

Mariam Ajapahyan

**Medieval Armenian Manuscripts in Private Ownership: Preservation,  
Protection, and Accessibility Issues**

MA Thesis in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management.

Central European University

Budapest

November 2016

**MEDIEVAL ARMENIAN MANUSCRIPTS IN PRIVATE OWNERSHIP:  
PRESERVATION, PROTECTION, AND ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES**

by

Mariam Ajapahyan

(Armenia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Master of Arts degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy,  
Management.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Examiner

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External Reader

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External Supervisor

Budapest  
November 2016

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# Abstract

The thesis concentrates on the problems of protection, preservation and accessibility of medieval Armenian manuscripts in private ownership. Showing the main aspects that protection laws do not cover it is aimed to give alternative recommendations that could address those and solve the problems that legal instruments do not. The social, cultural and historical importance of this manuscripts requires a special approach towards the preservation and accessibility. It is aimed to show that the manuscripts in private ownership should be preserved in the integrity of the tangible and intangible counterparts of the heritage they represent. Very much attention should be given to their role in the lives of the communities where they are kept and the society's perception of those manuscripts. Consequently, the main idea for the privately owned manuscripts is to keep the manuscripts in their social and cultural setting and find ways to make them accessible for researchers and other interested parties thus making them also objects of knowledge. By preserving their community and social value together with the visual and physical form it is aimed to bring them into a new research area which will be dedicated to the study and presentation of these manuscripts in many academic domains. This way the manuscripts will continue to be a part of the existing tradition formulated around them as both family heritage, and social and cultural values being at the same time recognized as a part of Armenian heritage that should be better studied and presented.

# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

The thesis deals with protection, preservation, and accessibility issues of privately owned medieval Armenian manuscripts, which are usually not kept and preserved in regulated ways. The aim of this thesis is to suggest steps in the form of recommendations that would solve the main problems of preservation, protection, and accessibility in the interests of both the owners and other interested parties (researchers, scholars, students and the wider public as the manuscripts are a part of Armenian heritage).

The existing scholarship about the issue of privately owned manuscripts in Armenia is limited to several *Catalogs (or short catalogs) of Manuscripts in Private Hands*<sup>1</sup> and catalogs that were compiled later can be found in Matenadaran<sup>2</sup> or on the official web page of Matenadaran. There are also numerous individual or compiled catalogs about the collections abroad held both at different institutions and in individual collections or in private hands. The issue of lost manuscripts has been a theme of discussion for many years and scholars have dedicated many works to this issue, which will be discussed in the first chapter of the thesis.

A project and an exhibition was launched in 2015 in Matenadaran called “Surviving Manuscripts,” dedicated to the hundredth anniversary of the Genocide and the manuscripts that were saved and ended up in Matendaran collection.<sup>3</sup> However, there is no existing

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<sup>1</sup> Several catalogs have been used for different stages of the thesis and different aims, but for the particular case of privately owned manuscripts in Armenia the following catalogs were used under the same rubric: *Յուշադրանք հայերեն ձեռագրաց մասնավոր անձանց*, [Catalog of Armenian manuscripts in private hands] comp. O. Eganyan, A. Mnats'akanyan, B. Ch'ugaszyan, L. Khach'ikyan, P'. Ant'abyan, A. Matt'ewosyan, A. Zeyt'unyan, ed. O. Eganyan: <http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber13/12.CucakDzeragracy.pdf> *Յուշադրանք հայերեն ձեռագրաց մասնավոր անձանց*, [Catalog of Armenian manuscripts in private hands] comp. Babken Ch'ugaszyan, <http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber15/16.B.Chugaszyan.pdf> and *Յուշադրանք հայերեն ձեռագրաց մասնավոր անձանց*, [Catalog of Armenian manuscripts in private hands] comp. O. S. Eganyan, Y. H. Vardanyan, in *Բանբեր մատենադարանի*, 1984, Yerevan, vol. 14 <http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber14/16.CucakDzeragracy.pdf> : last accessed: 11/13/2016

<sup>2</sup> Matenadaran is the repository of nearly 23,000 manuscripts covering many areas of medieval Armenian culture and science, as well as manuscripts in other languages. It is located in Yerevan, Armenia, and serves also as a museum and a research center; see the webpage for more information: <http://www.matenadaran.am/?id=61&lng=4>: last accessed: 11/13/2016

<sup>3</sup> See more about the exhibition “Survived Manuscripts” on the official webpage: <http://www.matenadaran.am/?id=449&lng=4#.WCh0itKLTIU>, last accessed: 11/13/2016

scholarship regarding the issues of private collections as a new platform of studies, including their social and cultural importance for the owners and the local communities, which includes the special role manuscripts started to play in the life of those communities after the Armenian suppressions (great enough already in the nineteenth century to make people migrate to Eastern Armenia), the Hamidian massacres at the end of nineteenth century, and the Genocide of 1915 in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>4</sup> The most problematic issue is the owners' lack of trust in authorities and scholars, who make laws, policies, and other suggestions for managing manuscripts. Thus, there is a necessity to develop a plan that would be an alternative to the official and established policies and suggestions that the owners mistrust so much.

To give suitable recommendations it is necessary to touch upon several issues concerning medieval Armenian manuscripts in private ownership. The following aspects will be covered in four chapters of the thesis:

- The issue of privately owned manuscripts as a platform for studies, a historical overview of the events which triggered the formation of new privately owned collections or single manuscripts in private ownership,
  - The cultural, historical, and social importance of these manuscripts,
  - The legal instruments designed for the protection of manuscripts
  - Case studies of successful international projects dedicated to the preservation, protection, and accessibility of manuscripts
- recommendations and policies concerning the protection, safe-guarding and future documentation of the manuscripts

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<sup>4</sup> All of these historical facts have been discussed widely in the scholarship; I have used the publications written or edited by Rich'ard Hovhannisyan. For more information on the issues see: Rich'ard Hovhannisyan, *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

First, it is necessary to present the stages of the work carried out and the methodology. After an overview of the scant literature in the initial stage of the work it became clear that field research would be necessary to form recommendations based on existing examples of privately owned manuscripts. Matters to be considered were the conditions of preservation and protection, accessibility issues, and the owners' attitude and readiness to accept any recommendations. Problems that would potentially put the implementation of the recommendations at risk of failure had to be identified. At the same time, the fieldwork has produced valuable insights for the value systems and attitudes of private owners, which are crucial issues for developing a new policy concerning the manuscripts. Thus, the fieldwork did not only focus on the manuscripts themselves as heritage objects but also on the social milieu, memory aspects and perceptions of the owners and of the local community.

Several different methods and approaches were used at the different stages in the research aiming at finding collections, making a condition assessment, and suggesting ways for proper preservation and management of the manuscripts. The stages listed above each had several action steps and consequently different methodologies were applied depending on the aim of the particular stage of research.

### **Field research and methodology**

The manuscripts which are the case study of the thesis were found in the Shirak region in northwestern Armenia and the Javakhet'i region in southern Georgia (inhabited partially by Armenians up to present day). The selection criteria mainly depended on the location of the manuscripts and on the fact that some of the owners guaranteed access to their manuscripts. The location of the manuscripts was found mainly from priests and people related to a local church who knew about the manuscripts because they go there for the "usual pilgrimage to the saint," as they call it.

Initially, an attempt was made to find manuscripts in private ownership from several lists dedicated to manuscripts, called *The Catalog of Manuscripts in Private Hands*.<sup>5</sup> The problem with this list is that the names of the owners are the names of the grandparents of the present owners and most of the families no longer live in the villages or the manuscripts were no longer there.

The field research was carried out in the form of visits to houses where the manuscripts were kept and informal conversations with the owners about several topics: how the manuscripts came to this location (mainly stories told by their grandparents), what they do to preserve them, what they think is good for preservation, their attitude towards the manuscript and opinion about the value of the manuscript, what they think about getting help from professionals for preservation, and whether they would allow digitization. The owners did not engage in the conversation in all cases and it was not possible in all cases to get answers to all the questions. Instead of answering questions four owners gladly told stories about the rescue of the manuscripts and their ancestors. Some of these stories, together with the attitudes of the owners towards the manuscripts and the conditions for preservation of the manuscripts, will be presented in different sections of the thesis.

### **Analysis and interpretation**

As a result of field research twelve manuscripts were seen and partially photographed. Eleven are gospels dating from the tenth to the seventeenth century and one is a decree of an Armenian Catholicos. The manuscripts are described briefly and presented with photos and notes on their condition in the short catalog which is attached to the thesis as an appendix. It is not the aim of the thesis, however, to give a textual analysis or analysis of the miniatures

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<sup>5</sup> [Catalog of Armenian manuscripts in private hands] ed. O. Eganyan: <http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber13/12.CucakDzeragracy.pdf>, [Catalog of Armenian manuscripts in private hands] comp. Babken Ch'ugaszyan, <http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber15/16.B.Chugaszyan.pdf>, [Catalog of Armenian manuscripts in private hands] comp. O. S. Eganyan, Y. H. Vardanyan <http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber14/16.CucakDzeragracy.pdf> (accessed: 11.13.2016)

and illustrations of the manuscripts. Thus, the attached appendix is a short catalog which rather has the aim to present examples of the different conditions and states of preservation that manuscripts in private ownership can be in, regardless of their cultural, historical, and social importance. The third important fact discovered is that the owners generally do not have experience with manuscript preservation or any knowledge about manuscripts; they are simply religious objects and family heritage for them. Based on the dating and primary evaluation of the manuscripts it is out of question that they are valuable objects for Armenian history and culture. Thus, their general heritage value cannot be questioned. At the same time, for the actual research focusing on the preservation and safe-guarding issue, it was more important to understand the memory aspects and value systems attached to them by their present owners.

Another important aspect was the attitude of the community or the whole village towards people who wanted to see or touch the manuscript; they were very protective and cautious in answering questions as well as in showing the manuscript or even the house where it is kept. Also, in all the villages and towns the main attitude towards the manuscripts was similar to the attitude to relics. Both of these issues will be discussed in the thesis chapters related to certain historical events, memories connected to those events, and in relation to the historical, cultural, and social perception(s) of the manuscripts. The third important question was to understand to what extent the owners have experience with manuscript preservation or any knowledge about manuscripts; In a similar way it was also studied in which way are these manuscripts simply religious objects and family heritage for them.

After the field research, it was important to combine the results with historical studies, cultural and social perception(s) related to the manuscripts. The results of the field research made it clear that for presenting the importance and value of manuscripts in private

ownership one should look not only into their history and historical value but also into their cultural and social importance. Thus, I have attempted to show how important it is to preserve, protect, and provide open the access to private manuscripts by showing their cultural, historical and social importance and value.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The first chapter suggests several reasons why manuscripts are privately owned and gives a historical overview of the conditions of different collections of medieval Armenian manuscripts. This aims to show the issue of privately owned manuscripts, how the practice evolved, and the historical importance of manuscripts in private ownership, briefly discussing also the case of the twelve manuscripts seen during the field research.

For preservation and management it is critical to develop a clear vision to describe the present condition of these manuscripts. This step is necessary as, depending on the different states of preservation of the manuscripts, various approaches will be used for recommendations on preservation and protection. The condition will also determine the different ways and techniques suggested for the safe-guarding or digitization plan. Therefore It is also necessary to describe clearly the condition of the manuscripts in detail. Poor condition can create difficulties for identifying the manuscript, the contents of the manuscripts, and the colophons.

For discussing the cultural, social, and economic values of these privately held manuscripts, the different categories of memory that form the value of the manuscripts for the owners, for academics, and the market value will be examined. A comparative approach will be applied to the different kinds of “memory” that form the owners’ views about their manuscripts as well as the shared historical memory the manuscripts represent. These kinds of memories also influence the value manuscripts have for the owners, local people, and the shared cultural heritage. Comparative and typological methods will be used in order to



identify the various layers within the manuscript value system. The establishment and analysis of the value system for the manuscripts will provide a clear picture of how important the manuscripts are in different domains as historical, cultural, and social entities.

For the section concerned with protection, preservation, and recommendations, a comparative approach will be used to establish existing standards and best practice. A case study will be carried out reviewing two projects that are suitable and representative of similar issues and problems to the Armenian case. The outcome of the case study will be to identify the best approaches and methods to be used for preservation, protection, and digitization of privately owned manuscripts, as well as to see projects that are established and implemented in a situation similar to the Armenian case. The aim of using a comparative approach and case study method is to collect all the necessary and important steps that have worked in these projects to create recommendations that will suit the Armenian case. Based on these findings, a best practice or best strategy will be established for medieval Armenian manuscript in private ownership.

All the collected data will be used to present steps that will cover all the aspects of manuscript protection. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis will be part of the last chapter. It will provide insights into the practical problems that may occur, opportunities such an approach will give, and suggestions for implementation based on the specificities of the situation in local Armenian communities. The last step in the thesis is the recommendations which suggest that any project launched to address the issues of protection, preservation, and accessibility of medieval Armenian manuscripts in private ownership should follow those. Thus, the research, analysis and interpretation of the above mentioned issues are summarized according to the following set of questions. The answers for these questions provide the basis for the recommendations and for a new policy concerning the manuscripts.

- To what extent private organizations (also NGOs) or individuals can be involved in raising financial sources for helping the preservation of the manuscripts?
- Who are the people to be involved in any related projects dealing with this manuscripts because they are a special role in the process or in communication?
- To what extent international organization and researchers should be involved in the process?
- How important and urgent is the cataloging and digitization of the manuscripts.
- To what extent training programs can play a role in this process?
- To what extent the public access (for example on the internet) to some of the data related to these manuscripts is important for the process.
- How can the issue be solved concerning the public access to some data and the problem of the safety of the manuscripts?

# Chapter 1 - The Issue of Privately Owned Manuscripts, Historical Overview, and Problems Concerning Preservation

Medieval Armenian manuscripts have long been a center of attention of scholars as they are an important part of the Armenian history, heritage, and culture. Some privately owned medieval manuscripts, however, have not been properly studied and examined, mostly because of limited access or the lack of it. The difficulty of getting access not only makes it harder to study manuscripts, but also preserve them in an organized and transparent way. This is a particularly important issue as most of the manuscripts kept in the houses of the owners are not under adequate conditions for preservation.

All twelve manuscripts in private ownership viewed during the field research have their own “biographies” and stories of being the part of the family heritage for generations or stories of being saved from destruction. The reasons that these manuscripts are in their present location vary a great deal; some of them have belonged to the family for ages and they have carried them as relics wherever they migrated, whereas others were saved during the Armenian Genocide of 1915 or the massacres at the end of nineteenth century. Some patterns emerged during my research concerning the reasons why the manuscripts are in the present location, and therefore it is worth looking at some historical events or processes which heavily influenced the modern history of these manuscripts. These aspects are important as they had a major effect on the attitude of the population towards manuscripts which itself changes their value and makes them even more precious and important. The social relations developed around these manuscripts and the traditional attitude and cultural religious perception of these manuscripts by the owners and the communities are the intangible aspect of the heritage value and by no means should be neglected. This

demonstrated that medieval Armenian manuscripts need to be preserved and studied carefully.

Throughout Armenian history there have been many wars and invasions that had an awful impact on the cultural heritage of the country, including the written heritage and manuscripts. This fact is mentioned by all scholars who have studied and written articles on manuscript losses. One scholar, K'olanjyan, has particularly mentioned several of the destructions in his article, first mentioning that during all the invasions and wars with other destructions and murders cultural values were also destroyed, manuscripts among them. He mentions that during history many manuscripts “were kept as hostages by the enemy and then a ransom was asked for them” paid, of course, by the Armenians.<sup>6</sup>

Another important issue discussed in the article is that there is no written history of the loss and rescue of medieval Armenian manuscripts, but he brings several sources according to which there were a number of destructions of manuscripts in the medieval ages. According to Step'anos Ōrbelyan, a historian that K'olanjyan refers to, one such destruction happened in 1170 by the Seljuks when more than 10,000 manuscripts were destroyed in Syuniq Baghaberd<sup>7</sup>. This was just one of the many such events that happened before and after.<sup>8</sup> But after all the disastrous Arab, Seljuk, Persian, Mongol Tatar, and other invasions, the worst massacres and genocide happened<sup>9</sup> in the Ottoman Empire in 1915, which was the greatest humanitarian crisis in Armenian history and swept away a great part of Armenian culture in just fifty years.

Some of the twelve manuscripts examined during my field research were saved from destruction during the Genocide of 1915 or during earlier oppressions and Hamidian

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<sup>6</sup> Suren K'olanjyan , *Հայ կալույթի կորուստն և նրա պահպանման հարցը* [The Armenian Massacres and Our Manuscript Losses], 97, <http://echmiadzin.asj-oa.am/4801/1/p.96-107.pdf> (accessed: 11.05.2016)

<sup>7</sup> An Armenian fortress in a region (Syuniq) in the south of Armenia

<sup>8</sup> S. K'olanjyan , 97, <http://echmiadzin.asj-oa.am/4801/1/p.96-107.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> S. K'olanjyan , 97, <http://echmiadzin.asj-oa.am/4801/1/p.96-107.pdf>

massacres<sup>10</sup> and brought to Armenia. One of the manuscripts was bought from an unidentified source and another one was a gift to the owner. Most of the manuscripts came to their present locations in either the nineteenth or early twentieth century, mainly after armed conflicts and the Genocide of 1915.<sup>11</sup> This is also the case for some of the collections in Matenadaran, which gives a historical explanation and reason why the private collections started to be formed later.<sup>12</sup> This should be examined as it had a major impact on the formation of private collections of manuscripts.

Some of the owners mentioned that according to their grandparents' and their parents' stories, manuscripts were saved during the massacres or the Genocide, hidden somewhere, and then taken to Eastern Armenia.<sup>13</sup> Four manuscripts out of twelve seen during the field research are from one region; Erzurum in nowadays Turkey.<sup>14</sup> Those manuscripts are from different villages of Erzurum region. The Majadya (southern Georgia, Armenian village) manuscript was brought to its place in 1829-1830 by the ancestors of the owner<sup>15</sup>, another manuscript from a village nearby Gyumri, was also initially in a province (Baberd) of the Erzurum region and brought to Eastern Armenia in the nineteenth century. The other two

<sup>10</sup> For further details on the issues of the Armenian oppressions in the nineteenth century, Hamidian massacres and the Genocide of 1915 see: James Reid, "Total War, the Annihilation Ethic, and the Armenian Genocide, 1870-1918", in *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard Hovhannisyan ( New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 21-47.

<sup>11</sup> This information is based on the marginal notes of the manuscripts and the stories that the owners told about the manuscripts, and will be discussed in detail later on.

<sup>12</sup> This statement was concluded from the facts presented in the *Introduction* of the catalog of Armenian manuscripts in Matenadaran: Յ ու լ ց ա լ ձ է ու գ ու ց Մ ա շ տ ո տ յ ի ա ն լ լ ա ն Մ ա տ ե ն ի ա ղ ա ղ ա ն ի [Catalog of the Armenian manuscripts of the Mashtots' Matenadaran], vol. A. comp. O. Eganyan, A. Zeyt'nyan, P. Ant'abyan. ed. Levon Khachikyan, Artashes Mnats'akanyan (Yerevan, 1965). [http://www.abcd.am/abcd/bookview\\_v2\\_4.php?p\\_id\\_text=7172&p\\_filter=#.WCijvtKLTIV](http://www.abcd.am/abcd/bookview_v2_4.php?p_id_text=7172&p_filter=#.WCijvtKLTIV), (accessed: 11.19.2016)

<sup>13</sup> People called and still call the eastern part of the historically Armenian land in the nineteenth and twentieth century Eastern Armenia and the western part of it, formerly in the Ottoman Empire (now Turkey), Western Armenia.

<sup>14</sup> For further details about the region of Erzurum and its history see: *Armenian Karin/ Erzerum*, ed. Richard Hovhannisyan (Costa Mesa California: Mazda publisher Inc. , 2003)

<sup>15</sup> Elya Saribekyan, *Մաջ աղի ալ ն լ ալ պահ վնդի մի ալ է տար անի մի ալ է ն* [About a manuscript in Majadya]: 7 (Էջ մի ածի ն, 2012) [http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2012/2012\(7\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2012/2012(7).pdf), 131-136 (accessed: 11.19.2016)

manuscripts from Sarian village were brought to Gyumri around 1832 and later on taken to Sarian village. This fact caught my attention and after the research it became clear that there were oppressions during 1828-1830<sup>16</sup> and the later periods in the nineteenth century resulting not only from Turkish policies but also because Armenian population was caught in a trap between Turkey and Russia, or other conflicts involving Turkey.<sup>17</sup> The demographic research<sup>18</sup> of the same time shows also how a massive flow of refugees could come and came to Eastern Armenia. Koumjyan also mentions in his article "The Decline and Revival of Erzerum: Sixteenth - Eighteenth Centuries" about how written records and the colophons of Armenian manuscripts from Erzerum show the depopulation of Armenians during 1828-1830, although several years later Armenians again came back and started to reconstruct the community.<sup>19</sup>

The rest of the manuscripts were brought to Armenia during 1852-1877 when again there were armed conflicts in the region<sup>20</sup>, and later 1885-1896 (Hamidian massacres), up to 1915 and afterwards (the result of the Genocide).

Stories like this are also usual for some of the manuscripts that are in Matenadaran which were taken there from different private collections formed at the beginning of the twentieth century and onwards. However, as will be seen later in this chapter, many manuscripts were brought to Matenadaran from Western Armenia<sup>21</sup> in 1915 to save them from destruction and this information confirms the large scale of destruction in manuscript heritage during this period. The impact of the Genocide of 1915 on cultural heritage, including manuscripts, has been a theme of discussion for many years and this is an important

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<sup>16</sup> Rich'ard Hovhannisyan, *Preface* in *Armenian Karin/ Erzerum*, ed. Rich'ard Hovhannisyan, 3

<sup>17</sup> James Reid, "How the Turks Rule Armenia" in *Armenian Karin/ Erzerum*, ed. Rich'ard Hovhannisyan, 147-149, 167-170

<sup>18</sup> Ashot Melkonyan "The Demography of the Province of Erzerum: sixteenth-Twentieth Centuries" in *Armenian Karin/ Erzerum*, ed. Rich'ard Hovhannisyan, 141-143, 145

<sup>19</sup> Dickran Kouymjian, "The Decline and Revival of Erzerum: Sixteenth - Eighteenth Centuries" in *Armenian Karin/ Erzerum*, ed. Rich'ard Hovhannisyan, 133

<sup>20</sup> Rich'ard Hovhannisyan, *Preface* in *Armenian Karin/ Erzerum*, ed. Rich'ard Hovhannisyan, 3

<sup>21</sup> James Reid, "How the Turks Rule Armenia" in *Armenian Karin/ Erzerum*, ed. Rich'ard Hovhannisyan, 156-157

point to look at, as it will explain how manuscripts were taken from their initial location and how many of them got lost, which gives another good explanation of how some of the private collections could come into existence.

There are a number of works of different scholars dedicated to the loss of heritage, including manuscripts, during the Armenian Genocide of 1915.<sup>22</sup> Some of the articles from the 1980s or much earlier discuss collections from special schools or scriptoria, while more recent articles have tried to compile results and give some figures on how many manuscripts were lost and how many were saved, which is still problematic as most of the collections by 1915 did not have even simple cataloging.<sup>23</sup>

There is no scholarly literature about how the private collections or privately owned manuscripts evolved and why they are in their present locations.<sup>24</sup> These manuscripts need special attention for both their historical and cultural importance and value and for their safety. There are several lists that present privately owned manuscripts. One can conclude from the catalogues that manuscripts were found only by the efforts of scholars who went to do field research, saw manuscripts and catalogued them. Those efforts to catalogue private manuscripts are summarized in a few “Catalogues of Manuscripts in Private Ownership”

<sup>22</sup> The main articles consulted for this issue are as follows: LusineTumanyan, *Լիմ եւ Կտուց մենաստանները Մեծ Եղեռնի օրերին* [Lim and Ktuts‘ monasteries during the years of Genocide] [http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2013/2013\(4\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2013/2013(4).pdf) , 96 (accessed: 11.19.2016)

Gēorg Ter-Vardanyan, *Հայերէն ձեռագրերի կորսուած հավաքածուների ցուցակների հրատարակման խնդիրը* [The Issue of Publishing the Catalogs of the Lost Collections of Armenian Manuscripts ] [http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2003/2003\(1\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2003/2003(1).pdf) , 54-55 (accessed: 11.19.2016)

Suren K‘olanjyan, *Հայկական կոտորածները և մեր ձեռագրական կորուստները* [The Armenian Massacres and Our Losses of Manuscripts] <http://echmiadzin.asj-oa.am/4801/1/p.96-107.pdf%20> , 95 (accessed: 11.19.2016)

<sup>23</sup>Both K‘olanjyan [The Armenian Massacres and Our Losses of Manuscripts] <http://echmiadzin.asj-oa.am/4801/1/p.96-107.pdf%20> , 98 and Ter-Vardanyan agree around this issue.

<sup>24</sup>Many scholars would indicate that it is a common knowledge that those manuscripts are so widely dispersed because many families took them to save during the Genocide or in some cases the manuscripts belong to the families generation after generation but it is anyway essential to write about this.

written and compiled by different scholars.<sup>25</sup> There are also numerous catalogues devoted to collections of individual monasteries, but the aforementioned catalogues concentrate on manuscripts owned by individuals.

It becomes clear how dispersed the manuscripts were if one just looks how and where from manuscripts were gathered and brought to Matenadaran. In the Introduction of the *Catalog of the Armenian manuscripts of the Mashtots' Matenadaran*<sup>26</sup> it is described in detail how the collections were gathered and donated to Matenadaran and how the Matenadaran collection formed. This is a remarkable way to see how many collections appeared after the massacres and Genocide and shows at the same time how dispersed were the collections all over the World. And many collections still are in different places abroad and in Armenia.

According to one of the catalogues, in 1955 thirty five manuscripts were gathered from different cities of the former Soviet Union (Leninakan [now Gyumri], Yerevan, Rostov, Astrakhan, Teodosia) as well as abroad (Paris, Marseilles, Beirut) and given to the Matenadaran.<sup>27</sup> Later, in 1971-1972, some manuscripts from the private collections in USA were also donated to the Matenadaran, but some still remain in the USA.<sup>28</sup> The latter

<sup>25</sup> [Catalog of Armenian manuscripts in private hands] ed. O. Eganyan: <http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber13/12.CucakDzeragrak.pdf>

[Catalog of Armenian manuscripts in private hands] comp. Babken Ch'ugaszyan, <http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber15/16.B.Chugaszyan.pdf>

[Catalog of Armenian manuscripts in private hands] comp. O. S. Eganyan, Y. H. Vardanyan <http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber14/16.CucakDzeragrak.pdf> (accessed: 11.13.2016)

<sup>26</sup> Յո՛ւ լ գ ալ ձ է ուզ ք ազ Մաշտոտի մանկան Մատենադարանի [Catalog of the Armenian manuscripts of the Mashtots' Matenadaran], vol. A. comp. O. Eganyan, A. Zeyt'unyan, P'. Ant'abyan, ed. Levon Khachikyan, Artashes Mnats'akanyan: Yerevan, 1965.

[http://www.abcd.am/abcd/bookview\\_v2\\_4.php?p\\_id\\_text=7172&p\\_filter=#.WCijvtKLTIV](http://www.abcd.am/abcd/bookview_v2_4.php?p_id_text=7172&p_filter=#.WCijvtKLTIV)

<sup>27</sup> K. Yuzbashyan, Պե տալ մանկան Մատենադարանի հայ երեւելի ձեռագրերի հավաքածուն 1955թ. [The growth of the collection of Armenian manuscripts in Matenadaran in 1955] *Բանբեր* Մատենադարանի, 1955, Yerevan, <http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber3/14.K.Yuzbashyan.pdf>, 231

<sup>28</sup> Հայ երեւելի ձեռագրեր Ամերիկայի Միացյալ Նահանգներում [Armenian manuscripts in the United States of America], comp. B. Ch'ugaszyan. *Բանբեր* Մատենադարանի, 12 (1977).

<http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber12/9.B.Chugaszyan.pdf>



donations also became possible because of the individual efforts of several scholars who summed up their work in a catalogue named “Armenian Manuscripts in the United States of America”<sup>29</sup> and also created a catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the UK<sup>30</sup>. The catalogue does not include all manuscripts, but just the ones that the scholars managed to see, and concluded that “their trip to the USA showed that there are a great number of manuscripts dispersed all over the world and there should be organized steps towards finding them”.<sup>31</sup> One of the articles indicates that, according to Catholikos Mateus B. Izmirlyans’ Decree of October 21, 1909, all the manuscripts from the Yerevan, Georgia, Shamakhi, Karabakh, Atrpatakan, Astrakhan, and Besarabia regions were brought to Ejmiatsin because of possible destruction.<sup>32</sup> This list continues further on

Steps were taken also to find privately owned manuscripts in Armenia, which were also summed up in a number of catalogues. Most of these manuscripts dispersed both in Armenia and abroad have one thing in common, they were taken there at the end of nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century: some of them were brought by refugees and still belong to their families, some of them belonged to the family for generations, and others were bought by collectors in the first half of twentieth century or later. All this shows that the Genocide of 1915 had a great role in the formation of private

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Հայ երեւնականագրերի չորսուհույի Ամերիկայի մասին, [Armenian manuscripts in North America] comp. Zaven Ts. Arzumanyan, *Բանբեր մասին հայարարված*, 11 (1973)  
<http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber11/16.Z.Arzumanyan.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Հայ երեւնականագրերի Ամերիկայի Միացյալ Նահանգներում. [Armenian manuscripts in the United States of America] Comp. B. Ch‘ugaszyan. *Բանբեր մասին հայարարված*, 12 (1977).  
<http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber12/9.B.Chugaszyan.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Տնւցակ հայ երեւնականագրերի Լոնդոնի Վելուք Ինստիտուտի գրադարանին. [Catalog of Armenian Manuscripts in the London Wellcome Institute] Comp. Vrezh Nersisyan, in *Բանբեր մասին հայարարված* 15 (1986). <http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber15/15.V.Nersisyan.pdf>  
 Հայ երեւնականագրերի Անգլիայի մասին. [New Armenian Manuscripts in England] Comp. Vrezh Nersisyan. *Բանբեր մասին հայարարված*: 13 (1980).  
<http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber13/13.V.Nersisyan.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> [Armenian manuscripts in the United States of America] Comp. B. Ch‘ugaszyan.  
<http://www.matenadaran.am/ftp/data/Banber12/9.B.Chugaszyan.pdf>, 219

<sup>32</sup> *Եղեռնը և մեր ձեռնարկները հորհուրդներին և փրկվածներին* [The Genocide and Our Lost and Survived Manuscripts] ed. Գէորգ Տէր-Վարդանյան [Georg Ter-Vardanyan] (Etchmiatsin: Մայր Աթոռ Սուրբ Էջմիածին Հրատարակչություն, 2015), 8

collections both in Armenia and abroad. Several catalogs of privately owned manuscripts in Armenia describe a number of manuscripts that were either brought from their initial locations to Armenia in nineteenth and twentieth century in order to save them, or belonged to the families as heritage from their ancestors who were priests or other clerics. The latter will be seen in the individual examples of manuscripts that are the subjects of this thesis.

Scholars agree that the Armenian Genocide of 1915 was a destruction of heritage as much as a massacre of people.<sup>33</sup> As early as the years of the Genocide some scholars were thinking of ways to bring attention to the issue of manuscript protection and cataloguing. Articles even published in newspapers about the issues concerning the cataloguing and protection of manuscripts.<sup>34</sup> Scholars such as Hovhannes Gazanchyan, who himself became the victim of the Genocide of 1915<sup>35</sup>, published important articles calling attention to the issue. His article gave scholars dealing with this issue later a chance to see the problem through the eyes of a witness of the conditions that existed for manuscripts and the events that led to the loss of so many manuscripts.

As early as the end of the nineteenth century the work of cataloguing was initiated and the great interest in manuscripts developed. The scholars started to catalog professionally to make efforts to examine the miniatures and the text, and even wished to compile a catalogue of all manuscripts, but the work was hindered because of the Genocide.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Lusine Tumanyan, [Lim and Ktuts' monasteries during the years of Genocide] [http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2013/2013\(4\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2013/2013(4).pdf) , 96 (accessed: 11.19.2016)  
 Gēorg Ter-Vardanyan, [The Issue of Publishing the Catalogs of the Lost Collections of Armenian Manuscripts] [http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2003/2003\(1\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2003/2003(1).pdf) , 54-55 (accessed: 11.19.2016)  
 Suren K'olanyan, Հայկական զանգվածային սպանությունների և վերականգնման աշխատանքները [The Armenian Massacres and Our Losses of Manuscripts] <http://echmiadzin.asj-oa.am/4801/1/p.96-107.pdf> %20 , 95 (accessed: 11.19.2016)

<sup>34</sup> Suren K'olanyan, Հայկական զանգվածային սպանությունների և վերականգնման աշխատանքները [The Armenian Massacres and Our Losses of Manuscripts], in *Էջմիածին*, 1965, 5-6-7  
[http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/1965/1965\(5-6-7\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/1965/1965(5-6-7).pdf) (133), 133

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

K'olanjyan used Gazanchyan's article to describe the situation in which the monasteries with their libraries existed. It becomes clear that as early as 1901 there were severe problems with preservation in churches and among private owners. There was no catalogue, even the simplest, at the churches "which should have not been that much of a problem" according to Gazanchyan.<sup>37</sup> So at that point already, he saw the necessity "to send people out to the villages to catalogue and examine the manuscripts, to centralize the catalogues on the Patriarchate of Constantinople"<sup>38</sup>, so that they knew what manuscripts they had and their locations and could take control of the most important ones.

This process would make it possible to know the value of manuscripts in villages and would help to stop the sale of the manuscripts that had already started.<sup>39</sup> The latter fact is important as this gives another reason for how manuscripts appeared in collections abroad, especially when a remarkable case of selling several manuscripts is described in the article. According to it, J. Markvart, a German professor of Armenian studies, had acquired four or five manuscripts (among which two were parchments richly decorated with miniatures) from a Turkish sergeant who went to Berlin to sell them to the Nationalbibliothek, indicating that they were thrown into a street in a village by soldiers and he took some 10, out of which he decided to sell 4 or 5. The professor took them and then gave them to the Armenian repository of Vienna.<sup>40</sup>

The exact number of manuscripts that existed before the Genocide is not known, although starting from the middle of the twentieth century several scholars have attempted to write about the overall losses of Armenian manuscripts because of the Armenian Genocide. K'olanjyan mentions that the destructions happened twice -- once during 1895-1896 Hamid

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<sup>37</sup> Some parts of Gazanchyan's article in K'olanjyan's article: K'olanjyan, [The Armenian Massacres and Our Losses of Manuscripts] [http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/1965/1965\(5-6-7\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/1965/1965(5-6-7).pdf) (133), 134

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 144

massacres and then in 1915<sup>41</sup> -- which also makes it difficult to compute the exact number of losses. But several scholars have gathered the information available about the losses from different monasteries and calculated an approximate number.

The destruction of Western Armenian churches and monasteries took place from 1895 to 1923; valuable objects, including manuscripts, were either stolen or burnt. In the 1950s scholars wrote about the destruction of heritage and manuscript losses.<sup>42</sup> It is impossible to find out, however, whether most of the manuscripts now privately owned were among the lost manuscripts as a catalogue of all manuscripts did not exist before 1915,<sup>43</sup> and in cases when the catalogues survived the manuscripts did not survive, which was the case with the largest catalogues,<sup>44</sup> which in their turn included just the small number of manuscripts existing at the time.<sup>45</sup> During the Genocide, refugees leaving for Eastern Armenia risked their lives<sup>46</sup> to save manuscripts, which have been considered sacred in Armenian tradition and relics inherited from the ancestors. So because there was no catalogue before 1915, neither can the number of lost manuscripts be known for certain.

The disastrous effect of the events at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century can be shown by the case of one region in Western Armenia, Vaspurakan, as there are a few primary records and different scholars have discussed the saved and lost manuscripts. The monasteries of the region had rich libraries where important manuscripts and books were kept, which were destroyed, but a small number were saved by migrants from there coming to Eastern Armenia, as the monasteries were also a safe haven for many people.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid 135

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, 133

<sup>43</sup>Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 136

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 135

<sup>47</sup> LusineTumanyan, [Lim and Ktuts' monasteries during the years of Genocide] [http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2013/2013\(4\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2013/2013(4).pdf) , 97

Some manuscripts were hidden in secret places, and others from five monasteries in the region were saved and sent to Ejmiatsin thanks to one of the monks<sup>48</sup> in 1915 by the order of Catholikos Gevorg E, who ordered: “Take all the manuscripts and other objects, catalogue them and safely[(in a safe road] bring them to Ejmiatsin.”<sup>49</sup> As a result, 87 manuscripts were saved with the help of migrants, 660 manuscripts were lost, which according to the monk, were sent but did not arrive in Ejmiatsin. In total (up to the 1960s), 1473 manuscripts in the Matendaran are from that region, saved during the years of Genocide and afterwards, but Tumanyan suggests that not necessarily all the manuscripts that reached Matenadaran are from those monasteries.<sup>50</sup>

This case shows how people cared about the manuscripts and how many intellectuals of the time were concerned and attempted to save them, but it also shows how disastrous armed conflicts are for heritage, as the saved manuscripts were just a small amount of what was kept in the region.<sup>51</sup> Also, even under such danger and necessity for safety, in 1915 some priests did not agree to give the manuscripts to save them. As a result, many refugees reported that Turkish soldiers gathered the manuscripts from one of the churches and took them somewhere after they learned they were important and valuable.<sup>52</sup>

These issues show how armed conflicts and the Genocide caused the cultural disaster that also destroyed manuscripts. It also gives a reason for how some of the private collections or privately owned manuscripts appeared in their present locations not only in Armenia but also abroad. Together with the stories told by the owners about the rescue of the manuscripts

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid, 106

<sup>49</sup> K’olanjyan, [The Armenian Massacres and Our Losses of Manuscripts] [http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/1965/1965\(5-6-7\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/1965/1965(5-6-7).pdf), 141

<sup>50</sup> LusineTumanyan, [Lim and Ktuts’ monasteries during the years of Genocide] [http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2013/2013\(4\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2013/2013(4).pdf) 107

<sup>51</sup> According to K’olanjyan , Vaspurakan was one of the biggest centers of scriptoria and one manuscript in Vaspurakan mentions that there were 3,124 manuscripts only in Lim (one of the monasteries in Vaspurakan), showing what a loss the region suffered. K’olanjyan, [The Armenian Massacres and Our Losses of Manuscripts] [http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/1965/1965\(5-6-7\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/1965/1965(5-6-7).pdf), 141

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

and these historical facts and all the articles written about the loss of the manuscripts it can be concluded that among all the disastrous events that happened during Armenian history the Genocide had the most disastrous effect on manuscript collections and that thanks to brave people many manuscripts were saved and formed the privately owned collections dispersed all over Armenia and abroad. Presently, private collections that were saved and preserved for so many ages are in danger from many harmful factors starting from weather and humidity in the house, ending with the limited experience of the owners to deal with the manuscripts. Besides the necessity for protection, these manuscripts have not been examined properly and are not available for researchers, even though several of them are of great importance.

## **1.1 Risks for manuscripts in private ownership**

After the above discussion it becomes clear that there may be undesirable consequences of the private ownership of manuscripts. There are several problems which raise the possible risks that manuscripts may undergo because they are in private hands. Those problems are mainly the lack of necessary protection or preservation. No funding is available for preservation or any other work needed for manuscripts, no in situ technical support even from state organizations, and no digitization possibilities.

None of the owners has practical experience of dealing with manuscript preservation, conservation or protection. The steps owners think will help to preserve the manuscripts may endanger the manuscripts and even lead to serious damage. Several owners thought that if the manuscript is covered with many cloths then it will be preserved, but as the manuscripts were kept in humid rooms or in the corners of rooms the cloth just preserved the humidity longer and damaged the manuscripts. Another common thought was that the sun would be good for the manuscripts, which can lead to severe damage of the folios and illuminations.

Another potential risk for the manuscripts is the smoke from the candles that usually accompany manuscripts in the room where they are kept. Sometimes the candles are put right in front of the manuscript as many people light them while praying. Although there is no obvious threat of fire in the rooms, the smoke affects the manuscript and also the constantly changing temperature is hardly a good impact on them.

So it can be concluded from the discussion of the chapter that scholars agree that the major destruction for manuscripts happened at the end of nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. From the scale of the destruction and the facts about how many manuscripts were lost and how many private collections appeared after the Genocide it is concluded that those destructions were the major reason of formation of those collections. The stories of the owners and individual manuscripts on how those were saved or the story of when and how those were brought to the present location also contribute to the latter conclusion. From those stories it becomes clear that many people not being clerics also felt responsibility to save those manuscripts and take those with them. This attitude is rather a traditional one and is pertinent presently in Armenia among the owners and communities having the manuscripts. Also it became clear that there are manuscripts in private ownership not only in Armenia but also abroad and that most of these manuscripts are not researched and maintained in regulated ways.

## Chapter 2 - The Cultural, Economic, and Social Values of the Manuscripts in Private Ownership

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the historical, cultural<sup>53</sup> and social importance of privately owned manuscripts and the different types of values attached to them. At the same time, another aspect will also be discussed: how their cultural values are perceived within the different layers of academic and social domains. It is also an attempt to show the attitude and value society connects to the manuscripts and discuss the reasons for that attitude. The existing attitude of the population towards these manuscripts that I encountered during the field trip carried out in the summer of 2015 (July – August) can be explained by unique historical events and cultural experiences that the owners have inherited together with the manuscripts.

All the layers of value system are interrelated and thus one cannot observe them entirely separately (they are interrelated both by the reasons for acquiring value and the consequences of it). To make it clear, if it is discovered that a manuscript has an important cultural and social value then it automatically raises the economic value. What will be discussed in the following paragraphs is rather an attempt to show the specific value of medieval Armenian manuscripts and the particular reasons for the value system the owners and the local population holds for these manuscripts.

The different layers of values of these manuscripts have as cultural objects are directly connected to their cultural, historical and social importance. Basically, all the values that privately owned medieval Armenian manuscripts share have different accentuation and meaning for different social layers: the general society, social groups, and individual members of society or of those social groups. Thus, the importance, role and value of the

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<sup>53</sup> I use the term cultural in this chapter to indicate art historical, religious, and symbolic values of the manuscripts, while the term social is used to describe the special interpersonal, intergroup or intercommunity relations formed around or because of the values shared about these manuscripts.



manuscripts, besides the value they have for the scholarship, will be presented on several levels:

- The perception of the manuscripts in the scholarship, their academic value; that is, general historical, art historical, and religious importance
- The common attitude of the society towards manuscripts (as relics) and an attempt to show how and why it formed in Armenian tradition.
- The owners' attitude,
- The communities' attitude (of the family, neighborhood (in the case of the city), and villages),

To give a better picture and examples of different perceptions and attitudes, some stories, memories, attitudes, important facts, and values connected to some of the twelve manuscripts examined during the field research will also be discussed. Medieval Armenian manuscripts have great historical and cultural value for Armenian cultural heritage in general.

It is very important from the very beginning to note that the manuscripts in private ownership should be taken as Armenian heritage in their entirety of being not only 'objects' of heritage that is 'tangible ones', but also with their 'intangible component'; that is their cultural, religious and social importance and value. According to UNESCO definition of Intangible heritage:

Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

...An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Intangible Cultural Heritage: What is Intangible Cultural heritage, UNESCO official webpage: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>: (accessed 11.17.2016)

Thus it is aimed to show that objects, in this case manuscripts, may also have or create special intangible heritage around them. This idea will be developed through the chapter to show that the manuscripts in private ownership should not be taken as separate objects of art value for they have also a layer of intangible heritage in the form of traditional attitude, perception attached to them by the community, and special social relations formed around the manuscripts. They should be considered a part of heritage in both tangible and intangible dimensions.

From the scholarly perspective the cultural values of the privately owned manuscripts are historical, religious, and art historical. In his article about the manuscripts losses during the Genocide, K'olanjyan refers to the words of Catholicos Garegin A Hovsep'yants' about the lost manuscripts: "Armenian art, Armenian culture and thought, centuries of different works of art and the Armenian spirit were embodied in those manuscripts which were also martyred and largely destroyed."<sup>55</sup> These words describe well how important medieval Armenian manuscripts are for different academic domains and also show his own attitude towards manuscripts, which is similar to the perception of most of Armenians. For the general population, however, the perspective of the historical value of the manuscripts differs from the one that scholars have; society basically connects the historical value to the fact that these manuscripts were created by their ancestors and they connect it to the religious importance, thus making these manuscripts sacred objects, an idea that will be discussed below.

The historical importance of these manuscripts is mostly connected to the fact that most of the privately owned manuscripts are religious texts, as in case of the manuscripts seen during the field research, twelve of which were gospels and one a decree of Ep'rem Catholicos. Generally, medieval Armenian manuscripts of religious origin are important

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<sup>55</sup> Suren K'olanjyan , [The Armenian massacres and Our Manuscript Losses] <http://echmiadzin.asj-oa.am/4801/1/p.96-107.pdf>, 96 (accessed: 11.19.2016).

sources for learning more about Christian religious practice, traditions, and rituals of medieval times and Christianity in general. The colophons are also significant for the information they carry about different historical facts and names of the time when they were created. Later marginal notes also have great importance from a historical perspective as they may shed light on particular historical events.

Mathews mentions that "The Illuminated manuscript was the most important visual medium of expression in Armenian culture. It is to manuscripts that one must turn for the most complete artistic statement of the Armenian world view and the most eloquent evidence of the Armenians' sense of place in relation to the peoples around them."<sup>56</sup>

Thus medieval Armenian manuscripts are the basic medieval art form representing the medieval practice of painting preserved in large numbers, which gives art historians the opportunity to study the medieval art of painting. So, the illuminations in medieval Armenian manuscripts are of great cultural value. Another important issue of cultural and historical value is that these are good sources to examine the work of medieval artists, scribes, and painters. The colophons are good sources for scholars to learn more about the artists and scribes of the time.

According to Nersesyan "The manuscript has traditionally been the Armenian religious object par excellence... Armenian manuscripts were the locus of faith to be treasured and guarded."

Usually manuscript illuminators and scribes never praised themselves for creating works of art, but they were considered to be craftsmen and the holders of a long-established religious and artistic tradition; as such they were well appreciated. One finds proof of this statement in nearly every colophon of every manuscript, where scribes apply a formulaic statement about themselves as "not important, ignorant, servants of God" before mentioning

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas Mathews, "Chapter III: The Art of the Armenian Manuscript" in *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts* eds. Thomas Mathews and Roger Wieck (New York: Princeton University Press, 1994), 39.

their names.<sup>57</sup> There were exceptions in matter of several illustrators, however, not being the strict holders of the traditional way of decorating the manuscripts as they were not members of any of the famous scriptoria but rather lived in remote areas in a church far from the centers and thus had a certain degree of individual expression while illustrating<sup>58</sup>. The latter fact is important as manuscripts in private ownership can also be very rare examples of medieval art or representing special stylistic methods that were very rarely used by the illustrators.

The owners of those manuscripts do not know the value of the cultural goods they have in all cases, which means that they are not aware of the historical or general cultural importance of their manuscript. The value given to a manuscript also depends on the owner, but in most cases the religious importance and family value are the only values recognized by the owners. As Klammer indicates in his article "Social, Cultural and Economic Values of Cultural Goods" "...what permits us to call cultural goods cultural are their cultural values, that is, their evocations of things cultural. Cultural values... are the values that evoke a quality over and beyond the economic and the social."<sup>59</sup>

Armenians have always had a unique attitude towards not only manuscripts but towards books and writings in general and this is definitely a cultural, traditional aspect. The main attitude of the Armenian population towards manuscripts and written culture is like that towards relics. I found this attitude characteristic in all the villages and towns I visited during field work. Most manuscript owners have a special room in their house where they keep the manuscript and in many cases even a so called "sacred corner" for them where the visitors

<sup>57</sup> Hamlet Petrosyan, *Symbols of Armenian Identity, Writing and the book*, [https://www.academia.edu/1115637/Symbols\\_of\\_Armenian\\_Identity\\_Writing\\_and\\_The\\_Book](https://www.academia.edu/1115637/Symbols_of_Armenian_Identity_Writing_and_The_Book), 52 (accessed: 11.19.2016).

<sup>58</sup> Irina Drampyan, *Թորոս Ռոսլինի կյանքը և նրա արվեստը*, [Toros Roslin: The Life and the Art] in *Պատմա-բանասիրական հանդես*, 1, <http://hpi.asj-oa.am/5639/>, 187-205. (accessed: 12/07/2015), 188

<sup>59</sup> Arjo Klammer *Social, Cultural and Economic Values of Cultural Goods*, 2001, p. 9, [http://culturalheritage.ceistorvergata.it/virtual\\_library/Art\\_KLAMER\\_A\\_2001-Social\\_cultural\\_and\\_economic\\_values.pdf](http://culturalheritage.ceistorvergata.it/virtual_library/Art_KLAMER_A_2001-Social_cultural_and_economic_values.pdf)

can come and light a candle or pray. The perception of these manuscripts as relics or sacred objects is similar even if the manuscript is not a gospel. The Armenian population has a special attitude towards manuscripts and books generally, but only manuscripts are called “sacred books” and have a “sacred corner” for them. In all of the villages I visited the answer to the question “Can you tell us the house where they keep the manuscript” was “Oh, you mean you want to know where the saint of our village is?” Thus in all the villages I visited they identified the manuscript as “the saint of the village.”

This interpretation of medieval manuscripts as “saintly” or relics has persisted in Armenian culture for ages and the existing attitude of the population towards written culture, including manuscripts and books, has been formulated throughout Armenian history. From the early fifth century when the Armenian alphabet was created it was mainly used for religious texts as both Petrosyan and Nersesyan refer to it. One can find the earliest examples of the “sacred perception” of the manuscripts in the colophons of the manuscripts written by the scribes themselves. A good example of how scribes “put obligation on the future generations to save the manuscripts”<sup>60</sup> can be found in a Gospel dating from 1411 presented by Nersesyan in his book:

Let no one remove it from this place,  
Let no one hand it over to an infidel.  
Should there be any fear of Muslims,  
Let them put it in safe-keeping in the fort,  
Or take it to the island of Cyprus;  
And when the danger has passed,  
Bring it back to this place,  
And receive their fitting reward<sup>61</sup>

This was quite a usual practice with medieval manuscripts, and writing continued to be used for “sacred communication throughout the Middle Ages”<sup>62</sup> which of course does not

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<sup>60</sup> Vrej Nersesyan, *The Bible in the Armenian Tradition* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2001), 50.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>62</sup> Hamlet Petrosyan, *Symbols of Armenian Identity, Writing and the book*, [https://www.academia.edu/1115637/Symbols\\_of\\_Armenian\\_Identity\\_Writing\\_and\\_The\\_Book](https://www.academia.edu/1115637/Symbols_of_Armenian_Identity_Writing_and_The_Book), 52 (accessed: 11.19.2016).

exclude the secular writing but rather shows that the main and largest part of the writing were religious texts. According to H. Petrosyan, writing was not supposed to be used for "mundane" matters. At the same time he mentions:

Anyone planning to create, an individual work was expected to explain the worth of his idea. Nevertheless, there is a considerable variety among the' nearly 30,000 extant handwritten books from the Middle Ages, which include texts devoted to history, philosophy, geography, mathematics, medicine, literature, and music. Most of these early books had a didactic purpose, and only a few texts were written (or have survived) about economic life or about the lives and works of craftspeople.<sup>63</sup>

He also suggests that "the modesty scribes displayed in the colophons was because they questioned their worthiness to animate the divine word and whether they deserved to be remembered in the 'book of life'".<sup>64</sup>

The story common among the general population about how the alphabet was created, according to which Mashtots "envisioned" the Armenian alphabet or "saw" it, can also contribute to this attitude and perception. Thus, if the letters were created with divine help then they should rather be used for "divine word" and religious matters. However, we know that presently in Matendaran there are many secular texts from the Middle ages comprising nearly all fields of science in the Middle ages. The creation of the alphabet up to now is believed to be a miracle that helped Armenians to stick to their identity and avoid assimilation during many later invasions. It can be concluded, therefore, that all these ideas have formed a traditional attitude among the population which to this day continues towards the manuscripts and partially continues in the form of great respect and care towards the writings and any kind of books in general, as well as the belief that manuscripts can heal the sick and bring prosperity to people.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 57.

H. Petrosyan also mentions that a manuscript or a book was so important for Armenians that the educated people of the time regarded them as animated creatures: they had souls and could suffer in loneliness in a library or monastery if no one read them. He suggests that the power of the written word came from pre-Christian times, as there was a belief that Sumerian, Urartian, and Armenian pagan deities could predict the death of a person by writing down the name of that person.<sup>65</sup> This pagan perception contradicts the Christian belief that manuscripts can heal people and bring good luck. Nonetheless, this shows the power of the written word in the Armenian cultural perception.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, it is no wonder that during the centuries it became a part of the culture to take care of books, especially gospels, and see them not as just objects but as living examples of cultural and religious identity. The same idea drove many Armenian individuals to risk their lives to save pieces of Armenian culture from the perpetrators during the 1915 Genocide. However, as the perception and attitude existed long before the Genocide one can find remarkable stories of how different manuscripts were saved during or after different invasions. Such is the case a well-known Armenian manuscript at the Matenadaran; the largest Armenian manuscript, *Msho Charēntir (Homilies of Mush)* from 1204, was saved twice by the Armenians. The first time it was “taken hostage” during the Seljuk invasion, then found and bought back by Armenians for 4000 silver coins. It stayed in its original place, Mush Arakelots’ monastery, for 700 years until the Armenian Genocide, when it was saved again by two women. They could not carry it because of its weight and divided it into two parts, buried one part there and took the other part with them. Years later the second half was found and sold to Armenians and both parts found their place in the Matendaran.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> In Armenian pagan tradition this deity was called ‘Grogh’ meaning ‘Writer’, *ibid.*, 57 -58

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 58

<sup>67</sup> Suren K’olanjyan, [The Armenian Massacres and Our Losses of Manuscripts] <http://echmiadzin.asj-oa.am/4801/1/p.96-107.pdf> 20, 97

The historical, art historical, and cultural values of manuscripts clearly play an important role in their market or economic value. If the owners of the manuscripts have registered the manuscripts they have the right to sell it in an international or national auction or in any other lawful way, but they can do it only if the state do not use the right to buy it. This means that the manuscripts have a market value that can be and should be decided by the specialists. However, most of the time if the sale happens, it is not done in regulated ways, as most of the owners do not register their manuscripts. Most of the owners do not want to sell the manuscripts and in most cases if those are sold it can be bought from the owners not for its real price; that is by cheating the owners about the price. Also, in many cases if the manuscripts are stolen and even if found there is no document that would prove it is the one that was stolen from the owners, which means there is even no simple description or object identification document for the owners. In other words, the price of a medieval manuscript can be connected to its historical importance or to the artistic quality of the decorations. These two aspects are interrelated, but they may work in a different way for the owners of manuscripts.

According to Klammer "Usually, economic values refer to the prices of things, or their exchange value. When economists speak of valuing a good, they mean the pricing of the good. It is a special kind of valuation as it focuses on the moment of exchange."<sup>68</sup>

In this respect most of the owners of twelve manuscripts subjugated the economic value to the cultural, historic, religious or family value which is understandable as most of the time what makes things heritage is priceless for population; it is the memory, emotional attachment, religious views and the responsibility that come over the economic value for the owners. Although most of the owners do not realize the cultural value of the manuscripts

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<sup>68</sup>Klammer, 10, [http://culturalheritage.ceistorvergata.it/virtual\\_library/Art\\_KLAMER\\_A\\_2001-Social\\_cultural\\_and\\_economic\\_values.pdf](http://culturalheritage.ceistorvergata.it/virtual_library/Art_KLAMER_A_2001-Social_cultural_and_economic_values.pdf)



some of them openly mentioned that they were interested in how much their manuscript was worth.

Three owners of all the eleven had either asked a specialist about the price or, in one case, been offered a certain sum to sell the manuscript. One of them, who has his own antiques' shop told me he would sell it, but only to a museum or a repository so that the manuscript would be safe. This case is of special interest as the folios of the gospel manuscript from the sixteenth century that originally should have been illustrated were cut off and replaced by printed pages, which raises the assumption that, as in many other cases, the illustrated pages were cut out and sold to someone else. The owner did not tell how he acquired the manuscript and said it was in that actual state when he had got it. This case raises the necessity of discussing the illegal trade of cultural objects and also the damage to them, which will be discussed in another chapter.

While for some of the private owners the market value was important, other people interviewed during my field research did not consider the opportunity to sell these objects. Two of the owners said they would never sell their manuscript as they believed "it would be a sin to sell such sacred books" or that "one cannot sell 'the saint' of the house and the whole village" and some of them mentioned they would feel that they "had betrayed their ancestors and family." All these issues raise the necessity to discuss the important factors that have influenced the value of the manuscripts. Two layers of importance of manuscripts for the owners and the local population are: the socio-religious importance of the manuscripts for Armenians and Armenian culture, and their value as family heritage for the owners, in some cases connected to the memories of their ancestors about the Armenian Genocide.

There is also another important attitude that the local population or community has towards manuscripts. They not only see the manuscripts as relics but also guard them and are very careful about giving access to people who do not look like usual pilgrims. This serves

not only purpose of guarding, but also has an aspect of religious beliefs. Pilgrimages are a practice up to the present in villages and in some cases also in towns; people believe that these manuscripts have healing powers or a power to give them good luck. Some owners mentioned that they have not let anyone to take the manuscripts away from the house as they believe that God's blessing, luck, and prosperity can leave the family with the book.

Three occasions from my field research are worth mentioning at this point that show exactly how people consider these manuscripts as symbols of their luck, prosperity, and health. One of the manuscripts in Gyumri was owned by a family where all man had gone to work abroad and the only person present was the wife of the owner. She said that her son and husband had built a small chapel somewhere in the town dedicated to the "saint" they have. They are very careful with even letting people touch it as the gospel is believed to heal people and even save people from the agony of death. And if they let anyone to take the manuscript something bad may happen to their family; whenever asked any questions she said she should discuss it with her husband, brother-in-law, and other members of the family.

Another important case is the Tsughrut gospel, which was not allowed to be taken and conserved as the "saint" of the village should not leave the community and the whole community was very careful even about letting me touch the manuscript as they were afraid that I might do something wrong, but the owner trusted us to open the manuscript and even take several pictures. The third interesting case again happened in Gyumri when the owner of the badly burnt manuscript only let me to take it out of the cloth wrappings and try to open it because he knew we have a bishop in our family. Several other cases were quite similar to this, but they usually did not mind if I opened and read the manuscript. Of course in all cases before touching the manuscript everyone around had to pray.

Other owners are quite aware of the importance of the manuscripts and their value, thus they do not want to give away "treasure" that belongs to them. Consequently, depending

on the owner's profession or social status, the perception of the value of the manuscript can differ from the case to case.

### **Memories, stories, personal encounters, and medieval manuscripts as family heritage**

Besides the religious perception of the manuscripts, the owners and also the community of the village or town feel obliged to guard and protect the manuscripts as their community (collective) heritage. Generally, the population feels obliged to take care of manuscripts and protect those as their ancestors have saved those “during the massacres.” The Armenian Genocide, the massacres at the end of nineteenth century and the situation of Armenian population under the rule of Ottoman Empire generally had such an impact on people that they tell stories about how the manuscripts were saved during the Genocide even though they were brought to the location earlier although most of these manuscripts really were saved from destruction (although at various times) by bringing them to a new location during the earlier oppressions and massacres.

It is quite apparent that besides destruction and looting the massacres of the nineteenth century and the Armenian Genocide of 1915 also had an impact on the population's perception of medieval Armenian manuscripts. Most of the owners told how they just know that one of their grandparents saved it when escaping from Western Armenia. However, there are many stories about how people saved manuscripts, hid them, and then years later, when it was safe, went back, found them and brought them back. Such is the case with some of the privately owned medieval manuscripts in Armenia. Thus individual experiences and stories have created community or collective memory around those objects. As Chris Weedon and Glenn Jordan put in their article “Collective memory: theory and politics”: “whereas memory might appear to be a personal matter, born out of one's individual experience, it is located in the ways the society as a whole remembers, and makes

sense of things.”<sup>69</sup> Thus in this particular case certain historical events being experienced by individuals became a part of collective memory of the community. Another article by Qi Wang discusses the fact that potentially autobiographical memories once shared may become a part of community’s shared past and identity<sup>70</sup>, which again makes it clear that certain autobiographical memories being a result of historical events which constitute the historical memory of the community have the great possibility to turn into a collective memory and into quiet sensitive ones.

These manuscripts have become symbols of memory for their owners and the local community. Instead of making new memorials to the victims and survivors of the massacres and the Genocide the communities have attached this role to the manuscripts, giving them another layer of social and historical importance. The words of Nora come naturally here to describe the continuous state of manuscripts perception as objects of memory and why not "a will to remember":

If the expression *lieu de memoire* must have an official definition, it should be this: a *lieu de memoire* is any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community.<sup>71</sup>

In this respect the manuscripts and the stories and values attached to them become a part of tradition, culture and heritage. The owner of one of the manuscripts in Gyumri which was entirely burnt and not readable told a story how his mother had told him that she had dreamed that a saint had told her to go to the location where the manuscript was hidden. She had gone there and seen a light and then she had found the manuscripts and several other things hidden with it. Later on she saw another dream where she was told the story of the

<sup>69</sup> Chris Weedon & Glenn Jordan, *Collective memory: theory and politics*, in *Social Semiotics*, 22:2, 2012, 143-153, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10350330.2012.664969>, 145 (accessed: 11.17.2016)

<sup>70</sup> Qi Wang (2008) "On the cultural constitution of collective memory" in *Memory*, 16:3, 305-317, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09658210701801467>, 306

<sup>71</sup> Pierre Nora, *From Lieux de memoire to Realms of Memory*: Preface to the English Language Edition, [http://faculty.smu.edu/bwheeler/Joan\\_of\\_Arc/OLR/03\\_PierreNora\\_LieuxdeMemoire.pdf](http://faculty.smu.edu/bwheeler/Joan_of_Arc/OLR/03_PierreNora_LieuxdeMemoire.pdf) (accessed: 11.17.2016)

manuscript: the manuscript had been saved during the Genocide while a church was in a fire, brought to Eastern Armenia and hidden. So the owner had a special corner in the house for the manuscript.



*Figure 1 "The Sacred Corner" in the house of the owner for the manuscript: a common scene for the houses having a manuscript.*

Another story again from Gyumri was that the ancestors of the owners, namely his great grand-father had brought it to Gyumri during the Genocide of 1915 and they also had a special "sacred corner" in the house devoted to the manuscript and for the people to come and pray in front of it. The remarkable fact about this was that they asked many questions about the cultural value of the manuscript and asked what parts it has, and what the meaning of the paintings is. Another important fact to mention is the attitude of the neighbors towards us; they became very suspicious and asked to wait until the owners come and then only to enter

the house, though the doors of the house were open for the neighbors to enter there and pray whenever they would like to.

It is no wonder that the owners and community have such a unique attitude to guarding and sometimes even not letting anyone touch them. Besides the religious perception of the manuscripts they also preserve the perception of their “ancestors risking their lives to save that piece of their cultural heritage.

“Culture is the ensemble of stories we tell ourselves about ourselves.” This famous definition of Clifford Geertz’s is brought into the article *The Mediality of Culture* where Szonyi, the author, makes an assumption that:

"the phrase “stories” refers to textuality, but also to the fact that these stories are made up, are constructed. It means that culture is to some extent fictitious. The phrase, “about ourselves” indicates self-reflexivity and self-representation; “telling [to] ourselves” suggests that there is a community, which circulates the stories for the purpose of identity-formation and identity consolidation. With the help of these stories we recognize ourselves as individuals, at the same time members of a community. The recognition happens as a result of an interpretive act, the community possessing the stories is thus ... becoming an interpretive community.<sup>72</sup>

This whole idea if applied to Armenian perception of manuscripts in private ownership will be representative of the attitude of the community and the living tradition towards and around the manuscripts. Thus, this attitude is based on different memories that the owners learned together with the inherited manuscripts. One should deal with different types of memories and perceptions of the community and the families holding the manuscripts. The first and the most general memory that everyone shares in the community is the historical memory connected to the massacres and the Genocide, or in other words the “collective memory” about the fact that these manuscripts survived a disaster which most of their ancestors did not. This “collective memory” was later influenced by individual

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<sup>72</sup> György E. Szönyi, “The Mediality of Culture Theories of Cultural Representations,” *Journal of Iconographic Studies* 7, (2014): 74.

memories and stories of the people who actually saved these manuscripts. These individual memories have already been transformed into family memories.

The fact that certain characters exist in a society for generations and appear in individuals in that society has been widely discussed in the scholarship and presented there “as rather a result of socialization and customs than phylogenetic evolution” by Jan Assman and John Czaplicka. This is also a rather suitable discourse and explanation in the case of the attitude the communities have towards manuscripts in Armenia.<sup>73</sup> Some memories are of individuals who themselves experienced the events and already exist in the form of family memories. Connections to the historical and “collective” or “social memory” became the most important aspect for their culture and heritage. Thus, all the different kinds of memories together bonded and constitute a realm of certain attitude, activities, and even rituals around these manuscripts. In such a case the sequence of the influences the different kinds of memories had on each other is understandable, but they have all been transformed into a collective memory and perception and cannot be taken or examined entirely separately. Speaking in Halbwachs’ words, in “collective memory,” “the remembrances are distributed within a group for which each is a partial image” which has emerged as a result of “individual” or “autobiographical” memory.<sup>74</sup>

These memories pass from one generation to another in the form of stories told and retold by the members of the family owning the manuscript and by the members of the community. Each member adds his or her own perspective to the initial story, thus it is no longer possible to refer to the original stories or firsthand memories of the individuals who experienced it. These narratives have formed an oral tradition which persists among the

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<sup>73</sup> Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity” in *New German Critique*, 65, 125-133 Duke University Press, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/488538?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/488538?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents), 125 (accessed:04.13.2016)

<sup>74</sup> Maurice, Halbwachs. *The Collective Memory: Historical Memory and Collective Memory*, <http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/201/articles/80HalbwachsCollMemChap2.pdf>, 50 (accessed: 24/10/2016)

community regardless of any scholar's opinion or academic literature about whether these are real stories or not. The communities in all villages and Gyumri refer to those oral traditions as "history". As Halbwachs' article on historical and collective memory suggests, "in addition to written history, there is a living history that perpetuates and renews itself through time and permits the recovery of many old currents that have seemingly disappeared."<sup>75</sup>

Armenian society basically uses the past and memories to frame and shape the present attitude towards medieval Armenian manuscripts. This has already become a tradition and new generations do not even question the content of the stories or collective memory the community has. Thus, the idea that the manuscripts are "sacred" or are the "saints" of their community is not doubted. It is, so to say, "inherited" together with the manuscripts. "This collective heredity imposes itself on individuals as something obvious, a point of view which is not subject to debate or justification, but that is taken for granted or banal: in this case memory is transformed into habit, convention literally "embodied" in a series of rites, formal organizations, objects, places, sayings."<sup>76</sup> In the case of memories connected to private ownership of manuscripts in Armenia, memories have been transformed into not just habits but to a traditional attitude which has become an inseparable part of culture and identity.

### **Social value of the manuscripts**

Another important aspect about the medieval Armenian manuscripts in private ownership is that they have created special social relationships in the communities around the manuscripts. According to José van Dijck, "The sociological meaning of collective differs from its historical counterpart, in this sense it means that people must feel they were a part of a communal past, that there was some connection between what happened in general and how

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>76</sup> Bruno M. Mazzara and Giovanna Leone, *Collective Memory and Intergroup Relations*, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1174/021347401317351080>



they were involved as individuals.”<sup>77</sup> Though most of the community was neither directly connected to the events nor the stories about the events that created the collective memory they have a special social relation to the owner families on both the collective and individual levels.

Besides safeguarding the manuscripts the local communities have assigned a special role to the family keeping the manuscripts. They refer to the family as "the keepers of the saint of the village", which gives a special social position and authority to the owner family. Also, the manuscripts are a common object of discussion in the communities, especially when people come to visit the manuscripts. Thus, manuscripts have become objects of social conversation and built relationships, which is an interesting theme to be developed and researched later.

As Klammer defines it,

Social values are the values that work in the context of interpersonal relationships, groups, communities and societies. People appeal to them in negotiating relationships with other people and with associations of people. In everyday conversations these values preoccupy people far more than economic values.<sup>78</sup>

The presentation above of the perception of manuscripts by the communities shows very well that, indeed, the social value of these manuscripts together with the cultural value prevails in the value system accepted by the owners and the community over the economic value. If used in a certain context and direction this social capital can be of great importance to find ways and solutions for protection and preservation that integrate the local communities in much of the process as it is similarly important for the communities to preserve these values.

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<sup>77</sup> José van dijck, *Mediated memories: personal cultural memory as object of cultural analysis*, in *Continuum*, 18:2, 261-277, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1030431042000215040>, 2004, 267 (accessed: 11.17.2016)

<sup>78</sup> Klammer, 10, [http://culturalheritage.ceistorvergata.it/virtual\\_library/Art\\_KLAMER\\_A\\_2001-Social\\_cultural\\_and\\_economic\\_values.pdf](http://culturalheritage.ceistorvergata.it/virtual_library/Art_KLAMER_A_2001-Social_cultural_and_economic_values.pdf)

As Klamer indicates:

The capacity to deal with social values and adhere to social norms is nowadays called social capital...Economic values are instrumental at best. In the case of cultural goods the satisfaction comes more from what they mean socially than economically...Its social values, that is, what it does for issues of identity, heritage, culture, pride and so on, will be far more important...<sup>79</sup>

Thus, this approach can be and should be used in case of medieval Armenian manuscripts in private ownership as for communities, owners and general public these objects are sacred, priceless, and have great social, religious, and cultural values which make the idea of "exchanging" this objects impossible. Manuscripts have become a part of their tradition, rituals, religious practice, and even routine conversations. When there is such an interrelation between the cultural object and the identity of the society it is also necessary to preserve that relationship, not only the physical object. Thus, the intangible and tangible aspects of the manuscripts as part of Armenian heritage should be preserved simultaneously and with similar respect and interest.

[start the new chapter on a new page]

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<sup>79</sup> Klamer, 11, [http://culturalheritage.ceistorvergata.it/virtual\\_library/Art\\_KLAMER\\_A\\_2001-Social\\_cultural\\_and\\_economic\\_values.pdf](http://culturalheritage.ceistorvergata.it/virtual_library/Art_KLAMER_A_2001-Social_cultural_and_economic_values.pdf)

## Chapter 3 – Preservation, Protection, and Accessibility Issues

### **Conditions of the manuscripts and the attitude of the owners concerning preservation and conservation**

When dealing with the manuscripts in private hands it is important to observe not only the existing condition of the manuscripts but also the conditions where they are kept and also whether the owners have practical or theoretical knowledge about manuscript preservation and protection. They may consider certain things good for the preservation of manuscripts or have their own ideas about it, but this can have different consequences for the manuscripts.

Scholars have made many attempts to take the manuscripts and conserve them, but they were always rejected; in some cases they were denied access in general. It is necessary to find solutions that will solve the problem of protection and preservation, however, and at the same time not cause any harm to either owner's rights or the manuscripts. In this respect it is necessary to discuss the existing situation concerning the attitudes of the owners in respect of conservation and preservation, and at the same time, to confront these with legal instruments applicable to privately owned manuscripts. This double approach can help us to see the problems which do not have legal solution and try to find a solution suitable for all the parties interested in the protection of the manuscripts.

During the fieldwork connected to privately owned manuscripts, special attention has been given to the conditions of the manuscripts. My survey in this respect does not simply record the actual conditions in which these manuscripts are kept, but also the attitudes of the owners, reflecting also their ideas on an "ideal" situation for these manuscripts. As this attitude is closely connected to their perceptions of the manuscripts, it is necessary to

understand their approach, before we can discuss the legal instruments to protect the manuscripts.

Thus, it is necessary to learn more about the owners in a professional sense. Some of the manuscripts have been inherited generation by generation, which can also make it difficult to tell the owners that the way their family has kept it for generations is not the best for manuscript preservation. This will be a logical question from their side, as according to them the methods they used have worked as the manuscripts still exist. It will be necessary to explain to the owners that the mere existence of the manuscripts does not indicate that they are in a good state of preservation.

The way manuscripts are kept differs from owner to owner; six of the manuscripts were kept in a special room without any cover or protection; one is kept in a small chapel situated in the garden of the owner's house (although he and his family no longer live in Armenia). There were also candles in the small chapel and the neighbor who held the keys said she opens it only when the priest is there, too, as in our case. It is characteristic for Armenians to build very small family chapels (in reality just a small building with a cross on it) to either keep the manuscript (or "the saint") there or for other religious reasons.

One of the manuscripts (a tenth-century Gospel) is in a small movable showcase with a glass cover; it is kept in a special room with a "sacred corner" in the house where they also have candles in front of the manuscript so that people coming there can pray and light a candle. Two other manuscripts were covered by various fabrics or cloth and kept in a "sacred corner" of the living room (the owners thought the cloth would help to preserve them) and several others are kept without cloth, again in the devotional part of the room; the *Decree of the Catholicos* is kept in a frame in a library room in the owner's residence.

The owners of the manuscripts have different professions; five of them live in villages and work in the villages and have no experience in manuscript preservation or protection.

They said honestly that they could not read the manuscripts so they thought of the manuscripts as important religious objects and family heritage<sup>80</sup>. The other five owners have different professions and live and work in Gyumri; one of the owners has an antique shop and thus has knowledge of the economic value of the manuscripts but no other experience of working with manuscripts. Three owners have different professions not connected to manuscript studies or preservation, and one owner, being an archbishop, has general knowledge for preservation and academic experience concerning manuscripts and the manuscript was a present to him as he is a descendant of the Catholicos who wrote it. Devotional forms other than praying and lighting candles are also present; they usually may kiss the cover of the manuscript or touch it.

An important case to discuss is the case of famous Tsughrut gospel from the tenth century, which is in southern Georgia. The whole village is very proud and very careful about the manuscript. Once you enter the village and ask about the manuscript the mayor learns that visitors have arrived and appears at the house earlier than the visitors. Apart from being so careful with the manuscript they also do not let the specialists to take it to Matendaran and conserve it. Finally, in 2015, three specialists were sent to the village to conserve the manuscript and they carried out all the necessary work of conservation in situ.<sup>81</sup> This shows that only negotiations with the owners and compromise from both sides can lead to a desirable outcome for preserving and protecting the manuscript and that it is possible to reach this outcome.

These manuscripts are a vivid example of the situation with privately owned medieval Armenian manuscripts. Most of the manuscripts are kept in houses, often in humid rooms, or sometimes in a small chapel in the garden, neither of which are the best environments for the preservation of the manuscripts.

<sup>80</sup> One of these five owners has two manuscripts

<sup>81</sup> The manuscript of Tsughrut got restored. Վերականգնվել է Օրմիզդիանի թղթագրության պալատում: [http://www.matenadaran.am/?id=620&lng=3#.WC1j0\\_l96yI](http://www.matenadaran.am/?id=620&lng=3#.WC1j0_l96yI), (accessed: 11.23.2016).

## **The legal framework for the preservation and protection of privately owned manuscripts**

The main goal of this subchapter is to show the gaps in the policies and laws concerning the ownership, protection, and preservation of the medieval Armenian manuscripts in private ownership and to show what policies are implemented and what laws are generally applied in Armenia to safeguard manuscripts or safeguard the rights of the owners in cases such as the illegal export of manuscripts. This information will be used later for suggesting strategies other than legal instruments, that is, alternative solutions for the problems occurring because of gaps or the issues not covered by any law. The importance of these policies is connected with the importance of medieval Armenian manuscripts for Armenian cultural heritage in general and their historical and socio-religious value, already discussed in the previous chapters.

First of all, these manuscripts are called private as they are not state-owned and they are not kept in state or national institutions or museums. This fact makes it more difficult for the government to find policies of effective preservation and also makes it legally impossible for specialists to apply the mandatory preservation or protection regulations to those manuscripts. Thus, the collections of manuscripts in private ownership have not undergone the necessary research studies and most of them are not inventoried or catalogued due to the lack of access. Taking into consideration all of these issues, two primary problems will be addressed: measures for preservation and protection of these manuscripts (including preventive measures for stopping illicit trafficking and trade and cataloguing the manuscripts) and, second, accessibility of the manuscripts for study and research.

### **The main issues concerning the laws and policies applicable to manuscript protection in the Republic of Armenia**

Most of the private collections of medieval Armenian manuscripts do not belong to state or any state institutions insofar as there is no evidence about these manuscripts in the

catalogues or inventories of institutions and museums or in catalogues made earlier.<sup>82</sup> There have been several attempts by researchers and institutions to negotiate with the owners so that they give the manuscripts to the repositories even just for conservation work and then get them back, but most of the owners have rejected this as well as rejected the idea of digitization by taking the manuscripts to the museums temporarily.

Another important issue is the illicit trafficking or the trade in manuscripts. Not many laws and regulations in Armenia apply to private collections of manuscripts. The relevant convention that was signed, ratified, and implemented for the enforcement of domestic law in Armenia is the UNESCO's *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* (Paris, 1970)<sup>83</sup> This convention, of great importance also in case of privately owned manuscripts, was enforced in the country by the domestic *Law on Export and Import of Cultural Values*. As is stated in the official report of Armenia on cultural policies within the Compendium online system:

The *Law on Export and Import of Cultural Values* regulates the processes of export and import of cultural items, determining precisely the conditions and order of exporting cultural items that are considered personal and state property. This field is regulated by the *Government Decrees on Procedure of Registration on a Voluntary Basis of Non-State Cultural Values Included in the Protective List of Cultural Values and Criteria Setting* (N631-N of 19 May 2005), *Approval of Expertise Licensing Procedure of Movable Cultural Values and the License Type* (21 July 2005 N1115-N), and *Establishment of the List of Especially Valuable Cultural Values Considered to be the Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Armenia* (13 October 2005 N1643-N).<sup>84</sup>

Because non-state cultural goods can be registered only on a voluntary basis there is not much the state can do about it, but if objects are to leave the country they should have proper licensing, which has influence in the field of trade. But considering that all these laws

<sup>82</sup> This fact was discussed in the first chapter in connection to manuscripts losses and the number of manuscripts lost.

<sup>83</sup> Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (Paris, 1970), *Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property* <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property/1970-convention/>, (accessed: 12.16.2015)

<sup>84</sup> 5.3 Sector specific legislation 5.3.3 Cultural heritage in *COMPENDIUM*, Armenia: <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/armenia.php?aid=533> (accessed: 12.16.2015)

have been accepted only in the recent past, many manuscripts are already abroad and already sold. Another problem is the large number of objects taken abroad illegally and sold right after the 1915 Genocide or in the following years. Thus it is clear that the 1970 UNESCO Convention has no influence over objects that were traded before 1970. Besides, if the manuscripts were not catalogued or registered by the owners before leaving the country and being sold and there are no documents or traces that they belonged to the owner before the trade, then it is very difficult for the State to impose any legal power on the purchaser to return them.

The Ministry of Culture of RA gives an explanatory note on the website about the role of the *Law on Export and Import of Cultural Values* stating that:

The Law on Export and Import of Cultural values is thought to contribute to the preservation of Armenia's cultural heritage and to prevent the illegal export, import of cultural values, as well as the illegal transfer of the rights of ownership over those goods. This law establishes the state bodies regulating the export and import of the cultural goods, the procedures for import and export, and for temporary import and export of cultural values, the liability in case of the violation of the law of export and import of cultural property, interstate cooperation and international agreements in the field.<sup>85</sup>

At the same time, the ministry discusses also the fact that the Criminal Code of RA has no separate part or chapter dedicated to liability for violating internationally established protection regulations of cultural heritage. However, some of the articles in the Criminal Code are intended to cover criminal liability for cultural values. Actions including smuggling of cultural valuables, the destruction or damage of especially valuable cultural objects or documents, as well as the destruction or damage of historical or cultural monuments are envisaged as criminally liable.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> The Bases of Cultural Legislation of RA, *Մշակութային Օրենսդրության հիմունքները*, <http://mincult.am/Himunqner.html> (accessed: 11.23.2016)

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.



The law on the export and import of cultural valuables of the RA also defines (in Article 4) the types of cultural valuables (goods) the law applies to, according to which there are several categories that cover medieval manuscripts: namely;

1. *Objects related to historical, including memorable, events in the life of the people and society:*<sup>87</sup> manuscripts can definitely be in this category as most of them are connected to historical events, some of them even symbolize an aspect of historical events or memory, as in the case of the manuscripts saved during the Genocide and brought to Armenia with such difficulty.

Medieval manuscripts also fall under several other categories mentioned in the law, such as artistic values; including partially or entirely handmade illustrations, artistically decorated objects of religious importance, pieces of manuscripts or printed objects of literary, historical, religious value, rare manuscripts and documents, etc.

Article N4<sup>88</sup> is very important, however, but again the fact that the manuscripts are registered on a voluntary basis makes it difficult to protect all manuscripts from illegal transport. It is also difficult to prove that all privately owned manuscripts belong to one of the categories and types mentioned above as all of these categories have details that may exclude manuscripts that are not rare or of high cultural value from being taken abroad.

Another important issue is that there is no law in Armenia on the responsibility of owners to guarantee the minimal requirements of manuscript preservation. Even if there were laws, most of the families do not have the experience, knowledge, or funds necessary for preservation work. The main reason for this is that the State also lacks funds for this or at least the government makes no effort to find funding or to support families to preserve and

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<sup>87</sup> Закон Республики Армения о вывозе и ввозе культурных ценностей  
[http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/armenia/am\\_exportimportculturalproperty\\_rusorof.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/armenia/am_exportimportculturalproperty_rusorof.pdf)  
 (accessed:11.29.2016)

<sup>88</sup> Закон Республики Армения о вывозе и ввозе культурных ценностей  
[http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/armenia/am\\_exportimportculturalproperty\\_rusorof.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/armenia/am_exportimportculturalproperty_rusorof.pdf)

conserve the manuscripts unless they are registered. Most of the families reject the registration of their manuscripts as they are afraid that if the location is disclosed people will try to steal them and sell them, even inside Armenia. This happens often in villages. I was told by one of the owners that there had been five manuscripts in their village, but they were stolen and they even had information about how the manuscripts were sold. But neither the police nor the owners could find ways to bring the manuscripts back, as those were not registered and the owners had no proof those belonged to them and neither the thief was found.

The latter fact raises another important aspect that the law does not cover, trade in manuscripts inside Armenia, sometimes not by stealing but by cheating the owners about the price and later selling it to another person. If the owner fails to register the manuscript then there will be no proof of ownership unless they have documentation proving it. Another important issue to look at is the existence of privately owned medieval Armenian manuscripts abroad, as in the case of two of the manuscripts encountered in villages in Georgia. There is nothing Armenian law can do about those manuscripts unless their owners are Armenian citizens and can register those manuscripts in the Armenian system or donate them to Armenian institutions.

Article N5<sup>89</sup> of the above-mentioned law regulates the prohibition and limitation of the export of the cultural valuables. According to the article, it is especially prohibited to export valuable cultural objects regardless of their date of creation and also cultural goods that are registered or subject to registration on the cultural heritage protection list. They are allowed to be exported only if the RA does not use the right to buy them within a month. The second chapter of the Law on Export and Import of cultural values presents the state management of the export and import of cultural valuables.

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<sup>89</sup> Закон Республики Армения о вывозе и ввозе культурных ценностей  
[http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/armenia/am\\_exportimportculturalproperty\\_rusorof.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/armenia/am_exportimportculturalproperty_rusorof.pdf)

Another important issue to look at is the accessibility problem. It has two important aspects: firstly, the accessibility problem that makes it difficult for specialists to carry out necessary works for the preservation of manuscripts and, secondly, the accessibility problem for researchers to examine them and open the collections for research in a wider community of scholars. All the problems presented in this subchapter can be solved from a different perspective than the state regulations as in most cases the regulations are not effective enough or do not cover certain aspects important to the owners. Thus, finding alternative solutions presentable and acceptable for both owners and researchers should be a priority for having the required protection and preservation conditions for medieval Armenian manuscripts in private ownership.

## Chapter 4-Case Study on Two Projects Implemented for the Preservation of Privately Owned Manuscripts

To create an approach that will cover the issues that can lead to the damage of manuscripts even after the adoption of certain laws, it is necessary to look at different projects launched or initiated for the preservation, protection, and accessibility of privately owned manuscripts. This will help give insight into the best practice by other projects that had similar issues and problems as in the Armenian case. The projects chosen for a case study include three most important aspects that are necessary to solve the problems encountered in the case of medieval Armenian manuscripts, namely:

- Problems of accessibility
  - Protection and preservation issues
  - Problems concerning the trust of the owners in the project and in the people who run the project
- Ownership issues, meaning the owners' fears that they might not own the manuscript after registration, cataloguing or digitization

The two projects taken for the case study are relevant to the Armenian case for the similarity of problems and for the fact that these manuscripts are not held at any state institution, have not been examined or studied carefully, and are not conserved professionally, and thus under constant threat of damage.

The first project, called the SRITE Project, or “Project for Preserving the Manuscripts of the Syrian Christians in India,” was launched to survey, digitize, and catalogue manuscripts kept in Kerala, aimed at preserving and making known the Syrian Christian

heritage in India.<sup>90</sup> István Perczel, the initiator and organiser of the project had preliminary estimated that there were over one thousand Syriac manuscripts in partly in private collections and partly in Church-related libraries of Kerala and most of the manuscripts were in very bad state because of the climate specificity and the conditions in the archives where those were kept.<sup>91</sup> By now, over 1,200 manuscripts Syriac and Garshuni Malayalam manuscripts and over 60,000 palm-leaves with documents in Malayalam have been digitized. Different international institutions cooperated within the framework of the project to reach the goal. However, by now, sponsorship and technical background is provided by the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, Collegeville, Minnesota. The project is important as the manuscripts belong to the communities of St. Thomas Christians in Kerala, South India. This project is important because the manuscripts are from different centuries, are not kept in state institutions, and are under constant threat of destruction because of the climate and humidity. The project aims at the digitization, cataloguing, and free access to the manuscripts<sup>92</sup>; it is a good case to look at in order to see the necessary steps for the successful completion of such projects. First of all, the importance of preserving both the content of the manuscripts and the manuscripts themselves is highlighted in the project<sup>93</sup>, which means that the digitization and the preservation of the original manuscripts are equally important steps.

The project has also prioritized the steps to be taken, mentioning them in the sequence to be implemented:

as a first step, the tasks of digitizing and describing the manuscripts are undertaken; as a second step, an organized electronic data-base is established... , in the third stage of the process, the manuscripts are used for

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<sup>90</sup> Project for Preserving the Manuscripts of the Syrian Christians in India, *General Framework and History of the Project*, <http://www.srite.de/>, (accessed 11.04.2016)

<sup>91</sup> Final Report on the DFG Project Manuscript Libraries of the Syrian Christians in South India (Thirteenth - Twentieth Century): Surveying, Digitization, Evaluation. For Further information see: <https://www.vhmml.org/http://www.srite.de/>.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, *Brief Description of the Project*

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

clarifying the details of history of Christianity in Kerala, as well as for publishing, translating and interpreting the newly discovered texts.<sup>94</sup>

The project is also important for the accessibility of the manuscripts for the scholars and researchers. Thus, besides preservation, by means of open-access electronic publications, it makes the manuscripts accessible for the wider scholarly community through the HMML website (<https://www.vhmmml.org/>). The project originally intended to return the funds from the publications to the owners so that they spend them on the preservation and conservation of the original manuscripts. This proved to be an unrealistic objective, as there was no income generated by the publications. Instead, in the framework of the project, a highly qualified archivist (Dr. Ignatius Payyappilly) was trained, who offers technical help and expertise for free for the maintenance and preservation of the archives. Thus, the project has generated an entire archives preservation movement in South India. It has also turned out that Church institutions and private owners had the financial means for the preservation – what they lacked was expertise and know how.

This can also be a valid point for the Armenian manuscripts, as most of the owners do not have enough financial means to provide for the conservation of the manuscripts. The state institutions in Armenia carry out the necessary conservation measures only if the manuscripts are taken to the institutions, to which the owners do not agree as they do not want to let the manuscripts out of their possession.

The second project relevant to the Armenian case is the project of Djenne manuscript library under the initiative of Tombouctou project, which deals with 4000 manuscripts from families and with the creation of a library for the manuscripts that are in private hands.<sup>95</sup> The manuscripts, as in the Armenian case, have been kept in private collections. Recently, the

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Tombouctou Manuscripts Project, *Update on Jenne*, [http://www.tombouctoumanuscripts.org/blog/entry/update\\_from\\_djenne/](http://www.tombouctoumanuscripts.org/blog/entry/update_from_djenne/), last accessed 11/04/2016

owners started to hand them into the Djenne Manuscript Library, built in 2006.<sup>96</sup> Because of this it has a different character, but it is also relevant to see how certain groups of the society can act if propositions are made for the manuscripts. The situation in Djenne is similar to the Armenian case in that families in the town are the owners of the manuscripts and the steps taken to solve the problems can also be useful for the privately owned manuscripts in Armenia.

The Djenne Manuscript Library recently became the repository where many families give their manuscripts for safekeeping.<sup>97</sup> This could be a partial solution in the Armenian case as the practice shows that some owners donate the manuscripts in order to save them from being damaged. This step can be a good example to follow for the privately owned manuscripts in Armenia because the families in Djenne who give them to the Djenne manuscript library remain the owners of the collections.

### **Policy implications and conclusions to be drawn from the two projects**

In both Kerala and Djenne the difficulty in working with the population is similar to Armenia. The manuscripts both were difficult to access like the Armenian ones, although the reasons are different. Most of the privately owned medieval Armenian manuscripts are in remote villages, which makes it physically difficult to access and research them. And even in case of the manuscripts owned by people living in towns, scholars are not be allowed to work with the manuscripts for a long time. The possible solution in this case is the digitization of these manuscripts, which proves to be a useful working method for both projects. The manuscripts, important from the artistic point of view and for the information in their colophons and marginal notes, should be accessible for researchers and scholars.

From the projects discussed above one can see that there are several important components that each project should have for successful completion:

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

- First, it is important to involve different international institutions to have the cooperation of different professionals. As can be seen from both case study projects this is a relevant step for the success of such projects.
- Secondly, a webpage with all relevant information about the project helps researchers interested in the project to get the necessary information and get involved in the project, as well as present important information for anyone who is interested. Also, the families owning the manuscripts are able to track the developments and research done on the manuscripts.
- Third, is that the owners should be assured that the manuscripts belong to them and the status of the ownership will not change irrespective of the work done and activities carried out.
- And, finally, to find ways to preserve the manuscripts in their original form, too. In some cases negotiations with the owners about giving the manuscripts to a library to be conserved and preserved maybe successful.

### **Recommendations for the Armenian case**

Taking into account all the cultural, social, and religious specificities that are present in Armenian society towards manuscripts it is necessary to find solutions that will be acceptable by all the parties interested in the preservation, protection, and accessibility of privately owned medieval Armenian manuscripts. At the same time to cover the preservation, protection and accessibility issues different specialists will be required for each of the three issues.

Ideally, a project should be launched by a non-profit organization either already dealing with manuscripts or a center for Armenian studies that can be potentially interested in medieval Armenian manuscripts. The project should cover all of the three main dimensions concerning medieval Armenian manuscripts in private hands: preservation, protection and



accessibility. The following recommendations are presented to suggest approaches other than state control or regulations for the manuscripts.

- One of the methods to foster the development of a project enhancing the preservation of privately owned manuscripts would be to get private organizations involved and interested for donations both in the form of financial means and in the form of any contribution dealing with manuscripts. Individuals (collectors or other people interested in manuscripts) and scholars should be encouraged to take part in such activities as the preservation of manuscripts or manuscripts presentation ideas, and also to donate manuscripts to the organization.

- The organization should establish good connections to similar international organizations and try to get as much experience from them as possible. Individual researchers will be encouraged to contribute their knowledge and published work about any issue dealing with privately owned manuscripts.

- As a first step towards the latter idea the manuscripts should be catalogued and digitized. It can be difficult to get the owners to cooperate, especially when it comes to the necessity to conserve the manuscripts, as they do not let the manuscript leave the house. A solution could be to organize the conservation work in situ whenever necessary.

- The complexity of carrying all the necessary conservation materials and the lack of funding for researchers to constantly or regularly take care of manuscripts for preservation purposes raises the necessity to find alternative ways to get the manuscripts preserved without any conflict with the interests of the owners. A good solution would be to start an owner-friendly training program about the basics of successful manuscript preservation. Several important issues should be integrated into the training program, such as what is harmful for manuscripts and what are the necessary steps the owners should regularly

take to ensure the protection and preservation of manuscripts. Also, owners should be assured about their rights to ownership rights of the manuscripts.

- Another way to realize the desired goals is to involve many volunteers from the field of preservation who would regularly make field visits to the location of the manuscripts and check their condition and to advise the owners about what should be improved and what should be excluded from the usual activities the owners take to preserve the manuscripts. A possibility would be to train local young people to carry out the required work. Volunteerism in this case could be a good way of getting experience for young specialists who wish to devote their studies and knowledge to manuscript conservation and preservation or to art history or book history studies including textual and artistic analysis of the manuscripts. At the same time volunteerism would help neutralize the funding issues, at least for the regular salary part.

- All the results should be reported to the organization and in fact should be put online on an official webpage, which would allow many researchers to express their professional opinion about individual manuscripts as well as the overall project and what could be changed, improved or developed. It is relevant to mention here that only results of the studies and research should be put online and not the process of the work carried out and for safety reasons the names of the owners and their address should not be disclosed. They should be sure that their manuscripts will not be stolen. However, in many cases the towns and villages where they have manuscripts are already known to a wider public, the best solution would be not to give out the names and the exact address.

- Another important step to be taken is to start writing the short descriptions of the manuscripts that would allow the owners or the authorities to identify the manuscripts if they are lost or stolen and then found. This would help to control the illicit trade both inside the country and outside. This could be done in the framework of the Object ID project

launched by J. Paul Getty Trust in 1993 and is internationally by different organizations including UNESCO. Having established the descriptive standards the project suggests it will be easy to trace the objects if stolen and then put on an auction or online sale.<sup>98</sup>

- An important step would be to make sure the owners and community know everything newly discovered about their manuscripts, for which the online webpage would be a good solution even if not working in all cases.

- The stories, attitude and communities' perception of the manuscripts should also be included into the website maybe in the forms of articles and photos showing the overall situation. This is an equally important step to be taken together with the preservation works for the manuscripts, as it comprises the intangible values and traditions attached to the manuscripts.

- A very important step to be taken is to include in the project all people who are trusted and respected by the communities and even let them be the initiators of getting into contact with the owners. Generally, the priests of the villages are respected and trusted by the locals, which can be a fact to focus on when starting the digitization, conservation and preservation process. Nevertheless, sometimes people do not trust even clerics and in those cases personal relations with the respected people of the communities will be crucial to get access to the manuscripts. This would benefit both the church, the owners, the communities and all interested parties in preservation of manuscripts.

- A step forward was taken by a trial to get into contact with the owners of the twelve manuscripts and try to digitize those. This important step was suggested and advised by Dr. István Perczel and supported and guided by Fr. Columba Stewart in the framework of the digitization and cataloguing projects of Hill Museum and Manuscript Library. There were several meetings both with Fr. Columba and Dr. Perczel to discuss the process, techniques

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<sup>98</sup> “About Object ID” in *Object ID*, <http://archives.icom.museum/objectid/about.html> (accessed: 11.23.2016)

and methods to be used for the digitization. Also, there was a need in technical assistance and photography practice which was kindly carried out by Attila Baticz.

The initial plan was to contact once more the owners of the manuscripts and try to make another field research to digitize those so that they are put online, catalogued and accessible for the researchers and further studies of the manuscripts. The first steps of contacting the owners have already been taken. Several owners rejected the idea as half of the family was abroad and the direct owners were not present for negotiations. For all the other owners the negotiations are in the process and will be updated as a next step of the current thesis.

This practical step to digitize the manuscripts gave the chance to see what the practical, technical and communication problems are regarding contacting and negotiating with the owners. It became clear that the negotiations should be led only with the direct owner of the manuscripts who are usually the male members of the families, as all other members do not feel comfortable to talk about any decision that should be made about the manuscripts. Also, this attempt showed that there should be a detailed explanation for the owners about what is the aim of the project and the description of further steps. Thus, digitization is a very complex process as special approaches and connections with the trusted and respected people are necessary to get the desired results.

## Conclusion

This thesis aims to suggest and contribute to the preservation, protection, research, and public accessibility of medieval Armenian manuscripts in private ownership. It is an attempt to show the importance of the manuscripts in many dimensions of the cultural, social, and historical domains and thus argue that these manuscripts, an inseparable part of Armenian heritage, culture, and history, should be preserved, protected, presented, and properly researched.

First of all, the inquiry into the history of manuscript losses during different invasions throughout the Armenian history, the Armenian massacres of nineteenth century and the Genocide of 1915 showed that the major losses and damage to medieval Armenian manuscripts happened during those events. It showed also that a large number of private collections abroad and in Armenia were formed during or shortly after these events. Thus, it was concluded that these events of the nineteenth and twentieth century triggered the private ownership of many medieval Armenian manuscripts in Armenia at the end of nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. It was also noted, however, that there are manuscripts that have belonged to families for several centuries; they belonged to their ancestors because those were ordered for private use. Both of these reasons also apply to some of the manuscripts seen during the field research from the point of the history of the individual object in connection to the historical events of the time.

An important issue argued is that the medieval Armenian manuscripts in private ownership should become a new platform for research in matters of their cultural, social, and religious value for the owners and the local communities. Although the religious attitude towards manuscripts as sacred and as relics is characteristic for the overall population in Armenia, it is only in the immediate or local communities that the manuscripts are called “saint of the village”. It also became clear that manuscripts after appearing in their present

location, after being saved from destruction, took on another role for the people of the villages or towns. They became symbols of surviving from massacres and the Genocide. The owners and local people attach many memories and stories to those manuscripts that were told by their grandparents who saved them. It became clear that manuscripts also have great memory and family value for people. An argument was put forward that for the local population the cultural, religious, and family values of the manuscripts are more important than the economic value of the objects because “sacred objects are priceless”.

Another important conclusion is that the families who own the manuscripts have important social roles in their communities as the holders and keepers of the “saint”. Thus, unique social relationships are constructed around manuscripts, which are guarded and worshipped by the whole community. The idea of social capital was also put forward and it is noted that most of the time the owners consider the social authority they have in their community very natural and do not even see it as something unusual.

All of this discussion in the thesis allows for concluding that these manuscripts are very important not only for their general artistic, religious or historical value, but also for their unique cultural, religious, and social roles, and perception for the local communities. At the same time, it became clear that not only should the manuscripts be preserved and protected in their physical form, but also the stories, memories, cultural, religious and social roles attached to them. It was also noted that the loss or the damage of these manuscripts would be a loss not only for the owners but also for the whole local community, Armenian heritage, culture and history.

Thus, the need to develop recommendations suitable for the Armenian case, meaning acceptable to owners and researchers at the same time, led to a discussion of the existing legal instruments which can potentially be used to preserve and protect the manuscripts. Although *The Law on the Import and Export of Cultural Values* has provisions to prohibit the

illegal trade and export or import of cultural goods and to protect the owners, it also helps to regulate the trade of the values exported illegally from the country and basically makes it difficult to take the objects outside the country. For cases when manuscripts are stolen, the law is of no help if the manuscripts are not registered according to the law, which is not done in most cases with the privately owned medieval Armenian manuscripts.

Because of the gaps that the law leaves in matters of protection and preservation two projects were taken as case studies of situation similar to the Armenian one. The most important steps that made the projects successful were taken as a best practice to apply to the situation in Armenia. The concluding recommendations focused on the main aspects of preservation, protection, and accessibility and suggested an alternative solution to the government or official involvement so as to have an all-inclusive solution for all of the parties interested in preserving the manuscripts.

Based on the research and analysis of the relevant materials, the following recommendations can be made concerning the manuscripts:

- To get involved people who the owners trust like priests of the communities or other individuals who have work with the manuscripts and are in good relations with the owners at the same time.
- To establish good connections to similar international organizations and researchers, and try to get as much experience from them as possible.
- To get private organizations, as well as individuals involved and interested for donations both in the form of financial means and in the form of any contribution dealing with manuscripts.
- To catalogue and digitize the manuscripts and to organize the conservation work in situ whenever necessary.

- To launch an owner-friendly training program about the basics of successful manuscript preservation.
- To train local young people to carry out the required work for preservation and for the beginning of the project to involve volunteers from the field of preservation who would regularly make field visits to the location of the manuscripts for preservation and regular check.
- To report all the results to the organization or team responsible for the project and put them online on an official webpage open for discussion and suggestions of researchers and specialists of the field.
- To include on the official webpage also the stories of the manuscripts together with analysis of the text and illustrations and miniatures of the manuscripts
- To guarantee the access of the public to see and read about the manuscripts as those represent Armenian cultural heritage, thus the webpage should compulsory be in two languages; Armenian and English.
- To make sure the owners and community know everything newly discovered about their manuscripts, for which the online webpage would be a good solution even if not working in all cases.
- To ensure the safety of the manuscripts, considering the possibility of stealing those, the address of the manuscripts should not be put online and the name of the village, the owners' names will be presented due to their own wish, the names of bigger towns or cities are, however, safer to right online.

The desired outcome of the recommendations would be the launch of a project that would have international cooperation with institutions, specialists, and researchers. It would insure accessibility to the public, the owners, and researchers with the help of an official



webpage comprising all the academic and cultural information about the manuscripts. It should also use the local social capital in the context of the social importance of the manuscripts to get the community interested and involved in the preservation and protection of the manuscripts. Special attention should be paid to guaranteeing protection of the owners' rights and to getting people who they trust to get involved in the process. Ideally, as a next step the manuscripts should be digitized and conserved in situ and the digitized versions should be published online with free access for scholars and students, which will help the local communities to make use of the heritage they have. The attempted digitization also showed how important it is to find people who the owners trust and respect to get access to the manuscripts and also for the owners to trust the work done and being assured of their ownership right.

So the main idea behind the thesis and the vision for the privately owned manuscripts is to keep these religious manuscripts as religious objects, but at the same time, make them objects of knowledge and by preserving their community and social value to bring those manuscripts to a platform of new studies dedicated to their all-inclusive research and presentation. Thus, they will keep their unique value for their owners, it remains a part of their family heritage, but they will be raised to another level by acknowledging them as significant part of Armenian heritage.

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# Appendix - Short Descriptions of the Manuscripts

This appendix is a short description of the manuscripts and not a professional catalog or analysis of the manuscripts, as for the professional catalog more time and specialists would be necessary. The information about some of the manuscripts is not complete as some of the manuscripts were too damaged or the colophon page was lost and there were no marginal notes. In some cases, I was not allowed to count the pages of the manuscripts and in some cases it was not possible as the manuscript was too damaged. Thus this description includes all the information that was possible to extract from the manuscripts according to my knowledge, time limits and experience. The information included in the short description if not referenced is based on the colophon or the marginal notes of the manuscripts that I read.

## 1. *Tsughrut Gospel*

Place: Georgia, Tsughrut

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> century (974)

Parchment: 395 pages, 14 pages of miniatures, the text written on both sides.

Hand: scribe's name is Hovhannes.

The script: the main part of the text is in *erkatagir*<sup>99</sup> (majuscule) *bolorak* (round) and the concluding part is in angular *erkatagir*.<sup>100</sup>

Layout: 2 columns, 22 lines except for the miniature folios, canon tables, and the colophon pages.

Ink: black/brown for the main text and red for the titles, for the miniatures: yellow, red, blue, green, dark red, and brown.

Binding: silver cover (not earlier than 18<sup>th</sup> cent.<sup>101</sup>) and 2 flyleaves at the beginning.

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<sup>99</sup> *Erkatagir* is the oldest of four scripts used for written Armenian, literally means “iron-forged letters”, used from fifth to the thirteenth century (after the tenth century more mixed with *bolorgir*), it was of 2 types angular and round (majuscule or uncial): see more on the theme in: *The World's Writing Systems*, ed. Peter T. Daniels and William Bright: (New York:Oxford University Press, 1996), 357.

<sup>100</sup> Nikolay K'ot'anjyan, *Օղբն ի թիւով եւ նախքան 974թ* [The Gospel of Tsghrut 974]: (Yerevan:Anahit, 2006), 5.



Condition: the state of preservation is satisfying, although the opening pages of the manuscript had different damages, the parchment has changed its form and fungi could be seen on different pages.

Update on the condition: It was restored and conserved by specialists from Matendaran on October 8-18 this year.

Decoration: rich, on front silver cover the crucifixion is depicted; the back cover shows the resurrection, 14 miniature pages in the gospel; the colophon and the canon tables are also illuminated.

Language: Old Armenian - *Grabar*

Contents: The four Gospels: Matthew; Mark; Luke, John, a colophon

Provenance: The commissioner Eghia priest. The manuscript was brought to Tsughrut village of Akhalts'kha from Ilija village of Western Armenia in 1830. The family has maintained it up to now as the relic of the village.



Figure 2. Miniature painting from The Tsughrut Gospel: The entree into Jerusalem.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid





Figure 3. The back silver cover of the Tsughrut Gospel: Resurrection.



Figure 4. The Colophon of the Tsughrut Gospel

## 2. Gospel,

Place: Georgia, Majadya<sup>102</sup>

Date: 1641

Parchment: 258 pages, 19 pages of miniature illustrations, the text written on both sides, but there is no text on the preceding or following pages of the miniatures.

Hand: scribe's and illustrator's name: Sahak,<sup>103</sup>

The script: *bolorgir*<sup>104</sup>

Layout: 2 columns except for the colophon, 24 lines

Ink: black for the main text, red for the titles and first letter of the section or decorated letters, also green, blue, brown, gold

Binding: leather cover, without flyleaves, on both front and back cover metal decorations with a cross in the middle decorated with stones

Condition: the colors of the miniatures have largely been transmitted to the neighboring page, on some pages the result is that the text is no longer readable, also fungi on the first and last folios of the manuscript; the last page especially is in a bad state, may be mostly affected by the humid environment where it is kept

Decoration: rich: metal and stone decorations on the front and back covers, 19 miniature folios depicting different scenes from the New Testament, also the “introduction” and the canon tables are illuminated

Contents: the four Gospels: Matthew; Mark; Luke, John, a colophon, later additions

Languages: Old Armenian

Provenance: the owner was Mesrop Bishop. It was brought to the present location in 1829-1830 by the ancestors of the present owner. He has inherited the Gospel from his mother who was very careful about the manuscript.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> See more about the manuscript: Elya Saribekyan, [About a manuscript in Majadya], [http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2012/2012\(7\).pdf](http://tert.nla.am/archive/HGG%20AMSAGIR/echmiadzin-vagharshapat/2012/2012(7).pdf), 131-136

<sup>103</sup> Elya Saribekyan, [About a manuscript in Majadya]

<sup>104</sup> The script Bolorgir (round letters) was created in the tenth century but became widely used starting from the thirteenth century: *The World's Writing Systems*, ed. Peter T. Daniels and William Bright: 357.

<sup>105</sup> Elya Saribekyan, [About a manuscript in Majadya]



Figure 5. A miniature folio from the Majadiah gospel: The presentation of Jesus at the Temple



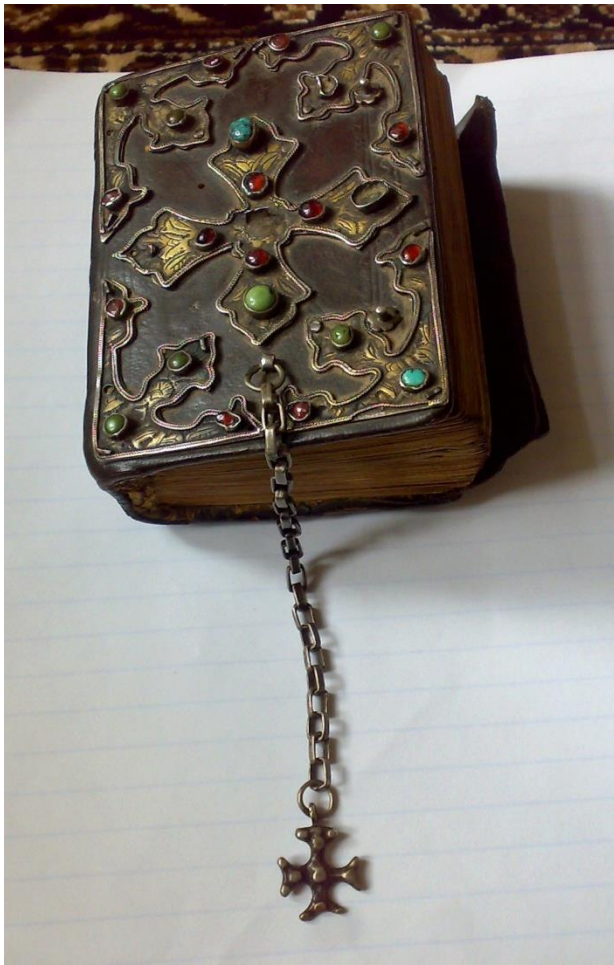


Figure 6. The cover and decoration on the Majadya Gospel

### 3. Gospel<sup>106</sup>

Place: Gyumri

Date: 1502

Parchment: written on both sides of the pages; the colophon notes that the parchment necessary for the manuscript was made of leather from one hundred goats

Hand: two scribes: Davit priest wrote the first three Gospels, the last Gospel (Gospel according to St. John) by Azaria bishop, was restored in 1697 (this information is written in the later marginal additions),

The script: *bolorgir*

Layout: 2 columns, 27 lines

Ink: black for the main text and red for the decorations on different pages, as well as green, blue, yellow used for the illuminations

<sup>106</sup> All the information about the manuscript was read in situ in the colophon of the manuscript.

Binding: leather cover and two flyleaves at the beginning (of earlier creation) in *erkatagir* script (the round type *erkatagir*)

Condition: generally in a good condition, but the opening miniatures of each Gospel are missing and replaced by a printed page, there is no information about when it was done.

Decoration: no ornaments on the leather cover, there are marginal illustrations on several folios. Two amulets: texts on two pieces of paper, certainly a later input of the owners, prayers for not letting the evil to touch the manuscript or the family holding it.

Contents: the four Gospels: St Matthew; St Mark; St Luke, St John, a colophon, later marginal notes

The colophon mentions that the manuscripts was made out of hundred goats' skin

Languages: Old Armenian- *Grabar*

Provenance: no information was possible to read from the marginal notes.

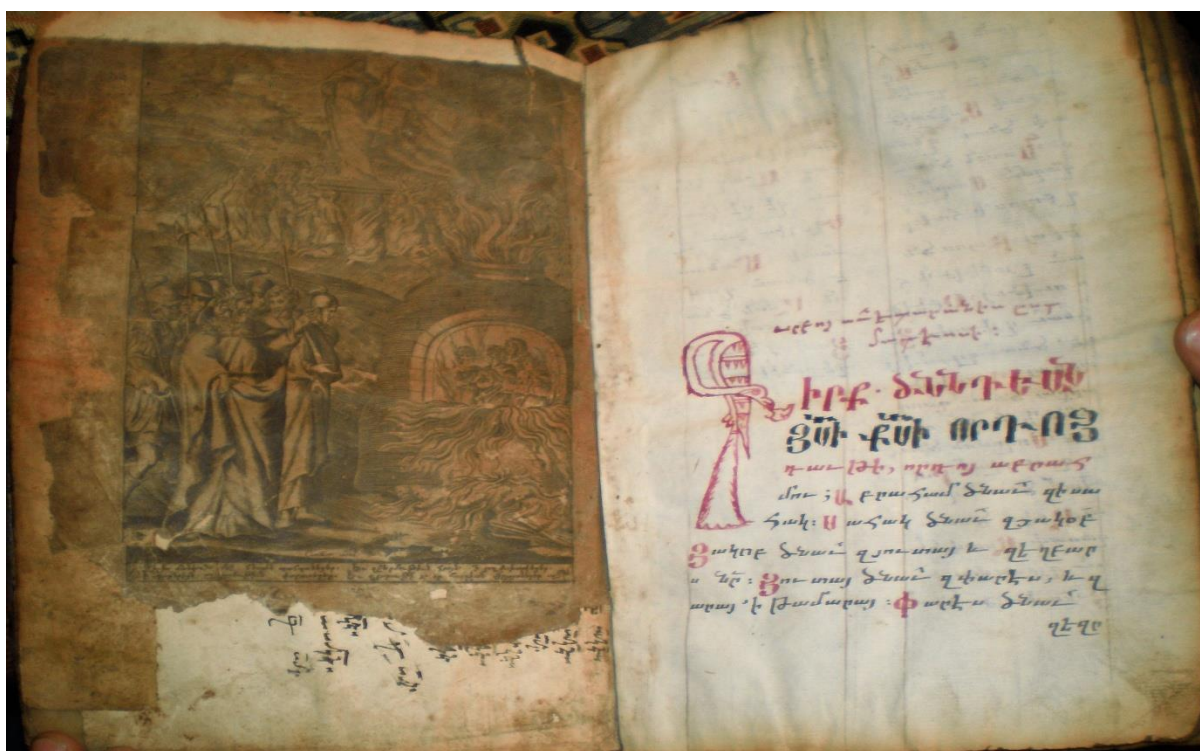


Figure 7. The replaced folios of the manuscript



Figure 8. A marginal illustration on one of the folios of the manuscript.

#### 4. Gospel (most probably 16- 18th century) Gyumri

Place: Gyumri

Date: 16-18th century (rough estimation as the colophon did not survive)

Paper: written on both sides of the pages, no colophon in the manuscript

Hand: the scribe is not known,

The script: *bolorgir*

Layout: 2 columns, 17- 21 lines

Ink: black for the main text and red for the

Binding: Leather with ornaments and a cross in the middle, two parchment flyleaves, fragments from an earlier manuscript in Old Georgian from an earlier gospel; Gospel according to Luke.<sup>107</sup>

Condition: in a very bad state, as the manuscript was saved from the fire and half of the folios were damaged by the fire, the other half was damaged because of the lack of good protection and preservation practice

Decoration: illuminated pages in the manuscript and also the metal decoration on the leather cover

Contents: the four Gospels

Languages: Old Armenian, Old Georgian on the flyleaves

Provenance: The manuscript was brought to the present location from present-day Turkey (the owner called it Western Armenia as all other owners) during 1885-1915 according to the story that was told by the mother of the present owner.

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<sup>107</sup> The assumption is based on the opinion of a specialist of the field.





Figure 9. The manuscript and its cover





Figure 10. an illuminated page from the manuscripts: The portrait of St. Luke.

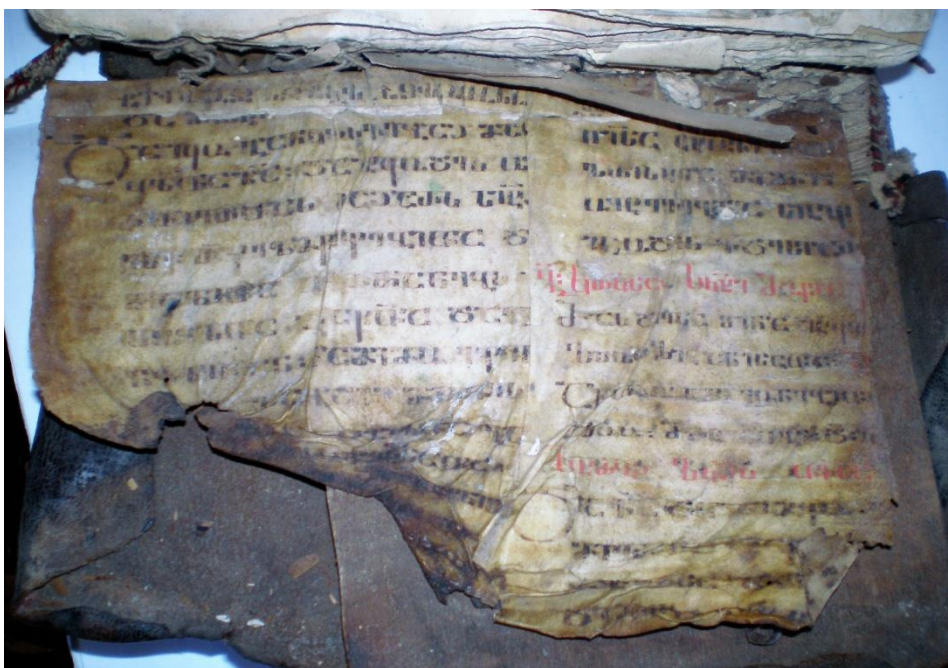


Figure 11. The flyleaf of the manuscript in Old Georgian.

## 5. Gospel

Place: Gyumri

Date: Cannot be identified as the manuscript was damaged.

Paper: written on both side, too damaged to give any other information.

Hand: no information available because of the condition of the manuscript.

The script: *bolorgir*.

Layout: 2 columns, lines cannot be counted as there is not even one full page.

Ink: black for the main text

Binding: leather back cover

Condition: extremely bad as the manuscript was saved from a fire which destroyed most of it.

Decoration: cannot be seen, but there were amulets together with the manuscript mainly metal crosses.

Contents: from reading a few pages that partially survived the manuscript is a gospel

Languages: Old Armenian

Provenance: no information available because of the condition of the manuscript.



Figure 12. One of the few pages that could be partially seen.





Figure 13. The manuscript, the decorations found with it and the cloth covering it.

## 6. Gospel

Place: Gyumri

Date: 16-17th century.

Parchment: written on both sides, four illustrated pages, each of those before each gospel depicting the Evangelists.

Hand: the scribes name was Hovhannes, but the colophon was written by Stepanos, the script: *notrgir*.<sup>108</sup>

Layout: 2 columns, 23 lines

Ink: black for the main text and red for the titles, other colors also used for the miniatures and illuminations.

Binding: Initially was leather with amulets on it, later on the front cover was changed into a wooden one and amulets were put on it, the old front cover has partially survived, but the back cover is still leather one.

Condition: in a good condition

<sup>108</sup> Minuscule created by speedwriters, was used only from 16-18<sup>th</sup> centuries; see more in: *The World's Writing Systems*, ed. Peter T. Daniels and William Bright: 357.

Decoration: rich, amulets of different shape on the cover and illuminations and miniatures inside the manuscript

Contents: The Four gospels

Languages: Old Armenian

Provenance: The manuscript has belonged to the family generation by generation and the grandfather of the present owner has brought it to Eastern Armenia "during the massacres" as the owner mentioned.



Figure 14. Miniature folios from the manuscript.



Figure 15. The ornaments of the manuscript on the new wooden cover made by the owner.

## 7. Gospel

Place: Haghmik

Date: 17th century most probably

Paper: written on both sides

Hand: the scribe not known

The script: *notrgir*

Layout: 2 columns, 21 lines, 9 miniature pages, canon tables also illustrated

Ink: black for the main text and red for the titles, other colors used for the illuminations

Binding: wooden with silver decorations (ornaments)

Condition: half of the pages at the beginning of the manuscript are separated from the manuscript and are in bad shape, the other half are still in good condition

Decoration: both on cover and inside, rich miniatures and illuminations on pages, silver ornaments depicting Christ's crucifixion on the front cover and resurrection on the back one

Contents: The Four gospels



Languages: Old Armenian

Provenance: no available information.

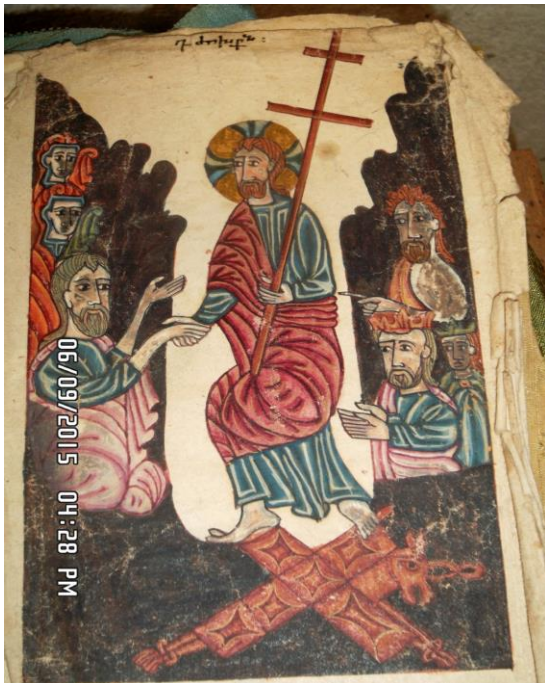


Figure 16. The descent of Jesus into Hell



Figure 17. The cover of the manuscript and the crucifixion depicted on it.

## 8. Gospel

Place: a village nearby Gyumri

Date: a part from 14th and another part from 16-17th century

Parchment: 309 pages, earlier restoration is obvious, probably two manuscripts dating from different centuries bound together or the renovator made the rest of it in the sixteenth century.

Hand: Sargis priest, the script: partially *bolorgir*, partially *notrgir*

Layout: 2 columns, 23 lines

Ink: black for the main text, red for the first letters and titles, and blue, brown, yellow, red, green for the miniatures

Binding: leather cover with iron cross on it and inscriptions on the cross, which suggests it is an amulet, flyleaves both at the beginning and the end.

Condition: the manuscript was in a satisfying condition, although the text in the colophon was partially erased, and then the manuscript was restored and renovated: it is kept at a small chapel dedicated to it.

Decoration: rich decorations inside the manuscript in the form of illuminations and miniatures, the cover has a cross with an inscription on it.

Contents: the four Gospels, a colophon, two later colophons, and later additions and marginal notes

Languages: Old Armenian- *grabar*

Provenance: The manuscript has a colophon in which the scribe mentions the year 1341 and that the manuscript is for the castle of Baberd, which was one of the provinces in Erzurum region. He mentions that his name is Sargis and the manuscript is for Hakobos and Mariane.

A later colophon adds that Sargis priest, the latest owner, bought it and gave for renovation to Davit who did the renovation work on 1587.

Another later colophon is written from the first person; Haghut‘ a woman who calls herself the latest *melik*‘ (I suppose in the meaning of owner or patron) of the manuscript, she mentions the names of the priests: Sargis and Melqiset‘, and also mentions the village where she has got the manuscript; Malasa which was actually in Baberd province of the Erzurum region and the church *surb Hovannu; St Hovhannes* (John) church.

Another date can be found on the cross; the amulet on the cover of the manuscript, which indicates 1678 already a different church.

Another date visible in later notes at the end of the manuscript is 1852, but the page is too damaged to see the text. However, the manuscript was brought from Western Armenia according to the neighbor of the owners which do not live in Armenia already several years, but the chapel is open for the people who want to pray.

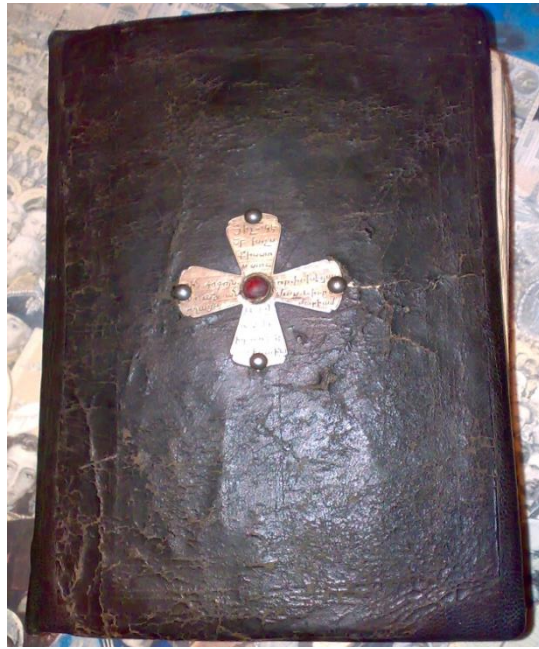


Figure 18. The manuscript cover with the cross on it.



Figure 19. An illuminated page from the manuscript.

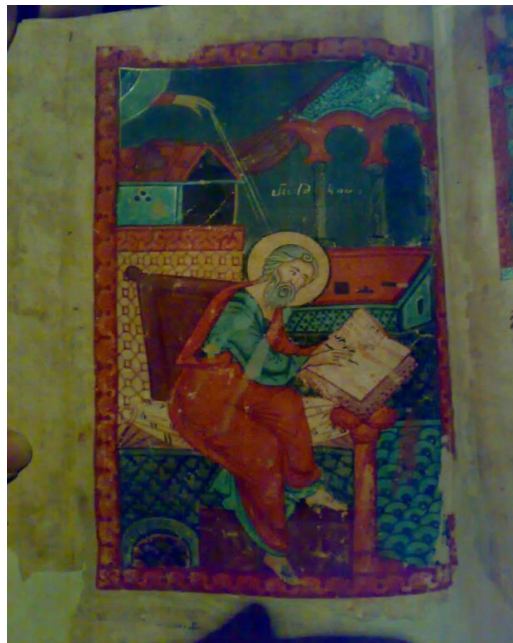


Figure 20. The portrait of St Matthew



## 9. Gospel

Place: a village nearby Gyumri

Date: 1288

Parchment: 175 pages,

Hand: the scribe: Abraham, a priest. The name Abraham is mentioned twice once for 1288 and second time for 1304, the script: bolorgir

Layout: 2 columns, 26-27 lines

Ink: black for the main text and red for the titles, green, blue, yellow used for the illuminations

Binding: leather cover with decoration of a cross in the leather, flyleaves at the beginning and the end, the first flyleaf is richly decorated

Condition: fairly good condition, traces of fungi seen on the last pages of the manuscript

Decoration: oriental style of decorations, rich decoration inside the manuscript in the form of illuminations and ornaments, but no separate miniatures, on several pages single character miniatures. The first folio is illuminated by ornaments of oriental style, the decorations of the beginning of each of the Gospels is also in oriental style

Contents: the four Gospels

Languages: Old Armenian - *Grabar*

Provenance: It is mentioned in the later marginal additions that the manuscript was taken to the present location in 1847 or 1877, difficult to read because of the state of the page.



Figure 21 The first illuminated folio of the manuscript



Figure 22. The cover of the manuscript

## 10. Gospel

Place: Sarian

Date: 1501

Paper: ---

Hand: the scribe: Vardan (a monk), in Haghpat (one of the monasteries with famous scriptorium), the script: *bolorgir*

Layout: 2 columns, 19 lines

Ink: black for the main text and red for the titles, green, blue, yellow used for the illuminations

Binding: the front cover with a metallic cross decorated by 4 stones, no flyleaves

Condition: the last 20 pages of the manuscript were damaged by the fire from which it was saved, otherwise in a fair condition

Decoration: decoration on the cover: a metallic cross with red and green stones, illuminations at the beginning of each Gospel, no miniatures though

Contents: the four Gospels

Languages: Old Armenian

The provenance: The manuscript was given to Galust and Davit' clerk. The manuscript was brought to Gyumri around 1832 and later on taken to Sarian village.

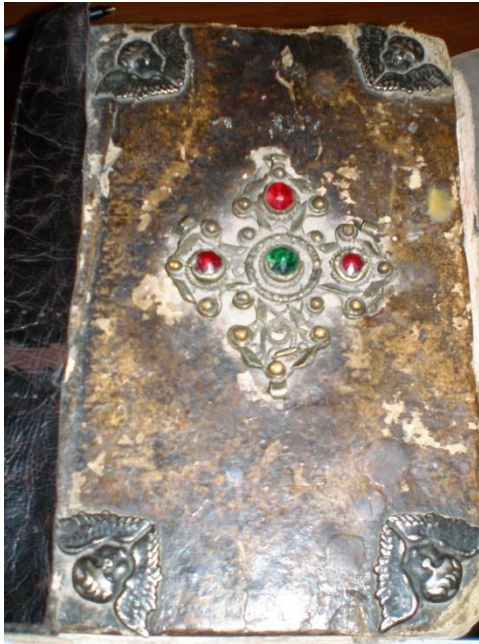


Figure 23. The cover of the manuscript



Figure 24. One of the pages of the manuscript showing the burnt parts

## 11. Gospel (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century)

Place: Saria

Date: 16-17th century

Paper: ---

Hand: the scribe: not known, the (most probably later) colophon written in 1648 by Aleqsan in which it is mentioned that the manuscript was repaired in 1646 by Hakob priest, who later on made additions and later notes.

The script: *bolorgir*.(*minuscule*)

Layout: 2 columns, 20 lines.

Ink: black for the main text and red for the titles and for the first letters at the beginning of the rows, green, blue, yellow used for the illuminations.

Binding: leather cover with decoration of a cross in the leather, parchment flyleaves written in Old Armenian and in *erkatagir* script older than the manuscript

Condition: fair, traces of fungi seen on several pages of the manuscript

Decoration: illuminated beginnings of the Gospels and decorated Head-letters of the paragraphs

Contents: The Four Gospels

Languages: Old Armenian

The provenance: The manuscript was brought to Gyumri around 1832 and later on taken to Saria village.





Figure 25. An illuminated page from the manuscript.



Figure 26. The cover of the manuscript.

## 12. Decree

Place: Gyumri

Date: 1828

Illuminated decree of Ep'rem II catholicos of the Holly See of Cilicia from 19th century (1828).

The script: *shghagir*<sup>109</sup>

The ink: black and red for the text, and yellow, brown, red, green, blue for the illumination.

Paper: one page

Provenance: It was given to the present owner for he is the descendant of the same dynasty that the catholicos was.



Figure 27. The one page decree of Ep'rem II catholicos.

<sup>109</sup> The notary wrote in *shghagir* as it was the faster way of using *bolorgir* script. For further information see: Michael Stone, Dickran Kouymjian, Henning Lehman, [Album of Armenian Paleography] *Հայկական հնագրութեան արքունիք*, tr. Gohar Muradyan and Aram Topchyan (Aarhus University press, 2006)