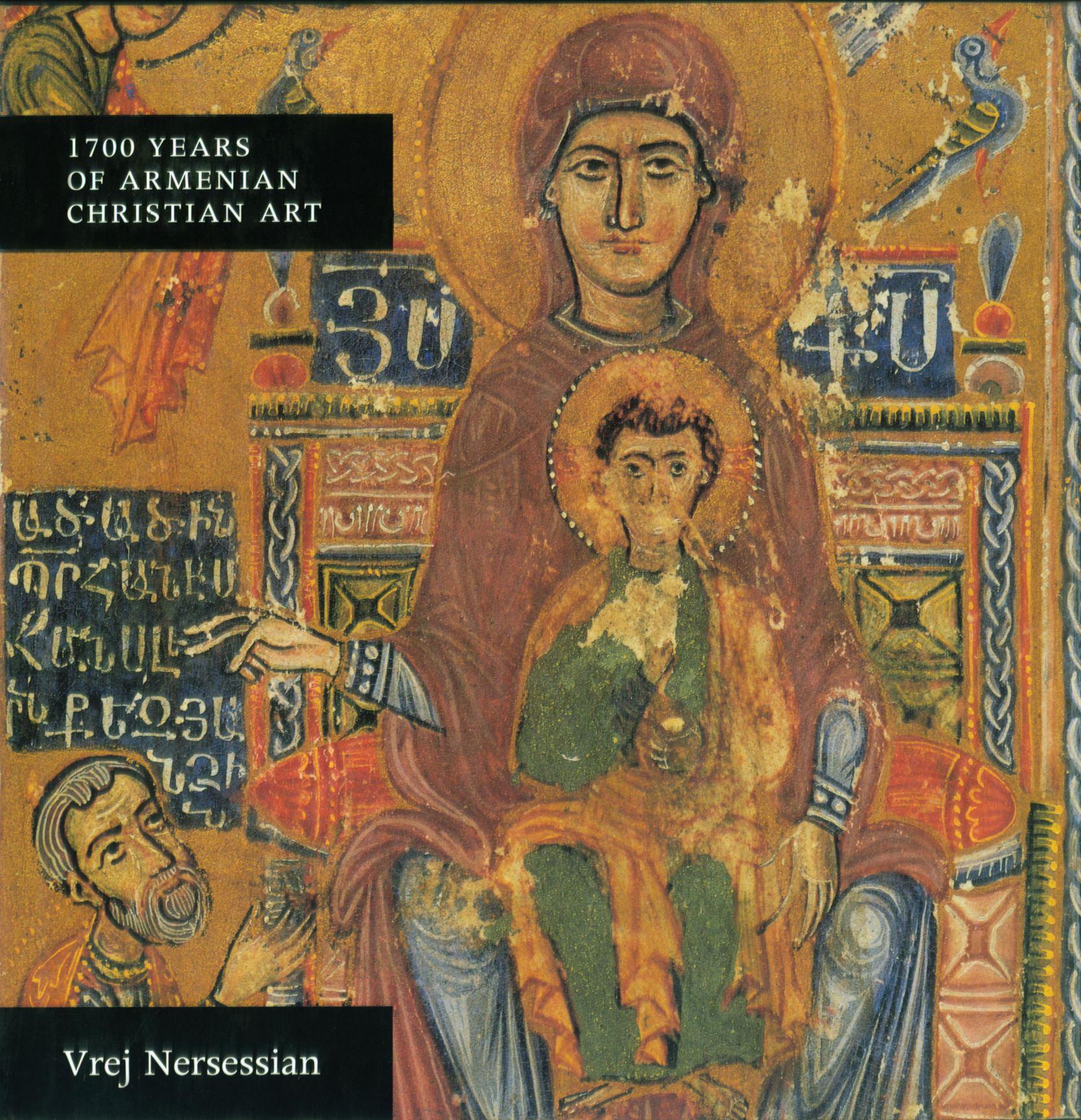


# TREASURES FROM THE ARK

1700 YEARS  
OF ARMENIAN  
CHRISTIAN ART



Vrej Nersessian

# TREASURES FROM THE ARK

1700 YEARS OF ARMENIAN CHRISTIAN ART

Armenia was the first country to recognize Christianity as the official state religion in 301 AD, twelve years before Constantine's decree granting tolerance to Christianity within the Roman Empire. Ever since, Armenia has claimed the privilege of being the first Christian nation, and the wealth of Christian art produced in Armenia since then is testimony to the fundamental importance of the Christian faith to the Armenian people.

This extensive new survey of Armenian Christian art, published to accompany a major exhibition at The British Library, celebrates the Christian art tradition in Armenia during the last 1700 years. The extraordinary quality and range of Armenian art which is documented includes sculpture, metalwork, textiles, ceramics, wood carvings and illuminated manuscripts and has been drawn together from collections throughout the world – many of the examples have never before been seen outside Armenia.

In his authoritative text, Dr Vrej Nersessian, Curator at The British Library, charts the development of Christianity in Armenia. This fascinating history is essential to an understanding of the art and religious tradition of Armenia, a country in which the sense of the sacred extends well beyond the purely religious, infiltrating the entire fabric of Armenian affairs to create a fascinating culture.

This sumptuously illustrated book will be of immense value to anyone with an interest in Byzantine art and culture, the history of Christianity and the history of Armenia and the Middle Orient.

# TREASURES

## FROM THE ARK





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1700 YEARS OF ARMENIAN  
CHRISTIAN ART

Vrej Nersessian

THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM  
LOS ANGELES

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6 մարտի 2000 թ.

ԳԻՐ ՕՐՀՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ

Քրիստոնեական եղբայրության և ժողովուրդների փոխադարձ ճանաչման ու սիրո ազնիվ նպատակին է ծառայում հայ հոգևոր մշակույթի ցուցահանդեսի բացումը Բրիտանական Գրադարանում նվիրված Հայաստանում քրիստոնեության պետականորեն ճանաչման 1700-ամյակին:

Հայ ժողովուրդը երրորդ հազարամյակ մուտք է գործում Հայրենիքում և Սփյուռքում տոնախմբելով դարակազմիկ տարեդարձը հազարամյակներով չափվող իր կենսագրության մեծագույն իրադարձության:

Աստծո կամքով 301 թվականին մեր ժողովուրդը աստվածփնտրումի իր ճանապարհը պսակեց Քրիստոսի խաչով և գտավ իր հարատևության խորհուրդը: Սրբազան Արարատի փեշերին առատացավ Տիրոջ առաքյալների միջոցով Հայաստան բերված Ավետարանի կենսապարզ և լույսը, երբ մեր հավատո հայր և առաջին կաթողիկոս Գրիգոր Լուսավորչի ու մեծագործ Տրդատ Գ թագավորի ձեռքով հաղթական խաչը Քրիստոսի հայոց պետական դրոշով երկինք պարզվեց: Հույսի, Հավատի ու Սիրո ճշմարտությամբ, արդարության, ազատության արժեքներով նորոգվեց հայության հոգին, դարերի մեջ երկնելով քրիստոնեական հարուստ և առանձնահատուկ մշակույթը ստեղծարար հայ ժողովուրդի:

Թարգմանության կարիք չունի մշակույթի լեզուն, որ որպես պատկեր ու քանդակ, գույն ու երաժշտություն, պայմանավորում է անմիջնորդ երկխոսությունը ժողովուրդների: Շինարար այդ երկխոսությունը արգասավորելու դարավոր ավանդույթներ ունի Բրիտանական Գրադարանը: Մեծ է Մեր ուրախությունը որպես Ամենայն Հայոց Կաթողիկոս, որ Բրիտանական Գրադարանի Հրեական և Քրիստոնեական Մերձավոր Արևելքի բաժինը իր Հայկական բաժանմունքով, տնօրեն Տ. Ներսես քահանա Ներսիսյանի գլխավորությամբ նախաձեռնել է հայ հոգևոր արժեքների ցուցադրության կազմակերպումը գիտական մեծահամբավ այդ կենտրոնում, ուր բազում մշակույթներ ու քաղաքակրթություններ են հանդիպում միմյանց: Քրիստոնեությունը Հայաստանում պետական կրոն հռչակելու 1700-ամյակին նվիրված ցուցահանդեսը զնահատելի ընծա է Հայ Եկեղեցուն և հարգանքի արժանի տուրք հայոց հնագույն մշակույթին ու պատմությանը: Ուրախ ենք նաև, որ ցուցահանդեսը հովանավորվում է Հայ Եկեղեցու բարեպաշտ զավակներ, լոնդոնաբնակ բարերարներ Վաչե և Թամար Մանուկյանների կողմից, որոնց վաստակով կյանքի են կոչվել եկեղեցասեր ու ազգաշահ շատ ծրագրեր, արժանի համբավ բերելով նրանց անվանը:

Հայոց Բեթղեհեմ Մայր Աթոռ Սուրբ Էջմիածնից Մեր ողջույնն ու զնահատանքն ենք հղում շնորհակալ այս նախաձեռնության բոլոր կազմակերպիչներին, բարերարներին և բերում Բարձրյալի օրհնությունը ցուցահանդեսի առաքելությանը, որպեսզի հայ հոգուց պոկված և նյութի մեջ մարմին առած աղոթքը հավատի ու կենսասիրության իր խորհրդով հասկանալի դառնա բյուրավոր այցելուների, և միավորվի մեկ համանվագում ժողովուրդների խոսքը առ Արարիչն Աստված՝ հանուն աշխարհի խաղաղության, համայն մարդկության բարօրության ու լուսավոր գալիքի:

Օրհնությամբ

ԳԱՐԵԳՆ Բ  
ԿԱԹՈՂԻԿՈՍ ԱՄԵՆԱՅՆ ՀԱՅՈՑ



## MESSAGE FROM HIS HOLINESS GAREGIN II

The exhibition on the Christian Art of Armenia at the British Library, on the occasion of the 1700th anniversary of the declaration of Christianity as the state religion of Armenia, is an expression of Christian unity among our peoples and serves to foster mutual recognition and love as well as Christian brotherhood among peoples.

The Armenian nation in the homeland and in the diaspora steps into the third millennium by celebrating this defining moment of its history. In 301 the Armenian people accepted Christianity as their state religion and on the eve of the battle of Vardanank in 451, Vardan Mamikonian tells his soldiers: 'Let those who thought Christianity was a mere garment for us now realize that they can no more tear it off than tear off the colour of our skin'. The life-giving light of the Gospel, which was brought to Armenia by the apostles, brightened the slopes of our sacred Mount Ararat when the father of our faith, and first Catholicos, Gregory the Illuminator, with King Trdat III raised the sign of the victorious cross together with the flag of the nation. The soul of the Armenian people was renewed with the values of hope, faith, truth in love, justice and freedom, and a rich and unique Christian Armenian culture was born and was nurtured through the centuries.

The language of culture needs no translation, because through pictures and sculptures, colour and music, an unmitigated dialogue between peoples is assured. The British Library has many years of experience which can ensure the fruitfulness of that dialogue. As Catholicos of All Armenians, we are immensely happy that through the generous sponsorship of the faithful children of our Church, the London Armenian benefactors Mr and Mrs Vatche and Tamar Manoukian, this exhibition of Armenian sacred art is being held at this renowned institution, where numerous civilizations and cultures meet. This exhibition, which is dedicated to the 1700th anniversary of the declaration of Christianity as the state religion of Armenia, is an invaluable gift to the Armenian Church and a worthy expression of respect towards Armenian culture and history.

We send our greetings and appreciation from the Holy See of Ējmiadsin to Revd Vrej Nerses Nersessian, curator of the exhibition, and his colleagues in The British Library for organizing this event, and seek the blessing of Our Lord for the success of the mission of the exhibition, so that the prayers which have sprung out of the Armenian soul and assumed material forms can be conveyed to the numerous visitors with messages of faith and life, and that the voices of all people unite in a plea to our Creator for world peace, prosperity and for a brighter future for all humankind.

Blessings

*Garegin II*

Catholicos of All Armenians

# MESSAGE FROM THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

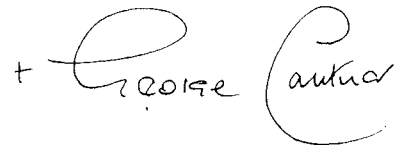
The 1700th anniversary of Armenian Christianity is a notable milestone in the history of the Christian Church. Beneath the cathedral in Holy Ējmiadsin, the mother church of Armenian Christians, lie the remains of a small stone church which may well date back to the earliest years of the church in Armenia when, according to tradition, St Gregory the Illuminator, following years of imprisonment and suffering, converted King Tiridates in 301. Ever since, Armenia has claimed the privilege of being the first Christian nation.

The heritage of Armenian Christianity is a noble one. The stone of the high Armenian plateau enabled churches to be built that have a striking and austere simplicity. Their characteristic pointed domes, like the pointed monastic cowls of the Armenian clergy, are a hallmark of the Armenian Church. But besides the architecture there are rich traditions of illuminated biblical and liturgical manuscripts, of textiles, church vestments and music. This important exhibition provides an opportunity to experience something of this Armenian Christian heritage.

As one member of the family of Oriental Orthodox churches, together with the ancient churches of Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia and the Malabar coast in India, Armenian Christianity has maintained a distinctive understanding of Christ with an emphasis on the Christology of St Cyril of Alexandria. Separated for many centuries from the majority of Christians in the East and West who accepted the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, in recent years there has been a growing closeness between the Oriental Orthodox family and other Christians, and within that closeness between Armenians and Anglicans. I welcome the progress that has been made on the journey to Christian unity.

There has been much suffering in Armenian history, and martyrdom has been a note of the Armenian Church. The Church of England in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was particularly concerned with the suffering of the Armenian people, and it is said that almost the last words of Mr Gladstone, the great Victorian statesman and churchman, were 'Those poor Armenians.' In the last century one of the consequences of that suffering has been a growing Armenian diaspora, which has meant that some of the treasures of Armenian Christianity have been made known to and shared with Christians in many parts of the world.

This new century brings major challenges and opportunities to Armenian Christians. Because they will build on the rich heritage of 1700 years of practising the faith, often in situations of persecution and martyrdom, I have no doubt that the challenges will be met and the opportunities seized. All of us can learn from the long witness of the Armenian Church, and it is my prayer that this exhibition will enable us to do that, and find a source of renewal for our own faith, as well as kindling new interest in the Christian traditions of this oldest of Christian nations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Carey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'G' and a large 'C' at the end.

*Dr George Carey*  
Archbishop of Canterbury

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The exhibition *Treasures from the Ark*, dedicated to the 1700th anniversary of Armenian Christianity (301-2001), has been accomplished with the enthusiastic collaboration of the directors, curators and conservators of a great number of museums, church treasuries and libraries. I thank all of them and their staff (see *Lenders to the Exhibition* on page 235). I wish to express my deep and heartfelt appreciation to His Holiness Garegin II, Catholicos of All Armenians and His Grace George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, for their blessings. I am also grateful to Mr and Mrs Vatche and Tamar Manoukian for their generous sponsorship of the exhibition through their Foundation, without which the project would never have been realised. I would also like to extend my thanks to Dr Armen Sarkissian, former Armenian Ambassador in London, and the staff of the Armenian Embassy for their assistance.

The effort put into this exhibition by colleagues in the British Library is greatly appreciated. Special thanks must be offered to Alan Sterenberg, Janet Benoy, Geraldine Kenny and all the staff in the Exhibitions Office for their exceptional industry and forbearance which made this exhibition possible. Helen Shenton and her staff in the conservation department, who laboured hard preparing the material, deserve special recognition. Colin Wight and his staff have been most helpful in arranging the film and lecture programmes for the public. I would also like to thank Edman, Karen and Arin Aivazyan, who with pride and enthusiasm explored the legacy of their heritage and ensured that the exhibition has a sensitive design.

I would also like to thank the staff of the Publishing Office at the British Library for their patience and professionalism. David Way, who with energy and skill co-ordinated the production of the catalogue, Kathleen

Houghton for obtaining the photographs and Lara Speicher who saw the book through production and kept it on schedule. Professor Robin Cormack read the draft of the entire manuscript and gave encouragement and support to the project, and I am most grateful to him in particular for the Introduction, which was far beyond the call of duty. I am especially grateful to Elizabeth Teague, who diligently edited the manuscript and offered acute and generous advice. The designer Andrew Shoolbred must be thanked and congratulated for the design of the catalogue.

Finally, but in many ways most importantly, Graham Shaw, Deputy Director, Oriental and India Office Collections, must be warmly thanked for his early and continued interest in and support of the project at every stage. I am also especially indebted to Catherine Pickett, who on several occasions facilitated my work on the computer.

The work was always on schedule thanks only to the assistance given to me by my wife Leyla Nersessian who helped with the laborious task of matching the photographs with the captions and with the inevitable cut and paste jobs that follow such endeavours. Her exemplary patience and support was a joy and a great help.

Finally to those that will view this exhibition and to them that will read this record of it remember in your thoughts Ter Nerses dpir and be not angry if you find errors, but make the corrections with a sweet disposition, insert what is missing and erase what is superfluous, and deliver me from accusations.

*Revd Dr Vrej Nerses Nersessian*  
Surb Khatch  
September 2000



# INTRODUCTION: ARMENIAN ART FROM A BYZANTINE PERSPECTIVE

The extraordinary quality and range of Armenian art which is documented in this exhibition prompts many questions for the art historian and particularly the Byzantine art historian. At the centre of the debate is how to incorporate this material into western and non-western art history. What was the role of Armenia in the establishment of Christian art? How effective an art was it for the Armenian Church? How inventive were Armenian architects and artists? How did Armenian art interact with and influence other artistic spheres?

Byzantine art has often been claimed as the first Christian art. Constantinople as the centre of production between 330 and 1453 has been frequently claimed as the definitive location of the establishment of the character of this art, and in particular of the icon, with its ambition to offer timeless representations of the truths of the Christian faith. Alternatively Byzantine art has been seen as an 'oriental' version of Christian art, and the mainstream has been located in the 'western' art of Europe. In this debate between 'western art' and 'orientalism', it has been pointed out that Armenian art is one of several branches of Christian art that are all too often left out of the discussion. It has suffered, according to one analysis, the fate of being Byzantium's own area of 'orientalism'.

The full understanding of the development of Christian art needs continued treatment and a fuller knowledge of several neglected areas of study. In recent years, new publications have enlarged our awareness of Nubian and Coptic art and also of Georgian art. In art history, however, the exemplary researches of Sirarpie Der Nersessian (born in 1896, her final work published in 1993 shortly after her death in Paris) have always meant that Armenian art, particularly its manuscript illumination, was the best known of the eastern, non-orthodox, churches. This exhibition brings together major materials from all over the Armenian world, and will allow a new appreciation of the character of this art over a long period of time. But those questions asked by the

art historian who looks at this material 'from the outside' still remain for debate. How does Armenian art 'fit' into the history of art?

One immediate issue is how Armenian art is periodized in modern studies. Are the divisions based on political circumstances or on cultural and theological factors? It seems that the conventional division used by Byzantinists among others into three periods is a mixture of all of these. In the first period from around 300 to 750, the initial bracket is defined by the missionary activities of St Gregory the Illuminator who, after surviving fifteen years in a pit in which he was imprisoned by King Trdat III during a major persecution of Christians, emerged to convert and baptize the king and his court. Christianity then became the state religion and Gregory was consecrated as the catholicos of the Armenian Church by the metropolitan of Caesarea. But the significant cultural advance was the invention of the Armenian alphabet at the beginning of the fifth century, followed by the translation of the whole Bible into Armenian (from the Greek Septuagint and the Syriac Peshitta) which was achieved by 433. The Holy Liturgy of St Basil and other texts rapidly followed in Armenian editions.

The fifth century was also marked in Armenia by persecution by the Persians, and by the reaction of the Armenian Church to the decisions of the various oecumenical church councils. These were reviewed in a council at Dvin in 506 at which allegiance to the decisions on the faith of the Second Council of Ephesus of 449 were unanimously preferred to the Council of Chalcedon of 451. This stand put Armenia firmly in the world of the eastern Monophysites, according to the Byzantine interpretation of their theology, and the church was henceforth regarded as heretical by the Byzantine community. Armenian theology is, however, not so crudely defined. The position is that the Armenian Church recognizes only the first three oecumenical councils and a characterization of its faith depends on understanding what was established and agreed in these deliberations.

What is striking for the art historian in this first period is the inventiveness of Armenian architects and the extraordinary interest in and development of centrally planned dome architecture (Armenian native building expertise is

sometimes seen as the explanation for the employment of the architect Trdat in the restoration of the dome of St Sophia at Constantinople between 989 and 994/5). Many of these churches were on a small scale, which allowed for structural risk taking. It seems that this architectural interest in developing the central plan was matched in Georgia and Byzantium itself. It was not therefore Armenia's separation from the orthodox community which stimulated architectural experiment, but the inventiveness shown in these churches owed much to geographical circumstances and available materials.

It does seem to be the case, however, that the interiors of Armenian churches, although not devoid of monumental paintings and mosaics, were not given such great significance as in Byzantium. This has led to suggestions that resistance to icons and iconoclast thinking was especially strong in Armenia, and in other monophysite communities, and is a consequence of their theological positions. This interpretation of a general resistance to art and icons is very much open to debate, but since the cultural context of writing about images in Armenia and the character and content of the relevant texts from the sixth century onwards is largely unknown to art historians, this must be one of the key areas for increased research in Armenian studies as a contribution to the wide and intense modern interest in iconoclasm and the power of images which it inherently communicates.

At the end of the 'first' period of Armenian art, it is clear that the Armenian church looked architecturally different from the Byzantine church and that its faith was different from that of the Byzantine community. This does not imply that it should be regarded as marginal and subordinate to Byzantium. There is evidence of the influence of Armenian architecture both in the capital city of Constantinople and in other parts of the Byzantine empire. Similarly in the rock-cut churches of Cappadocia and their wall paintings, the interaction of Armenian and Byzantine traditions has often been accepted.

The second conventional periodization of Armenian art is from around 862 to 1021, and it is generally described by Byzantine art-historical commentators as a retrospective and conservative period of artistic activity. In the presence of such monuments as the tenth-century wall paintings of Tatev, the sculptured exterior of Aght'amar and the rapid expansion of the royal capital of Ani, this must surely seem a superficial interpretation of the art of this period. It may be more helpful to ponder on the fact that Byzantine art and architecture likewise has been seen as a revival of the past – the so-called 'Macedonian Renaissance' of the tenth century. It seems better in the case of Byzantium to explain

the period in terms of a complex relationship between on the one hand religious and cultural expressions of continuity and the maintenance of past standards and beliefs, and on the other hand a definite period of experiment and advance in the nature of religious art and the decoration of the holy spaces of the church. Byzantine eleventh-century church art is in all its new effects very different from the early Christian period. It is arguable that the same interpretation of artistic production is valid for Armenia in this period.

The third periodization of Armenian art is put from around 1150 up to 1500, and follows on the disruption of Armenia by the Seljuk invasions. One major consequence of the new situation in Asia Minor and the Caucasus was the establishment of Armenian Cilicia (or Lesser Armenia) which operated as a new and lively Armenian kingdom from 1099 to 1375. The thirteenth-century art of this kingdom is some of the most inventive art of the Middle Ages.

Although many artistic media were practised in Armenia, and their character may have changed during these various historical periods, the most striking and best-known productions are the illuminated manuscripts. The analysis of their stylistic connections can help to clarify some of the questions about the nature and orientation of medieval Armenian art. It should also be noted that the inclusion in many manuscripts, whether or not illuminated, of long and informative colophons is an important feature of book production in Armenia. These texts help not simply in the dating and location of the production of the book, but illuminate the cultural values of their owners and producers.

Stylistic evidence supports the conclusion that one significant source of artistic influence in the early period was Syria. Of course this connection does not offer any simple explanation for the nature of early illumination in Armenia, for books in Syria showed several different patterns of production: some books show definite regional characteristics, while others, like the Rabbula Gospels of 586, are themselves strongly influenced by Byzantine art. But it is clear that the evidence of these early Armenian books needs to be coordinated with the Byzantine materials in order to build up a fuller picture of the production of the east Mediterranean region.

All studies of Armenian illumination in the period from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries have emphasized the profound changes of style which can be seen over this period. Thanks to the evidence of the discursive colophons which, as already mentioned, are a special feature of Armenian society, the work of hundreds of individual named artists and scribes and their patrons can be identified over the course of Armenian manuscript production. Additional

technical evidence of the pigments used by Armenian miniature painters and neighbouring artists has been collected through recent scientific analysis (recorded for example in T.F. Mathews and R.S. Wieck, *Treasures in Heaven. Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts* (New York, 1994). It is in manuscript illumination and not in icons or monumental painting that Armenian art has been found conspicuously sophisticated.

The artist who is best known to art history is T'oros Roslin, who spent his active years at Hromklay in Cilicia, with seven signed illuminated manuscripts dating between 1256 and 1268. His work is immensely daring in its iconography and stylistic experiments, and it is possible to attempt to isolate the sources of many of his ideas in earlier Armenian, Byzantine and western art. The personal style is however distinctively different from any of the sources. His non-Armenian name has led to speculation that one of his parents may have been from the west, but it is not clear that this would 'explain' his personal style. The broader question is why did Cilician art flourish so richly in the generation of T'oros Roslin? Was this due to personal inventiveness, to the social structures and intellectual life of Lesser Armenia, to the cultural environment created by the Crusader kingdoms or, more specifically, to the conspicuous presence in Cilicia of Franciscan missions which were

persuasive in promoting Armenian interest in a union with the Church of Rome?

This introduction has looked at Armenian art from the point of view of the art-historian outsider, and specifically through Byzantine spectacles. But it must be clear that in many respects Armenian art can and should be treated as a cultural entity in its own right which steered its own course between the traditions of Persia, Byzantium, Syria and Islam. It was not, however, in any way an isolated phenomenon, and the question remains how Armenian art can be incorporated into a broader art-historical discourse. As a cultural production, it emerges that a feature of this art, particularly in manuscript production, was a desire to record the human and personal circumstances of its production. The medieval period of Armenian art therefore offers one of the few historical opportunities of approaching individuals and their expressed intentions in making a religious art. This opens up possibilities of a precise understanding of artistic ambitions which is offered in few, if any, other medieval cultures. Perhaps for this reason alone, Armenian art should be more systematically incorporated into world art-historical study.

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# THE CONVERSION OF ARMENIA TO CHRISTIANITY

## The Land

Armenia is a land-locked, mountainous plateau at an average height of 5000 feet above sea level. The Armenian highlands stretch roughly between 38 and 47 longitude east and 37.5 and 41 latitude north and cover an area of some 125,000 square miles. The Kur River forms the boundary between the Armenian highlands in the east and the lowlands which adjoin the Caspian Sea. The Pontic range, which joins the Lesser Caucasus mountain chain, separates Armenia from the Black Sea and Georgia, forming the northern frontier. The Taurus Mountains, which join the upper Zagros chain and the Iranian plateau, form the southern boundary of Armenia and separate it from Syria, Kurdistan and Iran. The western boundary of Armenia has generally been the Euphrates River and the northern stretch of the Anti-Taurus Mountains. The most famous natural feature of Armenia is Mount Ararat, the legendary resting place of Noah's Ark, situated about half-way between Lake Van to the south-west, in Turkish Armenia, and Lake Sevan to the north-east, in the Republic of Armenia.<sup>1</sup>

The Armenians are one of the earliest inhabitants of Asia Minor. In the confluence of tribes that took place 3000 years ago in the seventh century BC, in the mountainous region around Mount Ararat, the first phase of Armenian 'nation-formation' began with the founding of Urartu by Arame. From the point of view of sheer numbers, the races in Asia Minor were not of equal strength and eventually the Armenians found themselves in an unfavourable position. The group, however, remained a self-segregating minority so consistently and tenaciously during the ages that in the general tumult and mass scramble of the times a form of national society emerged.<sup>2</sup>

The name Armenia first occurs in 520 BC in the victory inscription of the Persian King of Kings, Darius the Great, and in the works of the Greek philosopher Hecataeus of Miletus. But it should be noted that the Armenians call themselves Hay. According to ancient tradition, this is derived from the legendary patriarch Hayk who killed the

Babylonian hero-god Bell in battle and thus established the independence of the Armenians.

In a rare insight into social conditions of the period, the Greek mercenary general Xenophon, who passed through Armenia c.400 BC, found that the country was peaceful and prosperous. Out of curiosity he noted that beer was drunk through straws. But such illuminating glimpses are rare and much of the early history of Armenia is shrouded in mystery and legend. An important landmark was the foundation of a new dynasty by Artashes in the second century.

The best known of the Artashesian (Artaxiad) kings was Tigran II (95–55 BC), known as 'the Great' by the Romans, in the time of Julius Caesar. His realm extended from the Caspian Sea to Syria and the Mediterranean Sea. Tigran was invited by the Syrians to rule over their country because of internal disagreements; this is the first example in history of a 'mandated territory', twenty centuries before the League of Nations. However, the extent of his influence eventually made him a threat to Rome, and Lucullus was sent to curb the Armenians. Tigran was over-confident in the face of the highly trained, ten-thousand-strong Roman army, and has become famed for the apocryphal witticism attributed to him that 'If they are coming as ambassadors, they are too many; if as enemies they are too few.' He was defeated in 69 BC but retained control of the Armenian heartland which he continued to rule. His realm remained intact until the Byzantines and Persians partitioned it between them in AD 387.

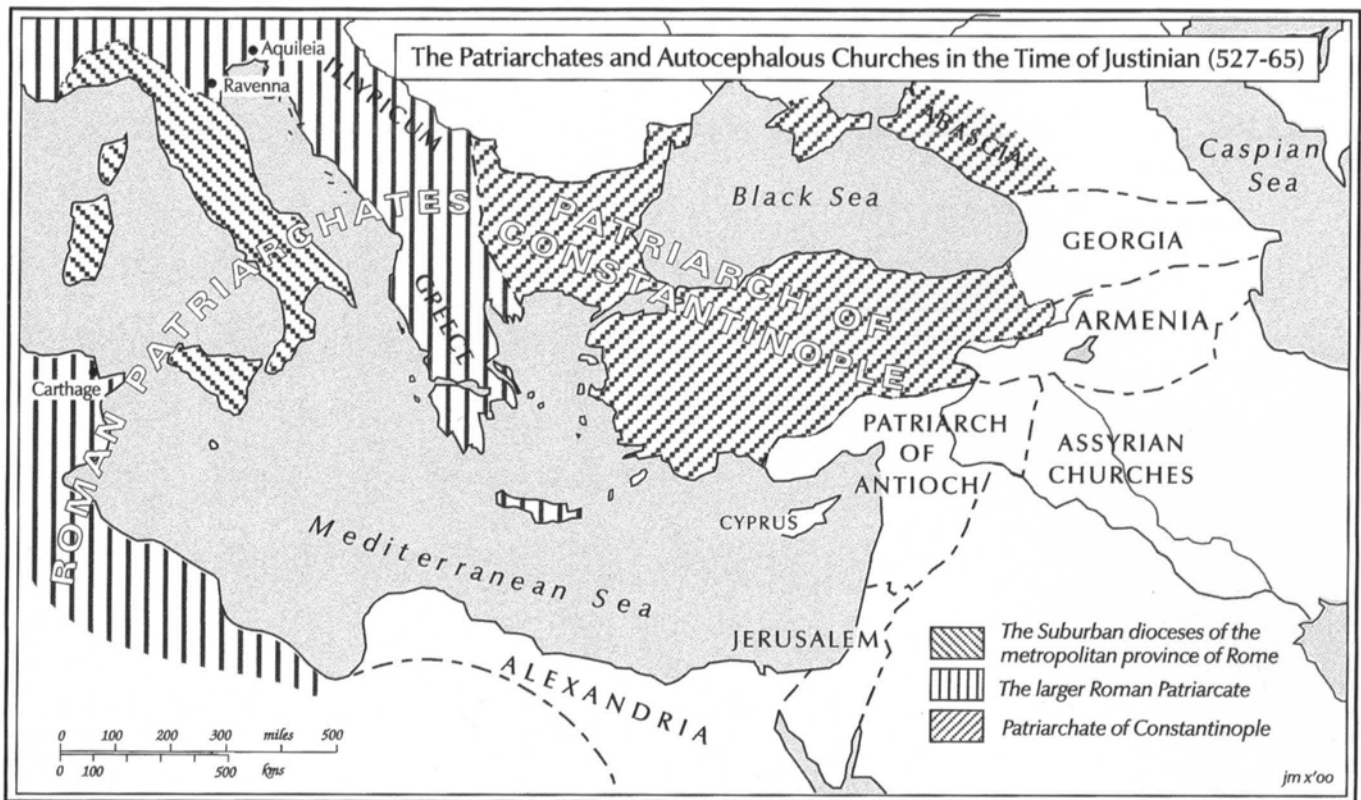
The first Parthian Arshakuni (or Arsacid), Trdat I, was crowned in Rome by Nero. Dio Cassius recounts that on a visit to the games he saw one of the contestants fall to the ground, only to be continually struck by the opponent. According to Dio Cassius, Trdat exclaimed that 'It is not fair

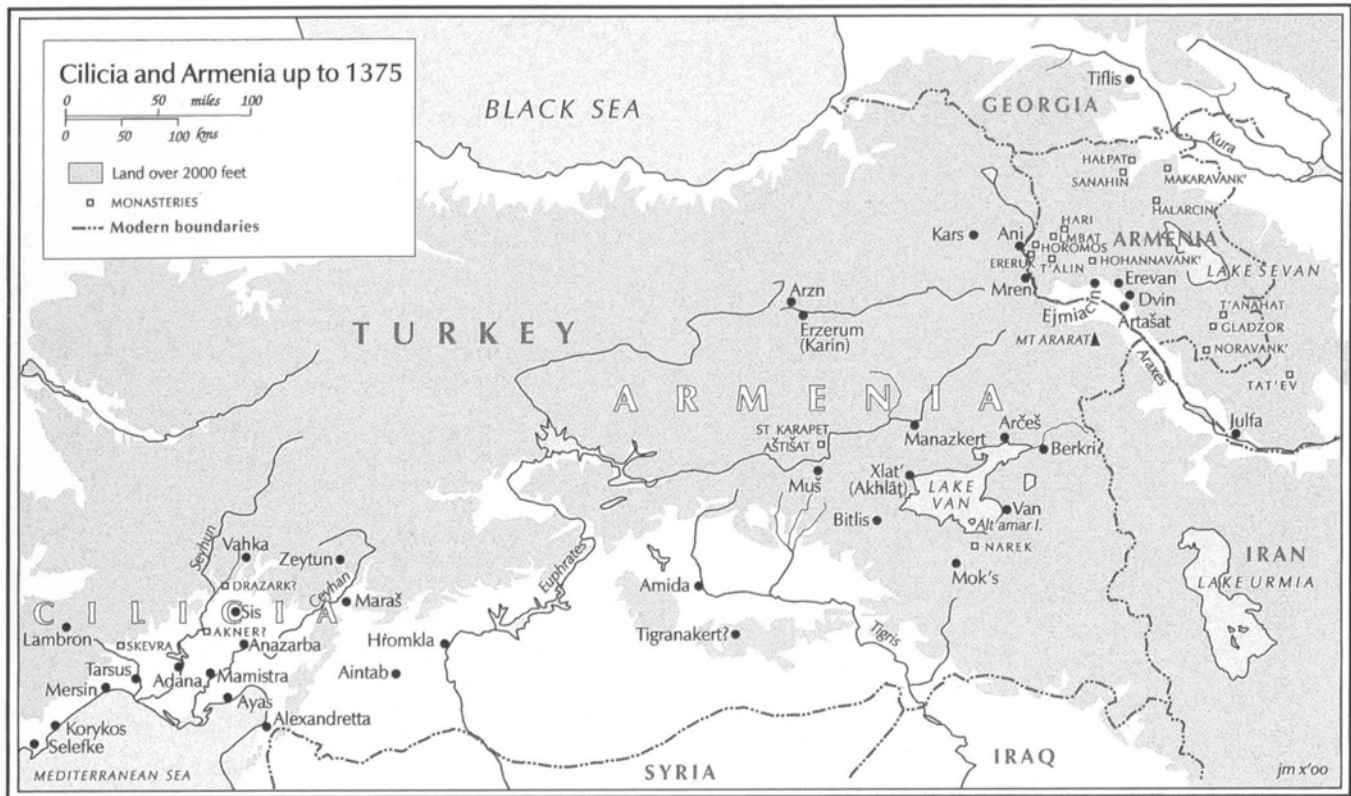
Christ in Glory, Donor and Painter, The Four Gospels, 1655. Cat. 126.





Իւսաչն տրուեալքան որքն գաց ի դատաստան. և  
փողք գաբրի ելեանք հնչեն և ձևուելք յառնեն:





that a man who has fallen should be struck', a dictum which the Armenians have adhered to, frequently to their material disadvantage.

It is interesting that the organization of the state in the Parthian Arshakuni dynasty, with its *nakharar* system of princes, relied only partially on the existence of the monarch. Each *nakharar* was independent in his own canton, certain of them holding hereditary public offices such as the prince-coronant (*t'agadir*) and the state chancellor (*hayr t'agavori*). As a consequence, the Armenian commonwealth (Roman Armenia, Persian Armenia, Armenia Magna and six separate units called satrapies) could function, and often did, in the absence of a king.

Armenia, wedged between two great powers, had its loyalty continually tested. The Roman historian Tacitus (c. AD 55 - c. 120), reflecting on this, says, 'The Armenians wavered in their loyalty and invited in the armies of both sides. Geography and the customs of the country, and frequent inter-marriages, made them more akin to the Parthians; they had no conception of freedom, but they preferred a Parthian to a Roman master', and concludes, 'Rome challenged Parthia in Armenia, because she had early determined, rightly or wrongly, that direct Parthian power should not

be allowed to extend to the shore of the Black Sea.' This ambiguity of the Armenian situation is further explained in the quotation below:

That country, from the earliest period, has owned a national character and geographical situation of equal ambiguity, since with a wide extent frontier common with our own provinces, it stretches inland right up to Media; so that the Armenians lie interposed between two past empires with which, as they detest Rome and envy the Parthian, they are too frequently at variance.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Nina G. Garsoian has noted that when the powers surrounding Armenia were in equilibrium, either in strength or in weakness, Armenia flourished, taking these opportunities to create states, foster trade, and grow artistically. When this equilibrium was lost and one side grew in strength, it rushed into the vacuum and Armenia once again became a battlefield. The earliest threat to Armenian identity came from the Persian empire. The political, religious, and cultural influences emanating from Persia were initially more powerful than the Hellenizing influences coming from the west. The first break with Persia was political; it came in

the shape of the Sassanid overthrow of the Arsacid ruling house of Parthia (226 BC) and severed the dynastic tie that bound Persia and Armenia. The second break was initiated by the ascendancy of Christianity over Zoroastrianism as Armenia's state religion. Referring to this decisive event, the celebrated French historian René Grousset wrote that by this very act 'the Armenian people undertook the most perilous but also the most glorious mission which could fall to a nation'. The orientation of Armenia towards the west was irrevocable after the acceptance of Christianity, with all its cultural, social and political implications. This orientation was to bring about a peculiar geographical layout on the map. The barriers that were to rise subsequently between Europe and Asia because of the religious differences of Christianity and Islam thus confined a small nation to a most vulnerable position. Armenia became Christendom's longest frontier, starting from the Caucasus and proceeding all the way down to the Cilician plains.

### The Spread of Christianity in Armenia

F. Dvornik in a series of studies has proved that 'one of the leading features of primitive Christianity was precisely that it laid everywhere the first foundations of the universal edifice of the Church on a national plan'.<sup>4</sup> To reach the roots of the growth of western Christendom, special emphasis must be placed on the Christian east, since it is the Eastern Churches that have best preserved some features of early Christianity.<sup>5</sup> For this perspective Church historians must abandon the picture of the history of the Christian Church as presented by the father of ecclesiastical history, Eusebius, who gives a 'very poor coverage' of the Church before the conversion of Constantine.<sup>6</sup>

When Christianity began to spread from Palestine in the first century AD, two world empires, the Christian empire of East Rome (later Byzantine) and the Zoroastrian, Sasanian empire of Persia, had a determining influence on the Christian populations that lived in the shadow of 'the two shoulders of the world'. Their frontiers cut across a largely undivided culture, with the result that Christians who lived in Roman and Sasanian Syria and Mesopotamia remained in close contact with each other, and yet were part of empires that spread the cultural achievements of their peculiarly vibrant region far to the west and to the east.

Christianity spread into Persia via Edessa, which in the first century was still the capital of an autonomous state under Roman supremacy, though it was to be incorporated into the empire two centuries later. As the same language –

Syriac – was spoken on both sides of the Romano-Persian frontier, Christianity spread from Edessa first along the Tigris and the Euphrates deep inside the realm of the Persian empire. The Parthian kings did not hinder the diffusion of Christianity and after 226 their Sasanian successors spontaneously offered asylum to Christians seeking refuge in Persia from persecution in the Roman empire. Not until war broke out between the Romans and the Persians in 340 did the Christians come under public suspicion, as was only to be expected, and a bloody persecution was let loose under Shapur II. In the realm of the Romans as well as of the Persians, Christianity had to exist as a religious minority amidst a non-Christian population, subjected to non-Christian rulers. Church history is full of accounts of martyrs in both empires.<sup>7</sup> But Christianity under Persian rule differed from that under the Roman empire in many ways.

Christians in the Persian empire were not subject to persecutions officially ordered by the King of Kings. The persecutions in the Persian empire were rather of a local nature. The ruler of the state was not behind the martyrdom of individual Christians. Even when persecution was at its worst, Christian worship was freely carried on in some provinces. In Persia persecutions never assumed the character of a general imperial policy as in the Roman empire. It was the powerful Persian Zoroastrian religion that after the third century flourished and deprived Christianity of its chance to convert the ruler and the state.<sup>8</sup> The fact that the Persian kings were not Christians, and the Churches in Persia never enjoyed the position and the privileges of a state religion, in no way prejudiced the development of Persian Christianity and its spread to the east. The Church in Persia did not need privileges to fulfil its mission; it had all the characteristics of a national Church without the dangerous entanglements which a state Church could scarcely avoid.<sup>9</sup>

In the Roman empire the situation was quite different. Since the time of Emperor Decius in the fifties of the third century the ruler himself had tried to wipe out the Christians from all over his empire through cruel persecutions. In its opposition to Christianity, however, the pagan Roman authority could not rely on any particular religion being strong enough to check Christianity in the long run. The Christians in the realm of the Romans existed in a religious environment, which, despite all syncretic approaches, was generally multiform and in the end powerless to prevent the Christian victory that came with the conversion of Constantine the Great.

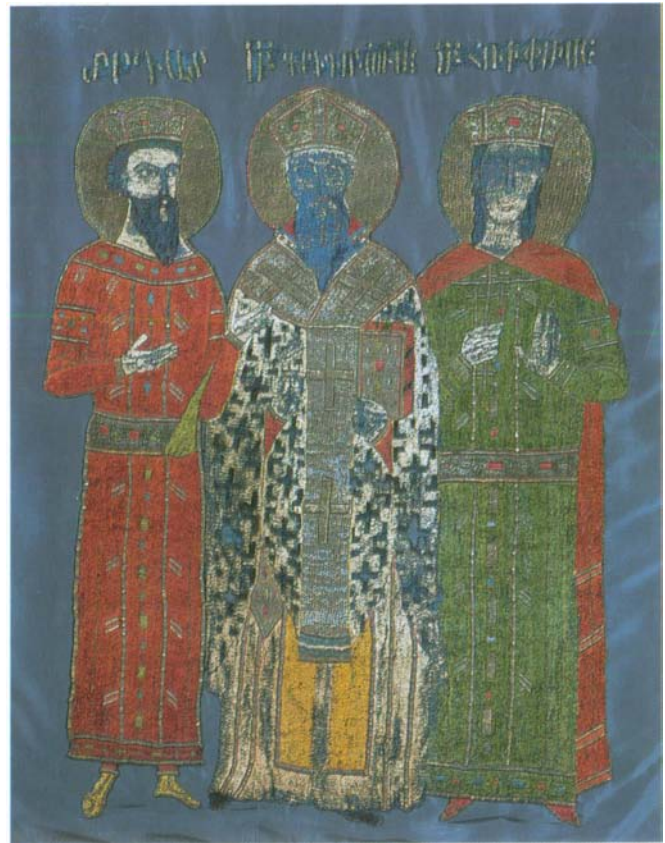
The hostility which for centuries divided the two empires made it absolutely necessary for the Christians of the Persian empire to build up their own independent eccle-

siastical organization and to foster as little contact as possible with the Christian Churches of the Roman empire. This made the Persian Church a national Church over which the bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon wielded unlimited authority.<sup>10</sup> It adopted the church organization as it had grown up in Roman Christianity, complete with patriarchs, metropolitans and bishops, ruling from definite sees over carefully delimited dioceses as the necessary framework to carry on its mission to the east. And yet the sense of being part of the Universal Church was very much alive and received adequate expression. It always valued its relations with Edessa and Antioch. In AD 410, the Persian Church accepted the canons of the Council of Nicaea and some other western synods. In AD 424, the Persian Church took an important step when a new Persian synod decreed that thereafter there would be no appeal from the judgement of the Catholicos to the Western Fathers, the metropolitan of Edessa and the patriarch of Antioch: 'Easterners shall not complain of their own Patriarch to the Western Patriarchs; any case that cannot be settled by him shall await the tribunal of Christ.'<sup>11</sup> The above decision has often been construed as an expression of the Persian Church's schism in disguise, but the verdict is rash; we should rather read the decision as the manifestation of the natural desire of every national Church to be independent of other Churches, which in its eyes are also national. There was a general tendency all over the east for every Church to be autocephalous: the Armenian Church was another case in point.

### The Date of Armenia's Conversion to Christianity

In the past twenty-five years remarkable re-evaluations have been made of the sources concerning the Christianization of Armenia. These advances have been accomplished through an analysis of the sources, as well as through some notable revisions in our understanding of the genealogical and chronological aspects of the history of the Armenian Arshakuni kingdom.

The exact year in which the conversion of King Trdat took place is not agreed among scholars. Tournebize argued that the most probable date lay between 290 and 295. E. Dulaurier, M. Ormanian, M.-L. Chaumont and Father Poghos Ananian, relying largely on the evidence of Movses Khorenatsi's *History*, have calculated it to have been in or about 302.<sup>12</sup> Movses had concluded that Trdat had begun his reign in the third year of the emperor Diocletian and that St Gregory the Illuminator had 'sat on the throne of Thaddeus in the seventeenth year of Trdat's reign'.<sup>13</sup> Diocletian's



Gonfalon of King Trdat and Saints Gregory and Hřip'simē, 1448. Cat. 41.

reign began in November 284, so Trdat's year of accession would have been 286 or 287, and his seventeenth 302 or 303. H. Manandyan's reading of the evidence leads to a different date.<sup>14</sup> He placed the return of Trdat to Armenia from Rome in 298 or 299, subsequent to the peace established between Rome and Persia after Galerius's victory. Hence Trdat's seventeenth year fell in 314, which, he concluded, was the date of the king's conversion. Behind this conclusion lies Manandyan's proposition that Trdat could not have adopted the Christian faith before 313. It would have been impossible for Trdat, the protégé of the Romans and Diocletian in particular, to have adopted officially the Christian faith in his realm when it was opposed by imperial policy. In a passage preserved in the Greek version of Agat'angeghos, Trdat's reliance on Diocletian in matters of religion is put in these terms:

From a youthful age raised and educated by you [Diocletian] ... hailing the gods who saved our power

together with ourselves, I loathe the so-called Christians. What is more, I gave over to the bitterest death [after] tortures a certain Cappadocian [named] Gregory beloved by me, throwing [him] into a pit in which dwell snakes who devour [those] thrown therein. And now, Lord emperor, I will fulfil thy orders to me with all haste and willingness.<sup>15</sup>

An external evidence for the dating of Trdat's conversion is provided by St Gregory's consecration in Cappadocia. According to Agat'angeghos's *History of the Armenians*, Gregory went to Caesarea where a council of bishops had been held on the occasion of his consecration. The date of this council is fixed at 314.<sup>16</sup> This date is consistent with another statement in Agat'angeghos that, on his return from Caesarea, Gregory had brought with him the relics of St Athenogenes. The latter was martyred probably about 303-5, so his relics would have been available in 314. Following this line of the argument, Ananian concluded that the year 314 was also the date of the 'official' conversion of the Armenians.<sup>17</sup> Behind Ananian's conclusion lies Manandyan's proposition that Trdat could not have adopted the Christian faith before 313, as this was the year in which an edict had been promulgated in Milan by the emperors Constantine and Licinius granting freedom of worship to Christians.

The non-Armenian evidence for the conversion of Armenia is small, but nevertheless important. Sozomen in his *Ecclesiastical History* refers to the Armenians:

the Armenians were the first to embrace Christianity. It is said that Tiridates, the sovereign of that nation, was converted by means of a miracle which was wrought in his own house; and that he issued commands to all the rulers, by a herald, to adopt the same religion. Subsequently, the Christian religion became known to the neighbouring tribes, and was very greatly disseminated.<sup>18</sup>

A second external source is Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*. The author records in relation to Emperor Maximinus Daia, who governed the Roman province of Oriens:

In addition to this, the tyrant had the further trouble of the war against the Armenians, men who from ancient times had been friends and allies of the Romans; but as they were Christians and exceedingly earnest in their piety towards the Deity, this hater of God, by attempting to compel them to sacrifice to idols and demons, made them foes instead of friends, and enemies instead of allies.<sup>19</sup>

This war took place in 312. The outcome was that Maximinus Daia 'was worn out along with his commanders in the Armenian war'.

The question that now arises is: if Gregory was sent to Caesarea for consecration in 314, when was Trdat's conversion likely to have taken place? Relying on the chronology of the *Narratio de rebus Armeniae*, compiled in about 700, the Council of Nicaea had been held 'in the thirty-fourth year of Trdat and the twentieth after the deliverance of St Gregory'. The deliverance refers to Gregory's emergence from the dungeon. His release had occurred just before the king's conversion. If the Council of Nicaea was held in June 325, then the release of Gregory and the subsequent conversion of the king took place in 305 or 306. Confirmation of this dating is provided by Patriarch Michael's independent testimony that Gregory's mission took place 'at the beginning of Constantine's reign', i.e. around 306. Furthermore, Trdat's persecution of the Christians now coincides with the Great Persecution that broke out on 23 February 303, led by Diocletian. The flight of the thirty-three Christian nuns to Armenia must have taken place between 304 and 306. It was led by Gayanē and Hrip'simē, and they suffered martyrdom at the hands of King Trdat sometime during those years. St John Chrysostom in his panegyric dedicated to St Gregory, written during his exile in Armenia (AD 404-7), refers to the two virgin martyrs. The death of the young women led to the eventual conversion of the king.

Ruben Manaseryan in his recent monograph discusses the question of why Eusebius who, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, describes the Armenians as 'friends and allies' of the Romans and refers to the fact that Maximinus Daia 'was defeated in the war with the Armenians', fails to mention the name of the Armenian Christian king Trdat and Gregory the Illuminator.<sup>20</sup> It is puzzling that Eusebius, who praises Armenian Christians for being 'exceedingly earnest in their piety towards the Deity', provides very little coverage of their conversion to the Christian faith. Eusebius also records that the Armenian Church attracted the attention of Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria, who 'wrote to those in Armenia, likewise On Repentance, whose bishop was Meruzanes'.<sup>21</sup> The fifth-century historian Sozomen knows that 'the Armenians were the first to embrace Christianity' during the reign of their king Tiridates. Indeed, Edessa too had anticipated Rome and Sozomen asserts that Edessa encouraged, at least indirectly, the Christianization of adjoining lands. In the north, the Iberians - the inhabitants, that is, of eastern Georgia - became Christians toward the end of Constantine's reign or at the beginning of Constantius's, and sent the emperor a request for priests. But ever since his conquest of

the east in 324 the concept of a universal Church and universal empire became an achievable objective as presented by Eusebius in a single historical narrative. 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me,' Jesus proclaimed when he appeared to his disciples in Galilee after the Resurrection. 'Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you.' Whether or not Jesus actually pronounced these or similar words, the Evangelist draws a direct and fateful link between heavenly and earthly power and the obligation to propagate Christianity through mission. This is the foundation text of Christian universalism, and one of Eusebius's favourite quotations. As emperor of Rome, but also a sort of bishop, Constantine is presented by Eusebius as propagating belief and practices as well as moulding the institutions and public doctrine of the new empire.<sup>22</sup> The state in its own interest had incorporated the Church: the emperor as the ruler of this state became the ruler of its Church as well. This new situation found its innermost expression in the fact that the empire and the ruler in his imperial dignity became from now on an integral topic in the Christian theology. It was the new conception of a 'political theology' which characterized for all time the essence of the established Church in the Roman and later Byzantine empire. Eusebius was the theological authority who gave the empire and its emperor a suitable place in the divine 'oikonomia' in the context of promise and fulfilment, by holding up Constantine as the one chosen by God to be the instrument of his providence.<sup>23</sup> Eusebius perceived the Christian empire in the line of the biblical tradition as interpreted by St Paul in Galatians 3: 6–8.

The transformation of Christianity within the Roman empire into the established Church was not without consequences for the Christians beyond the Roman borders. If the Christian empire with its Christian emperor and its political power was of such eschatological importance, what about those Christians who lived in the midst of paganism outside the divine realm? If the Christian empire was the 'image of Christ' and the emperor its supreme representative, what was his relation to those Christians who remained subjected to other rulers like the Persian King of Kings?

Constantine had also been looking to Persia itself, and claiming guardianship over the substantial Christian community that had emerged there since the latter half of the second century. In a letter he addressed at that time to Shapur II, and parts of which Eusebius included in his *Vita Constantini*, the Christian emperor made a famous statement of this claim. After underlining at length how God is on his

side, Constantine observes in his final statement, 'Cherish them in accordance with your usual humanity, for by this gesture of faith you will confer an immeasurable benefit on both yourself and us.'<sup>24</sup>

Admittedly, no reader of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* would guess that Sasanian Persia even existed, except as the source of Mani's heresy. Whereas Tertullian had taken the existence of 'places inaccessible to the Romans, but subject to Christ' as a cause of pride,<sup>25</sup> Eusebius attached little importance to Churches that did not fall into his one god—one empire—one emperor schema. Christianity and Rome were for him essentially one and the same, and so the existence of the Christians of Persia is ignored, only at the moment when Constantine decided to do something about them. The letter to Shapur II was a first warning; its allusion to divinely assisted conquests was a thinly disguised warning. Constantine no doubt discussed the state of Christianity in Persia with Bishop John 'of Persia', who attended the Council of Nicaea,<sup>26</sup> while the presence of a bishop from Persia at the Council of Tyre and at the dedication of the Anastasis basilica in Jerusalem (both in 335) illustrated how these major ecclesiastical events could be used to underline Constantine's claim to patronage of the Universal Church. At the ceremony in Jerusalem, Eusebius declared that the Roman empire heralds God's kingdom, 'has already united most of the various peoples, and is further destined to obtain all those not yet united, right up to the very limits of the inhabited world'.<sup>27</sup> Additional motive or pretext for the impending campaign was supplied by Shapur's own aggressiveness over conflicting interests in Armenia.<sup>28</sup> In 337 Constantine was in the midst of preparations to 'kindle the Parthian fires'<sup>29</sup> that had lain mostly dormant for almost four decades. Constantine appointed his half-nephew Hannibalianus with responsibility for Pontus, Armenia, and neighbouring territories, and the title 'King of Kings',<sup>30</sup> which he claimed for himself, indicated that he was declaring his suzerainty over Armenia, Lazica, Albania and Georgia. Persia could hardly ignore such a provocation. The care with which Constantine planned his expedition compels the conclusion that his aim was indeed to make the whole world Christian and Roman. He perceived that Christian Rome possessed a cultural impetus *vis-à-vis* Persia that polytheist Rome had lacked. The crusade for world empire, for a practical realization at last of politico-cultural universalism, was on. If Aphrahat can be taken as speaking for them, Shapur's Christian subjects welcomed the new turn of events and identified with the Roman emperor.<sup>31</sup> But just as he was setting out, Constantine died, in May 337. The Christians of Persia realized too late their error of letting themselves be



Altar curtain 'The Conversion of Armenia', Madras, 1789. Cat. 42.

seen as Rome's allies, and paid for it with bloody persecution in the decades to come. This must be part of the reason why they eventually began to distance themselves from Rome, though it was not until 424 that they formally declared independence from the see of Antioch.<sup>32</sup>

To present Constantine in a better light and to combat the accusation that he was the aggressor and cause of the ruination of his country, the story of his final days was rewritten. An important group of mainly early and non-Christian sources record how Constantine died at Nicomedia, at the start of his campaign against Persia. Ammianus Marcellinus, for example, writes: 'Since his [Julian's] detractors alleged that he had stirred up the storms of war anew, to the ruin of his country, they should know clearly, through the teachings of truth, that it was not Julian but Constantine who kindled the Parthian fires.'<sup>33</sup> Understandably, ecclesiastical historians preferred not to present their hero Constantine as an aggressive old man who died just at the wrong moment. Accordingly, they say nothing, in this context, of the Persian campaign, and assert that the reason Constantine died at Nicomedia, not Constantinople, was that, having already fallen ill, he had gone to take the warm baths near Helenopolis.<sup>34</sup> This is the *Life of Constantine's* version too, except that Eusebius does not omit the campaign against Persia; instead, he brings it to an abrupt end, unaware of the dismal history of Romano-Persian relations.

Agat'angeghos's *History of the Armenians* describes a visit by King Trdat of Armenia to Constantine the Great in

Rome, after they had both become Christians, on which occasion an Armeno-Roman treaty of friendship had been signed.<sup>35</sup> The account of the meeting is legendary but the Armenian sources are agreed on the existence of the treaty. P'awstos states that the emperor Constantine II 'recalled the treaty which had been sealed and established under oath through mediation between the emperor Constantine and king Trdat'.<sup>36</sup> Movses Khorenatsi records that the Armenian *nakharars* had called on Constantius to 'remember the treaty on oath of thy father, Constantine, with our king Trdat',<sup>37</sup> and in the same context Eghishe writes that the treaty had been found, at the command of the emperor, after searching many books.<sup>38</sup> It is also implied in a letter addressed to an Arshakuni king from the emperor Julian: 'Accordingly you must discard ... the emperor Constantine of blessed memory ... and take heed of me, Julian.'<sup>39</sup> Although this letter is regarded as spurious, it is referred to by Sozomen,<sup>40</sup> and whoever composed it knew of the existence of an Armeno-Roman alliance sealed at the time of Constantine.<sup>41</sup> Finally, Ammianus Marcellinus confirms the existence of an alliance before Constantius II (337–61), although he does not say when it had been made. Constantius had 'heard that [Arsaces] had often been worked upon by the Persian king with deception, with threats, and with guile to induce him to give up his alliance with the Romans ...'.<sup>42</sup>

An Armeno-Roman alliance made sense in the context of the international situation in western Asia in the early fourth century because Armenia was seen as a buffer state between the Roman and Persian empires. As such it would also have been valuable to any emperor vying for control of the empire. The unanswered questions are the exact date of the treaty and whether it was in fact concluded at a personal meeting between king and emperor, as indicated by Agat'angeghos, or through envoys, as implied by P'awstos.

Constantine's habit of conducting state affairs personally makes it likely that the treaty was negotiated at royal level, while both monarchs had personal reasons for meeting. Trdat had lived in the Roman empire during his exile, while Constantine had probably fought in Armenia during Galerius's campaign in 298.<sup>43</sup> An early meeting of the two rulers could have taken place when Constantine came to the east to serve as tribune in 293, at the time of Trdat's return to Armenia,<sup>44</sup> or while he was serving under Diocletian and Galerius in Syria in 296–97. Less likely is the scenario that they could have met while Constantine was at Diocletian's court in Nicomedia in 303.<sup>45</sup>

For the signing of the treaty, Agat'angeghos's *History* states that the pope was present, but there is some confusion regarding his identity since the sources mention both



Sylvester and Eusebius.<sup>46</sup> In the context of a meeting in the city of Rome, Sylvester (314–35) is feasible, but Eusebius is impossible since he was pope for only a very short period in 309–10, when Constantine's rival emperor Maxentius controlled the city. This makes it likely that the original name in the narrative was in fact Eusebius. As suggested by Gelzer, the cleric in question could have been Eusebius of Nicomedia, who was closely associated with Constantine.<sup>47</sup> This is supported by the virtual impossibility that the meeting took place in Rome, if only because Constantine did not regard the city as his residence and visited it on few occasions. Nor could such a visit have gone unnoticed by contemporary writers, especially when pagan Rome was eclipsed by other cities of the empire. The earlier visit by Trdat I had created a deep impression on the Romans, and Trdat the Great's visit is probably based on a reminiscence of that earlier journey.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the description of the meeting place as the royal city of the Romans could have signified any Roman royal city, of which there were a number in the first half of the fourth century. Three of these were possible sites for a meeting: Nicomedia, Serdica, which was described by Constantine as 'my Rome', and Constantinople, which came to be known as the 'new Rome'.<sup>49</sup>

The date of the possible meeting is limited by the complex political conditions of the period. At the beginning of 312, the Roman empire was ruled by four emperors. Constantine held Britain, Gaul and Spain. Maxentius ruled Italy and Africa. Licinius retained the Danubian provinces, Thracia and Macedonia, while Maximinus Daia ruled Oriens, Asiana and Pontica. These emperors fell into two camps. On one side, Constantine and Licinius tolerated the Christians within their jurisdiction. On the other, Maximinus Daia actively persecuted Christians and took positive measures to restore paganism. Maxentius tended to side with him and it was believed that they had a secret pact, but he did tolerate the Christians.<sup>50</sup> On the death of Galerius in 311, Maximinus Daia occupied Asiana and Pontica. In November 312, Maxentius was defeated by Constantine, who thus added Italy and Africa to his domains, isolating Maximinus. The position of Armenia was crucial since her frontiers with the Roman empire lay entirely along the provinces ruled by him. Trdat, it has been shown, had been converted some six years earlier and would therefore have been a potential ally of Constantine and Licinius. A further consideration was that the Christian Armenians would have constituted an unsettling influence on the large Christian population of Maximinus's recently acquired provinces in Asia Minor, and thus posed a serious threat to him. With the creation of this geopolitical situation, Constantine and Licinius may

have made some approach to Trdat to ensure his friendship. Such an invitation could have contained a personal element since Trdat had once fought in Licinius's army.<sup>51</sup>

Whether or not the Armeno-Roman treaty was concluded at this time, as proposed by Gat'rijan and others,<sup>52</sup> this is when Maximinus Daia attacked the Armenians. There is no mystery about the Armenian war in the autumn of 312: it is exactly the action we would have expected Maximinus to take to relieve his situation.<sup>53</sup> He followed it with an invasion of Europe, was defeated by Licinius near Adrianople in the spring of 313, and died soon after. Licinius, who had married Constantine's sister in February of that year, now took Asia Minor and the Armenian frontier. However, if the treaty was signed in 312 or early 313, there can have been no question of a personal meeting between Constantine and Trdat since it would have involved a journey across Maximinus Daia's territory.

Constantine was in Rome in the summer of 315 to celebrate his decennialia, but with Licinius in control of Asia Minor the latter could not have been snubbed by the Armenian king crossing his territory to form an alliance with his rival. Consequently, if the treaty had been signed in this period, Licinius too would have been associated with it. Of this there is no evidence in the extant sources, but it is possible that reference to him was expunged at a later date. On the other hand, some inscriptional evidence indicates that Licinius claimed, among other titles, that of ARMEN. MAX., which implies that he had waged war against the Armenians. The date of this attack is uncertain. On the assumption that such lists of titles were invariably stated in strict chronological order, Barnes dated it to between 313 and 315,<sup>54</sup> while Honigmann placed the campaign between 314 and 319, corresponding to the period of Licinius's deteriorating relations with both Constantine and the Christians under his rule who, Licinius suspected, were secretly plotting with Constantine against himself.<sup>55</sup> A parallel development of enmity towards Trdat was known to Movses Khorenatsi: 'And [Licinius] had grown cold in his love for Trdat, our king; he regarded [Trdat] as if he were in reality an enemy'.<sup>56</sup> The conflict must have taken place after Gregory's consecration in Caesarea in 314; otherwise Gregory would not have been able to travel to Cappadocia, in Licinius's territory. Thus the most probable year for Licinius's attack on the Armenians would be 315.

Gelzer's conclusion was that the monarchs had met in Serdica after the battle of Cibalae when Constantine first defeated Licinius.<sup>57</sup> This is believed to have taken place in 314, but the date has since been revised to 316, a settlement having been reached between the emperors early in 317.<sup>58</sup> A



Reliquary of St Step'anos, Van, 10th century. Cat. 23.

treaty between Constantine and Trdat would have made particular sense at this time for both parties. Constantine appears to have received envoys from Persia in 321,<sup>59</sup> but a royal visit by the Armenian king before Licinius's final defeat in September 324, involving travel across Licinius's territory, would have been difficult. For the period after the Council of Nicaea (325), Movses's explanation that Trdat was reluctant to leave Armenia in view of possible trouble on the Persian border is credible since the young Persian king Shapur II was approaching his majority. The situation did not ease before Trdat's death in the early 330s. A meeting after 325 thus being precluded, we are left with the

period between Licinius's surrender at Nicomedia on 19 September 324, when Constantine became sole emperor,<sup>60</sup> and the Council of Nicaea in May/June 325, as the most favourable time for a personal meeting.

Possible dates for the treaty are thus late 312, early 313, 317/318 or 324/325. Regarding a personal meeting between Constantine and Trdat, although it is difficult to find a feasible time and place for it, the unexpected presence of Eusebius, who can only be the bishop of Nicomedia, suggests that the report is based on historical fact. Eusebius became bishop c. 318 and was deposed temporarily, as a consequence of his stand on the nature of Christ, from late 326 to May 328. The date for a meeting is thus limited to the period between 317 and 326. The possible dates therefore are 317/318 and 324/325. The former period is excluded since Constantine was generally to be found in Europe then.<sup>61</sup>

This leaves 324–5, when an eminently suitable occasion was the foundation of Constantinople in November 324, when Constantius was invested with the imperial purple. Soon after this Constantine left Nicomedia to travel across Asia Minor to Antioch.<sup>62</sup> A brief meeting, perhaps in Cappadocia, could have taken place then, but the journey itself has been questioned.<sup>63</sup> Finally, they could have met in Nicomedia in early 325. In the absence of further evidence, it is not possible to arrive at a more definite conclusion.

### Apostolicity and Christian Missions

And at the same time certain Armenian brethren, fugitives from the Tartar invasions, arrived as pilgrims in England. When they came to St. Ives one of them was taken ill and unfortunately died in that town. He was reverently buried next to St Ivo's spring, the water of which is said to have great virtue. These brethren were of most honest life and amazing abstinence, being always in prayer, with rugged, honest faces and beards. The one who died was their leader and master, George by name, and he is thought to have been a most holy man and a bishop; he now began to perform miracles. (*Chronicles of Matthew Paris: The Chronica Majora 1247–1250*)

When it turned to Christianity, Armenia, like Georgia at the same time, turned away from Persia toward Rome. Christianity had entered the mountains of Armenia both from the Syriac-speaking plains around Edessa and from the river-valleys that led up from Caesarea in Cappadocia to Erzerum.<sup>64</sup> According to a fifth-century Armenian tradition

echoed in the *Epic Histories* of P'awstos Buzand and the Armenian version of the *Acts of Addai*, Christianity was first introduced into Armenia from Edessa by Thaddeus, the apostle who converted the royal princess Sandukht. From the seventh century the name of the apostle Bartholomew is also introduced into the apostolicity claim within Armenian historiography. These traditions corroborate historical evidence pointing toward the influx of various early Christian elements into Armenia from Syria and Adiabene during the second and third centuries.<sup>65</sup> The second-century Church Father Tertullian in his *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* listed the Armenians among those peoples who had converted to the new faith. In the middle of the third century, the Armenian Christian community in the south-western Armenian city of Sophene was sufficiently organized to attract the attention of Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria who, according to Eusebius, wrote a letter *On Repentance* to their bishop named Meruzanes.<sup>66</sup>

The second, more successful, attempt to establish Christianity in Armenia is credited to St Gregory the Illuminator and the See of Cappadocia in the late third or fourth century. With the conversion of King Trdat the missionary work of St Gregory received ecclesiastical organization. Agat'angeghos, who attests the conversion of Armenia to Christianity by Gregory, gives apostolic foundation to the fresh missionary impetus by linking the Christianization of Armenia to the martyrdom of St Thaddeus in the district of Artaz near Maku. In the history of the numerous apostolic origins claimed by various churches east and west, the Armenian catholicos and historian Yovhannes V (898–929) provides as good an explanation as any:

The establishment of the holy Christian faith spread all over the earth, and above all among the Armenian people, thanks to Bartholomew, who is one of the twelve, and Thaddeus who is one of the seventy, who received from Our Lord Jesus Christ the responsibility for evangelising and spreading the doctrine in our land.<sup>67</sup>

The critical objections to Armenian tradition in this matter are not stronger or more cogent than the difficulties which lie in the way of similar claims raised on behalf of other Apostolic Churches.

Despite the triumphal narratives that looked back to the heroic age of Trdat and St Gregory, the conversion of the pagan aristocracy of Armenia was a slow process. Paganism persisted for centuries in the intellectual culture inside and outside the Christian Church; it persisted in oral literature, cultic practices and religious festivals. In the critical words of P'awstos Buzand:

For from antiquity when they had taken on the name of Christians, it was merely as [though it were] some human religion; and they did not receive it with ardent faith, but as some human folly and under duress. They did not receive it with understanding as is fitting, with hope and faith, but only those who were to some degree acquainted with Greek or Syriac learning were able to achieve some partial inkling of it. As for those who were without skill in learning and who were the great of the people – the *nakharars* as well as the peasantry ... consumed themselves with vile thoughts in perverse practices, and in ancient pagan customs.<sup>68</sup>

The Armenian Church had to tread a narrow path between a number of political forces and religious ideologies. These included Persian Zoroastrianism, which had some degree of political control over the major part of Armenia, the patriarchate of Constantinople, which was influential in the remainder of the country, the Manichaeans, who troubled both the Zoroastrians and Christians, and various sects such as the Messalians and Borborites. Like his contemporaries Bishop Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom, the Caesarean-educated Catholicos Nerses condemned pagan practices – weeping, loud wailing, unbridled mourning, dances. The Council of Shahapivan was convened in about 446 to condemn these practices.<sup>69</sup> Ghazar P'arpet's Letter to Vahan Mamikonian complains that those who were educated in Greek schools were regarded with special suspicion, presumably because Hellenic learning was identified with paganism. Certain *abeghas* (celibate priests) had organized opposition to those who had been educated in Greek schools. Ghazar himself had been accused of belonging to a sect which was 'without name as regards a teacher, and without scripture as regards its beliefs'. He would not name the sect because he regarded it as 'far too besmirching to express in writing'.<sup>70</sup> Catholicos Yovhannes Mandakuni (478–90) refers to minstrel-mad drunkards who gave themselves up to debauchery.

It was Nerses who tackled these difficulties, and gave the Church some systematic organization. P'awstos Buzand categorically states that Nerses 'increased the ranks of the ministers of the church in every place within his authority in the territory of Armenia, and he placed bishops as overseers in every district. And he always watched over his jurisdiction and authority for as much time as was allotted to him'.<sup>71</sup> From another quotation it appears that Nerses did not confine his activities to Armenia. P'awstos says:

At about that time, St Nerses was touring his own principalities, for he held as a principality fifteen districts,

the original hereditary appanage, that had been destined [for his house] as their own particular [holdings]. And the major ones among these districts were the following: Ayrarat, Daranagh, Ekeghcats, Taron, Bzhnunik' Dsop'k', those in between, and those around them.<sup>72</sup>

The council at Ashtishat which he convened in 365 set down canonical regulations banning pagan-style funerals (rending of garments, loud wailing and unbridled mourning). Almshouses, hospitals and hostels were established throughout the country to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, to provide homes to the sick, and shelter to the poor. Nerses modelled his charitable activities on the work of his friend Eustathius of Sebastia and Basil of Caesarea.<sup>73</sup>

The decision to convert Armenia to the Christian faith was a political decision and offered better ground and hope for national cohesion than could the traditional combination of polytheism and Persian Mazdaism. Armenia was now aligned with Rome. But this was only the beginning of a relationship between Christian Armenia and Christian Rome that was quite as tortured as the Armenian relationship with Persia. Was Armenia, or was it not, part of Christian Rome? The power play between centre and periphery was to become the dominant problem in the history of both Rome and later Byzantium. So it was to Armenia's advantage to secure the conversion of its immediate neighbours, Georgia and Albania (Aghuank') and the other Caucasian races to the Christian faith and consider them as its natural allies and keep them in the Armenian orbit.<sup>74</sup> Armenian and non-Armenian sources bear evidence that the East Georgian Church was associated, at least until the late fifth century, with the ecclesiastical centre established by St Gregory in Ashtishat and Dvin. The missionary effect of Trdat's conversion and of St Gregory's consecration concerned all the peoples of the region. Christian priests were sent to other neighbouring nations and this explains why St Gregory the Illuminator is highly venerated throughout the medieval period, not only by Armenians but also by the Byzantines, the Roman Church and the Georgians.<sup>75</sup>

Movses Daskhurantsi in his account of St Gregory mentions: 'And he accepted the dignity of patriarch, and went and converted the lands of the Georgians and Albanians. Arriving in the province of Haband, he taught them to keep the commandments of the Son of God. He laid the foundations of a church in the cosmopolis of Amaras and appointed workmen and foremen to build a church there'.<sup>76</sup> Movses Khorenatsi recalls the mission of Grigoris, one of the grandsons of St Gregory, to the tribe of the Mask'ut'k'. It is revealing that King Trdat sends the mission because governors from the north-western regions came and said to the

king, 'if you wish to rule lands in the true way according to this faith, send them bishops from the line of Saint Gregory because they are seeking them ardently. And we know for certain that they will respect them for the famous name of Gregory and his posterity and will do everything according to their commands'.<sup>77</sup> Agat'angeghos gives his version of St Gregory's missionary work in Armenia and neighbouring states:

Thus throughout the whole land of Armenia, from end to end, he extended the labour of preaching the gospel. From the city of Satala to the land of Khaghtik', to Kaghajik', to the very borders of the Massagetae, to the gate of the Alans, to the borders of the Kaspk', to P'aytakaran, the city of the Armenian kingdom; from the city of Amida to the city of Nisibis he passed along the borders of Syria, the land of Nor-Shirakan and Korduk, to the secure land of the Medes, to the house of the prince of Mahk'rtun, to Atrpatakan - he spread his gospel preaching.<sup>78</sup>

In N. Mar's Arabic version of the *Life of St Gregory* we find: 'And he [Gregory] began to embellish the churches there and appointed priests from among those who knew the Holy Scriptures. He sent another one to Georgia, and one to the land of the Abkhazians, and another to the Alans.' The same source continues: 'He sent to the land of the Abkhazians Sofronios, who was a Cappadocian priest. He was placed with Saint Gregory and anointing him bishop he sent him. And he sent to the Alans Thomas a chosen man. He was from the small town of Satala.'<sup>79</sup> The Georgian version of the life of Gregory states: 'He [Gregory] had already preached the word of the Gospel not only in Armenia, but also in Persia, Syria, Marastan.'<sup>80</sup> It must be assumed that for the Mask'ut'ians the preaching and authority of St Gregory the Illuminator was not effective and did not have the desired outcome. Following the death of King Trdat, 'the ever faithless Aghuank' plotted, and these barbarians murdered the blessed one by trampling him with their horses on the plain of Vantnean near the Caspian Sea. His deacons took him away, brought him to Lesser Siunik', and buried him in the town of Amaras'.<sup>81</sup> Movses Daskhurantsi adds to this testimony the information that 'Gregory had taken with him the relics of the blessed Zacharia and Pantaleon, to the town of Dzri in the principality of Albania, built a small church there and deposited therein the relics of Zacharia and Pantaleon, appointing a priest named Daniel to watch over the shrine and serve the martyr'.<sup>82</sup> Movses Daskhurantsi also gives the reasons behind the murder of Grigoris: 'The Mask'ut'k' were convinced that "this is a ruse on the

part of the king of Armenia [Trdat] to prevent us from looting his country; if we do not loot, how shall we live?""<sup>83</sup> Trdat's policy was to convert the Mask'ut'k' and thus prevent their looting expeditions into Armenia. P'awstos Buzand also mentions the work of Grigoris in these terms: 'As for Bishop Grigoris the son of Vrt'anes and the brother of Yusik who was catholicos of the region of Vrk' and Aghuank', though he attained his ministry when only a youth, he built and restored all the churches in those regions, reaching all the way to the districts of Atrpatakan.'<sup>84</sup>

If P'awstos Buzand was complaining about the persistence of paganism in Armenia in the fourth century, then for the following century we have the contemporary testimony of Koriwn on the situation. It had not improved greatly. Koriwn testifies how Sts Sahak and Mesrop 'obtained permission so that while the Lord bishop disseminated the word of life among the royal garrisons, he himself would do likewise in areas of heathendom'.<sup>85</sup> From this evidence it is implicit that Mesrop had the task of preaching to the 'heathens'. Among the regions identified as being strongholds of paganism, top priority is given to the province of Gokht'n (Vasputakan -Siunik'), where Mesrop 'filled the province with the message of Christ's Gospel, and in all the town of the province he established orders of monks'.<sup>86</sup> So according to this testimony the province of Gokht'n, whose population had partially been converted, was visited for the second time by Mesrop, for as before it was still 'a disorderly and uncultivated region ... and with the faithful cooperation of the ruler, began to preach in the province, and capturing them all away from their native traditions and satanic idolatry, turned them to obedience to Christ'.<sup>87</sup> It was on this second visit to the borders of Siunik' where he

was received with godly amenities by the ruler of Siunik' whose name was Vaghinak. From him he obtained much assistance in his assumed task, enabling him to visit and to familiarize himself with all parts of Siunik'. And so as to teach he gathered youths from the more brutal, barbarian, and fiendish regions and cared for them and instructed as a teacher, educated and advised them so well as to obtain a bishop overseer from among those barbarians, whose name was Ananias, a saintly, distinguished man, and a father for the seminarians. He then filled the region of Siunik' with monastic orders.<sup>88</sup>

This is evidence that the region of Siunik' was also not yet fully Christianized.

According to Koriwn, Mesrop went to Georgia where he 'removed from them the purulent uncleanness of the wor-

ship of spirits and false idols, and he separated and purged them from their native traditions, and made them lose their recollections to such an extent that they said "I forgot my people and my father's house"".<sup>89</sup> His next destination was the land of the Albanians who, though converted to the Christian faith, were 'difficult to communicate with, not only because of their devilish, satanic, and fiendish character, but also because of their very crude, corrupt, and harsh language. Undertaking to refine them, offsprings of many generations, intelligible, eloquent, educated, and informed in godly wisdom'.<sup>90</sup> Then Mesrop visits the region called Baghastan whose inhabitants were already Christian and had a bishop named Mushegh, which according to some is the Armenian province of Utik 'on the border of Aghuank'. Among the organized movements opposed to the teaching of the Gospel Mesrop had also to deal with 'the uncouth and stubborn sect of the Borboritons. And when he found no other way to rectify them, he began to use the misery inflicting stick, with very severe chastisements, imprisonments, tortures, fetters' and when that failed they 'were driven out of the land'.<sup>91</sup> To a degree Mesrop was successful, for Koriwn testifies that the 'barbaric, slothful ... became well acquainted with the prophets and the apostles [i.e. The Old and New Testaments] becoming heirs to the Gospel, and in no way ignorant of the divine traditions'. The king of Albania 'promptly commanded the satanic and evil worshipping nation to withdraw and to free itself from old superstitions and to submit to the sweet yoke of Christ'.<sup>92</sup> The historian Movses Daskhurantsi, writing in the eighth century, well away from the events, sums up Mesrop's and his companions' missionary work in these terms:

He revived the church and strengthened the faith and spread the teaching of the Gospel to the land of the Utiatsik', the Albanians, the Ghpink', the Kaspk', up to the Tcholay Pass, and to other foreign tribes whom Alexander of Macedonia had captured and settled around the great Mount Caucasus, namely, the Gargark' and the Kamitchik', Hep'taghk'; he reconverted them to the Christian faith and taught them the form of the worship which they had learned long ago and had now forgotten. A perfect preacher and apostle to the barbarous mountain tribes, he taught them to write in their own languages.<sup>93</sup>

In the sixth and seventh centuries several new traditions were created relating to the missionary work of Mesrop. Of these of particular interest is the one quoted by Vardan Arcweltsi associated with his work in Armenia, Georgia and Albania with the churches of St Sargis and the Holy Cross:

'Gag is a famous fortress and district, founded by king Gagik, where is found the well known churches of the Holy Cross and Saint Sargis the General, consecrated by Saint Mesrop vardapet the Armenian translator.' Several such traditions linking Mesrop with Christian work in Aghuank' can be found in the *Haysmavurk'* and *Hymnals*, and also in the histories of Kirakos Gandzaketsi and Maghak'ia *abeghay*. Pseudo-Zak'aria in his *Chronicle* (sixth century) writes: 'In the northern regions there are five Christian tribes, who have twenty-four bishops, whose catholicos resides in Dvin, the principal city of Persian-Armenia. The name of their catholicos is Grigor, a virtuous and famous person.' From the additional information provided by the same source we know that aside from the Armenian Church, the Churches of Vrik', Aghuank', Siunik' (which during 571–640 was outside the jurisdiction of Armenia and was under the realm of Atrpatakan marzpanate) and Huns came under the authority of the Armenian catholicate, 'which was not at that time exclusively Armenian but a regional primacy'.<sup>94</sup> If we accept the evidence of Ghazar P'arpetsi that by the close of the fifth century Armenian had eighteen bishoprics, and if we accept that it remained so until the first half of the sixth century, then it is feasible to surmise that, of these, six belonged to Georgia and Aghuank', which fell under the jurisdiction of the Armenian catholicate at Dvin. The number of diocesan bishops participating in the Council of 505 was also eighteen.

Arshak Alpoyachian and N. Adontz, in their accounts of the growth of the episcopal sees in Armenia, draw upon the lists of the bishops who attended four Armenian church councils – Artashat 450, I and II Dvin, 505, 555, and Manazkert, 726. The number rose from eighteen to twenty-four, to twenty-six, to twenty-seven, and to twenty-eight in AD 726.<sup>95</sup> The stronghold of Armenian Christianity was the provinces of Ayrarat, Turuberan, Vaspurakan and Siunik', which had proper diocesan organization, while the provinces which were part of the Byzantine–Armenia–Bardzr Hayk', and IVth Armenia, which also had large Armenian population, found themselves in a fundamentally hostile environment, unable to stabilize their ecclesiastical organizations. The Armenian historian Sebeos speaks of an imperial edict dated 590–91 which required everyone:

to preach the Council of Chalcedon in all the churches of the land of Armenia and take communion with imperial forces. The Children of the covenant of the Armenian Church fled and withdrew into foreign lands. Many, holding the edict as nought, held their ground and remained steadfast; many, incited by ambition, united in

confession with them [the Greeks]. Then, the throne of the catholicos was also split in two ...<sup>96</sup>

Campaigning in Armenia in 654, Constans II, possibly encouraged by the philhellene catholicos Nerses III, compelled the Armenian bishops, 'some willingly, others against their will', to take communion with him in Dvin. In the face of the Muslim advance, Justinian II is said to have brought similar pressure to bear on Sahak III in 693. Armenian eleventh-century sources accuse Romanos III Argyros, Constantine IX Monomachos, and above all Constantine X Dukas, who plotted with the patriarch and all of the clergy in

the pernicious and foul design ... of destroying the confession of the Armenian faith. And he schemed to destroy through corruption the faith of our Holy Illuminator Grigor. And he wished to establish his demoniac, confused, and imperfect beliefs in Armenia ... to darken our luminous faith, and to transform the truth into falsehood, as is the custom of the Greeks.<sup>97</sup>

The empire's attempts to impose dogmatic homogeneity meant that in the following centuries, in spite of the fact that the Armenian profession of faith expanded, it was only confined to the east and south of its borders. The tenth-century historian Ukhtanes has a list of Armenian bishoprics which numbers thirty. Another chronicler of the same period, the famous Samvel Kamrjedzoretsi, had also compiled a list which the thirteenth-century scholar Mkhitar Ayrivanetsi quotes. In this list, which comprises thirty-eight bishoprics, he claims 'Saint Gregory the Illuminator founded 38, of which 19 were of the right and 19 were of the left'.<sup>98</sup> The sum of these testimonies is that by the tenth century the Armenian Church had established a well-defined territorial boundary, which was divided into thirty-eight dioceses which, it may be worth noting, remained the same with very minor changes.

### Monasticism and the Role of the Armenian Monasteries in Armenian Christianity

In Armenian literary sources when authors speak of Armenian monasticism they employ various terms and phrases, such as: *anapat*, *vank'*, *ukht*, *menastan*, *kronastan*, *miaynavorastan*. Each of these designations describes the varied types of monastic communities (ascetics and anchorites).<sup>99</sup> P'awstos Buzand, when writing on the virtuous hermit life of Gind *vardapet*, makes use of some very precise

terminology to distinguish anchorites, solitaries, and solitary communities:

This Gind was from the district of Taron and had been a disciple of the great Daniel. And after him, he was the leader of the religious monks (*abeghayits*) and teacher of the hermits (*miandzants*) and prelate of solitaries (*menaketsats*), and overseer of solitary-communities (*vanerayits*), and teacher of all anachorites – dwelling-in-the desert (*anapataworats*), and the supervisor of all those who had renounced the world for the love of God. They lived in the desert (*y-anapat*) in inaccessible rock-hewn caverns, or in caves in the ground, having but one garment and going barefoot; they were abstemious, eating only herbs, vegetables, and roots. They wandered about like wild beasts in the mountains, covered with skins, hides, and goatskins, bearing want, suffering, and anguish, straying through the desert in cold and in heat, in hunger and in thirst, for the love of God.<sup>100</sup>

Ghazar P'arpetsi has a passage on Mesrop vardapet Mashtots in which he attests that Mesrop joins a group of monks in a monastery and, pursuing a monastic life, joins the ascetic rule. The text reads:

He [Mesrop] then became desirous of the monastic order. He went to the monastery (*Vans*) of a large group of brothers, and receiving the monastic habit he became outstanding and renowned in every way. He abstained from all worldly cares and earthly preoccupations. Then, turning to the eremitic (*anapatakan*) life, he became admired and famous. He lived in the deserts (*yanapats*) in various caves with great virtue and a severely ascetic way of life, with many other holy men of religion and prayer-loving brethren.<sup>101</sup>

Here Ghazar draws a clear distinction between 'monastic life' and 'eremitic life' and gives the main disciplines of the communities under rule with special mention of clothing. The same biographical detail in Koriwn is presented in these terms: 'He [Mesrop] experienced many kinds of hardships, in keeping with the precepts of the gospel. He subjected himself to all types of spiritual discipline – solitude (*zmiay-naketsut'ean vars*), mountain dwelling, hunger, thirst, and living on herbs, in dark cells, clad in sackcloth, with the floor as his bed.'<sup>102</sup> The term *anapat* (desert) meaning *vank'* (monastery) is employed frequently by Armenian authors in all periods. In the Armenian ritual of 'Andastan' when the four corners of the earth are blessed, the northern hemisphere is designated by the terms '*vank'* and '*anapat'* separately: 'Bless, protect and providentially preserve the

northern parts of the universe, towns, villages, monasteries, anchorites, and the people living in these.'

Early in the fourth century the models of monasticism for future development were provided by two Egyptian ascetics, Antony and Pachomius. Antony, made famous by Athanasius's biography, renounced property and moved into the desert. Roughly contemporary with him, Pachomius started a community of ascetics by the Nile. The basic problem raised by the enthusiasm of the monks was the separatist and individualist character of the movements. Was the monk pursuing only his own salvation? Or had the movement a social purpose?<sup>103</sup> Insistence on the primacy of the social purpose of the ascetic movement was the central feature of Basil of Caesarea's organization in Asia Minor. Basil rejected the hermit-ideal as a private and personal quest, divorced from the gospel demand of love and service to one's neighbour. Basil was the first to give institutional form to the novitiate and the solemn profession, and to insist on obedience as a means of restraining excess and competitiveness.<sup>104</sup>

A painful practical problem was to keep the ascetics from passing wholly outside the local church under its bishop. A synod of Gangra in Asia Minor about 340–41 expressed strong disapproval of monks who entirely abandoned church attendance. In some forms of the ascetic movement the sacraments were regarded as secondary or even indifferent. One such pietistic mendicant sect in Armenia was called *Mdsghne*, meaning 'one who prays'; the Greek term is Messalians.<sup>105</sup> In 447 at the Council of Shahapivan several canons were passed to combat this sectarian movement.<sup>106</sup> Koriwn and Movses Khorenatsi also include in their accounts of the missionary activities of Sts Sahak and Mesrop their work among the sectarians and in particular the 'uncouth and stubborn sect of the Borborites'.<sup>107</sup> According to Melk'onian the root of the name is the Syriac word *barbarit*, meaning 'sons of the desert'.<sup>108</sup> It was easy for even the most orthodox monks to become indifferent not merely to the calls of secular society and civilization but also to the normal worshipping life of the Church. Basil of Caesarea sought to check this by instituting monastic communities with a rule under which the authority of the local bishop was safeguarded. This Rule of Basil of Caesarea, with modifications, was adopted by the Armenian Church, which is to be found in Gregory the Illuminator's *Yachakhapatum* under sermon 23.<sup>109</sup> The differences in the two rules is immediately apparent. While in the Caesarean version the monasteries were to be fully endowed so that the monks would only be concerned with prayers, in the Armenian case the monks had to labour to secure their living. The



Sanahin Monastery, Library, 1063.

fruits of their labours were to be shared among the needy, pilgrims, travellers and farm workers. The monastery had the following hierarchy: abbot, bursar, prefect for hospitality and supervisor for the animals.<sup>110</sup>

The role and function of the monasteries in the Armenian Church divide into three distinct periods: St Gregory the Illuminator, Nerses the Great and the Translators. In the first period the monasteries were private places, where monks retreated to devote themselves to a life of prayer.

During Nerses the Great's catholicate the number of the monasteries increases substantially and so does their function. In 365 St Nerses summoned a council in Ashtishat, 'where the first church had been built, for this was the mother of all the churches', so as to perfect the secular regulations of the Church. Among the six canons adopted at this council, four dealt with issues whose purpose was to increase zeal 'in good deeds'.<sup>111</sup> He ordered poorhouses to be built in every province, 'in model of the Greek hospitals', for the poor, where they would remain exclusively in their own lodgings and should not go out as miserable beggars; leper houses were designated for them. He also prescribed that lodgings be built to serve as inns for strangers and hospices for the orphans and the aged. He also 'built in the

desert uninhabited regions monasteries and hermit huts for solitaries'.<sup>112</sup> He entrusted the supervision of these to Deacon Khad. These secular interests and objectives of caring for prisoners, the sick, orphans and widows is implied in the names of a number of monasteries operating in Siunik': *Got'atun* 'House of mercy', *Aspnjakanots* 'place of refuge', *Otarats* 'for foreigners', *Hiwranots* 'Hospice', *Aghk'atanots* 'alms-house' – described by Step'anos Orbelian in his *History of Siunik*'. The monasteries with these specific disciplines were the monasteries of *Rshtunik*', Narek, Derjan, Horomos, Gladzor, Andzewats, Hogeats, etc.<sup>113</sup>

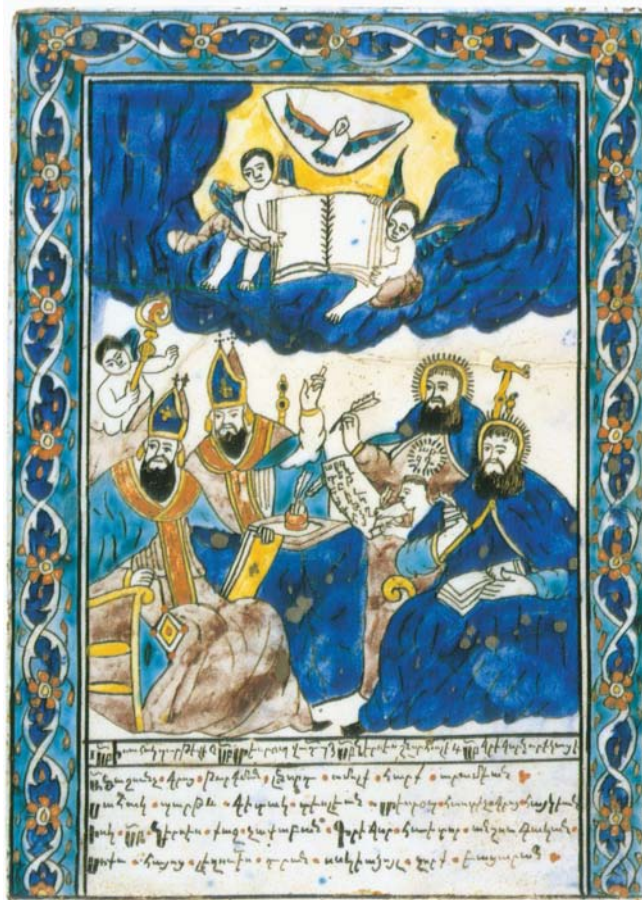
The Council of Dvin held in 645, called by Catholicos Nerses III (641–61), passed laws which sought to curtail some aristocratic abuses of monasteries - lodging in monasteries with cavalry, minstrels and dancing girls, dismissing monks – infringing ecclesiastical immunity from tax. The Council of Partaw in 768 complained of usurpation of property and of authority in the Church, especially by soldiers, cavalymen and tax-collectors. The 645 council canons stipulate that bishops should supervise monasteries but it also attests that they were themselves not immune from faults: they could not be relied upon to avoid violence, greed and encroachment on others' dioceses. The phenomenon of aris-



tocratic control of monasteries surfaces in the tale of Vahan Gogh'tentsi, who in 719 converted to Christianity and took refuge in a monastery in Shirak, but was expelled after six months at the behest of the lady of the then province, lest he ruin his benefactors as well as himself. Sayings of the fourth- and fifth-century Egyptian Desert Fathers, though first collected in an Armenian version in the twelfth century, were excerpted earlier, including during the eighth century. The selections suggest very respectable aspirations towards contemplation, virginity, humility and solitude, towards monks fighting, as soldiers and martyrs, their thoughts and desires. There was such a large community at Makenots in Siunik' in the 780s.

Some monasteries and churches were also very wealthy. The monastery of St Gregory at Bagawan, when plundered, possessed glorious and precious vessels which had been given by kings, princes and nobles. A 783 inscription at T'alın suggests monastic estate management, recording the digging of a monastic canal. T'at'ev, seat of the Siunik' bishops, had become very wealthy by 884. Bishop David purchased a village in 839 from Prince Philip, and acquired half another by exchange.

To the two principal tasks of monasteries' asceticism and caring just outlined above a new role was introduced which proved critical for the survival of Armenian Christianity. The earliest rituals pre-dating the conversion of Armenia came from Syria. St Gregory, as a representative of Caesarian Christianity, introduced the Greek liturgical and sacramental practices prevalent at the time. The early liturgy and rites of the Armenian Church, as in all ancient traditions, consisted of psalmody, scriptural readings and prayers, which were recited either in Greek or Syriac. Consequently, the language of the Church remained incomprehensible to the faithful. In the fourth century this problem was resolved by appointing monks and priests with a monastic background well versed in both Armenian and either Syriac or Greek who would translate the recited texts into Armenian. These monks or priests were called *t'argmanitch*, a Syriac loan word in Armenian. In 387, when the greater part of Great Armenia came under the control of Zoroastrian Persia, the future course of Armenian Christianity was threatened. If Christianity were to survive it was imperative for the *t'argmanitch* to meet the liturgical and spiritual needs of the Armenian people so they could understand the liturgy, Scripture, and teachings of the Church. The invention of the Armenian alphabet and the translation of the Bible were considered by the fifth-century historian and biographer Koriwn an important event, as significant for the Armenians as Moses's 'descent from Mt Sinai with the tablets contain-



'The Translators', Tile, Kütahya, 18th century. Cat. 66.

ing the Ten Commandments'. Koriwn, stressing the value of the Armenian version, stated that the ancient lawgiver Moses, the prophets, the evangelists, and the apostles 'became Armenian speakers'. In fifth-century Armenia, this idiom meant that the authors of the scriptural books acquired an Armenian identity.

The dynamic educational programme that the 'Senior' and 'Junior' Translators initiated between 406 and 439 was not restricted to Persian Armenia. Sahak and Mesrop obtained permission from Constantinople to include Roman Armenia, where schools were set up. Mesrop's missionary work, as we have already seen, took him to Siunik', Iberia, Albania; for both nations he invented alphabets. Along with the *t'argmanitch*, the Council of Sahapivan in 444, which was called to remove all remaining pagan practices and to combat the growing threat of sectarian movements, developed the role of the *vardapet* (unmarried priest) who had

powers to teach, interpret the Scriptures, and to excommunicate and re-admit excommunicants, as bishops had. By the seventh century, *vardapets* could authorize marriages and depose and reinstate *chorepiscopi*, and they were teaching in monasteries. The monasteries became intellectual centres advancing the apprehension of Scriptures and theology. Soon after the period of the Translators the emergence of an independent Armenian theology, biblical scholarship and sacramental theology advanced to such a degree that it imparted a strong sense of poise, security and reassurance. The focal point of this achievement was the schools in the monasteries of Ējmiadsin, Glak, Aragadsot, Shirak, Tat'ew, Narek, Hořomos, Sanahin, Haghpat, Hawuts T'ar, Saghmosavank' and Gladzor. The graduates of these monastic schools were known by epithets such as T'argmanitch, Philosopher, Grammarian, Rhetorician, and Poet.<sup>114</sup>

In the founding and rebuilding of monasteries the royal princely houses of the Bagratuni, Ardsruni and Siuneats vied with one another to a degree that, while it was damaging to the political interests of the country, was advantageous for the intellectual and artistic vibrancy of the people. Judging from the accounts of contemporary historians such as T'ovma Ardsruni, Aristakes Lastivertsi and Step'annos Orbelian, the wealth in the hands of the feudal nobility was spent on supporting the monasteries of Haghpat, Sanahin, Hořomos, Bagaran, Tekor and Mřen. From among the Bagratuni dynasty princes like Vahram-Pahlawuni, Grigor Magistros, Smbat Magistros and Vest-Sargis were the builders of the monasteries of Marmashen, Hawuts T'ar, Kecharis, Bjni, Bagnayr and Khdskonits respectively. The Ardsruni family were the benefactors of the monasteries of Aght'amar, Narek and generally all the monasteries of Vaspurakan. The Siunik' feudal lords sponsored the churches of Mak'eneats, T'anahat, Khotakerits, Kot'a and Sevan and the centres in Geghark'uni, Vayots-Dzor and Ernjak. In the Cilician period the Rubenian family were as lavish in their generosity as the previous benefactors. The monasteries of Kastazor, Drazark, Akner, Skevra and the Red Monastery were some of the great centres that were active in Cilicia under the patronage of the Rubenian and Lambron princes known in Armenian literary sources under one name: 'Western Monasteries' in contrast to those in Great Armenia, which were called 'Eastern Monasteries'. The last noble family famous for their patronage was the Orbelian house, in particular the Zak'arē and Ivanē princes who ruled over the whole of north-eastern Armenia soon after the defeat of the Seljuks and who built the monasteries of Harich, Haghardsin, Haghpat, Sanahin and in particular Getik or Gosh Mkhitar monastery, whose founder and abbot

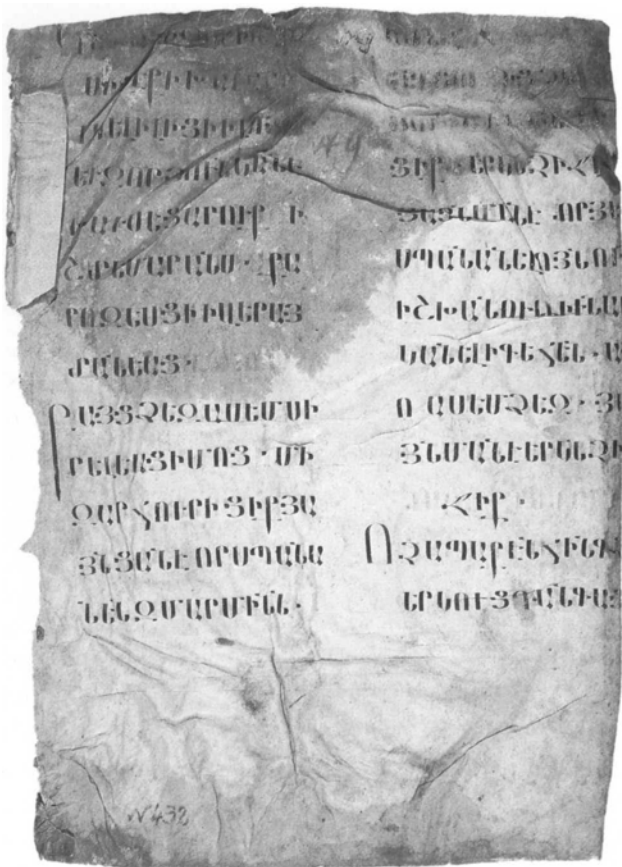
was the famous scholar Mkhithar Gosh (1130–1213).

Of the three principal contributions made by monasticism to the development of the Armenian Church one final function stands out above all the rest. This function was defined in the fifth century by Ghazar P'arpetsi in these terms: 'Do not mingle muddled teaching with the pure and limpid instruction of the holy and apostle like patriarch Gregory.'<sup>115</sup> Decades of Syriac, Byzantine and Latin ecclesiastical propaganda, often backed by force, numerous foreign customs and practices, infiltrated the Armenian tradition, threatening the integrity and orthodoxy of the Christian faith in Armenia. In addition to the bewildering number of movements, anti-ecclesiastical dissensions and sects like the Manichaeon, Messalian, Encratite, Montanist and Novatianist, which flourished in Asia Minor between the first and the eighth centuries, found fertile ground in Armenia. Movses Khorenatsi, reflecting upon the period after the deaths of Sahak Part'ev and Mesrop Mashtots, comments in his *History* that 'the peace was destroyed, chaos became rooted, orthodoxy was shaken, and heterodoxy was established through ignorance'.<sup>116</sup> The theological disputes and disagreements, which became inextricably associated with matters of order, discipline and authority in the fourth century and became bound up with the growing tension between the Greek east and the Latin west, infiltrated and engrossed the Armenian Church in theological controversy. Arianism, Nestorianism, Apollinarianism, Eutychianism, Monophysitism, Chalcedonianism and Iconoclasm are a few of the many religious movements which the Armenian Church found itself combating. 'Encyclopedic' *catenae*, theological commentaries and authoritative exegeses were composed in monastic academies for restoring the indigenous practices and safeguarding the orthodoxy of the Armenian doctrine. Treatises like the *Oath of Union*, *Against the Docetists*, *Against the Paulicians*, *Against the Dyophysites*, *Against the Iconoclasts*, *The Book of Letters*, *The Seal of Faith* and *The Book of Canons* are some of the titles that served as the depositories of the essence of the entire Armenian Christian faith, tradition and customs. Like high-energy vitamin capsules, they reassured contemporaries that the total nourishment of Christian truth, once distributed with insouciant abundance through so many books, was now available in their own times, to be 'activated in the urgent, deeply existential task of building up a local Christendom'.<sup>117</sup> In 665 Anania of Shirak, in his *K'nnikon*, claimed to have brought back to 'this country, the heritage of Saint Grigor, the land that loves Christ', a complete summary of cosmology and of chronological computation. Henceforth Armenians could do without the Greeks. There was a competitive edge to all



Khor Virap Monastery, Ejmiadzin, 17th century.

Fragment from the Gospel of St Luke (chapter 11: v. 53-12v. 6),  
8th century. Matenadaran, Cod. 432.



such ventures. In the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries religious persecution became a matter of policy. There was a series of ruinous invasions of Armenia between 1357 and 1403. By 1400 much of Armenia had passed to a Turkmen dynasty, the Kra Koyunlu. Franciscan and Dominican missionaries had established a presence in the late thirteenth century. The Franciscans in Cilicia had a convent at Sis by 1289, and the Dominicans in Armenia proper. Envoys from the papacy at Avignon from 1309 to 1376 exacted from the Armenians under pressure a proclamation of union which the 'Eastern monks' resisted and refused to accept. At the monastery of Gladzor, which had during the prelaty of its abbot Esayi Ntchetsi become a 'second Athens', waged a sustained philosophical, theological and pedagogical campaign against the movement for union with Rome. Extensive refutations were compiled based on Scriptures, tradition and keen theological reasoning as to why the Armenian Church should remain independent. Grigor Tat'evatsi (1346-1409), one of the most illustrious scholars, and his pupil Yovhannes Örotnetsi (1315-86) of the monastic academies at Tat'ev and Aprakunik' wrote, on the model of the literary legacy of Bartolomeo di Bologna, Thomas Aquinas, Peter of Aragon and Armenian members of the Fratres Unitores such as Yovhannes Dsordsoretsi and Yovhannes K'rnetsi, the *Book of Questions*, a treatise *Against the Turks*, *The Book of Golden Content* and *Book of Homilies* to protect the Armenian Church in its confrontation with the Latins.<sup>118</sup> The ultimate aim of the 'Eastern monks' succeeded in balancing the situation, condemning those who were disloyal to the Mother See,

strengthening the internal unity of the Church and clearing the path for the return of the centre from Sis back to its original place in Ējmiadsin in 1441. During the catholicate of Movses Siunetsi (1620-33) and his pupil and successor P'ilippos Haghbaketsi (1633-55) the monasteries of St Ējmiadsin, Hrip'simē, Gayanē and Ōshakan were rebuilt; Yakob *vardapet* of New Julfa renovates the monastery of St Stephen the Protomartyr at Darashamb, Esayi *vardapet* Meghrets'i re-establishes the monastery of St Karapet at Ernjak, Zak'aria *vardapet* of Ējmiadsin completely rebuilds Yovhannavank', and Mkrtitch *vardapet* Makvets'i re-establishes the monastery of St Tade, Sandukht at Artaz.<sup>119</sup> Finally, as a rule, the scriptoria were an integral part of monastic institutions which served the academies.

Traditionally, higher education among Armenians had been confined to the clergy, and was carried on in monastic institutions generally at the feet, as it were, of learned ecclesiastics. Many of the medieval Armenian monastic institutions had large libraries of manuscripts, which attracted scholars and scribes alike. The production of manuscripts as a practical art based on a theoretical system of the study of linguistic and grammatical features of the Armenian language was taught in the monastic academies. Aristakes Gritch (twelfth century), Georg Skevratsi (thirteenth century) and Grigor Tat'evatsi (1346-1410) contributed to the development of creative writing through the formalization of grammatical rules.<sup>120</sup> In the colophon of a grammar copied in 1357 by the scribe Step'anos at Surkhat' in the Crimea we read the following appraisal of the scribal art.

As it is impossible for the birds to pull a yoke and make a furrow, and for the oxen to fly, so also no one can attain mastery in the great art of manuscript production

without studying it. And should any one be audacious enough to engage [in this art without studying it], he will fail, and he will corrupt the art and adulterate the text, like the stupid butcher who cannot distinguish the joints [of the animal] and unskillfully cuts the meat from the limbs ... For in the hands of a foolish and stupid man this art is like a pearl on the nose of a pig or like a golden necklace around the neck of a donkey but he who is intoxicated with its love, he alone appreciates its sweetness.

The professional instructors, who are frequently referred to by the scribes as their 'spiritual parents', developed their own traditions. Scriptoria, as centres of creative writing as well as of transcription, contributed significantly to the development of Armenian culture. Among the more important scriptoria – a number of which also distinguished themselves as outstanding institutions of higher learning – mention should be made of the following: the school of Siunik', which flourished during the hegemony of the Bagratuni dynasty in the ninth to eleventh centuries; Tat'ev, which was established in the twelfth century; Ani, which functioned in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the school of Vanakan in the twelfth century; Haghbat-Sanahin in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; Hromklay, Drazark, Akner and others in Cilicia in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries; Gladzor and Metsop' in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; Erznkay and Karin in the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries; Van in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries; Kafa in the Crimea in the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries; and Baghesh, New Julfa and Constantinople in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

## THE CHRISTOLOGICAL POSITION OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH\*

According to the sixth-century canon of the Council of Nicaea the exarch of Caesarea had supervisory jurisdiction for the missionary districts to the east of the exarchate. The hierarchical links that existed until 373 between Armenian Christianity and the Church of Caesarea are explained by the origin of the evangelization and not by the exarchal position of the see of Caesarea. In 373, when the Church had become sufficiently strong and mature, its clergy had increased in numbers and its authority had been firmly established. However, because of this historical association the orientation of the Armenian Church on the question of doctrines was always determined by the Alexandrian school of thought. In this the Council of Ephesus (431), the council in which the Alexandrian position became victorious, was the dominant factor. The first patristic works translated into Armenian were the writings of St Basil of Caesarea, Gregory the Thaumaturgus, Gregory Nanzianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Ephrem the Syrian, Athanasius of Alexandria, Cyril of Alexandria and a few others.<sup>1</sup> These writings were predominantly Alexandrian in their approach to the Christological problems of the time. Thus the Alexandrian atmosphere that existed in the first half of the fifth century was decisive in determining the orientation of the Armenian Church.

The Armenian Church, together with the Oriental Orthodox Churches, recognizes the doctrinal and canonical validity of the first three councils of the Christian Church – namely the Council of Nicaea (325), the Council of Constantinople (381) and the Council of Ephesus (431). It reveres them as holy, and has special days in the liturgical year dedicated to each one of them, celebrated with special hymns. As a fifth-century church father puts it, the Armenian Church regards the doctrinal decisions of these councils as ‘The basis of life and guide to the path leading to God’. It has given them an authority by which all statements concerning the Christian faith are judged. By them certain

statements are reckoned and refused as additions to the tradition of the divine revelation. This attitude is best expressed by the anathema recited in the Armenian Church in conjunction with the Nicæan creed: ‘As for those who say there was a time when the Son was not or there was a time when the Holy Spirit was not or that they came into being out of nothing or who say that the Son of God or the Holy Spirit are of different substance and that they are changeable or alterable, such the catholic and apostolic holy church doth anathematize.’<sup>2</sup> This statement added to the creed refutes Arianism, Macedonianism, Apollinarianism and Nestorianism. Instead the Armenian Church confesses, ‘As for us, we glorify Him who was before the ages, adoring the Holy Trinity, and the one Godhead, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and through ages of ages. Amen.’<sup>3</sup>

In order to understand and appreciate the dogmatic position of the Armenian Church on the later developments of the Christological issues, it is necessary to review briefly the situation in the Church in the fifth century. The Church as a whole has always believed that it is important to maintain the teaching that Christ is both God and man. If we say that Christ is God and not man, then all that was human in the historical Jesus disappears, including his ability to suffer, to feel as we feel. In fact, Jesus ceases to be our model, because what was possible for him as God is not necessarily possible for us as men. There are also difficulties if we say that Christ is man and not God. If Jesus were a man, just as other men are, our doctrine of God and redemption would be impoverished to such a degree that it would be unattainable. Christians maintain the central teaching, that God was so good, so interested in the affairs of men, that he himself devised a means of our salvation, and ‘sent’ Jesus for our redemption. Thus the denial of either the divinity or the manhood of Christ implies consequences disastrous to the Christian conception of a Father-God.

\* Revised version of the text first published in German in *Die Kirche Armeniens*, Fredrich Heyer ed. Stuttgart, 1978, 71–91.



The Church of the Holy Cross, Aght'amar, 915-921.

Though the Church as a whole has always recognized the importance of retaining the full belief in both the Godhead and the manhood of Christ, there have generally been two schools of thought, one of which lays stress on the divinity, and the other which places emphasis upon the manhood of Christ. In the Ancient Church these two rival tendencies were displayed respectively by the rival theological schools of Alexandria and Antioch.<sup>1</sup>

The Antiochene school was, on the whole, more concerned with the life and human experience of Christ and sought to make a clear distinction between the human and the divine natures. Diodorus of Tarsus, one of the leading theologians of this school, distinguished Christ, the Son of God, from the Son of David, in whom the Word dwelt 'as in a temple'. He considered that the man born of Mary was the Son of God not by nature but by grace, only the Word being the Son of God by nature. The stress on the distinction between the two natures, rather than on their union, was more marked in the teaching of Theodore of Mopsuestia,<sup>2</sup>

who looked upon the union as a conjunction of distinct elements, and stated that 'not God, but the temple in which God dwelt is born of the Virgin Mary'. This separation was carried even further by Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>3</sup> The latter claimed that the two natures had remained complete and distinct after the union, each one retaining its specific properties and acting according to them. The union in Christ was, according to Nestorius, a personal union. This conception led to the recognition of two Sons in Jesus Christ, for the person of Jesus Christ resulting from the incarnation was not absolutely identical with that of the Word before the incarnation. This doctrine, in the final analysis, threatened the doctrine of redemption since salvation could not have been achieved by a man; humanity could not have been saved if God himself had suffered and died on the cross.

Alexandrian theology<sup>4</sup> started from the concept of the divinity of Christ. Its exponents insisted more on the divinity of the Word incarnate and the intimate and complete

union of the two natures in the person of Christ. St Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) taught that the person of Christ is identical with that of the Word; the Word incarnate is Jesus Christ and is complete in his divinity. But the humanity which the Word has assumed, and in which he lives, is also complete, being composed of a body animated by a rational soul. 'The two distinct natures', wrote St Cyril, 'had united into true union, and from both one Christ and one Son had come, not as though the difference of the natures had been done away with by the union, but, on the contrary, that they constituted the one Lord Jesus Christ and Son by the unutterable union of the Godhead and the manhood.' St Cyril defined this intimate union by the formula 'One incarnate nature of the God the Word'. There is one Son in Jesus Christ, and he, being identical with the Word, is the natural Son of God; this same Word incarnate is the Son of Mary by nature, and thus Mary is 'Godbearer' (*Theotokos = Astuadsadsin*) and not just the 'bearer of Christ' (*Christotokos = K'ristosadsin*), a term preferred by the Antiochene school. The Christology of Cyril triumphed at the Council of Ephesus in 431, and Nestorius (d. 451) and his supporters were condemned as heretics. But this teaching was gradually deformed by some of his followers, especially by Eutyches (c. 378–454), the archimandrite of a monastery in Constantinople. Eutyches so emphasized the union that the two natures in Christ were confused and the manhood seemed to be absorbed by the Godhead. He denied that the body of the Saviour was of the same substance as ours, and this naturally raised the question whether the manhood of Christ was true manhood or merely docetic.

### The Council of Chalcedon

The Tome of Leo (d. 461) and the Council of Chalcedon suspected Eutyches of teaching a form of docetism, that is, the denial of Christ's truly human nature, and, thus, of incarnation as such. Leo emphasized the difference between divinity and humanity in Christ in the Roman tradition. The most important and controversial phrases in the Chalcedonian formulation were to be the following:

- (a) 'Each nature performs what is proper to itself in common with the other; the Word, that is, performing what is proper to the Word, and the flesh carrying out what is proper to the flesh. The one shines out in miracles, the other succumbs to injuries.'
- (b) 'Although there is in the Person of the Lord Jesus one Person of God and man, yet that wherein the

suffering is common to both is one thing, and that wherein the glory is common is another, for from us He has the humanity inferior to the Father, and from the Father He has divinity equal to the Father.'

- (c) 'In order to pay the debt of our condition, the invisible Nature was united to a passible, so that, as was necessary for our healing, one and the same Mediator between God and man, the Man Jesus Christ, should be able from one to die and from the other should not be able to die.'<sup>8</sup>

Contrary to the Cyrilline-Alexandrian concept, Leo made the flesh, that is, Christ's human nature, into a centre of autonomous activities. All these ideas had, in fact, been conserved by both the Alexandrian and Antiochene traditions in the east. The clash between them was the result of fear on the part of the former that the latter was not affirming the unity of Christ's Person in any real sense. The Tome appeared to be expounding the doctrine of the two natures to the entire satisfaction of the Antiochene side.

### The Armenian Church and the Council of Chalcedon

The Armenian Church, having come under the influence of Alexandrian Christological teaching from the middle of the fourth century, repudiated the new doctrinal formulations of the Council of Chalcedon. The Chalcedonian Definition drafted in the same council was judged to be a deviation from the line of thought drawn up by St Cyril and sanctioned by the Council of Ephesus. The Armenian Church did not react against the Council of Chalcedon only under the influence of the Syrian Church. Nor were they misled because of the deficiency of their language in its capacity to render correctly the subtleties of the Greek expressions. Neither did they exploit the doctrinal issues for purely political and nationalistic purposes. The theological discussions were based on the Greek terms and conceptions and all the leaders of the Armenian Church in those centuries knew Greek as well as anybody else. In spite of the political unrest in Armenia at the time of the council, the Armenian Church soon had the knowledge of the decisions of the council and was able to participate fully in the discussions that followed. After long debates they deeply resented the new formulations, which were regarded as alien to the traditional Christology of the time, and revealed close association with the dyophysite Christology already condemned in the teaching of Nestorius. The action of the Armenian Church and other 'Pre-Chalcedonian' Churches was simply to vindicate

cate the position they had already taken along with the rest of the Church, as early as the fifth century.

In examining the reason why the Armenian Church and the other Eastern Churches adopted the stand they took against the formulations of the Tome of Leo and the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon, it is necessary to see whether they criticized the council from a monophysite point of view, an accusation attributed to them by the Chalcedonian Churches. The question, therefore, of what monophysitism is needs a few words of clarification. A compound of the Greek words, *monos* and *physis* used adjectively in English, the term monophysite means 'one-natured' or 'single-natured'. It is explained by Walter F. Adeney in these words:

The Monophysites had contended that there was only one nature in Christ, the human and the divine being fused together, because the two did not meet on equal terms, and the overwhelming of the Finite left for our contemplation only the Infinite.<sup>9</sup>

One of the bases on which the term monophysitism is used with reference to the non-Chalcedonian side is its defence of the use of the phrase 'One incarnate nature of God the Word'. There are three points made by this phrase 'One incarnate nature'. (a) It was God the Son himself who became incarnate. (b) In becoming incarnate, he individuated manhood in union with himself and made it his very own. (c) The incarnate Word is one person. The 'One' in the phrase 'One incarnate nature' is not a simple one, so that the characterization 'monophysite' cannot be considered applicable to the position held by the Armenian Church. As 'one incarnate' nature Jesus Christ is one composite nature. In the incarnation, by a divine act of condescension, God the Son willed to be so united with manhood that the two of them came together, without either of them being lost or diminished. At the same time, their union was so real and perfect that Christ was 'one composite nature'.<sup>10</sup>

According to the Armenian Apostolic Church the Orthodox faith is that our Lord is perfect in his Godhead and perfect in his manhood. They dare not say, however, that he is God and man together, for this expression implies separation. He is rather God incarnate. In him the Godhead and the manhood are united in a complete union: that is to say in essence, hypostasis and nature. There is no separation between the Godhead and the manhood of our Lord. From the very moment of the descent of the Divine Word, in the Virgin's womb, the Second Person of the Trinity took to himself, from Mary's blood, a human body with a rational soul, and made himself one with the manhood, which he

received from the Holy Virgin. Mary's child is God incarnate, one essence, one person, one hypostasis, one nature: one nature, out of two natures. In the teaching of St Gregory the doctrine of the incarnation is expounded in the following terms:

God the Holy Son was sent from God (The Father); he took flesh from the Virgin (and became) perfect man with perfect Godhead; he showed forth the power of the divinity and exposed the weakness of the flesh; those who believed in the flesh (he) manifested to them his Godhead; and those who erred (in their belief concerning) the flesh they denied his nature (i.e. his human nature). For, he united (himself) to the flesh in (his) nature and mixed the flesh with his Godhead; ... the true faith is this: He descended and fixed (his) Godhead with (our) manhood and the immortal with the mortal, so that he could make us participants in the immortality of his Godhead; thus, when the Son of God equal to the Father came with his flesh to the right of his Father, he mixed us to God.<sup>11</sup>

The union is expressed in Armenian by the words *kha'num* or *mia'worum*. These may be appreciated from the fact that in Exodus 26: 4, 'And thou shall make loops of blue on the edge of one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling,' the word coupling in the Armenian Bible is rendered by the word *kha'nuadsoyn*; and in Acts 27: 40, 'they loosed the rudder bands', the word band is translated as *z'kha'nelis*. In the Greek version of Proclus's *Tomus ad Armenios*, in place of the Cyrillian term nature (*physis*) the term *hypostasis* is employed. It is not my intention here to discuss whether this was a use made by Proclus or if it is a Chalcedonian interpolation, but what is beyond doubt is that the fifth-century Armenian translators of the Mesropian school found the translation of that term by the word *ent'akayut'iwn* inadmissible and opted for the term *bnut'iwn*, as in the translation of Hebrews 1: 3, where the word is rendered by *Eut'iwn*.<sup>12</sup> So that when discussing these Christological issues it is also vital to consider the linguistic evidence in conjunction with the historical arguments. Hence the union in which the Armenian Church believes differs essentially from the kind of union professed by Eutyches. Eutyches maintained that our Lord is one nature, but that the manhood of Christ is absorbed in his divinity. In fact he is denying the real existence of the manhood of Christ.

The Armenian Apostolic Church takes an opposite position in professing that Christ is one nature, completely preserved, in which all the human properties as well as all the divine properties, without confusion, mixture or alteration. Several doctrinal documents belonging to various periods



make clear how the Armenian Church understood the union of the two natures. The first of these documents is a treatise ascribed to the famous Armenian historian of the fifth century, Movses Khorenatsi.<sup>13</sup> Speaking against those who separate Christ in two, he strongly asserts the idea of unity right from the very beginning by saying that it is possible for many elements to join together and to be united in one nature. Man is composed of earthly and spiritual elements, but he has one nature. The two are not confused in him, that is to say, the flesh is not soul and the soul is not flesh. Each maintains its own properties. The distinctness of the two is not destroyed by their union. Likewise the incarnation also must be understood in the same manner. We must confess Christ one in his nature because it is said 'the Word became flesh' and that 'he took the form of a servant'. The meaning of the Scriptures is clear: that which was taken by the Word was that which he did not have. Therefore, the two, the Word and the flesh, which were separate before the incarnation, became one after the incarnation.

Half a century later, when the controversy over the use of the term 'natures' was more acute, the Armenian theologian Yovhannes Mandakuni (420–490) composed his *Demonstration*, in which he analysed the meaning of this word and the legitimacy of its application to Christ. This work is one of the most sober and erudite of the many studies composed in Armenian in defence of this position. Yovhannes recognizes that the term 'nature' has different connotations. One can speak of the natures of the body, of the soul, and of the mind, and these are all different; yet man is not many, but one. Similarly, the many names of Christ do not involve several persons or natures, but only one Lord. Christian tradition, summed up at Nicaea, speaks of the single nature of the Son who is of the essence of his Father, so Yovhannes can say that the Son is of the same nature as the Father. Hence the name of the Son is his divinity. But this term is not scriptural, so Yovhannes suggests that 'life' would be more appropriate to indicate the single personality of Christ. Yovhannes thus realizes that 'nature' does not necessarily mean 'person', but the traditional identification of these two terms is still influential enough to lead him to stress that the acts of Christ can be ascribed to only one nature, for the Lord is one. The incarnation is thus to be conceived as the indivisible union of the *Logos* and the flesh, but the subject of discourse is always the divine Word. The *Logos* was incarnate, became a man, and was united to the flesh, and this flesh is said to be the flesh of the Word by a true union. But the Word did not become flesh by nature, for then the flesh would be the Word, which is ridiculous. So Christ was by will and not by nature

in the flesh; he is God with the flesh, and with this same body (for Armenian does not distinguish 'flesh' and 'body') he will come again. Thus there are two points which he refutes categorically at the outset. The first is the idea of union as understood by those who in fact separate Christ in two. For him the union is genuine and not simply a principle of union or indwelling of the Word in the flesh. 'Some consider that the descending (the incarnation) was in appearance and not in truth.' They believe that Christ became man in the sense that he inhabited the 'flesh by complaisance and will'. Here, Yovhannes Mandakuni is criticizing the ideas propounded in the name of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who was influential in the bordering countries of Armenia. Second, he criticizes the Chalcedonian position for its dualistic interpretation of Christ's life and death. The distinctness of the two natures had led the dyophysite thinkers so far as to give each nature the meaning of a person. It is this hypostasized understanding of Christ's natures, as the Tome of Leo formulates so sharply, that was fiercely opposed by the Armenian Church, together with the other non-Chalcedonian Churches. The core of the Armenian position can be found in the following passage of the *Demonstration* of Yovhannes Mandakuni:

God the Word took flesh and became man; thus, He united to Himself in God – fitting manner, the body of our lowliness, the whole soul and flesh; and the flesh truly became the flesh of the Word of God. In virtue of this it is said of the Invisible that He is seen, of the Intangible that He is felt, crucified, buried and risen on the third day. For He Himself was both the passible and the impassible, the mortal who received death.<sup>14</sup>

It is clear from these two documents that the Armenian doctrine of the nature of Christ firmly asserts the oneness of the two natures of Christ, and not a unification of the two natures – one nature out of two natures unconfused and indivisible without change or diminution. St Gregory of Narek (945–1003), the greatest monk and mystic poet of the Armenian Church, puts the concept in these terms: 'Taking truly the very structure of the human body, the great God united in Himself without confusion ...' or

For since it was impossible that the impassible and immortal nature of God should undergo suffering and death, He therefore clothed Himself with a body capable of suffering, in order that the impassible might be tormented in a passible, the immortal might die in a mortal, nature, to deliver them that were liable to the payment of a debt, from the penalty of their transgressions.<sup>15</sup>

The dogmatic statements contained in the writings of Armenian theologians are directed towards the retention of a principle of unity, while at the same time they concede the diversity of the predicates, and aim to characterize all the deeds and sufferings of Christ as at once divine and human. The conception of the Tome of Leo and the Chalcedonian formulations, as we have seen, do the contrary; they allot one function to the divine, and another to the human nature, even after the union. God and man were indeed, in Christ, one person, one unity.

The Armenian doctrine of the Virgin birth and redemption is also consistent with the above exposition of the doctrine of the nature of Christ. The Armenian Hymnary, which contains a rich collection of hymns dating from the fifth to the thirteenth centuries, removes the doctrine of the incarnation from the realm of mere speculation and lends it the character of the pragmatic. Mary is the bearer of God, a formula constantly reiterated to show that the Holy One who was born of her was God himself made flesh. In one of the hymns sung during the feast of Nativity and Epiphany (6 January), the birth of Christ is described thus:

Mystery Great and marvellous that has been revealed  
 this day  
 Shepherds sing with angels, giving good tidings to the  
 earth  
 A new king is born in Bethlehem town.  
 Give blessings, sons of men, since for us He is incarnate

or

The uncontainable in Earth and Heaven is wrapped  
 within swaddling clothes  
 From the Father inseparate he seats himself in the Holy  
 altar.

It follows from all this that the suffering of Christ is a divine sacrifice. Christ's death was a voluntary death, endured solely for our salvation:

Thou Who in ineffable being  
 Art co-sharer of the Father's glory,  
 Didst voluntarily consent  
 To suffer in the flesh for us.

This last aspect of the doctrine of the nature of Christ involved the Armenian Church in the controversy concerning the corruptibility and incorruptibility of our Lord's body, a problem closely linked with the controversy of the nature of Christ. It would be only natural for the Armenian Church to affirm that our Lord's body is incorruptible. At the Synod of Manazkert held in 726, the followers of both

Julian and Severus were condemned by these third and sixth anathemas:

If any one denies that God the Word united Himself to our mortal flesh, but rather to the flesh Adam had before transgressing the commandment, which through grace became immortal, sinless and incorruptible, let him be anathema.

Whoever states that Christ's body was corruptible, inglorious and imperfect after the union and considers him corruptible, inglorious and imperfect from conception to the resurrection ... and only after the resurrection incorrupt, glorious and perfect, let him be anathema.<sup>16</sup>

But this affirmation did not mean that Christ had a heavenly body in any sense or that it was unreal, because the Armenian Church has always confessed that Christ's body was possible. The idea of the incorruptibility is that Christ, being sinless, his body could not be affected by the consequences of sin. In the words of the theologian Khosrovik, 'He clothed the flesh with His power and glory when and where he wished.' Hence the supernatural 'does not abrogate natural faculties, but develops them'.

One of the accusations set forth in considering the Armenian doctrine monophysite in the Eutychian sense is the form of the Trisagion as it is recited in the Armenian Liturgy: 'Holy God, Holy and powerful, Holy and immortal, who wast crucified for us.' The controversial clause is 'who wast crucified for us'. This phrase is replaced by other appropriate phrases according to the dominical feast that is celebrated, such as at Easter: 'who didst rise from the dead', at the Nativity and Epiphany: 'who was born and manifested for us'. From this it is clear that the Trisagion is sung in honour of Christ, not of the Trinity, and inasmuch as the Godhead was present in Christ incarnate it was legitimate to say that God has been crucified for us, has risen from the dead and was born and manifested for us.<sup>17</sup> Bishop Step'anos Siunetsi (680-735), in his Commentary on the office, relates the Trisagion to the elevation of the Gospel. Step'anos's description of this moment in the liturgy includes many details which confirm that the Trisagion is addressed to Christ only:

At the elevation of the Gospel, with spiritual eyes, we see the Son of God seated on a throne high and lifted up. The smell of fragrant incense refers to the teaching and glorification given to those born of the font, the children of the church. And the voice of the commandment is a proclamation of worship ... Here the suffusion of the Holy Spirit who came from the Father, typified by the

incense, takes us all up whence we have fallen. By this incense we come to God's likeness according to his image, and as we boldly process around the royal table, together with the seraphim, our confession of the immortal one who was crucified for us issues forth like fragrant incense.<sup>18</sup>

So it appears that the Armenians adopted the Trisagion at a very early stage – it must have existed for some time before its first extant attestation at the Council of Chalcedon. In the elevation of the Gospel, the worshipper is called upon to see the Son of God enthroned in glory, who offers his word to 'the children of the church', in the words of the Gospel. The fragrant incense reminds Step'anos of the sweet 'teaching and glorification' of God's Word issued to the faithful by the Holy Spirit. This Gospel reading is seen as a trinitarian outpouring, whose soteriological value is affirmed by referring again to the Holy Spirit typified in the incense: he 'takes us all up whence we had fallen', and in traditional Cappadocian tones, he brings us 'to God's likeness according to his image'. In short, God the Father offers his Son in and through the Gospel lection, which we receive by the grace of the Holy Spirit. In Step'anos's interpretation everything points to the imminent Gospel reading and its overriding importance as another mode of Christ's revelation to his people. Friederike Kockert underlines this interpretative connection of the 'Little Entrance' and the Gospel:

While the Trisagion in the present day Byzantine liturgy is isolated between the Little entrance and the readings, having no direct relationship with either one, in the Armenian liturgy, as the song accompanying the procession of the Gospel, it serves as a clear acclamation of Christ who is present.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion: the texts prove beyond doubt the Armenian opposition to Eutychianism, Julianism and Severianism. In addition to the passages already referred to from the Armenian Church Fathers, we need to mention here the works of Catholicos Yovhannes Ōdznetzi (650–728).<sup>20</sup> In his treatise *Against the Phantasiasts*, he refutes with great vigour the erroneous belief of the latter, that the humanity of the Saviour was a mere modification, an external appearance like the imprint of the seal on a wax. He affirms that the body of Christ is real and consubstantial with ours, and that the divine and human natures exist without confusion.

The Word, in becoming man and being called man, remained also God; and man, in becoming God and being God, never lost his own substance ... It is evident that it is the incomprehensible union and not the transforma-

tion of the natures which leads us to say one nature of the Word Incarnate ... there is one nature and one person in Christ, if we must state it more briefly, and this is not because of the identity or the consubstantiality of the natures ... but, as I have frequently said, because of the ineffable union of the Word with His body.<sup>21</sup>

Yovhannes Ōdznetzi occupies a distinguished place among Armenian catholicos as the only one during whose catholicate of eleven years, 717–28, two very important local synods were called at Dvin in 719 and at Manazkert in 726 to implement substantial reforms in the Armenian Church. During his tenure the patristic florilegium known as *Girk' T'ght'ots* (Book of Letters) and the Armenian *Book of Canons* were compiled by Ōdznetzi. In his *Oration*, delivered at the opening of the synod, he describes the battered state of the Armenian Church in the aftermath of the Arab conquests, decades of ecclesiastical tug-of-war with the Imperial Church, and other political factors:

For I see many grave aberrations multiplying, not only among the lay, but also among the monastics and church primates. We, who took to the path of truth with one language, based on one proclamation, have wandered unto many trails and paths, taking up infinite and variously spurious customs, both in conduct and in worship of God; to the extent that [we have] borne almost the same damage [as resulted] from the battles of our ancient history; man against brother and man against his friend, city against city and law against law. Interlocutors and partners in business and worldly pursuits, [people who] have assembled by God toward peaceful ends, we are [now] too terrified and distraught to ask him for peace. And we treat each other like aliens and foreigners. This one is barbarous to that one, and another is a savage to others.

The Synod of Trullo in 680, backed by Byzantine ecclesiastical propaganda, often by force and with the active participation of the Armenian Chalcedonians, had taken its toll in Armenia. The Greeks were not the only purveyors of alien ideas and customs. The sects known as the Paulicians and the Tondrakians was also threatening the integrity and orthodoxy of the Christian faith in Armenia. The Paulicians rejected the Church with its hierarchy and institution outright. To address this situation Yovhannes pursued a rigorous policy of restoring unified, indigenous liturgical practices and orthodoxy throughout Armenia.

Some of the corrupt practices the catholicos refutes in the *Oration* are the use of simple, portable tables as church

altars, the improper blessing and utilization of holy oil, improprieties in the order of baptism, illicit marriage ceremonies that are abbreviated and celebrated outside the church, excluding the baptism of Christ and the blessing of water from the celebration of 6 January, and omitting the divine liturgy on Saturdays and Sundays of Great Lent. The Oration addresses these issues concretely, enumerating specific improprieties and ordering solutions, all carefully justified by logical refutation of the offending practice, extensive references to Scripture, keen theological reasoning, and above all insistence on remaining faithful to the apostolic tradition preserved by the Armenian Church. The Synods of Dvin and Manazkert consolidated the national autonomy and autocephaly of the Armenian Church begun in the fifth century.<sup>22</sup>

To sum up the Armenian position, what they wished to say was that in the total being and action of Jesus Christ, both God and man are simultaneously and continually present and at work. The relationship between them is integral and persisting. To use here an appropriate term, it is indissoluble. Once it has taken place, in accordance with the divine purpose, it is there; it cannot be undone. The objection to Chalcedon is not derived from a monophysite point of view; it came from a genuine fear that the council did not affirm the unity of Christ adequately, and that therefore it violated the faith of the Church. It is also clear, therefore, that while opposing the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo, the Armenian Church was fully aware of the Eutychian heresy, and that it excluded it with as much force and determination as the Chalcedonian side. Therefore, the reason for its opposition to the council was not an implicit or explicit sympathy for the position referred to as Eutychianism by the Council of Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo.

Second, the Armenian Church maintained in the fifth century, and maintains until now, that the Christian dogma of the Holy Trinity, the incarnation and redemption was already stated in the creed of the first three councils. The business of a general council must be to communicate the dogmas to the faithful as revealed by God as compulsory for belief, leaving the doctrines to be discussed by the doctors of the Church. Dogma is a matter of belief; doctrine is a matter of study.<sup>22</sup> The Council of Chalcedon, strangely enough, mixed up these two distinct features, and taking up a dogmatic point – our Lord's perfect divinity and true man-

hood (already settled in the previous councils) – began to discuss the way in which they were united. It is true that Eutyches denied our Lord's manhood, but what next? All the Apostolic Churches were firm on their common creed. The Armenian theologian Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan maintained that

A Christian's loyalty is not to a council as such, but to the church as a whole, which itself is the highest council, and which is the keeper of the deposit of the faith. The Council is judged by the faith of the Tradition and not vice versa. That is why some councils have been rejected by the Church ... others have been accepted universally or partially ... Consequently, there is a hierarchy of Councils, both with respect to the importance ascribed to them and with respect to the extent of their reception. It is an historical fact that councils have been accepted after their statements have been the subject of further dialogue within the Church.<sup>23</sup>

The Armenian historian Ghazar P'arpetsi expresses this sentiment thus: 'Do not mingle muddled teaching with the pure and lucid instruction of the holy and apostle like patriarch Gregory.'<sup>24</sup> The autonomous and autocephalous nature of the Armenian Church was also expressed in its reception of all the previous councils of Nicaea and Ephesus. When Archbishop Aristakes returned from the Council of Nicaea with the canons of the council, Movses Khorenatsi records: 'Gregory [the Illuminator] was delighted and added a few chapters of his own to the canons of the council to take greater care of his diocese.'<sup>25</sup> When the senior Translators returned from Constantinople with the canons of the Council of Ephesus, 'Sahak [Part' ev] and Great Mesrop [Mash-tots] zealously translated again what had once been translated and made with them a new version. But because they were ignorant of our technique their work was found to be deficient at many points.'<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the desire of the Armenian Church Fathers to discuss and reevaluate the decision of the Council of Chalcedon was legitimate, by a church that was independent and autonomous both ecclesiastically and politically from the Imperial Church. 'Self-government' and 'separation' are not synonymous terms. Although individualism has sometimes hindered the preservation of Christian unity, it would be a mistake to think that this unity is incompatible with legitimate diversity and exclusive of all organized life.<sup>27</sup>

# THE ARMENIAN CHURCH WITHIN CHRISTENDOM

## Armenian–Byzantine Church Relations

The church of Armenia embarked on a path of autonomy very early on. In its endeavour to strengthen its national character, two important decisions were taken. First, the catholicoi who had from the time of St Gregory up to St Nerses (353–73) been consecrated in Caesarea ceased going to Cappadocia for consecration, after Sahak I acceded to the see without reference to Caesarea in 389. As a result of the partition in 387 Armenia ceased to be a Roman protectorate and there is nothing to indicate that the see of Caesarea had any metropolitan rights over the whole of Pontus. Moreover, we see that this canonical position even close to home was weakened when a second province was formed in Cappadocia with Tyana as its capital.<sup>1</sup> The hierarchical links that existed until 373 between Armenian Christianity and the Church of Caesarea are explained by the origin of the evangelization and not by the exarchal position of the see of Caesarea. When relations were established with the Greek East in the 430s, it was in Constantinople and not in Caesarea that affairs were dealt with. Soon after, the intellectual self-consciousness of the Armenians was also developed. Mesrop Mashtots (d. 440) gave the nation its own alphabet, and this achievement very soon led to an independent Armenian literature. It is self-evident that at first this was a matter of translations from Greek and Syriac, and with this borrowing the orientation to the intellectual centre of the Byzantine empire acquired a new importance. Of course, ecclesiastically it was no longer Caesarea that played the great role, but Constantinople, which meanwhile had acquired supremacy over Cappadocia, to which the Armenians turned. On one level the invention of the Armenian alphabet was the final step in the missionary work of the Church by which the dependence upon Greek or Syriac worship and literature ended. But on a second level it was directly associated with the autocephalous character of the Eastern Churches as well as the growth of self-identification among the non-Greek peoples of the east. It is somehow remarkable that the Greek colonies over the

Roman part of Armenia refused to mix with the native church and were provided by the Mother Church with their own Greek bishoprics, as was the case with Theodosiopolis (Erzerum), which was made subject to the metropolitan of Caesarea, whereas in the Persian part of Armenia, Syriac bishoprics were made subject to the catholicos of Persia. The Armenian Church indeed grew to be so national that neither the Greeks nor the Aramaeans, settled in the very midst of the Armenian population, felt themselves at home in Armenian churches and had Greek and Syriac churches built for their own use. This is also responsible for Armenian doubts about Chalcedon, where Theodoret was received and his orthodoxy affirmed. But it also stands between the Armenians and other monophysites who share the same objections to ‘Nestorian’ leanings at Chalcedon. The patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria might quarrel over procedure, but they had no claims to jurisdictional primacy over each other. Non-intervention in each others’ territories laid down at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381 prevented the imposition of any single language for use in the liturgy and church order, such as the popes were able to impose in the west. Rome had throughout insisted on Latin as the sole liturgical language of the west.<sup>2</sup> The languages of the barbarians were uncouth, uncultured and unwritten, and were judged to be ill adapted to the dignity of liturgy. The attitude of Constantinople was entirely different. The desire for ecclesiastical centralization did not extend to language, and it has always seemed natural to Byzantine churchmen that as new peoples were brought within the Church they should be encouraged to build up their Church and their national culture on the basis of their own language. The close identification of race, language, culture, and religious and political organization has given to Armenian Christianity an extraordinary resilience and pertinacity.

Origen had foreseen that, desirable though it might be for all men to follow the same doctrine, they were more likely to do so in the next world than in this.<sup>3</sup> The doctrinal rigidity we observe in the Church from the fourth century,

the vain search for precise definitions guaranteed to exclude old heresies and preclude new, was not helped by its professional priesthood. When bishops were not coasting from council to council, bickering over dogma, they were staying at home making even more trouble by building up local power bases.<sup>4</sup> No bishop would use such power to usurp the imperial throne, but he might well exercise in his own town an authority more apparent and forceful than the emperor's. Some sees accumulated influence that reached far beyond their immediate environs – most notably, Caesarea of Cappadocia, Antioch and Alexandria. Their position towards the periphery made them ideal powerhouses of mission, but also challengers to Constantinople and to the emperor's authority in matters of dogma. It was not for nothing that the patriarch of Alexandria came to call himself 'Judge of the Universe'. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451 Constantinople secured not only the doctrinal definition it wanted but also, by the famous canon 28, the exclusive right to consecrate 'the bishops in the dioceses of Pontus, Asia and Thrace and in barbarian parts'. This gave Constantinople control over the 'barbarians' on Byzantium's northern frontier and in the Caucasus – but implicitly left those of the east and south to Antioch and Alexandria. Canon 28 of Chalcedon was, in effect, the Byzantine empire's legal weapon. By this approach Christian Rome paid at the periphery for what it gained at the centre.<sup>5</sup>

The separation of the autocephalus Church of Armenia from its previous communion with the Byzantine Church of Constantinople over the Christological definition in 451 by the Council of Chalcedon and its rejection of the 'foul' Tome of Leo have long been the subject of numerous, and at times polemical, articles and studies. The anti-Chalcedonian movement in Armenia has been interpreted as an embodiment of 'nationalism' or a result of 'defective rendering of Greek terms into Armenian and the imperfect knowledge of the proceedings of the Council of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451)'.<sup>6</sup>

The Armenians were not present at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 – they were that very year fighting for their lives against Persia, having been refused help from Constantinople. One of the first acts of the emperor Marcian (450–57) was to refuse aid to the Armenians. 'This ignoble man,' wrote Eghishe, 'thought it better to preserve the pact with the heathen [Persia] for the sake of terrestrial peace, than to join in war for the Christian covenant.'<sup>7</sup> The objection to the Council of Chalcedon was not made in haste, nor was it a product of 'nationalism'. The evidence of conciliar lists indicates that although no representative came to the council from the Armenian interior, there can be no doubt

that Armenian bishops from Karin, Erez, Arcn and Ekegheats were actually present at Chalcedon and no longer could the objection to the Tome of Leo be based on the premise of the 'Armenian Church's isolation from contemporary controversies and consequent ignorance'.<sup>8</sup> The Armenian Church, which had by this time secured administrative independence from Caesarea and a cultural identity, chose to follow Cyril of Alexandria's insistence that the one incarnate nature of Christ is divine, 'out of two natures' but not 'in two natures'. The first Council of Dvin set the tone in 506 by proclaiming the allegiance of the Armenian, Iberian and Albanian hierarchies to the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople and condemning Nestorianism along with Chalcedon, deemed Nestorian. P.G.G. Gavañian, in an article called 'Eutyches and the Armenian church', raises the question as to how the Armenian Church could reject the teaching of Eutyches and at the same time refute the Council of Chalcedon, whose principal objective had been to combat Eutycheism.<sup>9</sup> This apparent contradiction disappears when we acknowledge that the doctrine called monophysitism by scholars has an orthodox and an un-orthodox implication. Most crucially, the Armenian theological stance taken in the sixth century remained constant throughout the centuries, as witnessed in the theologies of Abraham Aghbat'anetsi (607–15), Komitas Aghtsetsi (615–28), Yovhannes III Ödznetsi (717–28), Step'anos Siunetsi (d. 735), Khatchik I Arsharuni (973–92) and Khatchik II Anetsi (1058–65).

Though ultimately the one-nature Christology of Cyril of Alexandria was to emerge as the doctrine of clearly defined territories, including most of Syriac-speaking Syria, Coptic Egypt, Nubia, Ethiopia and Armenia, it would be a great mistake to think of it originally as a movement of independence, or even one whose leaders thought in terms of provincial or regional independence. Christians in the fifth and sixth centuries regarded themselves as 'citizens of Jerusalem', that is, of the capital of the whole 'race of Christians' and not as Armenian, Copt or Ethiopian. Opposition to Chalcedon was not an eastern form of donatism. Centuries after the ending of Byzantine rule the monophysite historian, Patriarch Michael of Antioch, was criticizing Marcian because Chalcedon divided the empire in secular and religious matters alike and thereby contributed to its ruin.<sup>10</sup>

Emperors Zeno (474–91) and Anastasius I (491–518) wished to secure the loyalty of the eastern provinces and this led them to follow a policy of religious comprehension that succeeded only in disturbing the whole empire. It was necessary for an emperor to have an eye and ear to Armenia. That country's craftsmen made and dyed the rich textiles of the east, its merchants travelled with them throughout the

empire, its peasants of the mountain sides made excellent mercenaries. To win over Syria and Armenia, Zeno published a reunion edict or Henotikon in 484, agreed by the patriarchs of Constantinople and Alexandria.<sup>11</sup> The Henotikon repeated the older creeds, anathematizing those who taught otherwise, 'whether at Chalcedon or elsewhere'. In 543, Emperor Justinian, in his effort to soften down the decisions of Chalcedon which he knew were widely disliked in Syria and Armenia, acting on his own initiative, and without summoning a council, issued an edict known as the Three Chapters, intended to conciliate the monophysites. In this edict he attacked the views of three deceased Nestorians, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyr and Ibas of Edessa. He succeeded only in exasperating everybody; the monophysites saw at once that the edict merely added to the decisions of Chalcedon, and in no way altered them. The Armenian catholicos Nerses II (548–57) called a council in Dvin in 555, in which the Armenians formally condemned not only Eutyches, the Three Chapters, Nestorius and – this time quite explicitly – the Tome of Leo and the Council of Chalcedon, but also Severus of Antioch for his doctrine of 'corruptibility' of Christ's body. This is also the council which ordered the translation into Armenian of the anti-Chalcedonian work of Timothy Aelurus's *Refutation* and added to the Trisagion the clause 'who wast crucified for us'. In 572, an Armenian rebellion, led by Vardan II Mamikonian, forced Prince Vardan and the catholicos Yovhannes II Gabeghian (557–74) and other leaders of the rebellion to flee to Constantinople, where Justin II had recently published his 'programme', strongly reaffirming Cyrillian Christology, while maintaining Chalcedon. In 573, the Armenians, including the catholicos, accepted Church union and took communion with the Chalcedonians. According to Sebeos, a new imperial edict of 590–91 ordered everyone 'to preach the Council of Chalcedon in all the churches of the land of Armenia and to unite in communion with the imperial forces. The children of the covenant of the Armenian Church fled and withdrew into foreign lands.'<sup>12</sup> Many, 'holding the edict as nought', held their ground and remained steadfast to the covenant of the Armenian Church, but the majority of Chalcedonian bishops who were living on the Byzantine side of the border met at Theodosiopolis (Erzerum) in 593 and elected a new Chalcedonian catholicos, Yovhan III Bagarantsi, who resided in Avan, across the river from Dvin, until his arrest and deportation by the Persians in 611.

The extraordinary settlement between Byzantium and Persia, reached in 592 under Emperor Maurice (582–602), gave the Byzantine empire control over most of Armenia.

The river Azat served as the dividing line, with Dvin, the residence of the catholicos, still on the Persian side, but right at the Byzantine border. The emperor Maurice invited Catholicos Movses II Eghivardetsi (574–604) to participate in a council of union, which the catholicos refused, issuing the famous rebuttal: 'I shall not cross the river Azat, to eat the baked bread of the Greeks, nor will I drink their warm wine.' The allusion is obviously to the use of the leavened bread and the zeon, or hot water, poured in the chalice before communion, by the Orthodox Greeks. Armenians use unleavened bread and unmixed wine in the liturgy.<sup>13</sup>

The Persian conquest of the Middle East, which lasted eighteen years in Syria (611–29) and eleven years in Egypt (618–29), brought fundamental changes in the relationship between various religious groups. In 614, after the capture of Jerusalem, Chosroes took the unusual – but very 'imperial' – step of convoking representatives of the major three Christian groups to Ctesiphon. Presidency at the meeting was given to the Armenian prince Smbat Bagratuni. The Nestorians, who had previously held a dominant position in Persia, presented a confession of faith. However, the Armenians later reported that it was their faith which was given the upper hand at the meeting. In fact, it appears that – any doctrinal agreement being previously impossible – Chosroes decided to maintain the Nestorian predominance among Christians in Persian territories and to support the non-Chalcedonians, where they had clear majority, i.e. in the former Byzantine territories of Syria and Armenia and in Western Mesopotamia. The Chalcedonians were obviously less favoured because of their attachment to the Byzantine empire. But then came the victory of Heraclius and the restoration of Byzantine rule, followed by new attempts at ending the schism. During his own six-year stay in Transcaucasia and Persia (622–8) and in the years which followed the victory, Heraclius, advised by Sergius of Constantinople, actively pursued a policy of church union.<sup>14</sup> The religious prestige which he had gained by restoring the True Cross, travelling through Armenia, 'gave many fragments [of the relic] to Armenian dignitaries', trying to gain their loyalty and induce them to ecclesiastical union. He and the patriarch Sergius strove to render the doctrine of the two natures acceptable by affirming that in Christ there was but one 'energy'. The teaching was developed in a doctrinal statement, called the Ekthesis, of 638: the human will in Christ was declared to be so in harmony with the divine will that he had, in fact, but one will, and that divine.<sup>15</sup> This monothelite doctrine did nothing to unite Christendom against Islam. Following the death of catholicos Abraham Haghbatatsi (607–12) and Komitas (612–28), the Armenian

imperial general Mzhezg Gnuti (630–35) summoned the newly elected Catholicos Eznik (630–41) to a council at Karin where he was coerced into accepting union with the Church of Constantinople in 632–3.<sup>16</sup> Resistance to the union was limited to a few theologians, headed in particular by Yovhannes Mayragometsi and Step'anos Siwnetsi. In 640, Yovhannes was formally condemned by Nerses III, the Builder (641–61), who remained Chalcedonian until a new council held in Dvin (648–9) where union was rejected again. At that time an anti-Byzantine alliance with the Muslim caliphate dominated Armenian politics. But a forceful return of Byzantine armies to Armenia reversed the situation once more. In 654, Emperor Constans II personally came to Dvin: the liturgy was celebrated at the cathedral of St Gregory the Illuminator, at which the emperor received communion with the catholicos Nerses, who recognized Chalcedon. By the mid-690s the Arabs were back in control, and by 706 opposition from any Armenian *nakharars* still tempted to contest the new order had been effectively and brutally crushed.

The precarious position of the Armenians, within and outside the empire, and the short-sighted political and religious policy of the Byzantines resulted in catastrophic consequences for both Byzantium and Armenia. The policy of the Byzantine emperors Tiberius II (578–82) and Maurice I (582–602) of persistently dividing and deporting Armenians in order to achieve peace, order and unity in the eastern borders of the empire is exposed by the seventh-century historian Sebeos in a remarkable testimony:

The Armenians are scoundrels and an unsubmissive nation. They dwell between us and constitute a source of disturbance. I shall round up my [Armenians] and send them off to Thrace; you send yours to the east. If they die there, it will be that many enemies who will perish. But if, on the other hand, they kill others, it will be that many enemies whom they kill. As for us, we shall live peacefully. If however they remain in their own country, we will never have any rest.<sup>17</sup>

In ecclesiastical policy, too, they did not accomplish their plan to gain the Church of Armenia for their direction and tradition. In the Caucasus they succeeded in separating the Georgian Church from the Armenian in 608.

Armenia possessed sufficient human and material resources to attempt to defend itself against the Muslims, but erroneous Byzantine religious and political measures made it impossible to develop a coherent resistance. Yet there was more local violent resistance in Armenia than there had been in Syria and Palestine and Egypt, but no

imperial army was in shape or in a position to come to its assistance in the critical early 640s. By the 650s, when Constans II had secured tighter control of the governmental and military apparatus, it was too late for Byzantium to do much. The Muslims had developed enough local ties and familiarity with the local situation that – together with the rising number of Muslim troops available for combat and conquest in Armenia – the odds had risen against the prospects for imposition of solid Byzantine authority. Yet the switching of sides by some Armenians, even the collaborations, did not lead Armenians to convert to Islam. Here again, their experiences differed from many of the Christian inhabitants of Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt.<sup>18</sup>

The relatively stable situation came to an abrupt end in the early eighth century with the accession of the Abbasid dynasty at Baghdad after 750. Increasingly oppressive taxation and religious intolerance, as well as the establishment of Arab emirates around Lake Van, in the valley of the lower Araxes, and as far north as Iberia, gradually altered the demographic and cultural pattern of the Armenian plateau and threatened its autonomy.<sup>19</sup> Fearful of their religious and secular institutions, the *nakharars* rebelled repeatedly against the caliphate, provoking increasingly brutal retaliations. The Arabs used harsh reprisals to defeat the insurrection led by Mamikonian in 774, and the whole family was wiped out. The beginning of the decline of the Abbasid caliphate after its first splendid century and the concomitant shift of Constantinople from a defensive to an offensive military policy in the east gradually recreated the balance of power on the frontiers of Armenia. Furthest removed from the danger of Arab attacks in their ancestral domain of Taron, west of Lake Van, and in the area around Mount Ararat and Aragats, the Bagratids' power increased and led to recovery.<sup>20</sup> Supported by the Church as defenders of the faith, the Bagratids expanded their domains and obtained a degree of recognition from the Abbasids, who conceded to them the title 'prince' and then 'prince of princes' of Armenia.

After his appointment as commander-in-chief of Armenia in 856, Ashot Bagratuni, son of Smbat the Confessor, began to lay the foundations of the future Bagratid kingdom. He conceived the idea of a united Caucasia under the banner of the Bagratids. The implementation of such a plan would presuppose a consolidation of the Christian forces and peoples of the Caucasus. Such a consolidation would be possible, if the theological differences between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian elements in Armenia and neighbouring lands could be resolved. The emergence of a united Christian Caucasia could be useful in gaining the friendship



and support of the Byzantine empire, whose armies had already reached the Euphrates in 859. Medieval Armenian historians place within the context of the early years of Ashot an exchange of letters between the Byzantine patriarch Photius and the Armenians over the possibility of church union. There are three lengthy letters from Patriarch Photius to Catholicos Zak'aria I Dzahetsi (855–76), another letter from Photius to Ashot, and Ashot's reply to Photius. Photius's letter to Zak'aria is commonly attached to a treatise called *Discourse of Vahan Bishop of Nicaea*.<sup>21</sup>

'In the 311th year of the Armenian era [= 862], Patriarch Photius of Constantinople sent Vahan the Archbishop of Nicaea to Armenia to Catholicos Zak'aria of Great Armenia concerning the unity of faith.'<sup>22</sup> Catholicos Zak'aria of Armenia called a council in Shirakawan of many bishops and clerics, in the presence of Ashot, commander-in-chief of Armenia. The authenticity of the letter to Zak'aria, as it is preserved, is, however, doubtful, although J. Laurent and V. Grumel regard it as genuine. Recently, G. Garitte has considerably weakened the thesis of its authenticity by showing that the author of the first part of the text used an Armenian work on the acceptance and subsequent rejection of the decision of the Council of Chalcedon by the Armenians. This document contained some errors concerning the dates of the first councils, which are repeated in this part of the letter. They are also copied in the *Narratio de rebus Armeniae*, a work composed about the year 700, which appears to have used the same source as the author of this part of the letter. A Greek patriarch, least of all one of Photius's standing, could hardly have committed such errors. The *Discourse of Vahan, Bishop of Nicaea* and the fifteen anathemata, considered by some to be the canons of the Council of Shirakawan, should be treated separately from the correspondence of Patriarch Photius and Zak'aria.<sup>23</sup>

The Letter to the catholicos Zak'aria tacitly recognizes the autocephaly of the Armenian Church as apostolic foundation through its greeting of Zak'aria as the successor of St Thaddeus, and suggesting that the Armenian doctrine was in fact orthodox and consonant with that of the Greeks. The Christological canons confirm the definitions of the first three oecumenical councils, rephrasing them in terms of Armenian theological thought. Thus the canons exempt the Armenian Church from the old accusations of Eutychianism and Theopaschism. They also bear witness that the Armenian Church kept its distance from the Julianist and Aphthartodocetist positions. The conciliation sought between the Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians in Caucasia was consonant with Ashot Bagratuni's general policy of unifying the Christians under the Bagratid kingdom. In

this connection, it is particularly important that the Armenian catholicos and historian Yovhannes Draskhanakertsi, an almost contemporary of Patriarch Photius, traces the apostolic character of the see of Constantinople to the Apostle Andrew. He writes as follows:

Constantius, the son of the great Constantine, had transferred from Ephesus to Constantinople the relics of John the Evangelist, and, emboldened by this, established a Patriarch in Constantinople. Later the people of Jerusalem, also emboldened by his act, raised their See to patriarchal rank, considering this legitimate since it was there that the Logos of the Father was born, was seen to walk among men, was baptised by John, was crucified, buried, and rose on the third day. And until that time there were only four patriarchs in the world, because of the four Evangelists, Matthew in Antioch, Mark in Alexandria, Luke in Rome, and John in Ephesus, but after these acts there were six in all.<sup>24</sup>

The tradition that mentions the transfer of John's relics to Constantinople is, of course, incorrect, but the meaning of the passage is clear: Constantinople was regarded as the successor of Ephesus which had been founded by St John. In the next passage Yovhannes added a seventh patriarchate – Armenia – elevated to that position because that country possessed the relics of the Apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus, who, according to Armenian tradition, had evangelized it. During the patriarchate of Anton II (893–901) Prince Smbat demanded that when a new catholicos was elected, he should travel to Constantinople to be consecrated there. This was the first time that canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon was being explicitly implemented – the canon that the Armenian Church had rejected.

The same conciliatory tone is found in the Examination and Refutation addressed by Niketas of Byzantium to the 'Archon of Armenia', which has none of the usual denunciations of the twelfth-century polemicists. Making an even greater concession, the patriarch Nicholas Mystikos twice acknowledged to his colleague the catholicos Yovhannes V Draskhankertsi (897–925) that 'the Armenians, the Iberians, and the Albanians ... collectively comprise your faithful flock', thereby recognizing the jurisdiction of the Armenian primate over the Chalcedonian Iberians.<sup>25</sup>

After Basil's death, Byzantium's religious diplomacy in Armenia changed materially. Romanos III, 'through personal command directed the church of God to assume a new approach'. He even conscripted into military service the monks from monasteries of the Black Mountain of the Armenian doctrine. The situation deteriorated even more

after the conquest of Armenia, when there was no longer any effort being made to win over the Armenians: 'When the Armenians were taken over by the Greeks,' writes Matthew of Edessa, 'he prevented any evil action by the Armenian nation; they sat down to examine the faith, ... and tried to hinder and divert all true believers in Christ from their belief.' While up to the conquest of Armenia the empire strove to accommodate those who held to the Armenian doctrine, after the conquest it took a confrontational stance against the Armenian catholicate. Under conditions of proliferating power bases the catholicate was the principal unifying force for the Armenians. Byzantium could not fail to recognize this reality. For that reason one of the first acts was to strengthen the Armenian catholicate in Ani. Matthew of Edessa lingers with relish over the ceremonious reception of Patriarch Petros in 1049/50 when 'Lord Petros was received with awesome pomp at Hagia Sophia ... and lived four years gloriously in Constantinople among the Romans, and every day he grew in glory and honour among the Greeks'. A year later Katakalon Kekaumenos 'did not show high honour to the patriarch'. Moreover, Catholicos Petros was removed from Ani and sent to Ardsn, and from there to exile in Constantinople. The antagonism of Constantine X Doukas (1059-67) increased to the degree that he threatened to have the Armenian princes living in the empire rebaptized; he 'conceived an evil plan wanting to take over and restrict the Patriarchal See of St. Gregory of the Armenians ... and instituted persecution and imposed various examinations on the faith of the Armenian people'.<sup>26</sup>

The Byzantine policy of 'dividing and deporting' Armenians continued and had negative impacts not only on the Armenians, but also on the Greeks themselves. During this crucial period the antagonism between the Armenian non-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian factions deepened. Byzantium was unable to establish strong support in Armenia. On 26 August 1071, the Seljuks, led by Alp Aslan, won the decisive battle of Manzikert and captured the emperor Romanus IV Diogenes (1067-71). This was 'one of the blackest days in the long history of Byzantium'.<sup>27</sup> After this battle Armenia was lost, and a new era began.

### Armenian-Byzantine Church Relations at the Time of the Armenian Cilician Kingdom

The great Seljuk raids that captured Ani in 1066 and Kars the following year, driving its king, Gagik-Abas, into Cappadocian exile, completed the demise of the Armenian Bagratid kingdom. The massive western migration of Arme-

nians contributed to the reoccupation of ancient Armenia Minor west of the Euphrates, as well as of Cappadocia and Cilicia to the south. The creation of an independent Cilician state became possible only with the establishment of the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem and especially the principality of Antioch, to both of which Cilicia was linked by intermarriages. The westward movement brought Armenians into closer contact with the Byzantine empire and Church, and when the Crusaders appeared on the scene in 1097, and soon took over several cities which had large Armenian populations, including Jerusalem, Antioch and Edessa, their lords and military orders - the Templars, the Teutonic knights and the Hospitallers - subsequently had much to do with Armenian rulers in Cilicia, and the papacy negotiated repeatedly with the Armenian Cilician Church about union.<sup>28</sup>

The Armenian catholicate had followed the Armenian political leaders to Cilicia, but the occupants of the ancient episcopal sees, notably that of Artaz, had remained in the homeland to care for their native flock. These were the eastern clergymen, since those who had left the country had moved west. Beginning from the eleventh century the eastern clergymen became more and more - but never completely - isolated from their western brethren due to their gradual encirclement by Muslim peoples. During the second half of the eleventh century Armenian-Byzantine ecclesiastical-political relations became hostile on both sides. The story of relations in this period has been described in detail by the historian Matteos Urhayetsi. Here we find testimonies to the Armenian-Byzantine ecclesiastical and political rivalry, the principal initiator of which was the emperor Alexius I Comnenus (1081-1118). The Byzantine historians Anna Comnena, John Cinnamus and Nicetas Choniates devote several pages to the persecution of the Armenian Church and population in the Byzantine empire in the twelfth century. John II Comnenus (1118-43) attempted to alleviate relations between the two ecclesiastical organizations, but the situation only improved when Manuel I Comnenus (1143-80) was enthroned emperor. The closest the Armenian Church ever came to reunification with the Greeks was during the Armenian-Byzantine ecclesiastical negotiations in the period between 1165 and 1178. In 1149 the Armenian catholicate moved from Dsovk to Hromklay. In 1165, Bishop Nerses Shnorhali (later Catholicos Nerses IV Klayetsi), on his way from a reconciliatory mission, met the imperial duke of Mamistra, Prince Alexius. The informal conversation between them turned into a theological dialogue. The prince, impressed by the graceful manners and broadmindedness of the bishop, and encouraged by his

attitude towards union, asked Nerses to prepare a written statement on the doctrine and rites of the Armenian Church. Thus in reply to Alexius's inquiries, Nerses prepared a doctrinal statement, namely, *The Confession of Faith of the Armenian Church*<sup>29</sup> in which he explained the differences between the Orthodox and the Armenian Orthodox viewpoints. In the course of this meeting he explained that the term 'one nature', used by the Armenians, in the sense accepted by Sts Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, referred to the 'ineffable union of the two natures with one another'. The *Confession of Faith*, which became his doctrinal masterpiece, greatly impressed Prince Alexius. He conceded that if one should speak of two natures, 'not because of the separation, according to Nestorius, but so as to show the heretics Eutyches and Apollinarius that there is no confusion, then we have nothing against it'. Therefore, 'if one speaks of one nature because of the indestructible and indivisible union, and not because of the confusion, and if one speaks of two natures because there is no confusion or alienation, and not because of any division, both are within the limits of orthodoxy'. In the union professed by the Armenians the humanity is not submerged in the divinity. 'We say Christ God and man, consubstantial with us by virtue of his manhood and with God and the [Holy] Ghost, by virtue of His Godhead, the same one and indivisible Godhead . . . , not one and another according to the belief of Nestorius who considered the body as the temple of the Word, for after the union the duality disappeared.' In the judgement of S. Der Nersessian, 'this apology of the Armenian faith and the liturgical and disciplinary practices of the Armenian church has a calm and dignified tone', and differs from earlier writings in that there is no overt criticism or attack on the Chalcedonian doctrine. The response to this statement was delivered to Nerses in 1167, after Catholicos Gregory III Pahlawuni (1113–66) resigned from the office and Nerses succeeded his brother as catholicos on Palm Sunday, 27 April 1166.<sup>30</sup> Nerses, unable to accept Manuel's invitation to go to Byzantium, wrote a second letter to the emperor, in which he repeats his belief in the desirability of a union of the two Churches, and he emphasizes that each party should come with due humility and gentleness, fortified by prayer, ready to recognize and correct whatever may be proved to be unorthodox in his faith. 'If God wills that we converse with one another, let it not be as the master with his servants and the servants with their master, for you set our defects before us, and we do not dare inform you of what shocks us in you. Such relations belong to worldly matters but not to spiritual, since all the faithful are equal with one another, the mighty and the humble'. Insisting again on the

importance of a sincere examination and mutual concessions, he adds, 'Let us not examine in a spirit of enmity and with useless quarrels, as it was done until now, a procedure from which the church derived no benefit in all these years but was rather harmed by it; let it be done in humility and calm.' In the second half of his letter Nerses explains the practices of the Armenian Church which differ from those of the Greek Church, such as the use of unleavened bread, and wine without the admixture of water for the Holy Communion. In regard to the feasts which are celebrated on different dates, Nerses mentions the Feast of the Nativity which the Armenian Church, having retained the early custom, holds on 6 January.

Manuel I Comnenus, who was prevented from proceeding to Asia on account of the disorders which supervened in Thessaly, sent to Hromklay twice, in 1170 and 1172, the court theologian Theorianus and John Athmanus, a member of the delegation, to negotiate with the catholicos Nerses IV. The dialectic of these two talks written by Theorianus and other documents connected with the discussion have reached us in several Greek manuscripts (Vat.gr. 1105, Vat.gr. 1124, Vat.gr. 2220) and in Armenian in the collection of documents compiled by Nerses Lambronatsi in 1165–78.<sup>31</sup> In the course of these discussions the Armenians agreed that they were mistaken in thinking that the Greeks leaned toward Nestorianism, just as it was an erroneous belief of the Greeks that the Armenians were followers of Eutyches. He promises to summon a council, for he must consult with the bishop of Great Armenia and Cilicia, but also agrees to write for the third time an explanation of the Armenian position. He repeats that the Armenian Church anathematizes Nestorius and Eutyches.

Theorianus, on his return to Constantinople, presented a detailed report of his mission in which he misrepresents the discussion and puts into the mouth of Nerses expressions which absolutely contradict the indisputable documents which have come down to us, and this is a proof that Theorianus was anxious to hide his failure or was trying to present his mission in as brilliant a light as possible.<sup>32</sup> On their second visit Theorianus and Athmanus had brought with them a memorandum comprising nine demands which the Armenians were asked to accept. Three of these concerned dogma: (1) to anathematize those who say 'one nature' of Christ – Eutyches, Dioscorus, Severus, Timothy Aelurus, and all their followers; (2) to confess our Lord Jesus Christ, one Christ, one Son, one person, and two natures and two operations; (3) to recite the Trisagion without the words 'who wast crucified for us' and without the 'and'. The next four points dealt with the dates of several feasts, the use of

unleavened bread, wine without water for the Holy Communion, and other practices of the Armenian Church, demanding that these be changed to conform with Greek Orthodox practice. Nobody could expect that the Armenians would accept such conditions. The negotiations with Nerses IV failed, due to the fact that his approach to the reunion of the Churches followed a different path. For him, union was ideally the fruit of the communion of faith and not of administrative submission or uniformity of practices, as indicated in the following statement:

Various signs have been given to us of the outpouring of the graces of our Saviour, such as the Holy Eucharist, the sanctifying Miwron, the Dominical feasts, and the rest. Now what purpose, think you, can be served by diverging in the use of these things as to elements, or time, as case may be, but, by stubbornly clinging to such divergences, only to destroy the unity of peace of the church of Christ? Why not take our Lord's example for our guide, who, the Sabbath being made for man's rest, nevertheless deemed it right to break it for the sake of human beings' own health? If we be not willing to do this, we are indeed fallen into Jewish fables ... let us beware lest the World call hypocrites ourselves also who so destroy the Law of God to establish our own traditions.

Despite drawing the positions closer together, the Byzantine approach was regarded as limited and too adamant. Nerses later addressed the emperor of Constantinople:

The cause of our running away from you is that you have been pulling down our churches, destroying our altars, smashing the signs of Christ, harassing our clergy, spreading slanders in a way that even the enemies of Christ would not do, even though we live close to them. Such behaviour will not only fail to unify the divided, but it will divide those who are united. For human nature loves diversity. And men are drawn to the execution of commands not so much by violence as by humility and love.<sup>33</sup>

Nerses died on 13 August 1173, at the age of 71. In 1176 Emperor Manuel Comnenus sent two letters to the Armenians: one by the emperor himself and the other by the Synod of the Greek Church and signed by 20 of its highest officials. Both letters were very conciliatory in tone. The previously imposed nine conditions for union were reduced to just one: the acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon. Nerses's successor Gregory IV, called *Tgha* 'The Boy' (1173–98), was

as desirous as Nerses to establish peace and understanding between the Churches. Catholicos Gregory and Archbishop Nerses Lambronatsi informed the Armenian bishops and abbots of the negotiations, inviting them to a council.<sup>34</sup> The eastern bishops and abbots of Sanahin, Haghbat and other monasteries criticized the catholicos, and some were under the impression that a sort of agreement had already taken place between the Greeks and the catholicos and that the latter was presenting them with a *fait accompli*.

In his reply Catholicos Gregory (1173–93) invited them once more to be mindful of the fact that the Greeks had made considerable concessions: that the law of love is universal, that it must extend beyond the limits of the group and that people must not act as if one Christ had come for the Armenians, one for the Greeks and one for the Franks. He himself spoke in the name of tradition: 'I am a true Armenian of undivided heart', he declared, but he found it preposterous to engage in a sweeping condemnation of the Greeks as being 'in ignorance and error'; nor did he believe that by saying 'two natures united' damage would be inflicted upon the Armenian Church. He invited the eastern clergymen to have the courage and integrity to meet people of divergent opinions face to face. If the Greeks hold the truth, he said, we must admit it. If we hold the truth, we must be able to convince them. This appeal did not meet with full success: the abbots of Sanahin and Haghbat remained obdurate and the former wrote a new letter of protest. But one of the chief signatories of the first letter, the bishop of Ani, and several other prelates of Great Armenia came to the synod which was held at Hromklay in 1179.<sup>35</sup> The two letters that the council of Hromklay wrote to the emperor and the Greek Synod are masterpieces of scholarship and of ecclesiastical diplomacy. The Armenians did not deviate from their own traditional orthodoxy, nor did they wound Greek sensibilities. The meeting ended in complete agreement and the documents were certain to please the Greeks. But before the synodal letters were despatched to Constantinople, Manuel I Comnenus died in 1180. The whole programme, designed to bring about the reunion of the two Churches, fell through. Isaac Angelus (1185) abandoned the negotiations, and inaugurated a policy of oppression against the Armenians who had settled within the empire. Some twenty years later, in 1196, when Nerses Lambronatsi went to Constantinople for a last attempt in that direction, he found himself in the position of 'a dove sitting among vultures'. The haughty attitude of the Greek divines, their 'thick wordedness' and lack of interest in 'renewal in the Spirit' disappointed the archbishop bitterly.

Though the attitude of the catholicos of Cilicia is more



Planisphere by Pierre Desceliers, 1550, showing Armenia (top right). British Library, Add. 24065.

conciliatory and reveals a desire to reach an understanding with the Greeks, there is no change so far as their doctrine is concerned. They are particularly anxious to show that the Armenian faith is Orthodox, and has always been so. In attaching the treatise of Catholicos Yovhanes to the synodal letter of the council of Hromklay, Gregory wrote:

We have deemed it important to send it to you so that you may know with certainty that orthodoxy has not been recently introduced among us; it has come to us from our fathers. But our enemies, not paying any attention to it, slander us with cruel and unseemly words.

Had the dogmatic problem been the sole issue, an understanding might more easily have been reached, for the difference resided in the terminology perhaps more than in the religious thought itself. But the Armenians feared that by uniting with the Greeks they might lose their independence. The Byzantine emperor and the clergy wished to abolish the

autonomy of the Armenian Church; the clause included in the demands presented by Theorianus, whereby the catholicos was to be appointed by the emperor, is a patent proof of this.<sup>36</sup>

#### **The Armenian Church and the Papacy at the Time of the Armenian Cilician Kingdom**

The Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia was geographically hemmed in by the Mamluk sultanate of Syria and Egypt to the east, and the Turkish emirate of Karaman to the north. Both were Muslim powers hostile to the Armenian kingdom. To offset this danger, two sets of alliances were forged. One was a religious unity established between the Armenian and Western Churches and the other was a political alliance with the Mongols. The religious and political context within which Armenian religious and political leaders attempted to

work out an independent identity and survive creatively is memorably portrayed by Sanuto Marino:

the King of Armenia is under the fangs of four ferocious beasts: the lion, or the Mongols, to whom he pays a heavy tribute; the leopard, or the sultan, who daily ravages his frontiers; the wolf, or the Turks, who destroy his power; and the serpent, or the pirates of our seas, who worry the very bones of the Christians of Armenia.<sup>37</sup>

The fifth 'fang' was the ecclesiology of the medieval Latin Church, which held that there could be only one Church with one faith and one supreme authority. That faith was the bond of unity of the whole Christian community and the one authority was that of the keeper of the faith, the pope. Heresy and schism were denials of that unity, and heretics and schismatics, therefore, put themselves outside the pale of the Christian community'.<sup>38</sup>

In the *Histories of Agat'angeghos*, Buzand and Khore-natsi there is the story of the visit of Trdat to Rome at the conclusion of which a *dashink'* (pact) or *ukht* (covenant) was agreed between the two rulers and St Sylvester of Rome.<sup>39</sup> On many occasions in time of crisis with Persia this special relationship was recalled. 'Remember the condition (*payman*) of the covenant (*ukht*) made by thy father [Constantine] to our king, Trdat, and do not abandon their world to the godless Persians'<sup>40</sup> was the form of the appeal Bishop Vrt'anes and the Armenian *nakharars* made to Constantius. This strong feeling of respect and benevolence towards Rome was revived at the time of the third and fourth Crusades. St Nerses Shnorhali in his 'Elegy on the Fall of Edessa' praises Rome: 'O Rome, magnificent and revered mother of cities; see of the great St Peter, chief of the Apostles; Church which cannot be moved, built on the rock of Cephas, against which the gates of hell will never prevail ... You are like the Garden of Eden.'<sup>41</sup>

There was a wide measure of divergence between Armenian and Roman attitudes to the union. The Armenians seem to have thought that they were renewing the pact of St Gregory and St Sylvester, and forming closer links with a sister church, whereas the papacy thought that the Armenians were making their submission to the Roman See, and that they would therefore conform their faith and practice, where necessary, to Roman norms.

Catholicos Gregory III Pahlawuni (1113–66) was invited to the Latin Council of Antioch (1141). After the council, Cardinal Alberic, the papal legate, invited Gregory III to accompany him to Jerusalem. In the Council of Jerusalem (1142) Gregory was given place of honour. When the papal legate invited him to sanction the union of the Armenian

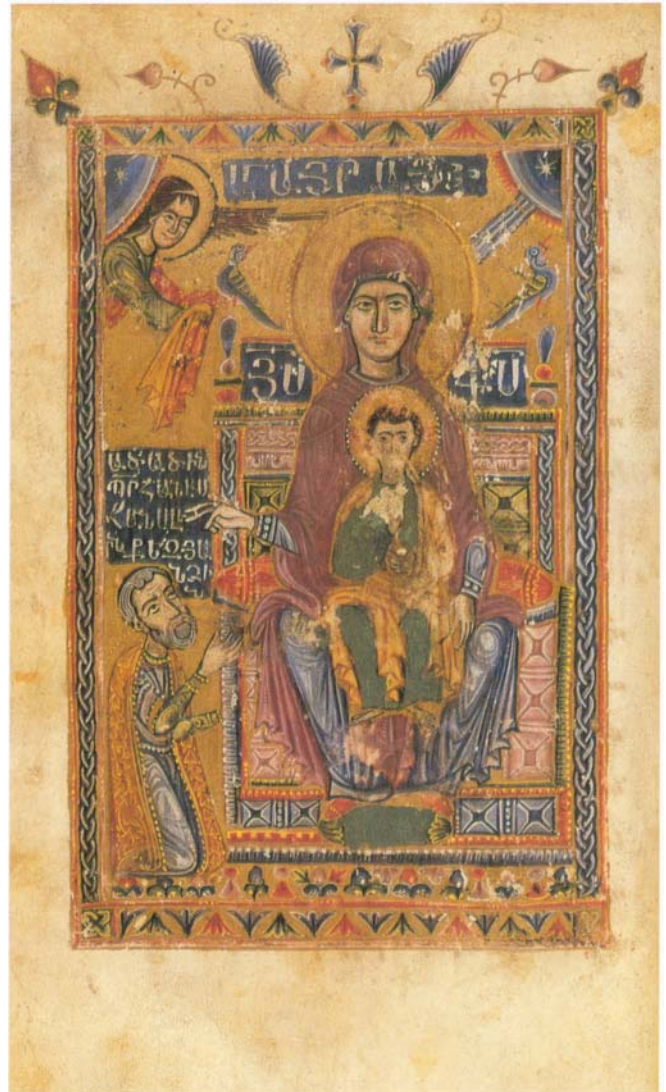
Church with Rome, the catholicos declined the proposal, declaring that 'the two Churches were not separated by any essentials'. The annexation of Cilicia by John II Comnenus in 1137–38 to the empire, the expulsion of the Latin hierarchy from the coastal cities and the presence of Queen Melisende of Jerusalem had drawn the Latin and Armenian Churches together. No attempt was made to force the Armenian Church into union with Rome, and the tenor of the negotiations seems to have been most amicable. The Latins were impressed by the scholarship of Gregory III Pahlawuni, whom William of Tyre describes as 'a distinguished theologian'. The Armenian historian Kirakos Gandzaketsi, writing in the thirteenth century, spoke of it in terms of a renewal of the alliance between Gregory the Illuminator and St Sylvester: 'the ancient treaty between Trdat and saint Grigor, and the emperor Constantine and the patriarch Sylvester, was renewed'.<sup>42</sup> Some years later, Gregory IV *Tgha* (1173–93), who worked actively for the cause of unity with Rome, stated that St Gregory the Illuminator had been ordained catholicos by St Sylvester in Rome, an embellishment not found in Agat'angeghos's *History*. Armenian and papal relations resumed in earnest at the start of the Third Crusade in 1187. In 1189 Pope Clement III wrote to Prince Leo II (1189–1219), and to Catholicos Gregory IV *Tgha*, asking them to help the Crusaders. The Armenian troops of Prince Leo II fought beside the Latin troops of Frederick Barbarossa. Leo II, desirous of being recognized as the king of Cilicia, turned to the west and sent envoys to Pope Celestine III and Henry VI in 1195 to open negotiations about receiving a crown.<sup>43</sup> The emperor, who was preparing to launch a new crusade, welcomed the opportunity to secure an ally and extend his power. He sent his chancellor, Conrad, bishop of Hildesheim, with a crown for Leo II. He was accompanied by a papal legate, Conrad, archbishop of Mayence. As a condition for the crown, the papacy insisted upon the implementation of a series of doctrinal and disciplinary reforms. According to Kirakos Gandzaketsi, the Armenian bishop at first refused to assent, until Leo II persuaded them both to make an apparent submission, implying that they would not be required to act upon it. Leo II was then crowned on 6 January 1198, on the Feast of the Kings, and the kingdom of Cilicia was inaugurated as a vassal state of the western empire, in communion with the Holy see.<sup>48</sup> At first King Leo II called himself 'King by the grace of the Holy Roman Emperor'; soon, however, he set no value on the papal conditions and called himself 'king by the Grace of God'. St Nerses, archbishop of Tarsus, and one of the twelve Armenian prelates who signed the document of union, in defending himself against the

accusation levelled by the eastern clergy opposed to the union, does so in these terms:

It is self-evident to anybody who takes the trouble to think about it that Christian peoples differ from each other on some points, but God's grace has given me the strength of intellect to view their vain traditions with detachment, and only to value an exchange of brotherly love. As far as I am concerned, the Armenian is like the Latin, the Latin like the Greek, the Greek like the Copt, the Copt like the Jacobite ... By the grace of Christ I break down all the barriers which separate us, and so my good name extends to the Latin, Greek and Jacobite Churches, as well as to Armenia, while I remain immovable in their midst without ever bowing to their particular traditions ...<sup>45</sup>

St Nerses indeed showed a degree of tolerance toward other Christian traditions which is rare in any age, and a recognition that the common faith which different confessions share is more important than the issues which divide them, and that many of their minor differences are, of their nature, trivial. Nevertheless, his charity towards the Latin Church, and his readiness to admit that, in some matters, the Armenian Church could learn from others, echoes the sentiments of his colleague Nerses IV Shnorhali. 'It is impossible for twelfth century Latin Christians to grasp that St Nerses could hold the Roman See in genuine reverence and yet regard the Latin, Greek, Jacobite and Armenian Churches as valid, autonomous parts of the Universal Church.'

The breach with Rome was of short duration. By 1226 it was known in the east that the emperor Frederick was mounting a new crusade, and this, perhaps, induced the Armenians to make peace with the Western Church. Smbat Constable, recording the coronation of Het'um I (1226–69) and Isabel, writes, 'links of friendship were strengthened with the Pope of Rome, the Emperor of Germany and ... the Sultan of Iconium'.<sup>46</sup> The catholicos Kostandin I Bardzberdtsi (1221–67) pursued a cautious path especially after the papacy raised questions (1237–39) about the legality of Het'um's marriage and insisted upon submission to the authority of Rome. Pope Gregory IX supported the view that the Cilician cities were subject to the Latin see of Antioch (June 1238). The Armenians countered this by appealing to the authority of the treaty epistle, for the pope subsequently conceded the existence of a tradition regarding Gregory and Sylvester (letter, 1 March 1239). The aim of the Cilician Armenians' leaders was to secure an alliance with the Crusaders on a basis of equality, a relationship which they believed had existed in the early fourth century.



The Psalter of King Levon III, 1283. Cat. 142.

This was implied by the historian Vardan Bardzberdtsi in his *Collected History*, completed in 1265, in his assessment that 'the letter of the covenant was written, they say, with the blood of the awe-inspiring mystery'. He also quotes a letter from an unnamed pope who had agreed 'that the patriarch of the Armenians undertake the administration over the Armenians and Greeks and all nations on that side of the sea, as we on this side', the implication being that the Armenians regarded the union with Rome primarily as a diplomatic, rather than an ecclesiastical, link.

The arrival of St Louis's Crusade in Cyprus in 1248 made King Het'um anxious to perpetuate his links with the west,

and he sent the catholicos to greet the king of France, who helped to mediate peace between Cilicia and Antioch.<sup>47</sup> In 1251, a synod of the Armenian Church met in response to a request from Pope Innocent IV to affirm the belief in the dual procession of the Holy Spirit (Filioque). The Mongol advance had reached Anatolia in 1243 and the Cilicians, realizing that the western alliance was not so effective as they had hoped it would be, turned to the Mongols. In 1247 King Het'um sent an embassy to the court of the Great Khan, Kuyuk, led by Smbad Constable, and in 1253 he set out himself to visit the Mongol court of Karakorum. He was the first independent ruler ever to make a voluntary submission to the Mongols, and the new Great Khan, Mangu, received him with honour and freed the Armenian Church throughout his empire from the payment of tax.<sup>48</sup>

In these circumstances, when the papacy was hostile to the Mongols and the Cilicians were dependent on the Mongols, it is not surprising that Armenian relations with the papacy were a cause for concern in Rome. The Armenian Church was even less willing than the Cilician king to offend the Mongols, since Great Armenia was now part of the Mongol empire. In 1261 Thomas de Lentini, bishop of Bethlehem and papal legate in the Levant, summoned the catholicos Kostandin I to meet him at Acre. The catholicos was unable to make the journey and instead he was represented by the theologian Mkhitar Skewratsi, who boldly affirmed Armenian ecclesiastical independence and attacked the papal claim of primacy:

Whence does the Church of Rome ... derive the power to pass judgement on the other Apostolic sees while she herself is not subject to their judgements? We ourselves [the Armenians] have indeed the authority to bring you [the Catholic church] to trial, following the example of the Apostles, and you have no right to deny our competence.<sup>49</sup>

Antioch fell to the Mameluks in 1268, and Cilicia became an isolated Christian state on the North Syrian mainland. Pope Gregory X invited the catholicos of Armenia to attend the Council of Lyons in 1274, but the Armenians declined to be represented.

A multitude of Latin missionaries swarmed over all the Christian east and what the popes were doing in the west, they applied also to the east. A Franciscan convent was founded in Sebastia in 1279, so for the first time the people of Great Armenia came into regular contact with Latin Christianity. The Franciscans also established themselves in Cilicia in 1292, with monasteries at Tarsus and Sis. The Latin influence, especially among the nobility and higher-level

clergy, increased. Armenian nobility was closely intermarried with the Latins. Latin missionaries, especially the Franciscans, were very active. It was one of these Franciscans, John of Monte-Corvino, who was sent by Het'um II (1289–1305) to Pope Nicholas IV with a letter requesting union with the Roman Church.<sup>50</sup> A few months after the sacking of Hromklay by the Egyptians in 1292, Het'um abdicated, accepted Catholicism and became a Franciscan, taking the name 'Brother John'. He left the throne to his nephew Leo IV (1305), yet every so often he would suddenly appear, borrow the throne for the occasion, sit on it without removing his monk's garb and pass judgement on the outstanding problems of the nation. There was cooperation between Het'um II and Catholicos Gregory VII Anawarzetsi (1293–1307), who was known as 'the Waterer', a nickname given to him for admitting having 'secretly' mixed water with the wine of the Eucharist.

The Mongol ruler Ghazan's repeated effort to break Mameluk power in North Syria failed and in 1303 Cilicia had no alternative source of help except for the Lusignan kingdom of Cyprus. Such help would be conditional on ecclesiastical union, and so Leo IV and Gregory VII, who had moved to Sis, called the Council in Sis in 1307.<sup>51</sup> In his letter to Het'um II, probably composed in 1306 or 1307, to adopt the reforms which the Holy see required, Gregory lists the issues the council to be convened was to discuss: (1) the acceptance of the canonical authority of the seven Ecumenical Councils; (2) the propriety of mixing wine and water in the eucharistic chalice; (3) the Chalcedonian definition of the doctrine of the two natures; (4) the removal of the expression 'who was crucified for us' from the Trisagion; and other minor ecclesiastical fasts and feasts.<sup>52</sup> The council, as Gregory VII had planned, was convened on 17 March 1307 in the Cathedral of Sis. Gregory VII had died before the council and in his absence the meeting was dominated by Het'um. At the end of the council Kostandin III Kesaratsi (1307–22) was elected catholicos. The opponents of the council organized a counter-council at Sis in 1309, and according to Samuel Anetsi, 'There assembled in the royal city of Sis a multitude of monks and cenobites, priests and deacons as well as vardapets and bishops and a multitude of people, men and women, because they refused to accept the use of water in the eucharistic cup and other innovations.'<sup>53</sup> The official reaction to this unauthorized convocation was swift: 'The king Oshin with the agreement of the Catholicos and the nobles seized them, locked the vardapets in prison in the fortress and killed many of the men and women and some of the priests and deacons. As well, he placed the monks in a boat and sent them into exile in Cyprus and



there many of them died.’<sup>54</sup> Even this did not silence the opposition and Ōshin I felt it necessary and prudent to convene another council at Adana in 1316 to confirm the decisions taken at Sis.

Brochard, or Burcard, travelled to the Near East about 1308 and stayed there for 24 years, acting for the papacy to convert the Armenian Church to Catholicism. After a number of favourable synods, in the end he admitted his failure and compared the Armenians with the leopard and the wolf who can never change their habits and the Ethiopians who cannot change the colour of their skin. He added that the Armenians had ‘superficially turned to Rome because of fear of the Saracenes and Turks’.

About the year 1330 there was a strong movement towards union among the monks, many of whose monasteries combined among themselves and shortly afterwards put themselves under the rule and direction of the Dominicans to form the ‘Unionist Brethren’ (*Fratres Unitores*). ‘Too zealous and not sufficiently prudent, they disparaged their own rite (they began to rebaptise baptised Armenians) in favour of Latin rites.’<sup>55</sup> One of the most severe critics of the National Church was Nerses Palients, bishop of Urmia, who had – and retained – close contacts with the Holy see. Because of the accusations he levelled against the Armenian Church, Benedict XI (1334–42) asked the catholicos to summon a synod to correct the errors and abuses. Of these he sent for consideration a list of 117.<sup>56</sup> During the later part of the fourteenth century, the papacy continued to promote the holy war against Islam and to preach the ideal of reunion with Rome of the schismatic Churches of the East. During the pontificates of Benedict XII (1334–42) and Clement VI (1342–52) the papacy seized the opportunity presented by the appeals for military assistance made by the kings of Cilician Armenia, Guy (1342–44) and Constantine III (1344–63), to conduct negotiations for reuniting the two Churches.<sup>57</sup> Nothing came of the efforts, and eventually the kingdom of Cilicia – ‘Armenia in exile’ – succumbed to the Muslim assault as had Great Armenia two hundred years before. King Leo VI was defeated by the Mamluk victory of Aleppo with the help of local rebellious barons. On 13 April 1375 Sis fell and Leo and his family were taken prisoner. Leo died in Paris in 1393.

The diplomatic and theological conversations between the Avignon popes, especially Benedict XII and Clement VI, and the Lusignan kings of Cilician Armenia, provided the background for the composition by Archbishop Richard Fitzralph of Armagh of his *Summa in questionibus Armenorum*, which was the most important literary product of these deliberations. The author of this work was a major figure of

the fourteenth-century English Church, who rose to become primate of Ireland and who was remembered in popular tradition as ‘St Richard of Dundalk’ – his birthplace. A doctor of theology from Oxford, Fitzralph served as chancellor of the university from 1332 to 1334.<sup>58</sup> With the encouragement of his sponsor, Bishop John Grandisson of Exeter, he passed through the lesser offices of the deanery of Lichfield, the chancellorship of Lincoln, and the archdeaconry of Chester, before his election to the archbishopric of Armagh in 1346. Fitzralph was frequently resident at Avignon, where he composed his most important work. Titled variously *De erroris Armenorum*, *Summa de erroribus*, or, in the sole printed edition of 1512, *Summa in questionibus Armenorum*, Fitzralph’s apology for Latin Christianity addressed to the Armenians was doubtless inspired by his conversations with the uniate clergy at Avignon and his negotiations with the Armenian envoys. Although the *Summa* was inspired by the events of 1341 and 1342, there is evidence to the effect that Fitzralph completed the work while resident in Oxford in 1347, finally presenting the book to Pope Clement VI in 1349. In the printed edition of 1512 the *Summa* is divided into 19 books.<sup>59</sup> As a whole, Fitzralph’s *Summa against the Armenians* shows little theological originality, although it does mirror very well the dominant concerns and major controversies of the fourteenth century.

The prospects facing Christianity at the end of the fourteenth century were bleak indeed: Jerusalem lost forever; Armenia liquidated; Constantinople besieged by the Turks with little hope of survival; the Latin Church rent by schism. Projects of union, certainly, seemed at an end. Yet they did not end. Timurlane the Mongol defeated Bayezid the Turk and gave Constantinople relief. The Latin Church regained peace in the Council of Constance, and contacts for union began again which led to the Council of Florence and ceased only in 1453 when the Byzantine empire also came to an end. In 1441 the Armenian catholicate returned to Holy Ējmiadsin from Sis.<sup>60</sup>

During the fourteenth century an extremely vocal and energetic group of Latinizing clergy, organized with papal sanction as the ‘Friars Unitors’, served as a sort of Latin ‘fifth column’ in Armenia. These pro-Latin clerics, aided and abetted by European missionaries of the two mendicant orders of Dominicans and Franciscans, worked for the Latinization of Armenian Christianity with more ardour and less discretion than the royal house of Cilicia. They were vehemently and sometimes violently opposed by the native Armenian clergy, who viewed them as seditious and heretical innovators, and by the Armenian laity, who resented their alien affiliations. The uniate clergy played an impor-

tant role in promoting the ideal of union and religious conformity; and, in their enthusiasm for Latin beliefs and usages, they exaggerated the alleged eccentricities, defects, or 'errors' of Armenian Christianity. In the papal curia at Avignon during the fourteenth century, representatives of this group served as interpreters of Armenian Christianity to European observers and critics.

During the Turco-Persian war of 1549–51 the catholicos Step'anos V of Salmast (1545–67) went to Rome (1549–50) seeking help from Pope Paul III (1534–49) against the Turks. According to Aretinus, the Armenian delegation accepted the decisions of the Council of Florence (1439), which had declared through the bull issued by Eugenius IV that the Armenian Church, isolated for 900 years, was now reunited with the Church of Rome, although there were still some unresolved doctrinal differences. In 1562 the coadjutor catholicos Mik'ayel I of Sebastea (1566–76) called a council in Sebastea which decided to send a delegation to Rome. The delegation consisted of Abgar *dpir* T'okhatetsi, his son Sult'anshah and a priest Aleksander. The objectives of this delegation are enumerated in a letter the catholicos wrote to the pope.

1. To remind the pope of the Armeno-Roman alliance of the early fourth century and to seek to re-establish with the see of Rome the relations first agreed upon by Pope Sylvester and St Gregory the Illuminator.
2. To assess the thinking of Rome on the prevailing situation in Armenia.
3. To make arrangements for the future visit to Rome of the Armenian catholicos.

Abgar *dpir* on the 13 February 1565 presented the pope with a credible proof of the Orthodoxy of Armenian church doctrine and a copy of the *Letter of Concord*. Although Abgar *dpir* was unable to secure political cooperation, he managed to secure the pope's permission to continue the printing of Armenian books in Venice which had been started by Yakob Meghapat in 1512. The document which was meant to bring the Roman Church closer to the Armenian Church was the *Concordia Armenorum cum Sancta Romana Ecclesia*, composed by Pope Eugenius IV in 1439, a bilingual edition of which was printed by the order of Pope Gregory XV in 1623. In a more fundamental way, Clement Galano, who had come to know the Armenians in Georgia between 1636 and 1641 and in Constantinople from 1641 to 1644, published a *Conciliatio Ecclesiae Armenae cum Romana* in three volumes (1650–61 and 1690) in which, after giving a history of the Armenian Church based on a study of Greek, Armenian and Latin sources, he pleads for its reuni-

fication with the Holy See of Rome. The printing activities of the Propaganda Fide generated even greater ill-will towards Rome among the Armenian clergy who were hostile to the union than there had previously been. This is clearly indicated in the title of a letter, probably composed in 1709 by Catholicos Aleksandr of New Julfa to Pope Clement XI: 'Letter ... Concerning the Regrettable Conduct of Missionaries who, in blatant injustice, create problems amongst the innocent sheep of the saintly Church of Armenia.'

Other texts dealing with theological controversies were published in 1688 by two scholars of New Julfa: an *Abridged Text of the True and Authentic Faith* by Yovhannes Mrk'uz, and a selection from doctrinal works, under the title of *Collection of Writings Against the Dyophysites, especially those of the Council of Chalcedon, which has ruined the World*. During the deportations of Shah Abbas the Armenian catholicos Davit' IV of Vagharshapat (1590–1629), the coadjutor catholicos Melk'isedek (1590–1627) wrote letters to Pope Paul V (1605–21) in 1605 and 1607 seeking the pope's intervention on behalf of the Armenians at the Persian court. Archbishop Norayr Pogharian in a brief study, 'Ējmiadsin and the Vatican', composed to mark the 500th anniversary of the return of the Holy See from Sis to Ējmiadsin (1441–1941),<sup>61</sup> lists all the catholicos of the sixteenth–seventeenth century who under Muslim rule corresponded with Rome, on whose political help they depended for assistance but who never contemplated compromising their doctrinal stance or accepting the primacy of Rome. Archbishop Pogharian sums up the Armenian position by quoting a passage from Catholicos Simeon I Erevantsi (1763–80):

Our faith is not old in need of renewal, nor is it deficient in need of completion, but by the grace of Christ which we have through our holy illuminators and their followers the perfect faith, correct doctrine, and beautiful traditions of the holy church, which is adequate to lead us to salvation and eternal life.<sup>62</sup>

The story of the relationship of the Armenians with their Roman Catholics is long and at times ignoble. An example of extreme Catholic reprisal against the Armenians in Constantinople is the almost unbelievable story of Patriarch Avedik (1702–11), who was kidnapped during the reign of Louis XIV of France (1638–1715), robbed, tortured, taken to the Bastille, brainwashed and made a Latin priest shortly before his death. The story is told in the famous novel *The Man behind the Iron Mask*.<sup>63</sup>

### The Armenian Church in Contemporary Times

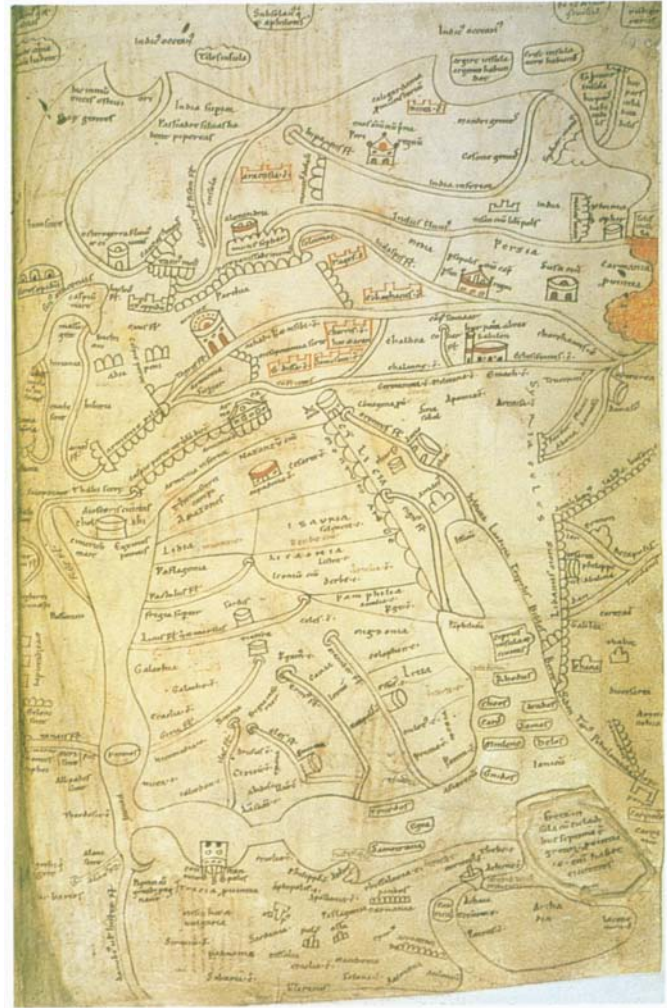
The vital part of the mission of the Armenian Church throughout its history has been its unceasing labour and struggle to maintain the spiritual, cultural and political identity of the Armenian communities dispersed in its historic homeland and in neighbouring countries. The longevity of these diasporan colonies has been measured solely by their Armenian Christian heritage.<sup>64</sup>

The fall of the Cilician kingdom late in the fourteenth century left isolated Armenian colonies in empires under Safavid Iran, Ottoman Turkey and Tsarist Russia. With the removal of the political forces that shaped and sustained Armenian society, the continuity and direction of the nations henceforth resided almost exclusively in the Armenian Church and its four centres:

- (a) The patriarchate of Jerusalem
- (b) The patriarchate of Constantinople
- (c) The catholicate of Cilicia
- (d) The catholicate of Ējmiadsin.

#### *The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem*

For two millennia Palestine, Asia Minor and Armenia have shared a common history as part of the Roman, Byzantine and, later, early Arab empires. The contacts have been political, economic and cultural. In the middle of the first century BC, an Armenian monarch, Tigranes, reached as far as Acre in his conquests of the region. With the establishment of Christianity in Armenia at the beginning of the fourth century, national attention was focused on the Holy Land. In his letters St Jerome mentions Armenians among pilgrims from various nations visiting the Holy Land. Monastic foundations sprang up, and typical of them was a monastery founded by St Euthymius, an Armenian bishop from Melitene, where Armenian and Greek monks lived and worshipped together. According to Cyril of Scythopolis, Armenian monks prayed in their own language at Mar Saba in the sixth century. Later, in the seventh century, the Armenian writer Yarut'iwn recorded that there were some seventy Armenian churches and monasteries in the Jerusalem area. Archaeological evidence in the nineteenth century, and as recently as 1990, indicates that around Jerusalem there were about a dozen Armenian monasteries. Rich mosaic floors with Armenian inscriptions from the Byzantine period substantiate historical information that Armenian royal and princely families patronized monasteries in the Holy Land.<sup>65</sup>



Jerome's map of Asia, 12th-century copy. The British Library. Add. 10049, f.64.

Evidence of a fully organized religious community in the Holy Land is also provided by the extant Armenian Lectionary, a translation of the Greek liturgy as it was performed in the Holy City in the fifth century. More importantly, it is substantiated by the remains of mosaic pavements with Armenian inscriptions found in Jerusalem and on the Mount of Olives. Among these, the mosaics in the funerary chapel in the Musrara Quarter of Jerusalem are the most important. The funerary chapel of St Polyuctos is mentioned by name in the list by Yarut'iwn and can be dated to the middle of the sixth century. It has an Armenian inscription: 'For the memorial and salvation of all Armenians, whose names the Lord knows.'<sup>66</sup>



Musrara mosaic, Jerusalem, 6th century.

With the Arab conquest in 638, the Armenian see of Jerusalem attained a stature perhaps equal to the Greek patriarchate, whose associations with the Byzantine empire rendered it suspect in the eyes of the conquerors. Yet all Christian communities continued to enjoy the privilege of holding services in the dominical sanctuaries. In the Crusader period, the particularly close connections of Armenian Cilicia with the Crusader kingdom saw the consolidation of the Armenian community in Jerusalem. During this period, good relations are reflected by the fact that the first three Crusader queens of Jerusalem – Arda, Morphia and Melisend – were from Armenian princely families. According to Ayyubid sources, in 1187, when Saladin captured Jerusalem, there were as many as 2000 Armenian residents in that city.

The order of St James throughout the ages has given priority to three areas: first, maintaining a presence in the Holy Land close to the sanctuaries; second, serving the Holy

Places; and third, hosting and accommodating the pilgrims. To fulfil these obligations entailed tremendous effort and imposed a financial burden on the monks of St James' monastery. Encouraging pilgrimage to the Holy Land was seen as maintaining and strengthening the contacts with the Mother Church in the homeland and diaspora. Spiritually, the Holy Places were a source of inspiration for the pilgrims and pilgrimage quickly became an important source of income for the community. Jerusalem has constantly been in the national consciousness of the Armenian people. Kings, queens, members of royal families, clergy, merchants, peasants, people of all walks of life have visited Jerusalem and embellished its churches with their gifts.

From the time of its inception in the sixth century, the patriarchate of Jerusalem has been an integral part of the hierarchical structure of the Armenian Church, under the general authority of the 'Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians'. The Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem is

the supreme head of the Armenian Brotherhood of St James, whose congregation stands towards the Armenian Church and nation in the same relation as the Order of the Franciscans towards the Holy See of Rome and the Catholic world.<sup>67</sup>

The history of the patriarchate in terms of its relations with the other hierarchical sees entered a new phase in consequence of the transfer of the supreme see to its original site at Ējmiadsin in 1441, the revival of the hierarchy at Sis in 1446, and the establishment by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II of the Armenian patriarchate of Constantinople in 1461.

#### *The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople (Istanbul)*

As an institution, the Armenian patriarchate<sup>68</sup> was the creation of the Ottoman state. In a series of related studies, Hayk Berberian refuted the presumed date of its establishment in 1461 and on the evidence of the sources concluded that the rank, with 'certain rights', was conferred on the Armenian religious leaders between 1526 and 1543, during the reigns of Marhasa Grigor (1526–37) and his successor Patriarch Astuadsatur (1538–43), the latter, in 1543, being the first priest ever to call himself the Armenian patriarch of Constantinople. Through a long period of evolution, it grew from a mere vicariate to a universal centre of religious and civil authority. By the middle of the eighteenth century, this process of transformation and growth reached its completion when the patriarchate acquired jurisdiction over all the Armenians of the empire, except for the few localities under the authority of the catholicoate of Sis, the catholicoate of Aght'amar, and the patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Despite the efforts of the patriarchs, Catholicism and Protestantism spread among the Armenians. The Treaty of Adrianople provided the catholics with the right to have their own Church and separate administration. The election of the Catholic cleric Hakopos as head of the Armenian Catholic Church was ratified by an imperial decree on 24 May 1831, which, in effect, signified recognition of the separate status of that community as a distinct millet. Eventually the bishopric was raised to the status of patriarchate by the decree of 17 April 1843.<sup>69</sup>

The first contact of the Armenians with Protestant missionaries dates from 1821 when Parsons (a missionary sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions) met Armenians in Jerusalem and found among some of them a positive response to his preaching. Two Armenian clergymen were soon attracted by the Protestant beliefs and they were warmly received by the Syrian Mission in Beirut. But as the Mission was exposed to danger in Beirut because



The Gospels of Catholicos Kostandin, 1249. Cat. 36.

of staunch Islamic opposition, it was transferred to Constantinople. In 1834 the missionaries opened their first school in Constantinople, to be followed soon in Smyrna and in most cities and towns of Western Armenia and Cilicia. In the midst of reciprocal accusations, evangelical Armenians announced, on 1 July 1846, the formation of the First Evangelical Armenian Church in Constantinople, at the residence of American missionary H.G.O. Dwight, along with the election of the first pastor. On the intercession of the British ambassador, an imperial edict was issued in November 1847, establishing a separate millet for the Evangelical Armenians.<sup>70</sup>

The greatest factor in bringing about the nineteenth-century Armenian national and cultural renaissance was the National Constitution (*Azgayin Sahmanadrut'iwn*) which took its final shape in 1860 and was approved by the Ottoman government in 1863.<sup>71</sup> Since the first moment of its establishment, the Armenian patriarchate of Constantinople



Processional Cross of Ashot II, 914-29. Cat. 25.

was governed by a patriarch who was assisted by *amiras*, high-ranking personalities of the Armenian wealthy nobility. But their arbitrary actions combined with their personal ambitions soon provoked resentment, particularly among the younger generation of intellectuals who were educated in the European ways of thinking and were affected by the social thinking in France as stimulated by the Revolution of 1789. The reforms promulgated by the Ottoman government paved the way for the Armenians to organize their ecclesiastical national life on the principle of the right for equality of all the people. By 1847 they had already established two councils recognized by the government: the Spiritual Council, composed of fourteen clergymen, and the Supreme Council, composed of twenty laymen of all classes. These two councils worked under the presidency of the patriarch. The experience that was acquired through them served as the basis for drafting the constitution, which was formulated in 1857, given final shape in 1860 and approved by the government in 1863. In spite of its many shortcomings, the Armenian National Constitution was a major achievement

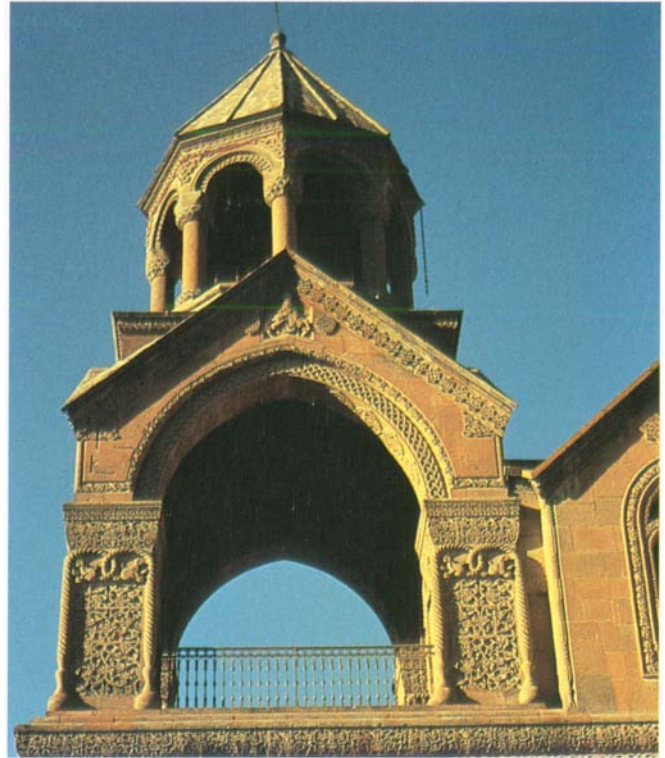
within the nineteenth-century Ottoman context. It clearly signified the triumph of liberalism and democratic principles in the millet over arbitrariness and absolutism. This constituted the basic regulations of the Armenians in the Middle East after the First World War and until now it has been fully maintained and officially recognised by the governments of Syria and Lebanon.

#### *The Catholicate of Cilicia*

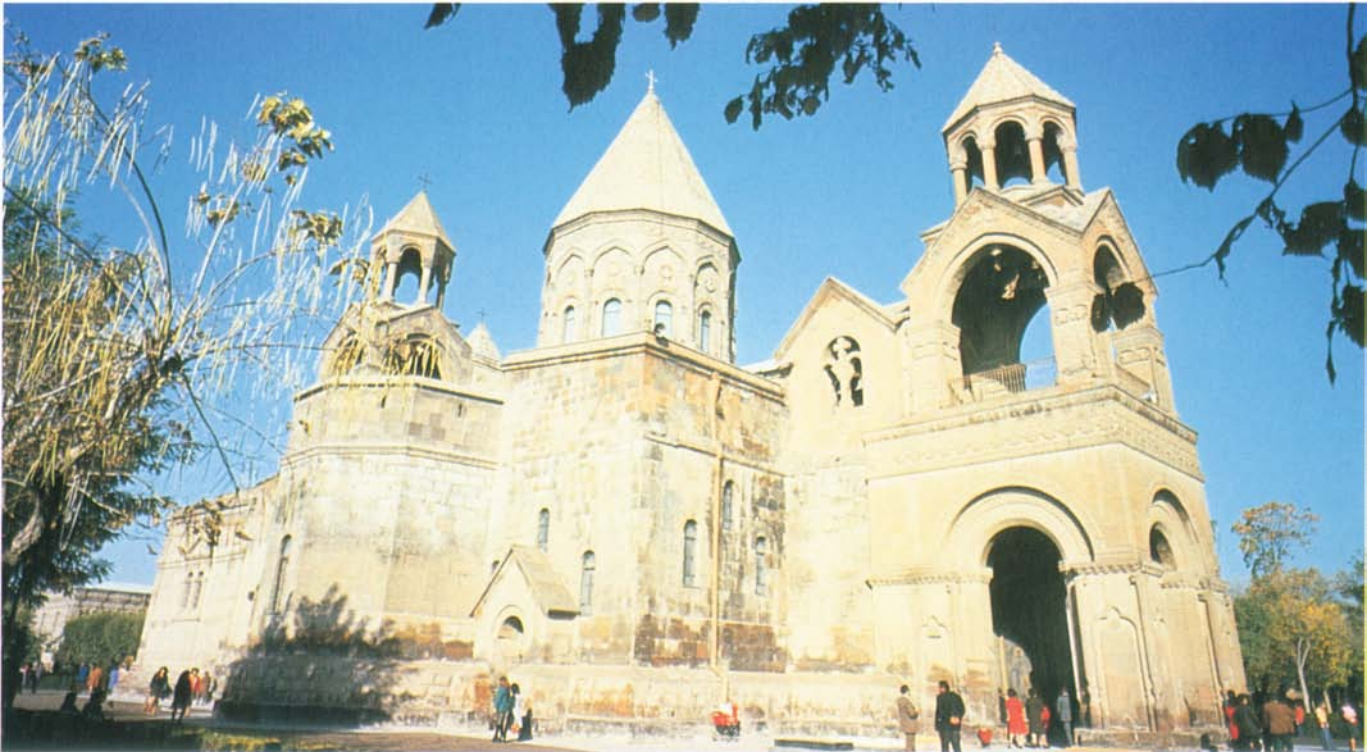
The name of the Armenian catholicate was never derived from a locality. It was always called Catholicate of All Armenians. On the strength of this title it had the authority of establishing the see wherever the political centre of the nation happened to be. Whenever the political centre of influence shifted the catholicate moved accordingly: founded in Vagharshapat, transferred to Dvin (481), Dzoravank' and Aght'amar (927), Argina (947), Ani (992), Dsamndav (1067), Dsovk' or Tluk' (1116), Hromklay (1120), Sis (1292). The peregrinations of the Armenian catholicate, from

the time of departure from Dvin to the return to Ējmiadsin, covered a period of 540 years.<sup>72</sup>

After the genocide of 1915 the attempts of the Allies at Versailles in 1919 and at the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 failed, as before, to protect the Armenians or to create an autonomous homeland in the face of the hardening Turkish opposition under Kemal Ataturk and the refusal of the United States Senate to ratify the promises of Woodrow Wilson or accept a mandate for Armenia. The subsequent massacres and flight of the Armenian population from the southern provinces of Cilicia in 1921–22 brought only the recognition of the *fait accompli* by the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, giving Turkey control over the whole of Asia Minor. In 1930, Catholicos Sahak I of Cilicia was obliged to seek refuge in Lebanon, having lost, along with the seat of his catholicate, all the dioceses under his jurisdiction. In 1931 Archbishop Bapken Kiwlēserian – one of the first graduates of Armash Seminary – was elected as coadjutor catholicos. His five-year tenure brought concrete achievements such as the establishment of a seminary, the founding of the printing press, and the publication of the monthly review, *Hask*. The Second World War halted this constructive activity. But after 1945, when Catholicos Garegin I Hovsep'ants – a graduate of the Gevork'ian Seminary at Ējmiadsin – came to the throne, a new period of spiritual and intellectual



The Cathedral of Holy Ējmiadsin, 5<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century, and detail showing belltower (above), 1658.



awakening dawned upon the Armenian Church. The death of Catholicos Garegin I of Cilicia in 1952 prompted a struggle for succession. Four years elapsed before his successor, Catholicos Zareh I, was elected catholicos, whose election Ējmiadsin refused to recognize. Despite the negative stance of the Ējmiadsin Seminary, Bishop Zareh was consecrated on 20 February 1956. He died in February 1963, when he was only 48 years old. His close associate, Archbishop Khoren Paroyan, the primate of the Armenian Church in Lebanon, succeeded him in May 1963 at the age of 48. In May 1977 Archbishop Karekin Sarkissian was elected as catholicos coadjutor of Cilicia until the death of Khoren I in 1983. In April 1995 he was enthroned as catholicos of Ējmiadsin. The constitution of the catholicate is based on the National Constitution of 1863.<sup>73</sup>

#### *The Holy See of Ējmiadsin and Eastern Armenia*

The whole course of the nineteenth century in Eastern Armenia was marked by a strong link of the Armenian people with the Russian tsarist empire. On 1 October 1827, Russian and Armenian forces under the overall command of General Ivan Paskevitch took the fortress of Erevan, and on 10 February 1828, the Treaty of Turkmenchai ceded Erevan and Nakhijevan to the Russians.<sup>74</sup> The Russian conquest of Transcaucasia and the subsequent migrations were the kernel for the formation of a compact Armenian majority in a small part of historic Armenia. It was to be here, in Eastern Armenia, that the future republics of Armenia – the independent Republic of Armenia (1918–20), the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (1920–91), and the re-emergence of the Republic of Armenia (1991) would be established.

While accepting the political sovereignty of the Tsarist government, the Armenians never made concessions in the realm of their ecclesiastical-national distinctness. Their national identity was even strengthened by the religious and cultural awakening that they experienced during the nineteenth century.

The most important imperial decision concerning the Armenians in the first half of the nineteenth century was the decree issued by Nicholas I in 1836 that governed relations of the tsarist government and the Armenian Church – the *polozhenie*, that is to say, a ‘Supreme Regulation for governing the Affairs of the Armenian Church in Russia’.<sup>75</sup> The statute excluded the Church from political affairs and subordinated it to the ultimate power of the tsar, but at the same time the Armenian Apostolic Church was given considerable autonomy. The *polozhenie* guaranteed the Armenian Church the security of its considerable prop-

erties, granted freedom of worship to Armenians, freed the clergy from taxation, and gave over Armenian religious schools to the Church. A procurator was appointed by the Russian government with the charge of supervising, and often directing, the work of the catholicos and the synod in Ējmiadsin.

The most unpopular measure was the edict of 1903, by which all the church properties – the source of revenue for the schools and cultural institutions – were forcibly confiscated by the government. The catholicos of the time, Mkr-titch Khrimian, together with his bishops, clergy and people, vehemently protested against this new order. Archbishop Maghak’ia Ōrmanian composed an extensive erudite document anonymously in French called ‘Les biens de l’Eglise Arménienne en Russie. Memorandum’, which he had published in Vienna by the Armenian ambassador and sent to all the world powers in Europe protesting against the Russian confiscation of Armenian ecclesiastical possessions.<sup>76</sup> The Russians gave up this policy. The Church continued to serve the nation on spiritual, educational and cultural grounds in line with its historical mission. The *polozhenie* was abolished with the downfall of tsarist Russia.

Under the Bolsheviks, all properties of the Church were nationalised; churches were confiscated or simply demolished. The seminary at Ējmiadsin, the printing press and the library of the catholicosate were seized. The low point came in 1938, when Catholicos Khoren I Muradbekian (1932–38) was murdered at his residence.<sup>77</sup> It is highly significant that in those hard times, Catholicos Khoren I made some significant positive contributions. His encyclical, issued on 1 October 1934, called for pan-Armenian celebration in 1935 of the 1500th anniversary of the translation of the Holy Scriptures into Armenian. A second encyclical issued on 1 August 1937 officially sanctioned the idea and the need for reform in the Armenian Church. The encyclical and the schema were sent to the catholicos of Cilicia and the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Constantinople for comments. Khoren I’s sudden death in 1938 was a setback for the movement.

On 10 April 1941 Bishop Gevork’ Tchorek’tchian<sup>78</sup> summoned the church council to elect a new catholicos, but the poor attendance, especially from abroad, meant that it was not possible to hold the election. However, on 12 April the council did approve Gevork’s temporary appointment. When the Second World War broke out Gevork’ appealed to the Armenian nation to resist the Nazi invaders. At the 1943 Kremlin meeting with Stalin allowed the Orthodox bishops to re-establish institutional life for their Church and laid out a more formal setting for Church-State relations. Gevork’ took advantage of the freer atmosphere. In 1943 he





Holy Week altar curtain, Madras, 1791. Cat. 43.



exhumed Khoren's body from the graveyard of St Hrip'simē Church and laid it to rest in the grave of the catholicoses in St Gayanē Church. Gevork's collection of funds for the David of Sasun tank division for the Soviet army was organized. On 29 January 1944 the column was formally handed over to the army, and was soon in action under the command of the Armenian general Baghramian. Stalin sent Gevork' a congratulatory telegram. That same month the catholicos was permitted to begin publication of the church journal *Ējmiadsin Monthly*, to replace the earlier journal *Ararat* (1868–1919). In 1943 Gevork' met Stalin and outlined his plans for the Church in Armenia: the immediate election of a new catholicos and the holding of a church council, the reopening of parishes, religious schools, monasteries and a printing press, the return of agricultural lands belonging to Ējmiadsin and the reconstruction of ancient churches. At the end of the meeting Stalin promised that after the war the Soviet government was preparing to take

back from Turkey the western provinces of Armenia handed to Turkey in 1920. He suggested that it was desirable to populate those regions by the same Armenian population that had been forced to flee Turkey and who now lived in the diaspora. The immigration of about 100,000 Armenians was to be organized. Stalin also agreed to give all necessary help in holding a church council to elect a new catholicos. In the middle of June, delegates from all over the world arrived in Ējmiadsin, among them Garegin I Hovsep'eants, catholicos of Cilicia, Kiwregh I, patriarch of Jerusalem as well as priests and lay delegates from the diaspora. On 22 June the council elected Gevork' Tchorek'tchian as Gevork' VI, the 129th catholicos. In September the Gevorkian Theological Seminary was reopened in Holy Ējmiadsin. Between 1946 and 1948 he encouraged the repatriation of more than 80,000 Armenians, mainly from the Middle East (Syria and Lebanon), Greece and France.

One of the major internal questions for the Armenian Church concerned the drafting of a new church constitution, which had been inconclusively discussed at the 1945 church council. The 1836 statute (*polozhenie*), which had formalized a certain degree of control over the Church by the Russian tsar, had been abrogated by catholicos Gevork' V in April 1917. A constitution for the Armenians under Ottoman jurisdiction had been drawn up in Constantinople and passed in 1863. In December 1947 the catholicos presented a draft text of the new constitution to the authorities for approval. The government found the draft to be in conflict with Soviet law, in particular when the catholicos reserved to himself the right to speak in international bodies, such as the United Nations 'in defence of the Armenian nation'. The Armenian Foreign Ministry alone had this right. He made plans for a complete restoration of the cathedral of Holy Ējmiadsin with financial assistance from Calouste Gulbenkian. He died on 9 May 1954, and was buried in Ējmiadsin.

The National Ecclesiastical Assembly, the Supreme Spiritual Council, convened in Ējmiadsin on 17 August 1955, chaired by the temporary Archbishop Vahan Kostanian to elect a successor to Gevork' VI. Because of the tensions, the council was not attended by the representatives of Cilicia, nor of Jerusalem or the patriarch of Constantinople. On 30 September, the largest-ever assembly convened in Soviet Armenia elected Bishop Vazgen, primate of the Armenian diocese of Rumania as the 130th catholicos. Catholicos Vazgen's reign (1955–94) has marked a considerable advance in the revival of Church life in Soviet Armenia. Raymond Oppenheim, Episcopalian chaplain to the United States embassy in Moscow from 1972 to 1975, noted that

The *modus vivendi* achieved by Catholicos Vazgen I has permitted a greater degree of religious freedom to flourish in Soviet Armenia than in any other part of the Soviet Union ... On my desk is an Armenian New Testament, printed on the presses of Holy Ējmiadsin. It was purchased on a parish church bookstall in Soviet Arme-

nia. In my more than three years' residence in the USSR, the only Bibles I ever saw on legal public sale were in Armenia.<sup>79</sup>

In 1970 the Armenian Church printed 10,000 copies of the Gospels and Acts, followed by 10,000 New Testaments in 1974–75. In January 1979, an edition of the New Testament, translated from Classical Armenian into the Western Armenian dialect, was published. The Church in Armenia had played an important role in keeping the memory of the 1915 genocide, with the tacit support of the Soviet authorities. The first memorial in Soviet Armenia to commemorate the victims of the genocide was erected in Ējmiadsin in April 1965 to mark the 50th anniversary. Catholicos Vazgen issued an encyclical to mark the occasion and a special issue of *Ējmiadsin Monthly* was devoted to the genocide. The consequence of this action was impressive. In November 1967 the Armenian government inaugurated the Dsidsernakaberd monument to the genocide, 52 years after the event and 47 years after the sovietization of Armenia. The growing spiritual impact of the Holy See of Ējmiadsin had been accorded considerable latitude by the Soviet authorities to minister to the religious needs of the diaspora. The relaxation of official controls on the Holy See was also instrumental in strengthening the administrative ties between the clerical hierarchies of the homeland and the expatriate communities. For the first time in modern history, the supreme catholicos was able to pay visits to his flock abroad. The successive visits of His Holiness Vazgen I to France, Egypt, Italy, England and the United States evoked mass enthusiasm and adulation.

Vazgen I died on 18 August 1994 aged 85. He guided the Church as best he could through the difficult years of Soviet rule. He played on the strength the Church could deploy through its influence in the Armenian diaspora to good effect, though many were uneasy at the more blatantly pro-Soviet statements he felt obliged to utter. But with a wider historical sense and perspective he believed this to be in the interests of his people.

# SACRED ART IN THEOLOGY AND WORSHIP

## The Holy Scriptures

The book occupies a special place in the Middle Ages, for it was the principal vehicle for the transmission of the Scriptures and commentaries upon them, dogmatic and theological treatises, as well as the vehicle by which all classical knowledge and literature was transmitted. Medieval monasteries all over the Christian world formed their own scriptoria, or writing schools, and assiduously copied the Bible, liturgical books for use in the Mass and the Divine Office, and even books of Classical literature and history.

We do not know exactly when the Holy Books were written and illustrated in such a way as to rank as works of art. The infinite care taken in the writing and preparation of the books of the Holy Scriptures was devoted principally to the text itself and the task of translation, which was exceptionally difficult for scholars of the ancient world. Even so, they did their utmost to ensure that the works were as beautifully produced as possible.<sup>1</sup>

The end of the great persecution of Diocletian falls in the time when the papyrus scroll, which had been in general use, was gradually being replaced by the codex, that is by a bound book, much like the books of today, except that it was written by hand. With the end of the persecution, the Church attained a new public status: everywhere churches were erected, and the first things needed for services were codices with the texts of the Old and New Testaments. Many manuscripts of the Holy Books may have been confiscated, destroyed or burnt, in obedience to the Edict of 304. It has been suggested that the disappearance of the scroll and the general preference for the more durable and more easily handled codex was due to the renewal of the common stock of biblical manuscripts in the fourth century.

The whole ecclesiastical culture of that time was so overtly literary that works of figurative art are seldom mentioned. Moreover, this culture depended entirely on the Bible, so that it is impossible to imagine an event in the church when the Holy Scriptures would not be called to witness at some time; they might even be quite literally

opened at random, and what was revealed would always be taken as of the highest authority from God. This reverential awe before the Word of God lent an aura of dignity also to the parchment codex. At some of the great councils, the seat of the presiding bishop was not occupied by the legates of the bishop of Rome, but by a codex of the Gospels, as the insignia of Christ, upon the purple cushions of the throne; in this way, they drew attention to the presence of the invisible head of the Church. The opening passage from the Gospel of Saint John, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God', reminds us that in Christ the *Logos* was made flesh, and that therefore the Gospels are also an incarnation of the Divine Spirit.<sup>2</sup> This thought, reinforced by Christ's pronouncement 'I am the Light', provides one of the reasons for the embellishment of the Word, which, 'being nobly bright ... should brighten the minds so that the beholder may travel through the true lights to the True Light ...'. No embellishment was therefore too lavish, and the encrustation of bindings with gold and precious stones thereby provided a fitting container for the Word of God.

Large, elaborately decorated Gospel books, the embodiment of the presence of Christ, are carried in triumphal procession during the Little Entrance of the Divine Liturgy with the prayers 'O Lord our God, who hast established in the heavens the orders and the hosts of angels and archangels for the ministry of thy glory, make now the holy angels also enter with our entrance and serve with us and glorify with us thy goodness.'<sup>3</sup> They were then placed ceremonially on the high altar, symbol of the incarnate Christ on the sacrificial table. Mosaic representations of the book enshrined on the high altar and of the Cross enthroned, sacrificial and triumphal symbols of the presence of Christ, surround the fifth-century dome of the Orthodox Baptistery at Ravenna. Also, revered as a sumptuous liturgical object in its own right, the illuminated Bible combined functions as a resplendent container of the Word of God equivalent to the paten and chalice containing the bread and wine placed next to it.

Armenian Christian art can only become intelligible when considered in relation to the culture of which it is an expression. The inspiration behind this culture was the invention of the Armenian alphabet at the beginning of the fifth century by the monk St Mesrop Mashtots (355–439).<sup>1</sup> Soon after the invention of the Armenian alphabet, St Mesrop, with the help of his pupils and mentor Catholicos St Sahak Partev (348–438), undertook the task of translating the Bible into Classical Armenian, from the Syriac and the Greek Septuagint version.<sup>2</sup> The scriptural corpus is called *Astudsashuntch-girk* (Breath of God), a theological designation based on St Paul's description of it in 2 Timothy 3: 16 'all scripture is inspired by God'. Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan says 'if a people has the immortal desire of the abundant life, it must needs go on breathing God's Breath, with which it was inspired at every moment of its creative activity'.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is not at all surprising that the first sentence written in Classical Armenian was 'To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding' (Proverbs 1: 2–3). The significance of the translation of the Bible into Armenian lies less in its being a monument of scholarly achievement or in its being the fruit of the labours of great saintly and pious men, burning with Christian zeal, than in being the originator and the sustainer of a profound revolution in the life of the Church and the nation. It was seen as the marriage between Christ and the Armenian people.

The Armenian historian Ghazar P'arpetsi, describing the events soon after the translation of the Bible into Armenian, says

When the holy Armenian patriarch Sahak had brought this great spiritual labour to completion, then schools were immediately established for the instruction of the flock. The ranks of scribes were increased, and they emulated each other. The services of the holy church were embellished ... The churches were rendered glorious; the martyria of saints received lustre, continually embellished by vows and gifts of the Testaments. Torrents were continuously flowing from the commentators, who explained the secrets of the prophets.<sup>4</sup>

Two very important assertions are made in this testimony: first, the ranks of scribes increased, and second, the churches received gifts of books of the scriptures. Both these points confirm that from the fifth century until the seventeenth century manuscripts were as a rule commissioned or sponsored by the Armenian faithful to 'render glorious churches and the martyria of saints'.<sup>5</sup> The colophons of Armenian manuscripts and early printed books are rich

with information which gives a clear picture of the motives for sponsorship or commissioning of manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> As a rule, the sponsor and the scribe viewed the manuscript as a sacred and venerable object, and therefore explained the act of its production as a morally rewarding endeavour. The author of the colophon, whether he was the commissioner or the scribe, felt himself duty bound to explain the reasons for his act, and mentioned the rewards he hoped would accrue to him in consequence of his good deed. In many a colophon the sponsor says that he acquired the manuscript as an 'indelible memorial or monument' to his own soul and to those of his immediate family, as well as his relatives, both living and deceased, many of whom are mentioned by name. The sponsor of a Book of Rituals expressed the hope that whenever the book was read his name would 'be remembered in Christ together with it'. A substantial number of manuscripts were commissioned as a token of the sponsor's love for God, or as his 'guide to attain the true life' or as a consolation for his soul. To many, the sponsorship was not only a 'memorial to the soul' but also the most effective means to attain salvation, to inherit the kingdom of God or to deliver them from the 'inextinguishable fire of hell'. One sponsor hoped that the Gospel he commissioned would serve as

an intercessor for my children and for the purification of my soul and that of my wife, in order that we may enjoy mercy on the day of his visitation [of the Lord]. I plead with you, who love Christ, so that when you read this Holy Gospel you will without fail beseech the Creator of everything to forgive all my sins; may the Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me.

Many manuscripts were copied for the edification and enlightenment of the clergy. A Collection of Commentaries, for instance, was copied not only for the benefit of the sponsor, but also 'for the enlightenment of the children of Zion, and for the admonition of the wayward and the ignorant of mind, so that by means of it the mentally blind shall be enlightened'. Consequently substantial numbers of manuscripts were commissioned for the specific purpose of offering them as gifts to monastic libraries or churches. The donor of a menology writes, 'And I offered this as a gift and indelible monument to the God-inhabited and famous and renowned holy monastery, and the Church of the Holy Cross at Aght'amar, in order that its clergy may enjoy this holy book, always derive enjoyment from it, and also remember me without fail in their prayers.' Frequently, manuscripts were regarded as a child: 'Blessed is he who has a child in Zion'; and many received a manuscript 'as a child

in Zion and as an intimate friend in Jerusalem'. It was not uncommon for a childless individual to assume the sponsorship of a manuscript as a memorial to himself; in such instances, the book usually remained in the family as an 'adopted child', or as a family heirloom. Equally common was the practice of having manuscripts copied to perpetuate the memory of a deceased child or relative. The deep sense of veneration with which manuscripts were regarded and the pains which scribes have taken to produce and preserve them are doubly meritorious, because the books themselves have been as fiercely persecuted and hunted as their owners. One could almost feel the trembling hand of the scribe in a passage in a colophon of a manuscript that lays down the injunction 'He who betrays this book to the unbelievers may be anathema by the 319 Patriarchs of Nicaca'.

In Armenian art the primary means for understanding the spiritual was visual perception, and the painter gained importance from the fact that it was he who could give visual form to the Divine. One of the earliest and most influential statements on the significance of the visual was made by St Basil of Caesarea (329–79). In his introduction to a sermon on the Forty Martyrs of Sebastea, St Basil compares speech-writers and painters, pointing out that the former embellish their subject with words whereas the latter depict them on their panels. He adds, 'For what spoken narrative presents through hearing, this silent painting shows through imitation.'<sup>10</sup> St Nilus of Sinai (d. 430), in a letter to Olympiodoros, urges that the church be filled 'on both sides with pictures from the Old and New Testaments ... so that the illiterate who are unable to read the Holy Scriptures, may, by gazing at the pictures, become mindful of the many deeds of those who have genuinely served the true God, and may be roused to emulate those glorious and celebrated feats'.<sup>11</sup> Methodios of Olympos notes that the Jews study the Scriptures like butterflies settling upon leaves. The Christians study them like bees suckling the honey from a flower. Exegesis of the Scriptures as the primary occupation of the 'schools and commentators' was established by the labours of St Sahak for 'instruction of the flock'. 'Old and young, succoured and filled with spiritual profit, ran joyfully from participation in the great mystery,' writes Ghazar P'arpeti. A vivid picture of this activity is provided by a miniature in a commentary on Isaiah. The miniature depicts the famous abbot Esayi Ntchetsi (1255–1338) explaining the Holy Scriptures to a class of monks. A stream of heavenly inspiration pours into his ear and flows out of his mouth on to his pupils, many of whom hold their own copy of the Holy Scriptures wrapped reverentially in cloth. The text on which Esayi is commenting is being read by a monk kneel-

ing in the foreground (Jerusalem Ms. 365, fol. 2). The act of interpreting the secrets of the prophets is likened to 'placing before all the people tables loaded with spiritual dishes, which when tasted by wisdom-seeking men became sweet in their palates, according to the saying of the psalmist: "Words of teaching are [sweeter] than honeycomb".'<sup>12</sup> In his Discourses Gregory the Illuminator confirms, 'Scripture is to be understood in two ways: one is tangible and visible, the other intellectual.' No other Armenian scholar than David the Invincible (610–85) could expound this point of exegesis better: 'to adorn and add glitter to the human soul, and translate it from a life that is material and befogged to one that is divine and immaterial'.<sup>13</sup> Compare this definition with a statement on the art of commenting made by Grigoris Arsharuni (650–729) in his commentary on the Lectionary, which he composed on the request of Vahan Kamsarakan: 'for instance like the peacock which as often it flutters its wings, displaying more and more colours surpassing the beauty initially witnessed, so also the hidden truths of the readings which are also so infinite, which the more explained reveal the unspeakable mystery of our salvation'.

### The Theology of Armenian Christian Art

The selection, arrangement and juxtaposition of scenes on a page is directly dependent on the translation and interpretation of the text. Significantly, differences in iconography of the same event in various traditions are due to particular and unique interpretations of the text. The most evocative instance is the visualization of the Sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. The Classical Armenian translation, differing from the Syriac Peshitta and Greek Septuagint, has 'a ram hanging [*kagheal*] by his horns' in place of 'a ram caught [*kaleal*] in a thicket' (Gen. 22: 13).<sup>14</sup> This suggests that the Armenian translation has preserved the original Syriac version. Accordingly, while in all other representations of the scene the ram is depicted either standing under the tree or 'caught in the thicket', Armenian artists show the ram hanging from the *sabek* tree by its horns. This occurs early in Armenian art; it is to be found in relief sculptures which date before the Arab conquest of Armenia in the seventh century, and in the early tenth century on the south façade of the church of Aght'amar.<sup>15</sup> This noteworthy feature of the Armenian translation, which has also influenced the depiction of the event in Armenian art, has also its theological interpretation. Armenian exegesis, focusing on the passage 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may



Grigor Khatet'si instructing his pupil. Gospels, Tsipnay Monastery, 1419. Cat. 96.

have eternal life' (John 3: 14-15), sees a correspondence between the bronze serpent that Moses raised and Christ crucified. Clement of Alexandria's teaching that the Lord of the Old Dispensation and the God of Christianity are the self-same God, comparing 'for a hanged man is accursed by God' (Deut. 21: 23, cf. 28: 66) and 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us -- for it is written, "Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree"' has its implications for iconography. This interpretation has primary significance, for in many Armenian manuscripts the multiple frontispieces of the Gospels begin with the pictorialization of the Sacrifice of Isaac. David the Invincible in his Hymn to the Cross, which he defines with the Christological predicate *Astuadsēnk'al*, meaning 'accepted or received by

God', says of the Cross: 'Blessed are you, Holy Wood, adorned by God, or truly plant, that through the Lamb hanged on you as on the tree of sabek, saved from death not only Isaac, but the entire progeny of Adam.'<sup>16</sup> The Cross is not merely an object of veneration, but indeed of worship, for the intelligible Wood is not to be separated from the reality of Christ himself (where the Revised Standard Version has 'tree', as in the expression 'tree of life', which occurs in the Book of Revelation, the Armenian translates the Greek literally as *p'ayl* ('wood')). The Wood of life then becomes an object of worship. It is the intelligible Ark (of Noah) and, perhaps more significantly, the intelligible Ladder (of Jacob). So thorough is David's identification of the Cross with Christ crucified that he likens the window of the Ark to the opening on the Lord's side, while the cleansed, rational human soul is said to have returned to the Ark with God's promise of adoption, as did the dove with the olive leaf. David is clearly in favour of the Trisagial clause 'crucified for us' sung in the Armenian Church from the early decades of the fifth century.<sup>17</sup> This line of exegesis is accepted in the exegetical literature of Step'anos Siwnetsi (680-735) and Anania Sanahentsi (1000-1070).

Nerses Shnorhali in his Commentary on the Gospel of St Matthew elaborates the theme thus: 'Abraham gave birth to Isaac as the type (*yorinak*) of Christ.'<sup>18</sup> Applying this exposition, Grigor Tat'evatsi adds to the tradition: 'For Abraham saw in the sabek tree the Cross of Christ.'<sup>19</sup>

This theological conception is also frequently visualized in the scheme of images where the Virgin Mary is represented along with Abraham. These two figures establish the human genealogy of Christ and attest the truth of the incarnation (Matt. 1: 1-16). The representation of Abraham, father of Isaac, with the Virgin Mary, mother of Christ, is substantiated by their common and unique role in the divine providence of God. Grigor Tat'evatsi discusses this in his homilies: 'Christ is called son of Abraham, firstly because He was from his generation and secondly it was promised that from his descendants will all the nations receive their blessings.'<sup>20</sup> In Armenian Marian thinking the relationship of Abraham and Mary is interpreted in a direct manner. According to apocryphal narrative the Virgin Mary is the daughter of Abraham who was to be called 'Holy Virgin Mary Mother of all'. The dynamism of the relationship of Abraham to Mary is fully attested by quotations from the Old and New Testaments: 'I will bless you' (Gen. 12: 2) = 'Blessed are you' (Luke 1: 42), 'Fear not, Abraham, I am your shield' (Gen. 15: 1) = 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God' (Luke 1: 30); 'I will surely return to you in time, and Sarah your wife shall have a son' (Gen. 18:

10) = 'And behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus' (Luke 1: 31).

The image of the sabek tree is interesting. St Ephrem the Syrian, who draws a parallel between the sabek and the cross, substantiates this comparison by saying, 'thus, this wood is worthy, for from it hang ... from two branches hang its fruit'. The description of the tree which Vardan Areweltsi in his Commentary on the Book of Genesis provides has echoes of the above: 'sabek is a branch of a tree or a tree with two branches'.<sup>21</sup> It is this theological interpretation of the text that has served as a basis for the imagery of the ram hanging by his horns from two branches as adopted by the painters of Vaspurakan.<sup>22</sup> The fact that the sabek tree has two branches also has theological connotations. Grigor Tat'evatsi presents this reflection: 'The ram of Isaac was hanging from the sabek tree, which has two branches, and is the true type (*yorinak*) of the Cross of Christ.'<sup>23</sup> One could argue that the two branches of the sabek tree should remind the spectator of the two bars of the cross.

The Armenian iconography of the Sacrifice of Isaac is an early development. In one of his *Letters*, Cyril of Alexandria comments on the sequence of images that should make up the scene of the sacrifice of Isaac: (1) Abraham on his ass takes his son and two companions; (2) the companions and the ass remain below, while Isaac with the bundle of wood and Abraham with the knife climb the hill; (3) Isaac is bound to the bundle of wood, while Abraham raises his knife. Cyril of Alexandria is convinced that the pictorialization must adhere closely to the text, and must reproduce visually all the distinctive elements of the event. The figural representation of the scene of the Sacrifice of Isaac in East Christian iconography has these three elements of the cycle. Armenian artists have also remained loyal to this interpretation.

In the narrative scenes of the Nativity and the Crucifixion there are certain details whose presence could only be explained by the use of accounts of the childhood of Mary derived from apocryphal literature. In the Nativity scene we find often represented a skull of a woman identified as Eve, while in the Crucifixion scene there is skull representing Adam. The Armenian Infancy Gospels tell the story of Joseph who went looking for a midwife and meets Eve, who, responding to Joseph's question 'Who are you?' replies, 'I came to see with my own eyes my salvation.'<sup>24</sup> In The Death of Adam there is the story of the vision of the sons of Adam Seth and Eve. 'In the night they saw Adam and Eve sitting in the dark lamenting. Then they saw a beautiful lady who had a small child in her arms, who approaches Eve, and they came close to each other, when suddenly a light shone from



The Sacrifice of Isaac. Lectionary, 1414. Chester Beatty Library, W. Ms. 599, f.266.

the child and enlightened the whole room.' We find this theme explored by Ephrem in his Commentary on Genesis when he says 'as much as Eve confused the lives of humanity, equally as much Mary the Holy Virgin, who gave birth to Christ, corrected and restored the lives of humanity.' Eve's temptation and consent to the fallen angel is paralleled in reverse by Mary's consent to God's angel; they are respectively, in a sense, the causes of our ruin and of our restoration.<sup>25</sup>

The application of this complex theological principle is implicit in the following passage of Agat'angeghos: 'For instance, through the first virgin Eve death entered into the world, so also through this virgin life entered the world. As through Eve by the birth of Cain curse and sweet ... entered the world by the birth of your son's joy, blessing and life came into the world.'<sup>26</sup> This same juxtaposition of thought is promoted by the Armenian hymnist Sahakdukht Siwnetsi (675-736) in her hymn 'Holy Mary', where she defines Mary's role as 'Door to the heavens and the descent of God,

mediator for peace, who lifted the curse of the first mother Eve by the death of the Lord ...'.<sup>27</sup> Anania Sanahentsi (1000–1070) in his Commentary on the Gospel of St Matthew explains the relevance of the symbiosis between written word and painted image particularly clearly: 'As [Christ] was crucified on Golgotha, in the earth where Adam was buried, so also [she] gave birth in the cave where there was the grave of Eve, in order to erase her curse.' It seems clear that this relationship is also referred to by Yovhannes Dsordsoretsi (1260–1335) who, as the continuator of Nerses Shnorhali's Commentary on St Matthew's Gospel, recapitulates the same idea in these terms: 'as said by the fathers, Golgotha was the grave of the first man, where the cross restores, so by the birth in Bethlehem the curse of Eve is lifted, and so also the skull of Adam at Golgotha.'<sup>28</sup> This line of interpretation is typical of a number of early Church Fathers, where the blessings of Mary and Christ are set against the curse of Adam and Eve. It is this tradition which David the Invincible has in mind when he writes

For the Hebrews say of the top of the hill of Golgotha that it is the place of skulls, and the burying place of the first man. And all is there, because the summit brings into the picture the height of the Cross, and the place of skulls its form. As to the burial, this is because having been wounded by the wood, Adam subsequently fell near it and is counted among the dead.<sup>29</sup>

We may round off this section by referring to the work 'On Paradise', a Syrian compilation which in its present version could be placed in the early sixth century, though much of the material may have been put together in the fourth. According to these stories Adam was buried in Jerusalem, 'the navel of the land', and when Noah and his sons carried the body of Adam from his first grave in 'the cave of treasures' into the Ark, Noah gave the skull of Adam to Shem with his seal. Grigor Tat'evatsi is alluding to this legend when in his sermon on the birth of Christ he says, 'After the flood the first son of Noah, Shem and his son Arphaksath brought the remains of Adam and buried it on Golgotha and the remains of Eve was placed in a cave in Bethlehem.'<sup>30</sup> This literary evidence is proof that the elements in the iconography of the narrative scenes of the Nativity and the Crucifixion were introduced in the early centuries. One of these features is specific to Armenian manuscript art. This is the practice of embellishing the scene of the Nativity by depicting a head of a woman under the cradle of the Child Jesus with the inscription 'Eve' or 'the head of Eve' as in manuscript Mat. Mss. 4820, fol. 3v.<sup>31</sup> This element is absent from Byzantine and East Christian iconog-

raphy. Another feature indirectly related to the above texts is the portrayal of the two midwives Zelomi and Salomi bathing the child Jesus, which entered into Armenian iconography from Byzantine and East Christian tradition.

An inseparable feature of the Nativity scene is the Visit of the Three Magi. Armenian literary sources have preserved intimate physical descriptions of their figures. 'The first magi named Melkon was old with white hair and long beard: the second, Gaspar, was young, without beard and red lipped: the third Balthasar was dark coloured with round beard.'<sup>32</sup> It is firmly held that the imagery of the Magi became prevalent in Armenian art from the sixth to seventh century, and it seems that Armenian artists knew this text. According to the Armenian Infancy Gospel the Magi, when going in to worship the Child, each had a different vision of him which they realized only later when they compared notes. Gaspar reported seeing a child, 'Son of God incarnate, seated on a throne of glory'. Balthasar saw him as commander of the heavenly forces, 'seated on an exalted throne before whom a countless army fell down and adorned'. Finally, Melkon saw him dying in torment, rising and returning to life. Returning twice to resolve their problem, they each had the visions of the other two. This is the source of the iconographic tradition that represents the three Magi as men of three different ages – young, middle-aged and old.<sup>33</sup>

In the iconography of the Crucifixion there are certain elements which respond to the Gospel story but additional accompanying interpretative texts provide fresh extra witness. In the Walters Art Gallery Ms.W.543 of the Four Gospels (1455) the Crucifixion scene has a large cross and, at the sides, the sun and the moon.<sup>34</sup> The combination of the sun and moon is a visualization of St Peter's words 'The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood' (Acts 2: 20; cf. Joel 2: 31). The perception behind this imagery is provided by Nerses Shnorhali and Yovhannes Dsordsoretsi in their Commentary on St Matthew's Gospel. They say 'It was not an uncultivated prophecy which Amos made'; 'And on that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight, and will turn your feasts into mourning ...' (Amos 8: 9–10). Compare this saying with that of Zechariah: 'On that day there shall be neither cold nor frost. And there shall be a day and that day known to the Lord is neither day nor night' (Zech. 14: 6). On the day of the Crucifixion 'the moon was fourteen days old and was below the earth, for when the sun withdrew, the moon rose in the east, but rushed and reached the sun and darkened the sun and after three hours on the heels and close to the sun it rose again in the east'. Thus the care-



ful juxtaposition of the sun and the moon in the same scene had the purpose of conveying the message that as a consequence of the Crucifixion the natural balances of the universe had been disturbed.

Finally, the Armenian miniature of the Crucifixion has one more characteristic feature, which in contrast to the former is not mentioned in the Gospels. This is the image of a lion sleeping under the cross. With the aid of a number of literary texts the association of the lion with the Crucifixion can be explained. Its origin lies in the *Physiologus* (*Baroy-akhos*), a work that features prominently in Armenian translated literature. In the *Physiologus* it is said 'when the female lion gives birth, the cub is born dead, it lies for three days, and on the third day the male lion comes and breathes over the dead cub and shouts until the dead cub comes alive. Similarly on the third day Christ rose from the dead by the will of God and raised us with Him.' The interpretation of Bart'oghemeos Maraghatsi (fourteenth century) points to the text in *Physiologus*: 'commentators bring as example of resurrection the lion, whose cub when born is dead, but the father shouts and raises it. Some argue that the lion is not totally dead ... and when the father shouts, breath re-enters and it rises.'<sup>35</sup> On the juxtaposition of Christ and the lion several Armenian exegeses have commented (including Eghishe, Vardan Anetsi, Grigor Tat'evatsi, Hakob Ghrimetsi and others). Mambrē Verdsanogh in his Homily on the Raising of Lazarus says that Christ 'cried with a loud voice on satan, like the lion on its prey'. Departing from the theological perspective, Hakob Ghrimetsi explains the relevance of the image of the lion in the Crucifixion scene in terms of the calendar: 'during Christ's Crucifixion the lion was controlling, which has deep mysteries; first the lion is king over all the beasts, and Christ is king over all creation'.<sup>36</sup> One of the chants composed by Grigor Narekatsi and sung on Easter Sunday invokes the powerful image of Christ as lion on the cross:

I tell of the voice of the lion  
Who roared on the four-winged cross,  
On the four-winged cross he roared,  
His voice resounding in the Hades.<sup>37</sup>

In baptism scenes there are several details which again do not feature in the synoptic accounts of the event. The presence of these features derives from literary details contained in orations and homilies. One of these apocryphal elements is the presence of two naked chained figures (male and female). In the Matenadaran Mss. 206 (fol. 446a) one of the figures is depicted seated on a dragon, and in others he is featured with a pitcher. According to G. Schiller,<sup>38</sup> these

features are included in Byzantine art as a direct allusion to Psalm 73[74]: 13: 'Thou didst divide the sea by thy might; thou didst break the heads of the dragons on the waters. Thou didst crush the heads of Leviathan.' Eghishe in his Homily on the baptism of Christ explains: 'the first Adam, deceived by the serpent, was expelled from paradise, and by providence the second Adam crushed the head of the dragon in the river Jordan'. Grigor Tat'evatsi also concurs with Eghishe by confirming that 'the saviour crushed the head of the Leviathan in the river Jordan'.<sup>39</sup> This designation introduces into the composition the idea of Christ's triumph over evil which in Walters Codex no. 543 had been expressed by means of Christ trampling upon a serpent.<sup>40</sup> The transformation of the personification of the Jordan into a demon had already taken place at an earlier period. In a Cilician Gospel of the thirteenth century the fleeing Jordan is a dark, naked figure with outspread wings and a satanic head. During the Feast of Epiphany on 6 January during the Blessing of the Water, a liturgical enactment of the rite of baptism, the following prayer is recited: 'Thou, Lord, didst bruise the head of the dragon upon the waters'; 'The dragon's head hath the Saviour bruised in Jordan's stream, and by his own authority hath rescued us all'. Or again, 'Thou also didst hallow the Jordan's currents, sending from Heaven the holy Spirit. And thou didst bruise the head of the serpent that lurketh therein'.<sup>41</sup> These words refer to Psalm 74: 13–14. 'Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces', interpreted in exegesis as a prediction of Christ's baptism. This reference is clearly indicated in the long prayer of the blessing of the water ascribed to Basil of Cappadocia and included in all Armenian Lectionaries for the Feast of Epiphany. The relevant passage reads:

And there [at the Jordan stream] he beheld the dread dragon lurking in the water; opening its mouth; it was eager to swallow down mankind ... But thy only-begotten Son by his mighty power having trampled the waters under the soles of his feet, sorely punished the mighty brute; according to the prediction of the prophet, that thou hast bruised the head of the dragon upon the waters.<sup>42</sup>

Another feature in the miniature of the Baptism not supported by the synoptic narratives but associated symbolically with the scene is the inclusion of a trunk of a tree with an axe embedded in it. In the context of the Lectionaries this image is presented next to the portrayal of St John the Baptist (Matenadaran Ms.7363, fol. 276b). This is a pictorial reflection on the saying of St Matthew: 'Even now the axe is



Baptism of Christ by  
Yovhannes Khizantsi.  
Gospels, 1335. Cat. 104.

laid to the root of the trees' (3: 10; cf. Luke 3: 9). The 'axe laid to the root of a tree' represents St John the Baptist. According to Nerses Shnorhali and Dsordsoretsi, John the Baptist represents the wrath of God and the incapability of the seeds of Abraham to bear fruit, which will be cut and thrown into the fire. The axe laid into the tree is meant to make implicit visually the message of St John. Another feature of the Baptism miniature is the representation of the hand of God in the segment of sky in the act of blessing. According to the Gospel story at the time of Christ's Baptism the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove (Matt. 3: 16, Mark 1: 10, Luke 3: 23). The interpretation for this imagery is given by Anania Sanahentsi in a theological tract called *Apology Against the Dyophysites*: 'The Father bore witness from heaven saying He is my beloved son, and the Spirit in the form of a hand pointed out the man baptised, that He is ...'.<sup>43</sup> Vanakan vardapet in his *Doctrinal Advice* explains further by quoting Luke: 'by the finger of God that I cast out demons' (11: 20). In the works of Grigor Tat'evatsi, this concept becomes much more precise: 'The finger of God is called the Holy Spirit ... first because the finger is from the essence of the body, so also the Holy Spirit is from the essence of God ...'.<sup>44</sup> The right hand of God, the dove and Christ together highlight the presence of the Trinity.

One could argue that amongst the miniatures illustrating the life of Christ, the Transfiguration is the most popular and has the most intense theological content. The iconographic tradition of the event is based on the narrative of St Luke 9: 27–36. The Armenian pictorialization of the Transfiguration has theological implications which show up the deeper divergencies between eastern and western Christianity. The east has dwelt upon the cosmic effects of the redemption wrought by Christ, and has viewed the Christian life in terms of our participation within the new creation. It is an outlook mystical rather than moral. The theology of the iconography is best understood in the light of Eghishe's homily upon the Transfiguration called *The Revelation of the Lord to Saint Peter*. This homily was translated into English by F.C. Conybeare but has never been easily accessible to English readers.<sup>45</sup> Peter is left by our Lord's predictions in sickness of the fear of death, the disease of worldly-mindedness that cannot rise to an acceptance of Christ's death and to a faith in his victory over it. Then on the mountain there comes the revelation of Christ glorified, bringing near the awfulness of heaven and the assurance that the portals of death are broken. Moses and Elijah by their presence attest the resurrection of the dead. 'There is not in this mountain any reign of death, and to this mountain death fears to ascend.' Could not the salvation of mankind then be

wrought without the death of Christ? 'They ventured to ask the Lord, who knew the secrets of their hearts ... But our Lord distressed not His beloved servants, but referred the question for answer to His Father's will.' Such was the revelation, hidden from all and sundry but given to the chosen three, 'the luminous mystery to the children of light ... and with the same light they were illumined and illumined until the second epiphany of that light'. Abruptly the homily passes to a description of Tabor as the writer knows it. It is a beautiful place with wells of water, 'vines yielding wine worthy for a king to drink' and many olive trees on the slopes. A zigzag path leads to the summit, where are now three churches. The pilgrim will find a brotherhood living there, tilling the land, tending the fruit, working at handicrafts, and so dividing their rule that an unceasing service of praise is offered as they 'make glorious and with awestruck voices adorn the holy churches on their mountain. One of the churches they call the Lord's Church, and the others are dedicated to Moses and Elijah.' 'Because they resemble angels they not only show mutual love, but no one hides from his fellows his secret thought.' 'And I, the most afflicted of men who trod on foot in the Lord's track on that mountain and with my eyes beheld that wonderful congregation of brethren, pray my readers and hearers that they may offer prayer for myself and for you in common. With them may you escape the dread sentence of God and become worthy of the kingdom of heaven.'

In this homily from the Armenian mountains there is a glimpse of some of the constant features of eastern Christianity: the sense of the dominance of the Resurrection, the unity of the Cross and the Resurrection, the vivid realization of the communion of saints, the contemplative life as a life to which the heavens are opened, the insistence that nature is not left behind but is transformed by Christ in the same new creation wherein the souls of men are drawn into union with God. It is not difficult to grasp how it is that the Transfiguration made its appeal to the eastern Christians: it came to be treated less as an event amongst other events and a dogma amongst other dogmas than a symbol of something which pervades all dogma and all worship. Nowhere is the ethos of eastern orthodoxy far from the themes which the Transfiguration embodies. In the liturgy, for instance, the sense of the nearness of heaven and earth is vividly realized; and the triumphant note struck at the offertory means that when the Church commemorates the Passion in the canon of the rite, it has already exulted in the presence of Christ risen and victorious. The services of the Feast of the Transfiguration tell their own tale. At Vespers the words are sung:

Before thy Crucifixion, O Christ, the Mount became like unto the heavens, and a cloud was outspread like a canopy, while thou was transfigured, and while the Father bore witness unto thee, there was Peter, together with James and John, inasmuch as they desired to be with thee at the time of thy betrayel also; that, having beheld thy marvels, they might not be affrighted at thy sufferings. Make us also worthy to adore the same in peace, for the sake of thy great mercy.

Thomas F. Matthew's suggestion that the Armenian iconography of the Transfiguration has an adoptionist Christology is totally speculative and unsubstantiated in the light of this ancient homily and most implicitly the Prayer of Remembrance in the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church.<sup>36</sup>

Another miniature which from the tenth century became a regular part of the programme of Armenian manuscript miniature painting was the image of the Descent into Hell or the Harrowing of Hell (Anastasis). The scene represents Christ's descent into Hades (the underworld), after his death and before his Resurrection from the tomb, his defeat of Hades, and his freeing of those whom Hades had held captive. The last act is visualized through Christ's raising of Adam. Referred to in veiled terms in the Scriptures (cf. Psalm 106: 13-15; Hosea 13: 14; 1 Peter 3: 19-20, Hebrews 2: 14-15), the account of Christ's triumph over Satan formed the subject of several apocryphal texts: the Gospel of Nicodemus, the Cave of Treasures, the Book of Rolls, and the Testament of Adam.<sup>37</sup> There are also commentaries amplifying the theme by Church Fathers: Paul of Samosata, Melito, bishop of Sardis, Ephrem the Syrian, Cyril of Alexandria and John of Damascus.

The tale begins at midnight in the nether world. There rose in the darkness something like the light of the sun. All rejoiced, especially Abraham (other versions have Adam) saying: 'This shining comes from a great light.' Isaiah and John the Baptist began to repeat their prophecies, John adding a warning to idolaters to take their last chance to repent by worshipping Christ. A dialogue follows between Death and Satan, who warns Death against Jesus and his fraudulent claims. Death is frightened, for he has lost Lazarus, and now fears to lose all the dead. 'For I see that all whom I have swallowed up from the beginning of the world are disturbed. I have a pain in my stomach.' During this conversation thunder peals: 'Lift up your gates, rulers, and be lifted, everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.' Satan and his demons try to bar the gates, crying: 'Who is this King of glory?' But the prophets mock them, especially Isaiah and King David, and the angels answer: 'The

Lord mighty in battle.' The gates of brass break and the bars of iron yield and are crushed; the bonds are set free, and all the dark places of death are lit up. Death and his company protest: 'Who is he who has so much power over the living and the dead?' But Christ in his turn seizes Satan by the head and hands him over to the angels, telling them to gag his mouth and bind him hand and foot. Then he gives him to Death, saying: 'Take him and hold him fast until my second coming.'<sup>38</sup>

While Death pours scorn on Satan, Christ lifts up Adam and takes him to paradise with all the other patriarchs, prophets, martyrs and 'forefathers', blessing them all with the sign of the cross. Paradise here is in heaven and in Eden, for they meet Enoch and Elijah at the gate, but the penitent thief, who joined them as they were speaking to the translated patriarchs, has come in by the gate of the flaming sword that barred the way back into Eden in Genesis 3: 24, where he gave Christ's promise as a password. In some sense the risen dead are certainly thought to be on earth, for some of them were baptized in the Jordan and kept the passover of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. An Armenian translation of the Gospel of Nicodemus has yet to be found, but there are several Armenian apocryphal versions that contain passages resembling the Gospel of Nicodemus.

In 1954 S. Der Nersessian published in English translation an Armenian version of the Harrowing of Hell, found in a collection of miscellaneous texts written in the Crimea in 1363 contained in Mss. 1293 at the Armenian patriarchate in Jerusalem. The story is entitled: 'History of John, son of Zacharias, concerning the destruction of hell and concerning Satan. How the Lord captured the incorporeal enemy and freed those who had been imprisoned by him.'<sup>39</sup> This is a version of the homilies ascribed to Eusebius, with notable differences which the author analyses in great detail. B. Sargisian in his study of Eghishe's homily on the *Burial of Christ* and Catholicos Zak'aria Jagets'i's (d. 877) *Descent into Hell* suggests that these two Armenian Church Fathers were familiar with the Gospel of Nicodemus and that an Armenian version of it must have existed.

Catholicos Zak'aria's Descent into Hell attests that, for six thousand years, since the time of Adam, Satan has vanquished everyone, but that now he is troubled by the man Jesus. There follows a long conversation with Hades and Death; the powers of Hell caution Satan, and tell him that Jesus must be very powerful, for he plucked from them the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow, and also Lazarus, whom they were not able to hold although his body had begun to be putrefied. When he heard Christ's voice, Lazarus 'rushing like a lion, went forth'. Further on in the

homily, Zak'aria speaks of the men who had risen from the dead and who were asked by the Jews how they had come to life or who had made them rise. He adds, 'And they answered: "Jesus of Nazareth, whom you crucified; he cried out on the cross and the keepers of hell were frightened, like animals at the voice of the lion, or the covies of partridges by the fluttering of the eagle's wings."' We are told that Satan and his legions, frightened by the signs they witnessed, fled 'like a covey of partridges when they hear the fluttering of the eagle's wings'.

The miniature of the Harrowing of Hell in Armenian art is transformed into a dramatic scene. Jesus, treading the broken gates under foot, grasps Adam by the hands in order to pull him out of the black gulf of Hell; to the rear, other naked men hold out their hands to be saved at the same time as Adam. To the left, demons, their hairs standing on end and their hands bound, flee lamenting. The personages depicted – Adam, Eve, Abel, John, Solomon, David – are all figures alluded to in the theological commentaries on the texts. In a homily on John the Baptist attributed to Anania (380-450) St John is portrayed as follows:

John went down into hell as forerunner of the Word, just as Elijah ascended into heaven as herald of the tidings to the celestials. For as Elijah was a type of John, so John in turn became a type of Elijah; for they two make known to us, one the grace of the other. For as this one was herald of the first coming of the Saviour, so that one shall be of the last coming. As the one snatched sinners and publicans from the violence of the evil one and led them to Christ, sanctifying them in the waters, so the other in the last times shall snatch the just from the hands of the Son of Perdition, the adversary of Christ, and present them to God by valorous championship.<sup>30</sup>

The sermons of Anania, Eghishe and Zak'aria Jagetsi naturally presuppose the visualization of this event, which is also enacted in the Armenian Church on Palm Sunday in the ceremony of *Opening of the Doors*, the rubric of which states that this 'is the mystery of the second coming and the day of judgement'.<sup>31</sup> Finally, in the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church the Anamnesis is brought to its conclusion by the prayer:

And descending into the nether regions of death in the body which he took of our kinship, and mightily breaking asunder the bolts of hell, he made thee known to us the only true God, the God of the living and of the dead.<sup>32</sup>

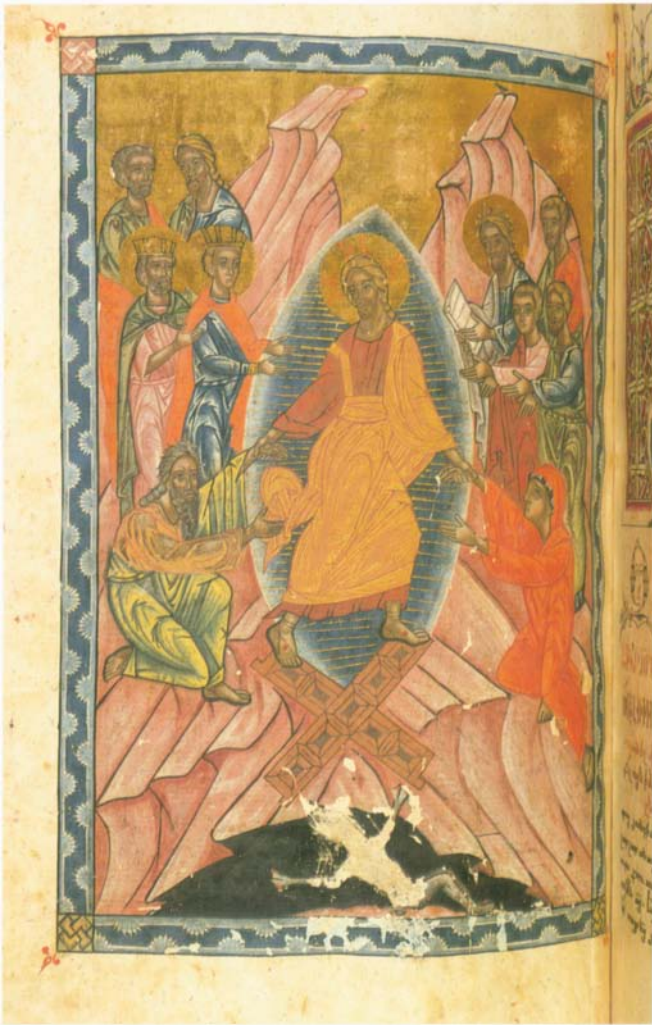
The Armenian iconography of the Annunciation has many features which illustrate the Annunciation story as

narrated in the Protevangelium of James. In the Protevangelium Mary and other virgins are given the task of weaving a veil for the Temple. The purple and scarlet fell to her share. She heard a voice at the well calling her highly favoured, and blessed among women. She looked to the left and right and saw no one. Trembling, she returned home and put down her pitcher. She took up the purple thread to go on with the job, and suddenly saw the angel by her. She heard him say: 'Fear not, for you have found favour with the Lord of all things, and you will conceive his word.' Her doubts and fears, immediately expressed, were as immediately answered: 'A power of the Lord will come over you, therefore what will be born of you will be called holy, the Son of the Most High.' Mary's reply is given in the words of the Gospel of St Luke: 'I am the Lord's handmaid. According to your words so let it be.' She completed her task, received a blessing from the priest who took it from her, and knocked at the door of the high priest's wife, her cousin Elizabeth, who was then expecting a baby, St John the Baptist.

Armenian artists painted many miniatures illustrating varied versions of the Annunciation story. One miniature that is particularly significant for our discussion is found in the British Library's *Menologium* (Or. 12550, fol. 257v), copied and illustrated in Istanbul in the year AD 1652. The miniature contains two views of the Annunciation. In one view, Mary goes to the well. She carries a pitcher, and Gabriel approaches her. He has the appearance of a middle-aged man with a heavy brown moustache and beard. In the second view, Mary holds the spindle in her hand. She rises from her seat at the sight of Gabriel, who this time has the appearance of a youth.

The Armenian artist T'oros Taronatsi, whose work is ascribed to the Gladzor School of art, introduces into the imagery of the Annunciation at the well a motif of a two-spigot fountain and the dove which appears on a disc of light near the Virgin's ear. This iconography is repeated in manuscripts copied in 1318, 1321 and 1323. The source of this representation is the Armenian version of the Protevangelium made from an older Syriac text which had been familiar to St Ephrem the Syrian. That this is so is clear from a comparison with it of Ephrem's sermon on the birth of Christ, of which an extract is only preserved in Armenian, which is also the source of our imagery:

The command went forth from the Great King and thereupon the Son of the King entered by the portals of her ears. When the Virgin said to the angel, 'Lo here am I, the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy



The Harrowing of Hell, Lectionary, 1631-32. Cat. 151.

word', he gave the word and she received the Child into her bosom. 'Tis not, as some say, that before the angel came it went down into the virgin; though, if it had been so, it were no wonder. But it was needful first that the tidings should be given to the virgin and that she in good will and holy freedom should accept him. There was nothing specially glorious to God in the angel's coming first; what was to be praised was that his advent was made in humility. Just as Moses announced to the people that the Most High shall descend, and when the elders and Moses were purified, then the Most High came down on Mount Sinai, even so Gabriel brought the tidings; and she was purified by the Holy Spirit and became a temple for God to dwell in. The effulgent

splendour flashed out into Mary, yet was not divided from the essence of the Father.<sup>53</sup>

In the commentary on the Diatessaron there are further clues that Ephrem used a form of the Protevangelium very similar to the Armenian. The question arises whether the incident of the conception through the ear originally had a place in the Protevangelium. The Greek entirely omits it. The same story recurs in several Greek documents; for example, among the doubtful works of Athanasius in the *Questiones Aliae* (Migne PG, 28, col. 789) we have the following passage:

Hear another mystery. As a house shut in on all sides, but which has towards the east a window of pure and thin glass, admits the sun's rays to penetrate and light up the whole of its inside; and just as the sun in passing through and his rays in going out again do not break the glass, which remains unhurt by their impact as they pass in and out so must you understand as touching the Virgin Mary. For she was quite chaste, like a house shut up all round; yet the Son and the Word of God descended like a divine ray from the Sun of Justice, the Father, and entered in through the little glass window of her ears, and lighted up her most holy abode. And after that he went out again as he knows how to do, without her virginity having been in the least impaired. But as before the birth, so during the birth and after the birth he preserved the chastity of the virgin.

The same idea recurs in another homily attributed to Athanasius (Migne, PG, 28, col. 969), where we read that 'God entered through the virgin's ears as he liked.' This homily is, perhaps, the work of Chrysostom. This thought is nowhere more clearly expressed than in a homily of Theodotus, bishop of Ancyra (c. 430) (Migne PG, 77, 1392). Here we read that 'Mary the prophetess conceived through her hearing the living God. For the hearing is the natural channel for words to pass through.' The idea, already entertained by Tertullian and Origen, is in close relation with the docetic belief of many of the earliest Christians that the body of Christ was phantasmal. The curious motif of the two spouts is closely related to this event. The conception happened when the Virgin Mary was sixteen. The indignation of Joseph, when her plight was discovered, is expressed in terms of shame that he had left her not properly protected in his own home. A dream relieved his immediate anxieties, for an angel told him that the Child was of the Holy Spirit, but Mary's condition could not be concealed from the circle of the High Priest, to which Joseph as well as Mary

belonged. They jumped to the conclusion that he had consummated his second marriage without the proper formalities. As he and she both denied this, they were made to drink the bitter water prescribed for a suspected adulteress in the Book of Numbers (5: 26).<sup>34</sup> Therefore, there is little doubt that the motifs in the Annunciation iconography are Mariological and not Christological. It is naïve to see in the motif of the two spouts an analogy to 'explain the union of the human and divine natures in Christ' or 'a metaphor of Armenian Monophysitism'.<sup>35</sup> It is quite absurd to explain Armenian theological thought only from the perspective of the Council of Chalcedon. This iconography occurs in Syrian and Ethiopian art and the common source for all is the apocryphal literature.<sup>36</sup> In Armenian poetry the imagery employed to describe the Virgin Mary is special: 'Living Paradise, tree of immortal life, fountain of living water, golden pitcher filled with manna, heavenly door, pure dove, temple and throne for God's logos, column of light, unscorching myrtle-tree.'

### Portraits

Manuscript illustrations are not restricted to the principal events in the life of Christ. The portraits of the evangelists, apostles, saints and donors were equally valued. Legend has it that the Evangelist St Luke, who was a gifted painter, 'painted the portrait of Christ our God and His parents ... and also the figures of the saints and the apostles and from him it spread throughout the universe as a spiritual act and worthy profession'.<sup>37</sup>

The famous icon of the Theotokos with the Child, called the Hodegetria, which for centuries was to be almost a palladium of the eastern empire, and was sent to Constantinople to the sister of Theodosius II (408-50) from the Holy Land, was considered to be a portrait taken from life by the Evangelist St Luke. St Basil of Caesarea (329-79) in his *De Spiritu Sancto* says that the icons of the apostles, prophets and martyrs are venerated in churches because these were both acknowledged and respected by the faithful.

If a figure from the Bible was shown by himself and not in the setting of a biblical scene, then an attempt was made to produce a 'likeness'. The Christians were so proud of the historical character of their revelation that they did not want to give their holy men purely arbitrary features, as if they were mere products of the imagination. When it was not possible to provide an authentic portrait, it was common to agree on a definitive type. This type was usually arrived at after some trials and hesitations, but once fixed, there was



The Annunciation and The Adoration of the Magi, Menologium, 1652. Cat. 153.

no changing it; and later it was no longer possible to unearth its provenance. Like the image of Christ, his mother and the apostles came to appear always with the same features. They were immediately recognizable, and could not be mistaken for anyone else; they also became, in a formal sense, portraits. Peter always has a round face, framed by a slightly curly beard, with a crown of grey hair around his forehead. Paul always has a furrowed, nerve-racked face, piercing eyes beneath a bald forehead, and a plain, pointed black beard. Andrew, the brother of Peter, is always a robust fisherman, with tangled grey tufts of hair. John is always a very youthful apostle, with enormous eyes, except



Portrait of St Matthew and title page of his Gospel. Gospels by Karapet of Bekri, Van, 13th century. Trinity College Library, Dublin, Ms. 10992, fols 24-25.

when he is shown as the hundred-year-old bishop of Ephesus writing his Gospel.<sup>58</sup> They were given the attributes of their profession and the implements by which they were tortured or put to death for their faith. The concept of the image is supported by texts. 'And St Peter was short, curly hair and white, bushy white beard, long nose, hairy, hard-master and conciliatory.'<sup>59</sup> 'Peter had white beard, short in stature, red faced, and keys in his hands.'<sup>60</sup> 'Saint Paul was short and robust, bold, greying, large nose, blue-eyed, large bearded and divinely inspired.'<sup>61</sup> I would like to suggest that these individual descriptions of the features of the apostles Peter and Paul were common to east Christian texts and the Armenian images of the apostles are derived from a common source.

Equally interesting are the descriptions of St Mark's physical features.

Saint Mark was a person of medium size not very tall but also not short, but graceful and handsome size. Begin-

ning to age but not very old ... and his soul was filled with the grace of God which shone in his body by the grace of the Holy Spirit. And his spirit was filled with all kinds of goodness, which showed the virtues of his personality.<sup>62</sup>

The following quotation is based on some accounts of the evangelist's life. 'And Saint Mark was, according to witnesses, medium in height, long nosed, thick bearded, bold, greyish, thin and full of Christ's grace.'<sup>63</sup> These physical descriptions of St Mark fully correspond to the iconography of the evangelist in Gospel illuminations. The unique physical features of the iconography highlight the inner life of the person. The theme of this kind of portraiture was not there for the sake of emphasizing the beauty of the face, but was more a means of underlining the dramatic meaning of the whole composition: for the theme of this kind of art was never the exhibition of a physical beauty ennobled by the mind, but always of an inner world, which could only be



brought to light by such means of expression – by an intense look, spontaneous gestures, vehement tension. According to John of Damascus (c. 675–749) in a letter to Theophilus, St Mark differs from the contemporaries of Jesus by his ‘severe temperament’. This feature is well expressed in the portrait miniatures of the evangelist in manuscripts executed in Cilicia and Crimea.

### The Canon Tables: Theology of Colour and Ornamentation

In Armenian theological literature there are several unique documents of art which explore and interpret the spiritual and aesthetic meaning of the Canon Tables. Several such commentaries by Step’anos Siwnetsi (680–735), Nerses Shnorhali (1102–73), Grigor Tat’evatsi (1344–1409) and Step’anos Dzik’ (seventeenth century) were recently published by V.H. Ghazarian.<sup>64</sup> Of these Nerses Shnorhali’s commentary, which forms part of his Commentary on the Gospel of St Matthew, is the most complete.<sup>65</sup> The frequency with which these commentaries appear seems to imply a felt need to check the enthusiasm of the artists in their use of symbols, colours, motifs and decorations.

The epithet ‘shnorhali’ (filled with grace) by which Nerses IV Klayetsi is known in the history of the Armenian Church is more than just an honorific title. In the Middle Ages the members of various Armenian monasteries were designated variously as ‘philosopher’, ‘grammarian’ or ‘rhetorician’. The distinctive ‘shnorhali’ designation was reserved for the members of Karmir Vank’ (Red Monastery), where scholarly erudition and deep spiritual life depended on the interpretation of the Word of God. Nerses and another graduate of Karmir Vank’ named Sargis Shnorhali (1100–67) were known for their commentaries on the Gospels and the Catholic Epistles.<sup>66</sup>

The Bible has for Nerses Shnorhali a paradigmatic value. It traces the parameters within which all history is to be understood. This was a definition of exegesis found in the Discourses of St Gregory the Illuminator: ‘For God established this world as a school, that creatures might learn the Creator’s care in fashioning and arranging and know that things visible and invisible are sustained through his providence.’ What happens now was foreshadowed in the events related in the Bible and makes sense to that extent. From a genuinely Christian perspective the Bible is the only ultimately meaningful record and imparts meaning to every other occurrence of note. This is, in sum, an extension of the old doctrine of ‘typology’, and Nerses follows it. He has

recourse to the Bible even to justify ritual practices of the Armenian and Roman Church. The use of unleavened bread for the Eucharist is a case in point. Thus the table of Abraham was a type (*yorinak*) of the table in the Upper Room. Nerses appears to infer from Genesis 19: 3 that the three cakes made by Abraham’s wife for the Lord were of unleavened bread. And if the Lord ate Abraham’s cake made of unleavened dough, then surely Jesus in the Upper Room also ate unleavened bread. Nerses Shnorhali develops what we might call the ‘doctrine of the two eyes’ as a principle of exegesis. This means that two levels must be seen in scriptural texts: ‘Scriptures is to be understood in two ways: one is tangible and visible, the other intellectual.’ They have a double meaning: literal and symbolic. Presumably there were efforts at a sort of demythologizing even in the twelfth century among Armenian writers. But Nerses argues that if we let go of the literal meaning of the Bible, there will be nothing on which to hang our symbolic interpretation. Take the story of Adam and Eve. Surely, Nerses writes to a correspondent, Adam and Eve and the serpent must have been real, for otherwise the race of men would not be here. Adam was a real individual and not the ‘universal’ man. In other instances difficulties seen in one scriptural passage are solved in terms of another, and a general theory of coherence seems to preside over the entire enterprise. It is as if Nerses were following the well-known principle that the Old Testament must be understood in terms of the Gospel.<sup>67</sup>

Within this framework Nerses explains how the devout Christian should approach the Canon Tables. What the Gospels teach, Nerses begins, is that in spite of the sinful condition of man, he is ‘in the image of God, and Paradise is his abode, and the Tree of Life is the occasion of his immortality’. By the Tree of Life he means the Divine Cross. Man’s origins are in Paradise, and it is the recollection of his original glory that leads man to desire the food immortal, which is Christ. Paradise in this context embraces at once the beginning and the culmination of human history, that is the creation of Adam and redemption in Christ. The first and most encompassing symbolism of the Canon Tables is therefore paradisaical. For now the Garden of Paradise is ‘walled around, not by the terrifying fire and the fiery Seraphic sword, but by the luxurious floral pictures and colourful, splendid ornament in the canon tables’. The core of Armenian aesthetic thinking is Nerses’s proposal that the world of experience should be divided into two classes of objects – the necessary and the pleasurable or sensuous. The sensual pleasures of the Canon Tables are not designed for the simple or uneducated folk but rather for ‘perfected’ ones, that is for the initiated. Pleasures, he says,

which are not accounted important, are of great utility to perfected ones, when by this manifest colour, taste, smell, hearing and the rest we ascend to the spiritual and to the rational enjoyment of the good tidings of God, which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which the heart of man has not recalled, which God has prepared for his loved ones.

Through the visual pleasures of the Canon Tables one is supposed to ascend to the spiritual enjoyment of the Gospels themselves. At the end of his Commentary, he calls the flowery meadows of the Canon Tables an 'evangelical preparation' that precedes the Gospel. He draws an analogy with the encampment of the Israelites at Sinai when they were required to wash and purify themselves before being admitted to the awesome vision of the Lord. Nerses calls the Canon Tables 'bath of sight and hearing for those approaching the soaring peaks of God'. By washing his eyes in the beauty of these tables and by 'circling with care in the tabernacle of this holy temple', the reader was to prepare himself for the greater vision to be had in reading the text that followed. By focusing attention on largely abstract decorations and colours, the Canon Tables were meant to focus the powers of his soul on the central mysteries of Christian revelation. This is an interesting role to ascribe to a work of art. Two premises lie behind such an approach. The first is the frank acceptance of the sensuous as something good in itself and therefore worthy of the serious attention of the educated or the initiate. According to Nerses, 'God gave the lover of material things understanding of the heavenly.' Accepting the premise, the artist found himself free to explore the limits of ornamentation and colour when illustrating his subject.<sup>68</sup>

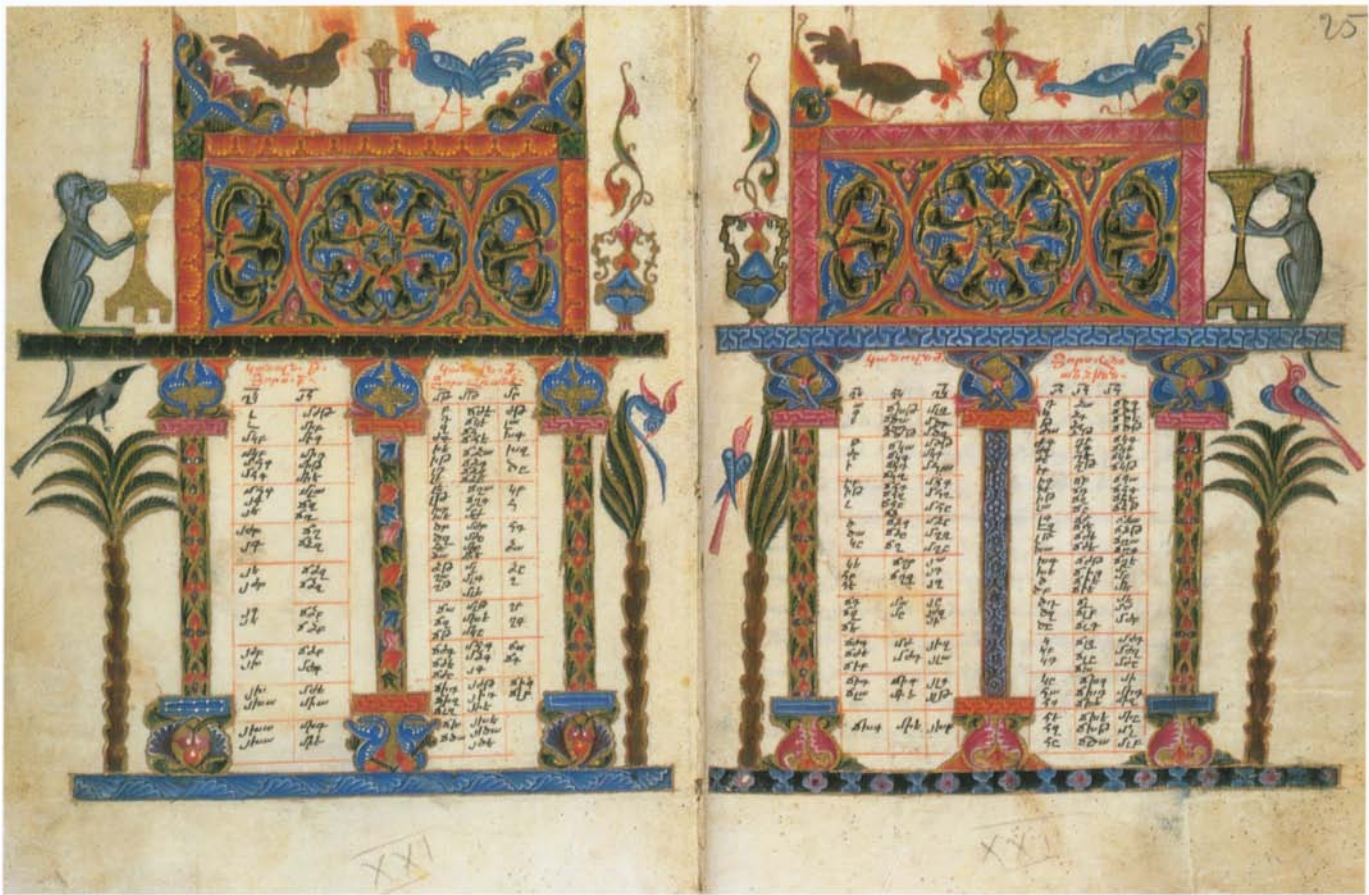
The second premise is that the most profound meanings contained in the Canon Tables must be left hidden. This is the exact opposite of the symbolic systems of western medieval art, which is didactic with each element labelled with specific meaning. The Armenian Canon Tables were designed for contemplation and their content had open-ended significance. In Armenian the word used for the Canon Tables is Khoran, the word that is also used to designate the Holy Altar on which every Sunday the 'mystery profound' (Incarnation to Ascension) is celebrated. Nerses expounds this idea further: 'The mystery is not apparent to all, but only to a few, and its entirety is known to God.' Following on this, each of the ten Canon Tables is interpreted as a dwelling for one of the great mysteries of salvation history, as follows:

1. The Blessed Trinity; Thrones, Seraphim and Cherubin
2. The Middle Priesthood of Angels
3. The Last Priesthood of Angels
4. The Garden of Paradise
5. The Ark of Noah
6. The Altar of Abraham
7. The Holy of Holies
8. The Tabernacle
9. Solomon's Temple
10. The Holy Catholic Church.

Ten is the most important number for the set, and Nerses calls it 'a holy number and a gift of God'. According to Nerses, the number ten was chosen by Eusebius by divine inspiration, for ten is the number of the commandments, the curtains of the temple, the parts of the body and its senses, the categories of Aristotle, the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, the articles of the Nicene Creed, and the ages of the world. It is therefore a number of completeness.<sup>69</sup>

In almost all commentaries, Canon Table presentations use four colours: red, green, black and blue. Sometimes additional colours are mentioned: purple, calico, flax and sky blue, which in essence may be considered hues. According to the eighth century commentary attributed to Step'anos Siwnetsi, the first Canon Table is coloured in four hues that signify 'the symbol of the four elements of the first temple'. The second Canon Table is also coloured in four hues, where black is the colour of 'true existence', as a divine symbol; red on black in the form of an arch symbolizes the blood of victims to save the apostates. If the inner part is black, and above it is red, in between comes blue, which symbolizes the spiritual in corporal life. The middle arch in gold is considered ecclesiastical; supposedly, the winged arch upon it shows Melchisedek representing Christ. The uppermost black arch is the symbol of Advent. The third and fourth Canon Tables are also represented in four hues. The names of the principal colours – white, green and red – are the designations given to Sundays following Easter: i.e. New Sunday (white), Sunday of the World Church (Green Sunday) and Red Sunday, on which occasions the celebrant of the Divine Liturgy adorns matching colour vestments.<sup>70</sup>

Four kinds of flora are mentioned by Nerses, which were probably represented in pairs in the outer margins. The date palm in the tables of the angels he took to refer to the lofty nature and sweet blessings of these heavenly creatures, but when he found them in the ninth table they referred to Christ, sprung from the root of David as truth sprang from



Canon Tables, Gospels, Crimea, 1658. The British Library, Or. 13895, fols 24-25.

the earth. The olive tree has three associations for Nerses: its greenness suggests the longevity of the patriarchs, the sourness of its fruit, the austerity of their lives, and its oil the illumination of their teaching. The lily also has many meanings: its colours of white, yellow and red mean purity, patience and manliness; the water lily signifies the patriarchs' ability to rise above the world around them; the desert lily stands for the ascetics of the desert. Finally, the pomegranate refers to the sweetness of the New Law within the bitter rind of the Old Testament.

Nerses offers an interpretation for six different species of birds in the Canon Tables. Birds played an important role in Armenian art from early on. The forty birds surrounding an eagle in the sixth-century Armenian mosaic in Jerusalem have been convincingly interpreted by Helen Evans as symbolic of the deceased flocking around Christ: Evans derives precedents for this positive use of bird symbolism from Sasanian and Syrian sources.<sup>71</sup> In the Memorial Office the

image often emphasized for the souls of the departed is 'With new feathers were they adorned at thy resurrection, O holy Only-begotten', or in the hymn 'Heavenly Jerusalem is the dwelling of the angels', 'Enoch and Elijah live in old age like doves'.<sup>72</sup>

Thus according to Nerses, the cock appearing in the ninth table 'close to the morning of righteousness, proclaimed the apparition of the ineffable light', that is, the advent of Christ; according to Step'anos Siwnetsi, the gold feathers of the cock made it represent those who are purified and worthy of the Holy Spririt; it is 'splendid and bold, commanding and awesome'. The cock in the margins of the New Testament represents Peter at the moment when he denied his Lord. Doves may stand for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, or for those who have received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a symbolism developed in early Christian Armenia by Agat'angeghos. Both commentators associate the partridges with the 'harlots' who by ruse came to have a role in Christ's

lineage. Nerses explains that 'it is the way of partridges to steal eggs and make them its own, even as they (i.e. the three women) stole by cunning from the house of Abraham and his son the fruit of blessings, and became the fore-mothers of Christ'.

The tradition that made herons symbols of the apostles involved a peculiarity of the Armenian version of the Scriptures, for Nerses, alluding to Christ's call to the apostles, says that from being fishermen the apostles were made 'hunters of men'. Hence fishing birds were appropriate symbols of the apostles. Finally, peacocks with their gold feathers represent the purity of angelic spirits for Nerses, but for Step'anos they represent the vain attention to externals of the Jews of the Old Testament. The introduction of monkeys and rampant lions in Armenian manuscripts is under western influence. The monkeys holding extinguished and lighted candles symbolize the Temple of Solomon and the Catholic Church. The Church has replaced the Temple as the dwelling place of the Divinity: 'this dwelling of holiness and place of praise'.

The consistency among Armenian artists in their use of colours, ornaments and decorations in however varied styles and locations is explained by the existence of well-founded literary tradition. One such instruction book for artists copying manuscripts, called *Patkerusoyts Girk'*, is found in the Mkhitarist Library, Ms. No. 1434, which Father Ghewond Alishan published in 1896.<sup>73</sup>

### The Nature of Image Veneration in Armenia

Unlike classical culture, which was essentially autocratic, the Christian Church consciously directed its appeal to all classes of society, explicitly including slaves and women. While it is true that St Paul's famous declaration that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bound nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3: 28) did not, and was probably never meant to, lead to the abolition of social differences, nevertheless, along with such sayings as that about the difficulty of the rich man in entering the kingdom of heaven, Christianization did bring with it something of a change of attitude towards those groups who had been barely considered at all in the pagan Roman world, chief among whom were the poor.

The breakdown of the old classical cultural and educational system has sometimes been associated with a 'new, popular culture', more universal in character and based less on the written word and more on the visual and the oral.

The Fathers indeed sometimes referred to sacred pictures as a way of educating the illiterate, which again may suggest the equation of 'Christian' with 'popular' culture, and it has been common to appeal to 'popular beliefs' as the explanation for the increase in the evidence for religious images in the sixth century.

One of the principal objections to religious images was that they were idols, which are forbidden by Scripture. Whatever may have been the biblical understanding of idol (*eidolon*), the defenders of images (*eikon*) during the iconoclastic struggle in the east could look back to Origen for a distinction crucial for their position. In his Homilies on Exodus, Origen cites the very passage (Exod. 20: 4) which led iconoclasts to assert that images are idols, proscribed by Scripture: 'You shall not make for yourself an idol nor a likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.' Origen by this definition asserts that the scriptural prohibition against the making of an idol or a likeness implies that the two are not the same at all.

The difference between the two is underlined by Paul, who proclaims that 'An idol is nothing in the world' (1 Cor. 8: 4). Origen affirms, then, that an idol is a figure or representation only of that which does not exist, that is to say, of nothing or that which is not. What is it that is not? Forms or figures which do not exist in reality, but only as products of the human imagination. Origen then lists several things of this type: a human body with the head of a dog or ram; the upper portion of a man with the trunk and hindquarters of a horse or a fish, and so on.<sup>74</sup>

An image or likeness, however, is something quite different. Someone who fashions in some material (gold, silver, wood or stone) the form of a quadruped, a bird or a serpent -- even for the purpose of adoring it -- does not make an idol, but an image or a likeness (*omoïoma-yorinak*). A likeness, then, is fashioned after some really existing archetype of things found either in heaven, in the earth, or in the water below.

Next Origen, following a similar exegetical method, explains Exodus 20: 5: 'you shall not adore them nor worship them'. Again, adoration and worship must be very different things. One may be compelled to adore something unwittingly, for instance the king or an idol; but worship implies that one willingly gives oneself over to something with all zeal, love and devotion.<sup>75</sup>

The defenders of icons or images in Byzantium would follow Origen in drawing a distinction between an idol and an image, and worship and veneration, even if they did not accept Origen's conclusions that Scripture enjoins against

the worship or veneration of either an idol or an image. What is most important to note, however, is that for Origen an idol and an image have a different ontological ground: the former is a figure only of something which is not; the latter is a figure only of something which is.<sup>76</sup>

Armenian painting, being essentially Christian and traditional, had to represent what is intangible and imperceptible and to narrate in colour and line the events drawn from the earthly life of Jesus. The paintings were never a gratuitous act but a functional one, since the religious images were created to enable the believer to apprehend the divine and follow visually the life story of Jesus. The efficiency of the image did not depend upon realism but upon the representation of what was recognized as the principle of the things portrayed and as the thinking of the Armenian Church.

The purpose of the painting was didactic as well as intercessional and propitiatory. The Gospel story was seen not as a historical succession of isolated events, but rather as a unified whole made immediate by the sacramental re-enactment of the great mysteries of the story – the incarnation of Christ, his teachings, his sacrifice, the miracles, and his glorification. Paintings were made to enable people to visualize the sublime drama of the Gospels, and the mysteries of the faith, and to portray the holy personages in a form intelligible to believers who could not read.

For centuries, many Christian communions and historians have accused the Armenian Church of being iconoclastic. Very often during the historical growth and development of the Church in Armenia, religious movements like the Mesalians, Paulicians and Tondrakians<sup>77</sup> emerged and taught an iconoclastic doctrine. It must be said, however, that these were not representative of Armenian Orthodox theology and doctrine. With the growth of Christianity in Armenia, icon veneration developed and became a natural expression of piety. Inside and outside, churches were adorned with sculpture – particularly the cross, images of Christ and the saints, and also pictures of biblical events. As early as the sixth century adornment of a church was the norm. The Church adopted this devotional piety from pagan worship, and sanctified it through Christianity by the sacrament of ‘The order of consecration of painted pictures in the church’. Nevertheless, it was very often looked upon as a vestige of pagan worship. Such opposition provoked Armenian Church Fathers to define and defend Christian art. Among these Church Fathers the most significant exponents of ‘a theology of art’ were Vrt’anēs K’ert’ogh, Yovhannes Odznetzi, Yovhannes Mayragometsi, Grigor Magistros, Yovhannes Sarkavag, Nerses Shnorhali and Grigor Tat’evatsi.

The Armenian *Nor Bargirk’ Haykazean Lezui* gives the word *Patker* (image) two definitions: (a) effective likeness of its model as a reflection in a mirror; and (b) a copy or symbol of the model, as for instance ‘Job is a symbol of suffering’, Daniel of justice and Noah of paupertas.<sup>78</sup> The image or representation of the sacred person or event in any medium, in order to be effective, had to represent its model accurately, alluding to Ghukas Vanandetsi’s treatise *Patkeraser Patkerateats*.<sup>79</sup> In the medieval phase there was deliberate rejection of the sensual likeness of the image to the prototype as the genuine means of understanding the model. ‘Man was made in the image of God with regard to the soul and not his body’, confirms Nerses Shnorhali.<sup>80</sup> Ghukas Vanandetsi also pursues the same line of thought, summing up the views of several Patristic Fathers. In the ‘preface’ of his treatise he reserves a special place for the viewer’s mental over sensual response, for the mental approach is not led by the ‘superficial’ response, but by symbol (mystery). As an example he quotes the relationship of Christ with his Jewish tormentors: ‘Herod, Pilate and not a few Jews had seen Christ, spoken to Him, even spoken about Him to others; some witnessed His miracles and heard Him teach. But their minds were in “darkness”; they failed to see God’s hidden mysteries. They saw the physical Saviour but failed to see the hidden prototype.’<sup>81</sup> Then Vanandetsi carries this line of argument one step further by asking whether it is essential for the image to be exactly like its prototype. ‘It is common knowledge that the model cannot be exactly like its prototype, for if it did, it would cease to be in the likeness and become the prototype. For instance Adam is the image of Christ in likeness and unlikeness.’<sup>82</sup> The Armenian artist Sargis Pidsak calls the figurative miniatures in the Gospel ‘dominical zard’. Pidsak employs the term *zard* to mean image but as the word derives from *ard* it also means ‘form’, ‘order’. In Armenian we often find the expression ‘Erkink’ ew erkir, ew amenayn zard erknits’ (heaven and earth, and all forms in heaven) or ‘zasteghs ew zamenayn zardun erknits (all the stars and order of the heavens).’<sup>83</sup>

The theology of image in the Armenian Church turns very largely on the image of Christ and its implications for Christian worship. To what extent was it legitimate, or even possible, to depict the human face of God in art? In sixth-century Armenia the hostility towards images arose in the context of docetism which, while acknowledging that Jesus was truly God, claimed that his appearance as man was merely phantasmal. It is against such a view that the Joannine Gospel and the epistles emphasize over and over again the flesh-and-blood reality of the incarnate Son of God. There were various attempts to explain Christ’s incarnation

and passion in a realistic and spiritualistic way, that is, excluding from it everything that seems unworthy of the Son of God, man born of a virgin and without sin. The Armenian theologian Yovhannes Ōdznetzi (650- 728) in two epistles *Against the Phantasiastes* and *Against the Paulicians* defends the means of visualizing the invisible. Yovhannes explains: 'For if you know not how to discern with the mind's eye the evangelic word, "The Word was made flesh", you will not be able to avoid the aforesaid blasphemy.' By this definition the visualization of the Lord is based on the Word and the principle of the real incarnation. What is forbidden to the Jews is permissible for Christians since the incarnation was real and not fictive. Objecting to the teaching of the sectarians that 'he did not become flesh of the Virgin, but in the Virgin', Yovhannes asks, 'do you attribute the Incarnation to the Word in his own nature, or do you hold that it lay in a union with ours? If he came by this mundane mode of existence in his own nature only, then was he severed from the manhood in which he had his being, and our hope of salvation is vain ... What will you make of the voice of the Archangel when he says, "He who is born of thee [Luke 1: 35]"?' The author draws a clear distinction in the terminology employed to describe the incarnation 'of the Virgin', 'in the Virgin', 'of Thee' and 'in Thee'.

The historian Movses Daskhurantsi in his *History of the Caucasian Albanians* includes 'The question asked by Dawit', bishop of Meds Koghmank', of Yovhann Mayragometsi, concerning images and pictures'.<sup>84</sup> According to S. Der Nersessian the letter was addressed to David, bishop of Albania by the Armenian theologian Yovhannes Mayragometsi (575-640).<sup>85</sup> Yovhannes relates that three monks named Hesu, Thaddeus and Grigor left Dvin and settled in Albania as monks teaching 'Destroy the images painted in the churches, and do not commune with worldly priests.' Their objection to images is that they are forbidden by Scripture. To the question 'Why do you not accept the image of God incarnate? they replied, 'Because it is foreign to the commandments and is the act of idolaters who worship all created things; we do not worship icons because the scriptures do not command us to do so.' The Old Testament prohibition of images is met with references to painting on the tabernacle of Moses and the various sculptures in the Temple of Solomon.

If one musters the arguments used by the opponents of the use and worship of images in the Church, the Old Testament prohibitions, while not always quoted (Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius), are unquestionably one of the mainsprings of this opposition. The thesis that the

devil created 'sculptors, painters, and producers of all kinds of portraits', or at least that he taught them their art so that in the pagan cult statues the uneducated 'might have models of licentiousness', seems to have been viewed as a corollary to the fact that the God of the Old Testament had rejected the arts. Accordingly these Armenian ascetics who 'give themselves the name saint' retired to the desert, practised extreme forms of asceticism and waged a campaign against religious images on the ground that the images 'are made of human hands and are not worthy of us'. This group of iconoclasts gained a large following in northern Armenia and on the Albanian frontier. In 714 George, an Arab bishop on the Syro-Mesopotamian border, wrote a letter from Syria to the presbyter Isho, who lived in a village named Anab. Isho had been arguing with an Armenian. The latter had told him that Gregory the Illuminator, the apostle of Armenia, had prohibited the admixture of water in the wine of the Eucharist. Bishop George informed his correspondent that Gregory had never prohibited this, just as he had not ordered 'that they should make no images in their churches, although they report that he did'. George implied that the use of pure wine in the Eucharist, as well as the absence of religious images, was simply an old tradition of the Armenian Church which his (Isho's) Armenian interlocutor had been trying to authenticate by tracing them back to Gregory the Illuminator. George was exaggerating in conveying that Armenian churches contained no images. The Armenians whom he knew must have been iconoclasts, and his letter is thus evidence for the persistence of iconoclastic sentiments among the Armenians down to the eighth century. The iconoclasts who had been expelled from Albania allied themselves with a new movement which was to play an important role in medieval and modern times: the Paulicians. It was the last act in the fascinating and tragic story of the Armenian iconoclasts as an independent sect. Their views on religious images were destined to influence the iconoclasts in the Byzantine empire in the early ninth century.

In Armenian sources the first mention of the Paulicians is made in the *Oath of Union* taken at the Council of Dvin summoned by the catholicos Nerses II of Ashtarak (or Bagrewand) (548-57) which is also attested by Yovhannes Ōdznetzi in his epistle *Against the Paulicians*.<sup>86</sup> He confirms that the heretics had already been reprimanded by the catholicos Nerses, had gone into hiding and were joined by the iconoclasts of Caucasian Albania. We are better informed by a treatise ascribed to Vrt'anes K'ert'ogh (550?-620?) who between 604 and 607, following the death of Catholicos Movses II Eghivardetsi (557-604) and the



The Virgin Mary and Child, with the donor Lady T'amam Khatun and Mary Magdalene. Gospels, Tayk, 1313. John Rylands University Library, Ms. 10, f.9.

election of his successor Abraham I Aghbat'anetsi (607-15), ran the affairs of the catholicate. Vrt'anes K'ert'ogh in his treatise *Against the Iconoclasts* sets forth the arguments by the opponents and the defenders of images in Armenia.<sup>87</sup>

The Armenian iconoclasts proclaimed that the practice of representing images in the churches was contrary to the commandments of the Scriptures, and image worship was a form of idolatry – of adoration of vile matter. The refutation is based first of all on scriptural arguments. In this treatise the author explains the doctrine of the Church, quoting texts of the Old and New Testaments, the Church Fathers and ecclesiastical writers, such as John Chrysostom and

Eusebius of Caesarea, as well as ancient practice of the Church and its tradition. From the Old Testament he takes as authority the command of God to Moses to embellish the curtain of the tabernacle with multi-coloured decorations and with cherubim in human form and palms; and there were similar paintings in the temple which Ezekiel saw in his vision. Several passages from the Church Fathers are next quoted to prove that they favoured the images. The author then explains that there is no connection between idolatrous and Christian practices, for the pagans worshipped the idols of false gods, while the Christians worshipped the images of Christ, the Virgin and the saints. The argument

that matter is vile cannot be held as valid, for nothing which has been made by God is vile, and, furthermore, the Christians do not worship the matter, but him whom the picture represents.

When we bow before the Holy gospel, or when we kiss it, we do not worship the ivory or the red paint ... but we worship the word of the Saviour written on the parchment. ... It is not because of the colours that we prostrate ourselves before the images, but because of Christ in whose name they were painted ... For we attain the invisible through what is visible; and the pigments and pictures are memorials of the living God and His servants.<sup>88</sup>

In describing thereafter the practice of the Armenian Church, he enumerates the subjects represented in the churches. They are: the Virgin holding the Christ Child on her knees; the martyrdoms of St Gregory the Illuminator, of St Hrip'simē, St Gayanē and her companions; the stoning of St Stephen; portraits of the prophets, apostles and other saints; the divine cross; the principal Gospel scenes: Nativity, Baptism, Passion, Crucifixion, Entombment, Resurrection, Ascension. The mention of the national saints, Gregory the Illuminator, Hrip'simē and Gayanē, clearly indicates that Vrt'anes was describing an Armenian church. He thus gives us the most complete iconographic cycle used in the early seventh century.

Vrt'anes K'ert'ogh in his treatise does not mention the Paulicians directly, unlike Yovhannes Ōdznetzi (717-28), who entitles his epistle *Against the Paulicians*. According to Yovhannes, the Paulicians 'passed from the attack against the images, to the attack against the cross, and to the hatred of Christ'. The old accusation of idolatry, of the adoration of matter, of following practices prohibited by Scripture, resurfaces. The refutation is again partly based on Scriptures and partly on early Church Fathers. Although Yovhannes does not enter into detailed discussion of matter, he refers to it in his assertion that the Church represents 'in every material the human appearance of the living and life-giving Christ', and that in seeing a cross or an image of stone or gold, we do not place our faith in the stone or in the gold, as did the pagans. He explains that it is possible to represent the image of God because of the incarnation. Man could not visualize the greatness of the creator, which is invisible even to the cherubim, but God took pity on him, and he, who in the beginning of time had made man in his image and likeness, assumed the human form. Thus the Word, being made flesh, taught us to worship the image of his human form, and the noble symbol of his victory. In bowing

down before them, he adds, 'I do not doubt that I am bowing down before Christ enthroned on them; and while looking at the visible, I recall to mind the invisible. Although they are made of various and different materials, I see in them all the one and same power.'<sup>89</sup>

However, of particular importance in the defence of the image and object as items of veneration and worship is the reasoning of Yovhannes Ōdznetzi, who emphasizes that only those materials are venerated in which Christ is present, for pre-eminently it is the name that makes the object holy and therefore, and warns 'You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain' (Deut. 5: 11). In *Against the Paulicians*, Yovhannes focuses on the sacraments which in the name of the Holy Trinity and performed by consecrated priests sanctify the objects of worship: 'when the churches, altars, crosses, and images are anointed with oil, we believe that divine power enters into them. They are thus distinguished from other, similar matter, just as we ourselves are distinguished from those who wrongly believe that matter is divine. It is the presence of the grace of the Holy Trinity that performs the miracles; inanimate matter could not help the living men, if God did not dwell in it'. One must not suppose, however, that because God is everywhere every object must be worshipped – the worship must be confined to those that have been anointed. This is firmly stipulated by two canons promulgated by Yovhannes Ōdznetzi in the Council of Dvin (719):

Canon 27: If anyone shall make a cross of wood, or of any other material, and not give it to the priest for him to bless and anoint it with the holy oil, one must not honour that cross or prostrate himself before it, for it is void and empty of the divine power, and such practice is contrary to the traditions of the Apostolic Church.

Canon 28: As for those which have been blessed and anointed, so that they may become instruments of the divine mystery, we must honour and worship them, prostrate oneself before them and kiss them, for the Holy Ghost dwells in them, and through them dispenses his protection to men, and the graces of healing of the ailments of souls and bodies.<sup>90</sup>

After the overthrow of Arab domination at the end of the ninth century, religious art flourished in Armenia. Figure sculpture and paintings covered the walls of the monuments erected by the royal princely families, catholicoi, bishops and abbots. We have an outstanding example in the Church of the Holy Cross of Aght'amar on the island of Lake Van, which is entirely covered with sculptural reliefs.<sup>91</sup>



The final phase of iconoclasm in Armenia is connected with the heresy of the T'ondrakians, which started in 898 and spread during the late tenth and eleventh centuries.<sup>92</sup> Like the Paulicians, with whom they were closely allied, the T'ondrakians were violently opposed to the cross. They destroyed it whenever they saw it, claiming 'We are no worshippers of matter, but of God. We reckon the Cross and the church and the priestly robes and the sacrifice of mass all for nothing, and we only lay stress on their inner sense.' Aristakes Lastivertsi in his *History* reports that the sectarians took the 'cross which received God upon itself, ground it to powder and cast it on the ground'.<sup>93</sup> Gregory Magistros, who played an active part in suppressing this heresy within his own provinces, rejects the accusation of idolatry, stressing that the cross is the focus of prayers of intercession:

When thou seest the sign of the cross thou shalt pray, because it reminds thee that Jesus Christ was crucified for thee; and thou must regard thyself as crucified along with him. In its presence thou shalt lay aside all earthly thoughts, and greet it with pure lips, and say: 'Christ, thou Son of God, be thou merciful to me ...' Thou shalt honour the pictures of the saints, and in thy prayers shalt mediate upon their sufferings and martyrs' deaths, submitting thyself to them as thy teachers. They are related to thee, and have become witnesses of the truth. So shalt thou invoke them as thine intercessors before the true God; in order that he who sleeps not may, according to thy trust in his servant the martyr, pity thee who lovest the martyrs.<sup>94</sup>

Yovhannes Sarkavag (c. 1050–1129) in an address entitled 'Regarding the relics of devotion and the acceptance of pictures', written with the concern to eliminate excessive forms of image worship and to correct some of the errors which seem to have been current at that time, states that we have not been ordered to worship the tombs or the images of men, even though they be saints. It is a pious custom to honour the relics of the saints, and the Church teaches us to seek their intercession before the Lord. But to substitute them for the Saviour and the Lord is unholiness, and we must not fall into the error of praying to his servants, or to any creatures, giving them the incomparable honour which is only due to God. We build martyria and memorials for the saints of God who suffered in his name, but in prostrating ourselves before their bones, we really do so before Christ. We beg them, whose images appear in paint or in any other material in the churches and martyria, to be our intercessors and helpers.<sup>95</sup> The most striking and vigorous exponent of this theme was the painter Hakob Jughayetsi, who extends



The Second Coming with the portraits of the scribe and sponsor of the Gospels, Ter Zak'aria, 1496. Matenadaran Ms. 5303, f.12.

the eschatological representations of the Gospel cycle by the inclusion of several sets of portraits of Christ and the Virgin Mary on facing folios. In a manuscript of the Four Gospels (Mat. Mss. 7639), painted by Hakob, there is one picture in which he represents a group of intercessors that includes the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist and Stephen the Protomartyr. Above them he placed the image of Christ and while the saints have their hands raised in the direction of Christ, the Virgin Mary is depicted holding her naked breasts and showing them to Christ with a revealing caption, 'Mary intervenes to her only begotten son and with both her breasts pleads and says "You created, do not destroy."' <sup>96</sup> In another manuscript of the Four Gospels, copied in Keghi in 1586, Hakob includes several sets of portraits of Christ and the Virgin face to face with the caption

for the Virgin which states 'The Lord is in the heavens with God the Father and the Virgin speaks to him and pleads "have mercy on us"'.<sup>97</sup>

The source of Hakob's imagery is an apocryphal story of a vision that Mary had of the afterlife in which she visits hell, sees the sufferings of the fallen and hurries to Christ to intercede on their behalf: 'Then, the Holy Virgin Mary opened to the divine her virgin breasts and said ... with these I fed the Lord ... have mercy.'<sup>98</sup>

Nerses IV Klayetsi, called Shnorhali (c.1102–73), when explaining the position of the Armenian Church in regard to image worship, states, 'We accept them; we bow down before the image of our Saviour; we respect the images of all the saints, each one according to his ranks; we represent them in our churches and on our sacred vestments.' But the same honour is not due to the representations of Christ, or of the cross, or to those of the saints.

We honour and glorify the images of the saints, who are our intermediaries and our intercessors before God; but *proskynesis* (veneration) is offered to God, through them; for it is only due to the creator and not to the created ... The images and names of the faithful servants of God, who by their nature are our fellow-servants, must be honoured and respected, each one according to his merits. In seeing their virtuous deeds represented on the pictures, we must take them as our models, and recall their sufferings in the cause of truth. Whoever insults them, does not insult the material out of which the picture is made, but him in whose name it is painted, be he the Lord or his servant.<sup>99</sup>

Nerses also speaks of the respect due to the cross and explains why it must be anointed. The cross is the chariot and the throne on which Christ the King is ever present; *proskynesis* and adoration are therefore rendered to the crucified Christ, and not to the material throne. 'God is invisible by his nature; in bowing down before the visible cross, we do so before the invisible God, according to the commandments we received from the holy apostles. While with our bodily eyes we see its material and true shape, with the eyes of the spirit, and our faith, we perceive the invisible

power of God united with it'.<sup>100</sup> 'However, only the anointed crosses must be honoured, for divine power is then indivisibly united with them. Otherwise, the honour would be addressed to mere matter, and the worship of what is created has been condemned by the holy books as idolatry.'<sup>101</sup>

The theology of the icon during the first phase of the iconoclastic controversy turns very largely on the image of Christ and its implications for Christian faith and practice.<sup>102</sup> To what extent was it legitimate, or even possible, to depict the human face of God in an art work? In the second phase of the dispute, the arguments become increasingly channelled into the well-worn tracks of the debate about the relation of the two natures in Christ, and whether the icon of the Saviour does not involve confusing or dividing the natures. It can be seen from the Armenian stance on images and on image worship that the Christological considerations were not at the forefront, when images became increasingly important for piety from the fifth century onwards. Peter Brown is right in suggesting that the debate was not Christological but 'a debate on the position of the holy'. He connects the role of the icon closely with that of the holy man, and plays down the importance of the Christological dimension.<sup>103</sup> In Armenia there had been active, down to the eve of the Iconoclastic Controversy in the Byzantine empire, an ascetic movement that had objected to religious images as being unlawful rivals of the Christian ascetic. Underlying this objection was the 'essential concept of the image'. The argument from holiness likewise was based on the essential concept of the image. 'Pictorial images are not holy, only the Christian ascetic is holy' had been the thesis of the Armenian iconoclasts. 'Pictorial images are not holy, they do not reveal the true glory of sanctity' was the doctrine emphasized in the florilegium of St Sophia, which was compiled by a committee of six members of Armenian origin appointed by Emperor Leo V and staffed by at least two Armenians, the energetic John the Grammarian and another called Hamazasp.<sup>104</sup> Armenian iconoclasm started from the same premise as the argument from sanctity, and it is therefore no coincidence that this argument appealed to and was elaborated by a committee dominated by Armenian thinking and religiosity.

# NOTES

## Chapter I

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Overleaf: Episcopal  
Staff (Crozier).  
Cat. 40.



# THE CATALOGUE

# SCULPTURE

Armenian sculpture was essentially a Christian art. However, excavations carried out in the ancient capitals of pre-Christian Armenia – Karmir Blur, Arin-Berd, Erebuni, Armavir, Ervandashat, Tigranocerta and Artashat – have unearthed a few pieces of sculpture which provide an insight into the predominant trends of that period. Agat'angeghos, in describing the idolatry that prevailed before the adoption of Christianity in 314 and the destruction of the pagan temples undertaken by St Gregory and King Trdat, speaks of the idols those temples contained. We are told they were made of gold, silver, stone, wood and bronze, and that they were cast, hammered, beaten and cut. Not surprisingly no such idols have survived. But excavation has brought to light various examples of sculpture from the post-Urartian and pre-Christian periods. Statues had been imported from Greece and the Greek cities of Asia Minor to adorn the Armenian temples. The superb bronze head of Aphrodite-Anahit in the British Museum (Exhibit Cat. 19) was discovered in the last century in the Temple of Anahita at Erez (Erzinjan), its principal sanctuary. The pagan temple of Garni, dedicated to the god Mihr (Mithra), is the only surviving Hellenistic building built by King Trdat I about 77 BC. The frieze of grey stone with the lion's head (Cat. 1) is from the Temple Garni, which collapsed during an earthquake in 1679, but which was restored between 1969 and 1975. Coins minted under Armenia's Artaxiad rulers have preserved the complete set of their portraits from 189 BC to the year 1 BC. The Tetradrachm of Tigran II, 95–96 BC, shows the beardless king in profile, wearing the five-pointed Armenian tiara with lappet and

fanons, adorned with a star and two eagles (Cat. 20).

In the Christian period sculptured decoration is employed either as an integrating element of the architectural structures, around portals, windows, capitals and cornices, or as an outstanding ornamental insert framed within portal lunettes or isolated in other prominent positions on the exterior walls. In the former instance, the decorations used are usually geometrical or plant motifs, an ideal opportunity for the local craftsmen to exhibit their skills in minute engraving on tufa stone as in the sphere of *khatchkar* (stone crosses). In the latter, mostly figured subjects of two types were used: the religious type, in which the theophanic theme predominated – the Virgin and Child, Christ the Pantocrator, scenes from Old and New Testaments. Occasionally human or animal figures were used to decorate the capitals. The figures seen carrying hammers, spades and various other instruments represent the workmen who built the church of Zwart'nots.

The funerary votive or memorial *stelae* popular between the sixth and eighth centuries take the form of rectangular pillars mounted on bases. Carved on the four faces of the pillars and of the bases are individual figures of Christ, the Virgin, saints and angels. Of special interest are those which represent purely national characters, inspired by the story of the conversion of King Trdat and Saints George and Sarkis, who enjoyed very early devotion in Armenia. The figures are depicted standing in a strictly frontal position, head in profile. The folds of the drapery are indicated by parallel grooves, straight or curved, without any direct relationship to the shape of the limbs.

## RELIEF SCULPTURE

1

**Projecting Lion Head from the Temple of Garni**

Basalt stone; 49 × 482 × 185 cm, wt 50 kg

Temple of Garni, c.98-220

BM: Western Asiatic Antiquities,

Inv. Nr 102614

Garni (ancient Gornea) Temple is situated in the village of Garni in the Abovyan district, on the right bank of the river Azat, 4500 feet above sea level, at a distance of 30 km east of Erevan. The first historical reference to it is found in Tacitus, who calls it 'Castellum Gorneae'. From antiquity throughout the Middle Ages it preserved its importance as a station for the royal garrison and a powerful fortress. The site includes the Fortress, the Temple, the Roman baths, a four-apsed church and a single-naved church. Destroyed in 1679 and rebuilt between 1969 and 1975 under the supervision of A. Sahinyan, the most renowned monument within the fortress is the peripteral temple, oriented north-south, with 24 Ionic columns on a high concrete podium reached by a broad flight of nine steps bounded by low walls with low reliefs showing Atlas figures; the entablature, with a markedly projecting architrave and frieze, is richly decorated with acanthus fronds, rosettes and standard mouldings, deeply cut and with some undercutting. This indicates that even if the design and ornament are typically Roman, the workmen were local, with experience of carving basalt. The dedication of the temple is disputed. In noting the pronounced similarities to temples such as that at Sagalassos, Trever has dated Garni's temple to the reign of Trajan (98-117), when Armenia was briefly a Roman province. It has also been less convincingly designated to Apollo/Mithras and dated c. AD 70 (Aṙak'elyan). It has also been identified with a funerary structure c. AD 150 c. 220, possibly for one of the rulers of western Armenia (Wilkinson).



1

**The Fragment Frieze**

The architrave consists of three *fasciae*, each higher than the one below, and each crowned with a moulding. Between the first and second *fasciae* is an astragal, between the second and third a rope decoration, while above the third come in ascending order a flat fillet, an astragal, a *cyma recta* decorated with a spiky leaf-and-dart, and a wider flat fillet, sloping slightly back. The architrave is 0.595 m high, rather higher than the frieze which, with the crowning moulding, is only 0.43 m high. The frieze is decorated with a deeply incised acanthus scroll. This bulges out towards the bottom to present what is virtually a *cyma recta* profile. Above is a flat fillet, an egg-and-tongue, and then a wider fillet. The dentils of the cornice block are surmounted by another leaf-and-dart. Then instead of the consoles often found in late Ionic and Corinthian comes a flat band, projecting above the leaf-and-dart, and slightly hollowed out underneath. An astragal effects the junction between this band and the sima or gutter, which is of the usual *cyma recta* profile, decorated with a leaf pattern and with projecting lions' heads. These lions' heads are purely decorative and do not in fact serve as waterspouts.



1 a

*Provenance:* During the course of compiling the *Bibliography*<sup>1</sup> I noticed a passage in Eric H. King's 'A journey through the Soviet Republic of Armenia': 'As to Vagarshapat, the sole existing remnant of the palace of King Tiridates (so far as I am aware) takes the form of a fragment of a stone frieze and reposes in the Department of Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum (Exhibit No. 102,

614).<sup>2</sup> My initial thought was that this could be a fragment from the cathedral of Holy Ējmiadsin, which according to the Armenian historian Arak'el Davrizhetsi Shah Abbas had in 1604 taken with the Armenians to Isfahan. However, this assumption was premature. In a sequel to the above article E.H. King corrects his 'entirely unwarranted surmise' and attributes the stone frieze to the 'king's other palace at Karhni, to which this exhibit must, now, obviously, very definitely and emphatically be assigned'.<sup>3</sup> I traced the fragment to the Greek and Roman Antiquities, where it had been transferred by R.D. Barnett in 1952 from Western Asiatic Antiquities. The caption on the fragment reads: 'Portico of a frieze from the palace of Tiridates King of Armenia AD 100–300. Bequeathed by Captain J. Buchan Telfer R.N., F.S.A, 1903 (or 1906).<sup>4</sup> Who is Captain J. Buchan Telfer? In *The Geographical Journal*<sup>5</sup> for the year 1907 I found in the obituary section a brief notice which said, 'We regret to record the death at the age of seventy-six, of Captain J.B. Telfer, R.N., who had been a Fellow of the Society [of Antiquities] since 1875. Captain Telfer had seen much naval service, having taken part in the Crimean war, gaining the Baltic Medal, besides serving on many of the naval stations abroad. He subsequently married a Russian lady, and resided, about 1870, for three years in Russia, visiting on two occasions the Crimea and the Caucasus, and making extensive journeys through the mountain districts. His knowledge of Russia, and his antiquarian and historical tastes, enabled him to add largely to the account of Suanetia previously given in Mr. Freshfield's "Central Caucasus".<sup>6</sup> His work in two volumes, "The Crimea and Transcaucasia", published in 1875, has a permanent value as a mine of curious information and an accurate description of Transcaucasia at that date'.<sup>7</sup> Among the well-known travellers to report on Garni, J. Chardin, R. Ker Porter and Dubois de Montpereux,<sup>8</sup> we must now add the name Captain J. Buchan Telfer.

In his book *The Crimea and Transcaucasia*, in the section on the 'Ruins

at Bash-Gharny' he provides this informative account:

To get to the ruins of Kharny, which are to the south west of the village, I passed under an arch of comparatively modern construction to the venerable remains that mark the limits of the 'fortress', a ponderous wall of massive squares of grey lava, rent asunder and displaced in a singular manner from its foundations by some violent disturbance of nature. Following a track that leads to the left, we saw some large capitals and other remains lying about, and farther on came to an imposing but melancholy sight – a large heap of hewn and sculptured grey porphyry piled in utter confusion; a sore spectacle indeed, and as complete a chaos as it is possible to conceive. Moses Chorenese, the Armenian chronicler of the fifth century, relates that Tiridates king of Armenia, who constructed the fortress of Kharny which became his favourite residence, caused a handsome palace to be erected within it for his sister Khosorvidoukhd, and that an inscription in Greek characters recorded the dedication. But it is a temple rather than a palace that is indicated by these superb remains; and their Grecian style of architecture may have been due to a desire on the part of the monarch to introduce a taste for higher art among his people, after his return from a lengthened residence abroad. The edifice, which had its front to the south, probably inclined towards the east in its fall; and although the structure would appear to have collapsed within the limits of its own foundations, each fragment lies far removed from its original annex, for portions of the entablature, of the pediment, of cornices, the bases, &c., lie tumbled in marvellous disorder; destruction of which there is no record, and that could only have been effected by an earthquake. The fortress, or some part of it, probably existed in the ninth century, for in

allusion to the death of the patriarch Mashtots, AD 897, an Armenian historian of the thirteenth century states that he was interred in the cemetery of Kharny, in front of the marvellous throne of Tiridates.<sup>9</sup>

Nowhere in the text does the author record the removal of the frieze. A line drawing of the ornamental sculpture, including the picture of one of the lions' friezes, is provided to illustrate the above passage. The only direct allusion to the frieze is found in a passing remark Captain Buchan makes in a lecture 'Armenia and its people' he gave on Tuesday 5 May 1891 and published in the *Journal of the Society of Arts*. Speaking of the need for Britain to see enforced the observance, by the apparently helpless or procrastinating Turk, of the Article in the Berlin Treaty of 1878, he sets himself the task of presenting a concise description of the history of Armenia, its resources, their church, religious tendencies, customs, and aspirations. Among the imposing edifices he mentions the ruins of Garni. This is what he says:

After that Tiridates had returned from abroad, and ascended the throne of his ancestors, he invited a company of Grecian workmen to his dominion, possibly from a desire to introduce a taste for higher art among his people; and he employed them to construct a residence for his favourite sister at a place now called Bash Gharny, near his capital. I should say it was a temple, rather than a palace, of the Ionic order, as indicated by its superb remains. It probably owes its complete destruction to an earthquake, of which, however, there appears to be no record, while there is evidence. A lion's face, portion of the frieze of grey porphyry, of which the entire edifice was constructed, is on the table before you. I am not aware of the existence in any other part of Armenia of another example of Grecian architecture, as being erected by the Armenians themselves. I chanced to converse with several Greeks – the Armenians call



them Berzen at a colony near Nahitchevan, who quite believed themselves to be the descendants of those who built the Takht Dertad, 'throne of Tiridates,' as the natives call the shapeless mass of gigantic porphyry blocks.<sup>10</sup>

#### Date of Construction

After the cessation of hostilities with Rome in AD 63, Rome agreed to appoint a member of the Arsacid house to the throne of Armenia. Trdat I went to Rome to receive his crown from Emperor Nero. In 66 he reached Italy and was received at Naples by Nero to whom he paid homage and who organized gladiatorial games in his honour. The coronation took place in Rome, which had been entirely 'decorated with lights and garlands'. Trdat acknowledged vassality in these terms: 'Master ... I have come to thee, my god, to worship thee as I do Mithras. The destiny thou spinnest for me shall be mine, for thou art my Fortune and my Fate' (*Dio*, LXII; vol. VIII, pp. 142-3). At Trdat's departure, Nero presented him with 2,000,000 sesterces and, more important, with permission to rebuild the destroyed capital of Artashat. Trdat I raised the capital again with the help of artisans given to him by Nero; and renamed it Neronian in honour of the emperor (*Dio*, LXII; vol. VIII, pp. 146-7). The famous Greek inscription found in Garni in 1945 by Martiros Saryan and P. Davt'yan refers to Trdat as 'the Sun' and as 'supreme ruler of Greater Armenia'. Movses Khorenatsi had knowledge of this inscription, which states:

About that time [i.e. after 325] Trdat completed the construction of the fortress of Garni in hard and dressed blocks of stone cemented with iron [clamps] and lead. Inside for his sister Khosrovidukht, he built a summer residence with towers and wonderful carvings in high relief. And he composed in her memory an inscription in the Greek script. (Movses Khorenatsi, II, 90, p. 247)

Movses Khorenatsi attributes the construction to Trdat III 'the Great'. The Armenian Arsacid (Arshakuni) dynasty has four kings with the same name. Trdat I (62/66 c. 98), Trdat II (c. 216-52), Trdat III (287-98, ruled in western Armenia) and Trdat IV the Great (298/299 c. 330).<sup>11</sup> The Greek inscription has attracted much discussion and comment, the last being the proposal of Professor F. Feydit,<sup>12</sup> who also attributed it to Trdat III, the Christian king. This decipherment was accepted by M.-L. Chaumont, who included it in her study.<sup>13</sup> Revd Poghos Ananian in his study<sup>14</sup> confirms that when Movses saw the Greek inscription it was already damaged. He reconstructs the Greek inscription to read: 'The Sun God Tiridates, uncontested king of Great Armenia built the temple and the impregnable fortress in the eleventh year of his reign, when Mennicay was hazarapet [thousander, chiliarch] and Amateteay was sparapet [general, commander].' The rest of the inscription offers thanks to the builders who carried out the work. Movses attributes these building activities to Trdat III. In the inscription the name 'Khosrovidukht' does not occur; instead is the word 'queen', which Movses takes to be a reference to the king's sister Khosrovidoukht. But although both these attributions are wrong, he had seen the inscription, for he makes a very accurate observation on the building when he distinguishes the 'fortress' and the 'pagan temple' but calls it 'summer residence' for in his eyes Tiridates the Christian king could not be seen to associate himself with pagan monuments and this explains why it was not destroyed like all the other pagan monuments. But his description of the building matches that of the temple. The existence of the 'fortified royal stronghold called Garni' (Bk III, viii) was known to P'awstos Buzand and to Eghishe, who tells us that it was destroyed by the Persians in 451 (Ch. III, pp. 119, 130). The inscription belongs to King Trdat I, who came to Armenia in AD 66, was crowned by Emperor Nero in AD 77 as the 'uncontested

king of Great Armenia', and in the 'eleventh year of his reign' restored the fortress and built the temple. Since the repairs to the earliest structure are of Roman dry-wall construction with the use of lead and iron clamps as opposed to mortar, it is further evidence that the repairs were made by Trdat I. According to R.D. Wilkinson, 'the stylistic analysis leads to the conclusion that the Ionic building at Garni was erected some time in the second half of the 2nd century AD' when Roman influence was particularly strong in Armenia.<sup>15</sup>

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## 2 Lintel with Cross and Harvest Scene

Tufa stone; 76 × 107 cm  
Dvin, 5–6th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 2604/5

The left part of a lintel from an unknown church in Dvin, in which the usual symbolic representation of paradise with the cross between stags, palm trees and a vine scroll has been transformed into a genre scene. Within the vine scroll that frames the 'Latin' cross on either side, a woman is depicted gathering grapes, and another, larger female figure carries a basket on her shoulder. In early Christian art, the classical portrayal of *putti* harvesting grapes, with its allusions to 'the vineyards of the Lord', had been adopted. These *putti* were later replaced by youths. The artist has in this composition been influenced by everyday life and has reproduced a scene that he undoubtedly saw often enough in a region where vineyards were plentiful. In a desire to fill the entire background the sculptor has enlarged, out of proportion, the leaves of the vine and the clusters of grapes. This so-called *horror vacui* is one of the characteristic traits of Armenian art and, indeed, of all Near Eastern sculpture.

Nersessian, *Der. Armenian Art*, 53–5; Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, 62; Thierry, *Armenian Art*, 61.

## 3 Capital with Bust of Christ in a Medallion on the Upper Arm of the Cross

Tufa stone; 61 × 35 × 30 cm, wt 55 kg  
Dvin, 5th–6th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 2604/7

An exceptional scene is represented on this broken *stelae* capital from Dvin. On the front of the capital, a bust of Christ with flowing hair, set in a medallion, rests on the horizontal arms of the cross, which is flanked by two angels. On the side of the capital, the fore-quarters of a horse, a monster's head beneath its right hoof, and the rider's hand holding the bridle, are visible.

This composition is exceptional, not only in Armenian art but in Christian art as a whole. The bust of Christ in an aureole at the top of the cross is frequently represented on *ampullae* from the Holy Land but nearly always in

scenes of the Crucifixion depicting the two thieves as well. On the mosaic of the apse of San Stefano Rotondo, in Rome (7th century), the bust of Christ is shown above the jewelled cross with St Primus and St Felician on either side. In this composition the angels encircle the 'Cross of Life' represented at the centre of a mandorla spangled with stars, and the theme of this composition is the adoration of the cross. The sculpture on the side of the capital represents St George or St Theodore slaying the dragon. The iconography of this fragment of sculpture provides firm evidence of ties with Palestinian iconography.

Nersessian, *Der. Armenian Art*, 52–3; Thierry, *Armenian Art*, 77–8; Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, 63; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, 165; Mutafian, *Roma Armenia*, 77; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, No. 2, 209.



3



#### 4 Capital with Bas-relief of Virgin and Child

Tufa stone; 35 × 44 × 47 cm  
Dvin, 5th–7th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 2604/3

The capital from the pagan temple of Garni (Cat. 1), typically Roman, both in style and technique, gave way to the Byzantine or Syrian types found in the capitals of Zwart'nots built by Catholicos Nerses III, the 'Builder' (641–62). The majestic eagles, and the rendering in high relief of the Ionic volutes which surmount the basket capitals in the church of Dvin in the seventh century, are transformed into interlacing circles carved in low relief.

This small capital, one of two found in Dvin, has only one of its four sides decorated. The Virgin, represented in three-quarters view, with the Christ Child blessing and holding a scroll seated on her left knee, is set in a medallion. The folds of the Virgin's cloak are in high relief around the head, whereas those of the cloak, as well as of Jesus's tunic, are simply suggested by grooves. The features are heavy.

Nersessian, *Der, Armenian Art*, 52; Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, 62; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, 166; Mutafian, *Roma Armenia*, 77; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, No. 1, 209.

#### 5 Sculpture of Masons

Tufa stone; 50 × 45 cm  
Cathedral of Zwart'nots, 641–62  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 1661

The ruins of the cathedral church dedicated to the *Zwart'unk'* (Angels), built by Catholicos Nerses III, the 'Builder' (641–62), are found two miles south-east of Ējmiadsin in the Ararat plain. The cathedral collapsed in the tenth century, probably during an earthquake. The ruins were excavated between 1900 and 1907, and strengthened between 1958 and 1967.

The palatine cathedral, the patriarchal seat and martyrion of the national saint, St Gregory, was exceptional because of the abundance and artistic quality of its sculptured decorations. The columns of the apses had composite Ionic–Armenian capitals with over-baskets, while the capitals of the columns behind the central pillars had eagles with outspread wings. The Greek monogram of the catholicos Nerses is inscribed on a medallion between the Ionic volutes, and the *coussinet* is itself embellished with a lozenge pattern.

Exceptionally, at Zwart'nots the secular figures set in the spandrels of the arches do not represent the founder of the church. Masons and sculptors, holding building tools, were represented in the spandrels, decorated with pairs of palms, vine scrolls and pomegranate branches.

Nersessian, *Der, Armenian Art*, 51; Thierry, *Armenian Art*, 594–5; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, 166.



#### 6 An Eagle Attacking a Bird

Tufa stone  
Hovhanavank', Ayrarat province, 13th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 2935

In spite of the high taxes during the Mongol domination, Armenian feudal families were quite wealthy and used some of their riches to endow the churches and monasteries. The Vatchutians, vassals of the Zak'arians, to whom the latter had given the region of Ashtarak, founded two monasteries there: Saghmosavank' in 1213, and Hovhanavank' between 1216 and 1261.

The main church and the Zhamatun from which this sculpture comes was built between 1216 and 1221 on the edge of the Kasagh gorge, in the village of Hovhanavank', Ashtarak district of Ayrarat province. The monastery flourished again in the seventeenth century.

The bas-relief showing an eagle attacking a dove, identical to a sculpture at T'anahat (1279), was placed on the east façade. The church of St Stephen in T'anahat has several carvings of animals: a bird of prey attacking a dove, two doves drinking from a cup, head of an ox, a lion attacking an ox, an eagle seizing a ram in its claws, and a lion's head. These sculptures are similar in style and composition to the relief on the south façade of the Holy Cross Church at Aght'amar, built in 915–21.

Thierry, *Armenian Art*, 582, 591; Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, 64.



7  
**Bas-relief of Prince Amir Hasan  
 on Horseback, Hunting**

Stone; 140 × 90 cm

Spitakavor Astuadsadsin (White Virgin),  
 Eghegnadzor, 1321

SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 1320, 1321, 1322

Monumental sculpture reached another stage of its development in the first half of the fourteenth century. In the Church of the Blessed Virgin at Areni, built in 1321 by Bishop Yovhannes Ōrbelian under the supervision of Momik, the Virgin and Child enthroned adorns the tympanum above the doors and the symbols of the Evangelists are carved on the pendentives

of the dome. A more lavish group of sculptures decorates the Church of the Spitakavor Astuadsadsin (White Virgin) built in 1321 on the Prōshian estate north-east of Areni in Eghegnadzor district of Vayots Dzor. The dedication to the 'White Virgin' is explained by the presence of an icon in which the Virgin was wearing a white drape.

Under the gable on the north façade, Eatchi Prōshian, who founded the church, is shown seated, and his son Amir Hasan II, who also took part in the founding, stands next to him. This type of founder portrait is not seen elsewhere.

Amir Hasan is represented a second time in this sculpture on horseback,

turning round to shoot the arrow that has pierced the neck of a doe carved on a second stone. The portrait of the founder as huntsman is an iconographic type common to Islamic art. Amir Hasan's costume, a long tunic drawn in at the waist by a belt decorated with stones, along with a three-pointed cap with two ribbons, is the same as that of the Mongol princes of the fourteenth century. The face itself, with heavy jowls and slightly slanting eyes, also recalls that of the Mongols.

Nersessian, *Der. Armenian Art*, 190; Thierry, *Armenian Art*, 204–5, 578; Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, 65; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, 170; Mutafian, *Roma Armenia*, 153.

8

**Fragment from an Armenian Stone Cross: Christ Enthroned**

Stone: 64 × 89 cm

Eghegnadzor, 13th century

SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 100.

This sculpture is a section of a stone cross made for Prince P̄rosh (1225–84) of the powerful P̄roshian family whose coat of arms – an ox's head with a ring to which two lions are attached and in the centre an eagle holding a lamb between his claws is carved at the entrance of the north-east gavit of the monastery of Geghard, finished in 1283. The P̄roshians and the Ōrbelians were in fierce political as well as cultural competition, a situation which stimulated an impressive number of architectural commissions.

The upper part of the cross depicts a highly developed iconographic theme of Christ Enthroned (the Deesis). Two angels, in differing poses, frame the central Deesis group; on the left an apostle is shown standing and there must have been another on the right. The Evangelist Matthew is seated lower down on the left, with one hand on his knees and the other on a book which was no doubt on a lectern, a pose typical of evangelist portraits in manuscripts. This iconographic type of the Evangelist shown seated, writing or meditating, does not figure on any other stone cross. Sometimes the twelve Apostles are represented, but always standing.

Nersessian, *Der, Armenian Art*, 195; Bochum Museum. *Armenien*, 172; Mutafian, *Roma Armenia*, 153.



8



8 detail



9  
**Bas-relief with an Eagle  
 representing the Coat of Arms of  
 Grigor Pahlavuni (c. 990–1058)**

Tufa stone; 89 × 56 cm

The Monastery of Ketcharis, Dsaghkadzor,  
 c. 1200

SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 913

Grigor Pahlavuni, prince of Bdjni, better known by his Byzantine title, Gregory Magistros, was a man of wide culture, the translator of the *Elements* of Euclid and two dialogues of Plato, the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedo*. When the Bagratids gave the village of Dsaghkadzor in the Hrazdan district to the Pahlavuni family in the tenth century, the illustrious prince Gregory Magistros founded the complex of the Ketcharis monastery and built the church of St Gregory.

The frontal figure of an eagle, wings spread and holding prey in its claws, represents the family's coat of arms.

Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, 64.

## STELAE

These funerary *stelae* form a rich and extremely interesting group of sculptures. More than seventy, for the most part in fragmentary condition, have been discovered in necropolises or near to ancient churches in thirty different localities scattered over the southern and eastern provinces of Armenia. We have in these *stelae* a very widespread type of monument, erected between the triumph of Christianity and the Arab conquest. Although their sizes and shapes vary greatly, we can distinguish three main types: septentional, meridional and memorial *stelae*.

Carved on the four faces of the pillars and of the bases are individual figures of Christ, saints and angels; the Virgin alone with the Christ Child or between two angels; scenes from the Old and New Testaments; large crosses sometimes framed by leaves; and a variety of floral and geometric ornaments. The biblical scenes – Daniel in the lions' den, the sacrifice of Isaac, the three Jewish youths in the fiery furnace – belong to the repertory of early Christian funerary art. More interesting are the representations of a purely national character, inspired by the story of the conversion of King Trdat. Often the king is portrayed with a pig's head, or as a wild boar, representing the form he assumed during his attacks of lycanthropy.

## 10

### Stele depicting the Virgin and Child, Saints, Cynocephalus

Tufa stone

Kharabavank', Mount Aragads, 7th century  
 SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 830

The figures adorning the *stelae* from Kharabavank' are all the same height. The Virgin and Child occupy the principal face; on the other three faces appear successively: a nimbed man next to a labarum, a cynocephalus with hands clasped and head turned toward the next figure, and a man dressed in a long tunic and cloak. The labarum sculpted on the *stela* resembles the one shown on coins dating from the reign of Constantine, but its proximity to a nimbed figure is



10 front

inexplicable. The labarum alone appears on one face of the *stèle* at Haritch (see Cat. 11); as the instrument of Constantine's victory, it replaces the cross found on other *stelae*.

The man with the head of a pig or a boar appears quite frequently, sometimes dressed in contemporary costume, sometimes nimbed and holding a large cross. Even if some of these figures, the one at Ödzun for instance, do represent King Trdat, this interpretation does not apply either to the nimbed character or to the cynocephalus on the Kharabavank' *stèle*. The precise meaning of these images is unknown to us.

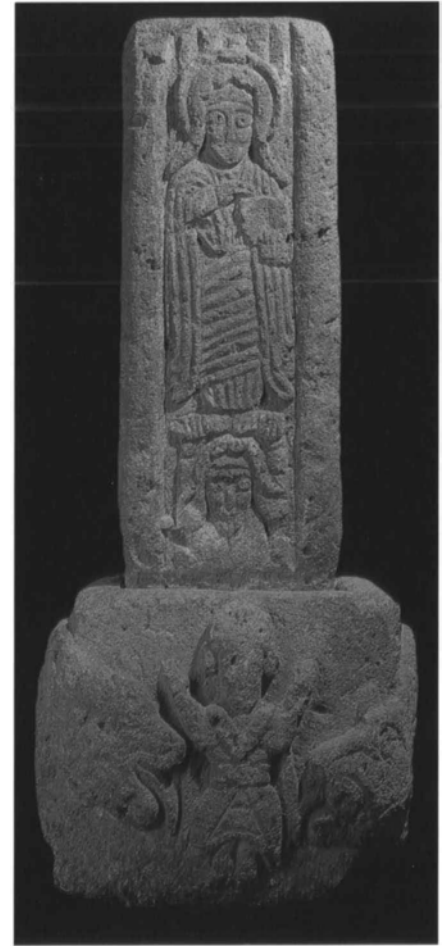
Hovsep'ian, *Abp. Nyut'er*, III, 61-2; Azaryan, *Vugh mijnadaryan haykakan k'andake'*, 92-115; Mnatsakanyan, 'The memorial art of Armenia of the

9th-14th centuries', in Ieni, ed., *Atti del terzo simposio internazionale di arte Armena*, 419-32; Nersessian, *Der. The Armenians*, 122-3; *Armenian Art*, 59-66; Thierry, *Armenian Art*, 75-9.

### 11 Stele depicting Daniel in the Lions' Den

Tufa stone; 150 × 40 × 40 cm  
Haritch, 7th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 870

In contrast to the Kharabavank' *stèle*, each of the sides of the *stèle* from Haritch bears a different decoration. Christ, conferring a blessing and holding the Gospel, is shown on the front side of the *stèle*. On the left side, two figures of different sizes may be seen: the one at the top wears a tunic and a cloak with dangling sleeves; the figure at the bottom is shown praying. The scene of Daniel (Daniel 6: 17) between the lions sculpted on base of this *stèle* is badly adapted to its support: the outsize bodies of the two animals extend around the sides.



11



10 rear



11 detail

## KHATCHK'ARS

The khatchk'ar is considered as being among the most original manifestations of the culture and religious piety of the Armenians. The cross, 'sign' of God or 'wood' of life, remains the major decorative motif, whence the name: *khatch* = cross and *k'ar* = stone. A great number of examples, spread over the period from the ninth to eighteenth centuries, are to be seen in Armenia. Inscriptions generally indicate the date and the name of the person in whose memory the funerary stone was erected. Khatchk'ars stand foremost as prayers for the salvation of the soul or souls of the departed in whose memory they are erected. The most common inscription will record: 'This cross was erected to intercede with God for [the salvation of the soul of] A..., and of his parents'. Others, occasionally carved on the back of *stelae*, recall historic or other events: military victories or, more often, the founding of a church or monastery. The funerary *stelae* of abbots and of members of feudal families are sometimes placed on high pedestals or above their mausolea. Quite often, these *stelae* are embedded in the walls of churches or carved around monasteries, as at Geghard.

Although the form, size and ornamental repertoire of the khatchk'ar have varied considerably in the course of its existence, depending on the time and place of its making, as well as on its function, the characteristic iconographic feature, the cross, remained substantially unchanged in its essential lines. Leaving aside the earlier examples, in which the symbol is heavily schematized, the prevalent design of the cross can, despite many calligraphic variables and stylization, be traced back to the form of the *crux ansata*, which has arms that broaden out at the ends and coils at the edges. In most cases, the cross is of the 'winged' type, that is, it has leaves sprouting at the base and symmetrically at its sides. In accordance with

its symbolic implications, which make reference to the Tree of Life, the cross also bears fruit, having sinuous shoots that branch off from the extremities and carry various schematized bunches of grapes or pines. Normally, the cross rests either on a *voussoir*, generally terraced and symbolizing Golgotha, or on a decorated disc, a 'rosette', intended as an allusion to the fertile seed whence sprouts the stem.

The absolute peak of formal perfection and technique in the art of the khatchk'ar seems to have been reached from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. The khatchk'ar of Grigor P'roshian, dated 1233, is an excellent example of 'openwork' sculpture, and of the varied ornamentation typical of the period. A different motif is carved inside each one of the polygons of the frame and, in three places, there is a bird. Even the ornaments of the two 'leaves' which frame the lower arms of the cross are not the same. But this variety does not spoil the unity of the whole. The Deesis decorates the entablature, and this iconographic theme is more highly developed in the khatchk'ar of Prince P'rosh. Openwork sculpture techniques reached their high point in the khatchk'ar carved in 1308 by Momik, the architect and sculptor of the church at Areni. The stone seems to be covered with fine lace; there is not a flaw in it. The design is simple, with floral ornamentation and linear interlaces. Multifoil arcades frame the three figures of the Deesis. In another group of thirteenth-century khatchk'ars, known as the 'Amenap'rkitch' or 'Saviour of All', the Crucifixion takes up the entire surface of the *stèle*. The first known example is one that Abbot Hovhannes of Haghbat commissioned in 1273 or that carved by Mamikon in 1279 for his parents Grigor and Mamakan, now at Êjmiadsin.

Azarian, *L'arte dei khatchk'ar* (The art of khatchk'ars) (Documents of Armenian Architecture 2) (Milano, 1969); Jeni, 'The figurative arts and the khatchk'ar' in *The Armenians*, Alpagò ed. 261-4; Nersessian, *Der. Armenian Art*, 192-6; Thierry, *Armenian Art*, 123-4 and 205-7; Aleksidze, 'The Khatchkars and inscriptions in the Kvakhvrehli cave-complex', *Atti del terzo simposio internazionale di arte armena*, 29-32.



12

12

### Inscribed Khatchk'ar

Basalt stone; 90 × 25 × 165 cm; wt 800 kg  
Noraduz, 991

SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 1317

*Inscription:* In the Armenian era 440 [991] during the reign of King Gagik I [989-1020], I Kharib erected [this stone cross] for the [soul] of holy K'ristap'or, remember me.

The cross with two big leaves rising from the base is the main ornamentation, standing on a short pole. The borders are filled with linear designs, with a rosette at the base with the four-line inscription.

Musheghyan, *Hatkanshakan tsutsak*, Nr 3. 50-51; Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, 66; C. Mutafian, *Roma Armenia*, 77.

13

### Cruciform Khatchk'ar

Tufa stone; 107 × 80 cm

The Church of the Holy Apostles, Sewan, 1448  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 1658

From the monastic complex on the north-west shore of Lake Sewan, formerly an





#### 14 Khatchk'ar of Aputayli

Tufa stone; 1.75 × 0.92 × 0.31 m  
Sewan, Noraduz Cemetery, 1225  
The British Museum, M&IA 1977, 5 5, 1

This Armenian stone cross was given to the British Museum by His Holiness Vazgen I, Catholicos of All Armenians (1908–94; 1955–94), after being lent to the British Library's 'The Christian Orient'

exhibition (1978). This is the first Armenian khatchk'ar to enter a major public collection in the British Isles.

*Inscription* (on the left edge): In the Armenian era 674 [1225]. God have mercy on Aputayli. Amen.

Rectangular with slight curve towards the front face with small quarter-spherical projections on the right and left edges in



island, 6561 feet above sea level, and part of the province of Siunik', two churches have survived. The Church of the Holy Mother of God (Theotokos) and the Holy Apostles, built in 874, at the beginning of the post-Arabic period by Catholicos Mashtots, and commissioned by Princess Mariam Bagratid, wife of Vasak of Siunik'.

*Inscription:* He is the saviour of the world and the hope of the faithful, Those who prostrate [before it] remember in their prayers the priest Karapet 897 [1448] Grigor the builder.

This unusual cruciform khatchk'ar is from the Holy Apostles Church. It shows Christ crucified, covering the entire surface of the *stèle*. At the foot of the crucifix the head of Adam is clearly depicted. These were known as *Amenap'rkitch* (Saviour of All) crosses, the iconographic theme modelled on the famous wood panel showing the Descent from the Cross given by Gregory Magistros to the church of Havuts T'ar' in 1031, now in the Treasury of the Holy See of Eĵmiadsin.

Musheghyan, *Hatkanshakan tsutsak*, Nr 8, 53;  
*Mnatsakanyan, Sewan* (Documents of Armenian Architecture 18), 32; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, 173.

a corresponding position, which act as holds when embedded into walls.

The front shows a 'leaved cross' above two smaller plain crosses, bordered on each side by a row of five rectangular panels, all but one of which are filled with interlace; the exception is the panel in the top left-hand corner, which contains a cross analogous to those in the lower register of the central field. Across the top of the face runs a frieze of interlocking circles and semi-circles surmounted by a row of double half-palmettes. From each of the cusped spandrels between the border panels and the frieze hangs a bunch of grapes, an arrangement giving the effect of an arch over the main cross. The flowering foot in C or S shapes, present in earlier khatchk'ars, evolved and became the tied-up flowering foot with a loop during the first quarter of the thirteenth century.

Azarian, *Haykakan khatchk'ar*, fig. 168; *The Christian Orient*, ed. Marrison, no. 110, pl. 19; West, 'A thirteenth century Armenian Khatchk'ar', 37-9, pls 1 and 2.

## 15

### Khatchk'ar from Vayots Dzor

Basalt; 138 × 70 × 22 cm

Siunik', Vayots Dzor, 12th-13th century  
Sec of Holy Ējmiadsin, Old Residence

The front shows a plain cross tied to a flowering foot on a three-step pedestal, with two plain crosses in the middle plane and three in a row in the above frieze. From each of the spandrels between the panels and the semi-circle arch over the main cross hang pomegranates. The cross has the minimum of ornamentation and represents 'The Glorification of the Cross' type found in many Armenian manuscripts. The projection at the base of the cross acts as holder when the cross is implanted into a pedestal in a free-standing position.

Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian Church*, Nos 79, 144; Pyhä risti: Armenian kirkon aarteita = The Holy Cross, *Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nos 81, 58 and 62; Megaron: *Treasures of Armenia*, Pl. I; Donabedian, L'École de sculpture Arménienne du Vayots-Dzor (XIII-XIVe siècle), *The Second International Symposium on Armenian Art*, vol. III, 129-40.



## MODELS OF CHURCHES

16  
Model of a Central Domed Church

Stone; 68 × 42 × 39 cm  
Sisian, 7th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 2858

17  
Model of a Church

Tufa stone; 40 × 33 × 33 cm  
Siwnik', 11–13th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 1157

18  
Model of a Church

Tufa stone; 54 × 32 × 27 cm  
Spitakavor, Eghgnadzor, 11–13th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 2859.

## Models of churches

Among the secular figures adorning the walls of Armenian churches the favourite are the donor portraits. A feature of these portraits is the presence of models of the churches which the donors hold in their outstretched hands, offering them to God. Such examples are found in the walls of the churches of St Gregory of Ani, Haghpat, Sanahin, Haritch, Aght'amar and others. The Church of the Holy Cross on the Island of Aght'amar, built between 915 and 921, has on the west façade the figure of King Gagik Ardrsruni holding a model of the church. The Church of St Gregory in Ani, built by King Gagik I (898–1020) had a full-standing figure of the king with outstretched hands holding a model of the church (now lost). The Church of Surb Nshan (Holy Sign) in Haghbat, completed in 991, has a plaque embedded high on the east façade representing Smbat and Gurgun, sons of King Ashot III, the two donors holding a model of the church. The bas-relief on the south façade of the



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cathedral at Dadivank', Artsakh, built in 1214, shows the princess offering the church in memory of her sons.

Cuneo, 'Les modèles en pierre', *RFA* VI (1969), 201–31, Plates LXXVIII–CXVIII.; Thierry, *Armenian Art*, 204; Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, 62; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, 167–8; Ieni, 'La Rappresentazione', *Atti del primo simposio internazionale di arte Armena* (Bergamo, 1975) (Venezia, 1978), 247–93; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nos 5, 6, 8, 209.



16



17

## METALWORKS

19

**Bronze Head of  
Aphrodite/Anahit**Bronze 35.5 × 31 × 23.6 cm,  
wt 10 kgProbably Asia Minor, middle of the 4th  
century BCAcquired in 1873 from Castellani  
British Museum, Department of Greek and  
Roman Antiquities Br. 266

This magnificent head, which has usually  
been interpreted as representing  
Aphrodite, is of heroic size, and evidently

belonged to a statue from which it has  
been torn away. Though the back of the  
head is considerably damaged, the face has  
fortunately escaped with little injury. On  
the front of the neck two faults in casting  
have been repaired by the insertion of  
strips of bronze and the bronze of the face  
shows signs of oxidization.

The hair is waved each side with two  
curls falling on the forehead, and gathered  
under a thick fillet, in which ornaments  
have been inserted; a ringlet hangs in front  
of each ear, and another on each side of the

neck. The mouth is slightly open; the eyes  
have been inlaid with precious stones or  
enamel.

With this head was found a left hand  
holding a fragment of drapery, which from  
the style and condition of the bronze  
appears to have belonged to this statue. It  
was therefore suggested that the original  
was a copy of the Cnidian Aphrodite of  
Praxiteles, in which the left hand held the  
drapery at her side, as in the statue in the  
Vatican. But it is now generally recognized  
that the head reflects the style of Scopas



19a

rather than that of Praxiteles, and the low  
broad forehead, the intensely gazing deep-  
set eyes, and the large heavy nose, are all  
characteristic of the strongly marked  
individuality of that sculptor's heads.  
Moreover, it is by no means certain that  
the head represents Aphrodite, and it has  
much in common with some of the  
effeminate fourth-century types of male  
deities, such as Apollo or Dionysos.

The style of the sculpture is  
characterized by largeness and simplicity,  
and the work may be assigned to the  
middle of the fourth century BC. Sir

Charles Newton writes of this head:

We have here one of those finely balanced types in which the ancient sculptor sought to blend superhuman majesty and superhuman faultlessness of proportion with a beauty so real and lifelike that the whole conception of the work is kept as it were within the pale of human sympathy, and the religious impression is enhanced, not impaired, by the sensuous charm. The first impression produced by this head is that of majestic godlike beauty, simple but not severe. It comes nearer to our conception of the work of a great master than any bronze yet discovered.

This bronze statue was found in Satala, now Sadagh, near Erzinjan in Armenia Minor. This place is notable as the site of the temple of the Armenian goddess Anahit (Persian Anahita) well known to classical authors such as Strabo, Plutarch and Tacitus, who call her the 'Persian Diana'. Anahit is mentioned by Armenian sources in connection with the famous temple at Erez – modern Erzinjan – in the province of Ekegheats (Acilisene), the site where this bronze head was found. Strabo testifies that Anahit was held in special honour by the Armenians and mentions the custom whereby the most prominent men consecrated their daughters to this temple. Agat'angeghos says that crowns and thick branches were offered to Anahit. Her statues at Erez and Ashtishat were made of gold. P'awstos Buzand speaks of a site dedicated to her on Lion Mountain near Erez, 'called the throne of Anahit'. Movses Khorenatsi refers to her by the name Artemis, the Greek goddess with whom she was identified, whose gilded bronze statue was brought to Armavir from Asia Minor by King Artashes and set up in Erez. Movses also mentions a statue of Artemis brought to Artashat from Bagaran. Agat'angeghos confirms what Strabo had said of Anahit, adding that she

had a special place in the affections of the Armenian people. She gives Armenia not only life, fertility and protection, but is also the glory of the Armenian race and its protector. She is the benefactor of all human nature and hence is regarded as mother. In more tangible terms, the great wealth showered upon her sanctuaries was because she was called 'golden mother, the golden-born goddess'. Agat'angeghos in his *History* of the conversion of Armenia to Christianity records that in the first year of his reign King Trdat went to the village of Erez in the province of Ekegheats, and visited the temple of Anahit to offer sacrifice there. The king ordered Gregory the Illuminator also to present to the altar of Anahit offerings of crowns and thick branches of trees. Gregory refused to worship the goddess Anahit, and was then thrown into the deep pit (Khor Virap). Gregory's survival in the prison for nearly fifteen years plays a decisive role in convincing the king of the superiority of Christianity. After the conversion of King Trdat, the images of Anahit throughout Armenia were destroyed. The pre-Christian pagan festival of Vardavar, 'the bearing of roses', celebrated in August and associated with Anahit, is now observed in conjunction with the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ, when in place of rose petals water is sprinkled on the congregation.

Ananikian, *Armenian Mythology*, 20–21; Afak'elyan, 'K'andakagordsui'yune Hin Hayastanum', *PBH*, 1 (1969), 43–68; Chaumont, 'Le culte de la deesse Anahita (Anahit) dans la religion des monaques d'Iran et d'Arménie au I<sup>er</sup> siècle de notre ère', *JA* 253 (1965), 167–181; Donabedian, 'La sculpture architecturale dans l'Arménie préarabe: rapports extérieurs', *Atti del quinto simposio internazionale di arte armena* (1988), 125–45; Fetvajian, 'British Museum-i meç' [The Greek bronze statue in the British Museum 'said' to have been found in Satala, in Armenia Minor], *Buzandecp* 1 (1934), 17–20; Walters, *Catalogue of the Bronzes, Greek, Roman, and Etruscan, in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum*, no. 266; Walters, *Select Bronzes, Greek, Roman, and Etruscan in the Department of Antiquities, Seventy three plates*, Pl. XIII; Wilkinson, 'The sculpture of ancient Armenia', *JASAS* 4 (1988–89), 213–32.

## COINS

20

### Tetradrachm of Tigran II 'The Great'

Silver, 95–56 BC

*Obverse*

Wt 15.91 gm; diam. 29 mm

British Museum Coins 7, Inv. No. RPK 4, p. 193, 245.4



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The obverse bears the portrait of Tigran the Great, in profile, beardless, facing to the right. He wears a five-pointed crown known as the Armenia tiara. This consists of a bonnet in the form of a truncated cone around which is wound the royal diadem decorated with a star and two eagles; the lappets of the bonnet fall over the shoulders. The head is carefully modelled.

*Reverse*

Wt 15.91 gm; diam. 29 mm

British Museum Coins 3, Inv. No. RPK 3, p. 193, 245.5

Stamped on the reverse is the Tyche of Antioch after the famous statue of Eutychides, a pupil of Lysippus on the Orontes, with the river flowing by her feet; Zeus Nikephoros; a standing Nike; Heracles leaning on his club. The inscription reads 'Basileos Tigranou'.

The reign of Tigran II (95–56 BC) was the most brilliant period in the history of the Artaxiad dynasty; his vast empire stretched from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean and from the Caucasus to Palestine and Cilicia. He took over from the Parthians the title 'King of Kings' and from the Seleucids that of 'God', 'the Divine', both of which appellations appear on his silver coinage, minted at Antioch. Tigran established his own mint, probably

at Tigranokerta, where Lucullus the Roman conqueror later took possession of 8000 talents of coined silver, equivalent to about ten million dollars.

Bedoukian, 'Gold forgeries of Tigranes the Great of Armenia', *Museum Notes: Notes and Monographs*, 1964, 303-7; Bedoukian, 'A coin of Tigranes the Great of Armenia struck in Commagene', *The Numismatic Chronicle*, X (1970), 19-22; *Armenian coins and medals. An exhibition from the collection of Dr Paul Z. Bedoukian*, New York, 1971; Bedoukian, *Coinage of the Artaxiads of Armenia*; Foss, 'The coinage of Tigranes the Great: problems and suggestions and a new find', *The Numismatic Chronicle Monographs*, 146 (1986), 19-66; Nersessian, 'Tigran II Meds ew Damaskosi dramahataranc', *HHH*, 19 (1999), 155-70.

## RELIQUARIES

21

### Reliquary of 'Holy Cross of Khotakerats'

Silver gilt and precious stones; 42 × 26.5 × 5 cm  
Siunik', Vayots Dzor, 1300

Ējmiadsin, Museum of the Catholicate,  
Inv. Nr 731

*Inscription:* Holy Cross of the Lord [you] be an helper to Eatchi [in the Armenian] era 749 [1300]

The historians Kirakos Gandzaketsi and Step'anos Ōrbelian testify that Prince Eatchi was a member of the Proshian princely family, whose name is first found in the inscription on the church of T'anahat, built during the catholicate of Hakob Klayetsi (1268-87). The date of his birth is put at around 1268-73. The last occurrence of his name is found in another inscription on the church of T'anahat, dated 1339. According to Ōrbelian, the monastery takes its name from the monks who survived on grass and vegetables (*khot-a-ker-ats* = grass eaters), where 'a fragment of the God fearing and wondrous Holy Nshan [Sign, i.e. Cross, called Khotakerats] was kept'.

According to the inscription the reliquary was made for Prince Eatchi in 1300, and is the best example of the silverwork of this period.

*Closed:* The top of the large panel with a bearded Christ as 'Pantocrator' occupies the place of honour. He is seated on a throne carried by the four apocalyptic beasts - man, eagle, bull and lion - as set out by John's Revelation (4: 7) and not the more common arrangement in Armenian art of that narrated in the Vision of Ezekiel. Christ wears a crossed nimbus, giving a sign of peace by his right hand in the Greco-Armenian style, while he holds in his left hand the Gospel inscribed with the words 'I am the Light of the world' in uncial script and in large capitals the letters YS K'R (Yisus K'ristos = Jesus Christ) on either side of his nimbus. Two angels at the top of the panel are seen bending their flabella down towards Christ.



21 closed



21 open

The left door has the full-frontal image of St Gregory dressed in Byzantine-style episcopal vestments, head uncovered, blessing with the right hand in Latin style and in his left hand he holds a Gospel. Above the nimbus in a roundel is the inscription 'S Grigor' (St Gregory). The right door has the full-frontal standing figure of St John the Baptist, whose name is also inscribed above his head in a roundel: 'Sb. Yvnes' (St John). As in Byzantine, so also in Armenian art the figure of St John was characteristic and with minor alterations is repeated throughout the centuries. St John is presented wearing a short tunic up to his ankles, short-sleeved shirt with eastern-style colours, barefoot as if standing in water, with long hair. He has a handkerchief hanging from his belt on which he has his left hand, while blessing with the right. On the narrow side panels, the Virgin on the left and St John the Evangelist on the right are shown on a smaller scale. Although separated from the central cross, these two figures evoke the Crucifixion scene. The names 'Astuadsadsin' (Theotokos) and Yovhancs (John) are inscribed just above their heads.

The picture below divides into three sections. In the middle of the panel is the bust figure of Prince Eatchi with his hands raised in prayer and on his right are the busts of Peter and Paul. Both portraits reproduce the standard imagery of these two apostles found in Christian sculpture and miniature painting: Peter with short and round beard, while Paul is bald with a long beard, holding a Gospel and blessing. The inscription in two lines fills the area separating the figures.

*Open:* A large jewelled cross fills the panel with a finely chased palmette scroll framing it. Other palmettes are engraved in the medallion which surrounds the arms of the cross. At the bottom of the cross the seated harts symbolize, according to the words of the psalmist, 'As a deer longs for running waters, so longs my soul for you, my God' (41: 1-20). Artistically the most remarkable are the delicate, expressive full figures of the archangels Gabriel and

Michael on the inner sides of the door leaves.

The elongated proportions of the figures, especially of the angels, and the graceful poses and delicacy of line of this reliquary contrast with that of stone sculptures. This difference is due primarily to the silversmiths' techniques and does not signal a different iconography. Like the sculptors, for instance Momik at Areni, the artist was anxious to adapt the figures to the object. On the leaves, one of the angel's wings fits into the rectangular section while the other, which is drooping, partly covers his body by following the vertical line of the edge. The arrangement of the other angels' wings is a further example. The iconographic type of Christ enthroned with the four symbols repeats that shown at the top of certain khatchk'ars and in the tympanum of the churches. This 'gem of Armenian silverwork' makes the loss of most of the silver objects all the more regrettable.

Hovsep'ian, *Nyul'er*, vol. 1, figs 7-8, 103-113; Hakobyan, *Mijnaduryan Hayastani*, Pl. VIII and VIIIa, 46-8; Arak'elyan, *K'aghak'neré*, Pl. XXII-XXIII, 175-7; Nersessian, *Armenian Art*, fig. 158, 200-205; Ter Ghevondyan, 'Haykakan ardsat'a gordsut'yan arvesti goharé', *Ējmiadsin* 8-9 (1964), 28-34; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian Church*, Nr 6, 38-9; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 6, 32; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 2, 154; Mutafian, *Roma Armenia*, Nr VI, 24, 153.

## 22

### Reliquary of the Apostle St Bartholomew

Silver and wood; 24.5 × 17.5 × 5 cm  
Van, 10th century; restored in 1443  
Ējmiadsin, Museum of the Catholicate,  
Inv. Nr 96

The reliquary has two doors each measuring 22.5 × 7.5 cm which have been fixed to the wooden frame by two hinges on either side. In the present state the doors do not open. Inside each of the leaves there are engraved and chased figures of two apostles; the figure on the left is probably that of the Apostle Peter, although the name at the side of his head is missing. The figure is severely damaged and hard to recognize. The position of his



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left hand suggests that he was holding a key which is now missing. The figure on the right is that of St Paul, whose name 'Pawghos', engraved in uncials on the side of his head, is clearly visible. Above the heads of the apostles the letters ... RD ... GHI ... ME have been preserved which, when restored, should spell the name [Ba]rd[u]ghime[os], whose relics the reliquary is said to have contained. Below the feet of the apostles are the remains of another name: BA and MVOR.

On the back of the frame is the following inscription: 'This holy staff [gavazan] of the Apostle Bartholomew was restored in Astapat by vardapet Ghubat'shah and son K'ekhwi in memory of all the workers. Amen. And the sinful in the Armenian era 892 [1443]. K.E. Karapet'. The name Ghubat' in the inscription is found in a manuscript colophon dated 1490. The place Astapat is a small village on the banks of the river Arax, where two monasteries were located: the Monastery of St Vardan, built in 1655 and of St Step'anos, first mentioned in literary sources in 976.

The garments of the two apostles resemble the sculptures of the two apostles on the Church of the Holy Cross at Aght'amar (914-21). All the archaeological evidence suggests that the two silver

leaves (0.5 cm thick) contained the figures of the Apostles Peter and Paul and were originally part of manuscript covers, which have been reused to make up this reliquary, filling the missing sections with leaf and borders of silver of 3 cm thickness.

Hakobyan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, Pl. VIIa/4, 42; Añak'elyan, *K'aghak'nerè*, Pl. XXI, 175; Ter Ghevondyan, 'Haykakan ardat'ya', 46–8; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian Church*, Nr 8, Pl. 8; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 8, Pl. 8; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 1, 153.

23

### Reliquary of St Step'anos

Silver and gold on wood; 31 × 19.5 × 3 cm

10th century; restored in 1302

Ējmiadzin, Museum of the Catholicate,

Inv. Nr 146

In the centre of the top panel Christ is depicted seated on a throne with a cross-shaped nimbus and holding a book in his right hand. The tops of the throne's rests are decorated with oval-shaped carvings bearing the sign of the cross. The letters TR ADS (Ter Astuads = Lord God) are engraved in uncials on either side of his halo. A cherub and a seraph on either side of the throne are seen bending their flabella down towards Christ. Below Christ's throne, there is a panel with two leaves held together by hinges (measuring 14 × 6.5 cm). On the left and right margins of the frame are the standing figures facing each other of the Apostles Paul and Peter. Paul is shown with a short pointed beard, bald head, and a long and wide tunic covering his feet. His name P[o]ghos (Paul) is engraved in large uncials on the side of his head. He is holding a book in one hand and blessing with the other. St Peter on the left has a short but full beard, with long and curly hair. He is a much more youthful figure, holding in his hand a single key, an obvious allusion to the text, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 16: 19) and blessing with the other. The central panel, which is encased in a rope-pattern frame, has the full-frontal figure of St Stephen 'the Deacon' holding a censer in his right



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and a chalice in his left hand. He is wearing a long tunic with a belt tied in a bow in front and, thrown over his right shoulder, the deacon's stole decorated with crosses. The engraving on either side of his head TEP'ANOS should be restored to STEP'ANOS. An oval-shaped glass stone covers the lower part of his tunic, his feet just visible from below. This must have been placed there later when the reliquary was restored. In the lower left margin is placed the figure of a youth, right hand raised above his head holding something, and bending slightly forward. The remaining figures completing the lower panel are missing. The identity of the youthful figure has been debated. Some have suggested that it is the portrait of the donor, but he is too young and his costume is too simple. The patrons of such luxurious objects were wealthy princes who, according to Step'anos Ōrbelian, 'gave to be made the splendid *paharan* [box] with gold and silver in the shape of a rectangle, beautifully ornamented with double doors'. Perhaps the completed panel below represented the Stoning of St Stephen (Acts 8: 55–60), of which only the figure of the youth holding a stone in his raised hand and another in his left in readiness to throw has survived.

Behind the frame there is a silver leaf with the following inscription: 'Remember Christ God the craftsman and restorer of [this] Holy relic and Khoraz the goldsmith in the Armenian era 751 [1302]; in your prayers remember thy servant'.

Considering the iconographic content and style and the technical method, and the close affiliation with the censers of Ani and the sculptures on the Church of the Holy Cross at Aght'amar, the reliquary should be dated within the period tenth to eleventh century.

Hakobyan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, Pl. VIIa, 42–3; Añak'elyan, *K'aghak'nerè*, XXI, 174–5; Ter Ghevondyan, 'Haykakan ardat'ya', 48–50; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 9, 32.

24

### The Reliquary-Triptych of Skevra

Silver-gilt; 63.5 × 35.5 × 7.5 cm (closed)

Cilicia, Monastery of Skevra, 1293

St Petersburg, Hermitage, Inv. Nr AR 1572

The inscription records that the reliquary-triptych was made in 1293 at the Monastery of Skevra on the request of the abbot of the monastery Bishop Kostandin, and was given to the Church of the Holy Saviour of the monastery. The first description of the object was made by Astuadsatur P'ap'azian, an interpreter in Constantinople in 1828. The reliquary had been kept in the Dominican convent of Bosco-Marengo near the city of Alexandria in Piedmont (Italy), founded by Pope Pius V (1566–72). In 1853 the reliquary reappeared in Paris and in 1880 in the collection of the Russian A.P. Basilevski, whose collection the Hermitage acquired in 1884.

*Closed:* The reliquary has three leaves, two of which serve as doors, which are fixed to the base with two hinges on either side. The frame is made of wood covered with silver foil of 0.6 mm thickness. In its closed position the reliquary is rectangular. The decoration comprises six busts in medallions and two full-length frontal figures. The two central figures represent the principal saints of the Armenian

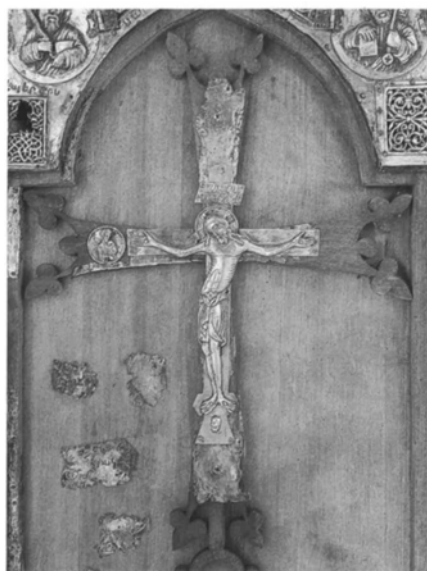


Church, St Gregory the Illuminator on the right and St Thaddeus, the Apostle of Armenia, on the left. St Gregory is vested in chasuble and omophorion embroidered with two crosses, and his head is covered, which is a symbol of his jurisdiction as supreme catholicos. St Thaddeus is in a three-quarter profile view, holding a book in one hand and blessing with the other. His costume is in a style characteristic of the apostles. The bust portraits of the Apostles Peter and Paul with their attributes are placed in medallions above the central arm of the cross. St Peter has a key and book in his hands, while Paul has a book and a sword. Two military saints occupy the medallions at the base. The portrait below St Gregory is that of St Eustratios and the portrait under St Thaddeus is that of St Vardan, the Armenian general of the Battle of Avarayr fought in 451. The names of all the figures are engraved next to them. The busts of the Apostles Paul and Peter in the top corners of the frame are later additions.

A dodecasyllabic poem around the band of the two doors includes the name of King Het'um in an invocation addressed to the Virgin Mary, 'Mother of the Incarnate Word' and to St John the Baptist and St Stephen asking for their intercession to Christ to preserve the monastery of Skevra and to give a long reign to King Het'um. The second verse contains the name of Kostandin in the form

of an acrostic, with the names of Sts Peter, Paul, Thaddeus and Gregory, requesting remission of sins and deliverance for the Armenian nation.

*Open:* In the centre is an elegant cross mounted on a pedestal, with arms which flare at their extremities and terminate at the corners in a large floral-shaped design. Christ is shown crucified. The inside of the open leaves displays the Annunciation scene according to the Gospel of St Luke. The Virgin Mary is represented seated, her head covered in a handkerchief and



24



24 detail

wearing rich garments. On her left is the standing figure of the angel Gabriel, with his feet above the ground. The salutation of the angel and the response of the Virgin Mary are inscribed inside the band of the leaves (Luke 1: 29 and 35 and Luke 1: 38). Above the leaves in medallions are the busts of St John the Baptist on the left, and St Stephen on the right holding a censer. The inscription accompanying them is 'Look, see the lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the World' (John 1: 29) and for Stephen 'I can see heaven thrown open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God' (Acts 8: 56). Below on the left is the portrait of King David, inscribed with the words 'He is your master, bow down to him' (Psalm 55: 11) and on the right is the figure of King Het'um in kneeling position, with his hands held in prayer. The king is presented in his plain and simple monk's clothing. The inscription round the rim of the circle reads 'Het'um, king of the Armenians'.

*Borders of the central frame:* There are medallions with the bust portraits of eighteen figures; with their names inscribed, in the following sequence. On the left are the Apostles Sts James, Judas, Thomas and Simon; the prophets Isaiah, Elijah; Sts Dionysius the Areopagite, Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom. On the right Apostles Andrew, Phillip, Bartholomew and Shmavon (Simon); the prophet Moses, Simon; Sts Nicholas (of Myra), Ignatius and Basil (of Caesarea). The back of the reliquary is covered by a 43-line inscription.

In iconography and style this composition resembles the corresponding scene in Queen Keran's Gospel; the same delicate modelling can be seen, and the same expressive quality.

Carrière, A., *Inscriptions d'un reliquaire arménien de la Collection Basilewski*, 169-213; Nersessian, 'Le reliquaire de Skevra', figs 463-71, 705-21; Ter Ghevondyan, 'Kilikyan haykakan ardsat'agordsut'yan patmut'yuniits', 75-84; Kakovkin, 'Hay arvesti nshanavor hushardzan', 118-35; Mnatsakanyan, 'Ov ē Skevrayi 1293', *masnatup'it*, *Ejmiadzin* 9 (1972), 57-65; Hakobyan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, 44-6; Mutafian, *Roma Armenia*, Nr VI, 33, 160-61.

## CROSSES

25

**Processional Cross with Gems**

Iron, silver, wood; cross: 59 × 35 cm, case: 64 × 39 cm

Ani, 914–29; the case made in Kars, 18th century  
 Ējmiadsin, Museum of the Catholicate,  
 Inv. Nr 889

Armenian cross, made of cast iron, with relatively broad arms (vertical arm 46 cm; horizontal arm 35 cm), with semi-crescent flare at their extremities and terminating at the corners in small discoid finials. The lower arm of the cross is fixed to a roundel with two nails with a 15 cm long hollow arm intended for the pole on which the cross would be fixed to carry aloft in the procession. The cross is decorated with three small and one large (now missing) semi-precious stones. In the centre of the cross there is another small cross inlaid with a yellow-greenish stone.

This cross is associated with the name of Ashot II, Erkat, son of Smbat who rose to the Armenian throne in 914 and whose reign marks the beginning of a new era in Byzantine relations with the Transcaucasus. In 922 he took the title Shahnshah (King of Kings) of Armenia and Georgia and was given the nickname 'Erkat' ('Iron') in recognition of his bravery.

Hakobyan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, Pl. Va(7), 35; Aġak'elyan, *K'aghak'nerē*, Pl. X, 137; British Museum, *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine art and culture*, Nr 161, 148–9; Moscow, *Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Pl. 12, 45; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 12, 34; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 9, 142.



25

26

**Altar Cross**

Silver-gilt cast, engraving, niello; ht 53 cm  
 Vaspurakan, Van, 1750  
 Ējmiadsin, Alex and Marie Manoogian Museum,  
 Inv. Nr metal 23

Altar cross made of cast silver, and gilded. The centre of the cross has in a square frame the risen victorious figure of Christ holding a staff with a banner and blessing with the right hand, and wearing a cross-shaped nimbus. The upper part is joined with rivets to a holder with a domed

section pierced and engraved with interlaced arabesques, the shaft plain except for an engraved band above and below. The arms of the cross flare out and end in palmettes. The design of this cross is very typical of fifteenth-century Ethiopian processional crosses with strong Islamic influences.

Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, Nr 220, 322; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian Church*, Nr 13 13a, 46–7; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 15, 34; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 15; *African Zion: the sacred art of Ethiopia*, Nrs 72–9, 180–84.



26



27

### 27 Consecration Cross

Bronze, cast; 21 × 14 cm  
Ani, 11th–12th century  
Ējmiadsin, Museum of the Catholicate,  
Inv. Nr metal 781

Latin cross, thick and heavy, cast in brass in a single piece, with broad flaring arms having inwardly cusped ends and three rosettes on the corners. The cross is decorated with incised small circles. An integral holder descends below the lower arm; it is broken off beneath a small hole.

Hakobyan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, 32–4; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian Church*, Nr 17, 51; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 15, 34; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 10, 39.



28

### 28 Benediction Cross

Bronze, cast; 16 × 8.5 cm  
Ani, 11th–12th century  
Ējmiadsin, Museum of the Catholicate,  
Inv. Nr metal 784

Hand cross cast in bronze with slightly flaring arms that terminate at the corners in small trilobed rosettes, cast in one piece. The lower arm of the cross is fitted into a sphere above a tapering ribbed cylindrical arm. On the face, in relief, is a representation of Christ crucified wearing a colobium, and not a loincloth. At either end of the arms are placed in medallions in relief the busts of the four Evangelists.

Hakobyan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, 34–6; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian Church*, Nr 16, 50; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 16, 21; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 11, 179; British Museum, *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine art and culture*, Nr 144, 134–5.



29

### 29 Ornamental Cross

Gold; 5.5 × 3.5 cm, wt 18.30 gm  
Dvin, 7th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 1208

Cross decorated with granular ornaments and central gem with the image of an eagle. The four equal arms of the cross are studded around the edges with small balls. The central area of the cross is filled with rope interlace design patterns, which copy the sculpted ornaments of the capitals of buildings found in Dvin. The gem with the stamp of an eagle is stylistically characteristic of Sassanian decorations. The cross is modelled in wax moulds and then refined. Stylistically it dates from the seventh century. Such crosses, aside from having four equal bars, have the representation of rays emanating from the four right angles which are formed by the bars, similar to the spokes of a wheel which radiate in all directions. The term *'sereknadzew* (in form of spokes), which derives from the hymn devoted to the Cross of Varag, is descriptive of its radiance: 'with the revelation of the radiant four-winged holy cross which illuminated the world with sun-like rays'.

Shahnazarian, SHMA, Erevan, fig. 79, 47; Hakobyan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, Pl. IV, 1, 32–3.

## BRONZE

Bronze alone of all the metals had a consistent formal and ornamental development in Armenia. As in the ancient Near East and East Asia, it was the chosen medium for ordinary domestic utensils and church furnishings. The religious prohibition on the use of vessels of gold and silver led smiths to attempt to use the baser metal for artistic purposes, and they turned to inlay in the same way as the potters turned to lustre to give a festive appearance to bronze objects intended as gifts.



30 detail



30

30

**Baptismal Cauldron**

Bronze; ht 83 cm, diam. 110 cm, wt 350 kg  
Haghardsin, 1232  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 831

*Inscription:* In the Armenian era 681 [1232] I, the sinful priest Zosima acquired this cauldron [z-k'obs from the Persian *kup* or *kop*] the brothers [of the monastery] gave it to me during my first year on the feast day of [saint] George the General.

Some of the most impressive Urartian objects in the State History Museum of Erevan are the bronze cauldrons decorated with animal figures. One of these depicts a lion with a long neck and open mouth. There is a cuneiform inscription on its neck: 'To Argishti's son Sarduri'.

This cauldron, one of the largest found in the Monastery of Haghardsin in 1881 and weighing 350 kg, stands on three feet and has four small but complete lion mouldings attached to the body to serve as handles. The inscription above is engraved in relief round the flat rim with a trough for the overflow. Below each of the handles are the remains of a lion's head, mouth open (their large bronze rings now missing).

Although this example is unique in the museum's collection, such cauldrons were made in Albania and in the Kubachi region of Daghestan, reflecting Sassanian designs. Academician I.A. Orbeli distinguishes three styles – Shirvan-eshek (Shirvanian cauldron), Gyurji-eshek (Georgian) and khatch-eshek (cross-shaped cauldron). The cross-shaped cauldrons were used as baptismal fonts. This cauldron, when found in the monastery, had a bell in it weighing 33 kg, which is further evidence that it was used for baptism. The foundation date of the Monastery of Haghardsin is 1071, the year when the first church at Haghardsin, St Astuadsadsin (Theotokos) was consecrated.

Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, fig. 86, 52; Hakobyan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, Pl. IX, figs 1–3, 52–3; Aġak'elyan, *K'aghak'nerġ*, Pl. XVII, 162–3; Kuhnelt, *Islamic Arts*, fig. 132, 158–64; Talbot Rice, *Ancient Arts of Central Asia*, figs 247–8, 258–9.

## CENSERS

The excavations at Dvin and Ani are the source for the large number of oil-lamps and incense-burners with attached chains. Those found in Ani, in the ruins of the Church of St Gregory, which was built by King Gagik (989–1020), are particularly significant. In their shape and style of decoration – a continuous frieze of the principal episodes of the life of Christ, from the Annunciation to the Ascension – they recall the Byzantine and Coptic censers of the sixth and seventh centuries, and this suggests that such censers and lamps were known in Armenia from a very early period. The style of the relief on the body, the poses of the figures and the way their clothes are draped, as well as the shape of the semi-palmettes chased on the stem and the upper band, suggest that these objects were made in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when Ani was the capital of the Zak'arian princes.

During the Divine Liturgy the deacon holds the censer in his right and the ark in his left hand. The incense is reserved in the ark of the incense. The incense is placed into the censer by the celebrant, following the deacon's prayer 'In peace let us beseech ...', to which the celebrant responds by saying, 'blessing and glory ...', and making the sign of the cross over the ark, and placing incense in the censer with the little spoon, which is always kept in the ark of the incense.

31

**Censer: Scenes from the Life of Christ**

Brass; ht 10.5 cm, diam. 10.5 cm  
Church of St Gregory, Ani, 13th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 766/178



31

The continuous relief sculptures on the body of the censer represent: the Annunciation, Nativity, Visit of the Magi, Crucifixion, Descent from the Cross, Entombment and Resurrection. The scenes are separated by floral ornaments.

32

**Censer: Scenes from the Life of Christ**

Brass; ht 10.6 cm, diam. 11.5 cm, base 5.8 cm  
Church of St Gregory, Ani, 13th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 1031



32

The figures in the scenes representing the principal events from the life of Christ are full of movement. The faces of the figures are expressive, the forms plastic, and the movements smooth and light. The three decorated holders are preserved. Below the

rim there is a wide ribbon decorated with lines and circles. The bowl-shaped body has in continuous relief the following five scenes: Annunciation, Nativity, Baptism, Crucifixion, Visit of the Women to the Sepulchre. The scenes are separated by foliage.

33

**Censer: Scenes from the Life of Christ**

Brass; ht 10.5 cm, diam. 11.5 cm, base 5.7 cm  
Ani, 13th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 123/1265



33

This censer was found in 1890 in Artsakh at the Monastery of Jrvshtik and is one of the superb-quality censers from the School of Ani. The events depicted are: Annunciation, the Visit of Mary to Elizabeth, Incredulity of Thomas, Nativity, the Visit of the Magi and Ascension. The final scene is rare and unique on such objects. Christ is depicted seated in a mandorla, held by angels on either side. The angel on the left has short hair, and youthful face; while the one on the right is older, with a short beard.

The Syro-Palestinian influence on these censers is explained by the fact that Christianity was introduced into Armenia from Syria, and the religious and cultural relations persisted up to the Middle Ages.

Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, fig. 83, 50; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, fig. 15, 117; Hakobyan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, Pl. VI a, b, c, 37–8; Afak'elyan, *K'ughak'nerč*, Pl. XVI, 158–9; Nersessian, *Armenian Art*, fig. 160, 205–6; *We Three Kings*, fig. 2, 12; Mirzoyan, 'Sur la datation et localisation', *REA* XXIII (1992), 603–26.

## PYX

34

**An Armenian Gold Pyx  
(*Tapanak*)**

Solid gold of 14–22 carats; octagonal: 98.5 mm from face to face, eight sides each measuring 56 mm high × 40 mm wide; each foot is 32 mm high; the lid 18 mm high, and the box stands 106 mm

Kesaria (Caesarea, Kayseri), 1687  
Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon

Inscription round the octagonal lid, beginning from the marginal panel behind the stone, reads as follows:

This vessel was made in the year 1136 [1687] of the Armenians, by the unworthy hands of Sedrak in the town of K[e]s[ar]i[a] when Sultan Suleiman came to the throne, on the day of Saturday which is the feast of Baragham [Barlaam], bishop of Antioch, and during this our patriarchate of Tēr Eghiazar [I, Ayn'taptsi, 1681–91], Catholicos.

The front panel beneath the jewel in the lid bears a representation of the Last Supper, with Christ and his disciples seated at a table. The two-line inscription beneath reads: 'Take and eat, this is my body and my blood'. The panel directly opposite shows the Assumption of the Virgin, in an attitude of prayer, standing on a disc representing the Earth between God the Father, with triangular halo and wearing a sceptre, and God the Son, bearing a Cross, both enthroned on clouds, surmounted by the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The two-line inscription below reads: 'Glory to God in the highest and unto earth peace'. Each of the six remaining panels bears a representation of two of the apostles, each holding the symbol of his martyrdom, with the name of each inscribed below in uncials. Taking the panel with the Last Supper as no. 1 and proceeding anti-clockwise, these represent: Barnabas and Matthew; Thaddeus and Simon; James and Bartholomew; Phillip and Thomas; James (the elder) and Andrew; Paul and Peter.

The pyx was used for the reservation of the sacrament, though it may in fact also have been used as an altar ornament.

Close in date to the Kayseri (Caesarea) pyx are the silver-gilt reliquaries made for the Holy Lance and a fragment of Noah's Ark now in the collection of the Holy Ējmiadsin Museum, and the many silver manuscript covers made by the Armenian silversmiths of Kayseri. Armenian goldsmiths from Turkey exerted considerable influence on Polish or *févrerie* of the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, well attested by Polish scholars such as Lozinski and Mankowski. In Istanbul, which had become the centre of the goldsmith's craft by the seventeenth century, the Armenians played a major role.

Hovsep'ian, 'Mi edj hay arvest ev mshakuyt' i Nyut'er, I, figs 22–34, 158–86; Kurdian, 'Kesarioy oskertchakan', figs 1–4, 51–61; Kurdian, 'Kituadsagordsut' iwné ew hayeré', figs 1–16, 79–127; Mankowski, *Orient w polskiej kulturze artystycznej*, 211–14; Tēr Ghevondayn, 'Geghardi Vank' i gandzerits', 40–49; Dowsett, 'An Armenian gold pyx (Kayseri, A.D. 1687)', figs 1–5, 171–86.



34



34a

## SILVER COVERS

35

**The Gospels of Kostandin Bardzraberdtsi**

Silver covers; 27 × 20 × 9 cm

Cilicia, Hřomklay, 1254

Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, Inv. Nr 1

*Provenance:* The vellum manuscript of the Four Gospels was commissioned by Bishop Step'anos for Catholicos Kostandin I Bardzraberdtsi (1221–67), copied by scribe Kiwrakos in 1248 at Hřomklay, during the



35



35a

reign of King Het'um I (1226–69) and bound in 1254.

The central motif of the top cover is of Christ on the cross. The short arms of the cross terminate in medallions which have half-length portraits of the Virgin and of John the Evangelist. The Four Evangelists are depicted full-length in the corners of the frame facing each other: Sts Mark and Luke (top) and Matthew and John, partly missing (below). The medallions that fill the spaces in between the Evangelists have the bust portraits of the Apostles Paul and Peter, in the margins in the middle Bartholomew and Andrew (right) and James and Simeon (left); in the lower margin Phillip and Thomas. At the end of the vertical arm of the cross are two plaques with the bust figures of angels holding a staff and a globe in each hand. The crosses that occupy the space in between the arms of the crucifix are later additions.

Christ enthroned and blessing takes up the centre of the composition of the lower cover. Palmette interlaces adorn the lobes of the quatrefoils accompanied by the inscription: 'in 703 [1254] the Holy Gospel was bound by the expense of Step'anos "the door bishop", i.e. chancellor of Catholicos Kostandin, for his memory'. In the corners of the plaque the delicately embossed symbols of the Evangelists stand out in high relief against the palmette scroll. The four small crosses on this face of the cover are also later additions.

The subtle modelling of the draperies of Christ and the angel, and of the bodies of the three symbols of the Evangelist, as well as the execution of the floral motifs, is similar in every way to the paintings of this manuscript and to those in other works of the period.

Hovsep'ian, *Nyut'er* II, figs 117–18, 261–5; Nersessian, *Der, Armenian Art*, fig. 120, 162; Agemian, *Manuscripts Armėniens enluminės du catholicosat de Cilicie*, Pl. I, figs 1–2, 7–18; Mutafian, *Le Royaume Armėnien de Cilicie XIII–XIV siėcle*, 136–9.

36

**The Gospels of Catholicos Kostandin i Bardzraberdsi**Vellum; 365 fols. Script *bolorgir* in double cols; 16.3 × 11.5 cm

Cilicia, 1249

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 7690

*Provenance:* The manuscript was copied by the scribe Kiwrakos at Hřomklay during the reign of King Het'um I (1226–69) and his sons Lewon and T'oros, and of Queen Zabel in the year 698 (1249) by the 'command and sponsorship of the holy and blessed Catholicos of the Armenians Kostandin' (I, Bardzraberdtsi, 1221–67).



36



36a

Sometime soon after 1255 the manuscript was bound in silver gilt covers and presented to King Levon III (1236–88), whose portrait, probably painted in c. 1250 by T'oros Roslin when the king was 18 or 19 years old (born 1236), is added (previously belonging to Matenadaran Mss. no. 8321). In 1263 the king presents the Gospels to his sister Fimi. The manuscript was taken from Cilicia to the Crimea sometime before 1621, where it was restored and rebound by Grigor.

*Inscription* (top cover): K'risto]s a[stua]ds, oghormea t[ear]n Kostandey kat' ughikosi ew dsnawghats iwroy eghbarts ew eghbawrordeats Amēn t'u[in] 704

*Translation:* Christ God, have mercy on Ter Catholicos Kostandin and my parents, brothers and nephews in the year 704 (1255).

*Inscription* (lower cover): Gretsaw awetarans ew kazmetsaw hramanaw tear'n Kostandea kat' ughikosi i yishatak iwr ew dsnoghats iwrots ew eghbarts ammen (sic).

*Translation:* These Gospels were written and bound by the order of Ter Catholicos Kostandin in memory of himself and his parents and brothers. Amen.

*Top cover:* Hammered silver plaque representing the Deesis: the intercession of the Mother of God and St John the Baptist with Christ, who stands in the centre holding the Gospels and raising his right hand in a gesture of blessing. The Mother of God and John the Baptist stand with hands open in their role as intercessors. The inscriptions engraved above the heads of the figures from left to right identify the personalities as: 'Mayr ay' (Mayr Astudsoy = Mother of God), 'YS K'S' (Yisus k'ristos = Jesus Christ), 'Yovannes' (John).

*Lower cover:* The Four Evangelists are depicted standing, as full-length figures, each holding a book in his hand. The names engraved above their heads read: Yohan (John), Ghukas (Luke), Mark[os] (Mark), and Mat'e[os] (Matthew). The sequence of the names is wrong. The third figure from the left next to Matthew is that of St Luke with the tonsure and not St Mark as indicated.

The spine is covered with two parallel silver plates which are held together by pivots, forming a flexible and moveable spine. The spine has chain-design borders. These were part of the restoration done in 1621. The flap consists of a single piece of silver laid with six semi-round globes, in sixteen parallel bands. These were also added when the covers were restored in the seventeenth century.

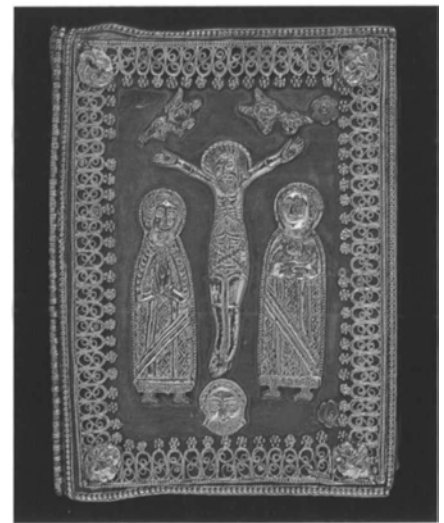
Ter-Ghevondyan, 'Kilikyan haykakan ardsat'agordsut'yan patmut'yun', *PBH* 4 (1963), 75–81; Gevorgyan, 'Levon t'agavori avetaranc', *BM* 8 (1967), 143–56; Hovsep'ian, *Nyut'er*, I, 169–72, figs 25–6; Ghazaryan, *Matenadaran*, 103–11; Durnovo, *Haykakan manankartchut'yun*, Pls 78–9; Bochum Museum, *Armenian*, no. 160, p. 242.

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### The Crucifixion, 1669

Vellum; 301 fols, in 12 signed gatherings of mostly 12 leaves; plus two twelfth-century folded fly-leaves. Script in regular *bolorgir* in double cols; 18 × 13 cm  
The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 14839

*Provenance:* The main colophon on fols 298–300 records that the manuscript was copied by the priest Alek'san in the village of Noranishik in the province of Erznjak near Erevan, at the request of Yohan vardapet, for his sister, the nun Lukiay, during the catholicate of the Holy See of Ejmiadsin of Yakob (IV Jughayetsi, 1655–80), when Shah Sefi the Younger ruled Persia and Sultan Ahmad the Ottoman empire, in AE 1118 (1669). The receiver of the manuscript is also mentioned on fol. 136: 'Remember the receiver of this Yohan vardapet in the year 1118' (i.e. 1669). The seal of Bishop Eremia of Erznjak dated 1687 and another of the priest Tēr Arut'iwn dated 1816 are stamped on the manuscript. Ruben Tēr Arut'unian (1920–92) was a descendant of Tēr Arut'iwn who had acquired the manuscript in Tiflis, where it had been taken from Kars by the deacon Sargis on 15 May 1758. The manuscript was auctioned by Christie's of London as property from the estate of Ruben Tēr-Arutunian on Wednesday 24 November 1993, and was purchased for the British Library.



37

Original red leather over wooden boards, lined with green silk doublures, encased in silver covers with a flexible link-and-rod spine, outer flap on three hinges. Sides with silver filigree borders and cherub head cornerpieces. The upper cover in relief depicts the Crucifixion, the figure on the left of Christ inscribed 'surb Astuadsadsin' (Holy Mother of God) and on the right 'surb Mariam'. Two angels above the Crucifix, and a skull under Christ's cross, reflecting the legend that Adam was buried near the centre of the earth. Outer flap with filigree rosettes in four compartments.

Nersessian, V., *Christie's Valuable Manuscripts and Printed Books*, Wednesday, 24 November 1993, lot. 20, 35–9; Nersessian, V., 'A treasure in heaven: An Armenian illuminated Gospel Book', *OIOC Newsletter* 50–51 (Autumn 1991), 6–9; reprinted in *Avagat XXXVI* (Summer 1995), 39–42; *Union Catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the United Kingdom* (forthcoming).

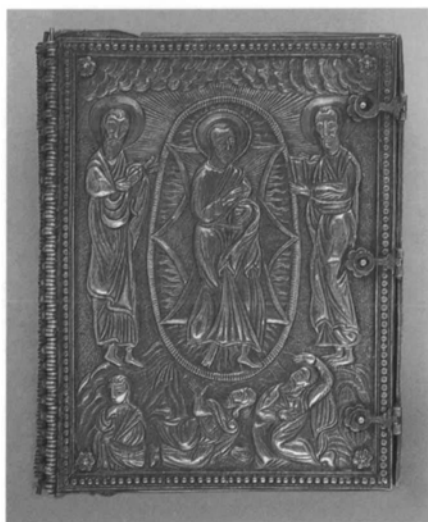
38

### The Transfiguration of Christ, 1755

Vellum; 333 fols, in 26 quires of 12 leaves each. Script regular *bolorgir* in double cols; 19 × 14 cm  
The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 13895

*Provenance:* The Four Gospels copied and illuminated by Nikoghayos *dsaghkarar* or *melanawor*, pupil of Ter Zak'aria





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completed on 20 May AE 1107 (30 May 1658) during the catholicate of Ter Yakob (IV Jughayetsi, 1655–80) and the episcopate 'of the northern regions' (Crimea) of Grigor 'who died in this year' for the khawaja Kirakos, son of the pilgrim Dolvadiar, in the Church of the Holy Theotokos. The manuscript has 12 full-page miniatures illustrating episodes in Christ's ministry, two of which, the Transfiguration and the Entry into Jerusalem (fols 8v, 9r), inspired the silversmith Eghia who made the covers dated and inscribed in 1755/56.

The manuscript is bound in wooden boards lined with dark green silk encased in silver with a flexible link-and-rod spine, flap with three clasps. The front cover has the representation of the Transfiguration in relief. Christ stands in an oval mandorla inside which there is a star emanating rays of light. At his sides outside the oval stand the full figures of Elijah and Moses holding the Tablets of the Law. Below at the foot of the mountain are the three apostles, without haloes, one kneeling, one prostrate, and the third seated. The back cover has the Entry into Jerusalem. The flap with three clasps has a six-line inscription in bold capitals, the first part of which repeats the information of the principal colophon (fols 329v–330v) adding 'this Gospel was restored by *mahdesi* [pilgrim to Jerusalem] Eghiy on behalf of the ordinary people at the door of the Church

of Surb Astuadsadsin in 1205' [1756].

Statistical data indicate that the greater part of Armenian silver covers belong to the school of silver binders that flourished at Kayseri in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There are now around a dozen silver bindings scattered in various libraries and museums throughout the world executed at Kayseri in the seventeenth century alone. On the evidence of the names of the silversmiths, it has been suggested that they were descended from the stock of Armenian artisans who had emigrated from Persia Armenia to Kayseri where they founded a school of silver binders.

Sotheby's *Catalogue of Fine Oriental Miniatures, Manuscripts and Printed Books*, Monday, 23 April 1979, lot. 182, 146–8; Nersessian, *Union Catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the United Kingdom* (forthcoming); Kurdian, 'An Armenian Silver Binding dated 1653', *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* (April 1946), 118–19; 'Kesarioy oskertchakan', *HHI* (1948), 51–61; Sanjian, *A catalogue of medieval Armenian manuscripts in the United States*, 16–22; 'Malkhasyan, 'Kesarahay kazmarvesti patmut'yuniis', *Ejmiadzin* 5–6 (1996), 174–90.

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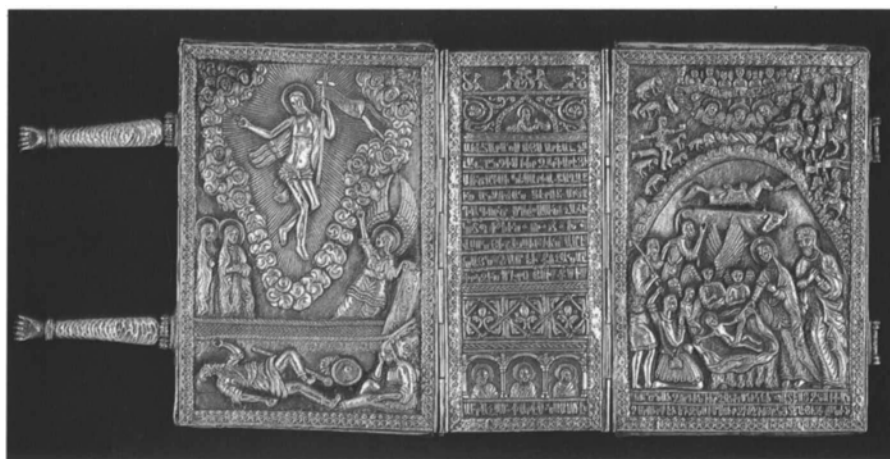
### The Nativity and the Resurrection, 1691

Vellum; 330 fols, in 26 quires of 12 leaves; plus 2 additional vellum leaves from a Psalter. Script in small *bolorgir* in double cols; 14 × 9.5 cm  
The British Library, Or. 13808

*Provenance:* The manuscript has no colophon. The inscription on the spine states that the manuscript was

'ornamented with silver, in the city of Kayseri, by the unworthy silversmith Malkhas Hadji Karapet in the year 1140 (1691) for remembrance at all times'. According to Frederic Macler the manuscript of the Four Gospels was probably copied in Constantinople sometime in the seventeenth century. Professor Franz Bock, an owner of the manuscript, had left a note in German reporting that he had purchased it from the Monastery of Lavra on Mount Athos. It was subsequently bought by the Baroness Lanna in Prague on 26 August 1886, in whose collection it was in 1926 when it was brought to Paris and shown to Professor F. Macler, who published a description of it in the same year. It was sold by Christie's in their early printed books and manuscript sale on Wednesday, 1 June 1977 and was acquired for the British Library.

The top cover (14 × 9 cm) is divided into two tiers. The Nativity occupies the central position, separated from the above scene by a band of cloud. The child Jesus lies in the centre in a manger, with the Virgin and Joseph standing in the right corner. To the left of the manger, the three Magi, the first kneeling, the others standing. Immediately above the manger there are three angels and above them a calf and an ass. Below the scene there is a two-line legend quoting St Luke 2: 7: 'And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no



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place for them in the inn'. The tier above depicts three distinct themes. In the centre are 12 angels announcing the birth of Jesus, who is holding a banner with the legend in small capitals: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace' (Luke 2: 14). On the left of the panel a flock of ten sheep and a young shepherd holding a bowl in one hand. On the right three kings on horseback, all wearing royal crowns. Two of the kings have their right hand raised with finger pointing to the star above, and the third is looking back towards the shepherd who has one arm stretched out. Below the kings there are three more horsemen with flags and under the hooves of the horses is a cluster of heads looking into the manger. The whole scene is enclosed in a grapevine border frame, completely gilt-fastened to the cover, the edges of which are neatly folded inwards, forming a slide in the manuscript.

The lower cover depicts the Resurrection. The frame is divided into two halves. The central panel depicts the Risen Christ triumphant holding a banner and cross and blessing with the right hand. The figure of Christ is enclosed in a segment of sky represented by rays and marked by clouds. Two groups of angels in fives and threes hover in the clouds. Below the cloud two women coming from the left toward the angel who is standing with one arm on the slab of stone placed upright above the empty tomb and with the other pointing to the Risen Christ. Below the tomb, two soldiers are represented asleep, their weapons lying beside them. The cover has attached to it two silver clasps shaped like an arm.

The two covers are hinged together by a solid silver panel also in *repoussé* style, with very delicate decorations. The top comprises a small khoran resembling the

headpiece over the Letter of Eusebius to Carpianus (fol. 9v). The figure of Carpianus holding an open scroll is enclosed in a conical-shaped dome surrounded by floral patterns. Below it there is a nine-line inscription in relief. Below the inscription are three floral patterns separating the three busts of the prophets under arched columns named as Abraham, P'ares and Naasovn.

The silversmith Malkhas hadji Karapet, also known as Malkhas M[ahdesi] Karapet, has executed the silver covers of the following manuscripts: Breviary, 1691 (Vienna, Ms. 416), Gospels, 1691 (Venice), Book of Rituals, 1704 (Boston Public Library, Ms. Armen 1), Psalter 1704 (Mat. Ms. 10411). The names of the silversmiths who worked in Kayseri between 1653 and 1741 are: Shahmir *mahdesi* Karapet, Malkhas *mahdesi* Yakob, Shapaz *mahdesi* Grigor, Malkhas *mahdesi* Ohanes, Shahmir *mahdesi* Yakob, and Astuadsatur Shahamir. Between them they executed the silver covers of 15 manuscripts. They are descendants from a family of Armenian artisans who emigrated from Persia to Kayseri and founded a school of silver binders. The workmanship of these bindings is closely related in iconography and style.

Macler, 'Notice d'un Tétraevangile Armenien de la collection Lanna (Prague)', *REA* 6 (1926), 27–31; *Christie's Early Printed Books and Manuscripts*, Wednesday, 1 June 1977, lot. 192, 80 I, Pl. 8 (Portrait and Headpiece of St Matthew); Nersessian, *Union Catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the United Kingdom* (forthcoming); Kurdian, 'Kesarioy oskertchakan dprotsin', 51–61; Hovsep'ian, 'Mi edj hay aruesti ew mshakoyt'i patmut'iwunits', *Nyuter* 1, 158–86; reprinted (Syria 1930); Sanjian, *A catalogue of medieval Armenian manuscripts in the United States*, 16–22; Malkhasyan, 'Hayeren dzeragereri kazmeré ev nrants patrastman eghanakneré', *Ējmiadsin* 2 (1995), 75–80 and 'Kesarahay kazmarvesti patmuyunits', *Ējmiadsin* 5–6 (1996), 174–90.

## EPISCOPAL STAFF

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### Episcopal Staff (crozier)

Silver-encrusted turquoise, cast and engraved, gilt; ht 147 cm, staff head 13 × 12.5 cm  
Van, 18th century  
Holy Ējmiadsin, Inv. No. metal N 163

The staff is made up of three six-sided rods covered with simple floral patterns. The unique feature of the staff is the crook, richly gilt and adorned with precious stones. The hook is made up of plaited and twisted shafts, branching into terminals made up of six dragon heads with mouths wide open and eyes inlaid with turquoise stones. Three of the heads look outward and three face inwards in a confrontational position. The snake-like dragons are symbols of wisdom as in Genesis 3: 1: 'the serpent was the most wise of all the wild beasts'. In Armenian manuscripts this image is often placed in the margins illustrating the verse from St John's Gospel: 'and the Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert' (3: 14). This also explains why in Christian symbolism the tree of life often includes representations of snakes/dragons.

Mnatsakanyan, *Haykakan zardarvest*, 509–22; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian Church*, Nr 40; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 35; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 38.



## TEXTILES

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**Gonfalon of St Gregory the Illuminator**

Silk, embroidered, relief embroidery;

83 × 59 cm

1448.

Ējmiadsin, Museum of the Catholicate,  
Inv. Nr Textile 115

*Inscriptions:* Front Trdat S[ur]b Grigor Lus[aworitch] S[ur]b Hrip'sime.]  
Back 'This gonfalon is worthy of Ējmiadsin. It is to the memory of the priest Simēon and wife K'amak Khat'un, his parents and children ... Wrote this with my hands ... Khat'un and her mother Gohar Melik'. Those who raise this in their holy hands remember us on the day of judgment'.

With the exception of a few fragments of textiles found in Ani, this processional banner is the only dated ancient embroidery that has been preserved. The front of the banner has the embroidered full-face frontal figures of St Gregory the Illuminator between King Trdat and St Hrip'simē, with their names inscribed above their heads. St Gregory is wearing a mitre, and has a Byzantine short white chasuble adorned with crosses in black and a pallium woven with silver threads. On his right hangs an epigonation, symbol of the authority of the catholicos. All the figures have round haloes woven out of gold thread. St Gregory is blessing with his right hand and holding a book in his left hand. The king, his hands raised, is dressed in a red tunic with gold belt and embroideries, while the identical tunic of St Hrip'simē is green. She is wearing a red cope with matching-colour shoes. The fine embroidery has a painterly quality.

On the other side Christ is represented, enthroned and blessing, surrounded by the four evangelist symbols, arranged according to the text of Revelation 4: 7. The costumes of Christ, his posture and the oval-shaped rug under his feet are very



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similar to the Byzantine iconography of this subject. The arch above Christ's head represents the heavens, above which there are the symbols of the sun, the moon and the stars. The initials YS and K'S (Yisus K'ristos = Jesus Christ) are embroidered on either side. The five-line inscription (with some sections missing) is placed around Christ's figure. This side of the banner is less well preserved.

Although the inscription does not give the date of its making, there are reliable literary sources for ascertaining the date. On the instruction of Catholicos Simēon I Erevantsi (1763–80) in 1768 an inventory was compiled of the treasures of the Holy See of Ējmiadsin. In this inventory the description for this banner reads: 'Processional banner, embroidered on red silk cloth. On one side Christ is represented, enthroned surrounded by the figures of the four beasts, while on the other side there is represented the figures of St Lusaworitch, Trdat and St Hrip'simē. Donated to the Holy See by a certain priest named Simēon and on behalf of his wife K'amak Khat'un in the Armenian era 897'. Here we have recorded the precise date, which is 897 [1448]. We have also another

testimony that shows that the existence of the banner was known as early as 1462. The historian Aṙak'el Davrizhetsi in his *History of the Armenians* quotes from a manuscript of *The Lives of the Saints*, copied in Ankuria, which describes the career of Zak'aria Aght'amartsi (1461–64). It is recorded that during the travels of this catholicos they carried a processional banner 'raised on a pole topped by a gold cross' and on the banner 'was embroidered on one side with the picture of the Lord, and on the other side our Lusaworitch Saint Gregory, and king Trdat, and the beautiful virgin St Hrip'simē, made of gold thread and in varied colours, and multicoloured decorated stoles'. The date of this colophon is Armenian era 911, which gives 1462. This banner was in the Treasury of the Holy See during the catholicate of P'ilippos I (1633–55) and the historian Aṙak'el Davrizhetsi had seen it in 1662.

The date 1441 suggests that the banner was made to commemorate the return of the Holy See to Ējmiadsin from Cilicia in 1441, which also coincided with the 1140th anniversary of the conversion of Armenia to Christianity.

Aṙak'el Davrizhetsi, *Patmut'yun*, 3rd edn, 423: 431; Hovsep'ian, *Nyut'or*, Vol. I, 128–31; Nersessian, *Armenian Art*, fig. 173, 241–2; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian Church*, Nr 76–76a, 120–21; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 65, 52; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 53, 94–5.

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**Altar Curtain**

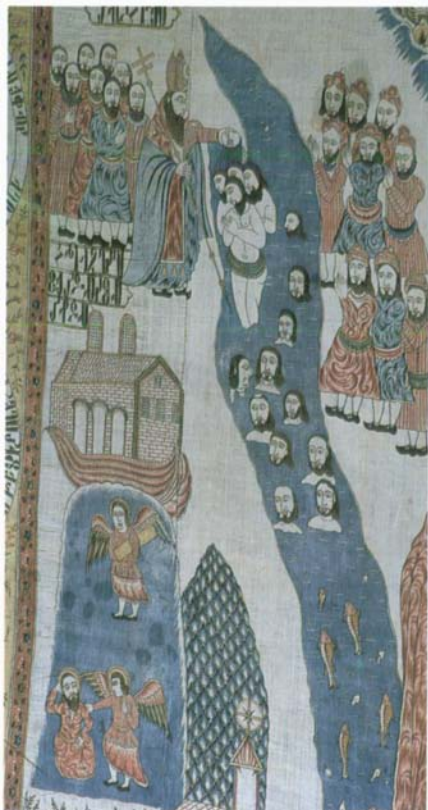
Cotton, printed; 360 × 268 cm

Madras, 1789

Ējmiadsin, Museum of the Catholicate,

Inv. Nr 618

*Inscription:* Yishatak ē Tēr Step'anosi ordi Astuadsatur ew morn uroy Mariam anin hogaybardzuteambn nvirak Ep'rem vardapetin: t'vin p'rkktchin 1789 P'ctrvari 11-i, Madras.



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*Translation:* To the memory of Tēr Stepanos son of Astuadsatur and his mother Mariam under the stewardship of the legate Ep’rem vardapet in the year of the Lord 11 February 1789, Madras.

### The Conversion of Armenia

The story of the conversion of Armenia to Christianity is told by Agat’angeghos in his *History of the Armenians*. Central to this event were the tortures and

imprisonment of Gregory by orders of King Trdat at Artashat for thirteen years, the martyrdoms at Vagharshapat of the nuns Hřip’simē and Gayanē and her 37 companions who had fled to Armenia during the persecutions of Emperor Diocletian (284–305). As divine punishment for putting the nuns to death, Trdat is changed into the form of a wild boar. The king’s sister, Khosrovidukht, is then told in a vision that only Gregory can cure the king. Gregory is brought out of the dungeon to cure the king. Gregory then proceeds to ‘Baptise the whole Armenian nation’ and convert the king to Christianity. In a vision God reveals to Gregory the sites on which chapels for the martyrs Hřip’simē and Gayanē and where the foundation for the Armenian cathedral at Vagharshapt called Ēj-miadsin (the descent of the Only-Begotten) are to be built. This story as depicted on this altar curtain follows Agat’angeghos’s text closely.

The fourteen medallions around the three borders of the curtain represent the major events from the life of St Gregory. Twelve of the scenes represent the incredible series of tortures to which Gregory was subjected but which failed to break his spirit.

#### Left

1. Blocks of wood were fixed to his legs and feet and tightened with strong cords until blood ran down to the tips of his toes.
2. Nails were driven through the soles of his feet and he was made to run this way and that.
3. A large sack filled with cinders from a furnace was fixed over his head and the mouth of the sack tied round his neck.
4. Gregory was bound with cords and hung upside down; a funnel was placed in his anus and water poured into his belly.
5. Gregory’s sides were torn with iron scrapers.

#### Lower border

6. Iron ‘thistles’ were cast on the ground and Gregory was thrown

naked onto the ‘thistles’.

7. Iron leggings were put on his knees and he was suspended on the gibbet until his knees were broken.

The kneeling figure of Ep’rem vardapet, the sponsor of the altar curtain.

8. Lead was melted in an iron cauldron, and while it was still hot it was poured like water over his body.
9. St Gregory was brought out of the dungeon to cure king Trdat who by divine punishment had become a wild boar.

#### Right border

10. When the king discovered that Gregory was the son of Anak the Parthian, who had killed his father Khosrov, he had him bound hand, foot and neck and let down into the pit where he remained for thirteen years.
11. Gregory’s hands were bound behind him, and a muzzle put in his mouth; he had a block of salt hung on his back and a noose placed round his chest.
12. Gregory was hung from a crucifix with a block of salt on his back.
13. Salt and borax and rough vinegar were brought and Gregory turned on his back, his head was placed in a carpenter’s vice, and the liquid poured down his nose.
14. Gregory was hung upside down and flogged with rods.

The central theme of the panel is the conversion of Armenia to Christianity as related by the various versions of Agat’angeghos. Dominating the top middle section is the depiction of the Holy Trinity. God the Father and God the Son are represented seated on a band of cloud supported by six angels. Above, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove whose rays of light descend towards St Gregory. Gregory in his vision saw Christ descend in the form of light, in his hand a hammer of gold, with which he struck the ground on

the site where Gregory built the cathedral of St Ējmiadsin and next to it, to the south and north, the shrines for the nuns Gayanē, Hřip'simē and Ējmiadsin, whose martyrdom is also depicted, with soldiers with swords beheading the kneeling nuns. Above on a disc is depicted the tall column of fire, and on top of it a cross of light. Each of the images has a caption: (a) Vank'n Sribuhi Gayinē; (b) Vank'n sribuhi Hřip'simē; (c) The city of Vagharshapat; (d) Nahatakut'iwnk' Kusanats; and (e) Siwn Lusoy. Above, next to the cathedral of Ējmiadsin, are inscribed the words of the hymn sung on the feast days of St Gregory 'the patriarch Grigor saw the great light and told joyfully to the believing king'. King Trdat and the royal family of the House of T'ork'oma are then shown kneeling in a procession to be baptized by St Gregory, who is wearing episcopal

vestments. Behind him is shown the bluish band representing the river Euphrates in which St Gregory baptized the 'Armenian nation' as the caption 'Mkrtut'iwn Haykazean azgin' suggests. According to tradition St Gregory when old retired to the Monastery of St Hakob on Mt Sepuh and submitted himself to fasts and vigils. Noah's ark is shown above the picture of the pit in which St Gregory was attended by two angels during his imprisonment. The remaining captions read: (a) Sepu Leřn, (b) Vank'n srboyn Hakobay, and (c) Masis leařn.

Like the Altar Curtain of 1791 (Cat. 43), this was also made in Madras in 1789 by the same sponsor, Ep'rem vardapet, a representative of the Holy See of Ējmiadsin in the Diocese of India, whose portrait as donor is placed among the images in the lower margin, wearing the familiar

Armenian headgear for celibate priests called the *vegħar*. They all have Armenian inscriptions, printed on very fine cotton cloth, with rich decorations fine and delicate lines.

Agat'angeghos, *History of the Armenians*; Davt'yan, *Druvagner*, 52-7; Hovsep'ian, 'Ējmiadsin medts khorani', *Nyut'er* 1, 299-303.

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### Altar Curtain

Cotton, printed; 854 × 113.5 cm  
Madras, 1791

Ējmiadsin, Old Patriarchal Residence,  
Inv. Nr 356

*Inscription:* Y[i]sh[a]t[a]k ē p[a]r[o]n  
Yakobin e[w] dsn[o]gh[a]tsn P[a]t[u]min ew  
Merkh[a]t' [u]nin ew am[en]ayn iwraynotsn  
i duřn srb[o]ly Ējmiadsni dze[řamb]  
Ep'[rem] v[a]r[dapeti 1791 i M[a]tr[a]s.

*Translation:* To the memory of sir Yakob's parents Patum and Merkhatur and all his relatives at the door of Holy Ējmiadsin by the hands of Ep'rem vardapet from Madras 1791.

Each of the four sets of three pictures (triptych) is dedicated to one of the four altars situated in the cathedral of Holy Ējmiadsin.

1. S[ur]b Yovannessi seghanwoyn ē i t'win hayots 1240
2. S[ur]b[o]ly Ējman teghits seghanwoyn ē 1240
3. S[ur]b A[stu]dsadni segh[a]nitsn i t'win hayots 1240
4. S[ur]b Step'anosi segh[a]nitsn 1240

*Translation:*

1. For the altar of Saint John in the Armenian era 1240
2. For the place of the altar of the Descent of the Only-Begotten era 1240
3. For the altar of the Holy Theotokos in the Armenian era 1240
4. For the altar of Saint Step'anos

The twelve scenes on this printed curtain represent the principal events making up the story of Holy Week (Passion Week) as recounted in the ten lections from the Gospels selected for reading on Maundy



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Thursday in the Armenian Church. The sequence of the lections as printed in the Breviary are: John 14: 16–18: 1; Mark 22: 1–65; Mark 14: 27–72; Matthew 26: 31–56; Matthew 26: 57–75; John 18: 2–27; Matthew 27: 1–56; Mark 15: 1–41; Luke 22: 66; 23: 1–49; and John 19: 17–37. The scenes represent from left to right the following episodes grouped into four sets of three scenes, each set dedicated to one of the four altars inside the cathedral of Holy Ējmiadsin: 1. Jesus is crowned with thorns (Matthew 27: 27–31; Mark 15: 16–20). 2. Jesus before Pilate (Matthew 26: 24–6). 3. Jesus before Caiaphas the high priest (Matthew 26: 57–8). 4. The Last Supper (Matthew 26: 26–9). 5. Jesus washes his disciples' feet (John 13: 2–15). 6. Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14: 32–42). 7. Descent from the Cross. 8. The Crucifixion. Jesus on the Cross with the two thieves on either side. The Virgin Mary and Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and John the Evangelist standing near the cross. A Roman soldier on horseback holding a lance pierces Christ's side from where 'came out blood and water'. The moon and the sun are placed above the top bar of the cross next to the initials YNTH, i.e. Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews (John 19: 17–36). 9. The burial. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and the Holy Women carry the body of Jesus in linen cloth for burial (John 19: 38–42). 10. The betrayal of Jesus. The scene represents Jesus being kissed by Judas the traitor, accompanied by priests and the pharisees, one holding a lantern and others spears and weapons. In the foreground Simon Peter has drawn his sword and stands over the body of the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear (John 18: 1–11). 11. Jesus, hands bound, before Ananias the high priest (John 18: 12–14). 12. Flagellation. Jesus being scourged and struck by two soldiers (John 19: 1–4).

Each picture is framed by arches resting on columns in the corners of which are placed angels with open wings. In the picture of the Last Supper (No. 4) above Christ's head there are heads of angels looking downward, while a medallion

representing the Holy Spirit in the form of two doves hangs from a chandelier with twelve candles suspended from the ceiling by metal chains. Judas in the foreground is about to depart from the table carrying a ewer. In the scene representing Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (No. 6) two trees fill the background and while Christ prays, four of the disciples are depicted sleeping. According to St Luke (22: 41–6), in response to Christ's prayer 'take this cup away from me' an 'angel appeared to him, coming from heaven to give him strength'; this is represented encircled with clouds bearing several angels.

The iconography of the pictures is dependent on the printed Bible of Oskan Erevantsi of 1666, which used the woodcuts of the Dutch graphic artist Christoffel van Sichem. Most of the curtains were produced in Madras, India, a major centre of printed cloth, where Armenians were well established. They were made by stamping prepared cotton fabrics with carved wooden blocks. This technique was also known in Armenia and used in earlier centuries, but in later times Madras seemed to control the market. Though these large altar curtains had purely Armenian designs, with long Armenians inscriptions, they were probably manufactured by Indian workers after designs supplied by Armenian artists.

Kasparian. *Armenian needlelace and embroidery: Armenian Woven Art*: AGBU Gallery; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, No. 77, p. 27.

44

### Altar Curtain

Silk embroidered with coloured stones;  
128 × 200 cm  
Agulis, 1771  
Ējmiadsin, Patriarchal New Residence,  
Inv. Nr 63

*Inscription*: Left. Y[i]sh[a]t[a]k ē Aguletsi Simeoni koghakits Ant'aramin ew Oskani koghakits Hripsimēin orduyn Mhrapin k'ern Gayieanin koghaktsoyn.

*Translation*: Left. To the memory of Simeon from Agulis, his wife Ant'aram and to Hrip'simē wife of Oskan, son of Mhrap uncle of his wife Gayiene.

*Inscription*: Right. Eghisabet'in ordoyn Grigorin dstern Herik'nazin ew arn norin Petrosin i duṛn Goght'neats Surb T'omayi Aṛak'eloyin t'vin hayots RMI [1220 = 1771].

*Translation*: Right. To Grigor son of Eghisabet and sister Herk'inaz and her husband Petros at the door of the [church] of Saint Thomas the Apostle of Goght'n in the Armenian era 1220 [AD 1771].

Agulis or Agulik' was the centre of the



historic Goght'n province until the end of the ninth century (now part of Nakhijevan) whose Armenian population, calling themselves zoker, spoke a special Armenian dialect called Agulisi barbar. Agulis enjoyed great expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and became an important commercial centre, in particular for its silk goods. The region had twelve churches, the most famous being the church dedicated to St Thomas the Apostle. St Thomas was founded at a very early date but the present building was rebuilt in 1694 after the earthquake of 1679. The interior of the church is painted with rich decorations and pictures of the Virgin by the famous artist and poet Naghsh Yovnat'anian.

The coronation of the Virgin Mary is the principal subject. In the centre is depicted the Virgin Mary enthroned with the Child Jesus holding a book and wearing a crown identical to the crown being held over their heads by the two angels. On the left side of the throne stands St Stephen 'the deacon', holding a censer in one hand and the ark of the incense in the palm of his other hand. He has a martyr's crown and embroidered halo, and is wearing a deacon's tunic and stole. On the right of the throne stands St John the Baptist, wearing a tunic and holding a staff with a banner and pointing

to the 'lamb of God'. In previous publications these two figures have been identified wrongly as representing St Gregory the Illuminator and Christ resurrected. The four Evangelists are represented in the four corners with their symbols. On the left and right are medallions with inscriptions held by pairs of angels wearing trousers. The whole composition is framed within floral borders. The embroidery is done in multicoloured silk threads. The iconography is similar to another curtain in the collections, dated 1805, in which the figures are all identified by inscriptions.

Thierry, *Armenian Art*, 470 1; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian Church*, Nos 78 78a, p. 143; *Treasures of Ĕjmiadzin*. Pl. Altar Curtain 1805.

#### 45 Altar Frontal for the Feast Day of St James

Cotton embroidered with gold and silver threads in relief; 110 × 201 × 1 cm  
Constantinople (?), 1619

##### *Inscriptions:*

1. Astuadsamayr. 2. Glukh srboyn Yakobay. 3. Gognotss yishatakelay Khatunn Srboy Erusaghemay. 4. Surbn Yovhannes Awetaranitch. 5. Surbn Yakob Tearn Eghbawrn. 6. Tuin Hayots 1068.

##### *Translation:*

1. Mother of God. 2. The head of St James. 3. The curtain is memorial from Khatoun to Holy Jerusalem. 4. St John the Evangelist. 5. St John the Brother of the Lord. 6. In the AE 1068 (1619).

Embroidered altar frontal for the feast day of St James, the Brother of the Lord, the patron saint of the Armenian patriarchate of Jerusalem whose Feast Day is marked on 29 December. During the celebration of the Divine Liturgy this altar frontal is used to cover the front of the altar. The central picture depicts a hovering angel, who brings the head of St James to the enthroned Virgin. Witnessing the event on the right are St James, 'Brother of the Lord' and St John, 'the Evangelist'. The 16 episodes around the frame from left to right are: the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, the Lowering from the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Last Supper, Transfiguration, the Raising of Lazarus, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Washing of the Feet, Baptism, Presentation to the Temple, Nativity, Annunciation, Appearance to the Apostles after the Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost.

The custom of the Armenian Church to have a change of altar frontal for every Feast necessitates a collection of alternative frontals, which were traditionally embroidered from the seventeenth century. They are all stretched over a frame, which fits exactly the front of the altar. The colours green and red have particular connotations as well, for the third and fourth Sunday after Easter are called by the Armenian Church Green and Red Sunday.

Narkiss, ed., *Armenian art treasures of Jerusalem*, 134 5, figs 179; Bedoukian and Victoria, *Armenian woven art. An exhibition from the collection of Dr. Paul Z. Bedoukian*, AGBU Gallery, New York, 1980.



## VESTMENTS

46

**Episcopal Mitre**

Silk, pearls, gold and silver thread embroidery;  
48.5 × 31 cm

Kesarea (Caesarea), 1653

Holy Ējmiadsin Treasury, Nr 51

*Inscription:* Yishatak eghitsi Sargisi Kesara srboy Oyannesi Karapeti Yisilian P'ashakhani Ghukas varpetn 1653'.

*Translation:* In memory of Sargis of Caesarea to the [Church] of Holy John the Baptist made by the master Ghukas P'ashakhan in the year 1653.

*Front:* The central figure of the iconography is the full-frontal triumphal image of Christ rising from the tomb, holding a cross and blessing, framed in a row of pearls. Two angels hover next to the empty tomb, represented by a white marble slab on the right side of which sits the Virgin Mary. The border around the Resurrection scene is divided up into 15 medallions which contain the modelled figures of God the Son, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove (top), followed by bust portraits of the 12 apostles, each holding the instrument of their torture. The two portraits below represent the Evangelists John and Luke with their corresponding symbols.

*Back:* The scene presented is that of the Adoration of the Magi. The Virgin Mary is attended by John the Baptist, Joseph and the donor, with two angels above the Virgin's head. Fifteen medallions fill the outer margin in which are represented in the centre God the Father and God the Son, and the rays of light (i.e. the God the Holy Spirit) descending. Each of the ten medallions holds two portraits, which together with the two single figures in the lower left and right corners make up the portraits of the 22 patriarchs. The remaining two portraits in the margin below represent the Evangelists Matthew and Mark. Obviously the scenes represent the two major feasts of the Christian



46 front

Church, i.e. Christmas and Easter.

The Armenian Church adopted the use of the mitre from Rome in the fifteenth century.

Nersessian, *Der, Treasures of Ejmiadsin*, 1984; Davu'yan, *Haykakan zhanyak*; Kasparian, *Armenian needlelace and embroidery*; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian church. Exhibition*, Pls 55-55a; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 42; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross. Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 52.





46 back

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**Amice (Vakas)**

Silk, pearls, silver-threaded embroidery;  
52.5 × 18.5 cm

Bitlis, 1781

Holy Ējmiadsin, Inv. Nr 185

*Inscription:* [Kogh]aktsin hachi Andařamin  
ordoyñ mahdesi Khatcheriani ... surb  
Astuadsadsni ekeghetsin 1230

*Translation:* To haji Andařamin from Akn,  
son of mahdesi Khatcherian to the Holy  
Theotokos [in AE] 1230 [1781]

The vakas is worn over the shoulders with  
the prayer 'Clothe my neck, O Lord, with  
righteousness and cleanse my heart from  
all filthiness of sin, by the grace ...' and  
it symbolizes the yoke of Christ.

Christ enthroned in the middle is  
flanked by 12 figures of the Apostles, six  
on either side wearing haloes composed  
of pearls. The figures are embroidered in  
relief in silver and silk thread on red silk  
cloth. The single-line inscription runs  
along the lower margin in large capitals.

*Armenian woven art: an exhibition from the collection of  
Dr Paul Z. Bedoukian, New York, 1980; Moscow,  
Treasures of Armenian Church, Nr 58-58a; Megaron,  
Treasures of Armenia, Nr 47; Helsinki, The Holy Cross.  
Treasures of the Armenian Church, Nr 54.*



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48

48  
**Epigonation (konk'er)**

Red silk, pearls, gold- and silver-threaded embroidery; 26.5 × 26.5 cm

Van, 17th century

Holy Ējmiadsin, Inv. Nr 378

*Inscription:* Yishatak ē konk'eris khochay Barseghin i vayelumn P'ilippos kat'oghikosi

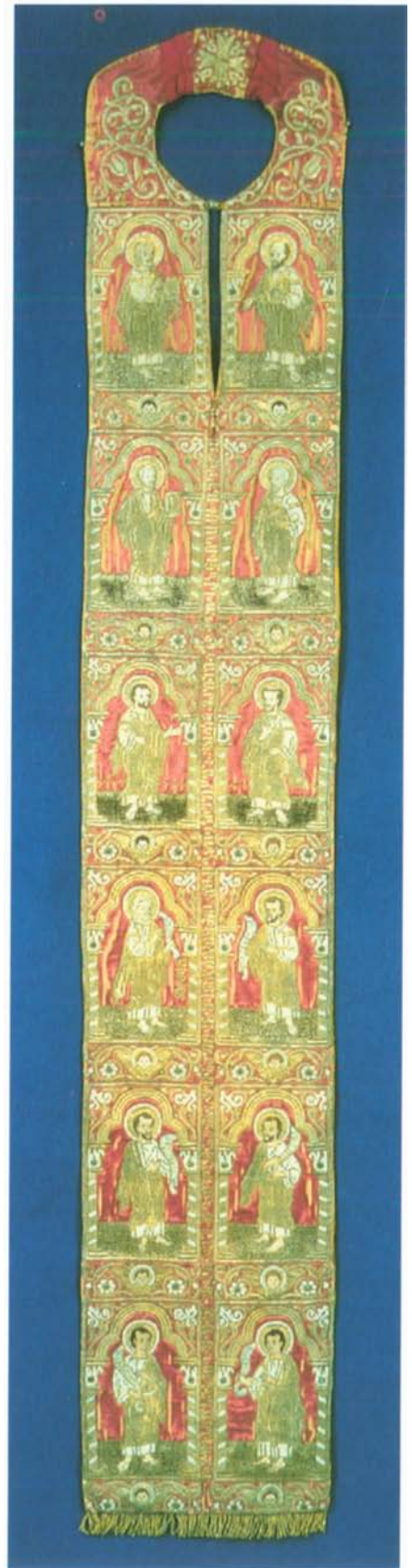
*Translation:* This konk'er is in memory of khawja Barsegh for the enjoyment of catholicos P'ilippos

The *konk'er* is a stiff piece of board, richly embroidered with four tassels at the four corners. Only the catholicos or the patriarch can wear it, hung on the belt at the height of the knee on the right side,

with a cord attached to one of the corners. It is the symbol of justice.

The iconography of the scene embroidered in gold and silver thread in relief on silk represents the enthroned Virgin Mary with the Child Christ seated in her lap giving a blessing. The four corners of the throne are filled with the symbols of the Four Evangelists. The outer borders have a delicate floral design. Three tassels hang from the three corners. The epigonation was dedicated for the use of Catholicos P'ilippos I Aghbaketsi, who was catholicos from 1635 to 1655.

Kévorkian and Achdjian, *Tapis et textiles Arméniens*, p. 136; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian Church*, Nr 60; Athens, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 52; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 56.



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**Stole**

Silk, pearls, gold- and silver-threaded embroidery; 144 × 26 cm

K'anak'er, 1716

Holy Ējmiadsin Treasury, Nr 127

*Inscription:* Yishatak ē p'orurars  
Vezrkhanin egheal arcwelean  
vacharakayni nviretsaw dzeramb  
K'anak'eritsi Sardard Vardaneani vor  
ēndsayetscal i duṙn Surb Geghardn 1165

*Translation:* This stole is in memory of  
Vezhirkhan an eastern merchant, made by  
Sardard of K'anak'er who presented it to  
the church of Holy Geghard in 1165 [1716]

The *p'orurar* (stole or epitrachelion) is of the same material as the cope. At one end it has an opening for the neck, and it hangs down in front over the *shapik* (tunic). The celebrant of the Divine Liturgy wears it, saying 'Clothe my neck, O Lord, with righteousness and cleanse my heart from all filthiness of sin, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ...'. It symbolizes righteousness.

The stole is divided into two equal halves, separated by a line of inscription in gold thread on either side of which are the full-frontal standing figures of the 12 apostles, beginning with St Peter holding the keys. Each of the figures is individually modelled, each holding a book or an open white scroll with Greek inscriptions. They are positioned under elaborate columns separated by a horizontal band containing the faces of winged angels. The red silk, embroidered with gold and silver thread in relief, is decorated with floral motifs and embellished with pearls and precious stones.

Nersessian, *Der, Treasures of Ējmiadsin*; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian church*, Nr 65-65a; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 50; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 62.

50

**Maniple or Epimanikia (Bazpan)**

Gold- and silver-threaded embroidery;

14.5 × 25.5 × 18 cm

Constantinople, 18th century

Holy Ējmiadsin Treasury, Nr 38 a b

The maniple, cuff or epimanikia is long enough to go round the lower part of the forearm, over the sleeves of the alb. It is of the same material as the cope. It is worn by the celebrant during the Divine Liturgy on his right and left forearms. The celebrant wears it, saying 'Give strength, O Lord, to my right (or left) hand and wash all my filthiness,

that I may be able to serve thee in health of soul and body, by the grace of our Lord ...'.

The central figure on the left cuff is that of the Angel Gabriel and on the right cuff that of the Virgin Mary standing in front of a throne with a table and above it two angels. The Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove in the top left corner and the canopy above the Virgin's head suggest that the elements of the two sections are meant to be seen together as a depiction of the Annunciation scene.

Nersessian, *Der, Treasures of Ējmiadsin*; Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian church*, Nr 68; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 54; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, 63.



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51

**Infulae (artakhurak)**

Silk, gold- and silver-threaded embroidery;  
43 × 8 × 13 cm  
Constantinople, 18th century  
Holy Ējmiadsin Museum, Nr 538 a b

Artakhuraks or infulae or fanons are lappets which hung from the lower edge of the vakas (amice) about 15 cm away from the centre on either side. They are made of the same material and colour as the vakas. Usually three tassels are attached to the lower end of an artakhurak. Artakhuraks are worn with the mitre by bishops.

Embroidered with several layers of gold thread in relief on red silk, the central figure on the left is that of the Archangel Gabriel standing on a cloud, wearing a halo made up of two rows of pearls. The inscription 'Gabriel' is placed in the outer margin in the middle, between the figure and the floral decoration. The right artakhurak has the full standing figure of the Virgin Mary looking towards the angel with open hands, and above her head clouds are represented in white and blue thread, with the dove of the Holy Spirit

placed in between descending on the Virgin Mary. The two elements of the iconography together depict the Annunciation. The top half of the lappet is filled with floral ornamentation in varied colours of thread similar to the left lappet. The letters 'Surb Mariam' (Holy Virgin) are placed in the outer margin next to the dove. A tassel of gold thread hangs from the end of each lappet.

Moscow, *Treasures of Armenian Church*, Nr 69;  
Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 55; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 64.

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**Chasuble or Cope (shurjar)**

Velvet, gold-threaded embroidery; 48 × 305 cm  
Van, 1826  
Holy Ējmiadsin Museum, Nr 549

*Inscription:* 1826 Van. Yishatak dni i du'n norashen S. Ekeghetswoy. P. Gap'amachian ē'

*Translation:* Van 1826. Placed at the door of the newly built church in memory. It is [by] P. Gap'amachian

The cope is a piece of semi-circular fine rich material, having a radius equal to the height of a man to the shoulder, plus four inches (10 cm). In front it has silver buckles which fasten the two ends. It is worn by the celebrant during the Divine Liturgy, when he says the prayers: 'In thy mercy, O Lord, clothe me with a radiant garment and fortify me against the influence of the evil one, that I may be worthy to glorify thy glorious name, by the grace ...'. Symbolically it represents the glory of the new spiritual life and of the faith, as shield and defence against the attacks of the Evil One.

A luxurious cope decorated with delicate and intricate ornamentation of floral and plant motifs in thick gold thread lace on dark red velvet. The work executed by the master P. Gap'amachian (Vaspurakan) is among the best known. This cope was worn by the famous catholicos Mkrtitch I, called Khrimean Hayrik (1892-1907), who was born in Van.

Moscow, *Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 75; Helsinki, *The Holy Cross: Treasures of the Armenian Church*, Nr 70.



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# CARVED WOOD

Wood is a much more fragile medium than stone and metal, and much of what must have been produced in Armenia has not survived. Among the collection of the Late Bronze Age in the State History Museum of Armenia, of particular interest for their originality and technical accomplishments, are two sumptuous wooden carts, dating back to the fourteenth or thirteenth century BC and discovered in the cemeteries of the village of Ltchashen on the shores of Lake Sewan. What remains of sculpted or carved wood from medieval Armenia are church doors, capitals used on the columns of a ninth-century church, an important carved reliquary of the Crucifixion, and lecterns.

The reliquary presented by Gregory Magistros to the Church of Havuts T'ar in 1031 presents a unique interpretation of the Descent from the Cross, in eastern or western art.

Jesus is depicted standing very straight, his head slightly bent and his right hand on the shoulder of Joseph of Arimathea, while Nicodemus removes the nails holding Christ's left hand to the cross. God's blessing hand and the dove are represented on the upper arm of the cross, thus bringing together the three persons of the Trinity. The composition is impressive in its simplicity: the serene expression of Christ and the upright body recall not the agony of the Passion but the triumph over death. The jewelled cross is not an instrument of torture but the triumphal 'Astuadsénkal' (God-receiving) sign.

The best extant examples of wooden sculpture are on display: capitals from the monastery at Sewan, the Doors of the Monastery of the Holy Apostles at Mush and Sewan and Lectern from Ani.

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## Carved Wooden Panel

Walnut wood; 180 × 57 × 12 cm

Haghpat, Church of the Holy Cross, 1188

Sam Fogg, London

The panel is divided into four horizontal segments carved with themes and images both ornamental and figurative of religious and secular content. The uppermost segment of the panel represents a man in a long garment with the heads of the lion on either side clasped under each arm. Single birds are carved on each side of the man's head which is missing because of the crack that runs from the top to the bottom of the panel. The bird on the right is standing on a dragon's tail. Ornamental motifs of closely tangled and knotted braiding fill the backgrounds. There are circular discs between the legs of the lions.

The second segment contains the representation of a cross placed under an arch, supported by twin columns, recalling the design of the entrances of the Armenian churches of the Bagratid period of the tenth and eleventh centuries. The arms of the cross are ornate and its base rests on an interweaving plant and

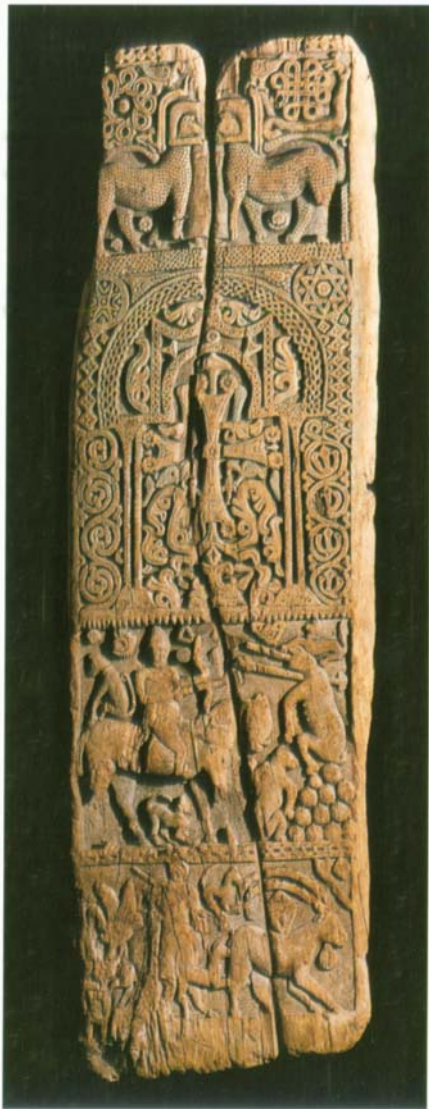
geometrical motif, intended as an allusion to the fertile seed whence sprouts the stem. Single birds, with fish in their beaks, are placed below the horizontal arms of the cross. A six-pointed star is carved within a circle on the right-hand corner of the large arch, and an eight-pointed star is placed in the left. The cross is of the 'winged' type, that is, it has leaves sprouting at the base and symmetrically at its sides. In accordance with its symbolic implications which make reference to the tree of life, the cross also bears fruit, having sinuous shoots that branch off from the extremities and carry various schematized bunches of grapes or pines.

The third horizontal segment represents what seems to be a hunting scene. A horseman, carved on the left, is shooting a bear with an arrow. The bear is pierced by two arrows and beside it, a bit lower, a second bear is shown. A cheetah with a collar around its neck is seated on the horse-croup with its back turned to the hunter. A hound is placed below the horse's belly. Another smaller cheetah, also with a collar around its neck, is carved above the arrow-stricken bear.

The lowermost horizontal segment of

the carved panel shows a large antelope on the right, which is being attacked by two hounds from above and behind at the same time. A hunter is also represented piercing the antelope with his lance. Unfortunately, the left side of the panel is damaged, and it is impossible to identify the image. It probably represents rich foliage.

The two previous attempts to identify the iconography by J.M. Fiey (1985) and L. Chookaszian (1994) are unsatisfactory. Daniel in the lion's pit and Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts (Daniel 6: 17-24; 7: 1-7), which are unusual subjects in East Christian art, frequently appear in Armenian art. The iconography of the first uppermost segment and that of the third segment are related in that the first represents Daniel in the lion's pit and the figuring of the beasts in the third segment has the distinctive traits of the beasts in the vision of Daniel mentioned in the biblical text. The first, carved in the upper zone, is like a lion; next comes the second beast who was 'like to a bear and it raised up itself on one side, and had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it'; the third is 'like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of fowl, the beast



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had also four heads'. The fourth beast was 'dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it -- and it had ten horns -- and behold there came among them another horn'. The circular objects between the legs of the lions in the first segment represent the sun and the moon an allusion to Daniel's dream. The circular objects next to the large and small bear represent the 'residue'.

The scene of Daniel between the lions is found sculpted on the base of the seventh-century funerary *stele* from

Haritch (see Cat. 11). Bas-reliefs of Daniel represented between lions occur also in Georgian sculpture represented in Medjoushevi (8th century), Hiza-Bavra (flanked by stone crosses on either side) and Martvili (912-957), replicated in the west in the sculptures of Neuilly in Donjon, Vouvant and Cosne. The figure of Daniel between two lions is also found on the northern façade of the Church of the Holy Cross on Aght'amar, built by the architect Manuel for King Gagik I between 915 and 921. Parallels of this imagery are found in an Armenian Lectionary written in 1331 in the canton of Apahunik' north of Lake Van (Jerusalem, no. 95); in a Lectionary written in 1335 at the village of Vahnashen (Pierpont Morgan Library, no. 803) and in a Lectionary written in 1414 in Khizan (Chester Beatty Library, no. 599).

The Monastery of Haghpat, founded in 967 or 976 by Queen Khosrovanush, the wife of Ashot III Bagratid, has a main church called Holy Cross which was completed in 991 by Smbat Bagratid, then king of Armenia, and his brother Gurgun, or Kiwrike, king of Lori. A plaque embedded on the east façade represents the two donors holding a model of the church. Gurgun wears a kind of mitre and Smbat a turban similar to the caliph's. The fretwork frieze around the drum dates from a restoration undertaken in 1188 or 1221. The walls of the interior have paintings of a Deesis combined with a theophanic vision, the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, the Baptism of Christ, the Communion of the Apostles and the Pentecost. The scenes are inscribed in Armenian and in Georgian. The huntsman in the hunting scene is Gurgun/Kwirike, the founder of the Kwirikian kingdom of Lori in 982, whose helmet-like hat as depicted in the woodcarving and in the façade of the Haghpat was the head-dress of the Bagratid royal family. Prof. N.Marr confirms this, in relation to the Haghpat bas-relief that 'A tall, sharp pointed hat could be usual for those Armenian kings who did not have extraordinary sovereign right, as for instance, the Lords of Lori and Gugark'. The engraving on this panel

depicting Daniel in the lions' den and Daniel's vision of the four beasts fits well into the scheme of the iconography in the interior of the church dedicated to 'their salvation'.

Sakisian, 'Une porte en bois sculptée Arménienne de 1134', *Artibus Asiae* 6 (1937), 221-29; Fiey, 'Sur un panneau historique en bois sculpté', *Annales d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de l'université Saint Joseph* 4 (1985), 88-100; Chookaszian, 'On a newly-discovered carved wooden panel', *JASAS* 7 (1994), 47-69; Baltrušaitis, *Etudes sur l'art médiéval en Géorgie et en Arménie*, 49, pl. lxxix-lxxxi; Der Nersessian, *The Chester Beatty Library*, 151; Mnatsakanyan, 'Il complesso monastico di Haghpat (X-XIII sec.)', *Documents of Armenian Architecture I* (1970).

54

**Carved Wooden Doors**

Walnut wood; 185 x 115 cm .

Church of Saint Karapet, Mush, 1212

Private Collection, Canada

*Inscription:* Right top Shinetsaw duřs s[u]rb K[ara]p[et]is dzeramb paron Step'anosi (below) i tiv[in] H[ayots] 661 [yish]atak iwr ew dsnoghats iwrots (right top) ew ordo nora paron Tirap[e]t ew am[enayn] zarimits.(right below) Es Sarepion or kazmetsi zdurn yishetsek i K'[ristos]'.

*Translation:* This door for Holy Karapet was built by Baron Step'anos in the Armenian era 961 in his memory and his parents and his son Baron Tirapet and all his relations. I Sarepion who made the door be remembered in Christ.

*Provenance.* The inscription along the upper and lower borders states that the door was commissioned by Baron Step'anos for the Church of Saint Karapet and made by Sarepion in 1212. The date in the Armenian era is 661 and not 961. Among the extant examples of large church doors the earliest specimen also belongs to the Ařak'elots Monastery at Mush in the province of Taron dated 1134. In 1915 the Armenian population of Taron was massacred, others migrated, robbed of their property. In 1916 A. Ter Avetissian discovered in Bitlis the door of Tarkmantchats Church of Ařak'elots Monastery and brought it to Tiflis. In 1925



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the door was transferred to Erevan, to the State History Museum of Armenia. According to the sale catalogue the present door was purchased from a farm building by its owner while working as an engineer in Turkey early this century.

Each of the rectangular forms has an extruded tenon above and below for the hinge. The face of each is carved with a central figural band, that on the left showing Christ half naked in the water being baptized; a large fish is swimming in the water, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove is descending upon Christ and,

behind John, the hand of God comes out of the left corner. The full-frontal figures represent the apostles of which six are on the left and four on the right panel. They have their names carved and can be identified as Petros (Peter keys in hand), Markos and Matt'eos (Mark and Matthew holding their Gospels) and Poghos (Paul, who seems to have a sword in his hand, which is the symbol of Peter). Each of the two square panels above and one below, has a different interlace design, within a border of meandering scrolling leaf vine between minor rope-pattern and lozenge

motif stripes. The symbols of the Four Evangelists are carved in the corners of the two square panels in the second segment.

The town of Mush in the province of Taron was part of the states of the Shah-Ermen Emirs, which in the eleventh century enjoyed the patronage of the princes T'ornik, Chortanuel I, and Vigen from the Mamikonian dynasty. The most lavishly produced manuscript from this period is the great Homiliary of Mush, which measures 70.5 x 50 cm. It was commissioned by Astuadsatur, a dignitary of Babert between 1200 and 1202, and saved from 'captivity' soon after its completion and taken in triumph to the Monastery of the Holy Apostles in Mush where it was kept as their most precious possession until 1915. A second time, thanks to the devotion of the inhabitants, the manuscript was saved from the pillage of the monastery in 1915, and brought to the Matenadaran at Erevan (Ms. no. 7729). The frontispiece of this Homiliary, painted by Step'anos, depicts the Baptism, Nativity, and the Adoration of the Magi with a remarkably ornamental and extraordinarily rich and varied décor as the first page. This frontispiece was the source of inspiration for the engraver of this door. The influence of Islamic art of the period can be seen in the works of this period that include the doors of the Monastery of the Holy Apostles, the Homiliary, and the Gospel of Haghpat of 1211.

Hovsep'ian, Taroni S.Ghazari kam Afak'elots vank'in duič', *Nyut'er* 1, 304-09; Sakisian, 'Une porte en bois sculptée Arménienne de 1134', *Artibus Asiae* 6 (1937), 221-29; Der Nersessian, *Armenian art*, 205-214, figs. 162-3; Chalpache'jan, 'L'arte dell'intaglio su legno in Armenia nei secoli X-XIV', *Atti ... terzo simposio*, Ieni, ed., 103-17; Ghazarian, 'Decorative carved doors of medieval Armenia and their maintenance in Soviet Armenia', *Atti ... terzo simposio*, Ieni, ed., 187-98; Christie's Islamic Art and Indian Miniatures and Rugs and Carpets, 15 October, 1996, lot. 294, 130-31.



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### 55 Southern Door of the Church of the Holy Apostles

Walnut wood; 190 × 100 × 20 cm, wt 130 kg  
The Holy Apostles, Lake Sewan, 1486  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 86

The Church of the Holy Apostles (Surb Arak'elots) is first mentioned in historical and epigraphic sources in 874, at the beginning of the post-Arabic period. The Church of the Holy Apostles was part of a monastic complex. The church has a cupola, three apses, and the south-east corner is filled by a room. Four squinches turn the central square into an octagon, but the cupola rests directly on the drum, without intermediary small squinches. The roof is pyramidal.

*Inscription:* In the Armenian era 900, during the catholicate of Sargis (III Miwsayl, 1484–1515), during the khanate of Yaghup Bek, the door of the church of the Apostles of Christ was decorated, on the command of the thrice blessed holy vardapet Daniel and his beloved son Ter bishop Nerses, by the hands of his student the unworthy Abraham, and also gifted brother Grigoris; we prostrated seek the grace of the Lord; the chief priest of all the nation and his parents the kind priest Karapet and his mother Hamori.

All of who have previously published this inscription assign it to 1557, while Garegin Hovsep'ian and Musheghyan decipher it as 1486. This is how the date is calculated  $900 + 35 + 551 = 1486$ .

Contrary to the decorative motifs of the doors from earlier periods, the theme here is the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost, which covers almost the entire surface. In the upper band, Christ, surrounded by the symbols of the Evangelists, is seated cross-legged, a pose adopted for the Virgin in fourteenth-century sculpture. In the next register, the Virgin and St John the Baptist, and to the right another figure that is impossible to identify due to the partial obliteration of the inscription. The dove is shown flying down at the centre of interlaced arches filled with floral motifs, and grooves evoking rays of light descend upon the apostles seated in two rows, one above the other, in keeping with the style of the period. The centre of the arch is occupied by a figure wearing a crown and holding the Gospel in one hand, a cynocephalus, and a man dressed in a short tunic and cap. The donors Archimandrite Daniel and Bishop Nerses, wearing hoods, are portrayed kneeling on either side, their hands raised in prayer. A large interlace medallion completes the decoration of this door. The Descent of the Holy Spirit adorns the front, but this scene is based on a different iconographic formula: the Virgin, praying, is seated in the midst of the apostles, who are standing. The door casing is of earlier period. The ornamentation with light and graceful crosses, stylized hexagons of flowers,

symbols of eternity and other design elements impart the door with a particular grandeur.

The engraver Abraham was a scribe and miniature-painter who had copied and illuminated manuscripts in the scriptoria at Sewan in 1476 and 1486; he selects a scriptural subject that is simple and expressive, with various depths and numerous characters. The master uses the means of both bas-relief and high-relief, carves freely and easily, achieving perfect lightness of form.

Hovsep'ian, 'Sewani Arak'elots vank'in haravayin duře', *Nyut'er* 1, 202–16; Musheghyan, *Hatkanshakan*, No. 31, 64; Ghazarian, 'Decorative carved doors of medieval Armenia and their maintenance in Soviet Armenia', *Atti del Terzo Simposio Internazionale di Arte Armenia*, 187–93; Nersessian, *Armenian Art*, 242, fig. 180; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, 174; Mutafian, *Roma–Armenia*, 78; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, 210.

### 56 Carved Wooden Capitals

Wood; 35 × 60 cm, wt 60 kg  
The Church of the Holy Mother of God, Lake Sewan, 874  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 227b

The Church of the Holy Mother of God (Surb Astuadsadsin) on the Sewan peninsula is sited to the south-east of the Church of the Holy Apostles. In the 1930, a *zhamatun* (narthex) could still be seen in front of the west façade of the Church of the Holy Mother of God. It was a square room with a roof supported by wooden columns. Their two large capitals, also in wood, are now preserved in the State History Museum of Armenia, and in the Hermitage in St Petersburg.

These wooden capitals are the only specimens from the period before the eleventh century. The openwork sculptural technique, widely used later for the khatch'ars, as well as the same way of decorating the background with floral motifs, is noticeable here. In the middle, two big half-leaves with two snakes around them frame a pine-cone; two small ducks in symmetrical positions are shown pecking the corn. Two birds, joined at the tail, stand on either side of the central





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motif, and snakes are biting the beaks of the birds turned inward toward the centre. Medallions are set in the semi-circular contour of the capitals beneath the birds. These are ornamented with polygons formed by the crossing of two triangles, or with a cross with rosettes in the cantons.

Tamara Talbot Rice suggests that the style of the ducks on the capitals is similar to that of the ducks found on a fifth-century BC gold disc from Akh'algorisk hoard.

Mnatsakanyan, *Sewan* (Documents of Armenian Architecture, 18); Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, 61; Nersessian, *Armenian Art*, 205, fig. 161; Talbot Rice, *Ancient Arts of Central Asia*, fig. 214, p. 232.

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### Carved Wooden Lectern

Wood, leather; 1.24 × 46.5 cm

Ani, 1164

SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 123/1145

*Inscription:* In the Armenian era 613 [1164]  
Remember in Christ Ter Sargis

On the foot of the lectern in smaller script is inscribed

Memorial at the door of Holy Arak'elots.

The lectern, made in memory of the priest Ter Sargis, was given to the Church of the Holy Apostles of the city of Ani, the capital of the Bagratid kingdom from 953 to 977. It fell to the Byzantines in 1045, and was taken by the Seljuks in 1064. The Church of the Holy Apostles was built around 1020 and the earliest inscription mentions a donation in 1031 which proves that the church in the eleventh century belonged to the Pahlavuni princely family.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries khatchk'ars were source of inspiration for ornamenting lecterns. Several folding wooden lecterns are preserved in the State Historical Museum. In the example exhibited a cross flanked by foliated scrolls with pomegranates decorates the upper panels and a linear interlace adorns the lower panel. The cross is laid on the back of a lion passant also found sculpted on

the walls of the fortress of Ani and later the same image of the lion is adopted to adorn the coins of the Cilician Kingdom of Armenia. In medieval Armenian literature Grigor Tat'evatsi interprets the cross as the Tree of Life and in the cross sees the concept of death and resurrection.

Shahnazarian, *SHMA*, 51; Musheghyan, *Hatkanshakan*, No. 26, 60; Arak'elyan, *K'aghak'nevè*, fig. XXXIV, 209; Davt'yan, *Drvagner Haykakan*, 155-6; Nersessian, *Armenian Art*, fig. 159, 205.



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57a

# CERAMICS

The excavations at Ani and Dvin have revealed large quantities of ceramics, most from the medieval period. In Armenia, as in the whole of the Near East, ceramics were either made of clay or of silica. Clay was used locally for domestic objects, and silica for prestigious items, because siliceous ceramic requires chemical components difficult to obtain as well as a more sophisticated technique, and it could only be produced in important and well-equipped centres. Dvin was the only Armenian city able to provide such luxuries at the time.

Most clay ceramics found in Armenia were probably locally made, and there are several types.

- A type with dots and drips of colour, from the Abbasid period, for cups with incisions unrelated to the disposition of the colours (green, purple, russet-yellow), which were dotted, speckled or dripped ('jasp' ceramics).
- The 'Garrus' (or Guebri) type, probably from Iranian Azerbaijan, spread eastward to Afghanistan, and westward to Bulgaria from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries. There are cups with decorations in relief representing animals or figures with tubular limbs,

with or without coloured glaze. The 'Aghkand' (Agkend) type, probably from Byzantium, common in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Deep cups with incisions (*sgraffito*) delimiting green, yellow and brown glazes, and depicting animals (birds or rabbits) in thick vine scrolls.

Siliceous ceramics found in Armenia are as follows:

- The Seljukian type, a moulded decoration glazed in blue, found in northern Syria, Iran and Armenia from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, and mostly used for vessels and cups. It has characteristic decoration of lions, sphinxes and birds.
- The 'Lakabi' type, which is incised, with polychromic partitioning, and was used on prestigious ceramics in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.
- 'Minais', with decorations painted over the glaze and refired at low temperatures, were very commonplace all over the Seljukian empire. Decorations with Mongol-type faces were extremely popular in thirteenth and fourteenth century Armenia, a style extending to sculpture and illumination.

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## Glazed Bowl with Stork and Snake

Ceramic; ht 8 cm, diam. 20 cm  
Dvin, 11th–12th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 1794/314



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Glazed painted earthenware with the image of a triumphant stork holding a snake in its beak, whose tail is curled round the neck of the bird. Green-coloured

foliage ornamentation surrounds the bird and the plain surface is filled with patterns of three dots.

In Armenian manuscript illuminations the motif of the stork and snake in a combative pose is very common, reflecting the Armenian proverb 'the tail of the snake the stork has digested'. The image is a symbol of the struggle between good and evil and as such is reminiscent of miniatures found in manuscripts (Matenadaran Nos 2806, fol. 4b, 4893, fol. 114a, 5736, fol. 10b, dated 1306, 1451 and 1290, respectively). There is a strong folk element at work in the motif, and it is very colourful and decorative in effect.

Thierry, *Armenian Art*, 212–13; Babayan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, fig. 48, 56–7; Mnatsakanyan, *Haykakan Zardarest*, 524–5; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, fig. 147, 189; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Inv. Nr 30, 193.

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## Bowl

Ceramic; diam. 18 cm  
Ani, 11th–12th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 123/306

The bowl was excavated in Ani and has a figure of a woman with one hand on her hips and the other holding probably a mirror. The woman's belt round her waist, her dress with bands of white and green, and her head-scarf represent local traditional costumes. The ornamental motif around the figure is floral, and birds whose remarkably slender, elegant legs coloured in light green and yellow are only visible. The free surface is filled with patterns consisting of three or four dots.

A manuscript dated 1317, written in the School of Vayots Dzor, has a miniature of a woman with similar costume and expression to the bowl from Ani. Faience



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found in Nishapur, the ancient capital of Khorasan, also has a strong folk element. It uses plant subjects and animal figures for preference and also human figures in unusual costumes.

Babayan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, fig. 59, 66; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, fig. 148, 189; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 37, 194; Kuhnel, *Islamic Arts*, fig. 61, 98.

## 60 Platter

Glazed earthenware; diam. 42 cm  
Dvin, 10th–11th century  
SHMA, Erevan, Inv. Nr 2121/207

A very rare dish found in Dvin with cross-shaped decoration, beneath the rim of which runs a band of what appears to be an ear of corn, followed by vine scrolls, and finally sunflower leaves. In the centre are three interlaced squares in the middle of which there is a cross. The use of cross, ear of corn, sunflower and vine in colours of green and yellow is connected with a harvest scene. The imagery on this tray illustrates the idea from an Armenian folk song:

On the feast day of Ascension, Tilpar  
came down to our orchard,  
Pulled out a gold handled knife, cut  
the golden grapes and placed them on  
the tray.

Babayan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani*, Pl. II, 23; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 29, 192; Afak'elyan, *K'aghak'nevë*, 240–53; Zhamkotchyan, *Mijnadaryan Hayastani Hakhchapakin*, 83–135.



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## 61 Lamp

Ceramic underglazed; ht 16 cm  
Kütahya, 18th century  
Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon,  
Inv. Nr.220

Whilst most of the lamps are of metal, there are also a few made of pottery. They follow the general shape of the metal prototypes, with bulbous body surmounted by a flaring neck, on which sits the glass dish containing the oil and the wick; the wick is supported by a float made of cork. The lamps are suspended by chains attached to three pierced handles. The pottery lamps are embellished with decorative designs cut through the sides, and glazed plain white or yellow.

Probably made for personal use in view of its small size. In the decoration of the horizontal strips, perforated star-shaped motifs alternate with floral motifs in blue on a white ground. On the rim and on the support can be seen the faces of angels in half-palmettes, topped by a cross.

Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, Nr. 213; Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, Catalogue, Nr. 338.



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### 62 Tile

Underglazed earthenware; 18 cm square  
1721  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London,  
Inv. Nr 982–1892

*Inscription:* Lord God, Jesus Christ. This house of Sargis was built in the year 1170 (1721) on March 17, on the day of Friday. [This marks the] completion.

The glaze is pitted and uneven; greenish-white ground. The edges of the tile are sharply bevelled back. Armenian inscription, in black, in an ogrec frame, in five lines of erkat'agir (uncial) letters.

Stuart-Browne, 'Armenian exhibits in the Victoria and Albert Museum', 317–20; Carswell and Dowsett, *Kütahya tiles and pottery*, I, Pl. 34 (a), p. 83; *Armenian Ceramic Art*. Armenian Museum, Fall, 1982.

### 63 Dish

Ceramic; diam. 22 cm, ht 4.8 cm  
1718  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London,  
Inv. Nr 279-1893

*Inscription:* Rim top: [This] is the Archangel  
Bottom: 1168 [23 September 1718]  
Back: Abraham vardapet

Painted in yellow, green, cobalt blue and turquoise, with touches of red and brownish-black outlines. The transparent glaze has a light greenish tinge on the base.

The dish shows the Archangel (*Hreshதாகետն*) Michael brandishing a

sword and holding the soul of a dead man, who lies beneath his feet. St Michael wears a yellow shirt over a short robe. The folds of the shirt assume the character of a face, with pointed ears, eyes, nose and moustache. The ends of the sleeves are shaped like animals' heads, with eyes and small pointed ears. The robe is drawn together between the legs and has a mouth painted on it. St Michael holds an uplifted yataghan-type sword in his right hand, with a trefoil guard. He wears greaves and stitched footwear revealing the toes. In his left hand he holds a scroll, and the soul of the dead man, depicted as a naked, beardless figure with arms crossed, streaked with red. The dead man wears a loin-cloth; his eyes are open, he has a forked beard, and his feet appear bound together. On the left is a bunch of brightly coloured flowers. The rim is inscribed at top and bottom in Armenian, in black on a green border.

The back of the dish is painted with four sprays of blue flowers and leaves of different types, with four smaller sprays between them. An inscription in Armenian Bolorgir is painted in black across the base: the name Abraham vardapet, who was the prelate of T'akirdagh (Tekirdag, 100 km west of Istanbul) from 1709 to 1734; nuncio to Jerusalem 1711–17; and first visited Jerusalem in 1719. He went to Ējmiadsin in 1734 and was elected catholicos, known as Abraham III Krcetatsi (1734–7).



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Carswell and Dowsett, *Kütahya tiles and pottery*, I, Pl. 16, fig. 5, pp. 68–9; Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery*, Pl. 50a, p. 64; *Armenian Ceramic Art*: Armenian Museum, Fall, 1982; Kurdian, *Kutinahay yakhchapakinerè*, 25–30.

### 64 Ewer

Glazed pottery; 17.5 cm high to rim; spout rises 0.75 mm above level of rim; body 11 cm diam.  
Kütahya, 1510  
BM: Department of Oriental Antiquities,  
London, Inv. Nr G.1983.1

*Inscription:* Yishatak ē Abreham dsarayi A[studsojy, K'ot'ayetsi; say bazhak amanès: i t'vis 959 Mart 11

*Translation:* This vessel is in memory of Abraham, servant of God, of K'ot'ay [Kütahya]. In this year, 1510, March 11 [1510]

The ewer has a bulbous body, with a narrow neck encircled by a convex moulding, flaring to a deep rim. It stands on a carved foot-ring. The spout rises straight from the body, the lip turning outwards at the top; the handle is shaped like a serpent, with a hole pierced at its junction with the neck. The vessel is made of off-white ware (discoloured brown where exposed). It is painted in two shades of bright cobalt blue on a white ground, under a clear glaze. The underside and part of the inner base ring are unglazed. The base is glazed, with an Armenian inscription in blue on a white ground.

The ewer is painted with designs in a series of horizontal bands. The body is decorated with split leaves with curled tips, and lotus-like flowers on thin intertwined stems, all reserved on a blue ground. Below, there are similar flowers, in blue, on a white ground. Above, the base of the neck is decorated with a ring of curved petals on a blue ground; the convex moulding with a rope-pattern containing small crosses; the upper neck with dotted lotus-panels alternating with sprays of flowers; and the rim with two interlacing rings of small, lobed leaves. The spout is painted with interlacing geometric bands forming hexagonal panels, and curved petals, reserved on a blue ground. The dragon-shaped handle is



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64a

decorated with scales, each with a dot at the centre; the head is painted with eyes and the jaws with tiny teeth.

Lane, 'Ottoman pottery of Isnik', *Ars Orientalis*, ii (1957), 271 n.29; Lane, *Later Islamic pottery*, 63 4; Brend, *Islamic art*, 184 6; *Armenian Ceramic Art*: Armenian Museum, Fall, 1982; Carswell and Dowssett, *Kutahya tiles and pottery*, I, Pl. 21a, 78.

### 65 Water-bottle (surahi)

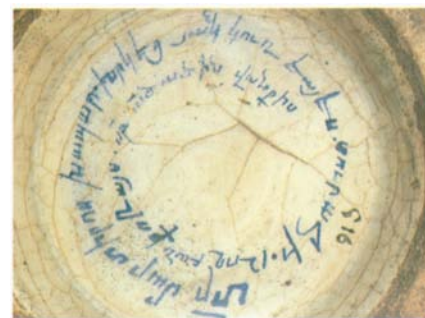
Glazed pottery; ht 23 cm, diam. 18 cm  
Kutahya, 1529

BM: Department of Oriental Antiquities,  
London, Inv. Nr G.1983.16

*Inscriptions:* On the moulding, in Armenian bolorgir script:

T[ĕ]r Martiros yepiskaypos  
khar khrkets i K'ot'ayēs  
s[ur]b A[stua]dsadsin dzez barekhaws  
mĕk surahi khrkĕk' i hos  
bařov bĕnĕ T[ĕ]r Martiros.  
i t'v[i]n 978 Marti 18 grvets ays  
surahin

*Translation:* Bishop Ter Martiros sent message (khabar from arabic xaber) to K'ot'ayes. May the Mother of God intercede for you: send one water-bottle (surahi) here. May Ter Martiros hold it with pleasure. In the year 978 (1529) on the 18 March this water bottle was inscribed.



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On the base, in Armenian bolorgir script, in a spiral design: T[ĕ]r Martiros khar khrkets yAnkureay es surahi t'ogh ban K'ot'ays s[ur]b A[stua]dsadsin vank'is. *Translation:* Ter martiros sent message from Ankara: 'May this water-bottle [be] a gift from K'ot'ays to the Monastery of the Holy Mother of God'.

The water-bottle has been broken at the neck, just above a convex moulding. Five holes have been drilled in the neck. It stands on a carved foot-ring. It is made of yellowish ware and painted under a clear

glaze in two shades of dark cobalt blue. The bottom and inside of the foot-ring are unglazed. The base is glazed, and inscribed in Armenian, in blue.

The vessel is decorated with horizontal panels, painted with delicate floral motifs. The body is painted with spirals, with the fine stems bearing tiny leaves and hooks. Below is a wide blue band, and above a band of rope-like ornament. The upper part of the body is painted with a pattern of tiny marguerite-like flowers and leaves, repeated above the convex moulding. The moulding is inscribed in rhyming Armenian, in blue double rings.

These two exhibits, i.e. this and the ewer, are from Kütahya, a town about 200 km south-east of Istanbul (previously part of The Godman Collection, Horsham, England) and are the earliest dated Armenian ceramics from Anatolia. The small spouted jug of 1510, made in the 'Memory of Abraham Servant of God' is the origin of the blue-and-white pottery style called 'Abraham of Kütahya' ware. That Kütahya was the place of production of the ewer is confirmed by the water-bottle (Cat. 65), which states categorically that it was ordered from Kutahya in 1529. Kütahya had an Armenian population during the Byzantine and the early Ottoman periods. The earliest record of a reference to Armenians in Kütahya is in the colophon of an Armenian manuscript dated 1391, which states that there was a church in that city. After the demise of Iznik workshops in the seventeenth century, pottery which had been produced in Turkey in the Armenian kilns since the beginning of the sixteenth century continued work in the eighteenth century. The extent of the Armenian dominance in this industry is also evidenced by the refurbishing of the Armenian monastery in Jerusalem with thousands of tiles and other religious objects, many of which were inscribed as donations to the Armenian patriarchate (1718-19). After the First World War a group of Kütahya potters settled in Jerusalem where they are still active today.

Alpoyachian, *Yushamatean Kutunahayeru*, 197-209; Zortian, *Kutinahay zhamanakagrut'wn*, 38-9; Kurdian,

'Kutinahay yakhehapakinerē', *Geghuni* (Venice, 1947), 25-30; Lanc, *Later Islamic pottery*, 63-4; Brend, *Islamic art*, 184-6; Porter, *Islamic tiles*, 111-16; *Armenian Ceramic Art*: Armenian Museum, Fall, 1982.

**66**  
**Tile**

Stone-paste; 26 × 19 cm  
Kütahya, 18th century  
BM: Department of Oriental Antiquities,  
London, Inv. Nr 1932, 6-15.2

*Inscriptions:* 1. S[ur]b Isahak Part'ewi.  
2. S[ur]b Mesrop va[r]d[a]p[et]. 3. S[ur]b

Nersēs Shnorhali. 4. S[ur]b Grigor Narekatsi  
A[stua]dsashuntch grots t'argman, Itsord amolk' hark' aramean  
Sahak Part'ew gitak teslean, Mesrop hastitch grots haykean  
Isk S[ur]b Nerses k'aj tchap'aban, Grigor h'etor anzugakan  
Sok'a hayots lezuis dran oskiadzoyl tchork' batsaran.

*Translation:* 1. St Sahak Partew [I, 387-436]. 2. St Mesrop vardapet [Mashtots, 362-440]. 3. Saint Nersēs





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Shnorhali [IV, Klayetsi, 1101–73].  
4. Grigor Narekatsi [951–1003]  
The Aramian [= Armenian] fathers,  
colleagues united in the translation of the  
Holy Scriptures:

Sahak the Parthian who had the vision,  
Mesrop the founder of the Armenian  
alphabet,  
And Nerses, supreme poet, Grigor, the  
incomparable rhetor,  
These four opened the golden gate of the  
Armenian language.

Painted in pale yellow, red, blue,  
turquoise, purple, with brownish-black  
outlines. The tile depicts four Armenian  
saints (left to right) Sts Sahak Partew,  
Nerses IV Klayetsi, called Shnorhali, St  
Mesrop Mashtots and Grigor of Narek.  
They are seated round a table covered  
with a cloth, at which a grotesque angel  
busily writes away on a opened scroll with  
a plumed pen the letters of the Armenian  
alphabet (a, b, g ...). St Sahak and St  
Nerses, both of whom were elected  
catholicoi of the Armenian Church, are  
depicted in full episcopal vestments and  
wearing mitres. St Sahak holds a book and

his epigonation (konk'er), symbol of his  
office, hangs from his right side, while  
Nerses Shnorhali gestures upwards with  
his left hand. An angel holds a spiral-  
headed episcopal crozier. St Mesrop  
vardapet, the founder of the Armenian  
alphabet in 406, holds a T-shaped doctoral  
staff (gavazan vardapetakan) and the first  
four letters of the Armenian alphabet (a, b,  
g, d) inscribed on a disc placed on his  
chest. St Gregory of Narek holds a book  
and pen. Above the group is an open book  
held by two angels, surrounded by clouds,  
with a bird above representing the Holy  
Spirit. On three sides the tile is painted  
with a crude border of flowers and  
interlacing stems. At the bottom is the  
inscription in five lines of Armenian  
notgir, comprising the names of the four  
personages, and rhymed quatrain verses,  
each of 16 syllables.

This picture serves as frontispiece in  
Mkhit'ar Sebastatsi's *Ba'girk' Haykaziean  
lezui* (Dictionary of the Armenian  
Language, printed in Venice in 1749). The  
four saints are part of the Feast of the  
Translators celebrated in the Armenian  
Church in the month of October. Professor

John Carswell incorrectly identified the  
saints, and Venetia Porter has described  
the picture as representing an Old  
Testament scene.

Carswell and Dowsett, *Kütahya tiles and pottery*,  
I, Pl. 44b, 100; Porter, *Islamic tiles*, Pl. 103, 111–13.

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### Deacon holding a Cross

Fragmentary tile; stone-paste; 9.5 × 10 cm  
Kütahya, 18th–19th century  
BM: Department of Oriental Antiquities,  
London, Inv. Nr OA + 10638

Painted in underglaze blue, yellow, and black  
with a figure of a deacon holding a cross.

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### Virgin and Child

Tiles, stone-paste; 10.5 × 13.7 cm  
Kütahya, 18th–19th century  
BM: Department of Oriental Antiquities,  
London, Inv. Nr OA 1928. 10–17.1

An icon of the crowned Virgin and Child  
made up of two tiles, painted in  
underglaze blue, yellow, black and red.  
The letters placed in the cross nimbus  
around Christ's head are in Greek.

Porter, *Islamic tiles*, Pl. 106, p. 115.



68

69

**Two Hanging Ornaments**

Ceramic

(a) Ht 10.8 cm, diam. 9.7 cm

(b) Ht 11.6 cm, diam. 9.5 cm

Kütahya, 1739/1740

Jerusalem, St James, Patriarchal collection

*Inscriptions:*

Round the middle:

(a) Ays t'ops mēghetsi Ĕstebanin hreshtakapet ek'eghetsin ishaytak'ēn ē: ... t'ivēn 1189. *Translation:* This sphere is in memory of the pilgrim Ĕsteban (Stephen) in the Church of the Archangel ... 1189. (18 September AD 1739)

(b) Ays t'opēs Heřeshtakapet ekeghetsin mēghetsi Ĕsteban ishaytak'ēn ē.

*Translation:* This sphere (in) the Church of the Archangel is in memory of the pilgrim Ĕsteban (Stephen).

At the bottom:

(b) Ays t'ivēn 1189 shinedzav. *Translation:* This was made in the year 1189 (18 September AD 1739).

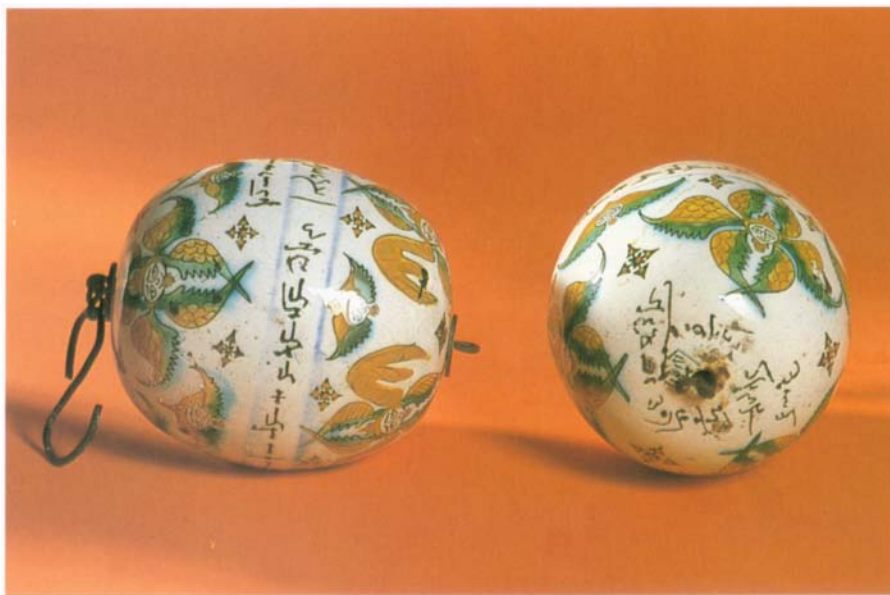
The ceramic egg-shaped ornaments are used for suspending oil lamps in the church. They are hollow and pierced at the top and bottom, with metal hooks for hanging. Painted in opaque yellow, faint cobalt blue, turquoise green, with brownish black outlines, on a white ground. Both are inscribed in Western

Armenian in *notragir* script round the middle and (b) is also inscribed at the bottom.

The ornaments are decorated with six angels, each with six wings; and six more angels' heads with double wings. The angels have yellow 'beards' and green and yellow wings. Part of the central inscription is written above the upper blue line.

The Armenian monastery in Jerusalem has a large collection of these hanging ornaments, given by the devout on their pilgrimages to Jerusalem from Turkish Armenia. These were made by Armenians in Kütahya for use in Armenian and Greek churches as well as in mosques. As in many votive offerings, they often bear the name of the donor and the date. It has been suggested that the eggs were symbols of fertility, but collectors have long held the view that they were placed between the lantern and the ceiling to prevent mice from descending the chain to consume the oil in the lanterns.

Armenian Museum, *Armenian Ceramic art: an exhibition from the collections of Hazarian and Bedoukian*, New York, Fall, 1982; Carswell and Dowsett, *Kütahya tiles and pottery from the Armenian Cathedral of St. James, Jerusalem*, 85, pl. 24 a-c; Narkiss, ed., *Armenian art treasures of Jerusalem*, 130, 157, fig. 177; Christie's London, *Islamic, Indian and Armenian art and manuscripts*, Tuesday 12 October 1999 (lots 381-407, Property from the collection of the late H. Hazarian, 1886-1981).



70

**Ewer and Bowl**

Ceramic underglazed

(a) Ht 20 cm, diam. of body 14.5 cm

(b) Ht 8.2 cm, diam. 26 cm

Kütahya, 1716

Jerusalem, St James, Patriarchal collection

*Inscriptions:*

(a) Yishatak ē i t'ur'n [for du'n] surb Akobin t'v[in] 1166 Dektember 29.

*Translation:* This is a memorial to the Church of St James in the year 1166, December 29 (29 December, AD 1716).

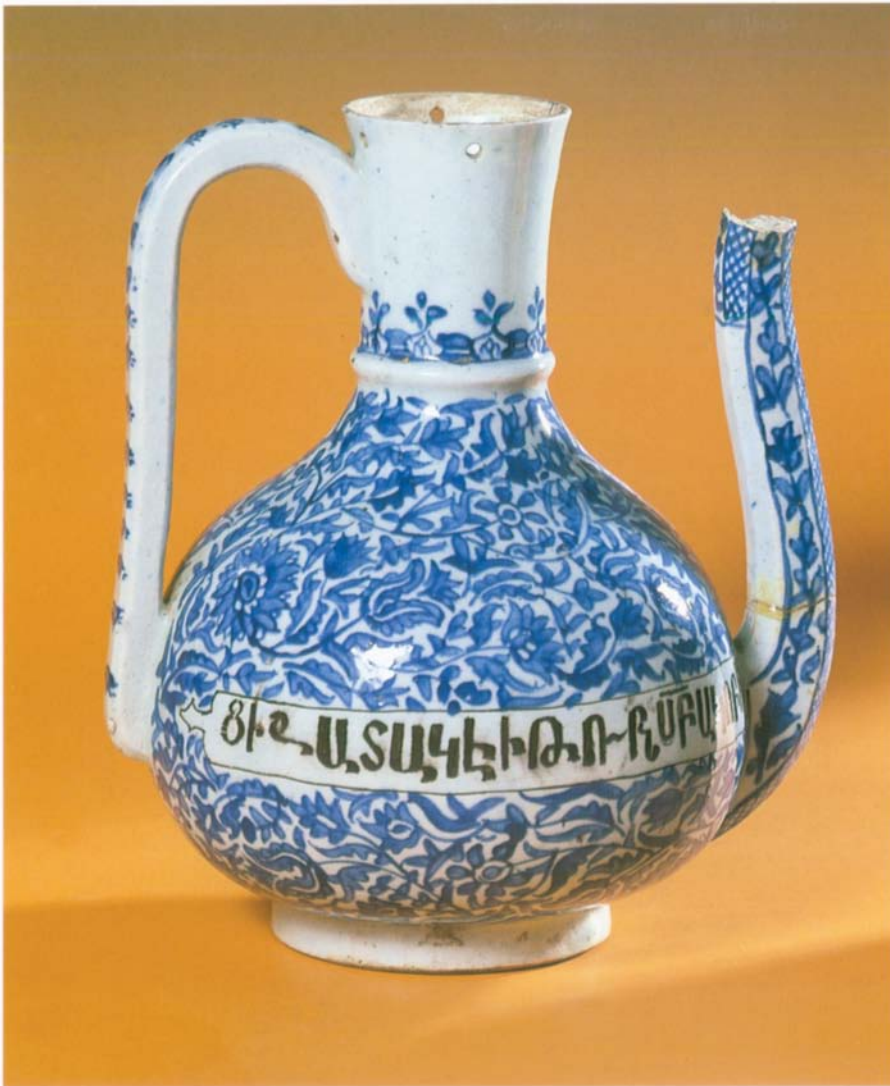
(b) (rim) Dzeřamb meghapart ew anarzhan K'ework' S. Margarēits (?) i t'v[in] 1166 Dektember 9 Got'atsu Abrahami ord[i] mghtedsi Karapetin ē. *Translation:* By the hand of the sinful and unworthy K'ework of the Holy Church of the Prophets (?) in the year 1166, December 9 [AD 1716], for the pilgrim Karapet son of Abraham Got'atsi (of Kütahya). (centre) Yishatak ē i t'ur'n s[ur]b Akobin. *Translation:* It is a memorial to the Church of St James.

Fine hard off-white ware. Painted in cobalt blue, with darker outlines, and black; the glaze has a greenish tinge. The spout is broken. Five holes are pierced through the neck, at the rim. The handle and the spout are hexagonal in section. There is a convex moulding at the junction of the neck to the body. The body of the ewer is decorated with an all-over pattern of blue flowers and leaves. Above the undecorated moulding is a ring of ten leaf sprays, linked by double bands. The outside of the handle is painted with a row of 17 little birds. The spout is decorated with flowers and leaves, alternating with panels of cross-hatching. Round the body are two cartouches with trefoil ends, outlined in black, containing an Armenian inscription in large capital letters in two sections.

The bowl is a similar ware and decoration to the ewer, to which it belongs. Inside the bowl there is a carved, unglazed ring at the angle of the rim. The bottom of the base ring is also unglazed. Inside, there are two Armenian inscriptions, painted in black in rings at the centre and the rim. Inside the central ring is a spray of blue flowers; it is

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surrounded by a wide band of blue flowers and leaves, and a ring of eight palmettes and eight ewer-like motifs. Outside, the bowl is painted under the rim with a band of flowers and leaves, and the body is decorated with five floral medallions in Chinese style. On the base is a small spray of flowers. The ewer and the bowl were made especially for the Cathedral of St James in 1716 by the craftsman K'ework' for the pilgrim Karapet, son of Abraham of Kütahya. The bowl was made on 9 December and the ewer on 29. During the Armenian Divine Liturgy, as part of the ritual of Purification, the celebrant washes his hands, reciting Psalm 26, 'I will wash my hands in innocence; and will go around thine altar, O Lord'.

Carswell and Dowsett, *Kütahya tiles and pottery from the Armenian cathedral of St James, Jerusalem*, 81, pl. 22, a c; Narkiss, ed., *Armenian art treasures of Jerusalem*, 130, fig. 178.

71

**Two Flasks**

Ceramic underglazed

(a) Ht 15.3 cm, diam. 9.7 cm

(b) Ht 15 cm, diam. 9 cm

Kütahya, 18th century

Jerusalem, St James, Patriarchal collection

*Inscriptions:*

(a) (b) Yishatak ē s[ur]b Yakobin mghtetsi Grigorin. *Translation:* Memorial to Saint

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James from the mahtesi (from Arabic *muqaddasi* or *maqdisi*, one of the Holy City of Jerusalem) Grigor.

Both flasks are painted in yellow, cobalt blue, sap green, and dark red, with fine black outlines, on a white ground with a faint greenish tinge. The necks have been sawn off. The base rings slope in towards the body. Each flask is decorated with four pointed medallions. Each medallion has a yellow serrated border, a spray of red dots at the point, and a pair of leaves at the base; at the centre is a blue flower with green radiating leaves on a red ground. Between the medallions are arabesque sprays of flowers and leaves. Below is a ring of diagonal pointed leaves, alternately blue, green or yellow, with red dots. The crudely painted inscriptions, in Armenian script, are identical.

Carswell and Dowsett, *Kütahya tiles and pottery from the Armenian cathedral of St James, Jerusalem*, 96 7, pl. 23, b; Narkiss, ed., *Armenian art treasures of Jerusalem*, 29 130.



72

72  
**Bowl**

Ceramic underglazed; diam.16 cm.  
Kütahya, 18th century  
Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon,  
Inv. Nr 927.

This bowl, decorated in green, yellow and purple on a white ground, has as its central element a six-pointed star, a motif often found in Armenian art. A rosette inside the star, twelve bulbs and six fishes complete the inner decoration. Fishes, as a Christian decorative motif, served to recall the feeding of the five thousand and the sacrament of the Eucharist by the Lord, who is referred to, in the second century, as 'the huge, pure Fish from the fountain which faith provides as food'.

Lisbon, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Catalogue, Nr 339; *Art and the Sea*, Catalogue, Nr 134; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, Nr 210.



73

73  
**Pilgrim Flask**

Ceramic; 19 · 7.6 cm  
Kütahya, 18th century  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London,  
Inv. Nr 777-1892.

Flask of flat-sided circular form with flared spout above a raised roundel in the centre. The flask has circular moulded panels on both faces. The decoration consists of delicately drawn leaves and flowers. On their pilgrimages to Jerusalem the devout carried these flasks as containers for their water or wine. Unlike metal containers, ceramic ware does not affect the taste of liquids and was, therefore, the preferred medium for this purpose.

Stuart Brown, 'Armenian exhibits in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Ceramics', *Ararat*, 5,55 (1918), 317-20; Christie's Islamic, Indian and Armenian art and manuscripts, Tuesday 12 October 1999, lots 382-407.

## FIRMANS

The history of the Armenians in Jerusalem is, essentially, the story of the Armenian patriarchate in the Holy City, whose position of pre-eminence among the various sees of the Armenian Church stemmed, primarily, from its unique association with the dominical sanctuaries. Indeed, the Armenian church has been and still is one of the three principal custodians of the Holy Places, the other two being the Greek Orthodox and Latin Churches. Second, the patriarchate controlled a sizeable number of privately owned monasteries in the Holy Land and in neighbouring countries. Third, it exercised administrative jurisdiction over several monastic and secular communities in Palestine, in the provinces of Beirut and Damascus, and in the bishoprics of Egypt and Cyprus.

Byzantine domination in Palestine and Syria came to an end with the crushing defeat of the army of the Armenian-born Emperor Heraclius (610–41) by the Arabs at the battle

of Yarmuk in 636. Jerusalem surrendered to Caliph Umar I in 638. The terms of the capitulation allegedly offered by the caliph to the non-Muslim inhabitants of the city are preserved in several versions. The authenticity of this charter seems highly questionable, but its terms essentially reflect the Arab policy *vis-à-vis* the non-Muslim subjects under their dominion generally. Although Arab policy in the main was based upon the principle of legal, political and social inequality between the Muslim conquerors and the subject peoples, among the latter the *ahl al-kitab* ('People of the Book'), namely Jews and Christians, were given the status of tolerated peoples. In return for Muslim protection (*dhimma*), these sects were subject to land (*kharaj*) and capitation (*jizyah*) taxes; and, since only a Muslim could draw his sword in defence of the lands of Islam, the *dhimmis* were exempt from military duty.

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### Ottoman Firman

Paper on silk backing; 143 × 16 cm  
Divani script, 12 Cemaziyevvel 1196  
(31 March AD 1782)  
Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate

A decree certified by Mehmet Emin, a judge of Islamic law from Istanbul on the appointment of the monk Zak'aria in place of Hovhannes, Patriarch of the Armenians of Istanbul, Rumeli and Anatolia. Due to an inability to come to a mutual understanding, Hovhannes was removed from his position upon the petition of Armenian monks, priests and notables of the community.

The document refers to Zak'aria P'ok'uzian Kaghzuntsi (1719–99), who served as patriarch of the Armenians in Constantinople once from 1773 to 1781 and again between 1782 and 1799. The circumstances relating to his second term of office are outlined in this document. His predecessor Hovhannes Hamatantsi (1781–82) was removed from office in March 1782 for the confrontation he caused with the Catholic Armenians and



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was replaced by Zak'aria on 31 March 1782. A year before, on 29 May 1781, by the decree of sultan Abdul Hamid I, Zak'aria had been forced out of office and exiled to Brusa.

In the Ottoman empire, in addition to the constraints of the *dhimma*, the Islamic authority found multiple grounds for interfering in the life of the Christian communities. One of these was the need for the sultan to ratify the patriarch's



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certificates of investiture, creating a permanent source of interference and internal conflicts. Communities were divided by quarrels between patriarchs appointed by sultans and those who were elected by the episcopal synods. The first phase of the patriarchate's historical development was marked by stability of administration, as evidenced by the fact that from 1461 to 1600 the patriarchal office was occupied by 16 men with the

average terms of nine years. In contrast, between 1600 and 1715 there were 54 ecclesiastics in the office with an average term of little over two years, and several of the incumbents lost and recovered the office a number of times.

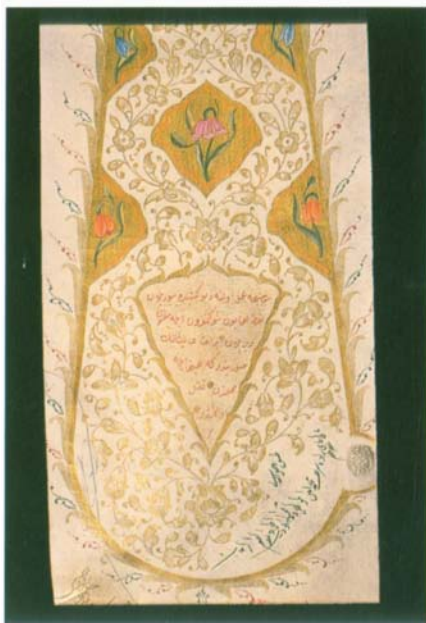
Ormanian. *Azgapatum*, II, part 3, 3155-58; Asatur. *K. Polsoy hayere ev irents patriark'nerè*, 151-65; Sanjian, *The Armenian communities in Syria under Ottoman dominion*, 35-45.

75  
**The Firman of Omar-Ibn-Al-Assa**

Vellum: 323 × 23.5 cm  
 Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate

The document sets out the rights and duties of the Christians – no mention of Armenians as such specifically – living under Islam and purports to have been dictated by the prophet Muhammad in the presence of some of his companions, and written by Mu'awiyah ibn Sufyan, who was one of the scribes of the prophet.

This is not the allegedly ancient Pact of 'Umar – which in its complete form is not attested before the end of the eleventh century. However, it might be the Edict of the Prophet to the Christians, 'a pious fraud of Nestorian monks of the ninth century' (C. Cahen).



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**Firman**

Paper: 168 × 80 cm  
 Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate, Inv. Nr 10

The classic formulation of the general status of the *dhimmis* was to be that of the so-called 'Covenant of 'Umar'. A forerunner of this is the document known as 'the Prophet's edict to all the Christians' and then '... to all mankind', preserved by two oriental Christian sources, the anonymous Nestorian Chronicle of Si'rit and the Jacobite Barhebraeus's *Ecclesiastical Chronicle*. This edict is

said to have been originally made by Muhammad with the Christians of Najran. Various monasteries and other institutions of the Christian Orient later claimed to possess genuine copies of this document, confirmations of which were connected with various historical figures like the caliph Mu'awiya and the Nestorian Catholicos Isho'yahb II. Copies of it have continued to turn up till the present century, at the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem and the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate in Istanbul. Nevertheless, it is a patent fabrication, probably the work of some Nestorian priest or monk. The 'Covenant of 'Umar' itself exists in extenso only in authors of as late as the end of the eleventh century.

Cahen, Cl., 'Dhimma' in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edn (1965), 227-31. I am most grateful to Peter Colvin, Dr Gerald Hawting and Dr al-Udhari for their assistance.

Tritton, *The caliphs and their non-Muslim subjects. A critical study of the Covenant of 'Umar*. London, 1930; Bosworth, 'The concept of the dhimma in early Islam' in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The functioning of a plural society*, Benjamin and Lewis, eds, I, 37-51; Hintlian, *History of the Armenians in the Holy Land*; Ye'or Bal, *The decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam. From Jihad to dhimmitude: seventh-twentieth century*.



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# MANUSCRIPTS

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## IVORY BINDINGS, Ējmiadsin Gospels, 6th century

Ivory, elephant; manuscript covers:  
30.3 × 37 × 0.9 cm

Matenadaran, Erevan. Inv. Nr 2374/229

This is the most important piece of ivory carving preserved in Armenia as the binding of the Ējmiadsin Gospels (Cat. 80). In a treatise called *Yaghags Patkeramaritits* (Concerning the iconoclasts), composed by Vrt'anes K'ert'ogh between 604 and 607, the author speaks of the sumptuous Gospels which were to be found in Armenia: 'We also see the book of the Gospels painted, and bound not only in gold and silver but with ivory and purple parchment.' In another passage defending the practice of veneration of Gospels in Armenia he comments, 'When we bow before the Holy Gospel, or when we kiss it, we do not worship the ivory or the red paint ... but we worship the word of the Saviour written on the parchment.' The author is referring to Greek manuscripts brought to Armenia from Constantinople for use by the translators of the fifth and sixth centuries. From what we know of the major surviving purple codices - the

Rossano and Sinope Gospels and the Vienna Genesis - all are dated to the sixth century. The ivory covers which actually bind the Ējmiadsin Gospels are Byzantine works of the sixth century, surviving relics from Vrt'anes' period and provide eloquent testimony to the accuracy of his statements. The archaeology of the covers, according to Arashes Matevosyan (1990), suggests that in 1173 the manuscript was rescued and rebound in its present ivory covers and sold to Gurzhi, son of Vahram.

Because the shape of an elephant's tusk precludes the cutting of a rectangular panel of more than a certain width, it was necessary to assemble such covers from a number of smaller panels, usually five. This assembly in turn suggested a compositional arrangement, with Christ or Mary in the centre - for the front and back covers of the book - and angels, apostles, saints and scenes from the Gospels in the flanking panels. Diptychs saved from fire, ransomed, or even treasured as a relic because of their association with some saint were assembled and used as book covers. The original holes on the borders of the panels indicate that these were part of a diptych. This is a rare example of such an instance, where the covers have survived as part of the manuscript.

*Front cover:* Carved in low relief, the central panel represents the Virgin Mary and Child enthroned, attended by two angels holding staffs. The panel to the left depicts the Annunciation and Mary's Temptation according to the Armenian Infancy Gospels. The panel on the right has the Nativity and the Flight into Egypt. The long horizontal panel above represents two elegant angels in flight holding aloft a cross within a wreath, as symbol of Christ. In the corners of the panel are carved figures, hands outstretched in a gesture of prayer, both wearing crowns. They probably represent King David and Solomon. The panel below contains the scene of the Adoration of the Magi.

*Back cover:* The central panel represents a young beardless Christ enthroned with a large Gospel resting on his knees by his left hand; his right hand is raised in benediction. There is no halo, but behind him stand Sts Paul and Peter. The panel on the right from the top represents the Miracle of the Woman with a Haemorrhage and below it the Miracle of the Paralysed Man at the pool called Bethzatha (Mark 5: 21 and John 5: 1). The left panel has the Miracle of the Paralytic, 'Take up thy bed and walk', and below it the Miracle of the Two Men possessed with a devil (Matt. 9: 1 and 8: 28). The panel below has the Entry into Jerusalem scene. Christ on horseback, holding a little cross, as in all the miracle scenes, is greeted by seven enthusiastic figures, waving palm leaves; others spread their garments in his path. The woman at the right, personifying the city of Jerusalem, holds a cornucopia. The panel above is identical with the one on the front cover.

These two plaques are sixth-century Byzantine productions; they belong to the group of composite book covers such as the binding of the Gospel of St Lupicin and the Murano plate in the National Museum of Ravenna, where scenes from the Gospels



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surround the central figures of Christ and the Virgin.

Nersessian, *Der, Armenian Art*, 72 5, Pls 49 50; Voibach, *Elfenbeinarbeiter der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, 2nd edn, 70 2; Durand, *Byzance: L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, 73 8; Buckton, ed., *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine art*, 70 4; Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine art*, 82 3.

78  
**Fragments of 7th- and 8th-century Manuscripts**

Parchment; single leaf; 26 × 19 × 0.5 cm  
 Script angular *erkat'agir*, single col., 19 lines to the page  
 Bible. Old Testament. Deuteronomy 27: 19 20 and 28: 1 2  
 Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 169

The Armenian alphabet, known as *aybuben* (a term coined on the Greek model by combining the names of the first two letters of the Armenian script), was created in 406 by the priest Mesrop Mashtots (died 17 February 440). This alphabet, comprising 36 characters, has been the medium for the expression of all three phases of the evolution of the Armenian language: Classical (Grabar), Middle Armenian (Mijin) and Modern (Ashkharhabar). In devising the Armenian alphabet, Mesrop was guided by the principle that each letter should represent only one sound, and that all sounds in the language should be represented by one symbol each.

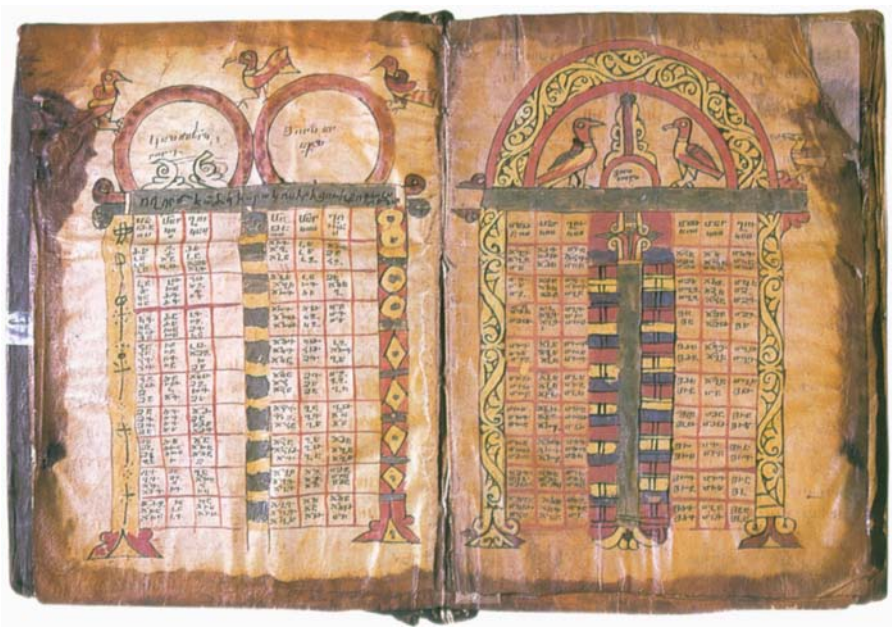
Four kinds of script can be distinguished in Armenian manuscripts. The first is the uncial script called *erkat'agir* meaning 'iron forged letters', also referred to as the 'original Mesropian' or 'Mesropian *erkat'agir*'. The *erkat'agir* letters may be 'rounded' with gentle curves connecting the strokes, or 'angular', a form that permits more letters per line; in either case words run together without spacing, with the use of only the single dot. This script was standard from the fifth through the thirteenth centuries. In the eleventh century the second script the *holorgir* (round hand) was introduced, which became the standard script for printing of books and periodicals from



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1512 onwards. The third script, *notrgir* (minuscule), created by speedwriters and notaries in the thirteenth century, has a more compressed style. Finally, the *sheghagir* (cursive) has now become the most commonly used variety.

Abrahamyan, *Hay gri ev gytchut'yan patmut'yun*, 66 109; Nersessian, 'Armenian' in *Encyclopedia of European Languages*, Price, ed., 14 18; Sanjian, 'The Armenian alphabet' in *The World's Writing Systems*, Daniels, ed., 356 63; Bochum Museum: *Armenien*, Nos 154 5, p. 239.



79

79  
**The Sanasarian Gospels, 986**

Vellum; 219 fols. Script medium *erkat'agir* in double cols; 31 × 23 cm

*Provenance:* Copied in 986 by the priest Eghian for the patrons Khatchik and Grigor. The manuscript received its present name from the Sanasarian College, established in Karin in 1881, where it was kept before its move to the Matenadaran.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 7735

**Fols 3v–4r The Canon Tables**

The ten surviving canon tables represent one of the earliest types of canon arcades, a type known in Armenian manuscripts through the Eĵmiadsin Gospels (see Cat. 80). The artist's decorative interests dominate. The supporting columns are flat bands filled with lines of various colours. The canon arcade, decorated with similar motifs, has two birds on either side of a fountain.

Of the tenth-century dated manuscripts this is the third earliest. The Gospel fragments of the late tenth century from Vienna (see Cat. 99) and the Walters Art Gallery Gospels of 996 (see Cat. 157) have a close affinity with the above Gospel.

Jean Michel Thierry places these manuscripts among the 'popular'

manuscripts in which local elements are employed with strong Byzantine influence, but eastern, Syrian and Mesopotamian, even Sasanian influence is evident. The decorations of this group of manuscripts are simple vine scrolls and geometric patterns such as checks, triangles and wheels. Living creatures are few: geometric stylized figures in the Baltimore manuscript, and birds in the Sanasarian Gospel. The choice of colour is limited but strong: contrasting yellows and reds, accentuated with black outlines. This rough style is also partly present in some Islamic-style Greek manuscripts, some of them from Palestine (Patmos No. 33[941]). It is possible that these Armenian manuscripts were the last examples of an eastern style that would have coexisted with hellenistic style from the beginning of the Christian era.

Eganyan, *Tsutsak dzer'agrats*, II, 600; Janashian, *Armenian miniature painting*, 20–23; Nersessian, *Der, Armenian manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery*, figs 1–2, p. 4; Thierry, *Armenian Art*, pp. 126–7, fig. 293.

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### The Ējmiadsin Gospels, 989

Vellum; 224 fols of 28 signed gatherings (in the letters of the Armenian alphabet A–R) of 8 leaves each; plus 8 + 2 = 234 fols. Fine *erkat'agir* in double cols; 35 × 28 cm (written surface: 23.4 × 9 cm)

*Provenance:* According to the colophon (230a–231a) the manuscript was written 'from an old and faithful model' at the monastery of Noravank', in the province of Siunik', by the scribe Yovhannes for the priest Tēr Step'anos in the Armenian era 438 (989) and of the Roman era 742 and the Arabic era 369. The second colophon records that in 1213, a certain Gurzhin, son of Vahram, brought the manuscript and presented it to the Church of Holy Step'anos the Protomartyr in the Monastery of Magharda, from where it was transferred to Ējmiadsin by Makar vardapet Petrosian (later catholicos, 1885–91) on 17 April 1847 as confirmed by the Encyclical of Catholicos Nerses V Ashtaraketsi (1843–57). There are four sites called Noravank' in Siunik', and the

colophon does not specify which of these was linked with the manuscript. A. Barkhudaryan (1958) has proved beyond doubt that the Ējmiadsin Gospels was copied in Noravank', situated in the district of Bgheno, close to Tat'ew, presently in the region of Goris. According to the historian Step'anos Ōrbelian and an inscription found in 1948, the church was build in 935–6 by Tēr Step'anos. The manuscript has been described by M. Brosset (1851), J.J. Uvarov (1862), Stasov (1886), J. Strzygowski (1891), F. Macler (1920), K. Weitzmann (1933), Der Nersessian (1933), Thomas F. Matthews (1980), Mat'evosyan Artashes (1990).

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 2374/229

Up to the tenth century eight dated Armenian manuscripts have survived: Queen Mlk'ē Gospels, 862 (Venice, No. 1144/86, see Cat. 109), The Lazarian Gospels, 887 (Mat. no. 6200), The Translators' Gospels, 996 (Walters Art Gallery, Ms. W. 537, Cat. 157), Dsurghut Gospels, 974 (Georgia), The Gospels of Ashot Sparapet 909 (Mat. no. 6202), the Sanasarian Gospels 985 (Mat. no. 7735, see Cat. 79), Sk'antchelagorts Gospels, 988 (Mat. no. 8906) and Ējmiadsin Gospels 989 (Mat. no. 2374). The principal divisions of the text are: St Matthew, 9a–71b; St Mark, 72a–111b (2nd col.); St Luke, 111b (2nd col.)–176b; St John, 177a–222a; principal colophon, 230a–231a and finally Directory of Feasts, 231a–232b.

The Ējmiadsin Gospels includes three different sets of miniatures in sharply contrasting styles. The Letter of Eusebius to Carpianos (1a–b); Ten Canon Tables (2a–5a); a tempietto (5b); Christ Child with the Apostles Paul and Peter (6a); standing portraits of the four Evangelists (6b–7a); Virgin and Child (7b) and Sacrifice of Abraham (8a). At the end of the manuscript, stitched on a pair of stubs and inserted between the last chapter of the gospel of St John and the colophon, are two folios with four miniatures painted on both sides of each page: fol. 228, Annunciation to Zacharias; fol. 228b, Annunciation to the Virgin; fol. 229, Adoration of the Magi; fol. 229b, Baptism.



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S. Der Nersessian has argued that the miniatures belong to the period of Armenian painting before the Arab invasion that began in 640. The unifying theme of the four miniatures is Epiphany, which in the Armenian Church embraces the birth and baptism of Christ, celebrated on 6 January. These miniatures represent the earliest form of the Armenian system of illustrating Gospel preface pages. It is reasonable to suppose that Palestine, where theophanies were frequently used to decorate shrines in the Holy Places, and with which Armenia maintained close ties, served as a source and model of inspiration for these preface pages.

#### Fol. 229 The Adoration of the Magi

The event takes place in a house as reported by St Matthew: 'Going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother'. An angel beside the throne of the Virgin introduces the eldest of the three kings. While in other accounts of the coming of the Magi it is always the appearance of the star that informs them of Christ's birth, in the Armenian Infancy Gospel it is the angel Gabriel. The Virgin enthroned takes a frontal pose in the centre while the Magi are grouped on either side. The Magi wear domical hats set with rows of pearls and decorated with

bands, tied in black, falling loose in fluttering ribbons. The Magus beside the angel is shown with grey hair and beard of an old man; the next, in profile, has the black hair and beard of a mature adult; and the last, on the left, is shown as a beardless youth. This iconographic style reproduces the story in the Armenian Infancy Gospel in which the three Magi, in worshipping Christ, have three different visions of him. Gaspar reported seeing a child 'Son of God incarnate, seated on a throne of glory'. Baghdasar saw him as commander of the heavenly forces, 'seated on an exalted throne before whom a countless army fell down and adored'. Finally, Melkon saw him dying in torment, rising, and returning to life. Returning twice more, the three Magi found their visions exchanged to confirm the identity of the three manifestations of Christ. Christ himself is depicted in a most exceptional iconography, for he does not sit directly in his mother's lap, but is held in an oval mandorla of blue, which she holds in her hands. The Christ Child has his right arm extended, with the palm turned toward the viewer, in a gesture of imperial largesse.

The iconography and content of these four miniatures are related to a whole series of theophanic scenes that adorned the cathedrals of T'alın, Mren, Gosh, Lmbat and Arouch. There are clear stylistic links with other works produced in the Christian east, for instance those of the Rabbula Gospels of 586 (see Cat. 108), but Strzygowski was mistaken in his view that the four miniatures are Syrian in origin.

Hovsep'ian, *Yshatakarak' Dzev'agrats*, no. 70, pp. 155–60; Durnovo, *Haykakan Manrankartchut'yun*, Pl. I, notes pp. 201–2; Nersessian, Der, 'The date of the initial miniatures of the Eĵmiadsin Gospel', *Études Byzantines*, 533–58; Barkhudaryan, 'Eĵmiadsni Avetarani', *BM*, 4 (1958), 43–59; Matthews, 'The early Armenian iconographic program of the Eĵmiadsin Gospel', 199–214; Mat'evosyan, 'Eĵmiadsin avetaran 1 000 tari', *Eĵmiadsin*, 1–3 (1990); Nersessian, 'Eĵmiadsin Gospels', *The Dictionary of Art*, 235; Buckinghamshire Art Gallery: *We Three Kings. The Magi in Art and Legend*.

## 81 Fragment of a Gospel, 10th century

Parchment; 2 fols. Script upright *erkat'agir* in double cols; 29.5 × 23.2 cm

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 9430

### Fols 1v–2r Sanctuary of the Holy Sepulchre and Canon Table

A common miniature in early Armenian manuscripts is the presentation of a monument in the form of a tempietto – a rotunda with a conical roof, with marble columns and curtains hanging from the semi-circular dome. The structure represents the Holy Sepulchre built by the emperor Constantine as it is represented on Palestinian ampullae and other objects. In this example of the tempietto repeating the miniature in the Eĵmiadsin Gospel and similar to the tempietto in the Second Eĵmiadsin Gospel (Jerusalem, No. 2555, fol. 7) has ornamentations around the roof which S. Der Nersessian suggests represents the 'Fountain of Life'. The four marble columns on the same rectilinear base present a one-dimensional structure, with birds on either corner of the roof and trees in the outer margins. The Canon Tables I, II, III, IV, V, VI and X have survived. The classical character of the iconography suggests that the artist of these fragments could be the same hand

that painted the miniatures of the Eĵmiadsin Gospels (see Cat. 80).

Eganyan, *Tsutsak dzev'agrats*, II, 928; Durnovo, *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun*, Pl. 5, notes p. 202; Ghazaryan, *Matenadaran*, Pl. 51, 38–43; Narkiss, *Armenian art treasures of Jerusalem*, figs 42, 30–1; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, No. 156, 239.

## 82 The Four Gospels Illuminated by Ewargris, 1038

Parchment; 243 fols. Script round *erkat'agir* in double cols; bound in leather and fitted with silver covers depicting the Crucifixion (top) and The Virgin and Child with twelve medallions bearing the busts of the apostles (lower). Made in 1851; 41 × 38 cm

*Provenance:* The scribal colophon at the conclusion of St John's Gospel (fol. 243r) states that the manuscript was copied by Ewargris 'the sinful and unworthy' priest, in the Armenian era 487 (1308), during the catholicate of Ter Petros (I Getadardz, 1019–36; 1038–58), who in 1036 was briefly deposed by King Yovhannes-Smbat Bagratuni and replaced by Dioskoros, and during the reign of the Greek emperor Michel 'the pious'. In 1646 the priest Mkhit'ar Mshetsi had seen the manuscript in the village of Aghburk' near Erzerum and copied the principal elements of the colophon, confirming its date of 1038.







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The colophon does not state the place of copying, but on the basis of its iconographic style L.A. Durnovo has placed it in Turuberan in Taron. This attribution is well supported by the information contained in the colophon. In 966 the province of Taron was absorbed into the Byzantine empire. Then Senek'erim-Yovhannes, king of Vaspurakan, in 1021/22 willingly exchanged his realm for possessions in Cappadocia during the reign of Byzantine Emperor Michel IV.

The illustrations preserved in this manuscript are as follows: fol. 1, Letter of Eusebius to Carpianus; fols 1v–4v, seven canon tables, and seven miniatures of episodes from the life of Christ; fol. 5, Nativity; fol. 5v, Baptism; fol. 6, Transfiguration; fol. 6v, Entry into Jerusalem; fol. 7, The Last Supper; fol. 7v, Crucifixion; fol. 8, The Holy Women visiting the Tomb; and fol. 8v, The Four Evangelists. The cycle of miniatures in this manuscript is liturgical, not narrative in conception.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 6201

#### Fol. 8 The Women at the Empty Tomb with the Risen Christ

The scene represented by this miniature, although named 'Yarut' iwn K'[risto]si' (The Resurrection of Christ), includes the Visit of the Holy Women to the Sepulchre and Christ Risen from the Tomb. The complex composition combines two successive events into one miniature following the Gospels of St Luke and St John. 'Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and, each holding cups approached the sepulchre to anoint him' (Luke 24: 9–10), accompanied by Simon Peter and the 'other disciple, the one Jesus loved [i.e. John] (John 20: 2–3). The sepulchre on the left has 'two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, the other at the feet' (John 20: 12–13), both pointing to Jesus, who is standing frontally on the right with hand raised giving his blessing. The four soldiers guarding the sepulchre are depicted sleeping, heads resting on large cushions.

This gospel has some features in common with manuscripts attributed to the Melitene school, but it differs from them in the style and quality of its illustration. The pictures fill the height of the page. The soft folds of the angels'

mantles are repeated in the clothing of the other figures. The pictures have no fixed setting, they are almost floating, and the charm lies in the rich colouring of the figures outlined against the undecorated vellum. It seems as if the painter tried to give colour a role other than a purely decorative one. The Armenian artist has played down the volumes of the human body and has brought out the linear effect, both decorative and expressive. The expressive heads and large eyes, at times the only outstanding features in the individual body, are common to many eastern schools from Coptic through Syriac to Cappadocian. The very simplicity and restraint of this composition, more intent on telling a story, makes it all the more impressive. The iconography of this artist has no connection with the Byzantine and derivative iconographic types but the composition of the scene relates to the iconography of the two Syriac manuscripts of the thirteenth century, Vatican syr. 559 and British Library, Add. 7170, Rich 7174 (see Cats 132, 133).

Hovsep'ian, *Yishatakaranak' dzer'agrats*, no. 97, 219–20; Durnovo, ed., *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun*, Pls 6–8, notes p. 202; Nersessian, *Der. Armenian art*, 117–21, Pls 87–8; Ghazaryan, ed., *Matenadaran*, 45–52; Izmailova, 'Le Tétraévangile illustré Arménien de 1038', *REA*, 203–40, Pls lviii–lxxxii.

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#### The Gospel of 'Vehap'ar', 1088

Vellum; 265 fols. Script straight *erkat'agir* in double cols; 24.5 × 32 cm

*Provenance:* The earliest colophon on fol. 79r documents its restoration by a later owner: 'in the year 537 [1088] I, Sargis the priest, with much labour restored this Holy Gospel as intercession on behalf of myself, my son Vard, and his mother. Those of you who are enlightened by it consider us worthy of remembrance'. There are present in the manuscript several other colophons which help to reconstruct the history of the manuscript: these are dated 1378 (fol. 127v), 1437–66 (fol. 79r), 1605 (fol. 79v), 1609 (fol. 79v), 1720 (fol. 79v), 1756 (fol. 80v), 1766, 1780 and 1805 (fol. 81r). The 200-year-old



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disappearance of the manuscript and its centuries-old odyssey came to its end when in 1978 Manik and T'adōs Antikyan presented it to His Holiness Vazgen I (1955–94), who then donated it to the Matenadaran on 1 March 1978, adding the final colophon (fol. 79), whence its name the 'Vehap'ar' Gospel', meaning the Gospel of his Holiness.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 10780

#### Fol. 56 The Holy Trinity at the House of Abraham

One of the two prefatory miniatures placed after the Canon Tables represents the Hospitality of Abraham or the Holy Trinity. The miniature is painted against the blank parchment across the height of the page. The three angels are depicted seated at a table. The angel at the head of the table with staff in hand and blessing with the other, has a crossed nimbus. On the table are placed 'three loaves'. The two younger angels on either side, also holding staffs, have one hand stretched out, pointing to the angel in the middle. The wings of the angels go beyond the limits of the rectangular frame, painted in a simple band of colour. In the smaller compartment, the composition represents a house with Abraham at its entrance looking up and offering them 'bread and

you shall refresh yourself'. In response to the question of the angels 'Where is your wife?', Sarah is depicted kneeling under an arch in the tent. The legends above the figures read: 'Sarah', 'Abraham', 'Holy Trinity', 'The House of Abraham'.

In Christian art, the representation of the Holy Trinity was one of the most difficult iconographic problems. In early Christian art no satisfactory iconography of the Trinity was developed, according to André Grabar. The failure of such figuration is understandable since any pictorialization which conveyed the idea of the three divine Persons must fail to convey their unity. One of the iconographic attempts at representing the Trinity is called the Hospitality of Abraham or the Trinity of the Old Testament. It was used in eastern Christianity and in areas strongly influenced by Byzantine art. According to the passage from Genesis 18: 1–15, three men appeared to Abraham while he was staying in the vale of Mamre. They were interpreted by Church Fathers, among others by St Ambrose and St Augustine, as a manifestation of the Godhead, three in one. Abraham's three visitors grouped around the table and shown as angels is a composition well known in Christian art. An early example is in the sixth-century

mosaic of S. Vitale in Ravenna, in which Abraham is shown welcoming three celestial visitors: the theme is found in several Byzantine and related mosaics and painting on wood dated to the successive centuries up to the fifteenth century. The most famous example is Rublev's Trinity (c. 1422).

The 'Vehap'ar' Gospels represents one of the most significant finds of recent years. Looked at from the point of view of stylistic development, this manuscript brings together all the known styles of Armenian book illumination. It begins with the classical Armenian ten Canon Tables set embellished with a rich and varied range of motifs, followed by part of the set of preface miniatures, and finally a set of 64 'running-narrative' illustrations within the text itself, breaking the columns of text exactly where the illustrations belong in the narrative, arranged not horizontally, but vertically. All the 64 'running-narrative' miniatures and the four Evangelists' portraits are painted at right angles to the text. The action of the individual scenes generally reads in reverse, from right to left, and in one scene, the Petition of the Canaanite (fol. 40v), even the legend in Armenian has to be read in reverse. In addition to the many affinities it shares with the Melitene group of manuscripts – Matenadaran Nos 4804, 283, 6201 and 3784 dated 1018, 1033, 1038 and 1057 respectively and Jerusalem Nos 3624 and 1924 dated 1041 and 1064 – the most interesting iconographic feature of the 'Vehap'ar' Gospel is the clericalization of Christ, the apostles and the Evangelists by clothing them in stoles. In the miniature of the sponsor on fol. 5r, there are eight persons: the sponsor, his wife, their two children, and four young men, the brothers of the sponsor, wearing chasuble and stole, with veghar, hands raised in prayer.

Nersessian, 'Vehap'ar' Gospels' in *The Dictionary of Art*; Mat'evosyan, 'Vehap'ari Avetarané', *Ejmiadzin* 5 (1978), 34–51; Izmailova, 'Quelques miniatures de l'évangile du Catholicos', *IV International Symposium on Armenian Art: Theses of Reports*, 171–3; Matthews and Sanjian, *Armenian Gospel iconography*, 53–6; Ghazaryan, *Matenadaran*, 50–1, figs 66–71; Grabar, *Christian iconography*, 114–18.

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## The Gospels of Mughni, 11th century

Fine vellum; 383 fols. Script round *erkat'agir* in double cols. Present covers by Garianč bound in 1679; 42 × 32.5 cm

*Provenance:* The manuscript was copied by the scribe Yovhannes for Bishop Barsegh. The colophon is lost and therefore neither the exact date nor place where it was copied is known. But the great resemblance between the ornamentation of the canon tables and headpieces with those of the Gospel of 1053 (Matenadaran No. 3593 and Begiwno No. 10099) enables us to assign it to the third quarter of the eleventh century. T.A. Izmailova attributes this group of manuscripts to the school of Ani, and probably to the scriptorium at Horomos. It is known as the Gospels of Mughni, for until its transfer to the Matenadaran it was kept in the Church of Mughni in Tiflis.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 7736

### Fols 12v–13r Nativity and Presentation in the Temple

Faithful to the tradition of the preceding century, the artist presents Christ's birth in a way that may seem strange. In this scene there is no tenderness, and one might say there is no humanity. The mother does not kneel before the infant, contemplating him with clasped hands and enveloping him with love. Mary reposes on a bed and seems to turn her head away from her son; she gazes vaguely at something invisible before her. The infant lies not in a manger but on a raised table that occupies part of the central composition; above his head a column of light shines from the star depicted in the form of a cross. By substituting an altar for the manger the artist interpreted the thought of the commentators and gave visual form to the doctrine of Redemption. By placing the ox and the ass – which are not mentioned in the Gospels – near the infant, he showed that he did not wish to separate the legend from the historical fact. The Gospel story and the legend are so closely interwoven that they are not easily



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separated. We are too accustomed to the ox and the ass in the Nativity scene for it to occur to us that these animals are not mentioned in any of the Gospels. They are mentioned only in the apocryphal *Evangelium de nativitate Mariae et infantis Salvatoris*. The legend, which no doubt grew out of a prophecy of Isaiah and a misunderstood passage from Habakkuk, was accepted by the early Church, and it remained alive throughout the ages because it was a popular idea that God was not recognized by men but welcomed by the humblest beasts. Another detail connected with the birth of Christ also appears. In the left corner two women are represented, named as Salome and Eve. Eve is shown seated with the Infant Jesus on her lap, while Salome pours water into the bowl. These are the midwives spoken of in the apocryphal gospels. 'Joseph went to find a midwife and when he returned Mary had already been delivered of her child. And Joseph said to Mary, "I have brought two midwives, Zelemie and Salome, who are waiting at the entrance of the cave".' These midwives, called in to certify the virginity of Mary, had very early aroused the indignation of the Church Fathers. But St Jerome's anger at the foolishness of the Apocrypha did not diminish the legend's popularity. According to the Armenian version of the apocryphal tale, when Joseph was seeking

a midwife, he met an old woman on the road who told him she was Eve and had come to help Mary during her confinement. The Middle Ages so often compared Mary with Eve that it is superfluous to insist on this point.

The iconographic formula employed here combines the Birth with the Annunciation to the Shepherds and the Visit of the Magi. The characters, shown in separate groups, are in tiers one above the other, and the cave is barely hollowed out of the mountain forming the background. Rather than give the illusion of reality, the artist has sought a decorative effect, and it is from this point of view that we should appreciate the qualities of the composition. Like the landscape, the figures are two-dimensional; lines that are a shade darker than the clothes indicate folds; the grounds are uniformly blue, there is little gold, and even the haloes of the angels, for example, are red, blue or green. The legends above the sections of the miniature are: *dsnund* (Birth), *hovi[w]k'n* (the shepherds), *Yousep'* (Joseph) and *Ewa* (Eve).

### Presentation of Christ in the Temple

The legend inscribed just below the lamp is partly illegible. The 'm' of the word *Ēndsayum* (Presentation) is visible next to *Tachar* (in the Temple). The architectural background of the Presentation in the

Temple recalls the setting in the the Adoration of the Magi of the Eǰmiadsin Gospels (Cat. 80). The exedra has been transformed into a ciborium and two buildings replace the porticoes with Corinthian columns. The tendency to show everything on a single plane is more evident here than in the older miniature, particularly in the design of the altar. The feast is meant to recall that the Son of God, who came to bring the New Law, had nevertheless wished first to submit to the Old Law. Simeon, with hands outstretched and covered, prepares to receive the Infant Jesus from the hands of Mary. The prophetess Anne stands behind Joseph holding an open scroll inscribed with the text: *'Ays tghay ē araritch erkniṣ ew erkri'* (this infant is the creator of heaven and earth). Joseph accompanies Mary holding a pair of pigeons to offer in sacrifice. The miniature has a close affinity with the miniature of the Presentation in the Menologium of Saint Basil II (Vatican gr. 1613). The figures are large and immobile and the folds of their garments are executed in the style of sculpture. The artist does not attempt to draw the attention of the viewer to any central theme of the miniature. He is much more interested in the intimate aspects of the subject – like the gesture of Joseph offering a pair of pigeons standing next to young Mary. The cycle of episodes depicted in this manuscript corresponds to the cycle of the Twelve Feasts of the Byzantine Church – Annunciation and Visitation, Nativity, Presentation in the Temple, Baptism, Transfiguration, Raising of Lazarus, Entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, Crucifixion, Ascension and Pentecost. The absence of the Resurrection and Descent into Hell is the peculiar feature of this cycle.

Eganyan, *Tsutsak dzeragrats*, II, 600; Durnovo, *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun*, Pls 9–11, notes pp. 202–3; Izmailova, 'Le cycle des fêtes du Tétravangile de Mughna', *REA* VI (1969), 105–39, Pl. XV; Nersessian, *Der, Armenian art*, 115–17, fig. 80; Ghazaryan, *Matenadaran*, 55–64.

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### The Book of Lamentations, 1173

Vellum; 343 fols. Small, angular *erkat'agir* (uncials); 15.4 × 11.5 cm

*Provenance:* The *Matean Oghbergut'ean* (The Book of Lamentations) of Grigor Narekatsi (951–1003) was copied by the scribe Grigor Mlichetsi also called Skevratsi (c. 1150–1215) for Archbishop Nerses Lambronatsi (1153–98). The place where it was copied is not recorded in the colophons, but it was undoubtedly Skevra, the residence of Nerses Lambronatsi. Grigor Mlichetsi is known to have copied five manuscripts between 1173 and 1215, of which four were done in the scriptorium at the Monastery of Skevra. In the colophon of the manuscript of the Four Gospels he copied in 1173, formerly at Tigranocerta (now lost), Grigor states that at Skevra he enjoyed the hospitality of Nerses Lambronatsi, who put at his disposal the manuscripts that he used as a model.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 1568

#### Fol. 177v Grigor Narekatsi Prostrate before Christ

Grigor Narekatsi, a member of the Monastery of Narek on the shores of Lake Van, wrote his *Book of Lamentations*, commonly known as the *Book of Prayers* or *Narek*, in 1002. It comprises 95 elegiac poems each beginning with the words 'From the depths of the heart a conversation with God', and it gives expression to the mystical meditations of a deeply religious and fervent man, endowed with rare poetic gifts. This manuscript is the earliest dated copy of his work, which also includes the *Life of St Grigor*, compiled by Archbishop Nerses Lambronatsi.

Four full-page portraits of the author – writing, praying, holding a book and cross, and prostrate before Christ – are the unusual feature of this manuscript. The inclusion of four portraits of the author is explained by reference to his Elegy 72. In this chapter Grigor says: 'I was called a master ... I was named "Rabbi, rabbi".'



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The first portrait where the inscription gives him the title of 'philosopher' corresponds to these lines. Further, on alluding to the etymology of the Greek form of his name 'grigoros', 'the one who watches', he adds: 'At my baptism I was called "wakeful" and I slept the sleep of death; on the day of redemption I was given the name of watchful, but I closed my eyes to vigilance.' The Armenian word for watchful *hskogh* – is inscribed next to his portrait in prayer, hands raised to the bust figure of Christ in the sky. The third portrait depicts a full-frontal figure of the saint clad in a blue tunic and a rose chasuble under an ornate arch. He holds a gold cross and a Gospel book in a rich, gilt binding with the inscription 'Saint Grigor the hermit [tchgnawor]' written in black, instead of white letters. It is obvious that this miniature is not by the same hand as the other three portraits.

The inscription of the last miniature of Grigor prostrated at the feet of Christ enthroned is obliterated. The pose and expression of the monk in this miniature are in harmony with the content of his poems, each of which is preceded by the words 'From the depths of the heart conversing with God'. This conversing also appears in the position of Christ who is leaning forward to bless the suppliant.

The tree, the roof of the ciborium, the stool and the few flowers contrast with the dark colours of the clothes of both Christ and Grigor. In the choice of these three types of portraits one may detect the guiding spirit of the sponsor, Nerses Lambronatsi, a great admirer of the poet Grigor, and the author of his biography as well as of a commentary on the Book of Lamentations. In the painter Grigor Mlichetsi, Nerses found a sensitive artist who could successfully carry out his ideas. The concentrated attention of Grigor, as he writes, and his rapt expression as he prays or lies prostrate before Christ enhance the spiritual content of these representations. The painter has concentrated his attention on the faces, which are carefully modelled.

Hovsep'ian, *Yishatakarank' Dzer'agrats*, vol. 1, 447–8; Azaryan, '1173 'vakaniin 'endorinakvads Narekē', *BM* IV, 83–110; Durnovo, *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun*, Pl. 30, p. 205; Gevorgyan, *Dimankar*, figs 108–10; Nersessian, *Der, Armenian art*, 129, Pl. 89; Nersessian, *Der, Miniature painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia*, 12–13, figs 21–4; Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 7–9; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, no. 159, p. 241; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, no. 3, p. 147.

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### The 'T'argmantchats' (Translators') Gospels, 1232

Vellum; 374 fols. Script round-hand *erkat'agir*, double cols; 30 × 23 cm

*Provenance:* Manuscript of the Four Gospels copied by the scribe Tiratsu and illuminated by the artist Grigor (c. 1200–55), son of the priest Khatchatur, for the priest Yovhannes in the Armenian era 681 (1232). The colophon does not specify the location of copying. After 1311 Prince Grigor gave the manuscript in memory of his deceased wife Princess Asp'ay to the Monastery of Khodaravank'. The manuscript is called T'argmantchats after the monastery in Gandzak, where it was kept until 1916, when it was brought to St Ējmiadsin by Archbishop Garegin Hovsep'ian.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 2743

#### Fol. 169v–170r The Last Supper

The manuscript, which is one of those copied probably in Artakh during the



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occupation of Armenia by the Mongols, reintroduces the traditions and achievements of the previous centuries. Their character is different from that of the elegant Cilician paintings; it resides in the force of the artistic expression and in the monumental character of the compositions. In the miniature of the Last Supper, the all-powerful Christ, bearded, is shown sitting at the head of an oval-shaped table on the left side, with his halo carved in part by *crux gemmata*, his hand is raised in benediction; he holds a scroll in his left hand. On the right sits Peter, also with his hand raised in a gesture of blessing. The disciple whom Jesus loved is shown leaning forward to ask 'Who is it, Lord?' Judas is represented with his face in profile, with one 'evil' eye, hand stretched out touching the bowl. All the apostles have haloes, including Judas, with the difference that his halo is not sprinkled with gold dust. His name is inscribed above his head. The expression on the faces of the rest of the apostles is one of disbelief and astonishment. The miniature expresses a powerful and nearly brutal talent, with its strong, contrasting colours, the severe faces of the apostles with eyes sunk deep in dark orbits and framed by dark lines, and their poses – rigid as though petrified with astonishment – emphasize the dramatic announcement of Christ: 'I tell you most solemnly, one of

you will betray me' (John 13: 21–2). Complex architectural features and blue-black skies add to the dramatic nature of the scene.

Hovsep'ian, *Yishatakarank' Dzer'agrats*, no. 406, 883–6; Durnovo, ed., *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun*, Pls 26–8, notes, pp. 204–5; Tchugaszyan, *Grigor Dsaghkogh*, 58–65, Pl. 5; Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 19–22; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, Nr 174; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Nr 8, Pl. 83.

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### The Gospels of King Het'um Written and Illuminated by T'oros Āoslin, 1268–9

Vellum; 332 fols + 6 fly-leaves. Script elegant *bolorigir* in double cols; 21.5 × 17 cm

*Provenance:* The manuscript was commissioned by Catholicos Kostandin I (1221–67) as a present for 'the handsome youth Het'um', son of Levon and Keran, who later reigned as Het'um II (1289–1307). The copy and illumination by T'oros, 'surname called Rawslin', took a fairly long time at Hr'omklay (Rum-qala), due no doubt to the death of the sponsor in April 1267, who was succeeded by Ter Yakob (I, 1267–86). An interesting reference is made in the colophon to the attack made by Baibars on Antioch on 18 May 1268. The binding of the manuscript, done by Ārakel Hnazandents (fol. 338v) perished in a fire and on 22 June 1454 the manuscript was rebound in the monastery of St Gregory by Archbishop Simcon, prelate of the see of Malatia (fols 338v–339). A final inscription, dated 17 May 1744, records that the manuscript was restored by Bishop Abraham in the city of Malatia (fols 339–339v).

This Gospel, formerly Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate No. 3627, was among the twenty-three Armenian manuscripts stolen and offered for sale at Sotheby's in London on Tuesday 14 March 1967. The sale did not take place and the manuscripts were returned to Jerusalem. In 1975 Archbishop Eghishē Terterian, patriarch of Jerusalem, presented the manuscript to his Holiness Catholicos Vazgen I who, in turn, offered it to the Matenadaran at Erevan. But before the



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donation, at some time between March 1967 and 1969, when this manuscript was exhibited and the miniatures were listed by Arpag Mekhitarian, three miniatures were found to be missing. These were fol. 152v, the Last Supper; fol. 258v, the Ascension; and fol. 307v, the Washing of the Feet.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 10675

**Fol. 294v (300v) The Raising of Lazarus**

This miniature, with its exceptional harmony of composition and colouring and the perfect balance of its figural arrangement, is definitely one of the best compositions in the manuscript. The participants are figured on different planes and the architectural setting creates a spatial dimension. An important role is assigned here to the architectural background, namely the building placed in the right-hand margin reminiscent of a folding screen seen from above. The 'folds' of this structure create the effect of spatial depth, which serves to counterbalance the overcrowded part of the miniature on the left. To the usual emphasis on the miraculous element, the artist prefers a rendering which allows for a vividness of expression and an authenticity of characters. The poses of the figures are calm; only the faces convey deep emotion,

without undue emphasis. But this somewhat impassive character magnifies the scene's grandeur and transposes it to a sphere beyond the worldly. The bright gold ground intensifies the brilliance of the colours.

The inscription above in large gold capitals, just visible, reads *Yarut' iwn* (Resurrection), while the legend below the frame in small *bolorgir* in black ink reads *Ghazaru yarut' iwn ē* (This is the raising of Lazarus).

The prosperous days of King Het'um I and the catholicos Kostandin I (1221–67) form the setting for the appearance of a skilled and imaginative artist T'oros Roslin, the master of the patriarchal scriptorium at Hromklay. Between the years 1256 and 1268 seven manuscripts were copied and illuminated by him, all at Hromklay. Many others must have perished in 1292 when Hromklay was captured by the Egyptian army, the residence of the catholicos and the churches looted, and their treasure destroyed. Unlike other Armenian scribes, often so generous with information, T'oros does not even mention the members of his family, with the exception of his brother Anton, and we do not know where his foreign surname, Roslin, came from.

Perhaps he was born of one of the marriages between Armenians and Franks so frequent in Cilicia, and not only among the nobility.

(Dowsett), *Catalogue of twenty-three important Armenian illuminated manuscripts*, Lot. 2, 8–11; Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 25–7; Nersessian, Der, *Armenian art*, 136–8, fig. 97; Nersessian, Der, *Miniature painting in the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia*, 51–76, fig. 204; Korkhmazian, *Armenian miniatures of the 13 and 14 centuries*, figs 90–103; Ghazaryan, *Matenadaran*, 114–85, fig. 242.

**88  
The Four Gospels Illuminated by Hovasap', 1274**

Vellum; 381 fols, Script *bolorgir* in double cols; bound by Grigor in 1584; 23.5 × 20 cm

*Provenance:* Copied for Smbat the Constable (1206–76), the eldest brother of King Het'um I (1213–70) and Bishop Yovhannes (d. 1289). The colophon is lost but brief notes written by Smbat himself on fols 124, 189 and 298b prove his ownership; his death in 1276 gives us the *terminus ante quem* for the copy of the manuscript. The marked affinity of the miniatures of this manuscript with those of the Gospel copied in 1273 (Istanbul, Topkapi Museum) Erevan, Mat. 345 suggest that this was also illuminated by



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the artist Hovasap' in one of Bishop John's scriptoria at Lisonka 'shortly before 1273'. Constable Smbat's Gospels was taken to Crimea, like many other Cilician manuscripts. It was already in Crimea in 1420, where the eight full-page miniatures of Gospel scenes were added between 1420 and 1432, probably by the painter Awetik, who has written his name in the Crucifixion scene.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 7644

### Fols 302v–303r The Portrait of St John and Headpiece of his Gospel

The Evangelist is represented seated frontally; he has placed the open book on the desk, and, head turned around, one finger touching his lips, he looks up with awe and amazement at the blessing hand of God emerging from the sky. The low desk has two phials on its side cupboard and other scribal accessories, and next to these a simple lectern with an open scroll hanging over it. Massive buildings in perspective occupy the background with drapery flung over it. Delicate pastel shades have been used for the draperies. The n-shaped headpiece of the Gospel is filled with foliate decoration, with a marginal ornament in the outer margin crowned by a cross, while the initial letter of the Gospel 'I' is composed of three eagles, the middle of which has its head turned inwards with a book in its beak. The title of the Gospel, '*Awetaran èst Yovhannu'*, written in red ink in bolorgir script, fills the empty space in the headpiece, while the rest of the page has five lines of text written in medium decorated capitals covering John 1: 1.

The delicate lines, as well as the serene expression of the Evangelists, place this artist's work in the same tradition as that of T'oros Roslin. The innovations are most apparent in the setting, in the way the landscape is presented and still more so in the general design of the buildings. Hovasap' fills the empty space behind the Evangelist with tall magnificent buildings reaching almost the top of the frame in contrast to the relatively small figure of St John, and so produces an effect of

solemnity. The treatment of the building shows that the artist was familiar with the representation of perspective. The palette of the miniatures is composed of yellow, light green, pale lilac and blues, and shades supporting the basic combination of reds and dark blues. There is lavish use of gold leaf.

Azaryan, *Kilikyan manrankartchut'unè*, 83 6, figs 32 7; Durnovo, ed., *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun*, Pls 31 3, notes p. 205; Nersessian, Der, *Armenian art*, 143 4, Pl. 102; Nersessian, Der, *Miniature painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia*, 86 90, Pls 329 30; Ghazaryan, *Matenadaran*, 175 6, Pls 322 4; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, Pl. 164, p. 245.

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### Lectionary of King Het'um, 1286

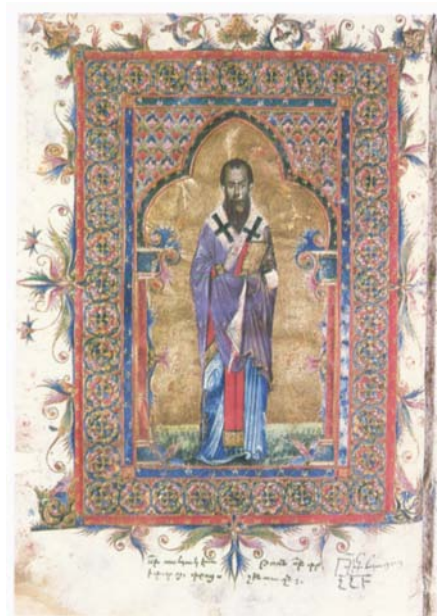
Vellum, 479 fols; *bolorgir* script in double cols; 33.5 × 24 cm

*Provenance:* The *Chashots* (Lectionary) was written for Prince Het'um in 1286, three years before his accession to the throne of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia as Het'um II, succeeding Levon III. The long colophon, which contains important historical data, does not, unfortunately, include the names of the painter and scribe, or the scriptorium. This is one of the three unsigned manuscripts in the collections of the Matenadaran, which Durnovo and Drampian attribute to 'the famous scribe Roslin'. According to Archbishop Norayr Pogharian and Sirarpie Der Nersessian, T'oros Roslin (c. 1205? 1270?) was active between 1256 and 1268 in H'romklay during the prosperous days of King Het'um I and the catholicos Kostandin I (1221–67) and copied and illuminated seven manuscripts. Although Sirarpie Der Nersessian does not accept this attribution, these could be assigned to his atelier, and the next generation of artists working at H'romklay.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 979

### Fol. 6v The Portrait of St Basil of Caesarea

The Lectionary contains readings from the Old and New Testaments as well as lives of saints and events commemorated in the Church. The repertory of subjects is thus



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wide and varied, which has made this one of the most lavishly illustrated manuscripts of the thirteenth century.

St Basil of Caesarea (329–79), holding a book and blessing, stands within a richly decorated frame. A later hand has erroneously identified the figure as being of that of 'Saint Sahak the grandson of Saint Gregory'. The first lection on the facing page is from the Proverbs of Solomon 11: 2–11: 'The lips of the virtuous man drip with kindness'; consequently Solomon, holding an open scroll, is figured in bust under the headpiece. The foliate ornament, filling the outer margin, encloses six figures, which, at first glance, have no connection with the accompanying text. Beginning from the top we see in succession the following figures: a grey-haired, bearded man, crowned and nimbed, clad in a green tunic and red mantle and seated frontally, right hand resting on his knees, the left holding a golden globe with a cross above it; a young man, also crowned, nimbed, and holding a golden globe, clad in blue tunic and red mantle and seated in the same position as the older man. The next four young men are neither nimbed nor crowned: the first, wearing a purple mantle, is kneeling, turned to the right,

and holding a crown; the second, in a blue tunic and red mantle, stands frontally, holding a chalice; the third, in a red tunic and green mantle, is kneeling, turned to the left and he holds a ewer with both hands; the last one, in a green tunic and red mantle, is seated frontally. In its formal aspects this marginal composition is similar to the one painted on fol. 67b, next to Exodus 1: 1–6 and which represented Jacob and his son. According to Garegin Hovsep'ian, and reiterated by S. Der Nersessian, the artist of the Lectionary has adopted this compositional type to represent King Levon and his five sons: the eldest, the heir to the throne, being crowned like his father (Het'um II). By painting it here next to Proverbs 11: 2–11, which is a praise of righteous men, the artist wished to convey the message that the royal family shall also guide them with 'the integrity of the upright'. The individual figures are too small to enable us to distinguish their features, but it is worth noting, nevertheless, that in this miniature, painted in 1286, the king is a white-haired aged man. Het'um II, who had commissioned the Lectionary before ascending the throne, did not include his own portrait; instead he wished to honour his father as the head of the family. His only portrait occurs on the silver reliquary of Skevra (Cat. 24), where he is represented kneeling. L.A. Durnova offers a different interpretation. The top figure represents King Levon III; the figure below is that of the crown prince Het'um II, while the remaining four figures represent palace officials: the crown-bearer, cup-bearer, the king's chamber valet and master of ceremonies.

Eganyan, *Tsutsak Dz'v'agrats*, vol. I, No. 979, p. 451; Gevorgyan, *Dimankar*, Pls 14, 15–20 and 88, notes on pp. 212 and 216; Nersessian, Der, *Miniature painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia*, 157–8, Pl. 643; Durnovo, 'Portretnie izo brazheniya na pervom', *Tegheqagir* 4 (1946), 63; Hovsep'ian, *Nyut'er*, vol. I, 90–5; Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 25–7; Mutafian, *Roma Armenia*, Inv. Nr VII, 15, p. 206.



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### 90 The Four Gospels of the Eight Miniaturists, 13th century

Vellum; 276 fols. Script *bolorgir* in single col.; bound by Serobē and Khatchatur Zeyt'untsi in 1621; silver covers (14th century); 22.5 × 16.7 cm

*Provenance:* The principal colophon is missing and hence the precise place and date of copying are not certain. A brief inscription on fol. 130v records that the 'unworthy scribe' Awetis copied the manuscript. This Awetis is the scribe who was active during the second half of the 13th century in the capital, Sis. He is also known to have copied several other manuscripts at H'romklay, in particular the Gospels of 1262 and the Lectionary of 1266, whose miniatures were done by T'oros Roslin (Jerusalem nos 2660 and 2026). This manuscript is illustrated by 280 miniatures painted in the margins or introduced into the text; but not all the miniatures are contemporary with the copy. In a colophon added in 1320, Step'anos, bishop of Sebastia, reports that he had been to Cilicia and had been received with great honours by Catholicos Kostandin II (1286–9) and King Ōshin, who wished to give him a present, and by his order, writes Step'anos:

I entered the treasure room of the house where manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures were assembled. And although I saw many, and of different kinds, this is the one that pleased me, written in a rapid and beautiful script and adorned with many-hued miniatures by a gifted painter. But it had not been completed, for part of the gospel scenes were painted, half of them were sketched, and many a place had been left vacant. Taking it with great joy I set forth in search of a good painter, and I found the holy priest Sargis, surnamed Pidsak, most skilled in painting. And I gave him of my rightful earnings 1300 drams, and he agreed, and with great labour, he completed the missing parts with gilt miniatures.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 7651

### Fols 75v–76r The Betrayal and Trial of Jesus

The narrative miniature spread across the lower margin illustrates the text of St Matthew's Gospel (26: 53–65). In the Betrayal scene, a crowd of Jews and soldiers, armed with swords and carrying torches and lamps, surrounds the central group of Judas embracing Christ. Peter, on the left, bends to cut off the ear of



Malchus, who has fallen on the ground. Leaves and tendrils are drawn all around the group in order to suggest that the event is taking place in the garden of Gethsemane. On the facing page, Peter and the servants seated by the fire are drawn on a smaller scale than in the principal scene of the trial before the high priest. Christ, brought by a soldier and a group of Jews, stands with hands bound; the tribunal consists of only two men seated on a semicircular bench: Caiaphas is rending his clothes, the other man may represent one of the elders. The Passion narrative continues to unfold in the next pages with miniatures of Peter's denial, Judas returning the thirty pieces of silver, Jesus before Pilate, the Mocking of Christ, and Simon of Cyrene carrying a large cross.

The miniatures painted or sketched before 1320 by 'gifted painters' include several artists, among them the renowned T'oros Rōslin and an unnamed most talented painter of the group whose vigorous, independent and inventive style is exceptionally demonstrated in the two narrative miniatures on display. R. Drampian in 1948 noted that the compositions introduced into the text bear the influence of eleventh-century Byzantine manuscripts, such as the Gospels of Paris, gr. 74 and of the Laurentian library in Florence, Plut. VI. 23. The publication of the Florence Mss. Plut. VI. 23 has confirmed that the miniatures of the Armenian Gospels are direct copies of those in the Laurentian Gospels, introduced in the text at exactly the same passages. The Laurentian Gospel was once in the hands of an Armenian who numbered the quires with Armenian letters corresponding to numerals, and he wrote in the margin of fol. 27v: 'this picture should be omitted'. The miniature on this page of the Laurentianus has not been repeated in our manuscript.

The painting of the extended and detailed cycle of miniatures illustrating the Passion of Christ is radically different from that in the Laurentian manuscript. It departs from the model and produces original work which is totally different both in iconography and in dramatic

treatment. In Sirarpie Der Nersessian's view, 'it is a pity that this gifted artist was not entrusted with the illustration of the entire manuscript, for we would then have had an original work which, together with the creations of T'oros Rōslin, would have borne witness to the imaginative powers of the Armenian painters of the late thirteenth century'.

The miniatures painted after 1320 belong to Sargis Pidsak (1290–1335), the most popular and also the most prolific painter of the fourteenth century. Thanks to the patronage of the highest dignitaries of the Cilician Kingdom, close to fifty manuscripts copied in Sis and Drazark have survived from his hand (see Cats 90, 123, 124, 142).

Eganyan, *Tsutsak dzer'agrats*, 2, 579–80; Azaryan, *Kilikyan manrankartchut'yunē*, pp. 98–100, Pls V–VII, figs 58–9, 95–7; Velmans, 'Le Tetraévangile de la Laurentienne. Florence, Laur. VI. 23', *Cahiers Archéologiques* 6 (Paris, 1971); Durnovo, ed., *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun*, Pls 50–3, notes p. 208; Korkhmazyan, *Armenian miniatures of the 13th and 14th centuries*, Pls 145–50; Ghazaryan, *Matenadaran*, 160–8 and 247–9; Nersessian, Der, *Miniature painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia*, 107–10 and 112–17, Pls 468–76; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, no. 163, p. 244.

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### The Bible Illustrated in Gladzor by the Artist Awag, 1314

Parchment; 509 fols. Script in small *bolorgir* in double cols; 25 × 36 cm

*Provenance:* The manuscript was copied by the scribe Martiros in Cilicia in 1314 for Kostandin *erets*. While in Cilicia King Kostandin I and Catholicos Mkhit'ar I Gr̄netsi (1341–55) invited the artist Awag to illuminate the manuscript, which he did between 1356 and 1358.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 6230

#### Fol. 399v The Nativity

The miniature narrates Jesus's birth following the accounts of St Luke and the author of the Protevangeliem. According to the apocryphal story Mary was sad at the prospect in front of her and went for a walk in the country. They were close to the third milestone when she said 'the child within me presses to come forth'.



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A cave was found where Mary gave birth. Her large body dominates the composition, dwarfing the other figures. To emphasize the perpetual virginity of Mary, the Child Jesus is represented separately 'wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger', attended by animals. Joseph is shown standing at the entrance of the cave, while the heavenly hosts praise God. On the left the shepherds are looking after their flock and gazing at the star that has descended from the segment of sky above the manger. On the right are the three Magi wearing crowns and bearing gifts. Below, the two midwives Zelomi and Salome are washing the child, with an angel holding a towel to receive the child. In the left corner the artist has inserted the standing figures of the sponsors of the manuscript, Baron Sorghat'mish and his wife Beki khatoun. The inscription below the frame reads 'Statsogh a]stua]dsunak gandzis zp[a]r[on] Sorghat'mishn ew zp[a]r[on] Beki kh[a]t[un] yaghot's yis (Remember in your prayers the receivers of this divine treasure Baron Sorghat'mish and Beki khat'oun).

Awag, a native of Siunik' and pupil of Esayi Ntchetsi, is one of the itinerant artists of the late Middle Ages. He worked in Gladzor, Maragha, Paytakaran, Cilicia, Tabriz, Tiflis and Sultaniya and had

collaborated with artists such as Mkhit'ar Anetsi and Sargis Pidsak. Seven manuscripts painted by Awag have survived, in all of which the influence of Cilician painting is evident in the ornamentation and the figured scenes. The manuscript he illuminated in Sultaniya in 1334 has twelve miniatures of the Gospel cycle (Jerusalem no. 1941) which reproduces, with slight differences, the miniatures painted in 1262 by T'oros Roslin. In another manuscript of the Four Gospels he illuminated in 1329 at Ortoubazar for Aslan (Mat. no. 7650) he has painted himself and the sponsor of the manuscript Aslan, who has in his hands a child whom he offers to Christ. This is the most direct pictorial expression of the saying from Isaiah: 'Blessed is he who has a child in Sion'. The self-portrait of Awag shows his fiery temperament. The expressions, the poses and the gestures of the figures convey astonishment and movement to the compositions, and movement is the most characteristic element of the work of Awag (see Cat. 146).

Eganyan, ed., *Tsutsak dzer'agrats*, vol. II, 275-6; Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 70-3; Avetisyan, *Haykakan manankartchut'yan Gladzori dprots'e*, 140-50; Nersessian, Der, *Armenian art*, 224-5; Nersessian, *Armenian illuminated Gospel books*, 28-30, Pls IX-X.

## 92 Bible, 1318

Vellum, 588 fols; script *bolorgir*; 26 × 18 cm

*Provenance:* Bible copied by the scribes Step'anos (fols 2a-510b), Kiwrake (fols 511a-542b) and Yovhannes Erznkatsi (fols 544a-588a) and illustrated in 1318 by T'oros Taronatsi in the University of Gladzor (1276-1346) for its rector Esayi Ntchetsi (1260/65-1338).

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 206

### Fol. 437v Portrait of Esayi Ntchetsi

It was Armenian practice to mention the scribes and painters in the colophon in order that their names might be recalled and prayers said for them by all present and future readers. Their portraits were an



92 (f.437v)



92 (f.437r)

additional means of perpetuating their memory. In this manuscript the artist T'oros Taronatsi represents the abbot and rector of the monastic school of Gladzor, Esayi Ntchetsi, seated next to the Canon Table, and on the opposite page, in a corresponding position, we see a young man, seated with brush poised on a large sheet of vellum. The portrait of Esayi, with his name clearly inscribed above his head 'Esayi v[a]rd[apet]', is assigned a place of prominence and executed in an iconographic style resembling that of the

portraits of the Evangelists. Esayi is depicted with an aureole, holding a book with red velvet covers stamped with a cross, hand raised in the position of giving a blessing, copying the hand of God emerging from the segment of sky placed in the top right-hand corner of the picture. Although the young man on the opposite page is not identified, it is another instance on the part of the artist T'oros to represent not only his patron, but also his own portrait as well. Portraits of scribes or painters, relatively rare in Byzantine manuscripts, occur frequently in Armenian manuscripts.

T'oros Taronatsi (1276-1346) was a scribe and artist of great talent and imagination, who was almost the official artist of Esayi Ntchetsi at Gladzor, under whose leadership the monastery came to be praised as 'second Athens'. Esayi Ntchetsi's head is large compared with his body, and is thrust forward somewhat from a hunched back, and his hands are longer, with upturned finger tips.

Eganyan, *Mayr Tsutsak*, vol. I, No. 206, 914-22; Gevorgyan, *Dimankar*, Pls 25-6; Nersessian, Der, 'Les portraits d'Esayi Ntchetsi', *Études Arméniennes*, 229-41; Narkiss, ed., *Armenian art treasures of Jerusalem*, 75-7; Pogharian, *Hay Nkaroghner*, 53-8; Megaron, *Treasures of Armenia*, Inv. nr 1, 145; Mutafian, *Roma - Armenia*, Inv. nr VI, 73, 173.

## 93 The Four Gospels Illuminated and Bound by Melk'isedek 1338

Paper, 188 fols (incomplete); script *bolorgir* in double cols; 32 × 23.5 cm

*Provenance:* Written, illuminated and bound by the scribe and artist Melk'isedek in 1338 at Berkri, situated off the north-eastern shore of Lake Van, in Armenia, east of the city of Archesh. The manuscript was received by Hayrapet and Paron (Baron) P'anos.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 4813

### Fol. 5v The Four Evangelists

The scribe and artist Melk'isedek is known only by this single manuscript. The manuscript contains eight narrative miniatures, one canon table and this single



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miniature of the Four Evangelists. This artist painted the narrative illustrations and the Evangelists' portraits sideways on the page, which makes it necessary to turn the manuscript round twice on each opening in order to view it.

The artist's preference for archaic models is expressed in this group of the Four Evangelists. The arrangement of the figures standing four abreast is characteristic of tenth- and eleventh-century Armenian manuscripts of the Melitene group (Jerusalem ms. 1924, 1064 and Mat. mss. of 1041, 1045 and 1057). The emphasized linear quality of the miniature and the general symmetry and regularity of the drawing and colouring enable the artist to strike an original note in the treatment of the subject. The scenes and single figures are drawn and painted on a plain background in a style similar to some of the Byzantine cave church paintings in Cappadocia. There is no doubt that Melk'isedek was a highly gifted artist and a prominent figure in Armenian medieval art.

Hakopyan, *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun: Vaspurakan* (Album), Pls 19–22, notes p. 242; Korkhmazyan, ed., *Armenian miniatures of the 13th and 14th centuries*, Pls 46–7.

#### 94 The Four Gospels Illuminated by Rstakēs, 1397

Paper; 267 fols. Script *bolorgir* in double cols; 27.5 × 18.5 cm

*Provenance:* In the scribal colophon (fol. 265v) the scribe and artist Rstakēs states that he copied the manuscript from a 'choice and reliable copy called Aghet'ntso' copied by the philosopher Yovannes, in the Armenian era 896 (1397), in the city of Hizan (Khizan) under the shelter of the Church of the Holy Virgin and Sts Sargis and Gevorg, the 'Generals', during the catholicate of Ter Karapet (I Keghetsi, 1393–1404) of Cilicia, and during the pontificate of 'our catholcos Zak'aria' [II, 1369–96] at Aght'amar. Aghet is a village in the province of Bznunik' (where the scribe Yovannes had been active in the first half of the fourteenth century). It is interesting to note that in the colophon of a manuscript copied in 1327, Yovannes mentions a Cilician manuscript as being his 'choice and reliable model' which had been copied by the philosopher T'oros in the scriptorium at Drazark and was sent to the monastery of the Holy Apostles in Taron. In a second colophon (fol. 264b) the sponsor of the manuscript records

'I, Martiros, a humble and unworthy son of [my] church desired this "godspoken and bearer of good tidings" Holy Gospels and had it copied in the memory of my soul and my brother's Kirakos's'.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 7629

#### Fols 5v–6r Washing of the Feet and the Treachery of Judas; Betrayal and Peter's Denial

The artist Rstakēs, who is known by this single manuscript, has illuminated it with ten narrative pictures (fols 1–9), ten canon tables (fols 9–14), four portraits (fols 18v, 85v, 132v, 210v) and four headpieces (fols 19, 86, 133, 211). He has displaced the symbolic scenes from the Old Testament and concentrated on the events of the Gospels from the Annunciation to Pentecost.

He paints two related scenes on each of the facing pages in a continuous style, discarding frames for the compositions, thus giving the impression of a rug pattern. All the scenes are dedicated to the events of Holy Week.

- (a) Washing of the Feet: Christ sitting on a chair, washes the right foot of Peter, whose raised hand is almost touching Christ's head; a second apostle sits behind him, his hand raised to his lips. Two apostles stand behind Christ. The captions above read from left to right: 'The apostles astonished'; 'The washing of the feet of the disciples'; 'Jesus Christ' and 'Peter'.
- (b) The Treachery of Judas: After washing the feet of the disciples, Christ declared solemnly 'one of you will betray me'. To the question 'who is it?' Christ replied, 'It is the one to whom I give the piece of bread'. Christ then 'dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot' (John 13: 24–7). Christ is depicted placing the piece of bread into the mouth of Judas, witnessed by three disciples, all with haloes. The captions above read from left to right: 'dipped the piece of bread

and gave it to Judas'; 'Jesus Christ'. This is not a miniature of the Communion of the Apostles or the Last Supper as interpreted by Hravard Hakobyan. It is part of the Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus that follows.

(c) The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus: Judas, approaching from the right, and followed by the high priest, embraces Christ; three soldiers, two on the left and one on the right, wearing short tunics, pointed bonnets, high boots, and carrying torches and axes, stand at the sides. The captions above read from left to right 'lanterns and torches', 'the kiss of Judas', and 'chief priest'.

(d) Peter cutting off the ear of Malchus: This part of the composition belongs to the scene of the Betrayal. It shows Peter in a seated position holding a scroll, 'who carried a sword, drew it, cutting off the right ear of the servant whose name was Malchus'. The caption above reads: 'Peter who cut the ear of Malchus'.

(e) Denial of Peter: Peter standing, his hands raised in a gesture of denial, his head turned slightly towards the maid, who points to him with one hand. The captions above read: 'the denial of Peter' and 'the maid'.

The artist Rstakēs has stylized the miniatures to such an extent that the forms of the figures, the folds of their garments and the details of the setting are subordinated to the all-important linear effect and are therefore perceived as purely ornamental details. At the same time, in spite of the limited palette, composed mainly of green and red with occasional additions of black, brown and yellow, his miniatures impress one by the harmony of their colouring and the skilfully balanced compositions. The miniatures can be described as displaying 'expressionistic mannerism'.

Eganyan, ed., *Tsutsak dzer'agrats*, 2, p. 574; Hakobyan, *Vasparakani manrankartchut'yunē*, 2, pp. 31-45; figs 8-11, notes p. 154; Durnovo, *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun*, Pls 67-8, notes p. 211; Hakobyan, *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun: Vasparakan* (Album), Pls 34-7, notes p. 243; Korkhmazyan, ed., *Armenian miniatures of the 13th and 14th centuries*, Pl. 49; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, Inv. Nr 173, p. 249.

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**The Four Gospels Illuminated by Yovhannes Khizantsi, 1401**

Paper; 298 fols. Script in *bolorgir*, double cols; 25 × 17 cm

*Provenance*: The manuscript was copied by the priest Zak'aria, son of Mkrtitch, and illuminated by the priest Yovhannes, the 'wise and without an equal scribe and artist' under the shelter of the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary and St Sargis at Khizan in the Armenian era 850 (1401),

during the catholicate of Davit Aght'amartsi (II, 1346-68). In another colophon (fol. 3a) the artist Yovhannes seeks prayers for his father Mkrtitch and mother and, 'my kind son Grigor and Hrip'simē, who untimely departed unto Christ and left us in inconsolable grief and pain'. In a manuscript of the Four Gospels copied by him in 1402 (Mat. No. 5562) he has included a portrait of himself and his wife Elkhatun.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 4223

**Fols 4v-5r The Washing of the Feet and the Betrayal**

The school of Khizan was situated on the south-west shore of Lake Van (now Turkey), close to the borders of Shatak and Taron. From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century hundreds of manuscripts were copied, many of which have survived. Yovhannes Khizantsi (c. 1360-1420), whose first known manuscript is dated 1390 and the last 1417, has thirteen manuscripts in the Matenadaran collection under his name. His manuscripts are typical representations of the Vasparakan school and constitute the best phase in the development of this workshop.

The Gospel cycle, which includes the miracles of the Wedding at Cana and the Healing of the Paralytic, where they are ranked with the important scenes from the life of Christ, is quite exceptional. The



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Passion cycle representing the Holy Week begins with the Washing of the Apostles' Feet, followed by the Betrayal, Jesus before Pilate and the Crucifixion. Christ, kneeling, washes the feet of Peter seated in an armchair, his hand raised to his head. Judas, approaching from the right, embraces Christ; four soldiers, wearing short tunics, pointed bonnets, high boots, and carrying torches and axes, stand at the sides. The short heavy figures, with round faces, wearing secular costumes imitating contemporary dress, recall the paintings of the so-called Baghdad school and those of a number of manuscripts of the Ilkhanid period.

Hakobyan, *Vasparakani manrankartchut'yunè*, 2, 83–104; *ibid.*, *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun Vasparakan* (Album), Pls 44–8, notes on p. 244; Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 84–6.

## 96 The Four Gospels Illuminated by Grigor Khlatsi, 1419

Vellum; 265 fols. Script *bolorgir* in double cols; 23.5 × 16 cm

*Provenance:* Copied in the Monastery of Tshipnay, under the shelter of the Church of Holy Nshan and St Stephen by the weary and thoughtless scribe Grigor vardapet in the Armenian era 868 (1419), during the catholicate of Poghos (II Gaṛnetsi, 1418–30) and reign of Kara Yusuf (d. 1420), for the priest Yohannes. Grigor was born around 1340–5 in Khlats, son of Dser, hence his nickname Dserents.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 3714

### Fol. 14v Grigor Instructing his Pupil, Self-portrait

Grigor of Khlats (Akhlat) was one of the leading teachers of the late fourteenth and first decade of the fifteenth century. The devastating raids of Timur that started in 1386 continued until 1426, the year when Grigor was martyred for not denouncing his Christian faith. The scribes of Armenian manuscripts copied in the Akhlats record: 'He made the Armenian homeland like a desert—bishops and vardapets [celibate priests], monks, priests

—took to flight and wandered about in foreign lands and became strangers.' In 1427 a monk from the Monastery of Medsop' complained that Mass had not been celebrated for six years. A large collection of Armenian manuscripts was destroyed. For the first time since the ninth century there was a decline in the number of manuscripts produced. T'ovma Metsop'etsi (1378–1446) in his *History* twice mentions Grigor, who in spite of



having to move from monastery to monastery, for 55 years copied manuscripts, 'day and night with restless vigilance'. Aṛak'el Baghishetsi (c. 1340–1454) confirms this observation by adding that 'he copied every hour, summer and winter, autumn and spring, night and day, at home and outside, in the monastery, in the village and in town. And thus not only when he was young but also in ripe old age, until the day of his martyrdom.' And what was his purpose? 'He copied and sold [manuscripts] and gave the proceeds to the poor', and 'encouraged all vardapets and monks to do the same'.

Grigor started copying manuscripts at an early age. In 1415 in a manuscript he copied in Jerusalem he states, 'I am sixty-six years old and a monk for forty-eight

years and these sermons [Yachakhapatum chaṛk', attributed to Saint Gregory the Illuminator] I have not come across in my country' [Mat. mss. no. 8775, fol. 315r]. From this information we draw the conclusion that he began copying at the age of eighteen (66–48 = 18), that is from 1367 to 1426. His most important legacy is the compilation of the *Yasmavurk'* (Lives of Saints) and *Gandzaran* (Collection of Canticles). The new edition of the Lives of Saints is known by his name as the 'Dserents' edition.

This is a choice manuscript, illuminated by Canon Tables (1r–4v) and accompanied by a commentary on the significance of the canons. The miniatures depicting scenes from the Gospels begin on fol. 5r and include: Baptism, Transfiguration, Miracles, the Raising of Lazarus, Entry into Jerusalem, Ascension, and Pentecost. It is apparent from this list that a number of the principal events are missing: Annunciation, Nativity, Washing of the Feet, Betrayal, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Descent into Hell.

The miniature exhibited is unique in Armenian iconography. Grigor, having been the founder and instructor in the primary monastic schools at Medsop'ay, Tship'navank' and Tat'ew (1409–10), is here represented seated on a high chair. He has in his left hand a rod, and a small black board in his right hand on which is inscribed the words 'Blessed is the man who [never follows the advice of the wicked or loiters and does not take the path of sinners]' (Psalms 1: 1). In front of the monk stands a student, hands folded close to his chest like a sinner; and behind him slightly to the right sits, cross-legged on the floor, another figure, holding fresh rods, which the master would require for punishment. Another interpretation would be that the novice standing in front of the monk has strayed from the 'right path' and the teacher is reminding him of the famous words of the Psalmist: 'Blessed is the man ...'. The role of the Gospel was to guide Christians away from wickedness by accepting the virtuous precepts of the Gospels. This interpretation is supported by the next miniature on fol. 15r, which

presents the sponsors of the manuscript sitting facing each other. The sponsor Yovhannes holds the Gospel while his father, the priest Daniel, is preparing himself with open arms to receive the manuscript, a source of 'light and salvation'.

Hakobyan, 'Grigor vardapet Khlata'etsin (Dserents) manrankaritch', *Ejmiadsin* 12 (1975) 47–54, figs 3–4; Hakobyan, *Vasparakani manrankartchut'yunë*, 2, 75–81; Gevorgyan, *Dimankar*, fig. 49, notes p. 214; Marabyan, 'Grigor Khlata'etsu dzeragrakan zharangut'yunë', *BM* 15 (1986), 173–90; Mat'evosyan, *Medsop'avank'i gritchut'yan kentronë*, 61–5.

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### The Four Gospels Illuminated by Yovhannes, 1460

Paper; 297 fols. Script *bolorgir* in double cols; 27.5 × 18.3 cm

*Provenance:* The Four Gospels copied by the priest Yovhannes in 1460 at Khizan for the priest Vardan. The miniatures of this manuscript were painted by the 'unworthy priest' (c. 1410–70) who in the colophon of the manuscript seeks prayers for his father the priest Mkrtitch, who was his teacher, and his mother Khatmelek' and



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grandfather Zak'aria. He was active between 1439 and 1468 and is known to have illuminated four manuscripts: The Four Gospels copied at the Monastery of Bast, south of Lake Van in 1439 (Chester Beatty, no. 565); Gospels of 1452 copied in the Mokats Scri Monastery (Mat. no. 9841); Gospels copied in Gamaghiel Monastery in 1468 (Mat. no. 4967) and the manuscript on display.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 7566

### Fol. 9r Portrait of Virgin and Child and Sponsors Vardan and his Son Amirbek

The scribe has represented the Virgin Mary standing with the Child Jesus in her arms, while the owner of the manuscript, the priest Vardan, and his son, the deacon Amirbek, stand with open arms in an attitude of prayer. The inscription below the picture reads: 'Vardan k'ahanan aghatche zsurb A[stu]dsadsinn barekhaws am[enayn] hawatatselots' (The priest Vardan begs the Holy Virgin Mary to intercede on behalf of all the faithful).

In Armenian manuscripts the donors usually stand before Christ, or they kneel at the foot of the Cross with the bust figure of Christ; occasionally they appear before the enthroned figure of the Virgin and Child. In this manuscript the impressive full half-profile figure of the Virgin and Child look with a compassionate and welcoming gesture towards the donor and his son. The red, green and brown colours present sharp contrasts. The imitation of contemporary dress, the slender figures with round faces, with highlights around the eyes and on the brows, lend vivid traits to the miniatures of this artist.

Hakobyan, *Vasparakani manrankartchut'yunë*, 2, 104–8; Hakobyan, *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun: Vasparakan* (Album), Pl. 55, notes p. 244; Gevorgyan, ed., *Dimankar*, Pl. 59, notes p. 214; Pogharian, *Haynkaroghmer*, 107–9.

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### Hymnal of the Armenian Orthodox Church, 1482

Paper; 404 fols. Script rounded *erkat'agir*; 12.8 × 8.8 cm

*Provenance:* The Hymnal was copied by the scribe Grigor in the district of Akants in the province of Vaspurakan in 1482, and was illustrated by the artist Karapet Berkretsi (c. 1449–1500) for his father, the priest Tiratur. He was active in the city of Berkri between 1472 and 1500 and is known to have illuminated nine manuscripts, several of which were Hymnals dated 1473, 1478, 1487 and 1498.

Matenadaran, Erevan, Inv. Nr 1620

### Fols 295v–296r The Battle of Avarayr

In the fifteenth-century Hymnals the artists who illustrated the hymn 'Norahrash Psakawor', written by the poet Nerses Shnorhali celebrating the Battle of Avarayr, represent Vardan Mamikonian the commander of the Armenian army confronted by the Persian elite corps of the 'immortals' riding elephants led by Mushkan Nisalavurt.

The confrontation between the Armenian and Persian armies took place on 2 June 451 in the region of Artaz, at Avarayr, near Maku on the bank of the river Tghmut, a tributary of the Araxes in central Armenia. Eghishë in his *History of Vardan and the Armenian War* describes the battle using biblical imagery from the Book of Maccabees:

From the multitude of helmets and shining armour of the soldiers light flashed like rays of the sun. The glittering of the many swords and the waving of the massed lances were like fearful lightning from heaven ... The Persian army, fearing the difficulty of crossing the river, began to stir in its place. But the Armenian army crossed over on horseback and attacked in great force ... With great vigour he [Vardan] attacked the spot and broke the right wing of the Persian army, throwing it back on the elephants. Then Mushkan Nisalavurt lifted his



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eyes and saw that some of the Armenian troops had broken away from the main force ... At that spot the two sides both were prepared to acknowledge defeat, as the corpses had fallen so thickly as to resemble piles of rough stones. (ch. V)

The picture on the left represents the Persian army on the elephants, in the middle, clad in red, is the Persian commander Mushkan Nisalavurt. The facing page represents the Armenian cavalry with its commander Vardan Mamikonian. The Armenian cavalry is led by a figure in profile wearing a pointed helmet and short tunic and holding a cymbal, probably sounding the rhythm of the soldiers' march, or perhaps he is the army's jester whose function was to mock and intimidate the opposing army. The inscription below the miniature is a quotation from the hymn by Nerses IV Klayetsi, called Shnorhali: 'Norahrash pesakawor ew zawraglukh arak'ineats, vaëtsar zinu' (New-miracle crowned, and general of virtuous men, heroically armed against death with spiritual armour).

Eganyan, *Tsutsak dzeragrats*, vol. I, 594; Durnova, *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun*, Pl. 71, notes pp. 211-12; Gevorgyan, *Dimankar*, fig. 101, notes 101; Nersessian, *Der*, 'Miniatures de la bataille des Vardaniens', *Études Arméniennes*, 701-4, figs 460-2;

Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 131-3; Eghishë, *History of Vardan and the Armenian war*, 168-71; Mutafian, *Roma Armenia*, Inv. nr III, 40, p. 89.

### 99 The Gospels, 10th century

Vellum; 8 fols. Script fine *erkat'agir*;  
112 × 140 cm

*Provenance*: Iconographically these fragments belong to a small circle of manuscripts which are most closely related to the original Eusebian version of the

Gospel. Differing from the oldest dated Armenian manuscripts (Cats 80, 86, 109, 157), this manuscript in its complete form may have contained a full cycle of miniatures based on a calendar of church feasts. In such a case, codex 697 becomes an early example of a characteristically Armenian kind of festival series inserted at the beginning of the Four Gospels.

Mekhitarist Congregation, Vienna, Nr 697

### Fols 4v–5r Canon Tables

The pictorial elements of the Eusebian Canon Tables are interpreted as an allusion to the Christian altar-ciborium, the fountain of paradise, the mausoleum of Constantine or the Sepulchre of Christ. Eusebius imbued time-honoured Roman motifs of monumental grandeur with a Christian meaning, thus creating a kind of architectural allegory. According to Carl Nordenfalk, Armenian Gospels have preserved the most faithful copies of Eusebius's original version. Aside from its importance for Armenian art, this codex is also an outstanding example of art of the early Christian era.

Bandmann, *Beobachtungen zum Etschmiadzin-Evangeliar*'; Nordenfalk, 'Die spätantiken Kanontafeln'; E. Klemm, 'Die Kanontafeln der armenischen Handschrift Cod. 697 im Wiener Mechitharistenkloster', 69-99; Buschhausen, *The illuminated Armenian manuscripts of the Mekhitarist Congregation in Vienna*, Pls 4-5, 17.



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99a



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**100**  
**The Four Gospels, c. 1330**

Paper; 242 fols. Fine regular *erkat* 'agir;  
245 × 195 cm

*Provenance:* On stylistic features this manuscript is dated to around 1330. The scribe of the manuscript is 'Simeon the priest' and one of the artists is 'Papanown the priest'. Six artists of Armenian and Greek origin cooperated in the illumination of this codex.

Mkhit'arist Congregation, Vienna, Nr 242

**Fol. 65r The Betrayal of Christ by Judas**

A characteristic feature of this manuscript is the 119 small miniatures inserted into the text. These are painted in opaque colours and uniformly framed. In spite of the unusually large number of masters who worked together on the illumination of the manuscript, the codex as a whole appears unified, first because of the strict observation throughout of the same colour scheme and system of composition, and second through the consistent use of crimson red frames for the scenes.

The scene accompanying the text of St Matthew (26: 14–16) shows a priest handing a red purse containing the 30 pieces of silver to Judas, followed by scenes showing the Last Supper, Christ

and the disciples in Gethsemane; and Judas's Betrayal of Christ – all representing the events of Christ's Passion.

In spite of the somewhat stocky proportions of the figures, the artist imparts considerable vitality to movement, gesture and facial expression, all of which lend energy and vigour to his compositions.

The iconography of this manuscript shows the influence of Palaeologan art of Constantinople, and one centre of Armenian art receptive to this style was Surkhat in the Crimea.

Akinian, 'Der Miniaturmaler der Handschrift Nr 242 der Bibliothek der Wiener Mechitharisten', 444–5; Buschhausen, *The illuminated Armenian manuscripts of the Mkhit'arist Congregation in Vienna*, Pl. 22, figs 38–41, 19–21.

**101**  
**Bible, 1375**

Paper; 586 fols. Regular *bolorgir* script;  
280 × 185 cm

*Provenance:* According to the colophon the manuscript was owned by Ter Manuel, bishop of the province of Bjni, copied by the scribe Bishop Yovannes from the diocese of Ani. Before the completion of



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the manuscript its owner Bishop Manuel 'passed away into the bosom of Christ, and this Holy Scriptures remained unfinished awaiting its illumination'. Bishop Yovannes, who was still young, liberated the manuscript from the hands of the infidels and had it illuminated by Melk'isedek in AE 800 (1375).

Mkhit'arist Congregation, Vienna, Nr 55

**Fol. 471v Portrait of St Matthew**

The Evangelist St Matthew is presented seated in front of a desk on which is placed a lectern. On the left top corner a segment of sky is painted in blue and emerging from it is an angel elegantly drawn pointing to St Matthew. On a desk in front of him the Evangelist has all the tools of his profession. The miniature is colourful, the figure and ornaments lovingly modelled, and bright yellow is used in place of gold.

The influence of the Cilician school and particularly of Sargis Pidsak (Cats 90, 123, 124, 142) is clearly apparent.

Buschhausen, *The illuminated Armenian manuscripts of the Mkhit'arist Congregation in Vienna*, Pl. 41, figs 97, 27.

**102**  
**The Gospels, 1375**

Paper; 304 fols. Regular *bolorgir* script;  
270 × 175 cm

*Provenance:* The principal colophon is incomplete. We do not have the names of the scribe or the illuminator, nor the place of origin. There is an inscription which states that the manuscript was acquired by the priest Grigor on 6 February 824 (1375). In 1520 the manuscript passed on to the priest Khatchatur, who had it restored by Grigor and Astuadsatur.

Mkhit'arist Congregation, Vienna, Nr 59

**Fol. 233v The Portrait of St John and Prochoros**

The full-length imposing figure of St John transferring the inspiration received from the 'hand of the Father' to Prochoros is painted in brilliant opaque colours. The artist's style is derived from the Cilician





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school, in spite of unusual voluminosity in the formation of drapery, which suggests some influence from Palaeologan art.

Buschhausen, *The illuminated Armenian manuscripts of the Mkhit'arist Congregation in Vienna*, Pl. 39, figs 92, 22-6.

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### Syriac Book of Ordination, 1238–39

Paper; 278 fols. Script in *serto* in 3 cols; 24 × 16 cm

*Provenance:* The manuscript was copied in the year of the Greeks 1550 during the pontificate of Mar Ignatios, patriarch of the apostolic see of Antioch in Syria from 1222 to 1252. The Greek era 1550 corresponds to the Syriac year 1238. The place of the copy of the manuscript is not recorded in the colophon.

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Inv. Nr 112

#### Fol. 28r Bishop ordaining a sub-deacon

The ordaining bishop in full episcopal vestments stands in front of an altar covered in red cloth on which are placed a gold chalice and plate. He wears a white hood decorated with an ornate cross

surrounded by a large aureole, and a long blue tunic and a purple chasuble. The bishop's white pallium or omophorion with ornate crosses is thrown over his neck and falls down his front. His arms bear the maniples. The person being ordained stands in front of a domed building with red roof supported by three columns, both hands folded across his chest. He is inclined slightly forward. He wears a long green tunic with the deacon's stole thrown over his right shoulder. Three deacons stand behind, one of whom, standing at the front, presents a book to the bishop to read, while the bishop places both hands on the ordinand's head.

Ordination books were rarely illustrated. The Ordination Book of Venice (Cat. 114) copied in 1248 is by far the finest and resembles the composition in this Syriac pontifical. The Armenian miniature is by the hand of a more able painter, and is not dependent on the earlier Syriac example. Ordination scenes of deacons are found in two other luxury Cilician Gospel books copied for Archbishop John, the brother of King Het'um I and Prince Vasak in which the archbishop is depicted ordaining deacons. The first is the Washington Freer Art Gallery Gospel Book, dated 1263 and copied at Grner (56.11, fol. 293) and the second is the



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Matenadaran Gospel of 1287, assigned to the monastery of Akner (No. 197, fol. 341). Given the style of both compositions, one thinks of a common derivation from a Byzantine model, but no contemporary or even slightly earlier Greek examples are known. The ordination scenes of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzen, Paris, gr. 510, are too late in date and style to be taken into account.

Zotenberg, *Catalogues des manuscrits Syriaques*, No. 112, 72-5; Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures*, xxii, 332 8, Pl. 111; Nersessian, *Der, Armenian manuscripts in the Freer Gallery of Art*, 64 5, fig. 195; Janashian, *Armenian miniature painting*, 181-8; Nersessian, *Der, Armenian miniature painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia*, 78 9, 96 7, Pls 644-5.

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### The Four Gospels Illuminated by Yovhannes, 1335

Oriental paper; 280 fols. Script *bolorgir* in double cols; 24 × 17 cm

*Provenance:* The Four Gospels copied by Yovhannes Khizantsi, the 'thoughtless and unworthy scribe', from a choice and reliable model in the year 1107 since Adam's expulsion from the Garden of Eden and in the year 1335 since the Incarnation of the Word of God Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and according to the Japhetic Khosrovian era, when the catholicos of the Armenian nation at Cilicia was Ter Zak'aria Aght'amartsi (I, Sefediniyan, 1296-1336) in the province of Hizan (Khizan), under the shelter of the Holy Cross and Holy Apostle Gamaghiel, and the Churches of St Sargis and St Gevorg, for the enjoyment of the pious and honourable priest Yovannes. The manuscript was restored and bound by Yovhannes Jughayetsi in 1601 and again by Hyarapet in 1665. Several later inscriptions dated 1699, 1727, 1806 and 1887 trace the history of the manuscript down to 1910, when it was acquired for BN.

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Inv. Nr arm. 333

#### Fol. 4 The Baptism of Christ

John the Baptist baptizes Christ, wearing a loin-cloth and standing on the body of a dragon; the water comes to their knees. Two angels stand on the right bank of the



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river; a dove with a halo descends on Christ. The most interesting innovation in this iconography of the Baptism is the depiction of an angel in the top left corner of the frame holding a bottle, descending on Christ, together with the hand of God emerging from the segment of sky on the right.

In his catechetical orations Cyril of Jerusalem explains the symbolism of the confirmation by the chrism which, in the ritual of Baptism, replaced the ceremony of the laying on of hands. The chrism, in the sacrament of Baptism, is the symbol of the Holy Spirit which anointed Christ. In his scholia, translated into Armenian, Cyril of Alexandria devotes an entire chapter to the explanation of the anointment. The Son 'is anointed in human wise like us with the praise of sinlessness. There having been made illustrious in him man's nature, having become worthy of the portion of anointing of the holy Spirit. ... He is anointed in human wise according to the flesh but anoints in divine wise with his own spirit them that in him have believed.'

These theological interpretations of the Baptism by the Church Fathers were translated into pictorial form in the art

of western Europe where the dove of the Holy Ghost sometimes pours the contents of a beaker over the head of Christ. The painters of Khizan adopted a different interpretation: the anointment is performed by an angel, perhaps in imitation of the baptism ritual when the priest, after preparing the oil, prays 'for the descent into the holy oil of the grace of the all-powerful holy Spirit' and pours some of it into the font. On the Feast of Epiphany which is commemorated in the Armenian Church with Christ's Nativity on 6 January, in the service of the Blessing of the Water, considered as the Feast of Baptism, the priest pours chrism from a dove-shaped container into the cauldron of water.

Kévorkian, *Manuscrits arméniens de la Bibliothèque nationale de France*, No. 333, 937-43; Nersessian Der, *The Chester Beatty Library. A catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts*, Nr 566, 50-7, Pl. 34b; Kévorkian, *Arménie entre Orient et Occident*, Nr 50, 231.

## 105 The Second Ējmiadsin Gospel, 10th century

Thick parchment; 236 fols, divided into 36 gatherings signed in uncial script A to K' (leaves 9-236) enclosed in red and blue painted roundels placed in the top right-hand corner. Text in round *erkat'agir* in black ink which has faded into brown, in two columns of 20 lines. Bound in leather over wooden boards stamped with a cross, silver nails, the lower cover slightly worn out; 41 × 29 × 8.5 cm

*Provenance:* The manuscript has no scribal colophons or inscriptions. There are two faked inscriptions which date the manuscript to the year 602. The first is in the miniature of the tempietto (fol. 7r) which records: 'In the A.E. 51 [602] was copied [in the city] of Odz, in the days of Mushegh [by] Grigor erets'. The same is repeated in the margin of fol. 91a. Another scribe has inserted a second inscription at the end of the Gospels on fols 7v, 40v, 177v, 235b and 236v which informs that the manuscript was copied in AE 51 (602) and in the 'Year of the Lord 602'. Two later inscriptions in the lower margins on fols 9a and 25b record that Archbishop Mkrtitch Tigranian from Tigranakert, who

had found the manuscript and kept it for 15 years, eventually donated it to the Monastery of St James on 12 June 1872, to Patriarch Esayi T'alastsi (1864-85) who throughout his 'long years of illness kept the manuscript at his bedside'. Several contemporary Armenian journals of 1900 reported the discovery of the manuscript in their pages, which were discussed in articles by Father Yakobos Tashian and Bishop Sahak Khapaian in *Handes Amsoreay* for the years 1900 and 1901 respectively. Both the authors express their reservations regarding the date of the manuscript. On palaeographic evidence the manuscript is dated to the end of the tenth century or early eleventh century, probably written in the province of Taron in Great Armenia. The manuscript is named the Second Ējmiadsin Gospel because its cycle of miniatures is similar to that of the Ējmiadsin Gospel which dates from 989 (see Cat. 80). The miniatures include an ornamental cross (1b), Eusebian Letter and Canon Tables (2-6v), Sanctuary of the Holy Sepulchre (7r), Portraits of Sts Matthew and Mark (7v), Portraits of Luke and John (8r), ornate Virgin, with the Christ Child in her lap at the top, and the Sacrifice of Isaac below (8v). The Evangelists are depicted in pairs under arches and the two thematic scenes, the Virgin with the Christ Child and the Sacrifice of Isaac, are included for their symbolic value.

Jerusalem, St Thoros Depository, Inv. Nr 2555.

### Fol. 7r Sanctuary of the Holy Sepulchre

The shape of the tempietto, a rotunda with a conical roof, derives, as do all the other examples of this structure, from the memorial building of the Holy Sepulchre built by the emperor Constantine. The painter drew the eight columns in the same way that the Carolingian painters did but he kept only the front part of the architrave. Moreover, the eight columns rest on the same rectilinear base so that the structure is one-dimensional. The crowned crests forming the first two motifs on the left resemble those of peacocks. The small birds inserted into those motifs and the

two bigger ones are probably pigeons and storks. The ornamental foliage symbolizes the 'tree of the Garden', that is Paradise, while the peacock represents the royal bird. The artist is copying an early model some elements of which he has preserved, but the real building the picture is supposed to evoke has been transformed into an ornamental composition.

Professor Sirarpie Der Nersessian calls this composition 'Fountain of Life', found also in the Ējmiadsin Gospels, No. 229 (Cat. 80) in the Vienna fragment No. 697 (Cat. 99), and in some Georgian and Ethiopian and western manuscripts. Among western manuscripts it appears in the Gospel book of Charlemagne copied by Godescalc in 781–3 (Paris, BN lat. 1203), and in the eleventh-century Gospel of St Medard of Soissons (Paris, BN lat. 8850). The symbolic value of the image is not the same in east and west. The Carolingian miniatures refer above all to Baptism, while the examples in the East recall the Passion. But these two meanings complement each other, for according to the commentaries of the early Church Fathers, the Baptism foretold Christ's death and resurrection. In an Ethiopian manuscript of the Four Gospels of the early fourteenth century the miniature of the Holy Women at the Tomb, a pictorial synonym for the Resurrection of Christ (Matt. 28: 1–7), also represents the domed rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The three principal Christological miniatures of the Death, the Resurrection, and the Ascension of Christ, and the representations of the three holy sites in Jerusalem often appear on souvenir *ampullae* produced for pilgrims in Palestine during the sixth and early seventh centuries. The comparison of the three examples in the Armenian manuscripts prompts S. der Nersessian to conclude that 'the better understanding of the circular shape of the tempietto in the Jerusalem manuscript, the distortion of the miniature of the Vienna fragment, can only be explained by the use of other models which were closer to those of the Byzantine and Carolingian manuscripts'. More recent studies have shown that the



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architectural format of the tempietto is derived from the Greek 'tholos' of four, six or eight columns. The prototype, an eight-column tholos, can be found in Carolingian manuscripts of the type of St Medard of Soissons, with birds and peacocks perched on the curve of the arch and the signs of the Evangelists placed within the enclosed tympanum. The use of architectural elements, twisted columns and simulated antique cameos and medallions manifests a continuing interest in emulating the forms of classical antiquity.

Tashian, 'K'ani mè dzeragirner Awetarank' Lazarean Chemarani, *Frusaghemi ew Shkhnotsi*', 353–7; Khapaian, 'Erusaghemi Awetarani', 33–5; Pogharian, *Mayr tsutsak*, VIII, 242–6, figs 2–3; Mekhit'arian, *Treasures of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem*, No. 1, 20 (English); Narkiss, ed., *Armenian art treasures of Jerusalem*, 30–2, figs 42–3; Strzygowski, 'Ein zweites Etschmiadzin-Evangeliar', 345–52, pls 1–111; Beckwith, *Early Medieval Art*, 30–3, figs 23–4; Underwood, 'The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels', *DOP*, 5 (1950), 43–158; Nersessian, Der, 'The date of the initial miniatures of the Ējmiadsin Gospel', *Études Byzantines et Arméniennes*, 533–58, figs 294–9; Nersessian, Der, *Armenian Art*, 120–2, Pls 85–6; Grierson, ed., *African Zion*, Nos 54–6, pp. 130–1; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, pp. 60, 96.

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**The Erznka Bible, 1269–70**

Thick paper; xvi + 603 fols, written in regular *bolorgir* script in black ink with red capitals, in double cols, between 46–9 lines each. Blind-tooled leather over wooden boards with flap which bears an inscription on the binder: 'Remember before the Lord the binder Ařak'el', done probably in the seventeenth century, when the manuscript was donated to the Monastery of St James. Two parchment fly-leaves at the beginning and end of the manuscript; 36 × 26 × 13 cm

*Provenance:* According to the colophon (fol. 580) the Bible was copied in the city of Erznka (Erzinkan) on the Euphrates, east of the Cilician border, for Archbishop Sargis and his son, Prince Yovhannes in AE 718 (1269). Three scribes, Mkhitar (fols 194b, 248v, 307v, 339r, 368v, 395), Yakob (426r, 464r, 535r, 1129v, 1133v, 1162v) and Movses (fols 580, 583, 645, 662v, 665v, 669r, 684r, 744r, 744v, 783, 810r, 1048r) were responsible for the copying of the manuscript, each one of whom has left his own inscriptions. There are several inscriptions throughout the manuscript (fols xvi, 195, 221, 249, 368v, 465r, 536v, 1134 and many more) left by Zirak Vanetsi (of Van), son of Isk'antar, who purchased the manuscript for 1000 ghrsh. [ghurush] and gave it as memorial for his parents to St James Monastery in AE 1075 (1626). This information is further supported by an inscription on fol. 1180r, which records that Bishop Davit Virapetsi on the command of Archbishop Grigor went to Erzerum as legate, found the said manuscript with Apaza pasha and then persuaded khawja Zirak' to acquire it 'for thousand ghrush'. He then gave it to St James as a memorial for his parents. The inscription concludes: 'I was responsible for the rescuing, purchase and donation of this manuscript to Jerusalem in the A.E. 1076' (1627). No artist's name is given, but similarity in style to a manuscript copied by a certain Mkhitar Erznkatsi for the same Prince Yovhannes in 1280 (Mat. No. 1746) implies that Mkhitar was the painter of most of the illuminations in the Erznka Bible.

Jerusalem, St Thoros Depository, Inv. Nr 1925



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**Fols 414b/812 The Vision of Ezekiel on the River Chebar**

The composition of the Vision of Ezekiel differs fundamentally both from the rare examples found in Byzantine manuscripts, and from apse compositions of Cappadocian churches; in certain details it even deviates from the biblical text. The picture illustrates the first and tenth chapters of the Book of Ezekiel combined

with the story of the Second Coming of Christ as told in the Book of Revelation chapter 4.

The multicoloured, rainbow-like oval frame and the fire within it seem to be based on Ezekiel (1: 4, 28), as also are the wheels, one within the other, covered with eyes (1: 15–18, 10: 12). The enthroned Christ is also based on Ezekiel (1: 26), although the blank scroll in his right hand is described in Revelation as a book written on both sides and relates to his Second Coming (5: 1). The vision of the four-faced creatures covered with eyes is also Ezekiel's (1:5 11, 10: 12–14), but the fact that they have six wings, rather than four, and that each has four identical, rather than different, faces relates it to Revelation (4: 6 8). The hand emerging from the fire and holding the shaft of a golden wheel surmounted by a half-wheel is a strange element in the composition, which may be related either to the creatures' hands mentioned in Ezekiel (1: 8, 10: 7), or to the hand which carried the unfurled long scroll 'written within and without' (2: 8 10), similar to the apocalyptic book which God holds in his hand (Rev. 5: 1). Lower down in the undulating blue stripes representing the river Chebar, the site of Ezekiel's vision, Ezekiel is lying, and an angel is shown offering him the scroll that the Lord has commanded him to eat (3: 1). The deviations from the biblical text – the wheel with a shaft held by hand – is the artist's way of relating the two scenes. Furthermore, by depicting the seraphim attached to the spokes of the wheel, the artist conveys more faithfully the meaning of the phrase 'when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth the wheels were lifted up with them'.

The conflation of literary elements in visual representations had already occurred in early Christian times. The four-winged, four-faced cherubim of Ezekiel were confused with the six-winged, single-faced seraphim of Isaiah and the similar creatures in Revelation, sometimes nimbed and carrying books, symbolizing the Evangelists. The result is that, even in early Christian art, it is

almost impossible to label a scene as a pure Vision of Ezekiel. Even his appearance in a scene does not necessarily identify the other elements as pertaining purely to Ezekiel, as, for instance, in The Vision of Ezekiel, apse mosaic in Blessed David, Thessalonica (c.425–50), the Byzantine manuscript of Cosmas Indicopleustas in the Vatican, and the so-called Roda and Farfa Catalan Bibles. The Vision of Ezekiel in the Erzka Bible has four cherubim carrying Christ, each with identical faces and six wings, unlike any other representation known to us, and may belong to another tradition.

The Erzka manuscript is the first illustrated Armenian Bible. The manuscript has 38 full- and part-page miniatures, the majority of which depict the authors of the Old Testament books, the Evangelists and Paul, mostly in sitting positions holding inkpots and writing. Two miniatures – Moses receiving the Tables of the Law and David playing the harp – recall the miniatures in Byzantine Psalters; all the others are original creations. The choice of certain themes in itself bears witness to the independent spirit of the artist. Thus, at the beginning of the Book of Daniel, instead of the customary scene of the Three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace, Daniel's judgement of Suzanna is depicted. This Bible, like the British Library's Awag Vank' Gospels of 1200–1202 (see Cat. 138), the famous Mush Homeliary, copied in 1202 (Mat. No. 7729), the Gospels dated 1201 (Mat. No. 10359), bears witness to the contacts with Cilicia. At the time when this manuscript was illustrated, Erzka was under Mongol domination and the alliance concluded between the Cilician kings and the Mongols facilitated exchanges between Cilicia and the scriptorium at Erzka.

Pogharian, *Grand Catalogue of St James Manuscripts*, vol. VI, pp. 401–16, figs 43–4; Mekhitarian, *Treasures of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem*, No. 10, Pls 10, 1–10, 2, p. 23 (English); Narkiss, ed., *Armenian Art treasures of Jerusalem*, 66–8, figs 84–6; Nersessian, Der, 'Erznkayi 1269 i'vi Astvadsashuntchê Erusaghem t'iv 1925', *Ējmiadsin* 11–12 (1966), 28–9; French translation in *Byzantine and Armenian Studies*, 603–9, figs 374–82; Nersessian, Der, *Armenian Art*, 218–19, pl. 166; Thierry, *Armenian Art*, 263, fig. 421.

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### Book of Questions and Lives of Saints, 1298

Oriental paper; 287 fols, in gatherings signed from A–DS (1–50), foliated in two parts, 1–153 and, from fol. 154, 1–60. Written in regular bolorgir script in black ink which has faded to rust colour in the first part of the manuscript, generally in single cols and 20–24 lines per page. Bound in stamped leather over wooden boards. Well preserved after restoration; 25 × 18 × 6 cm



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*Provenance:* The manuscript was copied by four scribes whose names are Sark'is the deacon, Yovhannes the priest, Markos, and Ewdok's-Ewt'im the priest. Among the several colophons two provide a full provenance of the manuscript. According to the scribe Sark'is (fol. 155r) the manuscript was copied in the monastery called Nor (New) under the shelter of the Church of the Holy Theotokos in the year 15 April 1298. A second, fuller, colophon (fol. 287r) adds that the 'manuscript was completed on Wednesday 13 August 1298 in the country of Saghkans [Tchmshkadsak] in the Monastery called Nor, also called Gayl Vank', near the village called Adma (Eastern Anatolia),

during the reign of Ker Leon Ghawrasay' (King Levon II, 1270–89). A later colophon in notragir (fol. 182r) records that a certain Grigor from Jerusalem gave the manuscript to St James Monastery in 1662. The manuscript contains two texts: fols 3a–154a cover St Basil of Caesarea the Cappadocian's (330–79) *Book of Questions on Monasticism* and fols 155b–271 *The Lives of Saints* in three sections: 1. The Lives of Egyptian Fathers (fol. 155b), 2. The Life of St Macarius of Egypt (fol. 260a) and 3. Homily of Paul the Ascetic (fols 271v–285r).

Jerusalem, St Thoros Depository, Inv. Nr 336

### Fol. 2b Portrait of St Basil with the Scribe Deacon Sarkis and the Donor

The frontispiece to the entire manuscript depicts Saint Basil of Caesarea in full episcopal vestments blessing the seated scribe Sarkis, one of the four scribes who copied the manuscript, and whose 'spiritual father and patron' Markos (fol. 155a) the cleric, holding a cross, stands behind him, presenting the scribe to the saint. The Byzantine stylistic elements are recognizable in the more classicizing faces as well as in the drapery, especially when they are compared with the rather abstract style of painting found in the Miscellany, copied in Getkay Monastery in Great Armenia in AD 1273 (Jerusalem, Ms. No. 1288). The Greek inscription on either side of the portrait reads 'Saint Basil', and the three-line inscription below, 'Remember O Lord the soul of your servant Markos', clumsy though it is, also points to a Byzantine model.

Pogharian, *Mayr tsutsak dzeragrats*, III, 232–6, fig. 29; Narkiss, ed., *Armenian art treasures of Jerusalem*, 75, 150, fig. 88; Anasyan, *Haykakan matenagitut'yun*, 1343–1406.



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## 108 Rabbula Gospels, 586

Parchment; 292 fols. Script in *estrangelo* in 20 lines each of double cols; 33 × 25 cm

*Provenance:* The colophon about the making of the manuscript begins on folio 292r and ends in the middle of the first column of folio 292v. It is a copy of the Four Gospels in Syriac of the Peshitta version copied in 586 by the 'sinful servant, humble and despised Rabbula, the scribe' in the 'holy convent of Beth Mar Yohannan of Beth Zagba'. In the long scribal note, Rabbula credits a certain presbyter John from Larbik and a deacon John from Aynata with beginning the

work; and then he credits the completion to a certain anchorite Christopher, a certain priest Martyrios, and a certain Damian. In the Dedication miniature (fol. 14r) there is an image of Christ enthroned, approached by four men, members of the monastery at Beth Zagba, offering their dedications to Christ, under the sponsorship of two patron saints. Scholars place this monastery in northern Syria, between the ancient cities of Antioch and Apameia (now Qal'at al-Madiq).

The illuminations appear at the front of the manuscript in a single gathering of 14 folios comprising two dedicatory scenes (1v–14r); five portraits (2r, 9v–10r); the ten

Eusebian canon tables spread over 19 leaves (3v–12v); and 29 scenes from the ministry of Christ from the Annunciation to Zacharias to Pentecost (3v–14v).

Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Ms. Plut. I. 56

### Fol. 13v Ascension

The imposing composition of the Ascension contains many elements which cannot be explained by the text of the Acts of the Apostles (2: 1–13) but were chosen for theological reasons. The Virgin, dressed in purple, stands isolated in the pose of an Orant. Not present in the biblical narrative, she is introduced here as the guarantee of the humanity of Christ, who had come down to earth through her. Likewise alluding to the human nature of Christ are the two angels offering crowns with veiled hands; an allusion to Hebrews 2: 7, 'Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownest him with glory and honour'. Paul himself, whose presence in the text is also unjustified by the text, seems to explain this passage by holding a codex slightly opened with one finger and pointing to the ascending Christ. The third extraneous element is the tetramorph and firewheels based on visions of Ezekiel. The picture must be understood as a glorification of Christ, invented for the church on the Mount of Olives where the Ascension had taken place.

The two miniatures of the Ascension in the Rabbula and Queen Mlk'ē manuscripts have resemblances and differences. In the Rabbula miniature there is more life and movement, more variety and richness; in the Mlk'ē miniature there is to be admired a certain beauty of simplicity, solemnity and magnificence; a divine mystery unfolds to men in all its mystery. In the choice of colours both have common points: the dominant tones are orange, red, violet, green and azure. The artist of Mlk'ē prefers violet and orange. Violet serves him for giving a certain notion of unity between celestial and terrestrial zones in the principal persons of the miniature, Christ, the two archangels and the Holy Virgin. In the Rabbula only the Holy Virgin is in violet. Orange, on the

contrary, serves him to give to the whole a vivacity and splendour.

In Christian art there existed various traditions for representing Christ raised on high: some artists painted him as raised by the Right Hand of the Father, who extends him his hand in token of his divine consanguinity; others, carried by angels or in a chariot of fire like Elijah's. The representation of the Ascension, therefore, was executed in one of these styles. Pope Gregory I (590–604) forbade western artists to show Christ raised to Heaven by the Hand of God, or by the angels or by the chariot of fire, because that would be to place in doubt the Divine Power. In the East and West, however, the angels at the side of Christ always figure as a sign of his kingly glory. Sometimes he has been represented on the throne, sometimes standing, but always in an oval as did the ancients for the apotheosis of Roman emperors. We find Christ seated in an *ampulla* of the treasure of Monza, in the Coptic fresco of Baouit in Egypt, both dating from the sixth century, and in a mosaic of the Basilica of Monreale of the twelfth century; Christ standing, however, is to be seen in an icon of the monastery of St Catherine at Sinai of the sixth–seventh century.

The composition of the miniatures of the Ascension in any case always has two planes, like that of the Transfiguration. The presence of the Virgin is mentioned neither in the Gospels nor in the Acts of the Apostles, but she is depicted, praying with outstretched arms, as a symbol of the Church. Two angels at her sides, with messenger's wand, figure in some miniatures, in conformance with the text of the Acts of the Apostles, to announce the Second Coming of Christ. This we find in Rabbula. The two angels are sometimes to be seen painted above the heads of the apostles, turned toward the latter to tell them of the Second Coming. The artist of *MLK'Ē* follows that tradition. As for the number of apostles present, that varies, according to the fancy of each artist, from ten to fourteen. *MLK'Ē* and Rabbula are in agreement, having all twelve, while in other details, as we have shown, the

Armenian and Syrian miniatures differ considerably. Rabbula, with Christ standing, borne by a chariot of fire, with archangels, to left and right of the Virgin, differs from *MLK'Ē*, where Christ is seated, and has no chariot of fire. And there are no archangels near the Virgin. One may thus conclude that the two miniatures follow two different traditions or styles.

Macler, 'Raboula-*MLK'Ē*', *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, 83–97; Leroy, *Les Manuscrits Syriaques*, 139–97; Wright, 'The date and arrangement of the illustrations in the Rabbula Gospels', *DOP* 27 (1973), 199–208; Janashian, *Armenian miniature paintings*, 66–72; Mango, 'Rabbula Gospels', *The Dictionary of Art*, J. Turner, ed., 25, 833; Weitzmann, *Late antique and early Christian book illumination*, 96–105, Pls 33–8.

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**The Gospels of Queen *MLK'Ē*, 851**

Vellum; 460 fols comprising 56 signed gatherings of 8 fols + 12 fols of miniatures. Regular Mesropian *erkat'agir* script of coffee-coloured ink; 33.5 × 28 × 12 cm. Present binding dates from 1515.

*Provenance:* This extraordinary manuscript has no principal colophon giving the date or place of copying. However, it has several inscriptions which trace its history from 1830 when it entered the Mkhitarist collection in the ownership of King Gagik I of Vaspurakan (908–37), and Queen *MLK'Ē*. Although King Gagik's colophon was largely erased in 1682 to make room for

the inscription of a later owner, enough has survived, referring to the decoration of the manuscript 'in gold and pearls', and names the Church of the Holy Cross in Varag, to which it was donated. This inscription has in it a date beginning with the Armenian letter Y = 300 (851), which according to Father B. Sargisian should be the date of the copying of the manuscript. Father Ghewond Alishan read 351 (902), accepted also by Vardan Hatsuni and Mkrtitch Puturian. In both these calculations the indication of the months and days has not been considered. N. Adontz has proved beyond doubt that the 'Monday 28 of the month of Arads and Tuesday 6 of the month of Areg' according to the Armenian calendar could only occur in the year 311 (862). But this date could not be the date for the copying of the manuscript. The duration of time corresponds to 28 January to 6 March, a time period of 39 days, hardly enough to have such a voluminous codex copied. Therefore, 862 is the date for the rebinding of the manuscript, while the date for its copying is 851, as suggested by B. Sargisian.

Prince Gagik of Vaspurakan was not the patron of the manuscript or its first owner, for he was born in 879, several years after the making of the manuscript. But he was its second owner, as the memorial on fol. 222v attests. In a second colophon, his wife, Queen *MLK'Ē*, claims to



109 (f. 4v)



109 (f. 463v)



109 (f.1v)

have 'given the Gospels to the church of the Holy Cross of Varag which I caused to be built by my hand and my expense and my help, and that of my king Gagik and his sons'. The date of this presentation is placed in 922. The important fact is that we are dealing with the only illuminated manuscript of royal commission to survive from the kingdom of Vaspurakan.

Mkhit'arist Congregation, San Lazzaro, Inv. N° 1144/86

**Fol. 4v The Ascension**

In this, the only surviving miniature from its prefatory cycle, Christ is represented in an aureole being carried by two flying angels, and a pair of archangels, in imperial Byzantine costume, stand guard like the great mosaic archangels flanking the apse of St Sophia at Constantinople. Below, the Virgin Mary is surrounded by a lively group of apostles, in which Peter and Paul make gestures as if to present something to the Virgin, but their veiled hands are empty.

Throughout the miniature there is simplicity in composition and dignity in idea. The execution emphasizes the artist's fidelity to certain dogmatic truths: Christ is depicted as all-powerful, seated on the throne; the archangels are treated as princes of the heavens; and the Holy

Virgin is differentiated from the apostles by her fine and imposing majestic presence as the first among the saints. The artist of the miniature was an Armenian, whose style is bold and solid, with unusually intense and vibrant colours of vivid magentas, intense purples, and saturated oranges.

The Armenian and Syrian miniatures (Cats 108-109) have resemblances and differences which imply that the two miniatures follow two different traditions. It is highly probable that among the manuscripts brought to Armenia in the fifth century for the translation of the Bible there were illustrated copies which served as models for Armenian painters. Armenian Christianity, with its close association with Cappadocia, Antioch, Alexandria and Byzantium, borrowed and assimilated varied elements to create a major work of illumination, distinctive in character. 'It cannot be denied that both in its civilization and its art, Armenia had a character in its own, which gave it originality and interest.'

Sargisian, *Mayr tsusak hayeren dze'agrats*, 385-6; Janashian, *Haykakan Mamrankartchut'wn*, I, Pl. 7, 20-8; *Armenian miniature painting*, figs 21-2, 45-72; Nersessian, *Der*, 'The date of the initial miniatures of the Ejmiadsin gospel', *Études Byzantines et Arméniennes*, 533-58; Adontz, 'MK'ē awetarani grut'ean tarin', *Sion* (1936), 274-5; Diehl, *Byzantium: Greatness and Decline*, 274-5.

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**The Four Gospels of Adrianople, 1007**

Vellum: 280 fols, *erkat'agir* script; 32 × 42 cm

*Provenance:* The extensive colophon records that the manuscript was written by 'the sinful and unworthy scribe Kirakos in the Armenian era 456 [1007] in the region of Macedonia, in the city called Adrnapolis [Adrianople] during the reign of Emperor Basil [II, 976-1025] for Yovhannes the protospatharios of the Emperor Basil II and the proximos of my duke Thothorakan' (Theodorakanos). The family name Theodorakanos derives from the name Theodore and the Armenian suffix *akan* (as in Kamsarakan, Haykakan, Movsisakan) means 'of Armenian origin'. One of the family was appointed Governor of Phillippopolis in 994 by Emperor Basil II (976-1025).

Adrianople in Thrace was one of the regions in which Armenians had settled from 988. Such a community had previously produced Basil I, of Armenian descent, who rose to be emperor of Byzantium (867-86) and founder of the Macedonian dynasty. Yovhannes was one of the many Armenians successfully serving in the Byzantine military. R.J.H. Jenkins says 'the military might, the military organisation and the military



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genius of Byzantium, the sure, strong base on which the whole glittering super-structure stood, was Armenian through and through'.

Mkhit'arist Congregation, San Lazzaro, N. 887/116

### Fols 7v–8r Yovhannes Presenting the Gospel Book to the Enthroned Virgin and Child

The figure of the Virgin Mary, enthroned with the Child Jesus (16.5 × 32 cm), is a remarkable composition. The throne, with cushions of imperial purple, inlaid richly with precious stones, the dress of the Virgin in dark blue, the shawl in violet, the child clothed in yellow, all create a very striking effect. The Virgin wears red slippers, her aureole, 7.2 cm in diameter, seems large, but if one takes into account its proportion to her figure, which is very statuesque, that impression disappears. The portrayal of the Virgin Mary is both affectionate, which shows that she is a human mother, and passionless and detached on account of her child's divinity. The inscription is in Greek and Armenian: MP OY and Surb Adsadsin (Asduadsadsin) are of the same purple colour, and appear written at the same time as the miniature was painted.

The portrait of Yovhannes, Protospathay, painted opposite the Virgin, to whom he offers his copy of the Gospel with veneration, is a rare example of its kind in Armenian miniature art. His dress is particularly interesting, consisting as it does of an azure robe, lighter than the red tunic, with full sleeves which are less tight and shorter than those of the robe. This outer garment, which N. Adontz calls a himation, is heavier, cut away in front and behind to allow freedom when walking. Though robe and tunic reach below the knees, the latter is the shorter, bordered with orange material all round the hem, and ending in short green strips. Over the tunic Yovhannes wears a kind of cuirass which falls to the waist, again bordered at the centre and extremities with a green strip. The ends of the trousers are quite tight and fit into the orange boots without heels. A large violet handkerchief is

attached to the left wrist. The head is covered with an azure hat, not at all the Arab turban, but a kind of headgear which does not cover the hair.

The inscription in Greek above the portrait, however, is confusing, for it does not contain the name of the owner of the Gospel but says 'Mother of God preserve your servant Photios the consul'. This Photios must be one of the subsequent owners who has replaced the name Yovhannes with his own, after also erasing the classical Armenian inscription, the traces of which can still be seen.

Jenkins, *The Byzantine empire on the eve of the Crusades*, 11; Maguire, 'Originality in Byzantine Art Criticism', in *Originality in Byzantine Art and Music*, Littlewood, ed., 109–10; Janashian, *Haykakan manrankartchut' iwn*, I, Pls 39–40, 33–7; *Armenian miniature paintings*, 93–104; Evans and Wixom, eds, *Glory of Byzantium*, Nrs 239, 357–8.

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### The Four Gospels of Trebizond, 11th century

Vellum; 633 bifolia. Mesropian *erkat'agir* script; 46 × 37 cm

*Provenance:* The principal colophon has been lost. The Gospel, one of the grandest works produced in Armenian, had a royal patron of the ruling house of the Bagradits, whose crowns are represented in Canon Tables IV–V. The only known canon tables of similar luxury are those of the Gospels of King Gagik-Abas of Kars (r. 1045–54).

The brief inscription on fol. 298v: 'Sir Baron servant of God and [this] Gospel, Amen' contains the ancient title 'Sir' used by princes of Armenia and Antioch from the time of the First Crusades to 1198, for the title ceases to be in use after this date.

Mkhit'arist Congregation, San Lazzaro, N. 1400/108



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**Fol. Canon Table**

The concordance numbers in simple squares are enclosed in canon tables of majestic size (30.5 × 30.5 cm) composed of three thick columns that imitate porphyry, the most royal of stones, supporting an intricately decorated rectangular headpiece filled with successive arches in full curve. Lush acanthus leaves at the borders and the peacocks on the top of the frame intensify the singular splendour of the composition. Armenian commentators on the Gospels have described the Canon Tables as the 'gates of heaven' leading to humanity's salvation.

Azaryan, *Kilikyan manrankartchut'yunē*, 27–9; Janashian, *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun*, I, Pl. 16, 28–33; *Armenian miniature painting*, 73–92; Evans and Wixom, eds, *The Glory of Byzantium*, Nr 240, 358–9.

**112****The Gospels of Havutst'ar, 1214**

357 fols. Round medium *erkat'agir* script; 28 × 39 cm

*Provenance:* According to the principal colophon, the manuscript was copied by Ignatios for the two brothers T'adēos and Hayrapet, both of whom had become monks at the monastery of Havutst'ar, also called Amenp'rkitch (All Saviour's) when the abbot was Poghos vardapet, during the reign of Ivanē (At'abek, 1212–29) and the catholicate of Ter Yovhannes (VI Ssetsi, 1202–20), in AE (1214).

Mkhitarist Congregation, San Lazzaro, Nr 151/161

**Fol. 268 The Headpiece of St John's Gospel**

At the beginning of the thirteenth century the northern provinces of Armenia were liberated and placed under the command of the Armenian general Ivanē Zak'arian. These territories were ceded to feudal families, the most important of whom were the Zak'arians, the P'roshians or Khaghbakians, and the Ōrbelians. Numerous churches were built, and the art of the khatchk'ar reached new heights of development while the illustration of manuscripts attained its apogee. Works such as the Awag Vank' Gospels of 1200–1202 (Cat. 138), the Homiliary of



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Mush, 1204, the Gospel of Haghpat, 1211, the Gospel of the Translators of 1232 (Cat. 86) are eloquent witnesses of this artistic rebirth.

The painter Ignatios, who worked principally in the domain of the Zak'arians, is one of the best artists of this period. His pre-eminence was recognized even by his contemporaries, as the expression at the end of the colophon of our manuscript testifies that 'the manuscript of the Gospel kept in a golden case in the monastery of Hořomos, was also copied by this scribe' and, more important, it had proved very expensive, for the brothers Ter T'adēos and Hayrapet confess that 'we sold all our properties to acquire you'. Of the seven manuscripts, illustrated entirely or in part by Ignatios, only the headpieces of St Mark, St John and some marginal ornaments have survived in this manuscript.

The Headpiece of St John is made up of a rectangle with trilobed arc openings, filled with two large rosettes enclosing blue interlacings. The entire left margin of the page is filled by the magnificent initial 'T', sumptuously painted in the same dominating colours, blue, green, orange and gold, with geometric designs throughout. At the right is the cross, placed on top of a palmette. The artist's objective was to obtain a decorative effect

without being concerned with the matter of proportion, for the drawing of the staff of the cross is out of proportion with the tongue and stem of the initial 'T'.

Hovsep'ian, 'Ignatios manrankaritch ev Shot'orkants tohmē', *Nyut'er*, I, 234–53 and II, 116–21; Janashian, *Armenian miniature paintings*, 159–71; and *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun*, I, Pl. 69, 53–7.

**113****The Gospels of Theodosiopolis, 1232**

Vellum; 408 fols. Round medium *erkat'agir* script; 25 × 34.5 cm

*Provenance:* The manuscript was written by the scribe Grigor, assisted by his father Khatchatur, 'a very skilful and versed' scribe, copied from the 'choice and best model' written by Grigor Murghanetsi. The manuscript was copied in the illustrious city of Theodosiopolis in 6430 from the date of the Expulsion of Adam from Paradise; in the Christian era 1232, and, finally of the Armenian era 769. Usually the Armenian era is calculated as beginning in the Christian era 551. But according to Samuel Anetsi the Armenian era was first used in 553 and our scribe Grigor conceives of the Armenian era as having begun in 553 and hence his 678 (1232).

Mkhitarist Congregation, San Lazzaro, Nr 325/129

**Fol. 1 The Headpiece of St Matthew's Gospel**

The scribe Grigor records that he had obtained a copy of the Gospels written by Grigor Murghanetsi, whom he calls 'skilful scribe and invincible scientist'. According to B. Sargisian, he was the copyist and illuminator of the Gospel of Trebizond (Cat. 111).

The scribe of our manuscript says of his own work, 'I have designed my work with my hands and ornamented it with pure gold, tested and purified by fire and coloured in varied colours and hues, decorated with numerous headpieces, arches and rainbows and floral details, by the grace granted to me by the Holy Spirit'.



*Provenance:* In AE 697 (1248) this Book of Ordination was written at the great and famous monastery called Zaṛnuk, in the Church of the Holy Virgin, at the command of Bishop Khatchatur, by the scribe Sargis.

Mkhit'arist Congregation, San Lazzaro, Nr 1657/440

#### Frontispiece Ordination of an Armenian Deacon

The Book of Ordination (Dzeṛnadrut'ean Mashtots) contains the texts of ordination for the orders of sub-deacon, deacon and priest. The miniature represents the moment in the ordination of a deacon when the bishop holds the Gospel over the

head of the ordinand. Behind them stand, on each side, two acolytes carrying lighted tapers. The ceremony takes place in front of the altar, placed under a ciborium. The scene is very simple. The expression on the faces of the participants communicates the solemnity of the ceremony.

The bishop wears over his light blue shapik a vermillion chasuble, and a white pallium decorated with crosses, which falls from his shoulders to his knees. Instead of the mitre, the bishop is wearing a cowl known as the kngugh or veghar on his head, ornamented in the centre with a cross.

The Monastery of Zaṛnuk is located in the environs of Melitene, not far from Cilicia, where the master scribe Kirakos,

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This skill is clearly seen in the execution of his headpiece of St Matthew's Gospel. The rectangle is framed on three sides by shells and precious stones. The rectangle (9 × 16 cm) is filled with multicoloured floral designs and crosses interconnected with interlacings. Above the rectangle two partridges are pecking at the flowers in a basket.

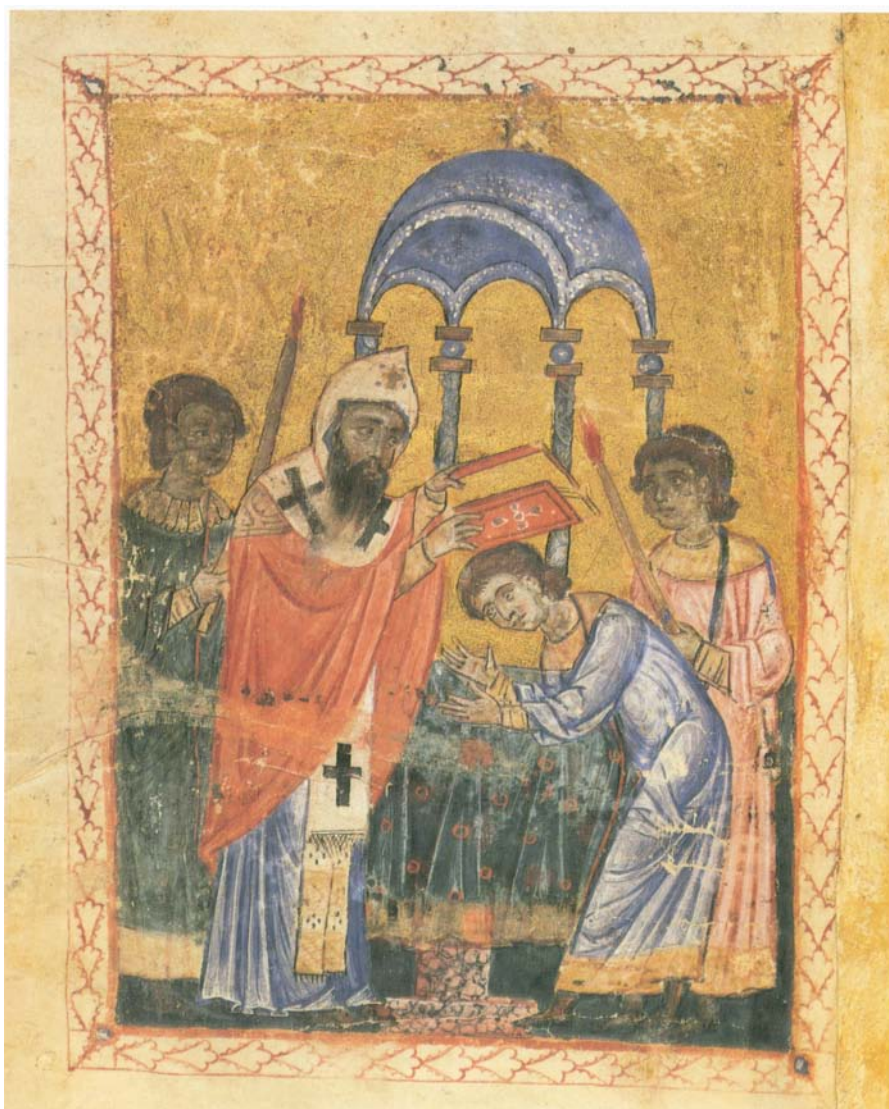
The initial letter 'G' of St Matthew bears under its arm the symbol of the evangelist, the angel, dressed in a red Byzantine chlamys, embroidered in precious stones, holding in his right hand a lance and in his left the globe of the world decorated with a cross. The outer margin is filled by an elegant cross on a pedestal.

Janashian, *Haykakan mamrankartchut' iwn*, Pl. 72, 57-60; and *Armenian miniature paintings*, 172-80.

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#### Book of Ordination, 1248

Vellum; 45 fols. The manuscript is written in three types of letters: principal text in round Mesropian *erkat'agir*; the hymns and the red rubrics in rectangular middle *erkat'agir*; and the titles in *bolorgir*. This manuscript is a good example of the mixture of calligraphy used by a single scribe; 19 × 26.8 cm



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identified in the colophon as the teacher of Sargis, the scribe of our manuscript, was active at the scriptorium of Hromklay in the first half of the thirteenth century. This miniature has provided the model for the Ordination scene found in the Four Gospels of Bishop Yovhannes, brother of King Het'um, copied in 1263, now in the collections of Freer Art Gallery (Nr 56. 11).

One could reasonably expect to find pictures of ordination in an Ordinal. However, no illuminated Byzantine Ordinal has survived. On the other hand, Armenian, Syriac and Jacobite Ordinals with miniatures do exist. The resemblance to Byzantine ordination scenes is evident. There is a baldacchino in the background, two deacons stand by with tapers; the ordinand inclines his head. The bishop, however, wears the kukugh, worn by Armenian prelates for ceremonies other than the Eucharistic liturgy; he holds in his hands an open book. The gesture admits of various interpretations. Is the bishop reading from the book, presenting it to the ordinand, or holding it over his head? A definitive answer to this question lies in the Armenian ordination sacraments. The order being conferred must be either that of the subdiaconate or that of the diaconate, because the ordinand wears no specifically sacerdotal vestment. In the Armenian rite, a Gospel Book is presented to a deacon at his ordination, as symbol of his authority to read it at the Divine Liturgy, but it is not held over his head. Unless, therefore, the bishop is reading from the book – which is not evident – we must suppose that he is presenting the Gospel Book to the deacon. In a Syriac Ordinal in Paris, dated 1238/39 (BN syr. 112), there are five miniatures of ordination ceremonies: fol. 28 a subdeacon, fol. 32b a deacon, fol. 61v a priest, fol. 67 a periodeutes, and fol. 69 a bishop. The ordination of the periodeutes resembles most closely the miniature in the Armenian Ordinal (see Cat. 114).

Janashian, *Haykakan manrankartchutivn*, Pl. 78, 60 2; Janashian, *Armenian miniature painting*, fig. 82, 185 8; Conybeare, *Rituale Armenorum*, 228 42; Leroy, *Les Manuscrits syriaques à peintures*, 332 8, figs 111 13; Evans and Wixom, eds, *The Glory of Byzantium*, Nr 238, 356 7.

## 115 Bible, 1418–22

Cotton paper: 778 fols. Medium *bolorgir* script; 28.2 × 16 cm

*Provenance:* This manuscript of the Old and New Testaments was written by the scribe Karapet in the city called Khlat'

under the shelter of the 'Church with eleven altars', on the command of the 'glorious vardapet Yovhanes' begun in AE 867 and completed in 871 (1418 22). In separate colophons the artist and poet Mkrtych, called Naghsh, bishop of the city of Amida, has left his memorial on fols 697v and 777v seeking prayers for himself



and mahtesi Mahut, who 'every day brought me ten lavash bread'. In 1827 the manuscript was sent from Constantinople to Venice in 'memory of Yakob Tiwzian on 15 August, 1826'.

Mkhit'arist Congregation, San Lazzaro, Nr 280/10

#### Fol. 544b The Tree of Jesse

The 19 miniatures illustrating the principal events of the New Testament begin with the symbolic scene of the Tree of Jesse. Jesse lies prone on the ground, his upper body resting on his hand; from his waist rises a tree, ending with two palm leaves which frame the standing Virgin and Child. Six ancestors stand, one above the other, next to the trunk of the tree, while 20 others, ten each on the left and right side of the Virgin, are represented as bust figures of nimbed men and women holding scrolls under small gold and multicoloured arches supported by scrolls covering the entire page.

The rest of the miniatures have only New Testament scenes; often two scenes represented on the same page, separated by a narrow band, and the Communion of the Apostles (fol. 552b) is placed in this instance above the Washing of the Feet, instead of below.

Sargisian. *Mayr tsutsuk hayeren dzeragrats*, I, Nr 10, 94–116; Hatsuni, 'Astuadsashuntchn ar Hayastan', 316–34; *Geghuni*, 1947, Pl. 22.

### 116 The Four Gospels, late 15th century

Fine vellum; 259 fols, in 23 quires of mostly 12 leaves. Text in slightly sloping *bolorgir* hand, written in black ink, in double cols, 23 lines each. Bound in contemporary wooden boards covered with dark brown blind-stamped leather, with flap. The upper cover fitted with a circular plaquette of pierced and chased silver depicting the Crucifixion and the lower cover is also fitted with a similar circular pierced silver-gilt plaquette, showing the Crucifixion, with many inscriptions in Armenian. Both ornaments are of the late seventeenth century. The insides of the covers are lined with red textile; fly-leaves at the front comprise a vellum bifolium of an Armenian manuscript of the eleventh or twelfth century and the fly-leaves at the end are vellum bifolium from a late thirteenth-century

French manuscript of a Commentary on St Luke's Gospel (1: 29–3: 11); 21.6 × 15.8 cm

*Provenance:* According to the extensive colophon on fols 257–9, the manuscript was written for Ter Yovannes, bishop of Argelan, by the scribe and artist Karapet Berkretsi (c. 1449–1500). Argelan and the monastery named after it are situated in Vaspurakan, close to the canton of Arberan, also called Berkri, off the north-eastern shore of Lake Van at a short distance east of the city of Ardjesh, where a scriptorium was working from 1251 to the end of the fifteenth century.

The manuscript belonged to the Paris Armenian Raphael Esmerian before it was sold by Dorling, Hamburg in 1984; it was later included in Tenschert, *Catalogue XVI* (1986), No. 15. It was sold as lot No. 33 in *The Beck Collection of Illuminated Manuscripts* by Sotheby's in 1997 and was acquired for Trinity College Library Dublin, jointly by the London Trust for Trinity College and Mr John and George Kurkjian.

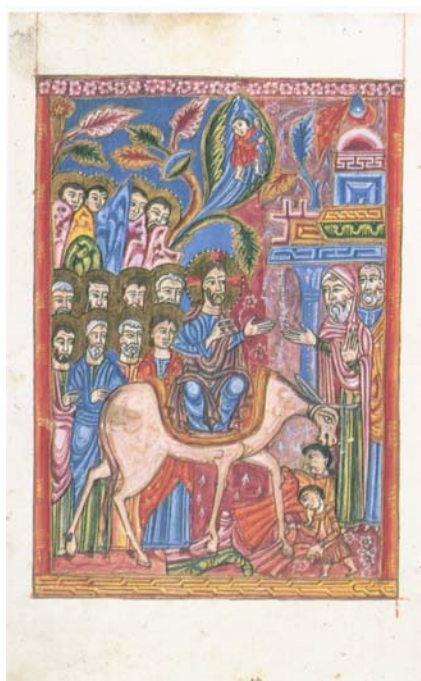
Trinity College Library Dublin, Inv. Nr Ms. 10992

#### Fols 5v–6r Entry into Jerusalem and Washing of the Feet

Christ on the donkey is riding to the right

towards two elders standing before the city gate; the twelve apostles are walking behind him. A child is up a palm tree and two others are laying down garments before the donkey's feet. In the facing folio Christ is washing the feet of the apostles, kneeling on the lower left drying the feet of St Peter, who points to his head recalling the words of St John's Gospel: 'not only my feet, but my hands and my head'. The other eleven apostles wait in three rows on the right.

The Gospel cycle at the beginning of the manuscript comprises the principal scenes of Christ's life in 16 full-page miniatures from the Annunciation to Pentecost and two miniatures depicting the Second Coming. The Washing of Feet scene takes the place of the Last Supper; the Resurrection is illustrated by means of the Harrowing of Hell and the Holy Women at the Sepulchre. The Entombment is depicted between these two Resurrection scenes, after the Harrowing of Hell, an order suggesting that Christ descended into Hell as soon as he had died on the Cross, before his body had been laid in the sepulchre. The illustrations of this manuscript have marked affinities with the work done during the second half of the



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fifteenth century in monasteries on the northern and eastern shores of Lake Van, in particular with the manuscripts illustrated by the artist Minas between the years 1432 and 1469, who was the teacher of the artist of this manuscript (Chester Beatty Library 564); and the Gospel written in Berkri, in the monastery of Huskanordi in 1475 (Boston, Public Library, No. 1327), and another written at Aght'amar in 1497 (Bodleian, Arm. e. 1). Karapet of Berkri, active between 1472 and 1500, was the son of Tiratur and teacher of the gifted artists Yovsep of Aght'amar (1470–1544) and Parsam the priest (1455–1520) (Chester Beatty Library, No. 567). He was a prolific scribe, and manuscripts copied by him include Gospels, Hymnals (see Cat. 98) and *Manrusmunk'*.

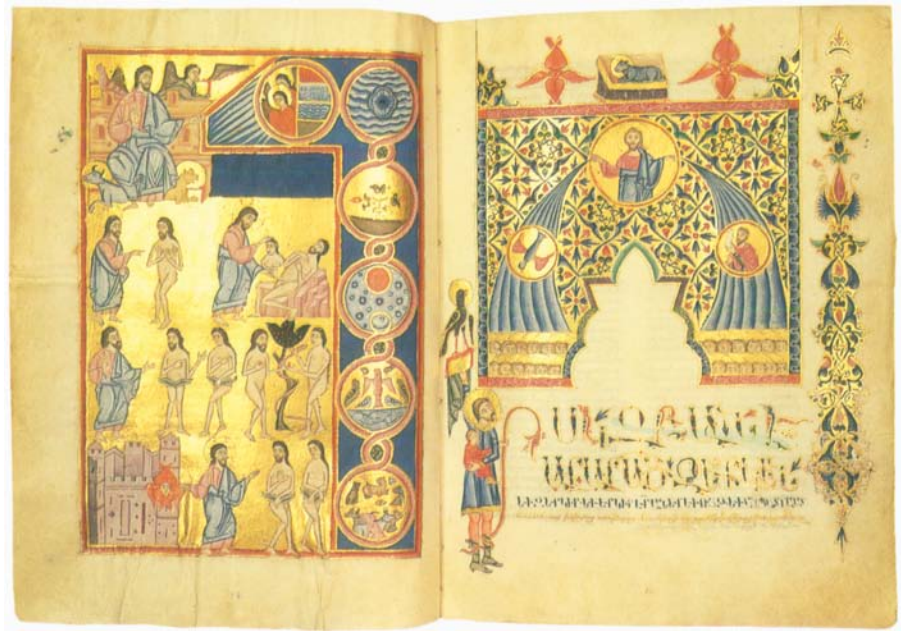
Sotheby's, *The Beck Collection of Illuminated Manuscripts*, Monday, 16 June 1997, lot. 33, 255–9 (coloured plates of Raising of Lazarus and Washing of the Feet); Baronian and Conybeare, *Catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, No. 9, 10–11; Macler, 'Notices des manuscrits arméniens vus dans quelques bibliothèques de l'Europe centrale', *JA* 11, 2 (1913), 229–84; Nersessian, *Der, The Chester Beatty Library: A catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts*, 57–62; Nersessian, *Der, 'An Armenian Gospel of the fifteenth century'*, *Études Byzantines et Arméniennes*, 684–94; Sanjian, *A catalogue of medieval Armenian manuscripts in the United States*, No. 67, 336–44; Hakopian, *Haykakan manrankartchut'yun: Vaspurakan (Album)*, Pls 68–70, p. 245; Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 131–3.

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### Bible in Armenian, 1629

Vellum; 1212 pages divided into 100 gatherings of mostly 12 leaves each. Minuscule *bolorgir* script; 22.4 × 16.5 cm

*Provenance:* During the winter of 1604–5, Shah Abbas (1588–1629) ordered 300,000 Armenians from the city of Julfa, along the Arak's river, to be deported to Isfahan, but hardly a fifth reached the Iranian city. It was none the less from this small nucleus that one of the most remarkable communities of the diaspora prospered. It even came to the point of constituting a real state within the state: it was under the administrative rule of a *k'alant'ar* who had widespread powers. Very rapidly the role of the Armenian commercial capital in the



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country's internal and especially in its external trade became highly significant. Armenian commerce, by then widely recognized, received the special attention of Shah Abbas and enjoyed the patronage of government authorities.

One Armenian who accumulated great wealth and enjoyed the patronage of the king was Khoja Nazar, son of Khoja Khatchik who in 1607 requested the scribe Hakob of Constantinople to copy an Armenian Bible for him. According to the colophon the manuscript was completed in the Armenian era 1072 [1623] but by the time it reached Isfahan it was 1629 'the year when the Persian king Shah Abbas died ... and was succeeded by his grandson Sahah Sefi'. In the same year Ter Movses Tat'evatsi (III, 1629–32) became catholicos of the Holy See of Ējmiadsin, and with the help of Khoja Nazar renovated Ējmiadsin. The colophon also mentions Khatchatur Kesaratsi (1590–1646), a pupil of Movses Tat'evatsi, who was appointed Bishop of New Julfa in 1620, and who in 1630 set up the first printing press in Persia and western Asia and supervised the printing of four Armenian books.

Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, Inv. Nr A. 152.

### Fol. 13 Scenes of the Creation

The miniature illustrates the events described in the first three chapters of Genesis. At the top of the page, God is shown enthroned, surrounded by the four animals of the Apocalypse; the inscription: 'By the grace of the Lord the earth was filled, and by the word of the Lord the heavens were made' is written in gold letters. The work of the first six days is briefly recounted in the medallions. Appearing successively are: the separation of light from darkness, symbolized by the two angels acting as God's agents; the separation of the waters; the earth covered with greenery; the creation of the celestial bodies; the creation of birds and fishes; and last, the creation of animals. The following episodes are arranged in three zones on a gold ground: first, the creation of Adam and Eve; then, from the right to left, Eve tempted by the serpent gives the fruit to Adam, and God speaks to Adam and Eve. In the last register, the action once again unfolds from left to right: a seraph guards the gate of Eden which is shown as a fortified town, and God addresses Adam and Eve, walking away.

This manuscript served as model for the painters of New Julfa, because many of its compositions are repeated, with slight

differences, in at least three manuscripts which were illustrated there: Bible of 1639 (Kevorkian Collection Nr 1), St James's Jerusalem 1645 (Nr 1933) All-Saviour's New Julfa 1662 (Nr 15(1)).

Nersessian, *Der, Armenian Art*, fig. 178, 233; Narkiss, *Armenian art treasures of Jerusalem*, fig. 142, 95; Calouste Gulbenkian Musee, figs 334 5, 59; Nersessian, *Catalogue of early Armenian books 1512 1850*, 21 4.

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**The Four Gospels in Armenian, 1647–93**

Vellum; 277 fols. *Bolorgir* script, 17.6 × 13.3 cm

*Colophon:* The scribe and artist of this manuscript is Nikoghayos, calling himself *dsaghkarar* or *melanawor*. He was the principal scribe of the Crimean school, and active from the 1640s up to his death in 1693. He worked mainly in the scriptorium attached to the Church of St Sargis at Theodosia (Kaffa), and in Surkhat. Between the years 1647 and 1693 he copied and illuminated over 34 manuscripts (see Cat. 39).

Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, Inv. Nr L.A. 193

**Fol. 12v The Ascension**

Christ is seated in an oval mandorla borne



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by four angels, two of whom have trumpets. Below are the Virgin in the centre with the group of six apostles on either side gazing upwards. The inscription reads: The Ascension.

Manuscripts were still being copied and illustrated in Armenia in the seventeenth century, long after Armenians had founded printing presses in major European cities. The Armenian artists in Constantinople and Crimea, the two most active centres, drew their inspiration from thirteenth–fourteenth-century works, particularly Cilician, and in certain instances it is even possible to identify the model. A case in point is the detailed cycle of illustration in this manuscript, which is an exact replica of the cycle in the Matenadaran Gospel Nr 7651.

Nersessian, *Armenian illuminated Gospel-books*, Pl. XIX, 39; Korkhmazyan, *Armyanskaya miniatyura Khrima*, 77 85; Gevorgyan, *Armyanskii miniatyurist XVII veka Nikogos dsakharar*. Pls i iv, 89 96.

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**Fragment from the Gospels of Marshal Ōshin, 1274**

Vellum; 320 fols. *Bolorgir* script; 27.5 × 20.5 (19.8 × 13.5) cm

*Provenance:* This miniature once belonged to the Gospel Book, now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York as Ms. M. 740, copied for Ōshin, marshal of the Armenians, son of the Prince of Princes, Kostandin, Lord of Lambron by the celebrated scribe Kostandin, assisted by Step'anos Vahkatsi (Cat. 142) in the capital city of Sis, under the shelter of the Churches of the Holy Cross and of the Holy Archangels, in the year of the Armenians 723 (1274), during the catholicate of Hakob (I, Klayetsi, 1268–86), and during the reign of King Levon II (1270–89), grandson of Levon I (1196–19), who restored the Armenian kingdom. The scribe Kostandin was also the copyist of the Queen Keran Gospels of 1272 (Jerusalem Nr 2563), a manuscript illuminated under the direct influence of T'oros Roslin.

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Inv. Nr McClean 201



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**Fol. 148 Portrait of St Luke**

The Evangelist St Luke is represented seated almost in view cutting his pen, an iconographic type used for Mark in the east as well as in west. The lectern is fish-based; incongruously placed on the wall, next to the twin columns, a traditional motif going back to antique times. The writing desk is well furnished: an inkpot, scissors, a pair of compasses, and bottles for various coloured inks. The jars in the open cupboard to the left seem to refer to the tradition in Armenian that St Luke 'was a disciple of Galen, the physician, and was himself a physician by profession'. In facial type and attitude the portrait of St Luke, with swirling folds of draperies and the windswept loose end of his mantle, exaggerates the stylistic peculiarities of miniatures executed in the scriptoria at Grner, where manuscripts Erevan, Matenadaran 7644 (1276), Topkapi Nr 122 (1273) and Venice, Mkhit'arist Congregation Nr 600 (1269) were also copied. The artist of this portrait of St Luke from the Pierpont Morgan–Fitzwilliam Museum Gospels had formerly worked in the scriptoria under the jurisdiction of Bishop Yovhannes. The

colophon states that Ōshin had the Gospels copied 'by the famous scribe Kostandin, and because of his deep love for the Lord he had it made more resplendent with golden ornamentation and a box for the glory of the Church'.

Nersessian, *Der, Miniature painting in the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia*, fig. 411, 105-6; Mathews, *Treasures in Heaven*, Pl. 15, Nr 64, 193-4; Kürz, 'Three Armenian miniatures in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge', in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, II, St 232 (1964), 271-9; Sanjian, *A catalogue medieval Armenian*, Nr 130, 582-96; James, *A descriptive catalogue of the McClean collection*, 364.

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### Saint Luke and Theophilus

Vellum; 260 × 174 mm

Cilicia, 13th century

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Inv. Nr McClean Ms. 201

To the left we see St Luke seated. His right hand is raised to receive the message, his left supports the Gospel, the first words of which are visible. On the right is T'eop'ilē (Theophilus), his name inscribed in red ink, presenting to the Evangelist a letter on which are written the words: 'And behold Jesus commandeth'. The contrasting costumes worn by the two principal figures emphasize their different social status. St Luke is wearing a simple mantle and has sandals on his feet, while the noble Theophilus has crimson shoes and stockings, and the hem of his tunic is studded with jewels. Theophilus is accompanied by a servant.

The miniature displays brilliant, jewel-like colours, a deep, saturated red and blue being the dominant colours. The technique is unusual; the impasto is so thick that the surface shows cracks in various places. Perhaps this is due to the use of wax, the old medium of encaustic painting.

Theophilus, the man to whom St Luke dedicated his Gospel as well as the Acts of the Apostles, is modelled on the more common miniature where St Paul appears at the side of the Evangelist, inspiring him to write his Gospel. This scene appears in eastern as well as in western art and illustrates a very ancient tradition according to which St Luke was a disciple

of St Paul. In this miniature Theophilus takes the place of St Paul, and appears as a nobleman, not as the bishop of Antioch with whom he was occasionally identified. In the Armenian Synaxarion under October 18 we find the following interpretation: 'Saint Luke wrote the Holy Gospel which is called after him, according to the words of the narration of the Holy Apostle Paul, for a Roman prince who was called Theophilus.' And later on: 'It is said

that once Paul sent him to Rome to preach there, and there he had as his disciple Theophilus, the great prince and duke, who made him write the Holy Gospel, not only according to the words and the narrative of Paul, who did not accompany the Lord, but also according to the narrations of the other Apostles, who accompanied Christ from the beginning.' St Luke and Theophilus appear in Armenian manuscripts Jerusalem Nr 2563



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of 1272 and Erevan, Matenadaran Nr 9422, of the 13th century.

Conybeare, *A catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts*, Ms. Or. 81, 4–6; Kurz, 'Three Armenian miniatures in the Fitzwilliam Museum', fig. 1, 271–5; Nersessian, Der, *Miniature painting in the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia*, figs 405–6, 97–102; 104–5.

## 121 The Four Gospels in Armenian, 13th century

Paper; 340 fols. *Bolorgir* script, 25.5 × 17.5 cm

*Provenance:* Written in the thirteenth century at Hromklay in Cilicia for the catholicos Kostandin I Bardzraberdtsi (1221–67).

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Nr 558

The catholicos Kostandin I, the owner of this manuscript, was one of the foremost art patrons of his time. Several manuscripts written at the patriarchal see of Hromklay for him, or at his command, have been preserved. At least three different painters are known to have worked for Kostandin I: Kirakos in 1244 and 1249; Yovhannes in 1253; and T'oros Roslin in 1256, 1260 and 1268. The colophons are lost and the name of the illustrator of this manuscript is unrecorded.

### Fols 265v–266 Portrait of St John

St John wears a blue tunic almost entirely covered with a bluish-green mantle on a gold background.

*Inscription:* Saint John the Theologian.

The eagle symbol of the Evangelist is perched on the tall lectern. The headpiece of the Gospel of John is decorated with two symmetrical peacocks above the rectangle at the sides of a vase. In the outer margin interlacing palmette surmounted by a cross on staff, while the inner margin is filled with the initial letter of the Gospel 'I' followed by five lines of text in double columns (John 1: 1–2).

This manuscript is an outstanding example of Cilician art in the thirteenth century.

Nersessian, Der, *The Chester Beatty Library*, I, 26–30; fig. 17a–b; Nersessian, *The Christian Orient*, Nr 113, 64.



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## 122 The Four Gospels, 1311

Paper; 2 leaves (fragment), 25.4 × 20.2 cm

*Provenance:* Written in AD 1311 by the priest Dser, and illuminated by the deacon T'oros Tarōnatsi.

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Nr 559

### Dormition of the Virgin

The Virgin lies, with folded arms, facing left. Behind the bed, Christ, turned to the right, raises with both hands the soul of the Virgin, in the shape of a new-born child, and three angels fly down in order to receive it. Another angel, holding an incense box, stands on the left, next to Christ, and further left are two apostles. The remaining ten apostles are grouped on the right, in front of a ciborium-shaped building: a few hold half-open books, others raise their veiled hands to their eyes. On the rocky foreground, to the right, stands a deacon holding a censer and a small ark of the incense. The inscription next to him: 'T'oros'.

The Dormition of the Virgin is not recorded in Armenian art before the thirteenth century. The earliest-known example is the painting in the church of St Gregory at Ani, built in 1215; shortly

after we find this scene in the Gospel of the Monastery of T'argmantchats (Translators) of 1232, and again in 1307 in the Gospel illustrated by T'oros Taronatsi (Venice Nr 1917).

The composition of this miniature differs in several respects from earlier Armenian examples and from the usual Byzantine iconography. The apostles are not divided into two symmetrical groups; Peter has not been singled out and given a prominent place at the foot of the Virgin's bed; the Jew Jephonias is not represented;



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the angel standing next to Christ plays the role of a deacon and holds an ark of the incense. The rocky background is a characteristic feature of the miniatures painted by the deacon T'oros. T'oros has added his own portrait, in deacon's robes and seemingly taking part in the burial rites of the Virgin, instead of humbly kneeling as the donors or scribes are usually figured when introduced into one of the Gospel scenes.

Nersessian, Der, *The Chester Beatty Library*, I, 31-3;  
Nersessian, Der, *The Christian Orient*, fig. 14, Nr 117.

123  
**The Four Gospels, 1329**

Vellum; 291 fols, *bolorgir* script; 23 × 16.5 cm

*Provenance:* Written and illuminated in 1329 by the priest Sargis Pidsak at Sis for King Levon IV (V).

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Nr 561

**Fol. 95v The Portrait of the Evangelist St Mark**

St Mark seated before a table, while the hand of God appears from the sky in blessing from the upper right-hand corner of the picture. The fish supports the lectern on which is placed an open book.

*Inscription:* This is Mark.

The portrait is the work of Sargis Pidsak, the major painter of Cilicia in the fourteenth century. Two years after

completing this Gospel, he was again employed by the king, and he painted his portrait as the frontispiece of the Assizes of Antioch, which he copied for the king (Venice, Nr 107). The portraits of the Evangelists are almost identical to those of a Gospel he illustrated in 1331 (Venice, Nr 16).

Nersessian, Der, *The Chester Beatty Library*, I, 35-6;  
Nersessian, Der, *The Christian Orient*, fig. 15, Nr 120.

124  
**The Four Gospels, 1342**

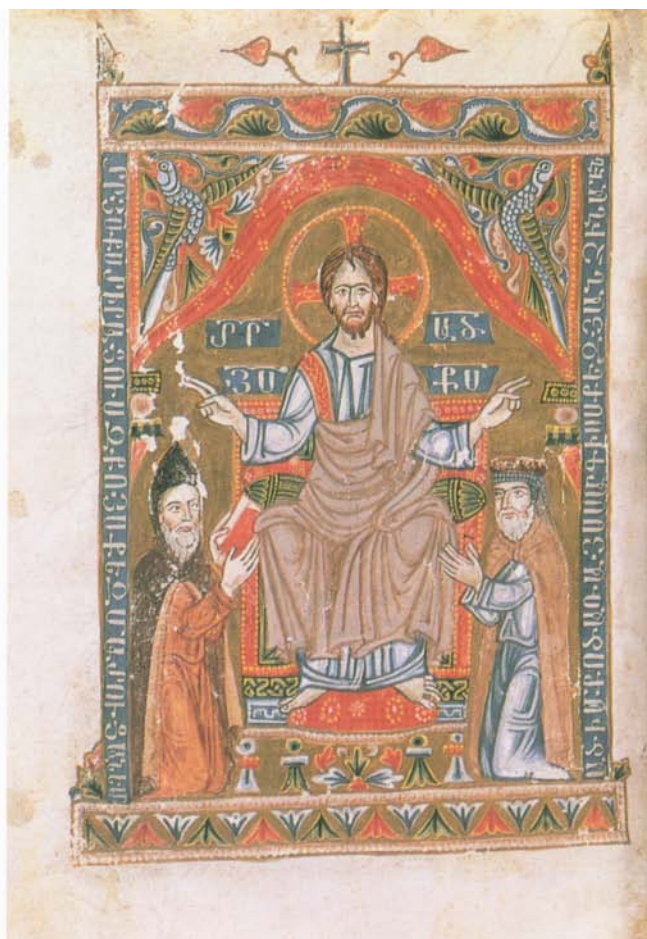
Vellum; 350 fols + 4 unnumbered, *Bolorgir* script; 20.5 × 14.5 cm

*Provenance:* Written in 1342 at the Monastery of Drazark in Cilicia by Sargis Pidsak for the priest Tiratur.

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Nr 614



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**Fol. 13v Christ, Donor and Scribe**

*Inscription:* 'Lord God Jesus Christ', on the left band of the frame, 'Lord Jesus Christ, I, Tiratu offer Thee Thine own'; on the right band of the frame, 'Christ my God Thy servant Sargis relies in Thee. Amen'.

The frontispiece, with Christ blessing the donor and the scribe, is particularly interesting. In the manuscripts of an earlier period the painter had usually represented only the donor in a prominent position and had not dared to add his own portrait. But in the fourteenth century the painters' portraits begin to appear fairly frequently. In manuscript Nr 559 (Cat. 122) the portrait of T'oros, standing in deacon's robes, is included in the representation of the Dormition; in another miniature in the same manuscript he is kneeling at Christ's feet, while the Virgin intercedes for him. In a similar composition painted by the artist Awag in 1329 (Cat. 146) the donor and the scribe both kneel at Christ's feet.

Three different portraits of Sargis Pidsak have survived. The first appears in a manuscript illustrated in 1331 (Venice, Nr 16), where he looks like a man in his thirties. In the next portrait painted in 1338 (Mat. 2627), he gives the impression of a middle-aged person, and in the last example, that of our manuscript, painted in 1343, he is already an elderly man with a white beard. These changes in the personal appearance clearly indicate that Sargis Pidsak tried each time to give a realistic image, and these miniatures are interesting examples of the art of portraiture in the fourteenth century.

Gevorgyan, *Dimankur*, figs 32, 33, 34; Nersessian, *Der, The Chester Beatty Library*, Pl. 21, 181-4.

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**Menologium, 1489**

Glazed stout paper; 544 fols, *bolorgir* script; 36.5 × 25.5 cm

*Provenance:* Written in 1489 in the town of Karkar, at the gate of (the Church of) the Holy Theotokos, by the scribes Sahak and Bishop Mkrtitch for mahtesi Faratj and his wife Panu Khat'un.



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The text is the redaction of Gregory of Khlat (1350-1426) and is similar, with occasional differences, to that of the Menologium in the British Library, Or. 4787.

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Nr 602

**Fol. 4v Saint Gregory the Illuminator and King Trdat**

The frontispiece, representing St Gregory Illuminator and King Trdat, is connected only in a very general way with the first lection of the Menologium: the commemoration of the Feast of John the Baptist established by St Gregory after his return from Caesarea, where he had been ordained. The text relates the bringing of the relics of John the Baptist, the miracles which took place, and recalls the destruction of the pagan temples of Armenia. There is no reference to the meeting between Gregory and the king which, according to the *Life of Gregory* by Agat'angeghos, took place later. This episode had been represented in the Church of St Gregory at Ani, built by Grigor Honents, in 1215. The king, surrounded by his friends and his army, all on horseback, sets out to greet Gregory.

The miniature exhibited here is greatly

simplified and other elements from the life of the saint are added. The monster which is being trampled by the king's horse may have a symbolical meaning, like the dragons represented elsewhere in the Baptism or the Harrowing of Hell (Anastasis), and might be interpreted as figuring the triumph over Satan brought about by the conversion of the Armenians, and the destruction of the pagan temples. But as Gregory stands on the dragon's head, it is more probable that it has been introduced here to recall the serpent's pit into which Gregory had been cast by the order of the king. The architectural setting should also be connected with an episode of the life of St Gregory, namely his famous vision when he saw four large columns, with crosses rising above them, joined by four large arches. Only three arches and one column have been represented here, but the prominence given to the cross over the column clearly indicates that the illustrator of this manuscript had this vision in mind.

On the Feast of Ējmiadsin the following hymn is sung:

The patriarch Gregory saw the great light  
He joyfully declared the same to the believing king  
Come, let us build the holy altar of the Light,  
For in him did light shine forth unto us  
In the land of Armenia.

Agat'angeghos: *History of the Armenians*, trans. by R.W. Thomson; Hultgard, 'Change and Continuity in the Religion of Ancient Armenia with particular reference to the Vision of St. Gregory' (Agat'angeghos para. 731-55), *Classical Armenian Culture*, Samuelian, ed., 8-26; Nersessian, *Der, The Chester Beatty Library*, Pl. 40, 155-9; Nersessian, *The Christian Orient*, fig. 18, Nr 126.

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**The Four Gospels, 1655**

Glazed paper; 331 + 2 fols, *bolorgir* script; 17.5 × 13 cm

*Provenance:* Written in 1655 at Shosh (Isfahan) by Hakob and illuminated by Hayrapet for the priest Grigor.

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Nr 578



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**Fol. 15v Christ in Glory, Donor and Painter**

*Inscription:* The divine cross on which Christ comes for judgement, and the Gabrielian trumpets sound and the dead rise.

Next to the figures on the left, 'Ter Grigor'; on the right, 'Ter Hayrapet'.

**Fol. 16 Last Judgement**

*Inscription:* The Lord seated on the tetramorphic throne, the judgement and the scales which weigh the rewards and sins.

This work is an excellent example of the work done at Isfahan and New Julfa during the seventeenth century. The figures and ornaments are carefully drawn, and painted in rich, bright colours, with a predominance of blue, red, green, yellow and lilac. The backgrounds of the ornamental compositions are always gold, while those of the full-page miniatures are partly gold, partly of different colours. The miniaturist, Hayrapet, who has painted his own portrait kneeling at the foot of the cross, facing the patron of the manuscript, was one of the prominent artists of Isfahan.

Nersessian, Der, *The Chester Beatty Library*, Pls 54a b, 92 8; Nersessian, Der and Mekhitarian, *Armenian miniatures from Isfahan*, pp. 205 6.

**127 The Cotton Genesis, c. 5th or 6th century**

Vellum and paper; 151 fols (originally 165). Script Greek; 27 × 22 cm (fragments 14.4 × 8.7 cm; 16 × 10.5 cm; 11 × 9.4 cm)

*Provenance:* Sir Robert Cotton (1571–1631), whose magnificent library entered the newly founded British Museum in 1753, gave his name to one of the two surviving early illustrated codices of the Greek Old Testament, the other being the Vienna Genesis. In the pre-Iconoclastic era both the cities of Alexandria and Antioch had well-developed schools of scriptural exegesis where this manuscript could have been produced. On the other hand Constantinople, the eastern capital of the empire, where the cultures of Alexandria and Antioch met, and where money and skill were alike available, should not be ignored. Kurt Weitzmann on stylistic grounds has argued that the manuscript was made at Alexandria.

One of the manuscripts severely damaged in the fire at Ashburnham House in 1731 was the Cotton Genesis. Shrunken and distorted fragments were recovered and 147 folios mounted under Sir Frederic

Madden between 1842 and 1856. Four fragments that were in the library of Revd Andrew Gifford, Assistant Keeper in the Department of Manuscripts (1756–84), were bequeathed with the rest of his belongings to the Baptist College. In 1928 the fragments were deposited with the British Museum on indefinite loan and then sold to the museum in 1962.

The British Library, London Inv. Nr Cotton Ms Otho B. VI



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127b

### Fols 27v–28r The Story of Lot and the Sodomites

The three miniatures selected for display illustrate the story of Lot and the Sodomites, accompanying the text of Genesis (19: 1–3; 4–11 and 12–13). 'And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in I pray, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.' The text of the second fragment reads: 'But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them ...' The miniature depicts the scene in which the Sodomites assault Lot with threatening gestures, demanding that he hand over to them the two men he has given hospitality. The artist has chosen the most dramatic moment, in which one of the two guests (the angels) grasps Lot's wrist as he vividly argues with the Sodomites, and pulls him back into the house, whose open door is visible. The grasping arm is all that is left of this angel, and nothing remains of the other. In a narrow strip below, in what is actually a subsequent scene, the smiting of the Sodomites with blindness is depicted by two men who have fallen to the ground. By this formula the artist has tried to pictorialize the verse 'so that they wearied themselves to find the door'. The concluding miniature below the text, 'And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever

thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it', presents the city of Sodom, its buildings embellished with strips of gold leaf. Lot can be seen kneeling at the left, as can part of the angel.

The Cotton Genesis before its destruction was selected for publication by the method of engraving. For this purpose the manuscript was loaned in 1618 to the French scholar, N.C. Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637), who commissioned the painter Daniel Rabel to make water colours. The project was never completed. Only preliminary drawings survive, one of them depicting the Third Day of Creation, now preserved in Bibl. Nat. MS. français 9350, fols 31, 32. Originally the Cotton manuscript had as many as 330 miniatures. The illustrations are inspired by the exegesis of Alexandrian theologians, where the artist offers painted commentary on episodes in as many successive scenes as the example of the story of Lot exemplifies. For the history of book art, this densely illustrated book is of great importance. Seldom again was the Book of Genesis illustrated so extensively. The second implication concerns the origins of Christian art in general. Contrary to the concept that it began in the catacombs as a symbolic art with a few abbreviated scenes, gradually increasing in scope and number and developing into narrative art, early Bible illustration suggests that an extensive narrative art developed quite early, side by side with funerary art. In the thirteenth century, mosaicists in Venice chose about a hundred scenes from the Cotton Genesis as models for the decoration of five cupolas in the narthex hall of San Marco.

H.I.B., 'The Cottonian Genesis', *BMQ* II, no. 4 (1928), 89–90; Bonner, 'The Cotton Genesis', *BMQ* XXVI, nos 1–2 (1962), 22–6; Weitzmann, 'Observations on the Cotton Genesis Fragments', in *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in honor of Albert Mathias Friend*, 112–31; Weitzmann, *Late antique and early Christian book illumination*, Pls 21–2; Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 1, p. 18; Buckton, ed., *Byzantium*, Nos 66–7, pp. 74–6.

### 128 Gospel Book c. 6th or 7th century

Vellum; 2 fols (fragmentary). Script Greek; 21 × 17.5 cm; originally at least 26 cm wide and probably more than 30 cm high

*Provenance:* These two leaves are all that remain from a set of Canon Tables that was once the preface of a splendid manuscript of the Four Gospels. Unfortunately, they were cut to fit into a Gospel Book of 1189 now in the British Library as Additional MS. 5112. The Gospels, with its insertions, belonged to Anthony Askew (1722–74), physician, classical scholar and traveller in the Near East. Purchased by the British Museum at the sale of Dr Anthony Askew's manuscripts, 15 March 1785, who probably acquired it from Richard Mead (1673–1754).

The British Library, Inv. Nr Add. 5111

### Fols 10–11r Canon Tables

On the left folio is the end of the Letter of Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (died c. 340) to Carpianus explaining the use of the tables (on the recto), with part of the first table having cross-references to Gospel passages in the other evangelists numbered with Greek letters. The right page has parts of the ninth and tenth canon tables on the recto and verso, ending with the passages occurring in only one of the Gospels.



Even rarer than purple-stained leaves, these are stained gold leaves, forming a background for a lunette supported originally by three columns forming two arches. The arches and columns are filled with an abstract ornament consisting of style palmettes supported by omegas with pod-like sides. Under each of the two arches is a portrait medallion, very classical in its realistic face and its free brush technique. There were originally twelve such medallions and they have correctly been interpreted as representing the twelve apostles. Since the apostles have no direct connection with the concordances of the Canons and the Eusebian Letter, it has been suggested that they may be influenced by the images that decorated the interior of Constantine's mausoleum attached to the Apostle Church in Constantinople. 'Since we obviously are dealing with leaves of such extraordinary splendour that their imperial patronage and Constantinopolitan origin can rightly be assumed, the association with the Holy Apostle Church has much to recommend it. An origin at the end of the sixth or seventh century is most likely.'

The decoration, though elaborate, is severe, precise, spare, and devoid of fantasy, unlike the Armenian where the artist's fantasy to indulge in inventing subtle variations and patterns had to be curbed from time to time by exhaustive commentaries on the content and manner of decorating the Canon Tables. The Armenian commentators expand the mystical meaning of the Canon Tables and encourage the viewer to use the rich decoration of the tables as a vehicle for understanding the unfolding of the mystery of redemption that began with the birth of Christ to its actualization in the founding of the Church on earth. Nerses Shnorhali calls them 'baths of sight and hearing for those approaching the soaring heights of God'.

Weitzmann, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, Pl. 43, p. 116; G.E. Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 2, p. 18; Buckton, ed., *Byzantium*, No. 68, p. 76.

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**The Theodore Psalter, 1066**

Paper and vellum; 208 fols. Script Greek in double cols; 23 × 18.5 cm

*Provenance:* An important 'monastic psalter' written and illuminated by the protopresbyter Theodore of Caesarea in February 1066 in the monastery of St John of Stoudios in Constantinople, at the command of the monastery's abbot, Michael Synkellos, 'best shepherd of this flock'. The text consists of the Greek Psalter, a metrical life of David in the form of a dialogue, and hymns and canticles composed by the Abbot Michael. Acquired by the British Museum at Sotheby's sale of the library of Henry Perigall Borrell, numismatist of Smyrna, 2 February 1853, who is said to have obtained it 'from the library of the Archbishop of Chios'.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Add. 19352

**Fol. 48r Saint Gregory the Illuminator**  
 Among the 435 miniatures in the margins illustrating episodes from the lives of saints, two on this opening folio are dedicated to the Armenian St Gregory the Illuminator. The psalm accompanying the unframed images is Psalm 40 (39), verse 3: 'He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and steadied my steps.' The first scene at the base of the outer margin has a legend which explains the source of the miniature: 'Saint Gregory cast into the foul-water of the dungeon.' According to Agat'angeghos, when King Trdat found out that Gregory was the son of Anak the Parthian who killed his father Khosrov, he had him 'let down into the bottommost pit'. King Trdat, after executing the Christian nun Hrip'simē, as divine retribution, changed into the form of a wild boar on the pattern of the fate that befell Nebuchadnezzar after the episode of the fiery furnace. In a vision from God to the king's sister, Khosrovidukht is told that there is no cure for the king's torments other than the release of St Gregory. The miniature depicts the noble prince Awtay and a servant who went to Artashat where the dungeon was, lowered



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a long, thick, strong rope into the dungeon and pulled Gregory up and led him to Vagharshapat. Gregory is represented in full episcopal vestment. The second superior scene above presents St Gregory holding the hand of King Trdat crowned, wearing imperial costume, accompanied by his queen being led into a church shaped in the form of a basilica which has the bust of Christ as decoration on the tympanum of the entrance. The image represents symbolically the conversion of King Trdat and the royal household to the Christian faith. The direct inspiration for this miniature is the allusion to 'the horrible pit' in Psalm 40 and this episode from the life of St Gregory was chosen for its biblical reference and ties with the image of Daniel in the lions' den and embodies the type of virtues that the monks aimed at under Michael's guidance.

The Armenian author Vrt'anes K'ert'ogh (604–7), in his treatise defending the use of representational art in the Armenian Church, enumerates images adorning the interior of Armenian churches and lists the images of 'St Gregory the Illuminator in the different stages of his tortures, ... and the portraits of Saints Gayanē and Hrip'simē with all their companions'. On an Armenian *stele* from Ödzun from the seventh century (see Cats 10–11), among the figures carved in relief are a figure with the head of a pig or wild boar, representing King Trdat in the

form he assumed during his attacks of lycanthropy, and St Gregory. The Church of St Gregory, built by Tigran Honents in Ani in 1215, has a detailed cycle of images from the life of St Gregory the Illuminator on the west wing. The earliest-known Byzantine portrait of Gregory is the mosaic (now destroyed) on the south tympanum of Hagia Sophia, dating to the period of Emperor Basil I, who claimed to have Armenian ancestry.

The marginal miniatures contain anti-iconoclastic images and were painted in a monastic milieu. Relatively small, and designed to be held or, at least looked at closely, these miniatures promoted personalized statements more consistently than any other medium in the Byzantine world. There is perhaps Islamic influence in the delicate miniatures, which are painted in brilliant but not garish colours, and the thin, dry little figures scattered in the margins or between the lines of text. A number of manuscripts have been related to it, including the equally beautiful Paris Bibl. Nat. gr. 74, where the architectural framework is used like scenery to denote different acts of the drama.

Attwater, *Saints of the East*, pp. 21–8; Morey, *Medieval Art*, 111; Beckwith, *The art of Constantinople*, 330–1453, 114; Miner, 'The "Monastic" Psalter of the Walters Art Gallery', in *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of Albert Mattias Friend, Jr.*, 232–53; Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 4, Pl. 1, p. 18; Buckton, ed., *Byzantium*, No. 168, figs 167–8, pp. 154–5; Nersessian, Der, 'A Psalter and New Testament manuscripts at Dumbarton Oaks', 149; Nersessian, Der, *Les portraits de Grégoire l'Illuminateur dans l'art byzantin*, 55–60, fig. 35; Loerke, 'The monumental miniature' in *The place of Book Illumination in Byzantine art*, Kurt Weitzmann and others, eds, pp. 84–5, fig. 19; Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine art*, 279–86; Evans and Wixson, *The Glory of Byzantium*, Nos 53, 98–9; Thomson, *Agat'angeghos History of the Armenians*, 221–3.

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### The Menologion of Symeon Metaphrastes, 1070–80

Paper and vellum; 273 fols. Script Greek in double cols; 42 × 32 cm

*Provenance*: Copied in a Bithynian monastery in the tradition of the court style between 1070 and 1080. The manuscript comprises the first ten books



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of the *Lives of the Saints* by Symeon Metaphrastes ('the re-phraser'), who had been Logothete and Magister during the reigns of Nicephorus Phocas, John Tzimisce and Basil II. The connection with a monastery has been suggested by the choice for illustration of a relatively obscure saint, St Autonomos, whose feast centred round Limnae, the traditional site of his execution in the early fourth century. He is seldom represented in Byzantine art and his feast day on 24 September coincided with those of five saints of more established reputation – Sts Thecla, Serapion, Nicetas, Leontius and Theodore of Alexandria.

According to an inscription on fols 73 and 108 dated 9 April 1699, it belonged to a certain Doukas Mitelencas. It was acquired by the British Museum in 1841 from the estate of the Revd Dr Samuel Butler, bishop of Lichfield, who died in 1839.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Add. 11870

#### Fol. 242v The Life and Martyrdom of St Gregory of Great Armenia

The Feast Day of St Gregory the Illuminator in the Greek Orthodox, Coptic, Syrian and Anglican Churches is celebrated on 30 September. The image

above the title in gold letters, 'The life and acts of the martyr holy hieromartyr Gregory of Great Armenia', shows St Gregory in episcopal dress standing in a hilly landscape, inclining slightly forward, both hands covered by his tunic veiling his face. His executioner stands directly above him, brandishing his sword. To the left is a stylized hill partially covering the entrance of a church. The whole picture is set in a complex frame decorated with a repeating motif of small enamel-like flowers in medallions.

The scene presented does not correspond to the text of Symeon Metaphrastes, for St Gregory was not executed but retired to a hermitage and lived the life of an anchorite, having consecrated his second son, Aristakes, as catholicos, who represented St Gregory and the Armenian Church at the Council of Nicaea in 325. The artist probably inferred wrongly from the term hieromartyr in the title of his *Life* that he was martyred. However, the term in this instance is a reflection of the many tortures (see Cat. 41) he endured under the order of King Trdat and the thirteen years he remained imprisoned in the dungeon. The scene reproduces the standard image of the genre of a martyr and in particular of Saint Autonomos. The study of the illustrations of the Metaphrastian Menologium, and of its antecedents, has proved that no new cycle, nor even perhaps single miniatures, were invented for the Metaphrastian Menologium; the illustrations, like the text, were based on earlier models which were adapted to the special type of decoration used for each of the manuscripts. This often determines the number of scenes. In this version, there are four scenes in addition to the saint's portrait or bust, whenever the headpiece is decorated with circular medallions; otherwise we find a single scene or a portrait.

Symeon Metaphrastes primarily revised and rewrote, in the classicizing style of the period, the *Lives* composed by the earlier writers. Symeon's Menologium, completed before the end of the tenth century, immediately enjoyed great

popularity and sumptuous copies were made for wealthy patrons and monasteries. Among the extant illustrated manuscripts the earliest dated examples are the Menologia of Paris, gr. 580 and 1499, dated 1055–56, and the Menologium of Moscow, no. 382 (9), dated 1063. The British Library Menologium contains the texts of saints associated with the 25 Feasts of September and includes a table which deals with the saints of October covered in the second and third books. Twenty-two images remain, the first three having been removed and the pages replaced in the sixteenth century.

Attwater, *Saints of the East*, pp. 21–8; Dalton, *Byzantine art and archaeology*, fig. 160; Beckwith, *The art of Constantinople*, p. 124; Nersessian, Der. 'Les portraits de Grégoire L'Illuminateur dans l'art Byzantin', *Etudes Byzantines*, 59, fig. 34; Nersessian, Der. 'The illustrations of the Metaphrastian Menologium', 129–38; Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 5, 18–19; Buckton, ed., *Byzantium*, Nos 169, 156–7, fig. 169.

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### The Psalter of Queen Melisende, c. 1131–43

Vellum; 218 fols. Script Latin in double cols; 21.5 × 14 cm

The ivory covers with scenes from the Life of David and the silk binding with Jerusalem Cross have been separated from the manuscript.

*Provenance:* Although her name does not appear in the manuscript, all evidence points to Queen Melisende of Jerusalem (c. 1131–61) as the recipient of this luxurious manuscript. In the calendar of the Psalter every day of the year is marked with the church feast or saint's name proper to the day; but against 15 July is written 'Eodem die capta est Jerusalem', that is, it commemorates the taking of Jerusalem by the forces of the First Crusade on 15 July 1099. A *terminus ante quem* is the omission from the calendar of any reference to the consecration of the romanesque additions to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre exactly fifty years later in 1149. Queen Melisende, daughter of King Baldwin II (d. 1131) and the Armenian princess

Emorfia, married Fulk V Count of Anjou on 2 June 1129; he died in 1143. As his death is also not recorded in the calendar, it is reasonable to assume that the Psalter was written some time during those twelve years between 1131 and 1143.

A French-speaking friar, Frère Ponz Daubon, has written his name in a late twelfth- or thirteenth-century script upside down on the unnumbered front paste down. Subsequently said to have belonged to the Grande Chartreuse at Grenoble and later to Dr Commarmont of Lyons, from whom it was bought by Professor Guglielmo Libri for the London booksellers Payne and Foss. Acquired from Payne and Foss for the British Museum on 12 November 1845.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Egerton 1139

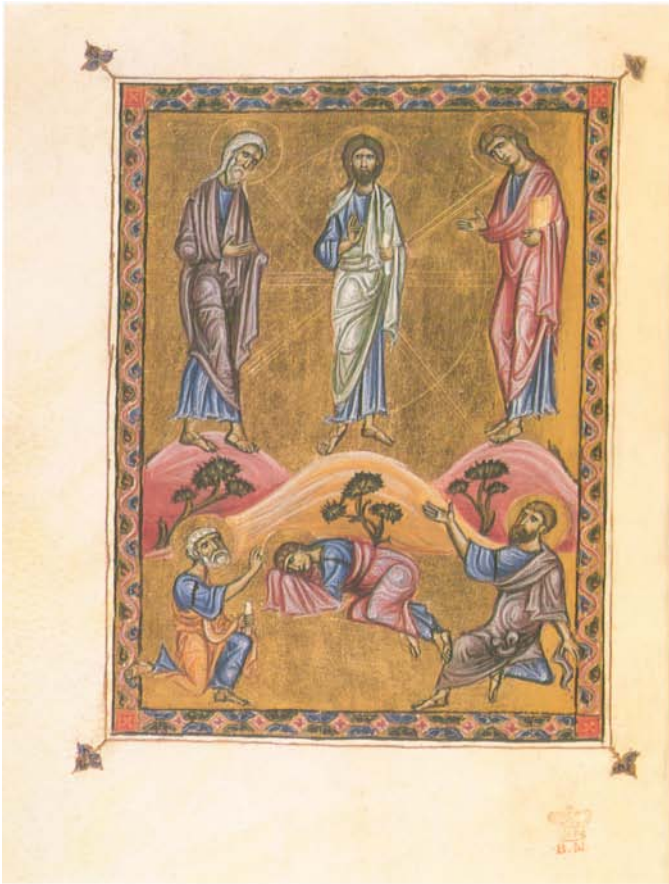
### Fols 4v–5r Transfiguration and Raising of Lazarus

These two miniatures are among the 24-cycle of full-page images that preface the Psalms. Christ is surrounded by an oval mandorla, and beams of light radiate horizontally and diagonally from the haloes of Elijah on the left, bearded, on the right Moses, beardless, holding a book, each standing on a separate peak. Their respectful attitude contrasts with the agitated poses of the apostles who 'fell on their face and were sore afraid'. Below are the three apostles before a rocky background: Peter on the left kneeling, one hand raised and pointing upwards, holding a scroll; James seated on the right, one hand resting on the floor and the other raised, pointing to Christ; John, in the middle, falls on the floor, covering his face with both hands. On the facing page Christ, followed by three disciples, approaching from the left with one hand raised in a gesture of blessing, and holding a scroll in the other; on the right in the arched opening of a building with diagonal roof and windows stands a youthful Lazarus, full face visible, with halo; one of the three Jews standing at the right unwinds his shroud; Martha and Mary kneel at his feet; two young men in short tunics and boots carry away the large stone slab.

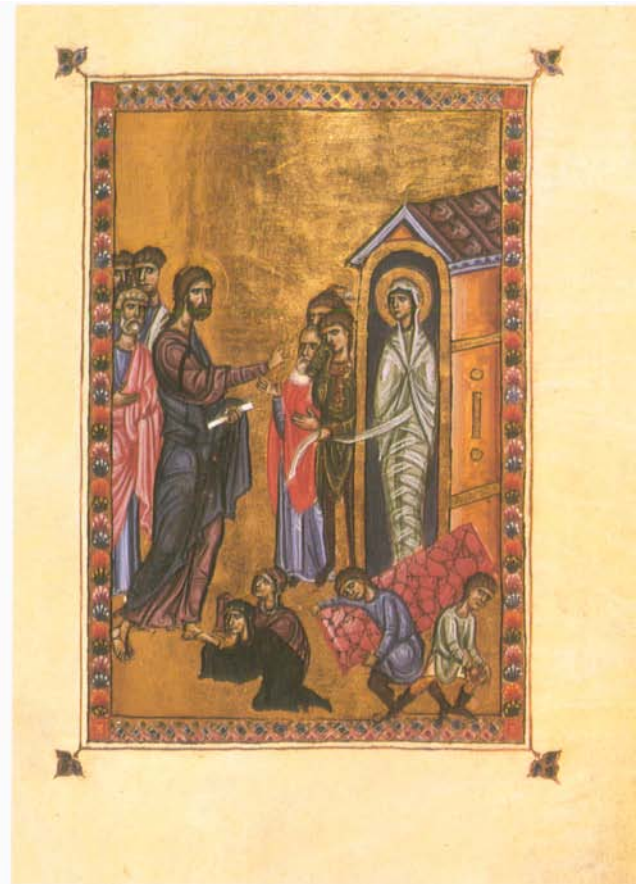
Although the artist in most instances follows his Byzantine models quite slavishly, there are features in his paintings which suggest that he either adds his own details or more probably misunderstood the true nature of his model. In the Raising of Lazarus scene, the tomb is presented as a huge arched building more like a sepulchre which we find in the miniature of the Holy Women at the Sepulchre. The tombstone is held in a slanting position by one man, and the second man, though supposed to be carrying the slab, has nothing in his hands and is moving in the wrong direction. In the Queen Keran Gospels (Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate no. 2563), in the Holy Women at the Sepulchre scene, the purple slab of the tomb lies diagonally, leaning towards the sleeping soldiers. In the miniature of the same theme painted by Sargis Pidsak in 1336 (Mat. no. 5786) two figures are shown carrying away the slab, one holding it under his arms and the other supporting it on his shoulders. In another Armenian Gospels of the twelfth century (Chester Beatty no. 555) two young men in short tunics carry a large stone slab.

Of the four artists who worked on the Melisende Psalter the most important was the painter who made the 24 prefatory miniatures and left his name on the last of these miniatures, the Deesis (fol. 12b) in Latin 'BASILIUS ME FECIT' (Basilius made me). The identity of the artist is unknown. His Greek name is not an evidence for his Greek origin. The leading Armenian artist and scribe of the Hfomklay scriptorium in the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia signs 'T'oros, by surname called Rōslin' (c. 1205–70). Inter marriages between Latin and Armenian noble families as well as ordinary folk were common. In the Crusader period, the particularly close connections of Armenian Cilicia with the Crusader kingdom saw the consolidation of the Armenian community in Jerusalem. During this period, the first three Crusader queens of Jerusalem—Arda, Morphia and Melisende—were from Armenian princely families. According to Ayyubid sources, in 1187 when Saladin captured Jerusalem,





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there were as many as 2000 Armenian residents in Jerusalem. This had political, religious and cultural consequences. William of Tyre states that during her nine years of regency Melisende governed well with an admirable sense of impartiality. Manuscript colophons suggest consistent positive relations between Melisende and the Jacobites between 1130 and 1148. Melisende intervened in property disputes between Jacobites and Franks. Her intervention was 'probably as important as any other single factor in removing Jacobite inhibitions about ecumenism where the Latins were concerned'. In 1142 she convened an ecumenical council in Jerusalem in which the Armenian Catholicos Grigor III Pahlavuni (1113–66), who was visiting the Holy Places in 1139, also participated. The entente between the Crown and the separated Churches under Melisende's rule also had a political dimension. As political allies, the Jacobites and Armenians had in common with the

Latins a mistrust of the Greek Orthodox. This was largely due to the Orthodox association with the Byzantine state. The threat posed by Byzantium through the annexation of Cilicia under Emperor John II Comnenos in 1137–38 brought the Latin and Armenian Churches together, especially as the Latin Church hierarchy in Cilicia was promptly replaced with Greeks. When finally Cilicia was created an Armenian state, the highest achievement of this entente was the crowning in 1198 of Levon II as king of Cilicia. The third dimension in the entente was also the manifestation of shared spirituality. Queen Melisende had an Armenian upbringing, and she brought up her daughters in her Orthodox faith. The combination of eastern and western elements in the restored lintels and tympanums of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which she had a hand in planning is quite consistent with the work of the Psalter in which eastern Christian painters were employed,

as is the western character of the ivory covers, with their royal emphasis, including six scenes from the life of David, accompanied by Cycle of Virtues and Vices on the front and six works of charity (Matt. 25: 35–6) on the back, carried out by a figure in imperial dress. Lucy-Anne Hunt has argued that the third artist of the Psalter, who undertook the incipit pages marking the beginning of the eight liturgical sections of the Psalter, was a Syrian, probably from Edessa. Manuscripts produced in the Holy Sepulchre scriptorium have been attributed to Armenian scribes and artists. The Missal of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, dated c. 1140–49, now in Paris (BN, 12056), related on palaeographical grounds to the Psalter, was copied by an 'Armenian scribe who could write Latin'. The gatherings were numbered by the original scribe with Armenian letters. The decorations of two Gospel manuscripts, copied in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the third quarter

of the twelfth century (BN. Lat. 276 and Vat. Lat. 5974) are also the work of several Armenian masters from Cilicia, who were employed in the scriptorium of the Holy Sepulchre. The wording of the scribal memorial and the choice of its location is further evidence that the scribe was familiar with the Armenian practice of inserting memorial notices in miniatures, while the Latin script itself betrays the Armenian scribe's lack of familiarity with the Latin script and penmanship.

Hintlian, 'Queen Melisende' in *History of the Armenians in the Holy Land*, 25–8; Buchthal, *Miniature painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 1–14 (Pls 1–19); Smail, *The Crusaders in Syria and the Holy Land*, 164–81; Dodwell, *The pictorial arts of the west 800–1200*, 241–3, figs 238–9; Buckton, *Byzantium*, no. 180, pp. 164–6, Pls 180; Evans and Wixom, *The Glory of Byzantium*, no. 259, pp. 392–3, Pls 259; Hunt, 'Artistic and cultural inter-relationships', in *The Christian Heritage in the Holy Land*, Anthony O'Mahony, eds., pp. 57–96.

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### Gospel Lectionary, c. 1216–20

Paper; 264 fols. Script bold *estrangelò* in double cols, 22 lines per col.; 44.5 × 35 cm

*Provenance:* An inscription in gold letters on blue at the end of the Easter Lection (fol. 185) records that the manuscript was copied and decorated during the prelate of Mar Iwannis, patriarch of 'all the universe' (1208–20), and Mar Ignatios, catholicos of the east (1216–20) – that is between 1216 and 1220. No place is given, but the manuscript is almost a twin of a lectionary in the Vatican (Syr. 559) completed on 2 May 1220, at the Monastery of Mar Mattei, near Mosul in northern Mesopotamia.



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Jules Leroy suggests that it was copied for the Monastery of Mardin, founded in 793, which became the seat of the Syrian Jacobite patriarchate from 1207 onwards. A single leaf containing the first part of the lesson for the second Sunday of Lent (Matt. 7: 28–9 and 8: 1–4), with a miniature of Christ cleansing the leper spoken of in the lesson, is now in the Mingana collection, Selly Oak, Birmingham, Syr. 590.

The British Library, London, Inv. Nr Add. 7170

### Fol. 160r The Holy Women at the Sepulchre and Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene

Two episodes, Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene and the Holy Women's visit to the Sepulchre, are combined in a single composition. The composition repeats the corresponding scene in Vatican Syr. 559 (fol. 146b) only on a slightly larger scale. The sepulchre on the left has a cupola supported by four columns. An angel seated frontally clothed in white robes, with a large halo, points to the empty tomb and the shroud with one hand, and with his head slightly turned right, looks at the three women who have brought spices 'with which to anoint him'. Mary Magdalene looks back at the full figure of Jesus, blessing with one hand and holding a scroll in the other. Two soldiers guarding the tomb are depicted asleep. The background of the scene is filled with trees. The legends in the pictures read: 'Our Lord Jesus Christ appears to the women' and 'The angel on the tomb'.



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The London Lectionary and its twin in the Vatican is an important source for the study of artistic interchanges between Byzantine, Coptic, Armenian and Arab art in Syria in the period of the Crusades. The imagery in the present Lectionary is rooted in the Byzantine tradition which has been adapted to local tastes and styles. This conflation of two episodes occurs in the Matenadaran Mss. No. 6201 illustrated in Great Armenia in AD 1038 (see Cat. 82) and is repeated with minor variations in several manuscripts. In the Four Gospels of the Walters Art Gallery dated 1455 (W. 543) the two episodes are combined in a such a way that Christ is speaking to all three women instead of appearing to Mary Magdalene alone. In the Syriac composition, although enclosed within the same frame, they are distinguished from one another through the attitudes of the figures, and Christ speaks to only one of the women.

Forshall, *Catalogus codicum manusccriptorum*, Pars prima, xxvi, 37–42; Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana collection of manuscripts*, 590, 1127–8; Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques*, xviii, 302–13, Pl. 93, cf. pl. 79; Morrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 29, Pl. II; Evans and Wixom, *The Glory of Byzantium*, No. 254.

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### The Four Gospels, 1499

Parchment; 219 fols. Script in large *estrangelò* in two cols, 16 lines each; 35 × 23 cm

*Provenance:* The Four Gospels in the Pesitto version were written in the year of the Greeks 1810 and in our era 1499 by a certain Elias in Mosul, for the church dedicated to James and St George at Tell Ziqufa, north-west of Mosul. This information is recorded not in the colophon but in two inscriptions on fols 206 and 213. A brief note on fol. 213v records that the manuscript was restored in 2013 (1701). The Four Gospels belongs to the luxury class of manuscripts where much effort has been devoted to making it as splendid as possible. However, the way this manuscript was written and decorated is very unusual, giving it a special place in the history of Syriac manuscripts.

The British Library, London, Inv. Nr Add. 7174



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#### Fol. 126a The Resurrection and the Visit of the Holy Women to the Sepulchre

Six soldiers are asleep before the tomb in the garden; this is conveyed by a green background and red, stylized plants. The stone is rolled back. In the upper part of the miniature, two bearded men, each with his right hand raised, are kneeling before a young man clothed in a white robe, holding up his left hand and pointing to the men. Behind the kneeling men stands a woman, both hands raised. The legends identify the female figure as Mary; the two men kneeling as 'two angels'; the man in the white robe as 'Our Lord Christ'; the framed section of the picture on the left with small white semi-circular opening is 'the tomb' and the six kneeling figures on the right are designated as 'the Jews guarding the sepulchre'. The scene pictures the episode of the empty tomb and the appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene according to the text of St John. The woman represents Mary of Magdalene, the two kneeling figures are the two angels and the young man in white is Jesus.

The iconography of this Syriac manuscript has close affinities with the earliest occurrence of this scene in the

Armenian Mss. 6201 (Cat. 82) copied in 1038, which is also repeated with minor variations in the Gospels painted by Melk'isedek in AD 1338 (see Cat. 93) and a Gospel in the Chester Beatty Library No. 566 painted in AD 1451. Two angels are seated on the sarcophagus in front of which lie four sleeping guards; two holy women and three smaller female figures stand on the right, and further to the right is the large figure of Christ giving blessing. Two apostles and the holy women at the sepulchre appear in Armenia in wall paintings decorating the Church of the Holy Cross in Aght'amar built between 915 and 921. The two bearded male figures without wings in this Syriac miniature are meant to represent the two disciples rather than angels. The second element of affinity with Armenian tradition is the striking way the pictures are painted on the page in relation to the text. They appear where the text comes to an end, and take up only as much space as the text allows. Their main role is only to decorate, not to illustrate the story of Christ's life. The same phenomenon also occurs in Vehap'ar's Gospel of 1088 (see Cat. 83).

Forhsall, *Catalogus codicum manuscritorum orientaliū*, xxx, 51-3; Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures*, xxxi, 396-403, Pl. 155a.

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#### Octateuch, Four Gospels and Synodicon, 1682-1706

Vellum; 209 fols. Script small elegant letters, double cols, 28 to 32 lines; 36.8 × 35.4 cm

*Provenance:* The manuscript is a faithful copy of an illuminated manuscript that was produced at the palace scriptorium of Emperor Dawit (1382-1413). Inscriptions from the original model and those added suggest that it was copied for a church of the emperor Iyyasu I (1682-1706), perhaps for Dabra Berham Sellase, which was dedicated in 1694. It seems to have been produced at his order, either at Amba Geshen or Gondar. Like its model, this manuscript combines the books from the Old Testament – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy,

Joshua, Judges, Ruth; from the New Testament – the Four Gospels and Canons.

The British Library, London Inv. Nr Or. 481

#### Fol. 22r The Annunciation

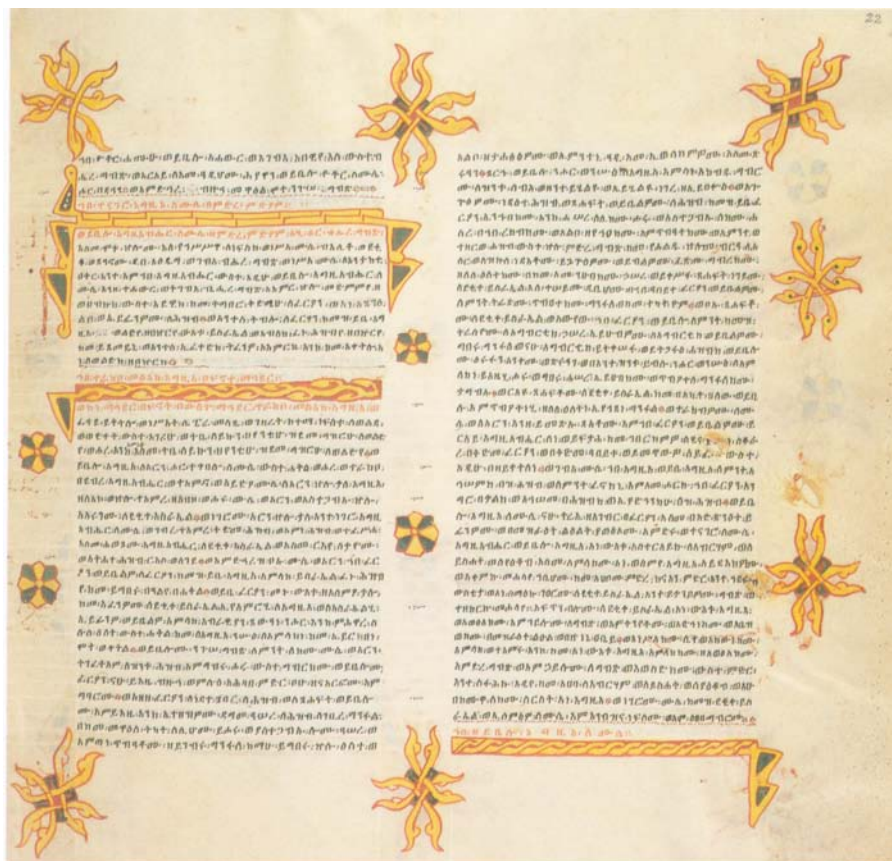
Mary stands in front of a chair, spinning. The way of drawing the thumb and the index finger of Mary's raised hand is typical of the seventeenth-century iconography of the Annunciation. The seventeenth-century copyist of the fifteenth-century miniature has changed the fingers of Mary's hand to emphasize the characteristic feature of the Annunciation narrative, that is, Mary spinning the thread for the veil in the Temple; St Gabriel, holding a staff in one hand, makes the usual gesture of pointing to Mary with the other.

The Book of Prayers of the Virgin Mary in the Biblioteca Vaticana (Cod. Aeth. 50), dated to the fifteenth century, has been interpreted as decorated and illuminated not by an Ethiopian but an Armenian who has left the Armenian inscription (fol. 97v) and made the vignette representing the Apostles Peter and Paul (fol. 46v) and of Jonah. The images have been executed in the Armenian manner with red or purple colours. The image of the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, freely delineated with varied colours, also recalls Armenian art. One miniature that is particularly



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significant for the study of the Armenian influence on Ethiopian art is the miniature of the Annunciation in the Armenian Menologium, copied and illustrated in Constantinople in 1652 (see Cat. 153).

Wright, *Catalogue of the Ethiopic manuscripts*, ii, 1–6; Chojnacki, *Major themes in Ethiopian painting*, 426–7; Chojnacki, 'The Annunciation in Ethiopian art', *Nubia et Oriens Christianus*, 312–14; Grierson, ed., *African Zion*, no. 107, 246–7; Nersessian and Pankhurst, 'The visit to Ethiopia of Yovhannes', *JES* 15 (1982) 79–84.

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The Four Gospels, c. 9th–10th century

Vellum; 244 fols, 31 gatherings signed with the letters of the Armenian alphabet from a to t on the top right-hand corner. Script archaic sloping to the left, *erkat'agir* in double cols; 29.5 × 20 cm. Contemporary brown leather covers, with rectangular flap covering the fore-edge of the manuscript. Top cover ornamented with a cross of ropework design in tooled rings round the arms of the cross. The lower cover is ornamented with a large rosette.

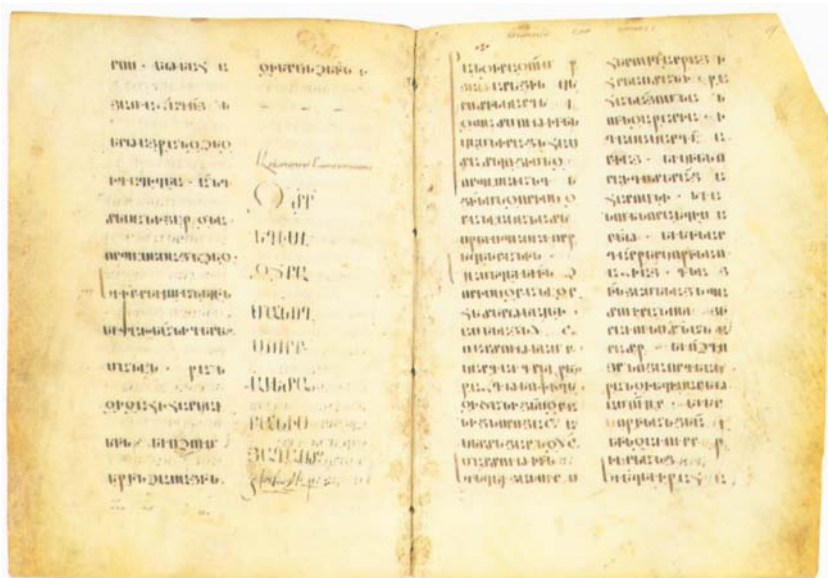
*Provenance:* The manuscript has no principal colophon. Two later inscriptions by the same hand on fols 72b and 118b in uncials twice as high as the text of the

Gospels are inserted in the blank spaces which the original scribe left at the end of St Matthew and St Mark. They are as follows: zTēr Eghise zhramanogh surb Awetaranis ork' ěnt'ernoik' yaghawt's yishesjik'. The second, slightly shorter, states: zTēr Eghise zhramanogh surb Awetaranis yaghawt's yishesjik'. In the second the word 'yishesjik' (remember) has been added by a later hand in *bolorigir* or round-hand script. The colophon translates: 'You who read this Holy Gospel remember in your prayers Tēr Eghise by whose order [this Gospels was copied]'. Its age cannot be determined exactly, but the script and the textual features are similar to the Lazarian Gospels of the year 887, the oldest dated Armenian manuscript (Mat. Ms. 6200). The manuscript was purchased from Mr J. Warington on 11 April 1857.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Add. 21, 932

Fols 118v–119r The end of St Mark's and the beginning of St Luke's Gospels

The folio on the left represents the end of St Mark's Gospel but omits the last twelve verses of Mark 16: 9–20. It is significant that the text of verses 7 and 8 is spread out over a whole column, the lines being set twice as far apart as they are in the rest of the text. It would seem as if the scribe was aware of the existence of twelve more verses, but decided against including



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them. In the Ējmiadsin Gospels dated AD 989 (see Cat. 80) these last twelve verses of St Mark are included and are headed by the title in small red uncials, 'of Ariston the Presbyter'. In 1891, when F.C. Conybeare was in Ējmiadsin he was the first to see the significance of this annotation and identified this Ariston with the 'Aristion the teacher of Papias' mentioned by Eusebius. And the knowledge which the Armenians had that these verses were Ariston's and not St Mark's explains why these hardly appear in manuscripts before the thirteenth century. Another significant textual feature of this manuscript is that although we do not know if it included the episode of the Woman taken in adultery at the end of St John's Gospel, for St John's Gospel ends on chapter XXVII: 1-3, on fol. 220a at the end of Chapter VII and beginning of VIII there is a marginal note which mentions 'the episode of the adulterous woman' (cf. Or. 81, fol. 320b). This is interesting for while the majority of witnesses place this narrative at the end of St John, a great number of medieval Greek and Latin manuscripts place it at Chs 7: 53-8: 11. This is exactly where the Armenian annotation occurs. The narrative is also found to occur in some manuscripts after Luke 21: 28.

In Armenian manuscripts from about the eleventh-twelfth century on, the text of the Gospels is regularly divided into pericopes. Each pericope begins with an ornate initial and an ornament, with the number of the pericope drawn facing it in the margin. The absence of ornate initials in this manuscript is proof that the text was not divided into lessons at the time when this manuscript was copied. We do not know how early the text of Armenian Gospel manuscripts was divided for liturgical use. It would appear from the study of some of the earliest manuscripts that it was not a regular feature in the tenth century. In the Lazarian Gospels of the year 887, the numbers of the pericopes have been written by a later hand. The same is true for the Gospels of Queen Mlk'ē, written in the year 902 (see Cat. 109). In this Gospel the numbers of the

chapters have been added by a later hand. They are marked for the first three Gospels in red, for the fourth in green ink. The numbers of the verses, according to the old Ammonian division, are written in the lower margins of the page in small uncials.

Conybeare, *A catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts in the British Museum*, No. 1, 1-3; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 12; Conybeare, 'Aristion, the author of the last twelve verses of Mark', *The Expositor* (7 October 1893), 241-54.

### 136 The Four Gospels, 1166

Glazed eastern paper; 310 fols. in 39 signed gatherings. Having exhausted the Armenian alphabet as far as the thirty-sixth letter, k', the scribe has signed the three remaining quires with Greek letters. Script is a neat almost continuous square *erkat'agir*, sloping to the right in double cols; 23 × 16 cm. Bound in reddish stamped leather with flap. An ornate cross is stamped on each cover.

*Provenance:* There are several colophons. The first, on fol. 145v, reads 'Lord Jesus have mercy on Simēon the sinful, who wrote this Holy Gospel'. In the second colophon at the end of the manuscript on fol. 310v, 'have mercy on the unworthy servant, the scribe who wrote this book, in thine awesome advent, on the hidden Sunday, and glory be to thee now and unto unending ages. Amen. It was written in the Armenian year 82.' F.C. Conybeare took the statement in the colophon to the Armenian year as a reference to the 'Great Armenian era' so he added 551 years, the difference between the Armenia era and the modern calendar, and arrived at the date 633, which he regarded as 'impossible, for the volume before us cannot be older than the twelfth century'. However, if the scribe was using the 'Lesser Armenian era' devised by Yovhannes Sarkawag which began in AD 1084, then the year 82 would be AD 1166 (1084 + 82). This date is supported by a brief inscription in *notr* (cursive) script (fol. 2v), stating 'This Holy Gospel was written 94 years before Zonan Ōdznetsi'. The reference is to Catholicos Yovhannes III Ōdznetsi, whose dates are 717 to 728. If we deduct the stated 94 years from the date of his death in 728, we

get 634, which agrees with the date of the principal colophon. Two later inscriptions are important for dating this manuscript. The first is on fol. 49a, written in the hand of a much later period. It records 'This is a companion volume of the Gospel of Zhazhkants'. The Gospels named 'Zhazhkants', meaning earthquake, was found and presented to the Matenadaran in 1992. We now know that it was copied in the village of Kendots in western Armenia by the priest Gevorg in 1431. If this is the Gospel of Zhazhkants named in our manuscript, then the date of copying is, like 'its companion', 1431. This is a likely enough date, for in a final inscription it is recorded that the manuscript was acquired by Khasan and his wife 'the great' Khatun in the year 890 (1440). The manuscript was purchased from Mr B. Barker on 7 January 1854.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Add. 19, 727

### Fols 239v–240r Headpiece of St John's Gospel

The initial letter 'I' of St John's Gospel fills the whole length of the page, with fourteen lines of the text in medium uncials in red ink on a plain background



(vv. 1–3). The title of the Gospel, ‘Awetaran est Yovhannu’, in small uncials in black ink is placed just below the small panel. The square panel supporting a palmette houses the numbers in Armenian letters of the Pentecostal lections. The colours used are red and green.

The text on the left folio is the conclusion of St Luke’s Gospel. In common with Armenian tradition, the Gospels invariably have the canons of Ammonius added in the margins, and are preceded by Eusebius’ letter to Carpianus and the prefaces, summaries, lists of Testimonia and colophons of Euthalius, whose marginal chaptering and subdivisions and calculations of stichi in the text are also added in the older manuscript. The scholia by the first hand at the end of Luke reads: ‘Luke’s Gospel has chapters 342, testimonies 16, paragraphs 2800. It was written in Antioch in the Antiochene tongue, seventeen years after the Ascension of the Saviour. At the request of the Church of Antioch.’

Rule and Anderson, *Biblical Monuments*, 212; Conybeare, *A catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts in the British Museum*, No. 2, 2–4; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, figs 1 2, 12 13; Grigoryan, ‘Zhazhakants’ avetarané’, *Dashnaksut’yun* (No. 3 March 1992).

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### The Four Gospels, 1181–82

Vellum; 375 fols, in 31 quires of 12 leaves signed in the letters of the Armenian alphabet from a to t. Script regular and neat *erkat’agir* in double cols; 22 × 16 cm. Oriental binding of dark-red leather over boards, with flap. Both covers were once adorned with metal crosses.

*Provenance:* According to the principal colophon (fol. 373) the manuscript was copied by T’oros in the monastery called Drazark, by the order of its abbot Samuel, during the catholicate of Tēr Grigor, and in the reign of Ėruben, ‘the pious prince’. The precise date of the manuscript is determined with the help of the personages named in the colophon. Tēr Grigor, called *Tgha*, was Catholicos Gregory IV who reigned between 1171 and 1193. Ėruben II was king of Cilician Armenia between 1174 and 1185 and the



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630th year of the reign of the Persian King Khusrau would be AD 1181. On fols 6b–7a a brief memorial in red bolorigir script in the lower margins of the Canon Table contains the name of the artist: ‘Lord God have mercy on Khatchatur and his parents. Amen.’ Bought from Joseph Lilly, 22 April 1868.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 81

### Fols 111v–112r Portrait and Headpiece of St Mark’s Gospel

St Mark seated under an ornate arched frame with two birds above the frame. He is bearded, garbed in the Byzantine manner, wearing over the alb a green chasuble, which covers his shoulders and falls to his knees. He is holding in his left hand his Gospel, and the right hand is holding the book placed on the lectern. His name ‘Surb Markos’ (St Mark) is inscribed in white chalk on the blue paint.

The headpiece of St Mark is a rectangle of small size, decorated with two birds standing at the sides of a floral motif. The festooned letter ‘S’, almost as tall as the page, fills the left margin; the initial words of the Gospel ‘Skizbn Awetaranani Yi K’i’ are written in the style of inscription on stone in large gold uncials on a blue background. Next to the letter ‘S’ is the



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title ‘Awetaran est Markosi’ in small uncials. The letters set in the side inner margins represent the Ammonian numbers.

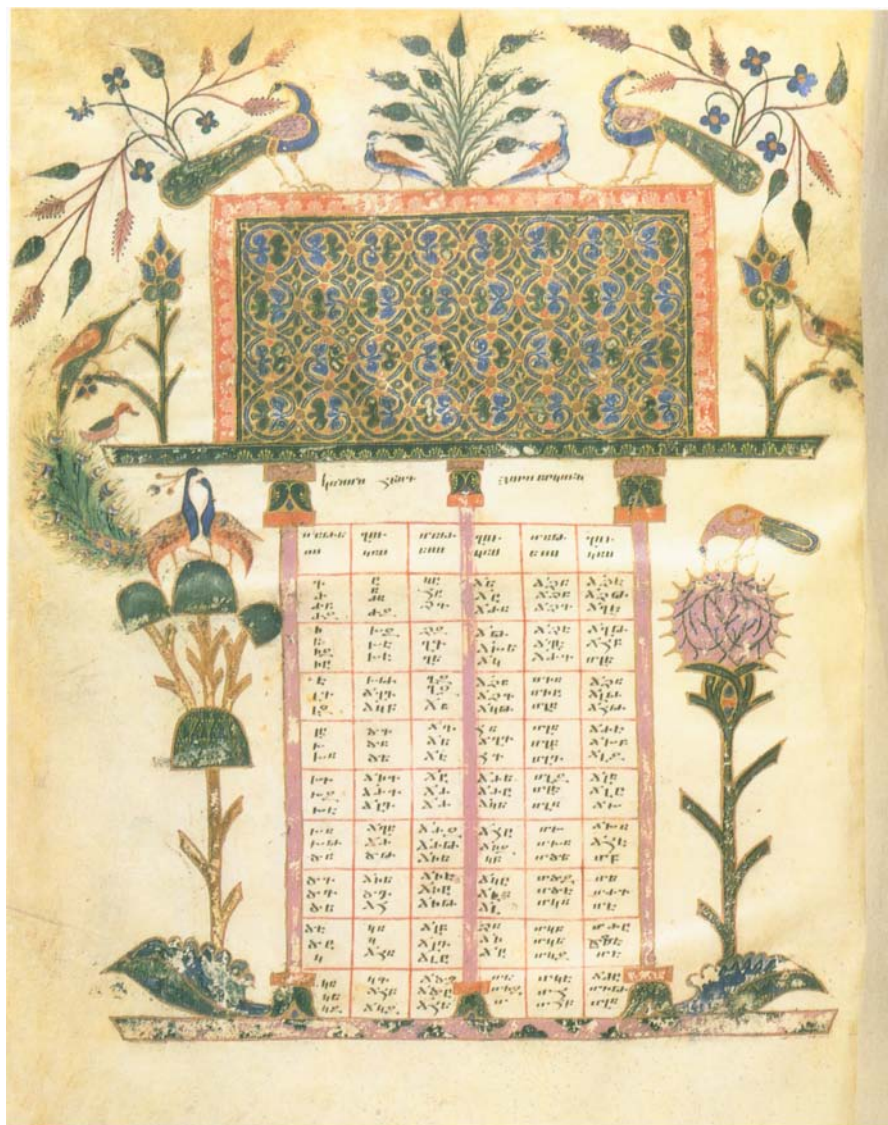
Few manuscripts have survived from the painters working in the monasteries of Cilicia during the second half of the twelfth century. Cilician painting reached its peak between 1250 and 1290. Its magnificent achievements developed from the miniature art of the preceding centuries in the monasteries of Drazark, Ėromklay and Skevra. The distinctive style of the Cilician miniature began to take shape towards the end of the twelfth century and this Gospel of the British Library is a good example. It begins with the usual set of Canon Tables, a dedicatory miniature of Samuel, primate of the monastery of Drazark and owner of the manuscript, presenting it to Christ (fol. 1v), and the portraits of the Evangelists with headpieces. The rather coarse portraits of the Evangelists, which occupy the entire picture space, are painted in chalky colours, laid in wide brushstrokes with little attempt at modelling. Blues, browns and greens, flaked in many places, predominate, and the backgrounds are also, and unusually, coloured. The relatively simple manuscripts of Great Armenia served as models for the artists working in Cilicia.

Conybear, *A Catalogue of the Armenian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, No. 4, 4–6; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 13–14, Pl. I; Nersessian, *Miniature painting in the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia*, 21, figs 44–5; Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 111, p. 64; Mutafian, *Le Royaume Arménien de Cilicie*, 127–39; Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, No. 158, p. 240.

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**The Awag Vank' Gospels, 1200–02**

Vellum; 384 fols, divided into 21 gatherings with irregular number of leaves (usually 8). Script in thick majestic upright *erkat'agir* in double cols. At the time of purchase the manuscript was bound in a tooled reddish-brown calf on wooden boards, dating from the seventeenth century. The front cover bears a central metal roundel enclosing a small brass crucifix with an inscription in Armenian reading, 'This cross is in memory of Eva'. Arranged around this are five metal crosses, and traces of rivet and a nail indicate that there was once a sixth. All the crosses have inscriptions, one of which is dated 1781. Size 37 × 29 cm.

*Provenance:* The principal colophon on fols 380–383b records that the manuscript was commissioned by the bishop Tēr Sargis and his brother Ambakum, priest, as a memorial for their paternal uncle Tēr Awetik', bishop, in the Monastery of Awag Vank' on Mount Sepuh, eleven miles south-west of Erzindjan. The manuscript was copied by the scribe Vardan *dpir* Karnetsi in the Armenian era 640 (inc. 31.1.1200), who in 1200–02 copied in the same Awag Vank' the Miscellany, now in Erevan Matenadaran Ms. no. 7729. A memorial notice on fol. 2a relates the arrival of the manuscript in Constantinople with a group of refugees 'from the land of Daranaghik', that is Kamakh, shortly after August 1605, when the manuscript was donated by a certain Seth, son of Yakob and Kost, to the Church of St Nicholas. The manuscript has several later colophons dated 1479, 1605, 1609 and 1626. In the eighteenth century, the manuscript passed into the Armenian National Library at Galata, Constantinople, the nucleus of which was founded by the Armenian patriarch of Constantinople, Yovhannes Kolot of Bitlis (1715–41), at the patriarchate at Kum-Kapi. It was catalogued as MS. no. 6 of this collection between 1902 and 1907 by its then



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librarian, the *vardapet* Babgen Kiwlēserian future coadjutor catholicos of Cilicia. The manuscript was later acquired by Mr Hagop Kevorkian of New York, to become MS. no. 6 of his collection. On 7 April 1975 the manuscript was auctioned at Sotheby's and was acquired by the British Library.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 13654

**Fols 5v–6r The Eusebian Concordance Tables, nos V–VI**

The concordance numbers are enclosed between coloured architectural columns flanked by trees and plants surmounted by

numerous birds, peacocks, partridges and others, beneath large headpieces. Their forms are stylized, but the different species can be recognized and their attitudes are well observed. According to the symbolical interpretation of the ornaments, the fifth canon represents Noah's Ark.

The scriptorium of Awag Vank', in the canton of Daranagh, Kemakh, less than thirty miles from Erzindjan (Erznka), was within the political and artistic sphere of influence of the city of Sis. Famous for the Erzinka Bible of 1269 (St James' Patriarchate Ms. 1925), which has been called one of the masterpieces of Armenian illumination (see Cat. 106), this Gospel is also very

finely executed in a style reminiscent of the art of Cilician Armenia, which in the year 1200 was on the threshold of its greatness, represented above all others by T'oros Roslin. The magnificence of the headpieces is acknowledged by its artist who, perhaps feeling slightly guilty at being in competition with the divine, has in barely visible minuscule *bolorgir*, written in the narrow band under the headpiece of St Mark's Gospel, 'I said in my amazement that all men are vain ...'.

The chronicler Grigor *vardapet* Daranaghtsi, who was mainly concerned that the history of the 'wonderful Gospel' in his care should be recorded in its own pages, places a notice dated 22 August 1605 which speaks of the 'persecution of Christians that took place ... we have been destroyed from the foundations, and we have fled and come to the metropolis Constantinople, and we have brought this wonderful Gospel with us' (fol. 2r). Three and a half years later on 20 October 1608, 'a severe, enormous affliction came again upon our thrice wretched nation ... when a severe command came from the king [Sultan Ahmed I, 1603–17] to drive Christians from this town, saying 'Go to your own country ... We have been trampled upon as "the mire of the streets"' (2 Sam. 22: 43, Psalm 17/18: 43) (fol. 1b). The American-Armenian writer Michael J. Arlen likened such poignant passages in the long litany of lamentations to messages in bottles, messages from some long-ago sea wreck; Grigor no doubt found this old manuscript an ideal vehicle to preserve the record of a persecution for future generations. Four hundred years on, in 1975, its message reached London.

Babgen [Kiwleserian]. *Tsutsak dzer'agrats Ghulat'ioy Azgain Matenadarani Hayots*, Nos 6, 26–36; Garegin I [Hovsep'ian]. *Yishatakarak' dzer'agrats*, I, no. 290, 637–48 (the title page of St Matthew reproduced here as fig. 32 does not belong to the Awag Vank' Gospels); Mat'evosyan. 'Erb ew ortegh a grvel Msho Chařentirė. *BM* 9 (1969), 137–61; Sotheby's & Co., *Catalogue of Important Manuscripts and Miniatures, from the Property of the Hagop Kevorkian Fund*, 7 April 1975, lot. 197, 97–9; Dowssett, 'The Awag Vank' Armenian Gospels, AD 1200'. *BLJ*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Autumn 1977), 139–66; Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 112, p. 64, fig. 11; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 18–21, figs 5–6, Pls III–IV.

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### The Breviary of King Levon II of Cilician Armenia, 1269–89

Vellum: 190 fols, in 18 quires of mostly 12 leaves. Script early *bolorgir* in single col. of 12 lines. Bound in dark calf on wooden boards, finely blind-tooled with knotwork and circle devices arranged round the borders and in a central panel on each cover, lines with fawn-coloured silk with green stripes. Size 16 × 12 cm

*Provenance:* According to the now incomplete colophon on fols 189v–190v, the Breviary, 'a hidden and abundant treasure, a matchless pearl, a shining gem and the gold of Ophir to the eyes of the beholder, like gold set with cornelian and scented with the immortalising perfumes of cinnamon, myrrh and frankincense', was copied by the 'lowly son of the Church and despicable scribe Step'anos Vahkatsi by the command and at the expense of the Christ-crowned, pious and godly king of the Armenians Levon [II, 1269–89], son of Het'um [1226–69], son of Kostand [of Bardzrberd, c. 1180–1263], and on his mother's side son of Qucen Zabel [1219–52] daughter of Levon I, king of Armenia [1199–1219], of the Rūbenids'. There is no precise indication of the place where the manuscript was copied, or its date, other than the internal evidence



which assigns it to the years between 1274 and 1276.

On 11 November 1948, the manuscript was deposited by its owner Jean Levy with Archbishop Artawazd Siwrmēian, who published a description of it in 1949. The same description was reprinted in 1950, by which time the manuscript had passed into the collection of Hakob Kevorkian of New York. Inside the front covers were found two brief descriptions. The first, in German, is a brief but full and accurate account of the manuscript from a printed catalogue and the second is a handwritten description in French entitled 'Manuscrit royal arménien du XIII siècle', probably of Archbishop Artawazd Siwrmēian. On Monday, 2 May 1977 the manuscript was sold at Sotheby's London, and was purchased by Mr Sarkis Kurkjian of London, from whom the Library acquired it in March 1981.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 13993

#### Fol. 9v King Levon III praying

King Levon III of Cilician Armenia, richly robed in red tunic with jewelled bands and loros, his hair contained in a close-fitting white cap, kneeling in prayer before a niche containing a red-draped, gold-edged altar on a rocky pedestal on which is placed a golden chalice, from which emerges the haloed head of the infant Jesus, his right arm extended in blessing. Standing behind the king and holding his crown is the king's uncle, the brother of Het'um I, the Baron Vasak, here portrayed as the *t'agapah* (keeper of the crown); his hair is also covered with a white cap, and he wears a simple rose tunic and a blue mantle lined with hair. The office of the *t'agapah* in Armenian royal history was a hereditary one held by the Bagratids, but it had lapsed when Baron Vasak ascended the throne. This office was revived in Cilicia by Kostandin of Lambron, the father of King Het'um of Lambron who later rebelled against the king and was killed in 1250. The next mention of the *t'agapah* is found in the dedicatory inscription of the Gospel of the lady Keran, copied in 1265 (Jerusalem Ms. 1956),

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where her son Kostandin is named the coronant. It is this Kostandin, son of Keran and Geoffrey of Sarvandik'ar, who had commissioned the Gospel of Erevan, Matenadaran 2629. In considering the illustration of this manuscript S. Der Nersessian suggests that the *t'agapah* in this picture is that of Kostandin, and so the manuscript can be assigned to the years 1272-78, that is, after Levon's accession to the throne and before Kostandin's retirement in 1278. The portrait of the king and his coronant is placed at the end of the prayer of Saint Nerses Shnorhali's *Havatov Khosotvanim*, which in this Breviary ends with a special plea for the king: 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Trinity and one indivisible Godhead, fortify Levon, King of all the Armenians, crowned by Christ, together with his children, against the enemies of the cross of Christ, our God.'

The representation on the altar table, with the nimbed child partly protruding from the chalice, is found in the monumental art of Byzantine and other Orthodox traditions: the Christ Child lying on a paten placed on the altar is designated as the Amnos or the Melismos and is a symbol of the eucharistic sacrifice. It is usually represented in the main apse or that of the prothesis accompanied by officiating bishops or the church fathers carrying inscribed scrolls; sometimes angels lower their rhipidia over the paten. The Armenian miniature which shows the king praying in his private chapel captures the moment during the Liturgy when the priest recites the prayer 'with faith do I believe in thee, immortal Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit', before partaking of the bread and wine. By depicting the chalice with the Christ Child the artist may have wished to evoke the most sacred moment of the Liturgy when the faithful receive their communion.

Archbishop Artavazd Siwrmēian in his articles considers the miniatures the work of the celebrated artist T'oros Rōslin. This attribution was rejected by Garegin Hovsep'ian in 1950, who firmly assigns the work to Step'anos Vahkatsi, who is also the artist of British Library's Ms. Add. 18,

549 and Or. 10, 960 (see Cats 143, 150). After the manuscript had entered the library's collection I had the opportunity to discuss the question of the identity of the artist with Professor S. Der Nersessian who, in a letter to me dated 9 March 1983, wrote, 'I had seen the Breviary when it belonged to Mr Kevorkian in New York, who had given me photographs of the miniatures. It is certainly not by T'oros Rōslin but by Step'anos of Vahka as Catholicos Garegin had noted. I doubt however that the person standing behind the king is Vasak.' In a second letter, dated 24 August 1984, she wrote, 'I doubt very much that the person holding the crown is the king's brother Vasak. There is only a vague resemblance with the brother's portrait in the Jerusalem Gospels - but the real reason for doubting the suggested identification is that the crown must have been held by the *t'agadir* and Vasak never held that office. The *t'agadir* was Constantine son of lady Keran and Geoffrey of Sarvandik'ar. Nor do I think that the Child in the chalice is of western inspiration - it seems to me to be a distorted copy of the Byzantine "Amnos".'

Sakisian. 'L'enluminure de l'évangile Arménien de 1274 au nom du Maréchal Auchinc', *Le Revue de L'Art* 39 (1935), 115-24; Siwrmēian, 'Lewon III t'agawori zhamagirk'ē', *HHT* 2 (1949-50), 49-57; reprinted in *Mayr Tsutsak Hayeren dzer'agrats Ezerpayi masnawor hawak'ammeru*, No. 23, 36-42; *Ejmiadsin*, 4-6 (1951), 57-1963; Hovsep'ian, 'Step'anos Vahkatsi', *HHT*, 2 (1949-50), 58-64; reprinted *Ejmiadsin* 4-6 (1951), 64-7; Kurdian, 'Step'anos Vahkatsi', *HE*, 12 (1951), 337-8; Pogharian, 'Step'anos erets Vahkatsi' (1263-93), *Sion* 4 (1976), 99-100; Sotheby's *Catalogue of important manuscripts and miniatures: The property of The Hagop Kevorkian Fund, Monday, 2nd May, 1977*, lot. 177, 84-5; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 22-5, figs 7-9, Pls V-VI; Nersessian, Der, *Miniature painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia from the twelfth to the fourteenth century*, 156-7, fig. 642; Mutafian, *Le Royaume Arménien de Cilicie, XIII-XIV siècle*, 60-1 (coloured plate).

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### The Four Gospels, 1280

Thick yellow paper; 270 fols, in 23 signed quires of mostly 12 leaves. Script in clear medium *bolorgir* in double cols. Bound in dark brown leather over wooden boards. The silver ornaments on the top and lower covers have been removed leaving the nail holes. Size 24 × 17 cm

*Provenance:* According to the principal colophon, the scribe of the manuscript Mkhit'ar went to the 'capital city of Egias' in Cilicia to learn the art of copying and illumination from the 'divinely gifted priest Kostandin' and copied this manuscript for the 'enlightenment of my own soul'. The manuscript was copied in the AE 729 (1280), during the catholicate of Tēr Yakob (I, Klayetsi, 1268-88) and during the reign of 'our Christ loving king of the Armenians Ghawn' (*sic* for Lewon II, 1271-89) and during the prelacy of Archbishop Tiratur over the capital city of Egias and the Church of Saint Ghazar. The manuscript was acquired by the priest Yovhannes and his wife Sophia. On the flyleaf at the end of the manuscript there is an inscription which records that in 1845 the manuscript was given to the Church of Saint Karapet in Scutari by Andranik Shamtanchian. The manuscript was auctioned in Paris on 29 June 1995 and was acquired for the British Library.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 15061

### Fol. 206r The Headpiece of St John's Gospel

The n-shaped quarter-page headpiece, delicately executed, is filled with foliage.



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The first word of St John's Gospel, 'Iskzbanē', is composed of the Evangelist's symbol of an eagle with a halo holding a book placed on the back of an elegant peacock whose head and neck form the loop of the letter 'I'. The remaining two letters are bird capitals, followed by three more letters in ornate capitals. The rest of the page is occupied by six lines of text. The full-length page palmette with cross on top is placed in the outer margin. From the manuscript in its present form we can only observe the artist's ability in the ornamental design of the headpieces (fols 4, 78, 128), the decorated capitals, and the miniatures in wash drawing in the margins.

In the studies of Sirarpie Der Nersessian and in the colophons of Armenian manuscripts of the thirteenth century, there is no mention of manuscripts being written in Ayas, nor the existence of a monastery by the name of Saint Ghazar. We have no information on the scriptoria in Ayas where the 'divinely gifted Kostandin' worked and trained scribes. During the reign of Lewon, the port of Ayas on the Gulf of Alexandretta, always an important stop-over for European and oriental merchants, underwent a revitalization as the centre of east-west commerce in Asia Minor. Ayas was a market centre as well as a port, and its bazaars sold dyes, spices, silk and cotton cloth, carpets, and pearls from all over Asia, and finished cloth and metal products from Europe. Early in his reign Lewon signed agreements with the Italian city-states of Genoa, Venice and Pisa and later with the French and the Catalans, granting their merchants tax exemptions and other privileges in return for their trade. In western sources Ayas was called 'Portus Ayacci, Domini Regis Eremenie'.

Boisgirard, *Archeologie-Art Musulman-Art Armenien*, *Le Jeudi*, 29 Juin 1995, Lot. 224, fig. Headpiece of St Luke's Gospel; Nersessian, *Union catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the United Kingdom* (forthcoming); Magsutian, 'Hayots nshanawor nawahangist Ayasi masin', *Hayrenik* 2 (1934), 129-32; Kurdian, 'Chshdum', *ibid.*, 160; Otten, 'Les Echanges commerciaux', in *Le Royaume Arménien de Cilicie XII-XIV siècle*, Mutafian, ed., 119-26.

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### The Four Gospels, 1282

Vellum; 344 fols, in 28 signed quires. Script elegant medium *bolongir* in double cols; 15.8 × 10 cm

*Provenance:* The manuscript was copied by 'the humble scribe Barsegh' 'in the great era of the Armenians seven hundred and ... in the twelfth year of the reign of King Lewon, and the fifteenth year of the catholicate of Tēr Yakob, this holy Gospel was written in the famous monastery of Drazark, under the shelter of the Mother of Light, the Theotokos, as a memorial of T'oros vardapet (fol. 160v). The Armenian king referred to in the colophon is Leo II/III, who ascended the throne in 1269 and was crowned in 1270. His twelfth year therefore is 1282. Yakob I Klayetsi became catholicos in 1268 and his fifteenth year might have begun in late 1282. This, then, is the date of the manuscript, and the year of the Armenian era, of which the second number is defective, should be read as 731. The later colophon on fol. 343v, not deciphered, states that the manuscript was restored in 1426 when 'it had fallen into the hands of unbelievers and was rescued by the priest Martiros who presented it to the Church of Holy Astuadsadsin at Sanahin where Yovhannes a *spasawor*

(servant) of the church restored in script (*gir*) and with flowers (*dsaghik*)'. The manuscript entered the library's collection in 1899.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 5626

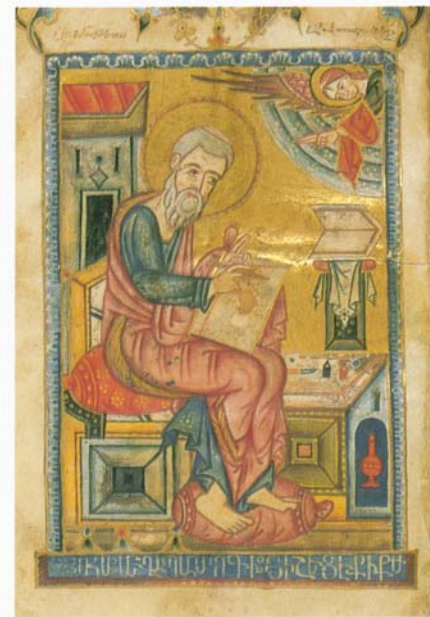
### Fols 1v, 2r Portrait and Headpiece of St Matthew's Gospel

St Matthew is seated and writes on the open book resting on his knees. He wears a dark blue tunic with lilac mantle, the loose end of which is brought forward by the left hand which holds the open book, and it ends in a knot. The draperies are modelled by subtle gradations of colour, especially the folds which are tucked under the knee and fall in triangular pleats. The artist Yohannes has written his name in a memorial painted on the lower blue band of the frame: 'Remember in Christ the sinful soul Yohannes'.

The Headpiece of Matthew's Gospel is n-shaped with a multifoil opening into the rectangle filled with intricate foliage painted in blue against a gold ground; in the centre of the rectangle is Christ's portrait in a disk and above two birds stand at the sides of a vase. The large ornament in the margin is crowned with a cross. The initial of Matthew is formed by his symbol -- a full-figure winged angel



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holding a book, and the remaining text is written in alternating lines of gold, blue, and red capital letters.

The portraits of Mark, Luke and John dictating to Prochoros are the work of the original scribe, Barsegh, for the names of the Evangelists are written in the same elegant minuscule as the text of the Gospels. In iconography, style, and the technique of abrupt changes of colour and gold hatching, these portraits, which occupy the entire picture space, are related to the Cilician royal manuscripts of the thirteenth century (Erevan, Mat. 2629; New Julfa, 57/161).

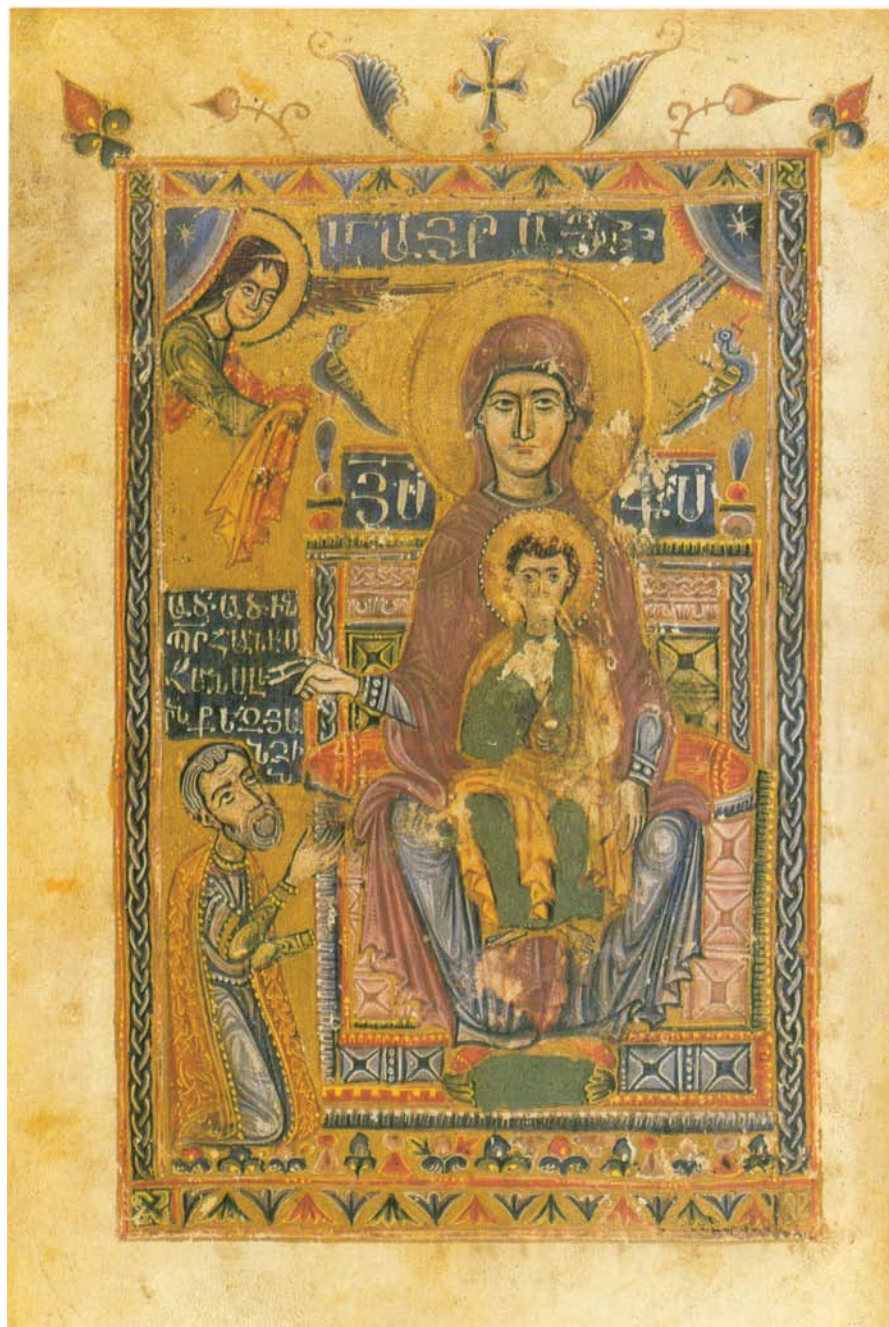
Conybeare, *A catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts in the British Museum*, Nos 11, 17–18; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 15, Pl. II (cover of book has the Portrait of John and Prochoros); Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 115; Nersessian Der, *Miniature painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia*, pp. 126–7, figs 416–23.

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### The Psalter of King Levon III, 1283

Fine vellum; 259 fols, in 28 quires of mostly 12 leaves. Script large regular *bolorgir* in single col. Bound in blind-tooled light-brown calf, slightly worn. Size 23 × 15 cm

*Provenance:* The manuscript has two chronologically distinct memorials on fols 258 and 259. The first refers to Leon, king in 1283–4, and the second to ‘Lewon (note different form of the name) the Fourth, son of Ōshin’, i.e. Leo IV/V, 1320–42. After the eulogy of the Psalter, the colophon records ‘Falling in love with this all-embracing treasure house of good things, the pious and godly king of the Armenians, King Leon, heir and inheritor [*payazat ew zhar'angawor*] of the crown of this kingdom of the Armenian people, descended by birth from Prince Ruben who was of the Bagratuni family and from the Ardruni house and clan, at whose command this Psalter of David was written for the embellishment of the church and for the instruction of New Sion, and having his own wish to sing and psalm and speak with God at his leisure ... this was written in the Armenian era 732 [inc. 10 January 1283] in the royal metropolis in Sis’. Then



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the memorial continues in verse, seeking remembrance for ‘the giver of this Psalter, the king of this nation of the Armenians Lewon the Fourth, son of Ōshin [1308–20], holy and chosen king’. A full-page notice on fol. 87b refers to events of AD 1307: ‘On 17 November 756 [1307] the senior Baron Het’um of Armenia [King Het’um II ‘regent’, 1289–1307], his brother’s son Leon [Leo II/IV, 1301–1307], son of baron

T’oros [King, 1293–94] were slain at the foot of Anazarab by the infidel Pilarghoy’ (Bilarghu). The later inscriptions and a section of an Encyclical bound into the manuscript as fly-leaf trace the history of the Cilician Ajapahian dynasty (keepers of the right arm of St Gregory) from 1731 to 1770. A note in cursive in indelible pencil on the front fly-leaf records: ‘Sold in the days of exile, 13th June 1920, in

Adana'. The manuscript was bought by Haykaz Hapeshian, who sold it to the Armenian collector Mr Zhak' Mat'osian of Paris from whom it passed on to Mr Hagop Kevorkian. On 2 May 1977 it was auctioned at Sotheby's and was acquired by the British Library.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 13804

### Fol. 2v The Virgin and Child

The Virgin and Child, in colours and gold. The Virgin is seated on a throne, with the Christ Child, here portrayed more as a youth, on her lap. Both raise their hands in blessing. Abbreviated legends in white uncials on a blue background above each figure read MAYR AY (Mother of God) and slightly lower YS K'S (Jesus Christ). An angel in the top left-hand corner offers a kerchief while the ray of light shines from the segment of sky in the right corner. Two delicately executed birds stand on either side of the Virgin's head. In the bottom left corner a lay figure, expensively robed, kneels and extends his hands in prayer: the inscription in white uncials above him reads 'A[stua]dsadsin P[a]r[on] Hanes Janslern k'ez yandzni (Mother of God, Baron Chancellor Hanes entrusts you ...)'.

Who is the Chancellor Hanes (or Hohannes = John) in the picture presenting the Psalter to the Virgin Mary and who is its artist? The name of the Chancellor Hanes is preserved in two documents: the chrysobull granting privileges to the Sicilian merchants issued in 1331, 'when Hanes eritsants was the chancellor', and another granting new privileges to the Venetians, issued in 1333 'sub canceleratu honorabilis viri domini Joannis'. Since the frontispiece of the Assizes of Antioch is translated into Armenian from the French by Smbad Constable and the French text is now lost, this medieval code is known only through this partial Armenian version; copied and illuminated in 1331 at Sis by Sargis Pidsak for King Levon IV (Venice, Mkhit'arist Ms. 107). Levon the IV is represented here as a judge passing judgement. In front of him stands a high dignitary, his right hand

raised in the gesture of speech, and he lays his left one on the head of a youth, kneeling in front of him. This standing figure has a close resemblance to the figure of the man kneeling in front of the Virgin and Child in our miniature. Both face and costume are identical in the two miniatures. There is no doubt that Sargis Pidsak is the artist of both miniatures. Sargis Pidsak (c. 1290–1355) was the most popular and the most prolific painter of the fourteenth century, who seems to have captured all the important commissions of his time and between 1307 and 1354 copied and illustrated over fifty manuscripts in Sis, Drazark and other monasteries, eleven of which are in Erevan, twelve in Jerusalem and the rest scattered in other collections. The Chancellor Hanes had the manuscript copied by the scribe Yohan whose memorial, 'Remember me, the sinful Yohan, O readers', is on fol. 176a, and illuminated by Sargis Pidsak approximately between 1312 and 1321.

Hapeshian, 'Saghmosaran gruads Lewon III t'agawori hamar', *HA* 2–3 (1922); reprinted separately in Vienna, 1922; Hovsep'ian, 'Lewon III-i Saghmosarani manrankartchut'iwné', *Anahit* 5–6; Azaryan, *Kilikyan manrankartchutyuné*, 87–8; Sotheby's *Catalogue of important Oriental manuscripts and miniatures. The property of The Hagop Kevorkian Fund*, Monday, 2nd May, 1977, Lot. 175, 81–2; Nersessian, *Union Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts in the United Kingdom* (forthcoming); Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 118, 65; Nersessian, *Der, Miniature painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia*, 159–61, figs 648–9.

### 143 The Four Gospels and the Vision of Isaiah, 1295

Glazed stout paper; 202 fols, in irregularly signed quires of 12 leaves. Script in clear, regular *bolorgir* in double cols. Modern half-leather and buckrum covers. Size 24 × 17 cm

*Provenance:* There is no precise indication of the place where the manuscript was copied, or its date. The colophon on folio 201 provides a *terminus ante quem*, for it records that in 1295 King Het'um II (1289–1307) offered this manuscript to the Marshall Ōshin, Lord of Lambron. The same colophon requests prayers for

'the king of Armenia Het'um and his god-fearing father and king of Armenia Lewon [II, 1270–89] and Keran his thrice blessed mother and queen of the Armenians. Also my father Baron Kostandin, Lord of Lambron and t'agadir [crown-bearer] of the Armenians and mother Anay and my son Kostandin ...'. In a second colophon the recipient of the manuscript, Marshall Ōshin [1277–95] has left a memorial in his own hand: 'this memorial of the Armenian era 744 [1295] was written by me Awshin'. The colophon then continues and requests prayers for King Lewon II, his parents, King Het'um and Queen Zabel (1219–52); for his two sons, Kostandin and Het'um; his daughter, Tefanaw, his wife Tikin Akats, and Fimi, the daughter of Het'um I and the wife of Julian, Lord of Sidon. In many details the information in this colophon repeats the facts contained in the colophon of the Four Gospels of 1274, also copied for Marshal Ōshin, now in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library (Ms. M. 740). The scribe T'oros Vahkaytsi has left several brief notices (fols 156b, 177b, 182a) and colophon on fols 200b–201a in which he records that he copied the manuscript for the priest Kirakos 'from a choice copy dated 322 (873)', probably at Sis some years before 1295. In another comparatively extensive colophon he gives



some biographical information about himself: 'unworthy scribe T'oros Vahkaytsi and my departed relatives in Christ, my father Kostandin and my mother, and my father's brother (*hawr eghbayr*) Step'anos k'ahanayn'. The manuscript was purchased from Luzac & Co. (London) on 8 December 1928. The second half of this manuscript is British Library's Ms. Add. 19, 730, which entered the collections in 1854 purchased from a certain Mr B. Baker and was catalogued by F.C. Conybeare. There is little doubt that the two manuscripts together form an Armenian New Testament.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 10960

#### Fol. 1r Headpiece of St Matthew's Gospel

This is the most attractive of the five headpieces (fols 43, 70, 114, 142) preserved in the manuscript. An intricate interlacement of leaves fills the headpiece, painted in green against a gold ground. The ornate marginal decoration comprises an interlacing foliate motif crowned with an ornamental cross. The initial letter of St Matthew's Gospel 'G' is an elegantly executed angel, with wings and nimbus, wearing a red tunic. The outstretched hand holding a book forms the horizontal arm of the letter and the other holds a staff. The remaining text in five lines in double columns is written in decorative uncials in gold outline, filled in blue and red. T'oros Vahkatsi, the nephew of Step'anos Vahkatsi (see cat. 139), is a major artist. He is the artist of a Bible copied in 1283 for the priest Sost'enes who resided at Sis (Jerusalem Ms. 304) and British Library's Or. 10960 and Add. 19, 730. T'oros Vahkatsi is a very inventive painter whose artistic talent is best expressed in the 21 marginal miniatures and ornaments, predominantly wash drawings in brown, which he places in the margins of the Gospels. These simple figurative miniatures are drawn in a lively style with great expressive force; for instance, the demoniac tears his tunic in a frenzy and gazes with awe at the demon issuing from his mouth (fol. 90v).

Nersessian, *Union catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the United Kingdom* (forthcoming); Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 23–5, figs 8–12, Pl. V; Kurdian, 'Patmakan yshatakaran mē 1295-en', 338–9; Nersessian, *Der. Miniature painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia*, 132–4, figs 546–51; Sanjian, *A catalogue of Medieval Armenian manuscripts in the United States*, No. 130, 582–96; Mathews, ed., *Treasures in Heaven*, No. 64, 193–4, fig. 53, Pl. 15.

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#### The Four Gospels, 1317

Oriental glazed stout paper; 251 fols, in 22 quires of 12 leaves each. Script is large, clear *bolorgir* in double columns. Size 24 × 32 cm.

*Provenance:* The manuscript was copied by the monk Astuadsatur in the Armenian era 766 (1317). The manuscript was bound by Dawit' in a village called Vawr, under the shelter of St George, when the prelate was Tēr Grigor. A third inscription records that the manuscript was restored and rebound by the newly ordained Archdeacon Sargis and his brother Alek'san at the door of Saint Sargis, for use by Archbishop Mkhit'ar and Bishop Astuadsatur in the Armenian era 1012 (1563). The inscription of the last owner, a monk called Atom, states that he bought the manuscript and presented it to the Church of Holy Astuadsadsin (Theotokos)

in Akrib. Akrip'i is a small village in the region of Van. There is a blue stamp (fols 7, 76, 195) with the legend 'The Prelacy of Edessa, 1868' which is also found in manuscripts Or. 2678, 2679 and 2680. The manuscript was bought from the Revd Suk'ias Baronian on 9 November 1883.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 2680

#### Fol. 4r Christ's Entry into Jerusalem

At the top there is a gateway with three triangular elements above representing the Temple (Tacha'n) as in the Presentation in the Temple (fol. 3a left). At the bottom left are four figures, with haloes and with palm branches in their hands, facing right, representing boys with palm branches and others (*tghayk' ostovk' and dserk'n*). In the centre is a tall tree with a few elaborately represented branches, with Zacchaeus (*Zak'eos*) sitting amid the branches. At the centre right Christ (*Ter Yisus*) is on the donkey (*yavanakn*). A small figure facing right kneels before the donkey, where two garments (*handerdzn taradseal*) are spread on the path, one yellow and one red. Christ rides with his right hand outstretched in blessing. Behind him are two ranks of four and three apostles (*ar'ak'ealk'n*) with haloes and wearing long robes.



The artistic work is crude, though lively and effective. Among the distinctive features of Van book illustration is the position of the narrative miniatures. The miniatures depicting the major episodes of the life of Christ, grouped in a multiple frontispiece, are placed at the beginning, preceding the canon tables. Fols 2v–5r carry the eleven scenes forming the cycle illustrating the main feasts of the Church, mounted in vertical fashion, so that the picture is seen sideways, with the spine of the book running along the feet of the figures. Since the feet in both miniatures meet the edge of the folio, when the page is turned, rotating the folio around the spine of the book, the other side comes out upside down. Another distinctive feature is the compositional device, the presentation of two scenes on the same page without a break. In the miniature of Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, Christ moves from right to left, suggesting a possible Syriac model, where the flow of the writing and hence the temporal progress of the narrative is from right to left (see Cat. 132). There is evidence that the artist at times misread the illustrations he was copying, and produced a muddled result. In this scene he has depicted the 'boys' and the 'elderly' in the crowd with haloes similar to those of the apostles. Zacchaeus appears to be in the centre (Luke 19: 1–2) and is depicted as being blind, while the reason he climbed the tree was that he 'was too short and could not see him in the crowd'.

Conybeare, *Catalogue*, No. 13, 20–22; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 30–32, Pls XI–XII; Hakobyan, *Haykakan Manrankartchut'yun Vaspurakan* (Album); Hakobyan, *Vaspurakani Manrankartchut'yun*, vols 1–2.



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#### 145 The Four Gospels, 1321

Fine vellum; 312 fols, in 26 signed quires of 12 leaves each. Script neat *bolorgir* in double cols. Modern binding of brown leather. Size 13 × 9.5 cm.

*Provenance:* The manuscript was copied for the priest Martiros 'in the famous holy cloister of the University of Gladzor by the scribe Koriwn in the 770 year of our era' (1321), in a bitter and untoward age, when the race of Archers exercised tyranny over the whole land of the Armenians and Georgians, under the reign over the Georgians of Gurgen and of Leon 't'agazha'rang' (V, 1320–42) over Armenia, of the catholicate of Tēr Kostandin (III Kesaratsi, 1307–22) and when the rector of the 'renowned holy monastery and university was Esayi' (Ntchetsi, 1265–1338). According to the second colophon the last owner of the manuscript was khawja Safar, who acquired the manuscript in memory of his father Petros and mother Sultan Khatun and had it restored in the year 1070 (1621). This khawja Safar I is not the brother of khawja Nazar mentioned by Peitro Valle, who had died by AD 1618. Like British Library Ms. Add. 18, 549 (see Cat. 150), this is another of the manuscripts that were acquired and



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restored by wealthy merchants of Isfahan. The manuscript was purchased on 18 January 1845. It had previously belonged to the library of the Duke of Sussex.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Add. 15411

#### Fols 91v–92r The Portrait and Headpiece of St Mark's Gospel

In the middle of the headpiece the artist has represented the Virgin, enthroned, nursing the infant Jesus. She wears a red crown on her head with a halo and a blue veil down over her shoulders, covering the greater part of her red tunic (the *Virgo lactans* iconograph). Two archangels dressed in imperial costumes with the embroidered loros stand guard: on the left, Michael, holding a chalice and a sword; on the right Gabriel holding a chalice and a lance. The infant Jesus is seated on the Virgin's knee. She presents her breast to the Christ child, who has a scroll in his left hand and his right hand is raised. The decoration in the outer margin is composed of the symbols of the Four Evangelists (heads of an angel, eagle, lion, and calf) placed within foliage supporting a cross. Below the title of the Gospel, 'Awetaran ěst Markosi', is placed the Evangelist's symbol, the lion, seated with upright wings forming the cup of the letter 'S'

and holding a book. In the rest of the initial line is written in multicoloured ornate letters 'kizbn Awetarani' and in plain uncial in abbreviated form YI K'I (Yisusi K'ristosi). On the facing page St Mark is represented seated with the open book on the lectern which has the words 'Jesus Christ' written in Greek while the first word of St Mark's Gospel, 'skizb', is written in Armenian in large uncials. The artist T'oros Tarōnatsi has signed his name beneath the portraits of St Matthew and St John (fols 9b, 241b). T'oros Taronatsi or Mshetsi (1276–1347) was the foremost artist of this period who worked first in Cilicia and then in Great Armenia in the period between 1307 and 1347, from whose pen 18 manuscripts are known.

In a manuscript copied in 1307, one of the earliest works of T'oros Tarōnatsi (Hartford Theological Seminary, No. 3) he adorns the headpiece of St Matthew's Gospel with the image of the crowned Virgo lactans (Nursing Virgin) while the headpiece of St Luke has the representation of the Virgin of Tenderness. The Virgo lactans is known in western and Byzantine art. The infant Jesus of the Armenian miniature, who is sitting upright and does not take hold of the mother's breast, follows old Coptic and Byzantine types. It is difficult to determine with any certainty the exact source of the models imitated by T'oros Tarōnatsi, for he has considerably modified the iconography, but there is little doubt that he had seen Latin and French manuscripts brought into Armenia by the missionaries on their way to the court of the Mongol Khans. Mkhitar Erznkatsi, his contemporary, says of him 'a kind and fine looking person ... full of wisdom and well versed especially in literature and painting'. His figures with their expressive, beautiful, almond-shaped eyes and dark shaded, arched eyebrows produce a particular impression. The bright and saturated colouring conveys a special splendour to his miniatures. Two main tendencies characterize his art: adherence to old traditions and the adoption of the achievements of the Cilician school of miniature painting.

Conybeare, *Catalogue*, No. 14, 22–4; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 25–8, figs 13–16, Pls VII–VIII; Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 119, fig. 13; Matthews and Sanjian, *Armenian Gospel iconography*, 67–75, fig. R10; Nersessian, Der, 'Western iconographic themes in Armenian manuscripts', *Études Byzantines*, 611–30, figs 389–90; Korkhmazian, *Armenian miniatures of the 13th and 14th centuries*, figs 21–2; Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 53–8; Bochum Museum: *Armenien*, No. 168.

## 146 The Four Gospels and Revelation, 1329/1358

Fine vellum; 75 fols; the quires are not numbered, and the manuscript is incomplete at the end. Script small, neat *bolorgir*, in double cols. Modern half-binding of red morocco. Size 22 × 16 cm.

*Provenance:* The manuscript has a single undated memorial (fol. 55) which requests prayers for an owner of the manuscript named Baron Evatshah. F.C. Conybeare in his catalogue dates the manuscript on the evidence of palaeography to 'hardly earlier than 1400 or later than 1500', having failed to notice the inscription of the artist in the lower margin of the Letter of Eusebius to Carpianus: 'I beseech you to remember Awag the painter and scribe'. The artist Awag *dpir* (c. 1300–60) was one of those widely sought 'wandering' scribes who worked in scriptoria in Siunik', Cilicia, Crimea and between the years 1329 and 1358 at Sult'anaya (Atrpatakan and P'aytakaran). Pogharian lists eight manuscripts from his pen, dated from 1329 to 1358. The manuscript entered the British Museum's collection in 1897.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 5304

### Fol. 23v The Entombment and The Holy Women at the Sepulchre

Two aged men, in short tunics, Joseph and Nicodemus, walking one behind the other, carry the shrouded body of Christ to the sepulchre. They 'laid it in a clean new tomb'; behind the men stand 'Mary Magdalene and the other Mary'. In the background rugged mountains. The text is St Matthew 27: 57–61.

The three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome (Mark 16: 1) carrying spices to anoint



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Christ, approach the angel who is seated on the rock holding a spear with a cross. The tomb is empty, except the 'linen cloth lying there rolled up' (John 20: 6–7). In the foreground two soldiers lie prostrate and asleep; their swords and lances are on the ground next to them (Matt. 18: 1–6).

The fourteenth century marks one of the important phases in the history of Armenian medieval art and the artist Awag is one of the most remarkable, creative and original representatives of the period. A graduate of the art school at the University of Gladzor under the guidance of Esayi Ntchetsi, he had travelled extensively and was familiar with Byzantine and western manuscripts and the best achievements of Armenian Cilician art. Awag had great talent and individuality and was able to absorb the various trends and influences and produce innovative and bold images. No artist surpassed Awag's mastery in representing the human figure from varied perspectives, meticulously depicting their emotions. Inspired by the works of T'oros Roslin, he also illustrates the story of the Gospel in great detail, with narrative miniatures inserted into the text and in the margins. This manuscript contains over sixty miniatures, each of the Gospels with its own cycle of miniatures illustrating

vividly and dramatically, and in rapid sequence, the text. The decoration of the folio is characterized by a balance and harmony between the text, on the one hand, and the miniature and marginal ornamentation, on the other. His depiction of the Healing of the Paralytic (fol. 27r), The Road to Emmaus (fol. 54v), the Betrayal of Christ and Peter's Denial are delicate and sensitive images which capture the principal moments: 'they let down the pallet'; 'Jesus himself drew near and went with them' and 'And Peter remembered the word of the Lord'.

Conybeare, *Catalogue*, No. 16, 27-8; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 28-9 and 94-6, fig. 17, Pls IX-X; Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 122; Avetisyan, *Haykakan mamkarkartchut'yan Gladzori dprotsé*, 140-51; Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 70-73; Korkhmazian, *Armenian miniatures of the 13th and 14th centuries*, Pls 18-20; Zakarian, 'Avag Dsaghkogh', *Éjmiadsin* 7-8 (1985); Mattheus and Sanjian, *Armenian Gospel iconography*, 110-13 (reproduces 10 miniatures); Bochum Museum, *Armenien*, No. 176.

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**Book of Ordination, 14th century**

Fine vellum; 111 fols, in quires of mostly 8 and 12 leaves of which only the first 7 are numbered. Script in neat *bolorgir* in single col. and ritual instructions in red ink. Half-bound in green leather. Size 22 x 16 cm.

*Provenance:* The colophon at the end of the rite of Ordination of a Priest records that a certain humble bishop named T'adēos translated the Ordinal from Latin into Armenian. Revd Sukias Baronian identified him with the T'adēos (Thadeus) mentioned by Quetif, who was a native of Kaffa (Theodosia, Crimea) and who was consecrated by Pope John XXII (1316-34) at Avignon. According to Quetif he translated a Greek Menologium into Armenian, which was preserved in the convent in Nakhijevan.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Add. 7941

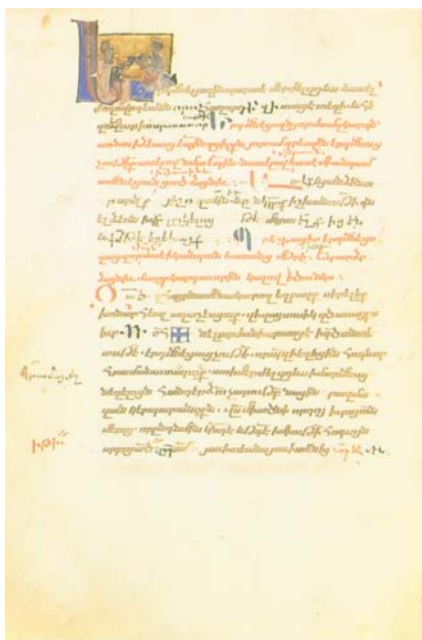
**Fols 5v-6r The Office of the Exorcist and Acolyte**

The manuscript contains the rites for the various orders of the Latin Church translated into Armenian. At the beginning of each rite is a miniature portraying a priest in the act of performing the rite. There are 22 of these richly coloured pictures against a gold background in which the clergy performing the ceremonies of ordination are wearing Roman costumes. The miniature on the left (fol. 5b) represents the Armenian letter (E) illustrating the rite of the 'Office of the confessor'. The miniature shows the ordaining bishop handing to the kneeling

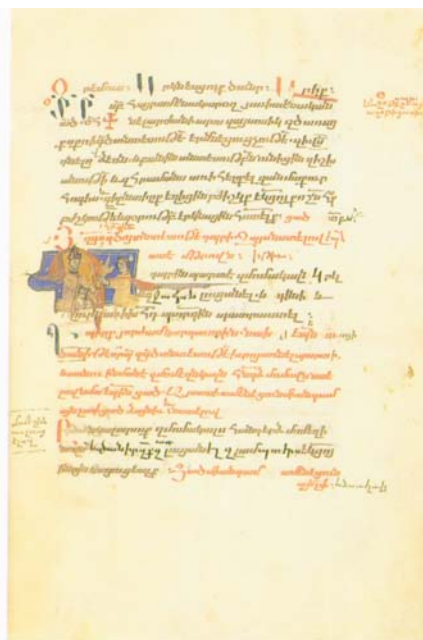
ordinand the Book of Confessions. The miniature on the right (fol. 6r) represents the initial 'D' illustrating the rite of the 'Office of the Reader' (*dpir*). The miniature shows the ordaining bishop handing to the kneeling ordinand a candle-holder, a symbol of his duties in church, which include lighting the candles and preparing the water and the wine of the Divine Liturgy.

The miniatures are in the style of Italian fourteenth-century work, and were doubtless copied from the Latin manuscript from which the text was translated. The text has close resemblance to a Latin Pontifical written in Italy in the fourteenth century (BL Add. 33,377). A Sens Pontifical of the middle of the fourteenth century (BL Egerton 931) has miniature initials illustrating many of the same rites, but in a very different style. The painter of the miniatures in the present manuscript was apparently not well versed in western ritual, for in the ordination of a subdeacon (fol. 7b) he represents the paten as a ring. Besides these miniatures, the volume contains on fols 26b, 44a and 78b blue initials set in red tracery borders, similar to the initial letters of French manuscript of the thirteenth century. The manuscript was therefore penned in Europe or by a scribe trained in Europe; or the decorations and initials may have been imitated from the Latin Pontifical (Bibl. Nat. 1219, olim Colbert 4160), from the text of which some of these Armenian rites seem to have been directly translated. The translator merely transliterates, instead of translating, a number of church terms, e.g. *Processio*, *capitula*, *rector*, *corporalis*, etc. The numbers prefixed to the several items in the text refer to the folios of the Latin manuscript of which the Armenian is a translation.

Conybeare, *A catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts in the British Museum*, No. 31, 60-66; Quetif, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum*, tom I, 538; Martène, *De antiquis Ecclesiae Ritibus libri*, col. 95; Conybeare, *Rituale Armenorum*.



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147a



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**The Four Gospels, 1437**

Oriental stout paper; 344 fols, in 28 quires, each of 12 leaves. Script regular *bolorgir* in double cols. Oriental binding in brown leather over boards. Size 20 × 10.5 cm.

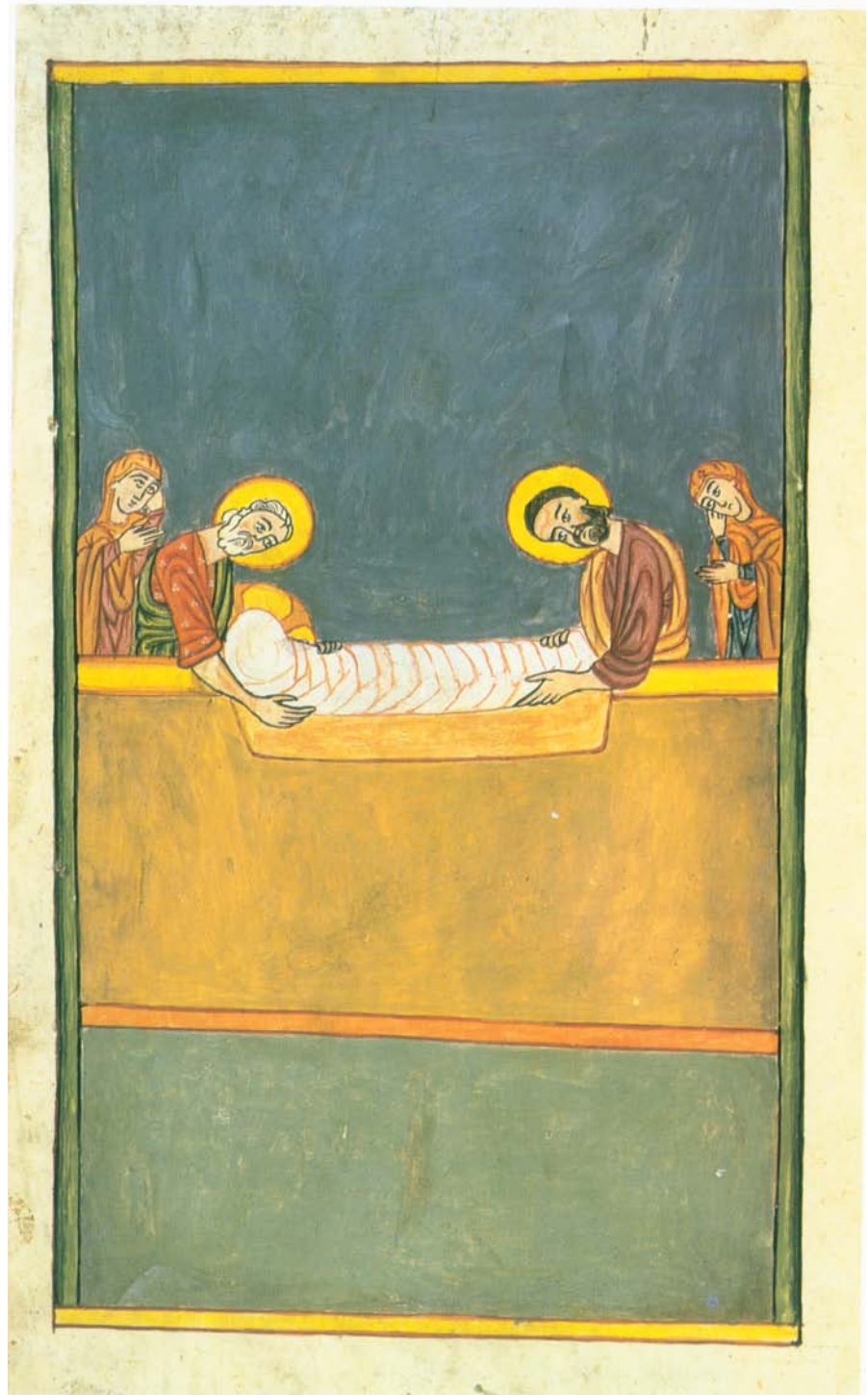
*Provenance:* The Gospels, 'an object of desire to the pure minded' 'Ahli Melik', daughter of Tawlat' Melik', was purchased 'out of her fair and honest earnings as a memorial and intercessor with God'. The Gospel book was copied and illuminated in AD 1437 at the Monastery of St George in the province of Balu by the priest Awetik' during the bitter and cruel time, when untimely death at the hands of unbelievers, made impossible for priests to eat bread', when Hamzah Sultan was governor of Mesopotamia and Kostandin (VI of Vahkay, 1430–39) was catholicos of Cilician Armenia. Three other colophons record the donations to the Church of the Holy Cross, a vineyard, coins, and a cauldron, dated 1460 and 1580. The manuscript entered British Musuem collections in 1883.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 2668

**Fol. 5v The Entombment of Christ**

At the centre, Christ's body lies with head to the left and turned away; he is wrapped in white grave clothes, and his nimbus shows behind his head. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus at the head and the foot, respectively, grasp Christ's body. To the left and right behind each man stands a weeping woman. Above is a purple background representing the night; below there are bands of brown and grey wash.

The manuscript has full-page miniatures of the Nativity, Baptism, Transfiguration, Crucifixion, Entombment, Harrowing of Hell, and the Ascension. The figures are clearly outlined and well proportioned; the clothes fall in graceful folds, and the slight stylization enhances the decorative effect of the compositions while still respecting the natural forms. The faces, hands and feet are delicately modelled, especially those of the women. The plain background and the use of



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simple colours – red, blue, yellow and green – create pleasing colour harmonies.

Conybeare, *Catalogue*, No. 18, 29–32; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 97, Pls XX–XXI; Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 123.

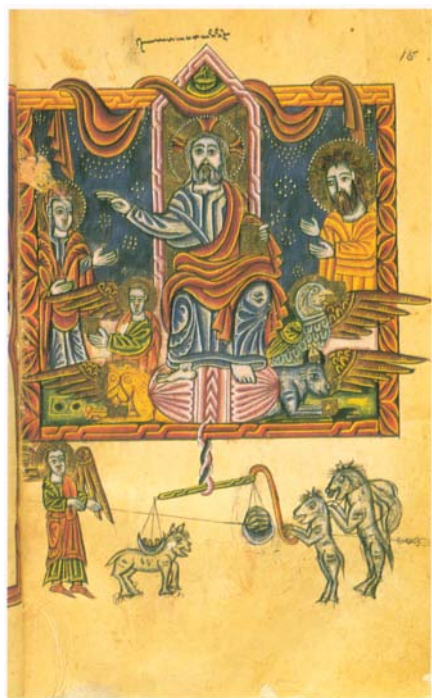
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**The Four Gospels, 1608**

Glossy stout paper; 309 fols, in 24 quires of 12 leaves. Script large, clear, elegant *bolorgir* in double cols. Bound in brown leather stamped with diaper pattern on wooden boards, restored. Size 17 × 13.5 cm.

*Provenance:* The principal colophon states that the 'Dominical Gospel written at sumptuous cost' for khwaja Velijan by the scribe Step'anos in the city of Shosh, which is called Aspahan (i.e. Isfahan) in the Armenian era 1057 (1608) during the catholicate of Dawit (IV, Vagharshapatetsi, 1576–1629) and Tēr Melk'isct' (rival catholicos) and reign of 'the wise Shah 'Abbas the red headed' (1588–1629). In the same year the artist Mesrop, son of Martiros of Khizan, 'illuminated the book with lovely colours, gold and lapis lazuli, and all sorts of pigments, as goodly memorial'. A second colophon dated 23 March 1831 records the untimely death of Sovin Manuk in the land of Gharayghan in the village of Tchanakhtchi. In 1900 the manuscript was in the British Museum's collection.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 5737

**Fol. 15a The Last Judgement**

Christ is enthroned with the four symbolic beasts, all with wings, his feet resting on a richly decorated semi-circular cushion; Christ holds a book in one hand, resting on his knees, and with the other hand is giving a blessing. The Virgin and John the Baptist stand at his sides in the attitude of prayer. The scales hang from the centre of the lower frame, the left tray rests on the back of a demon, a second demon tries to pull down the right tray, a third demon with a load on his back stands behind him. An angel, standing on the left, pierces the demons with a lance. Inscription: 'Datastann ē' (The Judgement).

Mesrop of Khizan was one of the several artists who worked primarily in Isfahan but who consistently described himself as Khizantsi (from Khizan). Mesrop had learned illumination, copying, and binding in the scriptoria of Khizan (Hizan), south of Lake Van. Mesrop was born around the turn of the sixteenth century (c. 1590) and was the son of Martiros of Khizan (cf. BL Or. 2707). The earliest mention of his name occurs in a Gospel illustrated at Khizan by Grigoris in 1605 (previously in the H. Kurdian collection, now in Venice). Shortly after this date he moved to Isfahan, where in 1608 he illustrated the Gospel on display and another in 1609 now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Arm. d. 13). Mesrop's departure from Khizan is connected with the forced mass migration of the Armenians from the Ayrarat and Lower Araxes Valley in 1604, commanded by Shah 'Abbas following his victory over the Turkish armies. The exodus is recalled in the Oxford manuscript by the scribe in these terms: 'Mourning fell upon Armenia, for he [Shah Abbas] destroyed and made desolate all houses and habitations, so that men fled and hid themselves in fortresses and clefts of rocks. Some he found and slew, others he led captive and sent to that city of Shosh or Aspahan [Isfahan] ... And he settled us on the south side of the river Zandar ... where we built houses and habitations and churches for our prayers'.

The wealthy merchants of New Julfa brought precious Cilician illuminated

manuscripts to New Julfa and had them restored, rebound and supplied with new colophons expressing their admiration for the beauty of these books and their faith in their saving powers. Mesrop in 1618 illustrated a Psalter and rebound a Gospel which had been illustrated in 1214 in Great Armenia by the painter Ignatios (Venice No. 151). That same year he restored a New Testament written in 1280 at Sis, to which he also added the portraits of the Evangelists and those of the authors of the Acts and Epistles (The British Library, Add. 18, 549, see Cat. 150). Like the previous manuscript, the Gospels copied by T'oros Taronatsi was acquired by khawaja Ter Petros, who had it restored in 1621 in New Julfa (The British Library, Add. 15, 411; see Cat. 145). Around thirty manuscripts survive from Mesrop's hand, the earliest being the manuscript on display and his name appears for the last time in a Gospel written in 1651 (Vienna, No. 93), all of which conform in style and iconography to the works of the late Khizan school.

Conybeare, *Catalogue*, No. 24, 42–4; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 31–5, figs 23–4; Pls XV–XVI; Kurdian, *Khizani dprotsin gritchner u manrankaritchnerè*, pp. 125–34; Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 130, Pl. 22 (Crucifixion); Nersessian, *Der, The Chester Beatty Library: A catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts*, 88–90; Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 198–200; Nersessian, *Hayeren nor dzeragrer Angliayum*, BM 13 (1980), 335–9; Taylor, *Book Arts of Isfahan*, 47–68, Pls 18–20 and fig. 13.

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**The New Testament, Cilicia, 1280/New Julfa 1618**

Fine white vellum; 314 fols, in 26 signed quires of 12 fols each. Script elegant medium *bolorgir* in double cols. Oriental binding of brown leather, with an ornate punched and tooled stepped Calvary and stylized lances typical of Florentine bindings of c.1480. The flap and lower cover are stamped with a diaper pattern. Size 23 × 15.5 cm.

*Provenance:* The scribal colophon on fol. 312 states that the manuscript was written in the year of the Armenians 729 (1280) in the metropolis of Sis, under the shelter of the Church of the Holy Spirit by Step'anos Vahkatsi at the expense of Sost'enes rabunoy (from rabi = vardapet) during the



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reign of Levon (II, 1269–89) and the catholicate of Yakob (I Klayetsi, 1268–86) and ‘the great rabbin of rabbins, whose name is sweet as dew’ called Vahram (i.e. Vahram vardapet Sewlerntsi) who held the rank of chancellor in the Royal Cilician Court and composed a History of the Rubenian Princely family in verse. On fol. 252 a second colophon in red ink, now almost wholly erased, records ‘Remember in Christ the receiver of this T’oros, son of Ōshin Lord of Korikos and brother of Het’um I, King of the Armenians’. Het’um I reigned between 1226 and 1270 and Het’um II acceded in 1289 and died in 1307. Prince Ōshin died, according to Smbat the Chronicler, in 1268. The scribe Step’anos Vahkatsi has also left brief memorials on fols 69, 112, 161, 303 and 308.

The second owner of the manuscript, Khwaja Nazar, acquired it ‘with money honestly earned by toil’ and had it repaired, illuminated and adorned with gold, and with lapis lazuli by Mesrop of Khizan (c. 1590–1652) in Isfahan during the reign of Shah Abbas in the Armenian era 1067 (1618) during the catholicate of Tēr Dawit’ (IV Vagharshapatetsi, 1590–1629) and Tēr Melk’isedek, a rival catholicos.

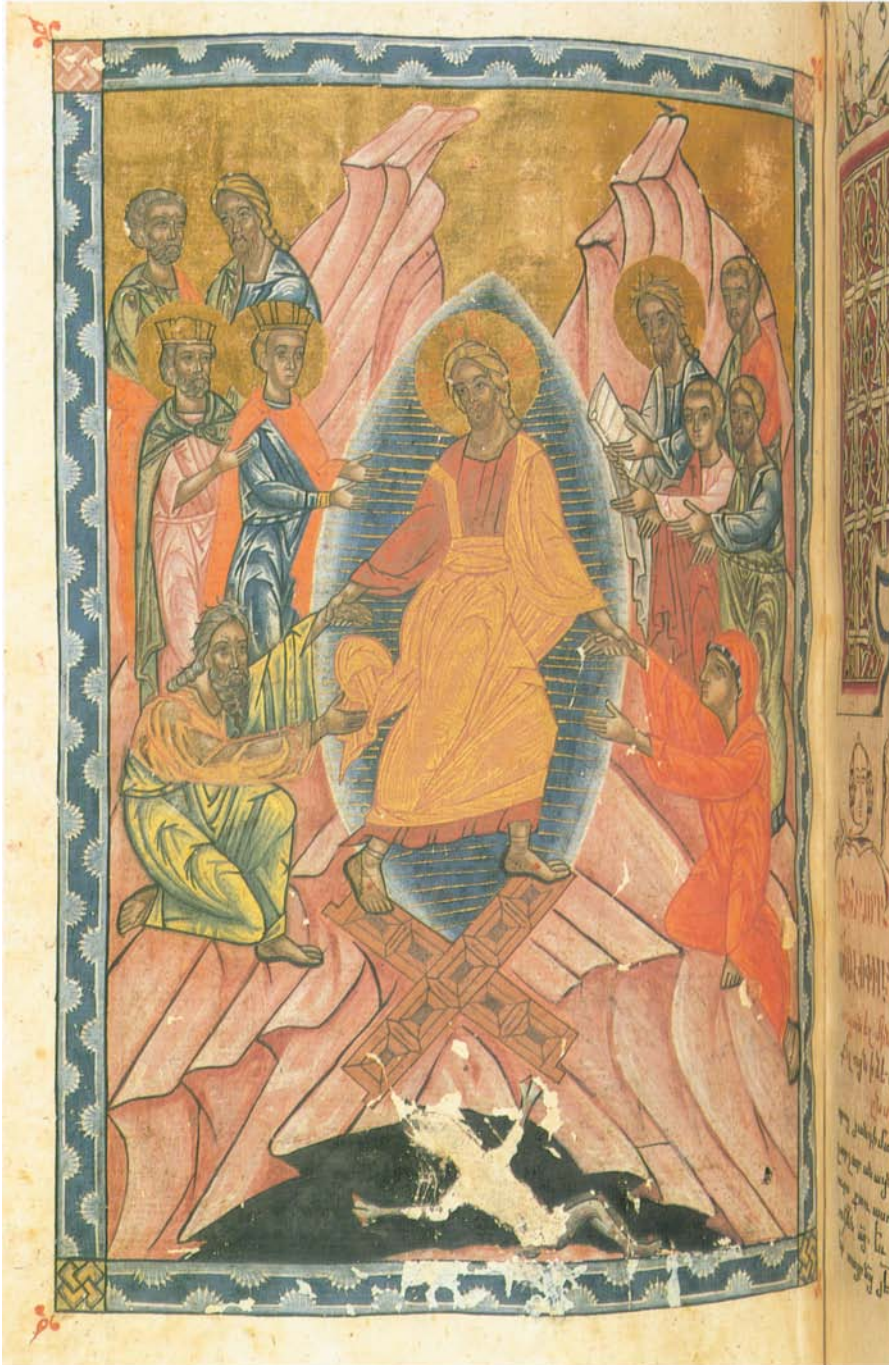
#### Fols 43v–44r Portrait and Headpiece of St Mark’s Gospel

The illuminations belong to two distinct periods. The headpieces (fols 4, 44, 71, 113), marginal arabesques, birds, decorative letters, and gold uncials were done by the scribe and artist Step’anos Vahkatsi in 1280 in Sis, the capital of Cilicia. Step’anos was one of the pupils of Bishop Yovhannes, the younger brother of King Het’um who had founded the important scriptorium at the Monastery of Gr̄ner and Akner. The portraits of the Evangelists and of Peter and Paul (3b, 43b, 70b, 112b, 161b) and the 23 figures in the margins of Acts and the Catholic Epistles were added by Mesrop of Khizan in 1618 at New Julfa, who several years earlier in 1608 had illuminated British Library’s Ms. Or. 5737 (see Cat. 149).

The following are some of the illustrated manuscripts which we know to have been at New Julfa in the seventeenth century: New Julfa, No. 27, Gospel illustrated in 1195 by Kostandin, probably at Skevra in Cilicia; Venice San Lazzaro No. 151 and New Julfa No. 36, Gospels illustrated in 1214 and 1236 in Great Armenia by Ignatios; London British

Library No. 15, 411, Gospel illustrated by T’orōs of Taron at Gladzor in 1321. The wealthy merchants of New Julfa lived in palatial houses and on a scale entirely comparable to that of Shah Abbas Is emirs. In Islamic societies the rich bourgeoisie, whether Muslim or Christian, was always in a position to ape court fashion; and at New Julfa the connection was particularly close because of the traditional renown of Armenians as goldsmiths and jewellers. Pietro della Valle, in his Letters from Isfahan, dated 4 April 1620, mentions the family of khwaja Safar and reports that he had recently died, and that his brother Nazar had succeeded him. Sir Thomas Herbert in his *Travels* speaks of khwaja Nazar, the ‘Armenian Christian prince’ whom he visited in 1628 and of whose Safavid court taste he disapproved. While the walls of the churches of New Julfa owe their influence to Flemish and Italian painters, manuscript illumination was a conscious revival of the manuscript illuminations of thirteenth-century Cilician Armenia. The most striking case of revivalism in Armenian painting is a Gospels (Freer Gallery of Art, No. 36. 15) dated 1668–73, written by Mik’ayel and illustrated at Nor Avan near Sivas in Anatolia. The painter, Baghram, states that he used as a model for the Canon Tables the Gospels illuminated by the famous Cilician painter T’oros Rōslin which in 1602 had been in the Church of the Virgin at Sivas. The original survives as Walters Art Gallery Ms. no. 539) dated 1262 (see Cat. 159). This khwaja Nazar was also the patron of the superb Bible illuminated by Hakob in Constantinople in 1623, now in the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum (see Cat. 117).

Conybearc, *A Catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts in the British Museum*, No. 8, pp. 11–14; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 22–3, fig. 7, Pl. VI (Portrait and Headpiece of St Mark); Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 114, Pl. III (Portraits of Sts Paul and Peter); Rogers, *Islamic Art and Design, 1500–1700*, 41–2, No. 29, Pl. 34 (Headpiece of St Matthew’s Gospel); Ōrmanian, *Azgapatum*, Vol. II, Bk. 2, pp. 2323–9.



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**Lectionary of the Armenian  
 Apostolic Orthodox Church,  
 1631–32**

Thick yellowish paper; 541 fols, in 46 signed quires, mostly of 12 leaves. Contemporary blind-tooled brown leather on wooden boards, small armorial device in the centre of each cover. Script medium *bolorgir* in double cols. Size 36 × 15 cm

*Provenance:* The colophon on fols 539–40 records that the manuscript was copied in the Church of St Sargis the General in Kaffa in the Crimea in the Armenian era 1081 (1631) for the patron Latchin *mahtesi* in memory of his brother Alek'sianos by the scribe Zak'aria, to be offered to the Church of St James, Jerusalem. A century later the manuscript was 'in the town of

the island of Crete' for on fol. 245r there is a request for prayers by Tēr Vardan of Erevan dated 30 April 1722. Another inscription on fol. 210b in cursive dated 24 May 1852 records the arrival at Candia in Crete of Ter Nshan Tēr Nshanian of Marsivan as parish priest. The manuscript was in The Hagop Kevorkian Fund under No. 43 until it was auctioned at Sotheby's London in 1976. By 1980 it was the property of H.P. Kraus, from whom it passed to Sam Fogg of London in 1996, whence it was acquired for the British Library in February 1997.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 15291

**Fols 211v–212r The Harrowing of Hell  
 and Title [Anastasis] page of Easter  
 Lections**

Christ's full standing figure occupies an oval-shaped area painted in blue with horizontal lines in gold. He has a large gold nimbus with initials of his name in red ink in Greek. His tunic is painted gold over red. His feet rest on the broken gates of hell. He lifts Adam and Eve by their hands. On the left are standing David and Solomon wearing crowns, with Enoch and Elijah standing behind them. On the right John the Baptist with bright gold nimbus stands holding a book, accompanied by three apostles. The figure of Satan at the base of the picture is completely flaked. According to the Gospel of St John this is the hour 'when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgement'. This is both the harrowing of hell and the general resurrection. Because Christ has been raised and has raised the dead, Christians are risen with Christ and will rise again at the resurrection. The lectionary contains scriptural lessons appointed for public reading at Mass according to the liturgical calendar. The cycle of readings for Easter begins with this miniature.

The manuscript has three full-page miniatures placed before the three principal liturgical cycles – fol. 2v Nativity, fol. 211v, The Harrowing of

Hell and Resurrection (Easter) and fol. 336v, Pentecost or Descent of the Holy Spirit. The faces of the figures are finally executed and individual with lavish use of gold leaf, and, like the drapery, show the influence of Byzantine art, as well as that of the paintings of the Cilician school. The influence of the icons of the post-Byzantine period is particularly apparent in the illustration of this manuscript. If the scribe is identical with the Zak'aria of Kaffa (Crimea) who copied Erevan manuscripts nos 7371, 7376 and 7517 of AD 1640, 1641 and 1643 as scribe, artist and binder, the present paintings could be attributed to him.

Sotheby's *Catalogue of important oriental manuscripts. The property of The Hagop Kevorkian Fund, Monday, 12 April 1976, Lot. 193, Plates of fol. 211v (The Harrowing of Hell) and fol. 336v (Pentecost); Kraus, *Catalogue 159 Illuminated Manuscripts from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries*, No. 35, 76, Plates of fol. 336b (Pentecost) and fol. 211v (Harrowing of Hell). Nersessian, *Manuscripts of the Christian East, Catalogue 18*, No. 21, 34-6, coloured plates of Harrowing of Hell, Pentecost and Nativity (frontispiece); Nersessian, *Union catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the United Kingdom* (forthcoming).*

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### Bible, New Julfa (Isfahan), 1646

Fine thin vellum; 596 fols, in 51 signed quires, mostly of 10-12 leaves. Script in small *bolorgir* in double cols. Bound in light brown leather over boards, blind-tooled cable design borders with floral patterns. The portraits of Christ and the Virgin with Child painted on the upper and lower underside of the manuscript. Size 26 × 19 cm.

*Provenance:* The principal colophon at the end of St Luke's Gospel (fol. 509v) records that the manuscript was copied by the scribe Yovhannes Lehatsi (of Poland) in the Armenian era 15 June 1095 (1646) for the priest Yovhannes ertets, 'who provided the expenses'. The principal scribe was assisted in the copying of the manuscript by another scribe, P'ilippos, whose name is mentioned eleven times at the end of the books of the Old Testament. The name of the artist Ghazar is inscribed in small round-hand script in red ink under the frame of the frontispiece of the Book of Genesis (fol. 2v). The manuscript was



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brought to England from Tiflis, Georgia by an English gentleman in 1847 and was acquired by Lord Robert Curzon (1810-73), whose collection was bequeathed to the British Museum by Darea Baroness Zouche on 13 October 1917.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 8833

### Fols 2v-3r The Expulsion of Adam and Eve and Title-page of Genesis

The composite full-page miniature in three tiers depicts the temptation and the fall of Adam and Eve. At the top of the page God is depicted resting on a throne surrounded by the four beasts of the Apocalypse, with a globe resting on his knees held in one hand and blessing with the other. On

either side of the throne stand three adoring angels. In the second tier from left to right, the Garden of Eden with God speaking to two persons fully clad in red tunics, who most probably represent the scribe and the patron of the manuscript. In the centre stands Eve, naked, holding an apple beside the tree of knowledge, and conversing with the snake coiled at the foot of the tree with its head resting in the branches. Next are the naked figures of Adam and Eve, each holding an apple. This is followed with the depiction of God speaking to Adam and Eve who are now 'clothed in garments of skins'. The last tier depicts the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden in three separate sequences. The action unfolds from left to right. God is speaking to Adam and Eve who are walking away; then a seraph holding a sword leads Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, which is shown as a fortified town whose gates are guarded by a 'cherubim with flaming sword'. The final picture shows Adam and Eve outside the gates of the Garden of Eden pondering their future. The inscription below the frame states: 'Znkarogh sora zanarzhan mahtesi Ghazars yishetsek' i Tēr yisheal lijik' i K'risto]se: Amen Hayr' (Remember to the Lord the unworthy painter of this the mahdesi (pilgrim) Ghazar and you will be remembered by Christ. Amen Father).

The rectangular headpiece occupying the greater part of the page has a multifoil opening which is filled with a vase with flowers and flanked on either side by two peacocks. Medallions in each corner of the rectangle have the portraits of the Four Evangelists, all seated with book in hand, each with their symbols. The larger medallion in the middle of the rectangle has the image of the Virgin and Child with hands open, flanked by two angels holding a golden crown over her head. Two striding peacocks confront each other at the side of a floral motif above the frame. A full-page interlacing palmette fills the entire outer margin. The initial letter of the text, 'I', is formed by an angel wearing a blue tunic and red cloak and holding aloft a sword in his right hand; a dragon is coiled around his legs, and its lowered

head forms the loop of the letter. The rest of the letters of the initial word 'Iskezbane' (In the beginning) are composed of bird capitals in various colours, followed by a full line in gold capitals.

Armenians had rarely copied the whole Bible before the seventeenth century. The wealth of the Armenian merchants in New Julfa meant that they could afford to have such large works copied and illuminated. The sponsorship of such luxurious manuscripts was more than a financial act. The Bible became the 'yishatakaran', literally, 'the place of memory' of its owner, tying him to the saving powers of the Armenian Church. A note in a Bible begun in 1607 and finished in 1636, when in its owner had died, cites the following:

I am going; you will stay with the living;  
I die; my book will remain in memory.

Curzon, *Catalogue of materials for writing*, 16–18; *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant*; Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 125; Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, 44–7, fig. 33; Nersessian, 'Robert Curzon (1810–1873) and the Levant': Exhibition leaflet 30 May to 25 October 1992; Nersessian, *Union Catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the United Kingdom* (forthcoming); Rogers, *Islamic Art and Designs*, 41–4; Adjemian, *Grand catalogue des manuscrits Arméniens de la Bible*, 959–64; Taylor, *Book Arts of Isfahan*, 47–68.

### 153 Menologium, Constantinople, 1652

Thick vellum; 616 fols, in 53 signed quires of mostly 12 leaves. Script large, thick black, fairly regular *bolorgir* in double cols. Stout calf on boards, blind-tooled; two metal clasps in front, one missing; remains of three leather thongs on back cover probably done in 1772 when the manuscript was rebound. Size 35.5 × 24.5 cm (external 36 × 25.5 × 15 cm).

*Provenance*: The colophon on fol. 616b shows that the manuscript was copied in Constantinople 'at the door of the fair-roofed and sweet-voiced Church of the Holy Mother of God' at the request of Zak'ariay khalifa 'as an ineffaceable memorial for ever' by the scribe Khatchatur erets during the catholicate of Ter P'ilippos (I Aghbaketsi, 1633–55)



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and the sultanate of Muhammad (IV, 1648–87) 'who while a boy of eight years took the crown and throne of his father's kingdom'. The Armenian date is spoiled, the R (= 1000) being followed by shadows of two letters now illegible. If the final letter is an A (= 1) and the dates of the catholicos and the sultan are taken into account, the manuscript must have been copied between 1648 and 1655, then the missing middle letter is a ch (= 100), that is 1101 of the Armenian era or October 1651/1652. The artist has signed himself in the lower margin of fol. 575 as 'the most insignificant of drudges Yovsep' erets' in red ink. Bought by The British Museum in 1960 from Dr O. Rescher of Istanbul.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 12, 550

### Fols 257b–258a The Annunciation and The Adoration of the Magi

A full-page miniature, the top half divided into two panels, each containing an Annunciation scene: in the left panel Saint Mary is depicted holding a pitcher near a well and an angel approaches; in the right panel, a younger angel holding a lily in one hand and blessing with the other

approaches Mary, standing in the interior of a house before her throne holding a spindle in her hands. The buildings behind her are linked with hanging drapery and above is a dove descending from a segment of sky in the centre of the frame. The Adoration is depicted in the lower compartment. Christ sits on the Virgin's knee, covered by a fold of her robe; he reaches out towards the gold casket offered by the oldest king kneeling before him, his crown on the ground at the feet of the Virgin. The second, also crowned, stands full face in the background holding a golden chalice. To his right stands the third king, dark faced, wearing a turban with a small crown on top and a red tunic with wide sleeves; he holds a gold casket. The first two are wearing long fur-lined mantles. Joseph stands, hand folded on his chest, above Mary and the Child with halo and small crown. The background consists of mountains. In the Armenian apocryphal texts of the Infancy Gospels the Magi are identified as kings representing the peoples of Persia, India, and Arabia. Underneath there is the inscription 'K'aghots 29 and January 6. It is the feast of the Nativity and Epiphany of Christ our God'.

The headpiece on the facing page, marking Epiphany and Christmas, enclosing an image of Christ as Pantocrator; full-length marginal ornament. First line of text composed of the letter 'Y' in the shape of two lions and a jackal, followed by bird capitals, the next two lines are in gold and red *bolorgir*. The letters around Christ's halo are E [I AM THAT I AM] and T[E]R [Lord].

The miniature is significant for the double Annunciation. In one version, Mary goes to the well. She carries a pitcher, and Gabriel approaches her. He has the appearance of a middle-aged man with a heavy brown moustache and beard. In the second view, Mary holds the spindle in her hand. She rises from her seat at the sight of Gabriel, who this time has the appearance of a youth. Both views illustrate the Annunciation story as narrated in the Protevangelium of James,

Pseudo Matthew, and the Armenian Infancy Gospel. According to this account the Virgin had gone to draw water from the well when she heard the angel address her, 'Rejoice, Virgin Mary'. She did not actually see the angel; trembling, she returned home and took up the purple thread to weave a veil for the temple. The angel, however, pursued her in order to continue his message as narrated in Luke. The earliest depiction of Gabriel as a mature bearded man occurs in a ninth-tenth-century manuscript (Mat. Ms. 7793) and it was still in use in the seventeenth century when it was adopted by Ethiopian artists (Ethiopic Or. 481, see Cat. 134). The cycle of legends concerning the Magi was extensive and in the thirteenth century, Jacob of Voragine collected part of the legends in his *Legenda Aurea*. Of all these legends, none was more scrupulously followed by artists than that which assigned a different age to each of the Magi. The first king is always shown as an aged man, the second as middle-aged, and the third as a beardless youth. In the Collectanea accompanying Bede's work it is said, 'The first Magus was Melchior, an old man with long white hair and a long beard ... It was he who presented gold, symbol of divine royalty. The second, named Caspar, was young, beardless, and ruddy; he honoured Jesus by giving incense, an offering that manifested his divinity. The third, named Balthazar, a dark complexion wearing full beard ... bore witness, by offering myrrh, that the Son of Man would die.'

In Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople and Antioch the Feast of the Nativity was, between 360 and 450, celebrated on 25 December in place of the old Mithraic feast of the birthday of the sun. But the Churches of the east rejected this innovation, which began in Rome. The Armenian Church to this day keeps the commemoration on 6 January, defending the date on the grounds that his human and spiritual births ought, for historical and symbolic reasons, be marked together. The Armenian Church Father Nerses IV Klayetsi wrote in 1165 defending the Armenian custom of celebrating the birth

of Jesus together with his baptism in Jordan on one and the same day, 6 January. His words are: 'In the same way as Jesus was born in the flesh from the holy virgin, he was born through baptism also from the Jordan, as an example unto us. And since there are here two births, differing – it is true – from each other in mystic import and in date, therefore it was enacted that we should feast them together, – as we feast the first, so also the second birth.'

Dowsett, 'Illuminated Armenian menologium', *BMQ*, 24 (1961), 87–94; Grigorian, 'Nor statsuads magaghat'cay Yaysmawurk' mc Londoni Britanakan T'angaranin mej', *HA* (1961), 495–510; reprinted in Öskian, *Tsutsak dzeragrats or i Handes Amsoreay*, 355–61; Marrison, ed., *The Christian Orient*, No. 133, Pl. 23; Nersessian, Der, *The Chester Beatty Library. A catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts*, No. 605, 162–6; Chojnacki, 'The Annunciation in Ethiopian art', 313, fig. 29; Buckinghamshire Art Gallery: *We Three kings. The Magi in Art and Legend*, No. 58, 42; Nersessian, *Union Catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the United Kingdom* (forthcoming); Sargisian, *Erek' t'agawor mogeru zroytsn haykakan matenagrut'ean mej ew anor kareworut'iwann*, 1910.

## 154 Bible, New Julfa (Isfahan), 1661/62

Thin white fine vellum; 582 fols, in 48 gatherings of mostly 12 leaves. Script regular *bolorgir* in double cols. Bound in contemporary brown calf on wooden boards tooled with small rosettes interlaced with seed-shaped patterns in diagonal lines, three metal studs for thongs, with flap. Size 26.5 × 20 cm.

*Provenance:* The manuscript has no principal colophon. There are four short scribal inscriptions (fols 170a, 193a, 219a, 294b) which name the scribes of the manuscript as being Yovanes, Yartut'iwann, and Yovsep'. A fourth inscription (fol. 383a) records that the receiver of the manuscript was Baron Yakobjan. A miniature on fol. 577b contains two dates, one according to the Christian Era, 1651, and the other, 'of the Armenians, 1110' (1661/62). The discrepancy is probably due to scribal miscalculation, and one would tend to put more trust in the date according to the Armenian era. In 1937, when Father H. Öskian published a description of the manuscript, it was in the



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possession of Mr Yovhannes T' Aramian who had it kept in a bank safe in Plovdiv. He had inherited it from his ancestors, one of whom was from the Armenian community in Akhalk'alak or Akhaltskhay in Georgia. According to S. Der Nersessian the 'the Bible was later brought to Paris and was acquired by Pierre Beres in 1974'. The manuscript was auctioned by Sotheby's in London on 27 April 1982 and was acquired by the British Library.

The British Library, Inv. Nr Or. 14101

### Fols 321v, 322r Portrait of King Solomon and the Headpiece of the Book of Proverbs

King Solomon, holding a bejewelled golden book, is represented seated on a golden oriental-style throne pointing to the Holy Temple. He is depicted as a beardless young king, wearing a crown and halo. The title page of the Book of Proverbs has a quarter-page headpiece with a multifoil opening filled with floral scrolls, with over it two birds at the sides of a floral motif. The outer margin has a full-page-length interlacing palmette terminated by a cross. The initial letter of the text, 'Ch', is composed of a lion biting the tail of a serpent and the remaining letters are formed of birds and a fish in

multi-colours. In Armenian tradition King Solomon is credited with parts of the book of Proverbs and the first verse of his book 'Chanatchel zimastut' iwn ew zkhrat, imanal zbans hancharoy' (To know wisdom and advice, and perceive the words of the wise) was the first line of text translated into Classical Armenian with the Armenian letters invented by Mesrop Mashtots in AD 406.

The 43 miniatures in this manuscript, in particular the scenes of the Creation, the episodes of the life of David and Jonah, and the illustrations of the Apocalypse, are based on the engravings of European Bibles. The scribes of New Julfa based their miniatures on a Bible illustrated in Poland in 1619 by the scribe Ghazar Baberdatsi (1570–1634), whose miniatures are in the style of Italian Renaissance and include the illustrations of the Apocalypse. That this Bible may have served as a model to the artists of New Julfa is suggested by the fact that many of the Bibles, including this one, reproduce the colophon of the scribe Ghazar Baberdatsi (fols 578, 579a).

Oskian, 'Tsutsak Hayeren dzeragrats in Bulgaria', *HA* (11–12), 1937, 570–73; reprinted in *Tsutsak dzeragrats or i Handes Amsoreay*, 169–71; Gasparian Nerses, *Tsutsak dzeragrats i Bulgaria*, 14–16; Hatsuni, 'S. Grots' entrelagoyñ grtchagirk' S. Ghazaru mej', 402–10; Adjemian, *Grand catalogue des Manuscrits Arméniens de la Bible*, No. 286, 945–8 [the same manuscript is also entered under No. 287 as part of BL collections]; *Sotheby's Catalogue of important oriental manuscripts and minatures*, Monday, 12 April 1976, lot. 194, 88–9; [Nersessian, Vrej], *Sotheby's Catalogue of Fine Oriental Miniatures, Manuscripts and Printed Books*, Tuesday, 27 April 1982, lot. 300, 137–40. Pls 'Four scenes from the life of Jonah' in colour and 'Hannah kneeling before Eli' in black and white; Nersessian, Der, Letter dated 9 March 1983; Nersessian, *Union Catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the United Kingdom* (forthcoming).

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### The Four Gospels, 1587

Oriental paper; 339 fols, plus two vellum fly-leaves; divided into 25 gatherings of 12 leaves each. Text in medium regular *boloxgir* in two cols of 21 lines each. Original blind-tooled light brown calf covers over wooden boards. Size 27.3 × 17 cm.

*Provenance*: A long colophon (fols 335–6) records that the manuscript was copied by the deacon Hakob Jughayetsi (c. 1550–1613) during the prelaty of Archbishop Azaria

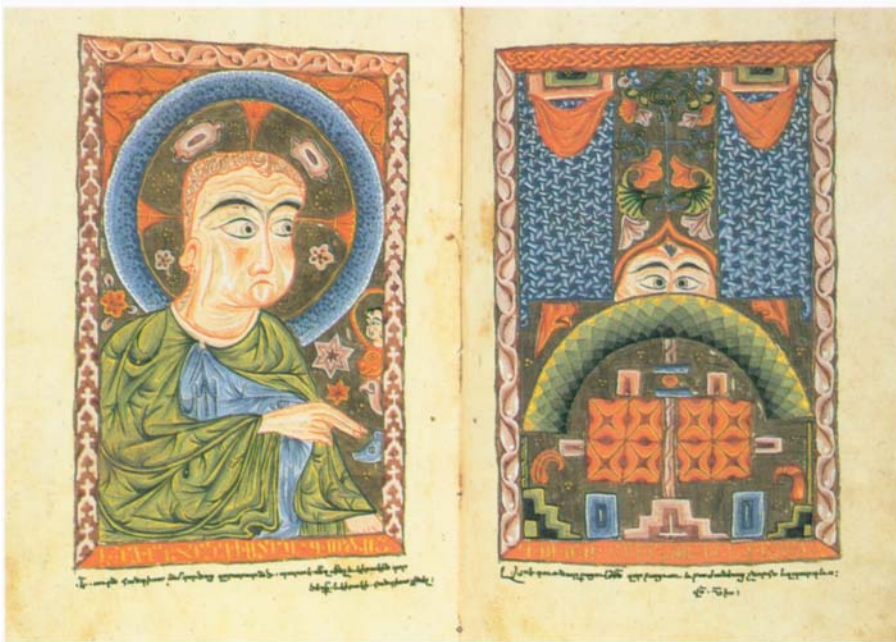
Jughayetsi and the catholicate of Dawit IV Vagharshapatetsi (1590–1629) in AE 1036 (1587) on the request of khwaja Atibek for the memory of his parents Baron Zakar and Arkhatun (fol. 333a). Soon after the manuscript passed into the hands of 'ra'is' (Arabic village elder), Akhanes (i.e. Yovhannes), donated it to the Church of Holy Step'anos, situated in the small village called Arak, in the province of Aghbak in Van, in western Armenia in the AE 1037 (1588) (fol. 339b). This village was destroyed and plundered by the Turks in 1896. A brief pencil scribble on fol. 337a gives a date 1898, probably the date when the manuscript was taken. Archbishop Artawazd Siwrmēian compiled his Catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in private collections in Europe between 1946 and 1949, in which he describes two manuscripts of Hakob Jughayetsi, one of which belonged to Jean Pozzi, who was France's ambassador in Constantinople in 1936, then acquired by M. Pierre Béres and sold in Paris in June 1999; the other is this manuscript, which he had seen in the John Rylands University Library's collection during one of his visits to Manchester.

The John Rylands University Library, Manchester. Inv. Nr Armenian 20 (R 55629)

### Fols 7v–8r God Resting on the Seventh Day and The Gates of Paradise

The Creator is shown pointing towards the heads of the Evangelists' symbols, strangely incorporated into this scene which has the caption below: 'This is the seventh day, resting from all works which God did. It is our duty to work until Sunday and to rest on Sunday'. The facing-page composition is explained by the caption, 'This is the gate of Paradise that He opened, and He gave to the world grace and blessings'. The two sides of this gate are set in an arch above which may be seen the top half of a face, which can be identified as the Creator's. This painting of Paradise is followed by the miniatures representing the Creation of Eve and Adam and Eve eating the fruit (fols 9b–10a), followed by a highly detailed Gospel cycle. The manuscript has 59 full-page miniatures as frontispiece to the Gospels.





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The artist Hakob Jughayetsi (of New Julfa) was the pupil of the famous scribe and artist Zakaria, Bishop of Gnunik' (c. 1500–76) at the scriptorium of the Monastery at Lim, located north-east of Lake Van. Eight manuscripts have survived from his pen, dating from 1576 to 1610. The outstanding feature of his work is the magnificent full-page miniatures grouped together as frontispiece to his Gospels. His iconographic cycle is extended to include depictions of the story of the Creation, expanded cycle of Gospel scenes which include major miracles, and eschatological scenes. His compositions differ not only from the customary representations in Armenian art, but those of the Christian east, and western. His portraits of God, Christ, and the Virgin Mary could easily be taken for an image of Buddha, and the similarity cannot be accidental. We have very considerable information concerning the business activities of the Julfa merchants with India and China and the Far East, where Armenians had set up colonies as early as the fourteenth century. These merchants undoubtedly returned from their journeys with sculpture, a banner, or some other object bearing an image of Buddha from which the painter Hakob drew his

inspiration for the illustrations in his manuscripts. Resolutely deviating from age-old traditions, he introduced a style which had no precedent and was never imitated. His portraits of God, Christ and the Virgin, which seem almost 'barbarous', strike one with the vigour of their draughtsmanship, exaggerated gestures and by their brilliance of the colours. Red, orange and blue dominate; white lines with winding outlines suggesting clouds add a lighter note.

Nersessian, *Union Catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the United Kingdom* (forthcoming); Siwrmeian, *Mayr tsutsak Hayeren dzeragrats*, Nos 11 and 37, 16–19, 83–5; Nersessian, *Der, Armenian Art*, 236–40, figs 181–2; Pogharian, *Hay nkaroghner*, 161–4; Drambyan, 'Hakob Jughayetsu mamankarneri patkeragrut'yunë', *BM* 10 (1971), 171–84, figs 1–4; Rogers, *Islamic Art and Design 1500–1700*, 41–4; Paris, *Rares Manuscrits Orientaux Chrétiens et Islamiques*, lundi 7 juin 1999, lot. C.

### 156 The Four Gospels in Armenian, 1313

Thick paper; 259 fols + 2 vellum fly-leaves.  
Large *bolorgir* in double columns; 32 × 23 cm.

*Provenance:* The colophon firmly states that the copying of the manuscript was concluded on 8 September in the

Armenian era 762 (1313) during the reign of Ōshin (1307–20) and during the catholicate of Tēr Kostandin (III Kesaratsi, 1307–22) in the village of Shikbak in the region of Tayk, under the shelter of the Church of Saint Sargis, when the Mongol Khan Tagha reigned. The copyist, Yovhannes the priest, states that the times were 'confusing (*kalabalik*) and requests the reader's prayers for the donor of the manuscript Hazarshah and Lady T'amam khat'un', whose portrait is included in the miniature of the enthroned Virgin and Child (fol. 9), her name written above her head (see p.85). The manuscript was rebound and the silver button was replaced by the binder Yakob in 1636 on the request of Khoja Murad and Mahdesi Andreas. At some time between 1313 and 1517 the manuscript came into the possession of an Armeno-Iberian family, who inserted an inscription in *khoutsouri* script on fols 258b–259a. The Georgian inscription states without providing any chronology the following; 'We the Vikhikians purchased this Gospel and rescued it from captivity. We bought it for 30 florin, when Melk'isedek was the *subash*, T'adun the *gatin*, and Yovsep' son of Gendimaraz the *tanuter*. All the Vikhikians old and young contributed, each paying part of the price according to their ability. Then we presented it to the church of the Holy Cross for the remission of our sins ... the Gospel belongs to the village and let no one make it an object of dispute'. Vikhik is a settlement in southern Tayk, one of the thirteen vilayets of Karin or Erzerum where the 'Armeno-Iberian' aristocratic family of the Vikhik-atsi from the great Bagratid dynasty of Tayk/Tao had settled at the end of the tenth century. The undisputed aspect of this Armeno-Iberian group is that all its members adhered to the Chalcedonian confession but also preserved their native language, as the presence of the Armenian locative suffix '-atsi' in their name Vikhik-atsi indicates. Bagrat Vkhkatsi, katapano of the east, chose Armenian for his 1060 inscription on the cathedral of the former Bagratid capital of Ani, whom Matthew of Edessa calls an 'Iberian by race' (Vrats



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azgaw) to designate his Chalcedonian confession, while Greek sources identified him as an Armenian.

John Rylands University Library, Manchester,  
Inv. Nr Arm. 10

#### Fol. 256r Portraits of King Trdat and Abgar

The two saints stand frontally. On the right is King Trdat, during whose reign Christianity became the official religion of Armenia. The figure on the left, whose identifying inscription has perished, is King Abgar (whom Professor Nersessian and Talbot Rice failed to identify). The identifying feature is the inclusion in the picture of the portrait of Jesus on a handkerchief, which according to legend Christ sent to King Abgar of Edessa. The king is represented holding with both hands the white handkerchief in the centre of which is the image of Christ, with a red nimbus. Movses Khorenatsi in his *History of the Armenians* regards Abgar as king of Armenia and Edessa. In the Armenian Divine Liturgy in the intercessions 'of the believing kings' the names of the following kings are recalled in this sequence – Abgar, Constantine, Trdat and Theodosius.

The group of portraits with Georgian inscriptions does not include any saint who belongs exclusively to the Georgian Church, while there are three specifically

Armenian figures: Gregory the Illuminator (fol. 258) and King Trdat and Abgar (fol. 256). All the figures are of saints belonging to the pre-451 period of the Church and therefore it would be hard to justify the conclusion of Professor Marr and Talbot Rice that the artist of the miniatures with Georgian inscriptions was Georgian. The miniatures are by Armenian artists living and working in the important Armenian colony of Tayk. An Armenian manuscript dating from the turn of the twelfth–thirteenth century in the Library of the University of Chicago has a miniature with a colophon written in three languages (Greek, Armenian and Georgian). An Armenian manuscript from Gladzor has Georgian glosses. The terms *subash* (Osmanian for head of the province), *gatin* (Osmanian for judge) and *tanuteri* (the Georgian form of the Armenian *tanuter*) were common in Georgian speech of Armenian Chalcedonians of Tayk.

Nersessian, *Union catalogue of Armenian manuscripts* (forthcoming); Taylor, 'The Oriental manuscript collections in the John Rylands Library', 449–78; Talbot, Rice, 'The illuminations of Armenian Manuscript 10', 453–8; Nersessian, Der, 'Notes and news of the John Rylands Library', 265–70; Arutjunova-Fidanjan, 'The ethno-confessional self-awareness of Armenian Chalcedonians', 345–63; Garsoian, 'The problem of Armenian integration into the Byzantine Empire', 53–124.

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#### The Four Gospels, 966

Vellum, 237 fols + 2 fly-leaves. *Erkat'agir* script; 30.5 × 25 cm.

*Provenance:* 'Written in the Armenian era 415 [966], by order and expense of the priest T'oros, by Sargis, unworthy priest, for the adornment and glory of the holy church, and for the enjoyment, the love [*sic*] of the people.' This manuscript is the fifth oldest Armenian manuscript among dated Gospels and is also one of the two copies of this early period to have both figural and ornamental miniatures. Because of its venerable date and the character of the illustrations, the Walters manuscript is a key monument of Armenian illumination.

Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Ms. W. 537



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#### Fol. 2 The Virgin and Child

The manuscript opens with the representation of the Virgin and Child, set within an ornamental frame crowned with an ogee arch. The Virgin is enthroned in hieratic frontality, hands raised in the attitude of the orans, while the Christ Child is seen standing in front of her instead of sitting on her knees. The accompanying inscription, 'Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee', clearly indicates that this miniature is a symbolical image of the Incarnation, an image which in slightly varying forms appears at the beginning of Armenian Gospels of the tenth and even later centuries.

The frame around the Virgin and Child is ultimately derived from a type which, in the Syriac Gospel of Rabbula (Cat. 108), is drawn around Christ flanked by four clerics. The ogee arch above the tympanum, crowned with a globe supporting the cross, is a structural form which has also been used for the tempietto in several Armenian manuscripts of the tenth century.

Nersessian, Der, *Armenian manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery*, Pl. B. 1–5; Matthews and Wieck, eds, *Treasures in Heaven*, Pl. 4, Nr 6.



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### 158 The Four Gospels, 1193

Vellum; 316 fols + 2 fly-leaves. Angular *erkat'agir* script; 26 × 18 cm.

*Provenance:* The Gospel Book was written in 1193, at the monastery named Poghoskan, for Bishop Karapet, during the catholicate of Gregory IV (1173–93). In 1221 the manuscript belonged to Catholicos Yovhannes VI of Sis (1203–21), who presented it to his nephew Smbat.

Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Ms. W. 538

#### Fols 3–4v Letter of Eusebius

The Letter of Eusebius, instead of being under architectural columns, similar to those of the Canon Tables, is written in the quatrefoil space reserved in a rectangle covered with a diaper pattern on a blue ground, and framed by a band decorated

with a broken palmette scroll. Peacocks drinking from an urn form the crowning motif. The painter does not give his name, but must have been trained in the scriptorium of Hromklay, and the elegance of his ornaments proves him to have been one of the most consummate craftsman of the late twelfth century.

Nersessian, Der, *Armenian manuscripts in the Walters art gallery*, Pl. 13 14, 6 9; Matthew and Wieck, eds, *Treasures in Heaven*, Nr 7, Pl. 8, 149.

### 159 The Four Gospels, 1261

Vellum; 410 fols + 2 fly-leaves. Medium-size *erkat'agir* script, 30 × 21.5 cm.

*Provenance:* This Gospel was copied and illuminated in 1261 at Hromklay by T'oros Roslin, for the priest T'oros, the nephew of the catholicos Constandin I Bardzraberdtsi (1221–67). The sponsor's name, together

with that of his uncle, is recalled in the versified dedicatory inscription on fols 11–12, in which the scribe records that the manuscript was written during the reign of the God-loving King Het'um and Queen Zabel, the daughter of King Levon.

Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Ms. W. 539

After the conquest of Great Armenia large numbers of Armenians migrated to Cilicia, on the shores of the Mediterranean, and established a barony which was raised to the status of a kingdom in 1198. The head of the patriarchal scriptorium at Hromklay was the painter T'oros Roslin, the most accomplished master of Armenian manuscript illumination. Seven manuscripts, dating from 1256 to 1268, are preserved, three of which are on exhibition (Cats 87, 89). Of these, by far the most lavishly illustrated is this manuscript.



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### Fol. 379 The Descent of the Holy Ghost

In the monumental scene painted by Rōslin, decorative elements are allied with the intention to show the real setting of the scene: two flights of steps lead to the 'upper room', mentioned in the Acts, in which some of the apostles lived and usually assembled; but the dome curiously projects from the opening of the large arch, and two peacocks stand on this arch, as they do on either side of the Canon Tables. Among the persons grouped within the lower central opening, and designated as the 'Parthians and Medes and Elamites' (Acts 2: 10), we see, as in Byzantine examples, a crowned man in imperial costume, another wearing the costume of the Jews, and, in addition,

men of different races distinguished from one another by the types of their headdresses, or in one instance (the bare-headed man on the left) by the physical aspect, which recalls that of a Tartar or Mongol. A dog-headed man stands in their midst, and from the thirteenth century onwards this fabulous creature appears, almost invariably, in Armenian compositions of the Pentecost.

Grace and delicacy are among the distinguishing traits of the style of T'oros Rōslin. The slender figures are plastically modelled; the drapery is decorative and elegant rather than naturalistic. The soft, subtle colours which predominate in the compositions are occasionally heightened by vivid touches of red. Gold covers the

background of the full-page miniatures. A lofty serenity characterizes the composition in which profound religious feeling is allied with human interest and close adherence to the text, occasionally interpreted in the light of contemporary life, and through the lively actions of the participating characters.

Nersessian. *Der, Armenian manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery*, fig. 131, 10-30; Matthews and Wicck, eds, *Treasures in Heaven*, Nr 8, 149-50.

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### The Four Gospels, 1455

Paper; 303 fols + 2 vellum fly-leaves. Large *bolorgir* script; 27.5 x 18 cm.

*Provenance:* The manuscript was written in 1455 at the Monastery of Gamaghriel at Khizan, south-west of Lake Van, by Hohannes vardapet, and illustrated by the priest Khatchatur. The sponsor was the priest P'ilipos, who is represented with his brothers Yusep' and Sultanshen, kneeling before the enthroned Virgin and Child (fol. 14v).

Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Ms. W. 543

### Fol. 7v The Marriage Feast at Cana

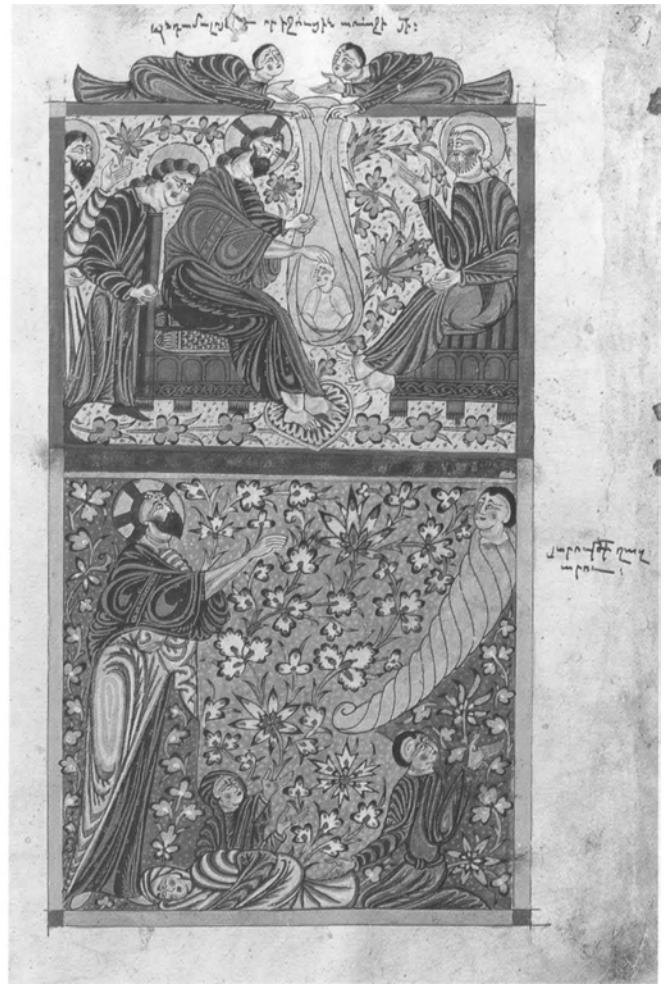
*Inscription:* The wedding at Cana in Galilee where [he] made the water into wine.

The theme of the Marriage at Cana, a popular subject for the artists of the Khizan school of the fourteenth and later centuries, is treated as a secular event by the painter Khatchatur, the leading artist of the Khizan school.

The page is divided into two compartments. In the upper one, Christ, accompanied by two apostles, blesses the cup presented by the master of the house. Six stone jars, to which Khatchatur has added a platter of meat, fill the narrow middle band. In the lower section the wedding guests partake of the wine and food, while the bridegroom sits apart. This banqueting scene reflects the local customs of wedding feasts. A sermon preserved in a manuscript copied in 1370 at Van refers to the ceremonies performed before and after a wedding. According to this text, the



160 (f.7v)



160 (f.8r)

bridegroom is clothed in a white dress and a red girdle, bound cross-wise in front and behind, that is, in the form of the ornate bands depicted in this manuscript of Khizan. After the wedding ceremony in the church, the guests go to the bridegroom's house, where the bridegroom is made to sit on a high chair, and he must not eat in the presence of the guests, which is, once again, what the painter has depicted. It is also in conformity with the local practice that no women, neither the Virgin nor the bride, appear at the feast, for the women met in a separate room.

Some resemblance to Islamic art can be seen in the costumes, the attitude of the figures and a few of the secondary details, but the energy and expressive qualities of this miniature are in marked contrast to the delicate style of the Persian miniatures.

Certain elements of this composition are present in the sculptures of the Church of Aght'amar built between 914 and 921.

Kurdian, *Khizani Dpivotsin gritchneri u manankaritchneri*, 30-41; Nersessian, *Der. Armenian manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery*, Pl. F, 31-41; Matthews and Wieck, eds, *Treasures in Heaven*, Nr 12, Pl. 30, 153-4.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Abbreviations:

AAS Armenian Academy of Sciences  
 BEH *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani*  
 BLJ *British Library Journal*  
 BJRL *Bulletin of John Rylands Library*  
 BM *Banber Matenadaran*  
 BMQ *British Museum Quarterly*  
 DOP *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*  
 ECR *Eastern Churches Review*  
 HA *Handēs Amsoreay*  
 HE *Hayastaneayts Ekeghetsi*  
 HHH *Haykazian Hayagitakan Handēs*  
 HHT *Hāsk Hayagitakan Taregirk'*  
 JA *Journal Asiatique*  
 JES *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*  
 JRAS *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*  
 JSAS *Journal of the Society of Armenian Studies*  
 OCA *Orientalia Christiana Annalecta*  
 PBH *Patma Banasirakan Handes*  
 REA *Revue des Études Arméniennes*  
 SHMA State History Museum of Armenia

## Introduction and chapters

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