

Armenian Manuscripts of the Crimea in Collections of Moscow*

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Abstract — The scientific article presents studies of three Armenian manuscripts of the 17th–19th centuries. These are Collection of Liturgical Texts, *Hmayil* and Herbal Treatment Guide (Treatment Book), originating from the scriptoria of the Crimean peninsula (Bakhchisaray, Kafa and Karasu-bazar). Manuscripts are kept in two significant collections in Moscow: the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts and the Russian State Library. A brief codicological characteristic for each manuscript is given. It is also presented art-historical, iconography, paleographic analysis of the miniatures and colophons that allows the scholars to get acquainted with the results of a comprehensive study of the manuscripts' heritage of the Crimean Armenians of the New Middle Ages.

Keywords — *Armenian manuscripts; miniature; colophon; iconography; painting; the Crimea; Bakhchisaray; Kafa; Karasu-bazar*

I. INTRODUCTION

Recently, there is a growing public interest in the architecture and art of the Armenian Diaspora historically inhabiting Russia, the degree of integration and the preservation of national traditions. The studying period of the 17th–19th centuries is characterized by the diversity of artistic activity and the formation of new national styles. Therefore, particularly important is the integrated study of objects of decorative and applied art, their artistic value and architecture of churches and monastic ensembles as a single cultural organism that forms an outlook of Armenian communities of the south regions of Russia. Thus, in the course of carrying out of the research project RFBR: No. 170400643-OGN, a set of unexplored Armenian handwritten originals was discovered in the collections of mentioned cities in footnote (*) below. We are unable to elucidate in a single article all the found material because of its large volume. On the contrary, we have concluded that it would be expediently to split the material by the collections of Astrakhan, Rostov-on-Don, etc. that it will be presented

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results of the study in two/three separate scholarly works in the near future. Following this principle, we decided now to focus the reader on the study in three manuscripts recently found in the collections of Moscow such as the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RSAAA) and the Manuscripts' Division of the Russian State Library (RSL). These manuscripts are originated from the Crimean peninsula, however, they differ from each other are in their features and content. These are the following codices: Collection of Liturgical Texts of 1668–1669 created in Bakhchisaray (RSAAA f. 181, No. 1269), *Hmayil* of 1774 occurred from Kafa (RSL f. 180/I, No. 6), and Herbal Treatment Guide (Treatment Book) from Karasu-bazar (RSL f. 180/I, No. 13) dates back to 1808. Two artifacts are decorated with miniatures and belong to the manuscripts of an ecclesiastical cult, and the third one is the subject of a secular character. The Collection of Liturgical Texts and *Hmayil* were created in the period before the Crimea was incorporated by Catherine II into the Russian Empire (1783). It is a remarkable fact, speaking about the active manuscripts' production and artistic live of the Armenians in the Crimea before the possession of Russia.

II. PROVENANCE AND INVESTIGATION DEGREE OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

When and how did the manuscripts ended up in the collections of RSAAA and RSL? The information contained in the colophons enable researchers to trace the historical path of the manuscript from the time of its creation to the present day. Bibliographic sources, if they can be found, also contribute to the study of provenance. So, we do not know anything about the fate and location of the Collection of Liturgical Texts (RSAAA f. 181, No. 1269) from the date of its creation in 1669 and until the end of the 19th century, Information could be available if the colophons and later inscriptions were not destroyed by some vandal (the ink layer was thoroughly erased; a paper is damaged too). Traces of vandalism are clearly visible on the surfaces both of the flyleaf at the beginning of the manuscript and on fols. 200v, and 201v. However, in the course of study, we identified a complete list of references not only on the Collection of Liturgical Texts, but also for two other manuscripts that partially shed light on the history of their acquisition by the Moscow collections.

There is a handwritten inventory of the 18th–19th centuries attributed both to the authorship of Nikolay Bantysh-Kamensky, Alexey Malinovsky and to an anonymous team of archivists. According to their register, the date of entry of the Collection of Liturgical Texts into the Moscow General Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MGAMFA) is 1868 (source of acquisition is not mentioned)¹. Based on the MGAMFA inventory, an anon author was compiled another brief description of the Collection of Liturgical Texts, presumably at the end of the 19th century (the manuscript was in this collection prior to its dissolution by the Bolsheviks in 1920) [1]. Later, the archivist A. Speranskaya attached a sheet to this inventory with her record signed on 7 March 1937. It is means the manuscript was already in the collection of the State Archives of the Feudal Serf Era (SAFSE) [1]. The SAFSE was renamed as the Central State Archive of Ancient Acts in 1941. Finally, in April 1992, the Bakhchisaray codex has been enrolled in the foundation No. 181 entitled ‘Department of Manuscripts of the MGAMFA Library’ (shelf-mark No. 1269) of the newly renamed collection as the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RSAAA) [2].

Scholar Christophor Ivanovich Kuchuk-Ioannesov was the pioneer, who draw the attention of scientists to the Collection of Liturgical Texts. He made a report about his discovery at a meeting of the Eastern Committee of the Moscow Archaeological Society, thereby first introduced the manuscript into a scientific circulation. The Eastern Committee Protocols No. 83 dated 24 February 1903 are testifying this [3]. There is very important report by Kuchuk-Ioannesov from the point of view of science, although it does not contain art-historical and codicological analysis. His message is bring mostly of an exploratory nature, built because of data gathered from the main colophon of the manuscript translated into Russian that I am demonstrating in the article below. We found no other bibliographic sources for this Collection of Liturgical Texts, except for those indicated in the References here below [1, 2, 3].

The fate of the Kafa scroll (*Hmayil*) of 1774 (RSL f. 180/I, No. 6) is also unknown since the creation of the manuscript and until its acquisition by the Lenin’s State Library (LSL) in 1946 as recorded in the Acquisition Book No. 56². The Division of ‘Collection of manuscripts in the languages of the USSR...’ is approximately established from this time, where the *Hmayil* kept today [4]. General data and limited number of miniatures of the scroll were presented in four different articles written by Vazgen Hakobyan, Alla Ter-Sarkisyants, Marina Krutova, Ivan Lyovochkin and Mikayel Arakelyan [5, 6, 7, 8]. These scientific works also contain very brief excerpts and mainly refer to the

information like in the case of the Collection of Liturgical Texts from the RSAAA. Thus, in the article by Ter-Sarkisyants, only incipit miniatures of the scroll are reproduced and without any scientific analysis; Krutova and Lyovochkin only state the presence of an illustrated scroll in the RSL collection (study in art is absent here); Arakelyan published three full-page miniatures and information about the artist and scribe. As far as I know, there are no other bibliographic sources for the scroll.

History is silent about when and how the Herbal Treatment Guide of 1808 (RSL f. 180/I, No. 13) penetrated from the Crimean city of Karasu-bazar to Moscow after its creation. However, in footnote 17 of the main index of the LSL manuscripts dated 1986 is written: “Armenian Treatment Book of the 16th century was purchased from Stroev that included in the foundation 180/I” [9]. First of all, compilers of the index made a mistake in dating the manuscript as the 16th century (*sic*); secondly, presumably Sergei P. Stroev who does not specify in which particular collection the manuscript was located³. However, there is a note in the inventory of 1947 about the accession of the manuscript to the LSL in 1938 (Acquisition Book No. 139) [4]. We did not find out other sources of the manuscript, except for the library index and inventory, in which there is a brief output data in the type of notes.

We should be consider three manuscripts in more detail separately and in chronological order since they are not linked to each other neither by dating nor by content, and even more they were created in three different scriptoria of the Crimea.

III. COLLECTION OF LITURGICAL TEXTS (RSAAA F. 181, No. 1269)

There are some inaccuracies in the handwritten inventory and guidebook of the RSAAA, both in the translation of the manuscript’s title into Russian and in dating, because the compilers translated the title of the manuscript as the ‘Prayers and Psalms for the feasts, table of Dominical letters written in Bakhchisaray in 1670’⁴ [1, 2]. Actually, the scribe himself gives name to his manuscript as the *Tonatsuyts* and *Parzatomar* that in Classical Armenian means the ‘Liturgical Directory for the Dominical Feasts and Other Saints Days’ and a ‘Simple Calendar of the Armenian Church’. In this case, it is not a convolute. This type of manuscripts officially refers to the Collections of Liturgical Texts, in which two or three complementary ecclesiastical works are usually arranged as can be seen in an example of several manuscripts published by Avedis Sanjian [10].

Paper, probably of Italian origin, is the main material of the manuscript. The *Tonatsuyts* and *Parzatomar* consists 203 folios (14.7 × 10.5 cm) stitched into a block of 18 quires, having 3.4 cm in thickness. The text is written in *bolorgir*

¹ Nikolay Nikolaevich Bantysh-Kamensky (1737–1814) and Alexey Fedorovich Malinovsky (1762–1840) — both are historians, archeographers and collectors of documents on the history of Russia. However, anonymous authors continued the work of two above-mentioned historians and entered information about the Collection of Liturgical Texts into the inventory register. They only indicated a year of acquisition of the manuscript (1868) awarding the shelf-number (n ° 1338) and stating that the manuscript was written in Armenian without indicating their titles.

² LSL was renamed in the Russian State Library in 1992.

³ We know at least three historians-archeographers bearing Stroev’s surname: Pavel Mikhailovich Stroev (1796–1876), Sergei Mikhailovich Stroev (1814–1941), and Sergei Pavlovich Stroev (1826–1886).

⁴ In original: “Молитвы и псалмы на праздники, таблица вруцелето, писанная в Бахчисарае в 1670 году”.

script and in one column (10.1 × 6.4 cm), and in 23 lines. Two flyleaves are located at the beginning and two other ones at the end of the manuscript. Dark and red-brown leather over wooden boards (15 × 10.5 cm). Ornamental stamping is found out on both sides of each cover. Canvas, gray-blue lines inside the surfaces of the boards.

The manuscript is grouped into the Directory of the holy feasts with selections of lessons and readings from the Gospels and the Lives of the Saints (fols. 1r-151r), as well as the Calendar of the Armenian Apostolic Church (fols. 152r-198r) with a table including 13 months of the ancient Armenian calendar year. The text of this manuscript has some similarities with the content of the *Tonatsuyts* of 1686 (M435) housed in the collection of the Matenadaran — Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan [11].

The two principal colophons compiled by the scribe and miniaturist Petros are located on fols. 23v, 201r and contain information about the manuscript itself: “This Collection was written by the hand of the worthless deacon Petros in 1117 of the Armenian era (= 1668) in the country of Crimea, in the suburb of Bakhchisaray under the auspices of the church of St. Gregory the Illuminator”. Next, on fol. 201r: “Glory to the Holy Trinity and the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit now and forever and ever, Amen. By the grace of the omnipotent God, this Calendar of Feasts and Ecclesiastical Calendar are written by the hand of many sinful and unworthy remains, dust and obscene deacon Petros in 1118 of the Armenian era (= 1669) on Wednesday, the day 31st of the month of March, in the suburb of Bakhchisaray, for use by Luseghen the son of pilgrim Martiros. May God make him long lasting and save from the temptations of visible and invisible enemies, Amen. My hand decay, turn to dust, the letter will remain recalling about it. Oh, brothers! *Xoja* Luseghen, remember me a sinner, indecent. I pray you for the second time, my dear ones, who may see read or copy this manuscript, mark the false-named Petros in prayer ‘Father, I have sinned... and you will be remembered by Christ. Our Father...’” [3].

The manuscript contains a small number of miniatures. Petros decorated a title page "Fig. 1"⁵ and eight headpieces for various ecclesiastical feasts and ceremonies as well as ten marginalia images (a cross and ornamental motifs). The decoration in the manuscript is not rich; the capital initials are ornithomorphic and zoomorphic "Fig. 2". Images are generally framed with red and black inks. Miniaturist also uses pigments in several places such as white lead, cochineal, cinnabar and ultramarine. Christophor Kuchuk-Ioannesov relates the title page and headpieces to the Byzantine style, thereby allowing an error in his judgment. At the very beginning of the 20th century, art-historical criticism in Armenian studies was at the embryo stage and apparently Kuchuk-Ioannesov, being not an art historian, did not have access to many Armenian illuminated originals he could make a comparative analysis. On the contrary, the

iconographical and stylistic analyzes of all the images showed that they are identified with numerous samples of miniature painting of the Late Middle Ages not only of the Crimea, but also of historical Armenia, in particular, such provinces as Higher Armenia and Vaspurakan.

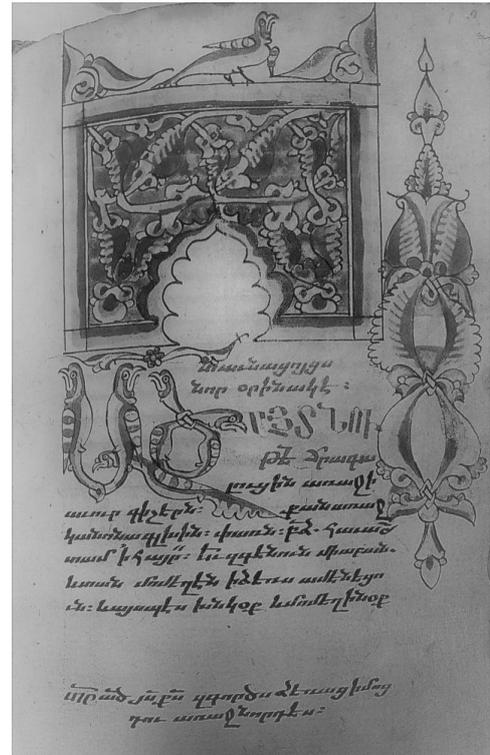


Fig. 1. Title page to the Calendar of Feasts (fol. 1r). Collection of Liturgical Texts, 1668–1669. RSAA f. 181, No. 1269 (Matenadaran, microfilm No. 658).



⁵ The author expresses sincere gratitude to the staff of the Matenadaran — Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts and the Research Department of Manuscripts of the RSL for providing illustrative material for publication (figs. 1-4).

Fig. 2. Headpiece to the ecclesiastical calendar (fol. 152r). Collection of Liturgical Texts, 1668–1669. RSAAA f. 181, No. 1269 (Matenadaran, microfilm No. 658).

IV. *Hmayil* (RSL F. 180/I, No. 6)

This type of manuscript is called *Hmayil* in Armenian. In fact, it is a talisman (amulet) or prayer scroll. *Hmayils* in the form of richly decorated and illustrated scrolls spread in Armenia and in the Diaspora in the 17th century. They were intended for home and travel use, and remained popular until the end of the 19th century. Our scroll, of course, refers to the priceless monuments of art and culture of the Crimean Armenians. This is a European-made paper and has more than 11 meters in length, with a width of 10.8 cm only. The text is written in a small *notrgir* script in one column; the number of lines varies from two to forty-one. The manuscript is in good condition. It includes excerpts from the Four Gospels, sermons, magic formulas and prayers for health were used as a talisman for adversity, designed to protect its owner from various dangers, especially from demons. All miniatures are accompanied by prayers for health and healing attributed to St. Grigor of Narek (10th century) and St. Nerses Shnorhali (12th century)⁶. The content of the *Hmayil* (RSL f. 180/I, No. 6) partially or almost completely coincides with many scrolls belonging to the collections of the Congregation of the Mkhitarist Fathers of Venice and the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin published by Frederick Feydi and Gevorg Ter-Vardanyan [12, 13].

The Crimean *Hmayil* was written and illustrated by the scribe and miniaturist Harutyun Kafatsi son of the monk Azaria in the city of Kafa (modern Theodosia) as stated by his colophon at the end of the scroll: “I wrote for the protection of the city of Kafa and for the use of Harutyun son of Petros with good intention in the year 1774, on 21 January”. There is also the late inscription indicating the conclusion of peace between the Ottoman and Russian empires on 28 July 1774⁷ [5]. It becomes clear why Haroutyun writes about the protection of Kafa in the aforementioned colophon.

The scroll is adorned with seventeen luxuriously miniatures and six ornamental headpieces executed in tempera in a technique of watercolour and *impasto* (three layers); the surface is matt and the ink and gold outlines appear in some places. The dimensions of the full-page miniatures range from 13.6 to 19.6 cm in height and from 8.9 to 9.2 cm in width. The preservation of the painting layer is in satisfactory condition, despite the presence of crackles in several places.

The so-called ‘Title’ is open the painting programme with the depiction of an ornamental chalice and eight birds at

the base from which two flanked obelisks rise. The Holy Cross and two angels in halos holding the laurels of the crown adorn the upper register of the composition. Images of two anthropomorphic figures symbolizing human souls are painted into the obelisks. The instruments of the passions of Christ, seven candles with candlesticks and five lamps hanging over the ‘Stone of Anointing’ are drawn in the composition “Fig. 3”. There are full-page miniatures directly follow the multivalued image of title. The artist consciously divides them into five groups bearing the iconographical and theological significance. The first two miniatures illustrate the Old Testament themes: God the Father “Fig. 4”.



Fig. 3. Title. *Hmayil*, 1774. RSL f. 180/I, No. 6.

⁶ Alias Grigor Narekatsi (951–1003) was an Armenian monk, poet, mystical philosopher, theologian, and composer, based in Narek Monastery near Lake Van, he is regarded as ‘Armenia’s first great poet’. Alias St. Nerses IV Klayetsi, the Catholicos of All Armenians in 1166–1173.

⁷ Here we are talking about the Russian military company in the Crimea of 1767–1774, in which the Ottoman Empire was defeated. The Crimea was liberated from the Turks and annexed to Russia in 1783.



Fig. 4. God the Father. *Hmayil*, 1774. RSL f. 180/I, No. 6.

Adam and Eve personifying the creation of the world within six days, the fall of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Paradise "Fig. 5". Further, Harutyun Kafatsi illuminates five scenes from the New Testament: Annunciation, Adoration of the Magi, Baptism, Transfiguration "Fig. 6", "Fig. 7", "Fig. 8", and "Fig. 9", and the Crucifixion with the Theotokos, Mary and John. The cycle ends with the eschatological subject as 'Mary and Child Crowned in Heaven'. Harutyun continues to build a pictorial set with images of saints: John the Baptist preaching at the Jordan River, St. Stephen the Protomartyr with a censer, St. Gregory the Illuminator baptizes King Trdat and his retinue, Christ and 12 kneeling Apostles in ornamental medallions. There is other miniature on the biblical theme as Abraham and the Sacrifice of Isaac, and the Cryptogram with a multi-coloured flower pattern immediately following it. The cycle ends with compositions depicting the victory of Good over evil: Archangel Michael throwing down a fallen angel, St. George the General on horseback striking a dragon with a spear, St. Sargis the Commander and his son Minas on horseback and finally King Solomon confronting the demon and other seven devils.



Fig. 5. Adam and Eve. *Hmayil*, 1774. RSL f. 180/I, No. 6.



Fig. 6. Annunciation. *Hmayil*, 1774. RSL f. 180/I, No. 6.



Fig. 7. Adoration of the Magi. *Hmayil*, 1774. RSL f. 180/I, No. 6.



Fig. 8. Baptism. *Hmayil*, 1774. RSL f. 180/I, No. 6.

Compositional continuation of the Transfiguration scene is an ornamental headpiece with trefoil lancet arches that opens the beginning of the text of the amulet "Fig. 9". The second rectangular headpiece with a built-in semicircular four-colour arch (orange, green, purple and blue) decorated like a rainbow; under the arch is a reclining deer. This headpiece starts the prayer 'In Faith, I Confess' by Nerses Shnorhali. The third headpiece is almost identical with the first one, but it has a multifoil lancet arch covered with ornamental motifs from which the text 'Of the Healing Property of the Gospel of Matthew' generates. Thus, it is not difficult to notice that elements of Western European iconography are dominating in the full-page miniatures. On the other hand, both the composition and the colour scheme are undertaken in the style of the Crimean school of Armenian miniature painting of the 17th–18th centuries, but the headpieces and initials repeat the ancient Armenian motifs of the preceding centuries.



Fig. 9. Transfiguration; Headpiece. *Hmayil*, 1774. RSL f. 180/I, No. 6.

V. HERBAL TREATMENT GUIDE/TREATMENT BOOK (RSL F. 180/I, NO. 13)

According to the colophon on fol. 143r, the manuscript was written by the scribe-translator and the deacon Srapion Arakelyan, the son of Bogdan, in the town of Karasu-bazar (modern Belogorsk) on the Crimean peninsula in 1808. The "crafty doctor *Agha Karapet Manukyan*", as wrote Srapion, commissioned the codex in a memory of himself and his relatives.

The Herbal Treatment Guide (Treatment Book) begins with the title page entitled by the deacon Srapion in Armenian as 'Medical Guidebook for Substance or the Description of Healing Plants in the Medicine Used, with an Explanation of the Benefits and Uses of These and with Attaching of Drawings Corresponding to the Natural Form of Each Plant. Composed on the Highest Command by Doctor of Medicine and Obstetric Art, Professor Nestor Maksimovich-Ambodik, Sankt Petersburg. The Second Volume. Published in the printing house of the Marine Gentry of Cadet Corpus in the City of St. Petersburg in 1785'. It is became clear that the manuscript is an exact translation from Russian into Armenian made by Srapion from the first Russian Phytotherapy (herbal medicine) published in four volumes in 1783–1789. The author of this work was the State Councilor Nestor Maksimovich-Ambodik (1744–1812) — one of the founders of the Russian obstetric and pediatric schools [14].

Therefore, the manuscript consists of two main parts including the texts of volumes II and IV of the St. Petersburg

edition. The second volume is divided into 43 chapters and the fourth volume consists of 33 chapters. Tables of contents are placed at the end of each volume. All chapters of the manuscript are numbered in Arabic numerals and correspond to the numbering of the printed books of Nestor Maksimovich-Ambodik. Each chapter begins with the name of the plant in Latin, Russian, Armenian, and Turkish, but all of them are written in Armenian letters. Treatment Book is not accompanied by illustrations (miniatures). It belongs to the secular manuscripts' tradition of the Crimean Armenians of the beginning of the 19th century.

VI. CONCLUSION

Thus, in the course of the study I revealed three Armenian handwritten and illuminated manuscripts (Collection of Liturgical Texts, *Hmayil* and Herbal Treatment Guide) in the collections of RSAAA and RSL. These manuscripts are vivid examples of the written and visual heritage of Armenians of the Crimea, namely, Bakhchisaray, Kafa (Theodosia) and Karasu-bazar (Belogorsk). These handwritten monuments reflect the religious and secular life of the Armenian Diaspora of the 17th century – early 19th century. I carried out a thorough art-historical and iconographical analysis of miniatures from the manuscripts of Bakhchisaray and Kafa. As a result, it was determined the attribution of the manuscripts to the traditional school of Armenian miniature painting of the Crimea. The study also shows that the decorative initials and headpieces of the Bakhchisaray codex repeat the ancient Armenian motifs of the preceding centuries, and a number of compositions of the Kafa scroll go back to the samples of Western European iconography of the New Middle Ages. The Treatment Book of Karasu-bazar contains recipes written in Armenian with phonetic names of plants in Latin, Russian and Turkish.

Artifacts of Armenian art of calligraphy and book-illumination, for the first time presented in this article, have a significant historical and cultural interest. The 'General Catalog of Armenian Manuscripts and Illuminated Encyclical Letters from Collections of Moscow' including also descriptions of the Crimean manuscripts in the RSAAA and RSL is being prepared for publication in Armenian, Russian and English in near future.

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