

THE MELITENE GROUP OF
ARMENIAN MINIATURE PAINTING
IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

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The manuscripts under discussion reflect the artistic tradition to the west of the Armenian heartland: the areas on the eastern edges of Cappadocia. Armenians moved into the regions around Sebastia/Sivas, Caesarea/Kesaria/Kayseri, Melitene/Malatia, and farther to the south in the Black Mountains just north of Cilicia after the Byzantine re-conquest of these areas from the Arabs during the second half of the tenth century, the campaigns often being led by generals of Armenian origin. The establishment of the Artsruni king of Vaspurakan, Senekerim, in lands around Sebastia in 1022 reinforced the Armenian character of the entire area, with nominal authority as far west as Caesarea and south to Melitene. This presence was strengthened with resettlement of Armenians from Ani and Kars from 1045 to 1065.¹

Close contacts between Armenian monastic clergy in the eastern sector of Cappadocia with the centuries-old Byzantine artistic tradition of Cappadocian orthodoxy had a perceptible effect on Armenian manuscript illumination.

A group of sixteen illustrated Armenian manuscripts displaying a monastic or provincial style are virtually the only artistic or cultural remains originating from this entire area prior to

¹ All the details are found in the massive two volume work, Gérard Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens entre Grecs, Musulmans et Croisés: Étude sur les pouvoirs arméniens dans le Proche-Orient méditerranéen (1068-1150)* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2003), especially vol. 1, *Aux origines de l'état cilicien: Philarète et les premiers roubéniens*.

the thirteenth century.² They are all Gospel manuscripts and share a number of characteristics. Nine of them bear dates through preserved colophons, but only two are securely attributed to a specific locality. All except one of them date or are attributable to the eleventh century and collectively bear the name of Melitene. One of the original manuscripts of this set was definitely copied in Melitene, thus the name; the others share such close stylistic and especially iconographic elements with it that some specialists attribute them to the same school of artists and even suggest that they were copied in the same scriptorium, while others believe they were from both Sebastia and Melitene.³ To these four can be added a little known fifth Gospel fragment.

All the manuscripts in this group were discussed in a conference in Spoleto, Italy, concentrating in that study on only three of their features: 1) the variant of the Gospel text found in each, 2) the physical layout of the decorated Eusebian apparatus, including the canon tables, and 3) the portraits of the Evangelists.⁴ In a number of earlier studies the peculiar layout and illumination of these works were also presented.⁵ Tatiana Izmail-

² These are listed in Dickran Kouymjian, *Index of Armenian Art (IAA)*, fascicle 2: *Illuminated Armenian Manuscripts of the 11th Century, Preliminary Report and Checklist* (Fresno: Armenian Studies Program, 1979). Eleventh century manuscripts are discussed in general terms by Dickran Kouymjian, "The Evolution of Armenian Gospel Illumination: The Formative Period (9th-11th Centuries)," in *Armenia and the Bible*, ed. Christoph Burchard (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), pp. 138-41.

³ Tatiana Izmailova believed strongly in two groups, Sebastia and Melitene, whereas both Sirarpie Der Nersessian and Haïg Berbérian considered them all from the Melitene area. See a discussion with relevant bibliography in Tatiana Izmailova, "L'Iconographie du cycle des fêtes d'un groupe de codex arméniens d'Asie Mineure," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s. 4 (1967): 125.

⁴ Dickran Kouymjian, "Armenian Manuscript Illumination in the Formative Period: Text Groups, Eusebian Apparatus, Evangelists' Portraits," *Acts of the 43rd Annual Conference of the Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* (Spoleto: Presso la sede del Centro, 1996), pp. 401-60, with 20 plates.

⁵ Dickran Kouymjian, "The *Scaenae Frons* in Armenian Art: The Classical Tradition in the East," *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, ed. Anthony Bryer (Birmingham, England, 1981), pp. 155-71; Dickran Kouymjian, "The Classical Tradition in Armenian Art," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s. 15 (1981): 331-56; Dickran Kouymjian, "Armenian Gospel Illumination and the Classical Tradition," *Text and Context: Studies in the Armenian New Testament, Papers Presented to the Conference on the Armenian New Testament, May 22-28, 1992*, eds. Shahe Ajamian and Michael E. Stone (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), pp. 59-73.

ova carried out the most detailed research on the iconography of these Gospels.⁶ Izmailova and Sirarpie Der Nersessian identified nine manuscripts in this group, and Bezalel Narkiss added a tenth.⁷ Six more manuscripts or fragments have been added to the list.⁸

The artists, most certainly monks with little instruction in drawing or painting, were in most cases also the scribes who copied the Gospel texts. Taken together these works provide the largest repertory of Armenian manuscript painting until the abundant production in Cilicia in the second half of the thirteenth century. Indisputably they preserve an art going back to models from the earliest years of Christian image making, mixed together with elements from the Byzantine tradition of the immediate post-iconoclastic period of the ninth and tenth centuries, and some borrowing from Cappadocia wall painting. Yet, they retain strong oriental, as opposed to naturalistic Hellenistic, features. They conserve an older tradition kept alive in remote monasteries little affected by high Byzantine art so much the fashion in Armenian noble circles of the tenth and eleventh centuries (responsible for another distinct group of more refined eleventh century Armenian Gospels not included in this discussion). The miniatures are not the beautiful ones illustrating albums of Armenian art, though their naïve freshness has a certain charm.

Characteristics of Eleventh-Century Monastic Miniatures

Eleventh-century Armenian miniatures fall into two groups: 1) sumptuous or royal Gospels, or 2) provincial or monastic ones. The former group, including the Trebizond Gospel (early elev-

⁶ Izmailova, "L'Iconographie du cycle des fêtes," 125-66.

⁷ Bezalel Narkiss and Michael Stone, *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem* (New Rochelle: Caratzis, 1979), p. 168n39.

⁸ M4435 (henceforth, M = Erevan, Matenadaran, J = Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate) a fly leaf with the Entry into Jerusalem; M6202 text of 909 but with an added folio bearing the Nativity; J2562 of the eleventh century with canon tables and a tempietto. An unpublished Gospel with decorated fly leaves from the village of Areg with three scenes. A Gospel of 974 still in the village of Tsghrut with a cycle of three scenes, Eusebian letter, canon tables, Evangelists' portraits, and the Virgin and Child; M10780, the Vehapar Gospel.

enth century) and Adrianople Gospel of 1007, both now in the Mekhitarist Library, Venice, use excellent parchment, fine pigments, gold leafing, and above all a very painterly, naturalistic classicizing style. An Armenian king and a high dignitary commissioned at least two of these elegant manuscripts.⁹ The second group, including the Gospel of 1064 in Jerusalem and all those of the “Melitene” group employ materials of lesser quality, with the total absence of gold leafing, the lack of any backgrounds in narrative scenes (the plain parchment is left unpainted), and with stereotyped figures, are summarily, naively, or sometimes crudely executed with very reduced naturalism, often with a total disregard for either actual human shapes or the modeling of facial expressions. Canon tables (Fig. 1) are characterized by arches that are more decorative than architectural. Finally, the feature common to every narrative scene and Evangelist portrait of the provincial series is their frieze-like painting (Fig. 2) across the height of the page, requiring a ninety-degree rotation of the book by the reader in order for the miniature to be seen correctly; only the canon arcades are painted upright on the page. On the contrary, all miniatures of the sumptuous Gospels are painted normally in harmony with the text. No satisfactory explanation has yet been offered for this phenomenon. The earliest manuscript to display miniatures rendered at right angles to the text is the Gospel dated 974 still kept in Tsghrut village in the Akhaltskha (historic Javakhk) district of Georgia.¹⁰ The practice of this kind of frieze painting virtually dies out after the eleventh century even though a few archaic examples are known from later centuries.

The “Melitene” Group

The “Melitene” group takes its name from one Gospel, M3784 of 1057, copied by the priest Tovmas in the city of Melitene and probably illustrated by him.¹¹ The miniatures, for instance the

⁹ The Gagik of Kars Gospel (J2556) and the Adrianople Gospel.

¹⁰ See Nikolay Kotanjyan, *Tsghruti Avetarane 974 t.* [The Tsghrut Gospel 974] (Erevan: Anahit, 2006), text in Armenian, Russian, and French, with all illustrations in color. See also Claude Mutafian, *Arménie: La magie de l’écrit* (Paris: Somogy, 2007), “Un village et son manuscrit,” pp. 284-85.

¹¹ Garegin Hovsepian, *Hishatakarank dzeragrats*, vol. 1: *V darits minchev 1250 t.* [Colophons of Manuscripts: From the Fifth Century to 1250] (Antelias:

Presentation in the Temple and Baptism (Fig. 3), are executed across the height of the page in fine line drawings against the blank parchment and colored with a pastel pink wash resembling watercolor augmented by an occasional touch of faded yellow. Unfortunately, most of the illustrations of this manuscript and the following one are of poor quality. Though this 1057 manuscript is the latest in date of the group to be discussed, Izmailova thought it displayed the most archaic elements. She used it as a prototype. An earlier manuscript, Jerusalem 3524 of 1041, place unknown but in Byzantine territory, copied by the priest Samvel (Fig. 5), has more vivid colors with red and green predominating, as in the Ascension.¹² The two complete manuscripts have exactly the same fifteen scenes of the life of Christ cycle distributed on ten pages, five with two scenes shown side by side, five with a single episode. The following is the list of the subjects as they are arranged on the page: Annunciation and Visitation together, Nativity, Presentation in the Temple and Baptism together, Transfiguration and Raising of Lazarus together, Entry into Jerusalem, Last Supper, Betrayal, Crucifixion and Descent from the Cross together, Entombment and Harrowing of Hell together, Ascension, followed by the four Evangelists standing.¹³

Two other manuscripts in the Matenadaran, Erevan, with incomplete cycles have a strong affinity to them: M3723 of 1045 preserves four miniatures on three pages—Entry into Jerusalem,

Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1951), no. 107, cols. 235-36. For a discussion of opinions on the localization of four of the manuscripts, see Izmailova, "L'Iconographie du cycle des fêtes," p. 124. It is clear from the colophon that the city of Melitene was under the protection/patronage of St. Gregory.

¹² Hovsepian, *Hishatakarank dzeragrats*, no. 100, cols. 223-34; Artashes Matvosyan, *Hayeren dzeragreri hishatakaranner, V-XII darer* [Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, Vth-XIIth Centuries] (Erevan: Matenadaran, 1988), no. 105, pp. 86-87; see also Narkiss and Stone, *Armenian art Treasures of Jerusalem*, p. 148. Stone reports that on the same folio as the scribe's colophon (fol. 337) is an undated one of rebinding by Grigor of Khrich, who gives the place as Yamus in Melitene, but Hovsepian says that the rebinding colophon is of 1600. Izmailova speculated that the manuscript was copied in Sebastia, whereas, as mentioned above, both Der Nersessian and Berbérian opted for Melitene.

¹³ The entire series of both the manuscripts of 1041 and 1057 are described and illustrated in Dickran Kouymjian, *Index of Armenian Art*, fascicle 2 (Fresno: Armenian Studies Program, 1979), available in a relational database at http://armenianstudies.csufresno.edu/iaa_miniatures/index.htm.

Last Supper, Entombment and Harrowing of Hell (Fig. 6), plus the four Evangelists—respecting exactly the division of the two complete manuscripts except that since the portrait of the Evangelists is on the back of the page with the Harrowing of Hell, the artist ended the cycle leaving out the Ascension.¹⁴ The pages have been torn and patched making it difficult at times to discern all the elements. The other undated manuscript, M974, preserves eight scenes on five folios—Presentation and Baptism (Fig. 4), Transfiguration and Raising of Lazarus, Betrayal, Crucifixion alone, Entombment and Harrowing of Hell—terminating again with the Evangelists on the back of the Harrowing of Hell, thus revealing deviations from the prototype: no Descent from the Cross (affording the Crucifixion an entire page), and no Ascension, thereby forming a subgroup with the Gospel of 1045.¹⁵ Curiously, the miniatures of M974 are arranged in reverse order suggesting that somewhere along the line of transmission there was a Syrian influence, since Syriac like Arabic and Hebrew is written from right to left and illustrations and text start at what would be considered the back of the manuscript and move forward. Its miniatures are more appealing than the others discussed so far. The facial features, with very wide-open eyes, prefigure a type that becomes common in Vaspurakan at the very end of the thirteenth century and after.

The primary feature uniting these manuscripts beside the horizontal orientation of their miniatures, their reduced classical style, and the less skillful painting is the similarity of their iconography, that is, the elements making up each of the scenes in the cycle.¹⁶

¹⁴ Kouymjian, *Index of Armenian Art*, fascicle 2, no. 7 at http://armenianstudies.csufresno.edu/iaa_miniatures/manuscript.aspx?ms=M3723G.

¹⁵ Kouymjian, *Index of Armenian Art*, fascicle 2, no. 19 at http://armenianstudies.csufresno.edu/iaa_miniatures/manuscript.aspx?ms=Cughrut.

¹⁶ Earlier bibliographies include Izmailova, "L'Iconographie du cycle des fêtes," *passim*; Tatiana Izmailova, "Localisation d'un groupe de manuscrits arméniens enluminés du XIe siècle d'après leurs colophons," *Lraber* (1966), no. 9, pp. 280ff; Tatiana Izmailova, "Le tétraévangile illustré arménien de 1038 (Maténadaran n° 6201)," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s. 7 (1970): 203-40; Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *Armenian Manuscripts in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery, 1963), pp. 1-6; Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *Armenian Manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery* (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1973), pp. 1-5; Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *L'Art arménien* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1977), pp. 117-22; Narkiss and Stone, *Armenian Art Treasures*, pp. 32-40.

Finally, there is an undated fragment of a Gospel still kept in the Village of Areg, near Talin, with three narrative scenes on pages cut in half and used as guard sheets in a later manuscript. Madame Izmailova wrote about the manuscript in a letter of 1980, and somewhat later, in 1987, Zaven Sargsyan, Director of the Paradjanov Museum, provided slides of the three pages. The iconography of the scenes—Entry into Jerusalem, Last Supper, Betrayal—each occupying a separate sheet, is much closer to the manuscript of 1041 than to that of 1057.¹⁷

Because the miniatures preserved in the Areg Gospel remain unpublished, emphasis will be placed on them and their relationship to the other manuscripts of the core “Melitene” group, at the same time connecting these through a few comparative illustrations to the other paintings of the larger eleventh-century monastic series. The Areg fragment and its situation within the Melitene codices allow us to move beyond the excellent analysis of Izmailova.

The short segment of scenes to be examined, all from the latter part of the life of Christ cycle, begins with the Entry into Jerusalem. In the earliest manuscript, that of 1041 (Fig. 7), Christ mounted on the donkey moves directly toward the walled city of Jerusalem followed by two of his disciples and preceded by another. Two youths are laying down the symbolic red carpet in the form of garments directly in front of a palm tree with a figure climbing up the trunk and another, identified by Izmailova as a naked goddess, standing on its branches.¹⁸ To the right before what is surely one of the gates of Jerusalem is a group of Jews, one with his hand out and a woman to the right holding a child against her shoulder. The triangular form seemingly floating in the sky is an overhead view of the Holy City with its crenellated walls. The Areg Gospel has the closest affinity to the Jerusalem manuscript of 1041, as evident by the two youths spreading garments, a branch of the tree with a hand holding what appears to be a flower, followed to the right by the Jews with the leader

¹⁷ In her long personal letter in April 1980, Tatiana Izmailova offered a number of important corrections and additions to my *Index of Armenian Art*, fascicle 2. The Areg Village fragments are not included in the *Index*, which was published the year before I was made aware of the fragment.

¹⁸ Izmailova, “L’Iconographie du cycle des fêtes,” p. 143n79, Fig. 19; idem, *Armianskaia miniatiura XI veka* [Armenian Miniatures of the XIth Century] (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1979), pp. 91-97.

clearly holding up a palm branch and the woman shouldering her child. The gate is simpler, but the aerial representation of Jerusalem with a recognizable rendering of the church of the Holy Sepulcher is much better drawn and painted as are all the scenes of this manuscript. Furthermore, at the very top of the diamond shaped Jerusalem are two Armenian letters Em (Եմ) with an abbreviation sign above for E[rusaghe]m. These elements are also found in the Gospel of 1045 (Fig. 9), with the naked goddess and three apostles, but Jerusalem is shown differently, with the aerial view gone. In the 1057 (Fig. 10), only the two apostles in the rear are represented, and like the 1045 Gospel there is no second individual climbing the lower part of the tree. The Jews are within the city looking out. Note the difference (Fig. 11), with a miniature from the monastic group but not in the Melitene set, the contemporary Gospel of 1038, copied it is believed in Taron, itself dependent on the Tsghrut Gospel (Fig. 12) of 974.¹⁹

The Last Supper of the Gospel of 1041 (Fig. 13) shows Christ reclining to the left of a semi-circular table with only eleven Apostles.²⁰ In the center is a dish with a large fish and, before the Apostles, round loaves incised with crosses. To the back and above is the wall of the upper chamber with pointed crenellations, though to the left these look more like a wavy band. Judas is not differentiated from the other disciples. The Areg fragment (Fig. 14) is once again much clearer with Judas reaching for the food, following the scriptural passage, and further identified with a legend above his head: "It is Judas." Next to him at the end appears Peter. The back wall is represented by a wavy scroll above a Greek key pattern. The table has a border on the near side with loaves also placed along it; the blue curtain draped in front of the table is more naturally rendered than in the other examples. The wall in the 1045 manuscript (Fig. 15) is reduced to a black line, though much of the rest is the same as in the two previous examples including the saltcellars on each side

¹⁹ For J3624, see Izmailova, *Armianskaia miniatiura XI veka*, p. 54, Fig. 26. For the manuscript of 1038, see Kotanjyan, *Tsghruti Avetarane*, p. 80, Fig. 7.

²⁰ In scenes of the Last Supper from twelfth to fourteenth century manuscripts attributed to Karabagh, the eleven Apostles are regularly found around the table (M6319, fol. 1v), at times with Judas off to the side (M316, fol. 11). See Dickran Kouymjian, "The Art of Miniature Painting," in Dickran Kouymjian and Claude Mutafian, eds., *Artsakh. Garden of Armenian Arts and Traditions* (Paris: Somogy, 2011), respectively, p. 129, Fig. 20 and p. 111, Fig. 7.

of the fish. As in the codex of 1041, Judas is not identified; while at the far right Peter seems to be represented. Inscriptions identify Christ, the Apostles, the table, and the fish. The Melitene Gospel of 1057 (Fig. 16) differs in several respects: the wall in back has disappeared; Judas is at the end of the table, identified and reaching for the food; the front edge of the table is lacking. On the other hand, Christ gestures with his right hand, probably indicating speech rather than benediction in this instance, and holds a scroll in his left as in the Gospel of 1041. The radical iconographic differences of the Gospel of 1038 (Fig. 18) reinforce the dissimilarity between other eleventh-century provincial manuscripts and the Melitene group.

The Betrayal (Fig. 19) of the Jerusalem Gospel has a very formal arrangement: a horizontal line of men in two or more rows, though only the legs and feet of the first row are shown. In the background, the spears, axes, and torches of the soldiers in the garden of Gethsemane are rhythmically placed. Christ and Judas are in the center in a very vague embrace without a kiss. Two rows of spikes serve as the foreground. The Areg Gospel (Fig. 20), this time showing the left part of the miniature, again presents much clearer figures, with the pants or leggings and boots under the short tunics well drawn; the lower frame of the miniature serves as a very sturdy ground line. The Gospel of 1045 is missing this scene, but it appears in the undated manuscript, M974 (Fig. 22), in a variant form. The most striking difference is the inclusion to the right in a separate inset of Peter cutting off the ear of a servant. The people are clearly separated into two groups, and they are identified as the Jews on the left and the soldiers on the right, all wearing long tunics. The facial types are clearly different and bright eyed, though the costumes of alternating green and white are the same as in the Areg Gospel. The manuscript of 1057 (Fig. 21) brings Christ and Judas together in the center foreground before the crowd. The figures, except for Christ and Judas and a soldier at the left holding a spear, appear armless. The tunics resemble those of 1041 but are much less natural than in the Areg example or M974. One can note the difference in another manuscript outside this core group, the undated Vehapar Gospel of the same first half of the eleventh century.²¹

²¹ The scene, as most of the miniatures scattered in the text, is presented verti-

There is no doubt that the Areg Gospel belongs to the Melitene group, with closest affinities to the earliest examples of 1041 and 1045. Were these five manuscripts all from the same scriptorium in Melitene? Did the artist of the Areg Gospel use the same older models as the others of the group? Does Areg predate them and could it have been the model for the miniatures of 1041 and 1045? Such questions are almost impossible to answer. Among the five manuscripts, it is artistically the most skillful and follows its model or models with the greatest understanding. Several instances have already been mentioned. Only in the Areg Gospel's Entry into Jerusalem (Fig. 8) is there a reasonably clear depiction of the Holy Sepulcher. In that same miniature fragment, the goddess in the tree with only her left hand visible is shown holding a flower, a detail that is very blurred in the other versions. The examples from antique art, cited by Izmailova in her study of this feature, show a flower in each hand of the goddess as in a Phoenician gold ornament from the second millennium B.C. or the goddess Daphnis from the fifth century.²² The clarity of the glances of the disciples (Fig. 14) in the Last Supper, with Judas distinctly rendered and Peter to his left, point to a very old tradition as does the motif on the wall. That same realism is evident (Fig. 20) in the artist's handling of the garments in the Betrayal.

It is not possible to repeat all the careful iconographic and stylistic analyses of Izmailova leading her to conclude that though the proximity of Melitene to Cappadocia as well as the use of the frieze technique of fresco painting would suggest a strong borrowing from the wall paintings in the rock-cut churches of that Greek-speaking region, in fact the Cappadocian influence on these works is much less palpable than an older paleo-Christian tradition or a late iconoclastic and immediate post-iconoclastic one from manuscript painting. For instance, the similarity of the Last Supper (Fig. 17) is striking in the Melitene manuscripts when compared with that in the Byzantine Khludov

cally within a two column text, with a limited number of figures in three groups: two disciples to the left, Christ and Judas in the center with Peter cutting off the ear of one of the three centurions to the right. See Artashes Matevosyan and Tatiana Izmailova, *Vazgen Vehapari Avetarane* [The Gospel of the Catholicos Vazgen], in Armenian with titles also in English and Russian, a facsimile edition with short text (Erevan: Nairi, 2000), fol. 70.

²² Izmailova, *Armianskaia miniatiura XI veka*, p. 96, Figs. 49-50.

Psalter of the first half of the ninth century.²³

As stated, the Melitene group contains the oldest preserved long cycle of full-page miniatures of the life of Christ in Armenian art. The even fuller cycles of over 60 miniatures in the Vehapar Gospel and the originally more than 150 in the King Gagik of Kars Gospel, both contemporary to the Melitene group, derive from different traditions.²⁴ Furthermore, the scenes are smaller vignettes dispersed throughout the text of those manuscripts. Their iconographic schema is also at variance one to the other, and to the Melitene group.

Conclusion

Though the questions posed above remain essentially unanswered, even more have to be asked. Where does one look for the source of the Melitene illuminations? If the earlier models were works of Armenian creation, now lost, where would they have been created? Were these models brought with the new immigrants in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries as they moved further west from historic Armenia or was there an older indigenous Armenian tradition kept alive in the Sebastia-Caesarea-Melitene area? Once again, it is not possible to offer convincing hypotheses until more research is done. Izmailova suggested that since the Cappadocian tradition did not provide a viable model for the Melitene group, other avenues had to be explored. She revived an earlier notion that there still existed as late as the tenth and perhaps the eleventh century parchment rolls of the Gospels (as opposed to codices with folded pages) in which miniatures would have been juxtaposed one next to the other, as in the Melitene manuscripts. Viktor Lazarev believed such a roll-manuscript to be the source of the famous late-ninth-century Byzantine Homilies of Gregory Nazianzenus (now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France) that employs a frieze tech-

²³ Marfa V. Shepkina, *Miniatiury khludovskoi Psaltyri* [Miniatures of the Khludov Psalter], a facsimile edition (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1977), fol. 40v.

²⁴ For all the miniatures in the Vehapar Gospel, see Matevosyan and Izmailova, *Vazgen Vehapari Avetarane*, passim, and for those of the King Gagik of Kars Gospel, the table listing all the miniatures that exist or once existed tucked in the inside back cover of Thomas Mathews and Avedis Sanjian, *Armenian Gospel Iconography. The Tradition of the Glajor Gospel* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1991). The table also contains a list of the miniatures in the Vehapar Gospel.

nique.²⁵ The coupled scenes of the Annunciation and Visitation in it can be compared with those in the Gospel of 1057. Another trail might lead back to an Armenian intermediary from the previous tenth century, especially if the implantation of the Artsruni clan in the 1020s was not just in Sebastia but also in Melitene, which was closer to Vaspurakan. The Church of the Holy Cross on the Island of Aghtamar built in the early tenth century as the artistic jewel of the Artsruni dynasty might have served as a thematic source. The interior frescoes, though badly damaged through willful neglect, are painted with a cycle of twenty-six scenes devoted to Christ. While stylistically they are different from the Melitene group, there are many echoes and similarities in the iconography, as, for instance, the Entry into Jerusalem. Even the decorative elements suggest an affinity, at least to the Areg Gospel, for instance the wavy treatment of the wall in the Last Supper with the decoration of the upper background in the Crucifixion and Resurrection.²⁶ It would be tempting to see the Van-Taron region as the milieu for the artistic inspiration of the Melitene Gospels, since it is already the apparent source or even the place of creation for a number of contemporary manuscripts of the larger provincial group, particularly the Gospel of 1038. Such a notion would also be re-enforced by the stylistic similarities already pointed out between M974 of the Melitene group and the later Van-Vaspurakan miniature style.

For the moment, we rest with hypotheses and the indisputable fact that the Melitene manuscripts, produced at the extremities of Cappadocia, represent the largest corpus of Gospel illustrations from a single school or scriptorium in the history of Armenian art before the Cilician period two centuries later. It is evi-

²⁵ BnF, grec, no. 510, Viktor Lazarev, *Storia della pittura bizantina*, revised Italian edition (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1967), Fig. 94; Tatiana Izmailova, "Le style: remblances et divergences dans le groupe des codex arméniens de l'Asie Mineure," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s. 6 (1968): 151-73. See also Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "The Illustrations of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, Paris, gr. 510: A Study of the Connection between Text and Images," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 16 (1962): 195-228.

²⁶ Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *Aght'amar: Church of the Holy Cross* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), Figs. 64, 68 (Entry into Jerusalem), Fig. 69 (Crucifixion). See also Nicole Thierry, "Les peintures de l'Église de la Sainte-Croix d'Aghtamar (915-921)," *The Second International Symposium on Armenian Art, Erevan, 1978*, vol. 3 (Erevan, 1981), pp. 182-90, for a complete list of the scenes with a diagram.

dent that before the devastating blow inflicted on Armenian art by the Seljuk invasions, Armenian Gospel illumination was moving toward the incorporation of a larger narrative cycle of between twelve and sixteen scenes. The subjects of the Gospel scenes chosen in these manuscripts correspond to the major feasts of the church calendar.²⁷ In all of these manuscripts the paintings are grouped together at the beginning. With the exception of the interlude represented by the Cilician school, the long cycle of the life of Christ miniatures placed before the texts of the Gospels becomes the norm in Armenian art until the end of manuscript production in the eighteenth century.²⁸

²⁷ The seventeen different narrative scenes found in eleventh-century Armenian manuscripts of the provincial tradition are Visitation, Annunciation, Nativity, Baptism, Presentation in the Temple, Transfiguration, Raising of Lazarus, Entry into Jerusalem, Last Supper, Betrayal, Crucifixion, Descent from the Cross, Entombment, Harrowing of Hell, Holy Women at the Empty Tomb, Ascension, Pentecost.

²⁸ All illustrations that follow are from Dickran Kouymjian, *Index of Armenian Art*, online at http://armenianstudies.csufresno.edu/iaa_miniatures/index.htm.



Fig. 1. Jerusalem, J3624, Gospel of 1041, f. 4, Canon Table V



Fig. 2. Erevan, Matenadaran M6201, Gospel of 1038, ff. 6v-7, shown upright



Fig. 3. M3784, Gospel of 1057, f. 7, Presentation in the Temple and Baptism



Fig. 4. M974, Gospel, eleventh century, f. 1, Presentation in the Temple and Baptism



Fig. 5. J3624, Gospel of 1041, f. 10v, Ascension



Fig. 6. M3723, Gospel of 1045, f. 3, Entombment and Harrowing of Hell



Fig. 7. J3624, Gospel of 1041, f. 8, Entry into Jerusalem



Fig. 8. Areg Village Gospel fragment, eleventh century, Entry into Jerusalem



Fig. 9. M3723, Gospel of 1045, f. 1, Entry into Jerusalem



Fig. 10. M3784, Gospel of 1057, f. 8, Entry into Jerusalem



Fig. 11. M6201, Gospel of 1038, f, 6v, Entry into Jerusalem



Fig. 12. Tsghrut Village (Javakh), Gospel of 974, f. 8, Entry into Jerusalem



Fig. 13. J3624, Gospel of 1041, f. 9, Last Supper



Fig. 14. Areg Village Gospel fragment, eleventh century, Last Supper



Fig. 15. M3723, Gospel of 1045, f. 2, Last Supper

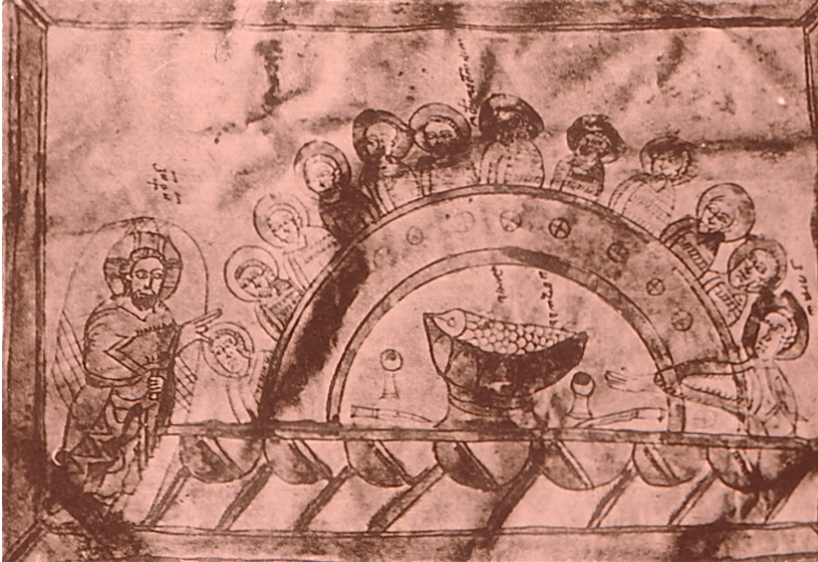


Fig. 16. M3784, Gospel of 1057, f. 8v, Last Supper



Fig. 17. J3624, Gospel of 1041, f. 8v, Last Supper



Fig. 18. M6201, Gospel of 1038, f. 7, Last Supper



Fig. 19. J3624, Gospel of 1041, f. 9, Betrayal of Christ



Fig. 20. Areg Village Gospel fragment, eleventh century, Betrayal of Christ



Fig. 21. M3784, Gospel of 1057, f. 9, Betrayal of Christ



Fig. 22. M974, Gospel, eleventh century, f. 2, Betrayal of Christ