

The Kars-Tsamandos Group of Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts of the 11th Century

Because there are over 50 Armenian illuminated manuscripts from the 11th century, I propose in this communication to discuss only a single outstanding manuscript, which I have currently under study, the Gospel of King Gagik-Abas of Kars, Jerusalem, St James 2556 (hereinafter referred to as J2556), along with the manuscripts that can be most closely grouped around it¹. Tatiana Izmailova named these manuscripts the »Byzantinizing« group, but this term involves many complex judgments of artistic intention². Indeed, the divergence of the paintings from the art of the capital is as important as their resemblances to it. Therefore I prefer to name the group after the scriptorium producing the manuscripts, which, it can be demonstrated, followed the royal family after the Seljuk conquest of Kars to a fortress in Cappadocia, still producing illuminated manuscripts of high quality. The other important groups of Armenian illuminated manuscripts of the century are also commonly designated by their places of origin – the Meletene/Malattia group and the Ani-Halbat group. The question is what these books say about life in Anatolia during the turbulent decades of the Seljuk Conquest. This study, however, must be understood as a progress report toward a larger study.

King Gagik-Abas was the last Armenian ruler of the wealthy little kingdom of Kars, 1029-1065, which was the last surviving Bagratid stronghold against the rising tide of the Seljuk invasion. The city sat on the northern leg of the Silk route that ran over the Pontic Mountains to Trebizond and thrived on the trade that passed through it and on the local products that it contributed to that trade. From their natural resources they exported timber, lead, iron, copper, and silver; from their produce nuts, wine, and salted fish; and from their factories textiles such as carpets, veils, and silks. Kars was typical of Armenian settlements in that it consisted of a military citadel of the nobility perched above the dwellings of the common folk, which were clustered around the cathedral of the Holy Apostles (930-937) beside the Arpacay River (fig. 1). Sirarpie Der Nersessian, whose article remains

the most serious study of the manuscript, points out that its colophons give Gagik-Abas the title *Shahanshah* and therefore it must date after 1045, when he inherited that ancient Iranian title upon the abdication of his Bagratid senior, King Gagik II of Ani³. For the later terminus Der Nersessian places the manuscript before the sack of Kars by the Seljuks under Ibrahim Inal, on the feast of the Epiphany in 1054. But it might conceivably have been later than that, for the citadel of Kars survived the assault. Lastavertsi recounts how the Seljuks killed everyone in the town and only those who escaped to the citadel managed to save their lives⁴. The citadel held then, and according to Matthew of Edessa, ten years later, after Alp Arslan had sacked Ani on 16 August 1064, he was entertained by Gagik-Abas with a lavish banquet and an exchange of gifts presumably in the citadel of Kars⁵. This was a year before Gagik-Abas finally accepted the Byzantine offer of residence in Cappadocia and abandoned Kars altogether.

A battered half-page with a portrait of the royal family is the most famous page in the Gospel of Gagik-Abas (fig. 2), but this has been attached to the book only since 1911, and my wife and I have argued that it does not belong to this manuscript because the script and the rulings of the colophon are inconsistent with the script and rulings of colophons elsewhere in the Gospel⁶. Further, we argued that it is not properly a portrait of King Gagik, as it is usually described, but of his daughter Marem, since she sits in the centre of the lion-supported throne and her father makes a gesture of deference toward her. The throne, the fabrics, the pearls, and the bowls of fruit are all familiar appurtenances of royalty from Sasanian to Islamic times, and, quite exceptionally, the princess wears the *tiraz* bands of Islamic rulership on either shoulder. In Islamic art women do occasionally the *tiraz*, but only in ceramics, where they are shown drinking or playing musical instruments; they are not portraits⁷. The princess Marem in *tiraz* is uniquely a portrait of a woman ruler. She is presented as the heir and successor to her father. Armenian law provided that in the absence of a male heir, which was

1 During a research trip to Jerusalem in the summer of 1981, the late Archbishop Shahe Ajamian graciously invited me to undertake a study of the Gospel of King Gagik-Abas of Kars. I acknowledge the assistance of the late reverend librarian Archbishop Norayr Bogharian and Kevork Hintlian. Virginia Orna, chemist, also took part in the study on the same occasion, and she reported her finds on the pigments in *Treasures in Heaven*. See: Orna, *The Making* 128-130. 136. – On the history of Kars, now see: Hovanissian, *Kars*. – To Costa Carras I am most grateful for the use of his photographs in **figs 2. 5. 7-8**.

2 Izmailova, *Armienskaja Miniatura* 182-214.

3 Der Nersessian, *Kars* 85-107. – See also: Narkiss/Stone, *Armenian Art* 12-13. 32-33. 147. – See also: Der Nersessian, *Armenian Art* 110-114.

4 Aristakes (Bedrosian) 91-92.

5 Matthew of Edessa (Destourian) II ch. 23, 599.

6 Mathews/Daskalakis, *Portrait* 475-484. – See also the more recent, careful discussion, with further bibliography on this portrait page: Kouymjian, *An Interpretation* 117-120.

7 Ettinghausen/Grabar/Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art* fig. 323. – *Trésors fatimides* 111 no. 35.



Fig. 1 Kars. The citadel and the cathedral of the Holy Apostles (930-937). – (Photo Th. F. Mathews).

the case with king Gagik-Abas, a daughter could inherit, though on her death the inheritance would not pass to her children but revert to the nearest male relative. The miniature is a testament, as explicit as any written document could be. Marem's enthronement on the lion throne is vivid documentation of the Iranian context of Armenian rulership.

The portrait of the princess in J2556 is a precious fragment of a manuscript, of the same high quality as the Gospel of Gagik-Abas, which has not survived. The incomplete colophon on the reverse of the half-page is in two columns reading, »(first column) ... [Gagik] in whom dwells the Holy Spirit of the Trinity in his graceful life, filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord, with immaculate reputation, who diligently studied all the holy scriptures ... (second column)

...for the holy queen Goranduxt, and for Marem, their offspring, that God may grant them to his church for long days, peaceful years, before ...« The prayer form of the colophon is unlike the other colophons in J2556 (found on fols. 5^v, 135^v, 222^v, and 371^v) which take the simple form of, »Remember in the Lord ...« Clearly the missing manuscript was a book of Holy Scripture, most likely another Gospel book, sponsored by King Gagik-Abas. I would date it after Ibrahim Inal's sack of 1054 had made Gagik-Abas' tenure precarious and given him serious anxiety about an heir but before his final abandonment of the city in 1065. The half page is a precious remnant of a grand illuminated manuscript of roughly the same size as the Gospel of King Gagik. Evidently at some point in its medieval history the book was in ruinous condition and pages



Fig. 2 Jerusalem ms. 2556, fol. 135bis. The Enthronement of Princess Marem with her parents Gagik-Abas and Goranduxt. – (Photo courtesy of Costa Carras).



Fig. 3 Tsamandos/Kouchkalesi. The citadel. – (After Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens* fig. 88).



Fig. 4 Lead seal of Princess Marem Kouropalissa. – (After Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens* fig. 89).

were being taken from it for re-use as flyleaves in another manuscript, which was a fairly common custom in the Armenian tradition of book binding⁸. A pair of diamond-shaped stitching holes and a fold down the middle of the page are evidence of this re-use. The new manuscript was about 16 cm × 24 cm, a quarter the size of the original manuscript.

Marem is an important figure in contextualizing our group of manuscripts, and her later career bears out our interpretation of the miniature as a deed of inheritance. After the Byzantine government relocated Gagik-Abas and his family to Cappadocia in 1065, Marem survived the murder of her father in 1069 and ruled in her own name at least until 1078 in the citadel of Tsamandos/Kouchkalesi 50 miles east of Caesarea/Kayseri (fig. 3). Her inheritance of Tsamandos is witnessed by a lead seal with her Byzantine title of *kouropalissa* (fig. 4)⁹. On the face we find the image of the Virgin of the Blachernitissa type, common on the seals of Byzantine governors of the period. The image bears the Greek abbreviations, »Mother of God«, and around it runs an Armenian inscription, »Marem is the Kuropalissa«. The inscription in Greek on the reverse reads, »Mother of God, come to the aid of Maria Kuropalissa, the daughter of Gagik of Kars«.

Because her official position and her title came from the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes (1068-1071) Greek was her language of rulership, while her prayer to the Mother of God was put in her native Armenian. The bilingualism of this seal is unique, according to Dédéyan.

The period of Marem the Kuropalissa at Tsamandos, that is between 1069 and 1079 or a little later (the fall of the castle being undocumented), is a turbulent period, embracing the momentous Seljuk victory of Manzikert in 1071. Gérard Dédéyan has gathered a few pieces of evidence of the history of Tsamandos in these years¹⁰. Bar Hebraeus narrates that in the winter of 1069-1070 the Turcoman Afshin, a subordinate of Hajib Gümüstegin who spent several seasons roaming freely in Anatolia and sacking where he pleased, was returning from raids further west when he was surprised by a snowstorm in the vicinity of Tsamandos (or Simnadou). He sent to a woman there named »Maryam«, that is Marem, who was »mistress« of the citadel to ask permission to purchase supplies in her city and the surrounding villages. She at first refused, but when Afshin threatened to lay waste the groves, vineyards and gardens, she relented. It seems as if the two found themselves at a standoff: Afshin could not lay siege to

⁸ Merian, *The Making* 131-132.

⁹ Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens* I 299-300, and seal in fig. 89.

¹⁰ *Ibidem* 300-301.



Fig. 5 Jerusalem ms. 2556, fol. 18. Satan and the Beasts in the First Temptation of Christ. – (Photo courtesy of the Armenian Patriarchate of St James).

the castle itself in the dead of winter with troops who were starving, and Marem could not afford to have her orchards and vineyards devastated. They shook hands, effectively, and the Turcomans were allowed to go shopping while Marem's castle and gardens were spared.

Dédéyan cites another piece of the history of Tsamandos in the colophon of Erevan ms. 275¹¹. This Gospel of smaller dimensions (26 cm × 19 cm) preserves three incipit pages, whose design places it in the Gagik group, and the colophon places its manufacture in Tsamandos. The patron was Smbat Patrik (*patrikios* being another honorific Byzantine title), who ordered the manuscript under the rule of Michael VII Doukas (1071-1078) and under the *kuropalatiwn* (or »kouropalattissate«) of the »pious and powerful Marem«. Further the colophon mentions the *katholicos* Grigor II Vkyaser.

11 Ibidem. – Izmailova erroneously calls the ms 975 in her text and gives the wrong dimensions. – Kouymjian/Stone include the ms. in their catalogue, *Album of Armenia* no. 29, 174-175.

The royal manuscript workshop of Kars seems to have accompanied Gagik and his daughter to Tsamandos. Broadly speaking this was a move from Armenian territory to Greek territory. The question is what kinds of continuity can be followed in the manuscript production.

The surviving Gospel of Gagik-Abas, measuring a colossal 46 cm × 35 cm even after some heavy trimming in its modern rebinding, is twice the size of luxury manuscripts in Byzantium. It was arguably the most splendid Gospel of all medieval Christendom. The 481 vellum folios contained a set of ten decorative canon or index tables, four portraits of the evangelists with facing decorated incipit pages, and some 227 narrative miniatures interspersed within the text, one on virtually every other folio (Der Nersessian estimated only about 170). In addition there are minor ornaments on every page, including 256 birds and 56 carpet panels.

Tragically, the manuscript has been horribly mutilated and its ruined condition has discouraged study. Fully 90 % of the miniatures have been robbed. The pattern of robbery is instructive, although Der Nersessian passed over this evidence in silence. In miniatures that were cut in half, one can observe that it is the figure of Christ that has been cut out, leaving behind his disciples (the Last Supper, fol. 206^v) or his persecutors (the Mocking of Christ, fol. 127) or Satan (the First Temptation of Christ, fol. 18) (fig. 5)¹². On the other hand miniatures left intact by the robber were either subjects that lacked Christ entirely (the Women at the Tomb, fol. 142^v; the Jews Question the Blind Man, fol. 419^v) or were in poor condition (the Mission of the Apostles, fol. 134; the Healing of the Paralytic, fol. 143^v). The robbery, therefore, was not the work of a fanatical vandal, who would more simply have burned the entire book, but of a devout if misguided Christian who was selecting images of Christ. One can only date the mutilation sometime before the last binding of the manuscript in 1703/1704, when paper patches were glued in to make up portions of text that had been lost in the robbery of miniatures. I would like to propose that the images were excerpted as precious souvenirs for distinguished visitors to the Armenian Patriarchate, perhaps in acknowledgement of donations. In the 17th and 18th centuries the Patriarchate saw intermittent periods of insolvency under severe Ottoman taxation; one patriarch Gregory »the chain-bearer« even resorted to the wearing of chains for four years to dramatize his pleas for donations¹³. Unfortunately none of the missing miniatures has ever reappeared, and Dickran Kouymjian has suggested privately that their collective loss may be a sign that the miniatures were collected all together, possibly in an album.

I am proposing, then, that this enormous painted encyclopedia of the life of Christ survived the Seljuk invasion of Anatolia intact. When Ibrahim Inal sacked Kars in 1054 it is evident that the book was not kept in the cathedral of the

12 Consult the reproductions in Der Nersessian, Kars 100-107.

13 Narkiss/Stone, *Armenian Art* 123.

Holy Apostles in the town below, which was looted, but in the citadel above which was secure from the Seljuks. We may propose then that when the royal family emigrated to Cappadocia in 1065 they took the book to Tsamandos. It is significant that the *katholikos* Grigor II Vkasaser, son of the great scholar Grigor Magistros, also took up residence there. Like his father, he too was a man of letters, for his name, Vkasaser, »Lover of martyrs«, refers to his work compiling and editing the lives of the Armenian martyrs. In other words the royal library and the scholars attached to it followed the king into exile. When Tsamandos fell to the Seljuks in the 1080s the manuscript somehow again survived.

The refined style of figure painting in the Gagik-Abas Gospel has been compared by Der Nersessian to the contemporary Byzantine lectionary, Athos Dionysiou 587. This might lead one to imagine that Constantinopolitan masters were imported to Kars, which is certainly possible. Byzantine artists were mobile and ready to accept commissions from a variety of patrons. But already in the 10th century very classicizing elements appear in the Queen Mlk'e Gospel and the Ejmiacin Gospel¹⁴. One simply has to accept the fact that the classicizing style in question is more extensive than Byzantium itself. Several different hands can be distinguished in the Gospel of Gagik-Abas, and I hope on this basis to be able eventually to formulate a hypothesis about the make-up of the workshop and the scriptorium.

The program of the manuscript displays an unusual independence from Constantinople; none of the surviving scenes, Der Nersessian herself remarked, follows the standard Byzantine iconography. I will analyze only one of the miniatures, the First Temptation of Christ on fol. 18, because of its exceptional iconography (fig. 6). The miniature follows immediately on the text of Mt 4:1-4. »Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights. And afterward he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, »If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread«. But he answered, »It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God«. The miniature is placed without any framing directly after the last verse. This is the way the Armenian system of intra-textual miniatures works; they are placed immediately after the verse they illustrate, whether in one column or two, unframed or more often framed (with ever-changing decorations). Christ has been cut out of the picture and Satan has been left behind surrounded by beasts.

This treatment the subject is unique in Christian art. The Temptations are usually illuminated by showing Christ and Satan by themselves in conversation¹⁵. The artist of the Gagik-Abas Gospel indeed shows the two in conversation

but he develops both figures, showing Christ trampling on the Serpent and Satan surrounded by the wild creatures of the world. Reading the beasts around Satan, one can identify from the top a wolf, bear, eagle, unicorn, elephant, lioness, leopard, and the lion. The unicorn is especially interesting, for his long sinewy neck and heavy horn distinguish him both from Islamic and Western unicorns. The composition may be related to ancient compositions of a master of the beasts, such as Horus or Orpheus, but here animals have a special purpose. They take an active role in the great conflict between Christ and Satan: the eagle pecks at Satan's eyes, and the other beasts, all save the lioness, turn to confront him. Satan, moreover, is represented twice in the miniature, once as the black and ugly fallen angel under attack by the beasts and again as the Serpent of Genesis. The knife used to rob the figure of Christ spared Christ's right foot which is trampling on the Serpent¹⁶.

The painting thus refers back to the fall of Man in the Garden of Paradise. In Gen 3:15, the Lord, upon discovering Adam's sin, says to Satan: »Cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go and dust shall you eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he [the woman's offspring] shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel«. Rather than represent literally a conversation between the two about Christ's hunger, the artist has chosen to show the Temptation as the cosmic contest between the Saviour and Satan. Born into Eve's family, Christ tramples on the Serpent and restores the primitive condition of Paradise in which the beasts were on terms of peace and friendship with mankind. This kind of exegesis I have labelled *synecdoche*, which is the rhetorical figure of the part for the whole, and it is a favourite strategy of Armenian exegetes. A single event in Christ's life is made to encapsulate the whole of his work of redemption¹⁷. The painting therefore shows a very serious re-thinking of the Biblical narrative. Whether the painters were themselves knowledgeable in such matters or were working closely with the studious clergy we cannot say.

The heavy losses in the Gospel of Gagik-Abas prevent us from following these arguments through the book in detail, and this is a great loss, considering the care with which the program was developed. But there are nine miniatures intact and seven more half preserved which I am analysing with interesting results. Moreover inspection of the entire manuscript has permitted identification of the subjects of all of the missing miniatures by their exact situation in the text. I have already published the complete list of the miniatures in my study of the Glajor Gospel¹⁸. This will offer a very useful tool in studying the wider meaning of the program.

14 On the 10th-century manuscripts see Mathews, *Bagratiid* 57-60.

15 Schiller, *Iconography I* 143-145.

16 The iconography of Christ trampling on serpent, dragon, or other beasts has a long history, but this miniature seems to be the only use of the theme with the Temptation. – Schiller, *Iconography III* 32-40.

17 Mathews/*Sanjian*, *Gospel* 81-85.

18 *Ibidem* tab. 8: Table of Armenian Gospel Programs.



Fig. 6 Jerusalem ms. 2556, fol. 18. Satan and the Beasts in the First Temptation of Christ. – (Drawing Th. F. Mathews).

In addition there is now a new and very promising contextual approach being opened up by the research of Theo van Lint, the Gulbenkian Chair of Armenian Studies at Oxford, whose invitation brought me to Oxford last year as a Visiting Professor under the sponsorship of the Leverhulme Trust. Van Lint, with Anna Sirinian, is preparing the critical edition and annotated translation of the letters of Grigor Magistros, the first instalment of which will appear in the forthcoming *Revue des Études Arméniennes*. Grigor Magistros was far and away the leading Armenian intellectual of the period and closely associated with King Gagik-Abas¹⁹. Born into the distinguished Pahlawuni family, his father was commander in chief for the forces of the Kingdom of Ani until his death in battle in 1021.

Grigor received the distinction of *magistros* from the Byzantine emperor Constantine Monomachus (1042-1055), who appointed him *doux*, or military commander of the province of Armenian Mesopotamia, where his family had extensive holdings in Taron. Familiar with Arabic, Persian, Syriac and Greek, he founded his own academy with a comprehensive curriculum. This was a unique enterprise, for it was a non-monastic, lay school. Besides his contacts with King Gagik-Abas, Grigor Magistros knew the Abbasid vizier Abu Nasr al-Manazi, whom he met in Constantinople searching for manuscripts, and he corresponded with an otherwise unknown Amir Ibrahim of mixed Armenian and Seljuk parentage. It is interesting that the Seljuk Conquest was preceded as well

19 On the career of Grigor Magistros see: Langlois, Grégoire Magistros 5-64. – Sanjian, Gregory Magistros 131-158.

as followed by intermarriages. Grigor Magistros' two letters to Amir Ibrahim are the starting point of van Lint's projected publication and they will shed important light on intellectual dialogue between Christianity and Islam on the eve of the Seljuk Conquest²⁰.

The Amir posed twelve questions concerning Christianity which Grigor Magistros attempted to answer. Many of the subjects under discussion involved events that are illustrated in the Gospel of Gagik-Abas. For example Ibrahim questioned signs of weakness in Christ, such as his prayer in Gethsemani, that the cup should pass from him. The program of the Gospel of Gagik-Abas includes an unparalleled seven miniatures devoted to this subject (fols. 118, 119, 208, 209^v, 210, 350, 353^v), of which one survives intact (118) plus a portion of another (353^v). Further, Ibrahim questioned the fidelity of the disciples' transmission of Christ's teaching, another subject of evident interest to the illuminators (The Sermon on the Mount, fol. 21^v; The Mission of the Apostles fol. 134^v). We await with great anticipation van Lint's completion of his project.

Besides the narrative scenes, the Eusebian canon tables of the Gospel of Gagik-Abas make significant innovations, for they are the earliest dated set of tables which eliminate the open arcades used in earlier manuscripts in favour of a rectangular field of decoration atop columns, which becomes standard thereafter. Only the second page (fol. 5^v) retains four open arches, though they do not correspond to columns in the tables underneath since the Eusebian Letter was placed here. This victory of decoration over the informational structure of the tables is the work of a very creative artist and must be ascribed to a particular Armenian interest in the abstract symbolic vocabulary of the tables, which assumed a mystical importance in Armenian theology²¹. This full rectangular field almost never appears in Byzantine art, and when it does it may be ascribed to Armenian precedents. Only six of the original ten pages survive; missing are the fifth and sixth pages, which would have had tables 3-4, and the ninth and tenth pages, which would have had tables 8-10. Since the first page is a recto the ten pages do not constitute the five double-page set that becomes canonical subsequently. Notable elements of decoration are the rainbow arch and the adorsed birds forming the capital on fol. 4.

The Gospel of Gagik-Abas of Kars was by no means a solitary masterpiece but part of a larger production of the Kars scriptorium. We have already argued that the portrait of Princess Marem is part of a second manuscript of similar

dimensions, which has not survived. More significant, a third manuscript of the same colossal dimensions survives intact, and may be evidence of the same scriptorium after its move to Tsamandos. This is the splendid Trebizond Gospel, ms. 1400/08 in the San Lazzaro Library in Venice²². The unusual dimensions may indicate a workshop connection, as if the size were meant as a signature of the royal workshop. A textual connection was alleged 40 years ago, though this now appears untenable. Norayr Bogharian, the librarian of the St James collection in Jerusalem, proposed that the Venice manuscript was a copy of the Gospel of Gagik-Abas²³. According to Bogharian, a colophon of 1157 mentions the work of an earlier scribe named Grigor Morghaneci who copied from a model in the treasury of King Gagik-Abas under the direction of the Catholikos Grigor V kayaser (1066-1105). This is good evidence of the continued activity of the workshop in exile. But Bogharian proposed that the model referred to was J2556 and that the manuscript produced was the Trebizond Gospel, which would give us a precise place and date for this manuscript. But unhappily Bogharian failed to check the text itself of J2556 in his own collection. The critical passages are four, whose place in the Gospels was disputed already in the 2nd century²⁴. These passages are found in the Trebizond Gospel and cited by Janashian as proof of the antiquity of that manuscript: the resurrection narrative in Mk 16:9-20; the comforting angel of Gethsemane in Lk 22:43-44; the angel of Bethesda in Jn 5:4; and the adulterous woman in Jn 7:53-8:11²⁵. But in fact these passages are all missing in the Gospel of Gagik-Abas as can be confirmed by consulting fols. 222, 353^v, 392^v and 410, though their presence in the Trebizond Gospel is confirmed by Janashian²⁶. The evidence of the colophon of 1157 must therefore be re-interpreted to refer to another manuscript from the »treasury of Gagik-Abas«, establishing the serious work of textual criticism taking place in Tsamandos, which may have provided the climate in which the Trebizond Gospel was composed.

Stylistic similarities linking the Trebizond with the Gospel of Gagik-Abas have been remarked but never systematically pursued. We may set aside the Evangelist portraits, since they are entirely missing from J2556, and focus briefly on the narrative illustrations and the decoration of the canon tables. In the first place, Trebizond does not use the intra-textual system of Gagik-Abas but a prefatory system, which arranges the narrative material in a set of full-page illustrations of the festival scenes at the start of the book, with the result that none of the Trebizond scenes is identical with the Gagik-Abas scenes²⁷.

20 The Letters of Grigor Magistros were published (in Armenian) by K. Kostanec' – I thank Theo van Lint for sharing his description of this project.

21 On the theological interpretation of the canon tables see Mathews/Sanjian, Gospel 169-176 with translations by J. R. Russell of the two most important interpretations of Step'anos Siwnec'i and Nerses Klayec'i: Ibidem 206-211.

22 Janashian, Miniature 23-27. – Der Nersessian, Armenian Art 114, supposes the manuscript came from Ani in the middle of the 11th century. Because of its un-dated status the manuscript does not figure in Dickran Kouymjian formal catalogue, but in a note apart he remarks that the manuscript is »usually dated to the tenth or early eleventh century«: Kouymjian/Stone, Album 53.

23 I am indebted to Theo van Lint for reading the article of Bogharian (Bogharian, Grigor) for me. Narkiss/Stone noted the article but did not pursue its consequences in Narkiss/Stone, Armenian Art 168 no. 35.

24 Metzger, The Text.

25 Janashian, Miniature 23.

26 Ibidem.

27 The prefatory miniatures are now bound separately from the text and their order has been scrambled.



Fig. 7 Jerusalem ms. 2556, fol. 132. The women at the tomb. – (Photo courtesy of the Armenian Patriarchate of St James).

In style, moreover, the narrative paintings are very different, and much of this is due to the difference in scale between intra-textual and full-page picture format. The figures in the Gagik-Abas book are light, spindly figures of a »miniature« character, with little muscle or substance to them, the arms and legs often attached to the torso with little organic sense (fig. 7). The figures of the Trebizond Gospel are more monumental: the Christ of the Baptism is an athletic nude, shown in contrapposto with a well-articulated chest; the angel of the Annunciation is full of vigour and movement; Joseph in the Presentation moves with considerable grace, crossing his legs as he approaches the altar. The coloration is also very different, brighter and harsher in the Gagik-Abas, subtler and more modulated in the Trebizond. Pigment analysis demonstrates a sufficiently different palette to posit different workshops. The Gagik-Abas has a magenta of alizarin/madder and an organic brown not found in the Trebizond ms. while the latter has an indigo blue and an organic green not in the former²⁸. The Trebizond artist layers his colours, giving a richness to the surfaces, and he prefers pastel shades of mauve, light blue, and light green. One might almost suppose that the artists in Tsamandos came from a tradition of icon or mural painting. The Greek titles in the paintings may be seen as a reflection of their background.

The decoration of the Canon Tables presents another class of evidence. We have already remarked the decisive step in the transition from open arcades to a rectangular field in Canon Tables of the Gospel of Gagik-Abas. The Canon Tables of Trebizond take another step toward regularizing the set. As in J2556 only six of the ten pages survive (missing are the first and second pages with the Eusebian Letter and the seventh and eighth pages from the end of canon 5 to the beginning of canon 9). The surviving tables use a uniform design of

three columns supporting a rectangular headpiece containing a tympanum arch of ever changing decoration. Especially worthy of note are the single and double rainbows of the third and tenth pages (Janashian XII and XVII) and the arched bird-inhabited scrolls of the fourth to sixth pages (Janashian XIII-XV). Amidst this diversity of patterns it is striking that the Canon Seven of the Trebizond Gospel (Janashian XVI) is identical with Canon Seven of the Gagik-Abas Gospel on fol. 8 (fig. 8). The tympanum arch is decorated with three bands in the same sequence, two with mosaic crosses flanking one with flowers; beneath the arch one observes the same fan paneling in eight sections; and the similarities continue in the horizontal *trabeation* below, and in the floral decorations in the margins on three sides. Whether this indicates the same artist at work in the two mss. is hard to say. The layout proportions are different (taller in Gagik-Abas) and the colouring shifts to blues and greens in the Trebizond Gospel.

There were other manuscripts in this Kars-Tsamandos group. Tatiana Izmailova assembled three interesting fragments that were preserved, like the portrait of Princess Marem, in the bindings of later manuscripts²⁹. All of these have recently been made available to the public in Dickran Kouymjian's wonderful website of the Armenian Studies Program of California State University Fresno. They are Erevan mss. 963, 4435, and 10,147. The fragment in ms. 4435, presents the Entry into Jerusalem, with Christ riding toward the welcoming crowd in the gate of the city on the right while disciples follow behind. The composition of the disciples ranked in files is rather banal, but the soft blue of the sky and the pale pink of the city walls are signs of sophisticated painting. According to Der Nersessian the placement of the scene at the bottom of the page indicates that it was not a full-page preface miniature but an intra-textual miniature,

²⁸ See the tables by Orna, *The Making* 135-38.

²⁹ Izmailova, *Armienskaja Miniatura* 208-224.

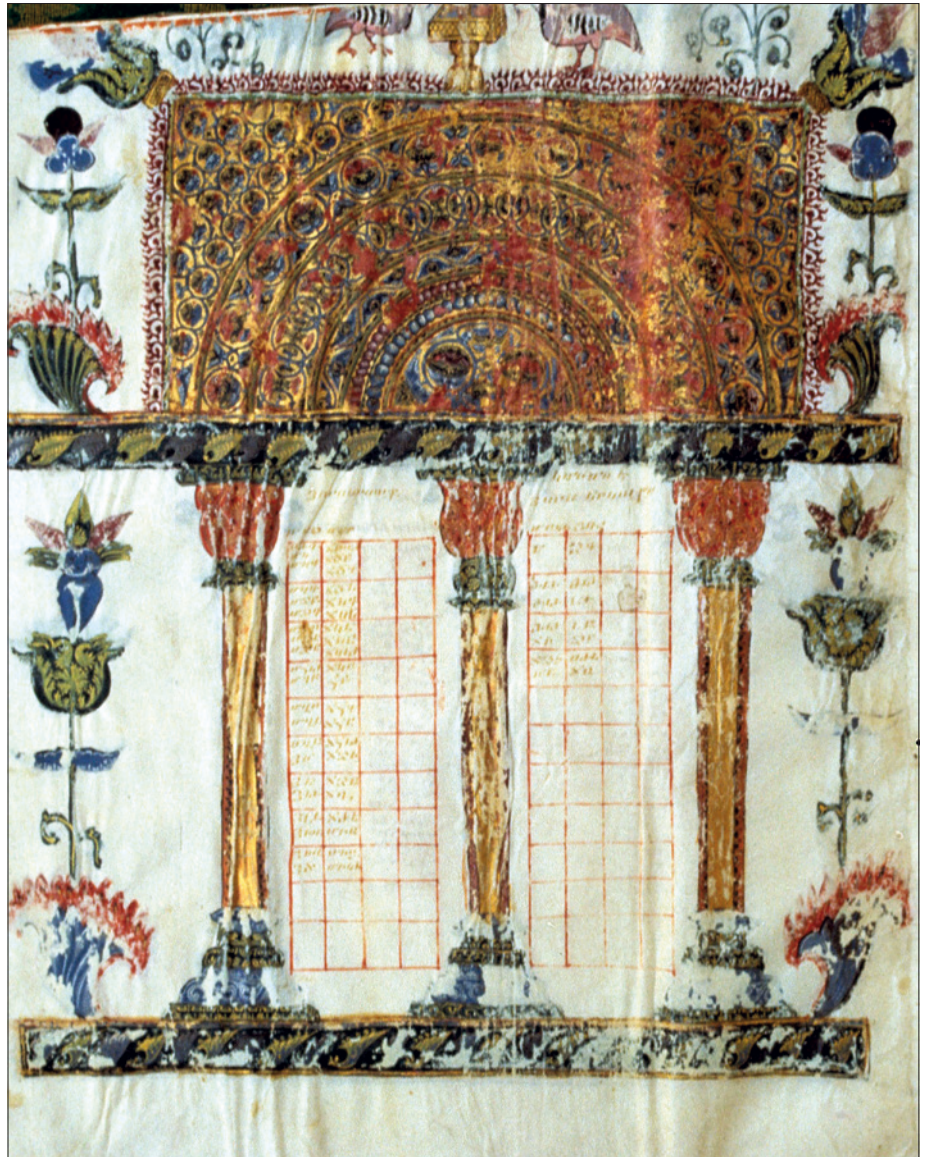


Fig. 8 Jerusalem ms. 2556, fol. 8. Canon Seven. – (Photo courtesy of the Armenian Patriarchate of St James).

on the pattern of the narrative miniatures of the Gospel of Gagik-Abas³⁰. In ms. 963 two fragments survive, one of which is an evangelist portrait of 33 cm × 25 cm. that Izmailova identifies as St Luke, within a lovely, ornate frame. The other fragment is a rectangular heading enclosing a horseshoe arch containing birds and beasts in conflict, which compares well with the canon table headings in the Gagik-Abas Gospel. Still another fragment is in ms. 10147, the top half of an evangelist portrait. Since all the evangelists are missing from the Gagik-Abas Gospel the Izmailova fragments help to fill out a larger picture of the scriptorium.

What are the Armenians doing painting lovely manuscripts in Tsamandos while the enemy ravaged the entire country? Does this sound like the nonchalance of Nero playing his violin while Rome burned? This raises the question of the use of these religious manuscripts. Books are one of the accessories

of stable civilized life, in which context modern scholarship constantly classes illuminated books as luxury items. Art historians love the adjective «luxurious» to describe the gilded pages of medieval books. But that is decidedly not the way they were regarded by their makers. Illuminated Gospels were not a frivolous extra, nor were they made for «display», a term American art historians seem to borrow from the world of political advertising. For Armenians Gospels belonged to the religious sphere not the political sphere, and the making of a fine, illuminated Gospel fulfilled a religious imperative, a pressing obligation, a genuine Christian duty. The dedicatory pages of Armenian manuscripts speak of their being offered in fulfilment of one's duty to acknowledge God's blessings, the occasions being events like coronation, marriage, delivery from prison³¹. Thus the commissioning of the mss. belongs to the religious tradition of «votive offerings», which motivated

30 Der Nersessian, Kars 98.

31 Mathews, Cilicie 258-260. – Also see: Rapti, Donateurs.

the commissioning of countless works of art from ancient Greek sculptures to Byzantine icons³². No matter how pressed the »pious and powerful« Marem felt by terrifying events that closed in around her, she had to fulfil her religious obligation by offering thanks. Possibly the splendid Trebizond Gospel was her thank offering for her appointment as *kuropalatissa*.

The fate of the Kars-Tsamandos group of manuscripts after the Seljuk Conquest can be followed only in spots. After the fall of Tsamandos the Gospel of Trebizond remained in Anatolia, in Armenian possession, as witnessed by a sequence of pious inscriptions: of a »Sire Baron« of the Crusader period (fol. 298); of someone named Evača who purchased the manuscript in 1425 (fols. 191^v and 244); and by priests Yohannes and Sargis sometime later (fol. 492^v). In 1803 it was in Trebizond when it was found by Father Ignazio Papazean. The Gagik-Abas Gospel, having survived the fall of Kars survived also the fall of Tsamandos, intact. Then it must have been brought over the Taurus Mountains either to Sis, the capital of the emerging Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, or to Hromkla, the new patriarchal residence. Firm evidence of its presence in Cilicia in the 13th century is found in an unpublished pen drawing in the margin of fol. 340. At Lk 20:12 a wispy young man holding an empty pot represents the third servant whom the lord sent to claim the fruit of the vineyard from his tenants. This is a most unusual parable to illustrate, the mistreatment of the servant being a forecast of the passion of Christ. The sketch witnesses the interest the manuscript continued to excite both for interpreters and illuminators. It is signed in very small letters by »Sargis«, as kindly read for me by Ioanna Rapti; this may possibly be Sargis the deacon, scribe and painter active in Hromkla in the mid-13th century³³. After the fall of Sis to the Mamluks in 1375 we have no further evidence of its circumstances until its eventual donation to the cathedral of St James in Jerusalem. The Gospel, of which Princess Marem's portrait is a fragment, was in ruins by the time the portrait fragment was stitched in the binding of another manuscript for safe-keeping, like the Erevan fragments discussed by Izmailova. The manuscripts of Kars-Tsamandos continued to be studied, copied, and treasured.

32 Mathews, Early Icons 37-55.

33 Der Nersessian, Cilicia I 47. 51.

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Zusammenfassung / Abstract / Résumé

Die Kars-Tsamandos-Gruppe armenischer illuminierter Handschriften des 11. Jahrhunderts

Das Evangeliar König Gagik-Abas von Kars, St James 2556, und einige andere illuminierte armenische Handschriften (Kars-Tsamandos-Gruppe) des 11. Jahrhunderts waren Teil einer umfangreichen Produktion des Kars-Skriptoriums. Dieser Artikel behandelt insbesondere die Frage, was diese Bücher über das Leben in Anatolien während der turbulenten Dekaden der seldschukischen Eroberung sagen.

The Kars-Tsamandos Group of Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts of the 11th Century

The Gospel of King Gagik-Abas of Kars, St James 2556, and some other illuminated Armenian Manuscripts (Kars-Tsamandos Group) of the 11th century, were part of a large production of the Kars scriptorium. This article deals mainly with the question what these books say about life in Anatolia during the turbulent decades of the Seljuk Conquest.

Le groupe de manuscrits arméniens enluminés de Kars-Tsamandos du 11^e siècle

L'évangélaire du roi Gaguik-Abbas II de Kars (St James 2556), et quelques autres manuscrits arméniens enluminés du 11^e siècle (groupe de Kars-Tsamandos), faisaient partie d'une grande production du scriptorium de Kars. Cet article aborde essentiellement la question du témoignage de ces écrits sur la vie en Anatolie durant les décades turbulentes de la conquête seldjoukide.

Traduction: Y. Gautier