

# secular SACRED

11TH – 16TH CENTURY

WORKS FROM  
THE BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY  
AND  
THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON

EDITED BY NANCY NETZER

MCMULLEN MUSEUM OF ART  
BOSTON COLLEGE





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*and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*

organized by the

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Curators:

Pamela Berger, Sheila S. Blair, Jonathan M. Bloom, Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner,  
Michael J. Connolly, Lisa Fagin Davis, Patricia Deleeuw, Robin Fleming, Earle A. Havens,  
Stephanie C. Leone, Nancy Netzer, Virginia Reinburg, Laurie Shepard

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Courtesy of the Trustees of the Boston Public Library

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# Contents

## Director's Preface

Nancy Netzer

7

## Secular and Sacred Objects from the Middle Ages: Illuminating the History of Classification

Nancy Netzer, Department of Fine Arts, Boston College

11

## Sierce Lions, Clever Foxes, Diabolical Dragons: Animals Tell Tales in Medieval Arts and Letters

Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, Department of Romance Languages, Boston College

19

## Scrolling through History: *La Chronique Universelle*, Boston Public Library Ms.Pb.Med.32

Lisa Fagin Davis, Independent Scholar

43

## The Two Swords: Secular Magistracy and Sacred Ministry in Medieval and Renaissance Art

Earle A. Havens, Curator of Manuscripts, Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Boston Public Library

51

## Mary as Model: The Sacred becomes Secular in Medieval Art

Patricia Deleeuw, Department of Theology, Boston College

64

## The Nuns of the Ronceray d'Angers and their Tapestries of the Eucharist

Virginia Reinburg, Department of History, Boston College

68

## Marking Time: The Lives of the Young in Fifteenth-Century Tuscany

Laurie Shepard, Department of Romance Languages, Boston College

74

## In Vogue in Fifteenth-Century Florence: the Material Culture of Marriage

Stephanie C. Leone, Department of Fine Arts, Boston College

81

## Illustrated Religious Books

Virginia Reinburg, Department of History, Boston College

88

## Kidnapping the Gospels

M.J. Connolly, Department of Slavic and Eastern Languages, Boston College

92

## Avarice, Money, and Judgment Day

Pamela Berger, Department of Fine Arts, Boston College

98

## Status, Sanctity, and Silk in Late Anglo-Saxon England

Robin Fleming, Department of History, Boston College

104

## From Secular to Sacred: Islamic Art in Christian Contexts

Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, Department of Fine Arts, Boston College

115

## Works in the Exhibition

121



IN MEMORIAM

John J. McMullen

1918–2005

# Director's Preface

Nancy Netzer

**S**ecularSacred is the McMullen Museum's third interdisciplinary exploration of a medieval theme. In 1995, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Medieval Academy in Boston, the Museum gathered objects primarily from American collections to examine how such works embodied the concept of an exhibition entitled *Memory and the Middle Ages*. Again, in 2000, in celebrating the beginning of the third millennium of Christianity, the McMullen selected objects from the Schnütgen Museum in Cologne to examine in *Fragmented Devotion* stories told in different eras by material fragments of the medieval devotional world. In the present exhibition, many of the same scholars, joined by others, take a fresh look at messages conveyed by an array of medieval and early modern objects in the process of reconsidering their traditional classification into categories of the secular and sacred.

In 2002 Matilda Bruckner, chair of Boston College's Medieval Forum, initiated the idea for undertaking an exhibition to encourage the Medieval Academy to convene once again in Boston. Bruckner asked colleagues at several other area institutions to co-sponsor the Academy meeting and then approached Richard Emmerson, executive director of the Medieval Academy, who happily embraced the idea. The Museum then gathered medievalists from various disciplines at Boston College to formulate a theme for the exhibition. Laurie Shepard proposed that examination of the secular sphere of medieval and early modern life would resonate with current concerns of scholars in a number of fields. In a series of meetings, excerpts from which have been captured in a film that documents the organization of the exhibition, the group then began to ponder how secular messages reinforce sacred ones, or vice versa, in medieval and early modern art works of art. The result was the decision to examine closely objects that transmitted, in various ways, both types of messages. The group was especially pleased when the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Boston Public Library enthusiastically agreed to participate as partners. This has been a most fruitful collaboration among three institutions: (1) a private museum of art with one of the largest medieval collections in North America, (2) a public library with outstanding collections

of manuscripts and early printed books, and (3) a research university with one of the country's largest and strongest faculties in medieval and early modern studies across many disciplines. Each contributed its own strengths, making the project a model of its kind.

On field trips, the Boston College professors viewed collections with Museum of Fine Arts, Boston curators Tracey Albainy, Marietta Cambareri, Frederick Ilchman and Pamela Parmal, and Boston Public Library curator Earle Havens. A large number of objects attracted their scholarly attention, from which each chose items related to the theme of an essay for this volume and a section of the exhibition. The team made this entire undertaking—exhibition and catalogue—possible. Thus, it is to them, my co-curators Pamela Berger (art history), Sheila Blair (art history), Jonathan Bloom (art history), Matilda Bruckner (French), M. J. Connolly (Slavic), Lisa Fagin Davis (independent scholar), Patricia DeLeeuw (theology), Robin Fleming (history), Earle Havens (curator of manuscripts at the Boston Public Library), Stephanie Leone (art history), Virginia Reinburg (history), and Laurie Shepard (Italian), that we owe our greatest gratitude for participating in this challenging collaborative project.

The range of those involved in the exhibition has extended in numerous directions and drawn on the expertise and generosity of many at our lending institutions. Director Malcolm Rogers, the trustees, Tracey Albainy, Ronni Baer, Marietta Cambareri, Meta Chavannes, Karen Gausch, Katie Getchell, Andrew Haines, Pamela Hatchfield, Abigail Hykin, Frederick Ilchman, Will Jeffers, Jean-Louis Lachevre, Patricia Loiko, Meredith Montague, Ingrid Neuman, Chris Newth, Kim Pashko, Pamela Parmal, and Jennifer Riley, all from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, deserve special thanks. We are extremely grateful to our partners at the Boston Public Library: director Bernard Margolis, the trustees, curator Earle Havens, conservators Stuart Walker, Aaron Schmidt, and Deborah Evetts as well as the staff of the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts. We extend thanks also to additional lenders Stephen Scher and Amy Friend and Evelyn Lane at Wheaton College.

The staff of the McMullen Museum and others from across the University have brought this complex project to fruition. In particular, Diana Larsen, designed the installation to provide an appropriately sacred secular experience. Mark Esser, Alston Conley, Vincent Marasa, Stacey Small, Giovanni Buonapane, Joseph Figueiredo, and James Slattery contributed their expertise to the installation. In designing this volume Keith Ake has created a sacred object in the most secular sense. Naomi Blumberg's editing and oversight of the catalogue and exhibition texts were invaluable. Interns Charisma Chan, Vivian Carrasco, Emily Neumeier,

and Debra Pino aided in the exhibition's overall organization. John McCoy designed the texts for the exhibition and its website and produced the audio tour. Naomi Rosenberg edited several of the essays with extraordinary discernment; Keith Ake, Paul Dagnello, and Hallie Sammartino followed the evolution of this exhibition to produce the accompanying film, which was completed under the guidance of Ben Birnbaum. We are grateful also to Stephen Vedder for photographing all of the works in the Boston Public Library that are reproduced in this catalogue, to Michael Prinn and Rose Breen for arranging insurance, to Rosanne Pellegrini for publicity, to John Sage for recording the audio guide, and to the members of our Development office, especially James Husson, Katherine Smith, Catherine Concannon, Mary Lou Crane, and Johanna Wald, who aided our funding efforts.

We could not have attempted such an ambitious project were it not for the generosity of the administration of

Boston College. We especially thank President William P. Leahy, S.J., academic vice-president Cutberto Garza, former academic vice-president John Neuhauser, associate academic vice-president Patricia DeLeeuw, and dean of arts and sciences Joseph Quinn. For major support of the exhibition we are indebted to the Newton College of the Sacred Heart Class of 1965, led in this endeavor by Priscilla Durkin; to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation particularly Lisa Ackerman and Wyman Meers; Elizabeth and Robert Pozen and the Patrons of the McMullen Museum chaired by C. Michael Daley.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge our esteemed and beloved chief benefactor, the late Dr. John J. McMullen, a secular man who, through his kindness, warmth and thoughtful deeds, conveyed the sacred. In dedicating this volume to his memory, we hope that it will serve as a lasting tribute to his contribution to this Museum and to Boston College.



NOTE TO READER

Numbered plates (no.) are works in the exhibition. Additional images in the essay are designated as figures (fig.). Works cited in the text are listed in full at the end of each essay.

Attributions of works in the exhibition were supplied by lending institutions and generally do not reflect research by contributors to this volume.

# Kidnapping the Gospels

M.J. Connolly

**A**rmenians view their church as a “national” one. This entails a synergy of the sacred and the secular, which we can see from the earliest recorded history of Armenian Christianity and which remains conspicuous even today. Exquisite miniature paintings in Armenian devotional books, the bindings and various appointments which accompany them, as well as the ritual for the use of those books, provide some insights into the developing nature of this internal dynamic between secular and sacred.

## Matthew: a First example

The Holy Gospels<sup>1</sup> set forth the basic framework for the display of Christian revelation. After a prefatory cycle of miniatures and Eusebian canon tables, Armenian gospel books begin the text of each Gospel<sup>2</sup> with a full-page representation of the evangelist. Of the four evangelist portrayals in a fifteenth-century Gospel book from the collection of the Boston Public Library<sup>3</sup> (no. 78), only that of Matthew<sup>4</sup> (no. 78c) is original, and of notably finer quality and compositional detail. Before his calling as a follower of Christ, Matthew (Levi Alphaïou) had served as a Roman tax collector, and Christ had found him seated in his collecting booth;<sup>5</sup> now Matthew sits recollecting and writing the first of the sacred Gospels. An angel in the left margin symbolizes the evangelist, an unusual positioning, and an angel bust above points to the bust of a tonsured Christ in the tympanum over the evangelist’s portrait. Matthew has exchanged his secular master for the higher spiritual one, and the image immediately connotes the follow-up to the calling of Matthew, when Jesus eats with publicans and sinners and pointedly instructs the Pharisees about the worldliness of his mission: “I am not come to call the just, but sinners” (Mat 9:13).

## Šaraknoc’

Although the stamped leather binding and simple toggle clasps of a sixteenth-century Armenian hymnal (*šaraknoc’*) in the collection of the Boston Public Library<sup>6</sup> (no. 79)

seem modest alongside the silver bindings of its two companions (nos. 77–78), the illuminations inside this hymnal highlight with gold and vivid colors the histories which dwell in over one thousand original hymn compositions set for feast days both in the dominical and sanctoral cycles. The Armenian monastic daily office of common prayer (*žamergut’iwn*) comprises seven canonical hours which supplement relatively fixed texts, essentially psalms, canticles, and prayers of various sorts, with medieval poetic chants (*šarakans*) composed for specific feasts and inserted at eight specified points in the course of the daily office. These are collected in a single volume called a *šaraknoc’*. Beginning in the fifteenth century the *šaraknoc’* acquired an ever richer set of illuminations. The supralinear system of musical notation called *xaz* employs some forty symbols whose names we know but whose precise interpretation is elusive: the melodies are transmitted by oral tradition, and the various ecclesiastical centers present differing versions (*elanak*) in their performances and scholarly transcriptions into Western notation.

Three particular illustrations of the more than one hundred fifty in the BPL *šaraknoc’* illustrate constant interactions between the sacred and secular worlds.

## Hripsimē

In the margin of an unnumbered page in the Pentecost cycle (no. 79b), a crowned, queenlike figure with a hand cross stands pointing to a text heading *Kanon srhoc’ Hrip’simeanc’* “the order for the Holy Followers of Rhipsime.” In the traditional Roman calendar the feast of Saints Rhipsime, Gaiana, and their companions, virgins and martyrs, coincides with Michaelmas (29 September), thus coming the day before the traditional Western feast day for St. Gregory the Illuminator, with whose history theirs is closely bound up by legends. Although hagiologists often discredit these legends, they appear in standard Armenian historians from the fifth century onward and have also become an inalienable part of the secular national tradition. The Armenian calendar celebrates them on the Monday in the week of the first Sunday after Pentecost, i.e. as the first feast after the solemn octave of Pentecost.<sup>7</sup>

The legend has a community of Roman Christian virgins, under the matron Gaiana, fleeing Rome to escape the amorous intentions of Diocletian toward Rhipsime, a noble member of that community. They take refuge in Armenia, where Trdat (Tiridatēs), the king of Armenia, stalked them in like manner. He eventually martyred them on 05 October (312? AD). They thus become protomartyrs of the Armenian Church immediately before the Christianization

of the nation. The legend gives them an instrumental role in the establishment of the national church.

On the Saturday of the same week as the feast of Rhipsime, the Armenian Church celebrates the “coming forth of our Holy Father Gregory the Illuminator from the pit,”<sup>8</sup> one of many feasts for that saint. As punishment for the slaying of Rhipsime and her companions, King Trdat, while out hunting, is transformed into a wild boar. Gregory had been languishing in a pit for fifteen years, consigned there by Trdat for religious, political, and dynastic reasons, but through the prayers of Gregory at the behest of the king’s sister, Trdat was found and restored to his former self. The royal family thereupon embraced Christianity and decreed it for the entire Armenian nation. This moment marks the beginning of the intimate association between the sacred and the secular in the nation’s history. Rhipsime’s queenly crown depicted here (no. 79b) is that of a founding martyr.

### The Lenten martyrs

For the Saturday of the fourth week in Lent,<sup>9</sup> one folio (no. 79a) illustrates *in margine* forty heads neatly piled in a pyramid ( $6+(3\times 5)+(4\times 4)+2+1$ ) on a watery platter, a three-column array of thirty-nine crowns above ( $12+13+14$ ), and the hand of God in blessing coming from the heavens. The heading directly opposite the pyramid of heads announces the Saturday of the Forty (Martyrs of Sebastia in Armenia),<sup>10</sup> a feast observed throughout the universal Church on the tenth of March in the traditional Roman calendar. Their martyrdom dates to 320 AD under the reign of Emperor Licinius when, in response to a renewed persecution, forty soldiers stationed in Sebastia refused the compliance order of Agricolaus, *praeses* of Cappadocia and Lesser Armenia. They died by exposure, naked on a frozen pond in the cold Armenian winter.

According to the Latin martyrology, one of the watchmen awoke and saw the soldiers praying and suffused with light, “messengers, as if sent by a King, who were distributing to the soldiers thirty-nine crowns.”<sup>11</sup> And as the watchman was asking himself *Quadragesimi corona ubi est?* (“Where is the crown for a fortieth?”), one of the soldiers, who could no longer bear the cold, jumped into a tempting warm bath kept nearby. The watchman thereupon declared himself a Christian and joined the number, bringing it back to forty.

The first *šarakan* (*Orhnut’ean*) of the night office begins on this page “[T]oday they, who with their hardship battled and won against the enemy in Sebastia, dance in chorus

with the incorporeal ones. By their intercession, o Christ, spare us.”<sup>12</sup>

Relics of these martyrs passed to the parents of Saints Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, and their panegyrics, along with those of John Chrysostom and others, kept the cult of the Forty, a highly symbolic number for the Lenten fast, very much alive. These were the first major martyrs on Armenian soil after the declaration of Christianity as the national religion, even though certainly, given the composition and stationing of Roman legions, few if any of the Forty would have been of Armenian origin. But here was a cult of martyrs at the right time and in the right place to serve the needs of a growing Christian national identity.

### Vardananc’

On the Thursday of the second week after the fast of the Catechumens (the week before the first week of the great Lenten fast), the Armenian church celebrates a feast which increases in importance along with Armenian national awareness after the collapse of the Armenian kingdoms and the long run of Arab, Mongol and Ottoman domination. Although the feast of Vardananc’ does not have a full *kanon* of *šarakans* associated with it, it nonetheless merits a rare two-page spread (no. 79c) in this *šaraknoc’*. It shows an incipit in gold that reads:

As an outstanding wreathbearer and commander of the brave, you were manfully enflamed with the spirit of arms against death.<sup>13</sup>

Above this, the illuminator has spread a two-page battle scene, Persians on the left with cavalry on stylized blackish elephants above, Persian infantry below, confronting Armenians on the right, Armenian infantry below, Armenian cavalry above a river, and preceded by a taunter on foot, with severed body parts in both lower fields.

This represents the lost battle of Avarayr (451 AD), the culmination of a ten-year, small-scale insurgency against Sassanian Persian control under Yazkert I, first in the form of increased taxes, military drafts to fight Kushan incursions in Central Asia, then finally an attempt to convert Armenia to Zoroastrianism. The carefully composed sixth-century history of Elišē details the events leading up to the battle, the battle itself under the command of Vardan Mamikonean, and the consequences of the battle, which ultimately became a moral victory: Persian losses had been triple that of the defeated Armenians, Persian measures against Armenia eased, and a revolt continued for thirty years under Vahan Mamikonian.

In the united efforts of church and secular nobility, Armenia gained an awareness of its potential to maintain both its faith and its relative political independence. The military figures of Vardan and his soldiers became Christian martyrs, their illustration is one of the most elaborate in the *šaraknoc*, and the title of their feast appears as one of the longest in the Armenian calendar:

[Commemoration] of the Holy Vardananc' commanders: Vardan, Xoren, Artak, Hmayeak, Tačat, Nerses, Vahan, Arsen, Garegin, and of the other Armenian warriors, one thousand thirty six martyrs.<sup>14</sup>

### Holy Cross and Holy Gospel

In the year 614, as part of an unstoppable westward sweep from Damascus (613) all the way to Egypt (619), the armies of the Persian ruler Khosroēs [588–628, Armenian *Xosrov*] had captured Jerusalem and removed the enshrined relics of the True Cross to his astrological throne room in Ktēsiphōn (Tizbon).

The seventh-century Armenian historian Sebeos tells about the taking of these relics and their recovery after the defeat of the Persian armies and the death of Khosroēs:

The first thing that [Emperor Heraclius] requested of him [Persian nobleman Xoream] was the life-giving Cross which he had captured at Jerusalem. Then Xoream swore to him, saying: "As soon as I reach the royal court I shall make inquiry about the Cross, and have it brought to you." . . . Now Xoream took his multitude of troops and went to Ctesiphon [the Persian capital]. . . . Then the venerable Heraclius dispatched loyal men to Xoream concerning the lordly Cross. [The latter] sought for it with great urgency and immediately gave it to the men who had come. They took it and departed hurriedly. [Xoream] also gave them no small amount of goods and dispatched them with great joy.

The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in September highlights the importance of this restoration of a relic uncovered by St. Helena, the mother of an Emperor (Constantine). Constantine housed the Holy Cross in a dedicated basilica in Jerusalem. Three centuries later it was brought back under circumstances which underline the prevailing sense of sacred over secular. According to further legend, when Heraclius approached the gate of Jerusalem bearing the relics of the Cross, he found the going increasingly more difficult, until he could proceed no further, not from weight or overexertion but from some inexplicable force. The Patriarch Zakharias suggested

that the worldly splendor of his secular adornments were unsuited to the humility which bearing the Cross requires, and after removing his imperial robes, Heraclius was able to continue.

A ritual veneration similar to, perhaps even greater than, that accorded the material relics of the life-giving Cross also applies among Armenians most particularly to the spiritual relics of Christ's saving activity, the Holy Gospels. Thus, in the Armenian ritual tradition:

- The Gospel book (*surb awetaran*) is bound in precious metal, the Armenians preferring silver, although historical examples also have gold or ivory bindings, with a Crucifixion scene dominating the front panel, and a Resurrection scene dominating the rear.
- One never touches the Holy Gospels without a fine cloth sudarium [*dastarak*], and the Gospel book set upon the altar always has the *dastarak* wrapped about it in a distinctive manner.
- In the Divine Liturgy a solemn procession with the elevated Gospel book, accompanied by chanting, candles, rhipidia (ritual fans, *flabellae*) and incense, clockwise around the altar (in the direction of the sun) precedes the service of readings (*synaxis*), just as the even more sacred eucharistic portion has a parallel procession for the bringing of the sacred species, or "offerings," to the altar.<sup>15</sup>
- The solemn chanting of a Gospel passage by an ordained cleric constitutes a focused part of every major service.
- Every reading of the Gospel takes place within a highly elaborate formulaic structure.<sup>16</sup>
- The Gospel book is held aloft by the deacon during the full chanting of the Creed.
- At the close of services, the faithful come forward to kiss the celebrant's hand cross and to venerate the book of gospels held by a deacon or priest, at which time they offer their specific intentions and vows accompanied by a formula from Psalm 19.<sup>17</sup>
- When not in specific liturgical use, the Gospel book, wrapped at its base, is set upright at the center of the altar.
- Solemn seasonal blessings (of houses, water, etc.) are made with the hand cross and with a Gospel book.<sup>18</sup>
- Gospel books, of all service books, display the most elaborate and most finely executed painted miniatures to suit the narrative, often in a coherent prefatory cycle as in the Gospel book on display here, along with canon tables of text concordances, marginalia, and initials.

This detail illustrates the paramount importance of the sacred Gospel books to the Armenians. A realization, in this light, by secular rulers of the monetary value that can accrue to holding a Gospel book hostage, appears three times in the example shown here.

In addition to the traditional colophons (ff. 311–316) concerning the commissioning and preparation of the Gospel book around the year 1475, and poignant written petitions such as the one at f. 165v at the end of Matthew’s Gospel (“Remember also the cleric Karapet. Amen.”),<sup>19</sup> there are several mentions of the ransoming of this manuscript from captivity around 1663, prior to the addition of the current silver plates to the binding.

The most straightforward of the recovery colophons (f. 165v) reads:

I, *vardapet* <celibate priest> Margaray, from the land <canton> of Tarōn, which is now called Muš, from the monastery of the 12 Apostles, now came to the land of Tarberuni to the city of Berkri to the monastery of Argelan [=Tēr Yuskan Ordj], and I saw this Holy Gospel held captive by aliens, and with difficulty we managed, along with the congregation, to free it from the hands of the impious.<sup>20</sup>

Three other corroborating colophon entries (ff. 36r bis, 318r) provide additional names of those involved in the recovery and mention (f. 318r) a ransom sum of one hundred piasters.

One need not look far for examples of such ransoming even contemporary with the production of this manuscript and two centuries before the rescue which Ms.q.Med. 34 (no. 78) details:

On the sixth of the month of June, in the year 924 of our Armenian era [AD 1475], the Isamaelites captured Kafay. And this holy Gospel was captured and brought to Istanbul and I, Awetik’, purchased it and offered it to the church of St Sargis . . .

Remember *paron* Awetik’, the last recipient of this Gospel, as well as his parents, who acquired this holy Gospel from the Muslims [*aylazgi* ‘alien’] who captured it in Kafay and brought it to Istanbul . . . (Sanjian 1969, 1475.8)

[Sultan Mehmet II] also captured an excellent and choice Psalm Book and brought it to Istanbul; and the

medical doctor Amirtovlat’ found and delivered this holy book from captivity. This occurred in the year 922 [= AD 1473]. (Sanjian 1969, 1480.1)

And the famous Glajor Gospel book also experienced the same in the late fourteenth century:

. . . the filthy and accursed T’imur [=Tamerlane] plundered our lands. I, *paron* Martiros, son of Šahanša, and my wife, *paron* Ładam, daughter of *paron* Arlut’ay, son of Ĵum, grandson of the prince of princes P’roš, after much effort and expense rescued, through our honest means, this our holy ancestral Gospel, which had fallen captive into the hands of foreigners, and we now hold it as our steadfast hope and for a memorial for our souls, and for the eternal repose in Christ of our parents. (Mathews and Sanjian, 578)

As with many Gospel books, this one opens with a prefatory cycle of miniatures depicting three Old Testament themes (the sacrifice of Abraham, the root of Jesse, the vision of Ezechiel) and sixteen themes related to the New Testament, which roughly coincide with the great festal “mysteries” of the Eastern Church: Annunciation, Nativity, Presentation in the Temple, Baptism of Christ, Transfiguration, the Raising of Lazarus, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, the Betrayal, the Crucifixion, the Burial of Christ, the Harrowing of Hell, the Myrrh-bearing women at the tomb, the Ascension of Christ, the Coming of the Holy Spirit, and the Dormition of the Mother of God.

As if in reaction to the secular tribulations of the times, the fall of the Cilician Kingdom, the Mongol invasions, and the Ottoman depredations, which the colophons always say have come “for our sins,” Armenian manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, such as no. 78, began adding to the prefatory cycle miniatures portraying the torments of the souls in Hades, and the second coming of Christ with the last judgement. In the latter scene (f. 26r) the brothers Grigor and Mkrtič’ Berkrc’i, the scribe and commissioning abbot respectively, kneel before the throne of Christ as the Ancient of Days (Apoc 6:14), while in the previous facing miniature (f. 25v), St. Gregory the Illuminator, who effected Christianity as the national religion in Armenia, sits enthroned and surrounded by the Apostles, while angels and demons weigh out souls in a large balance.

The most dramatic and unusual set of images occurs in the pair of miniatures on ff. 24v–25r (nos. 78a–b), where the *sæculum* ends and the eternally sacred prevails. On folio 24v (no. 78a), three rows of three sinners, crouching naked

and in obvious torment, each with his sins captioned above, appear on striking red and black backgrounds. Below, demons, partly truncated by bindery cuts, carry away large black sins on their backs, while other, yet unharvested sins sit waiting on the left, semi-circular in shape.

On the facing folio 25r (no. 78b), Satan cradles a soul, while seated on a two-headed monster, each head of which vomits (or consumes?) a soul. In a stylized pit beneath Satan, fifteen heads look out from a background of fire, while four additional souls, harnessed at the neck enter in single file from the left, following another demon, who carries sins on its back to a point beyond the frame, a dramatic way to symbolize the eternity of condemnation.

The compiler of this Gospel book has seen the necessity of reminding those who use it, in an especially dramatic fashion, of the ultimate end of worldly pursuits.

### *Maštoc'*

A workhorse ritual book (called in Armenian *Maštoc'*, after the fifth-century creator of the Armenian alphabet and first translator of scripture into Armenian), BPL Ms.q.Arm.1 (no. 77) offers no illustrations and little in the way of decoration. This ritual book covers, in nineteen sections, rites for birth, marriage, death, and various blessings. The rites and texts are fairly standard. Two features of this ritual, however—one linguistic, one decorative—show a subtle shift in sacred-worldly perspectives for the Armenian world.

Armenian makes an important linguistic distinction between *grabar*, the language of scripture and, by extension, of higher literature, and the spoken vernaculars, *ašxarhabar*, literally “secular/worldly language.” In Western Armenian dialects (the provenance of Ms.q.Arm.1), voiced plosives of the literary language are pronounced as voiceless and usually aspirated, although the *written* character still corresponds to the classical orthography for the corresponding voiced plosives. Thus, for example, what is written in Classical Armenian *Grigor* (Gregory) is pronounced as if it were written \**K'rik'or*.<sup>21</sup> Armenian spelling usage is highly conservative and conceals the effect of this Western Armenian sound shift.

Here, however, the letter <g> is frequently spelled phonetically with the letter <k'>, e.g. *t'ak'awor* for *t'agawor* (king) or *hok'zhang'ist* for *hogehang'ist* (requiem service). Although this corresponds to the Western Armenian (Cilician) pronunciation, such phonetic rendering in a liturgical text is totally unexpected where a relatively strict orthographic standard applies. Interestingly, only the pronunciation shift of the velar is recorded this way, and the fact that

<b> would be pronounced like <p'> or <d> pronounced as <t'> is not represented. The spelling of this ritual book evidences a bold but ultimately unsuccessful assertion of the secular pronunciation-spelling in a sacred text.

From a decorative point of view, the covers of this ritual present its most remarkable feature, starting with the colophon on the spine piece (no. 77c) concerning the binding in silver:

This [is] the *maštoc'* / of Murat, / son of priest / Abraham, / which he himself / procured / and had / adorned / in silver / in the city / of Caesaria / by the silver-smith / Malxas / M[ahtesi] Karapet / in the year / 1153 [1704 AD].<sup>22</sup>

Patrons invariably find mention in written colophons *inside* a manuscript, and may appear in miniatures kneeling before the throne of God, but a spine colophon with the owner's name and circumstance shows ostentation. The present text even neglects formulaic self-characterizations such as “humble servant of God” or “sinner” and identifies the status of the silversmith as a *mahtesi*, pilgrim to Jerusalem. Commercialism is pressing out modesty and humility.

On the front cover (no. 77a), sixteen Old Testament figures in paired and titled arcades—beginning with Moses and Joshua at the upper left and Hosea and Amos at the upper right—flank an image of Isaiah standing before the throne of God; God holds a scepter and orb and is crowned, rather surprisingly for an Oriental Orthodox church setting, with a triple tiara in Roman papal style. An angel is purifying Isaiah's lips with a live coal (Isa 6:6–7), and two six-winged seraphs hover behind the divine throne. A bottom row with eight prophets, including the major ones (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezechiel, Daniel, Malachias, Zachariais, Haggaeus, Abdias) in titled arcades, runs below the central image over an ornamented row of five boxes.

On the back cover (no. 77b) the twelve apostles, in titled arcades, surround, at sides and bottom, a scene of Christ predicting the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (Mat 24:1–2; Luc 29:44). The rendering of the “Temple” strongly resembles St. Peter's in Rome.

What are we to make of these seemingly Romish intrusions into the heart of Anatolia? The work of missionaries? Or is commerce again overtaking doctrinal and traditional interests?

Armenians, through their highly developed mercantile connections, were among the foremost exploiters of the emergent Western printing technologies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Venice, Rome, Basel, Istanbul

and Amsterdam, but the manuscript tradition continued in the homeland long after the appearance of the first complete Armenian printed bible in 1666 in Amsterdam. The publisher of the Amsterdam Bible, Oskan Erewanc'i, used derivative woodcuts by a local artist, Christoffel van Sichem II, and these woodcuts served as a copy book for silversmiths and muralists in the Armenian Near East, including the silversmith who made the binding plates for this *Maštoc*.

The Romish motifs in the main cover, therefore, derived not from Catholic proselytism but from the incorporation of readily available and perhaps esoteric Western images into Eastern decorative processes. The secular world won again.

Political conveniences at one end of Armenian history and commercial considerations at the other leave their traces even in the most devout of devotional books. Yet the simple declarations of colophons and the thematic placement of miniatures reassert in those same books the importance of keeping one's eye on the world to come and of living the sacred values, which transcend the secular. The seventeen-hundred year old Armenian condominium of nation and church has continually ensured that no pitched battles rage between sacred and secular, but small tensions play themselves out in subtle ways, reflected in the synthesis to which even simple devotional books bear witness.

## Endnotes

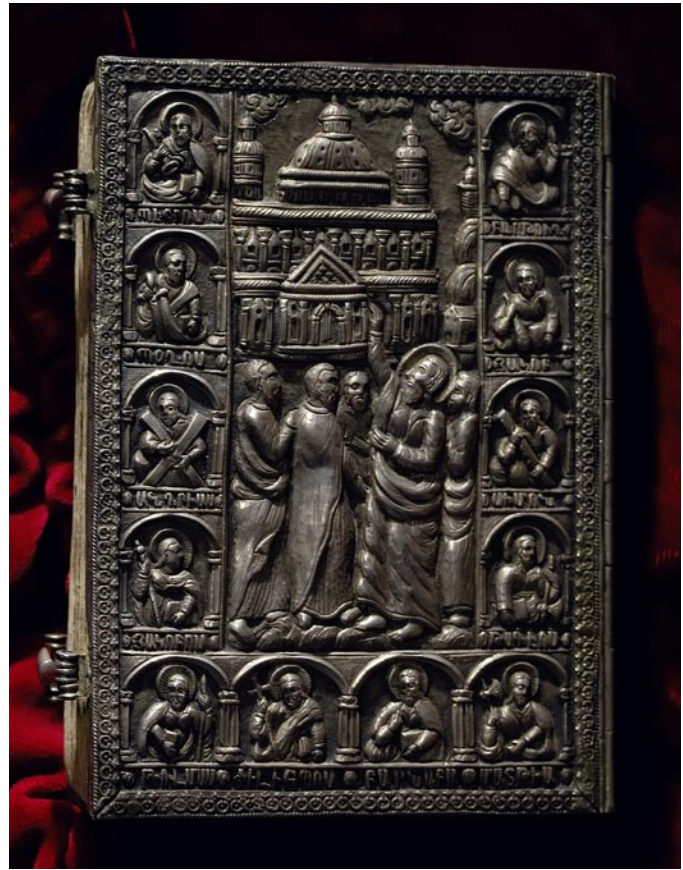
- 1 Arm. *awetaran* "book of good tidings," in *tetraevangelion* style presenting the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in book, chapter and verse sequence. There also exist later lectionary-style gospel books which present the liturgical readings (pericopes) in calendar order.
- 2 Arm.: *ast Ma(t)t'ēosi, ast Markosi, ast Lukasu, ast Yovhannou*
- 3 BPL Ms.q.Med. 34
- 4 BPL Ms.q.Med. 34, f. 36v
- 5 καθήμενον ἐπὶ τοῦ τῶν ἁγίων, Mat 9:9–13; Mar 2:13–22; Luc 5.27–32.
- 6 BPL Ms.q.Med. 199
- 7 On 31 May in 2005, always dependent upon the date of Easter, fifty days before Pentecost.
- 8 Arm.: *Srboc' hōrn meroy Grigori Lusaworč'in eln i virapēn*
- 9 Very few Armenian feasts fall on specific dates, but are set on fixed weekdays relative to a given Sunday, which is in turn relative to the date of Easter or of other Sundays "closest" to a commemorative date.
- 10 Arm.: *Šabat' srboc' k'aiasianic' ē.*
- 11 *et quosdam a caelo descendentes angelos tamquam a Rege missos, qui coronas triginta novem militibus distribuere*
- 12 Arm.: *Aysōr and anmarmnoc'n dass . . .*
- 13 Arm.: *Norahraš psakawor ew zōraglux aiak'ineac', vaiec'ar zinu hogwoyn [ariabar anddēm mahu]*
- 14 Arm.: *Srboc' Vardananc' zoravarac' Vardanay, Xorenay, Artakay, Hmayekaj, Tāčatay, Nersesi, Vahanay, Arseni, Garegni, ew ayl zorakanac'n Hayoc' hazar eresun ew vec' vkayic'.*
- 15 This is similar to, but far from identical with, the Lesser and Greater Entrance rites in other Eastern Christian traditions.
- 16 C. *Aleluia.*  
D. *Ōrt' i [Arise!]*  
P. Peace to all  
C. And with thy spirit.  
D2: Let us attend in fear  
D: To this Holy Gospel according to *Matthew*  
C: Glory to thee, o Lord, our God.  
D: *Proskhumē(n)* [Let us attend!]  
C: God is speaking  
D: Our Lord Jesus Christ saith: (or similar formulaic incipit)  
D: <Gospel text chanted>  
C: Glory to thee, o Lord, our God.
- 17 May the Lord give to you in keeping with your heart, and may he bring all your secret intentions to pass (Psalm 19:05).
- 18 May this water be blessed by the sign of the Holy Cross and by this Holy Gospel . . . in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and always and for all eternity.
- 19 Arm.: *ews aiavel yišec'ēk' ztirac'u karapetn amēn*
- 20 Arm.: *Es markara vardapet i yerkrēn taronoy or ayžm muš koči · or em i vanac'n bžn [=erkutasan] aiak'eloc'n ew ayžm eki i yerkirn tarberun(w)oy · i k'alak'n berkri i vank'n argelanic' · ew tesi zays surb awetarans i jeis aylazgac' geri · ew haziw karac'ak' handerj žolovrdeamb azatel i jeracn anawrinac'n.*
- 21 One can even see a trace of this in the common Armenian-English diaspora name *Kirk*.
- 22 Arm.: *maštoc's / ays mura- / t ordi t(ē)r / abrahamin / zor ink'n / astac'aw / ew zardar- / ec' arca- / t'aw kesa- / ria k'ala- / k'in jer- / amb arca- / t'agorc / malxasin / m karape- / tin t'(i)vn / r'č'c'g*

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77a front cover—The prophets: Isaiah before the Throne of God



77b back cover—The apostles; Christ predicting the destruction of the temple

77a–e

**Ritual**

Armenia, ca. 1698

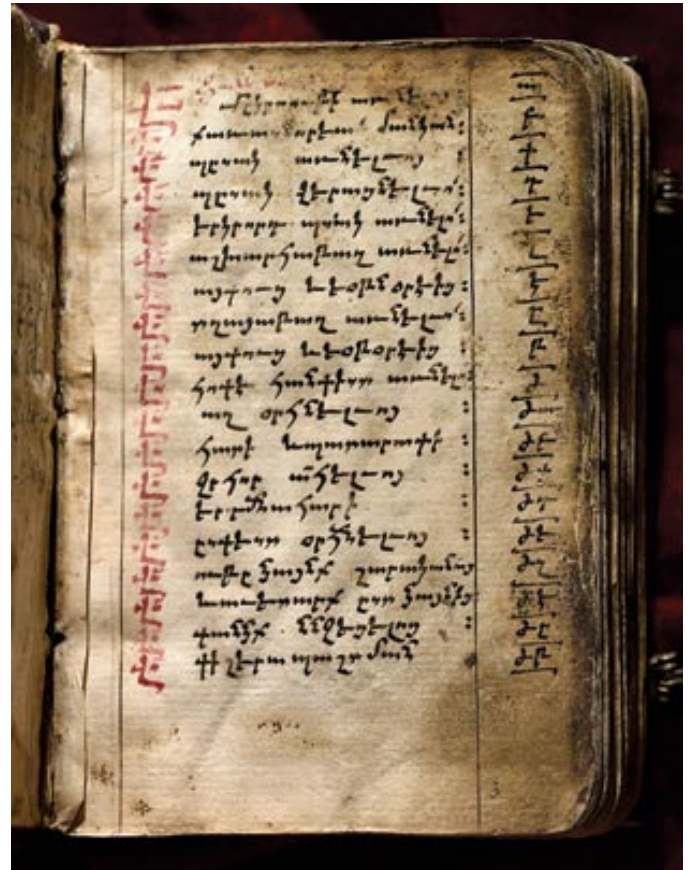
Illumination on paper, embossed silver binding, clasps, 6 x 9¼ in.

Boston Public Library, Gift of Finley Currie, Ms.q.Arm.1





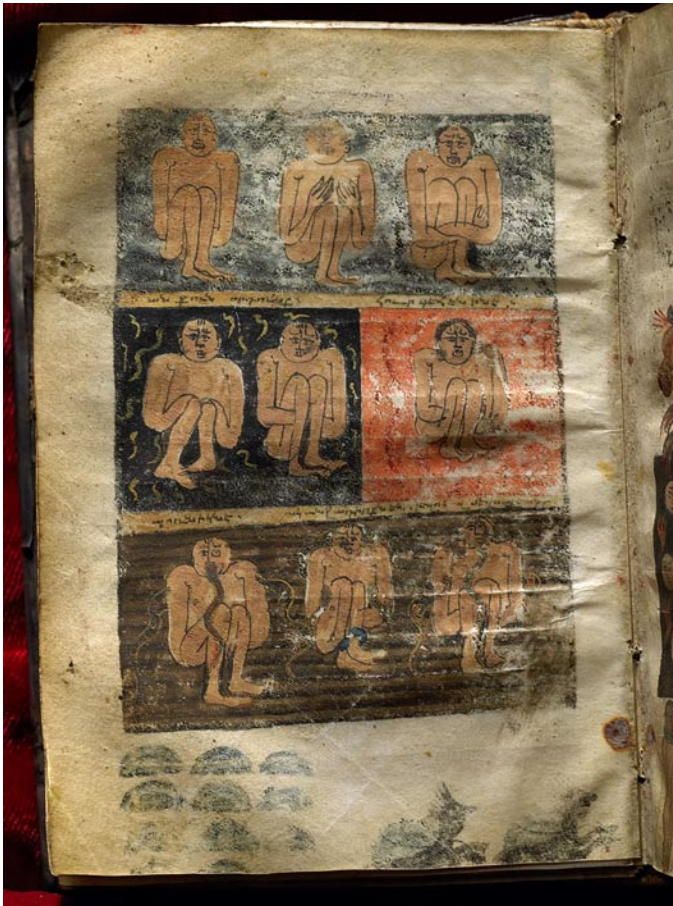
77c spine—Inscription by owner about the binding (1704)



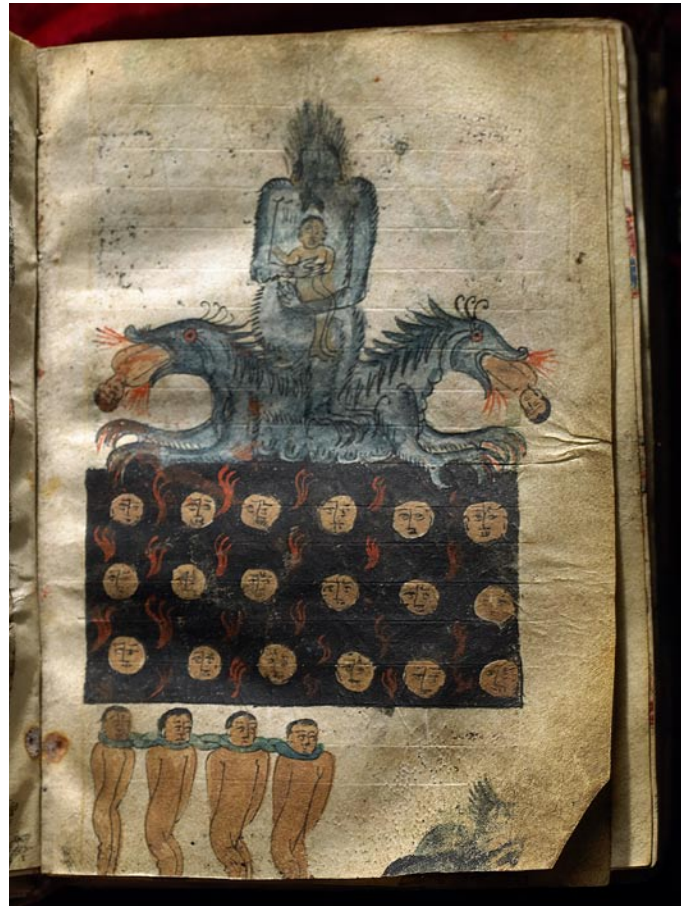
77d Content list of services (f. 3r)



77e clasp



78a Souls in Hell (f. 24v)



78b Satan (Hades) and souls in fire (f. 25r)



78c The evangelist Matthew (f. 36v)

78a-c

**Gospels**

Armenia, 1475

Illumination on vellum, later 17<sup>th</sup>-century embossed silver binding, clasps, 6¾ x 10¼ in.

Boston Public Library, Francis Skinner Fund, Ms.q.Med.34



79a The Forty Martyrs of Sebastia (f. 73v)



79b St. Rhipsime (f. 219v)



79c The battle of Avarayr (ff. 298v–299r)

79a–c

Hymnal

Armenia, 16<sup>th</sup> century

Illustration on paper, 16<sup>th</sup>-century leather binding over wooden boards, leather and peg clasps, 5 x 8 in.

Boston Public Library, Josiah H. Benton Fund, and James Lyman Whitney Fund, Ms.q.Med.199



80

**Stikherarion** (f. 1r)

East Slavic, 17<sup>th</sup> century

Illumination on paper, 17<sup>th</sup>-century leather binding over wooden boards, 6¼ in. x 8¼ in.

Boston Public Library, 2005 new accession





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