

ԱՐՎԵՍՏԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ART

LUSINE SARGSYAN*

«Matenadaran» Mesrop Mashtots Research
Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, Yerevan State University
sargsianlusin@gmail.com

ILLUSTRATING A FOURTEENTH – CENTURY ARMENIAN OLD TESTAMENT: THE VISION OF ISAIAH IN THE ART OF THE MINIATURIST AVAG¹

Key words: The Vision of Isaiah, Old Testament, miniature art, Avag, Sultanieh, Bible, iconography.

Introduction

The present article aims to bring together a variety of considerations that inform Armenian Old Testament illumination during the 14th century. As a case study it introduces the example of a Bible (Matenadaran No. 4429) created in Sultanieh (Northern Iran)² in 1338, copied by the scribe Mxitar of Ani (fols. 55v, 148v, 149r, 184v) and illustrated by the deacon Avag (fols. 148v, 149r)³.

* Հոդվածը ներկայացվել է 09.06.20, գրախոսվել է 10.06.20, ընդունվել է տպագրության 14.08.20:

¹ A version of this paper was published in Armenian, see Սարգսյան Լ. 2019 (Ա), 48–57. The current English translation represents a broader study of the subject. I am grateful to Dr. Vazken Khatchig Davidian for his suggestions for the English edition of the text.

² For a brief description of the manuscript see Յուզակ ձեռագրաց Մաշտոցի անվան Մատենադարանի 1965, 1212: Աճեմեյան 1992, 129–131. For published literature discussing the principal and several later colophons of the Bible see Յովսեփեան 1948, 207: Խաչիկյան 1950, 307–312: Գեորգեան 1998, 74: Սարգսյան 2019 (Ա), 48–49.

³ On the life and creative heritage of Avag see Սարգսյան 2015 (Բ), 73–88. Eleven manuscripts are currently attributed to Avag. A further manuscript should be added to this

Through a close and comparative reading of the Old Testament illuminations, and with a particular focus on the Vision of Isaiah, the study aims to raise the following questions: a) to consider the relationship between the appearance of the new and its incorporation into established traditions of representation as they exist in systems of illumination of the Bible; b) to understand the formation of the iconography of the Vision of Isaiah in the art of Avag and alongside considerations of contemporary parallels both within the Armenian and Christian art; c) to elaborate on the question of prototypes used by Avag; d) to introduce the textual sources that would have influenced the development of Avag's iconography; and, e) to consider the issue of the theological interpretation of the image in accordance with the commentaries of the medieval authors.

The System of Illumination and Iconography

The Sultanieh Bible is not complete and appears partially unfinished. Some pages at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the manuscript are currently missing, presumably lost⁴. Furthermore, whilst many pages are empty⁵, the Bible also contains several pages that are unfinished⁶, suggesting that the miniaturist had been unable to apply color to the miniatures. These miniatures

list. It is a Miscellany of Philosophical Texts (IOM RAS, ИБ B-116) copied in 1337 at University of Glajor by scribe Ep'rem, and later, in 1356, completed by Avag in Tp'is (modern Tbilisi). For a brief description and colophon readings of the manuscript see Юзбашян 2005, 170–171, 240–242. A paleographic study of the manuscript allows me to state that Avag *vardapet* mentioned in the colophon is none other than Avag, the known illuminator of the eleven other attributed manuscripts. I am grateful to the art historian Inesa Danielyan, who kindly drew my attention to this manuscript and also to the director of IOM RAS – Prof. Dr. Irina F. Popova, for her kind contribution to my research.

⁴ E.g. there are missing pages between folios 161 and 162, because after the preface of the Gospel of Matthew the following passage “/// call His name Jesus” (f. 162r) from his Gospel appears. It is thus clear that the portrait of the Evangelist Matthew, along with the title page of his Gospel, are missing. Furthermore, the Gospel of Mark ends with the passage XVI:3 on folio 200v, and is followed by the title page of the Gospel of Luke which is located in folio 201r. This shows that there are several missing pages between folios 200 and 201, which would include a portrait of the Evangelist Luke.

⁵ E.g. in the Letter of Eusebius to Carpianus (folios 150v–151r), ten canons of concordances in eight tables (folios 152v, 153r, 154v, 155r, 156v, 157r, 158v, 159r), and on folios 249r and 320r, only red frames of the chapter headpieces are visible.

⁶ According to G. Hovsepian, the artist had been working on other commissions by the Orbelians, see in Յովսէփեան 1948, 207.

represent drawings (22v, 23r, 93v, 94r, 124r, 186v, 187r, 201r, 228v, 229r, 248v) outlined with red or light brown ink and, it seems, made using a lead-pencil (according to Garegin Hovsepian⁷).

In the abovementioned images Avag continues the already established tradition of illustration, such as the illumination of the Old Testament books and chapters with *semi-khorans*, chapter headpieces and portraits of the authors. Among the full-page miniatures of the Old Testament two prophetic visions, those of Isaiah (fol. 22b, ill. 1) and Ezekiel (fol. 93b⁸), are depicted. Both are followed by illustrated title pages (fol. 23r⁹, 94r). The title page that comes after the illumination of the prophecy of Isaiah is decorated with the portrait of the prophet situated within the initial letter “L”. Isaiah is depicted standing, with a halo around his head, with his right hand raised in a blessing pose, and holding an open parchment sheet in his left hand. The initial letter ends with the head of a dragon. Meanwhile, the title page immediately following the miniature of the Vision of Ezekiel is decorated with a headpiece which has a multi lunette arch at the center with pointed edges. The initial letter «Է» is made up of a representation of the prophet, holding a parchment roll, and a halo around his head, and an animal which appears to be a lion (one of the four animals of his Vision). At the center of the headpiece of the title page of the Prophecy of Jeremiah (fol. 124r), the prophet is portrayed with a halo around his head, holding a parchment roll in his left hand and raising the right hand to the Hand of the God who emerges from heaven.

Illuminated Armenian Bibles are known to us from the 13th century¹⁰. In the 14th century, the artistic decoration of the Armenian Bible continued the tradition of the previous century, whilst also enriching these illustrations with new details. The Bibles illustrated by Avag played a special role in this chain of development. Continuing the already established tradition of illustration¹¹, new details appear that become characteristic of the 14th century illustrated Armenian Bibles, which include scenes from the Creation and of the Fall of Adam and Eve into sin in the

⁷ Յովսէփեան 1948, 206:

⁸ About this scene see Vardanyan 2014, 585–587, fig. 6.

⁹ For the reproduction see Սարգսեան 2019 (Ա), 57, ill. 2.

¹⁰ Տեր-Ներսեսյան 1966, 28.

¹¹ An exception is the Bible of Erznka which has numerous miniatures and specific structure of illumination; for details see Տեր-Ներսեսյան 1966, 28–39.

Book of Genesis¹². Along with many similarities in the structure of illumination, the Bible of Sultanieh contains some innovations that have not yet been found in other Armenian Bibles, whether illustrated previously or by the contemporaries. One such innovation is the depiction of Isaiah's Vision¹³.

The Vision of Isaiah follows the preface to the prophecy of Isaiah which precedes the prophecy: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken ...". In the upper part of the miniature the Holy Trinity is depicted on a tetramorphic throne. God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Christ are depicted with halos around their heads. A cross is represented within each halo. The figure of the Father is presented blessing with an incomparably large right hand, while his left hand touches Christ's shoulder. Between Father and Son, the Holy Spirit appears with his wings wide open, flying upwards rather than descending. The Holy Trinity is surrounded by a four-part circle from which rays of light are emitted (Is. IV:2, 5). It is important to note that the miniaturist did not depict four tetramorphic symbols in a circle, which emphasizes the separateness of the visual interpretation of the Vision of Isaiah from the vision of Ezekiel (I:4–12) and the Revelation of John (IV:6–7). Two six-winged seraphim, each holding a ringing-instrument, surround the Holy Trinity. On the right ringing-instrument there is an inscription: "*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts*" («Ս[ուրբ]ք, ս[ուրբ]ք, ս[ուրբ]ք՝ Տէր Զօր[ոյն]», Is. VI:3). The four creatures of the tetramorph have wings, each of which holds a Gospel. On the right side of the Holy Trinity appear a human face and a lion, whilst on the left an eagle and an ox, symbolizing the Evangelists (Ezek. I:10)¹⁴.

¹² The miniaturist Avag depicted these scenes in the Bible of Venice no. 935. For more details on the system of illustrations of the 14th c. Armenian Bibles see **Սարգսյան** 2019 (Բ), 296–311.

¹³ I cannot exclude the possible existence of this scene in Armenian Bibles of the 13–14th centuries. As in literature, there appears to be some confusion between the scene of the Vision of Isaiah with other scenes (in particular with the Vision of Ezekiel). E.g., in the monograph of A. Gevorgian the depiction of Isaiah's Vision is entitled "Tetramorphic throne"; see **Գևորգեան** 1998, 73.

¹⁴ The artist used such iconography on his depiction of the tetramorphic throne in the scene of the Last Judgement (Matenadaran, Ms. no. 7650, f. 26v, Ms. no. 212, f. 80r) with the minor difference of the four characters, having no wings. For more detail see **Sargsyan** 2018 (B), 139–158.

The depiction of the image of the Holy Trinity in the Vision of the Prophet Isaiah can be considered as one of the most innovative features of the art of Avag, as such iconography has as yet not been encountered in the Armenian art of either the previous or the 14th centuries¹⁵. However, it does appear in the Christian art of the same period, e.g. in the Bulgarian Psalter, illustrated in 1360, in which the Visions of the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel are depicted together. At the center of the latter composition is the Holy Trinity, surrounded by a tetramorphic throne. The difference between this image and that of Avag is the absence of the Holy Spirit¹⁶. It is usual for God the Father, Christ, and, then the Holy Spirit to be depicted in images of the Holy Trinity¹⁷. Meanwhile, Avag's depiction of the Holy Trinity is closer to that in the image at the beginning of the Genesis in the Bible illustrated by Sargis Picak in the same year (Matenadaran, Ms. 2627, f. 2v, ill. 2). There are however some iconographic differences between the two images; e.g. Sargis portrayed God the Father with Jesus Christ, and then the Holy Spirit.

The image of the Holy Trinity in the art of Avag seems to be a visual interpretation of the Gospel of John, which reads "The Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father" (XV:26). It can be assumed that this iconographic deviation was made in order to emphasize the idea of Theophany, the visualization of which occurs in the scene of Baptism, with images of the right hand of God, descending from heaven, the dove of the Holy Spirit, and then Christ in the Jordan River. An interesting ideological relationship can be observed between Avag's interpretation and two sculptural compositions from the Vayoc' Ĵor region (the 14th century).

¹⁵ Such iconography has not yet been found in later Armenian miniature art (e.g. a miniature from a Bible illustrated by Małak'ia Polsec'i and Markos Patkerahan in 1686, Matenadaran, Ms. 349, f. 357v); neither does it appear on known old prints and silver covers. See e.g. "The Vision of Isaiah" of the Oskanian Bible published in 1666 in Amsterdam, or the silver cover of 1691 (Venice, No. 198) and another cover (Venice, Ms. 2061). According to S. Merian, the latter have been influenced by Dutch engravings, see **Merian** 2013, 135, 154, 158–159, fig. 5, 10, 11. According to N. Garibyan and A. Sahakyan, an engraving from the Frankfurt Bible (A.D. 1564) could have been used as a prototype for the engraving of Isaiah's Vision in the Oskanian Bible, see **Garibyan, Sahakyan** 2018, 137.

¹⁶ See the reproduction of the miniature in **Bucur** 2019, 242, fig. 8.9.

¹⁷ E.g. the images of the Holy Trinity in the 13–14th centuries Cilician marginal miniatures (Matenadaran, Ms. 9422, f. 21r, 249r, Ms. 7651, f. 10r, Vienna, Ms. 278, f. 14r, Jerusalem, Ms. 2568, f. 250r); for reproductions of the miniatures see **Der-Nersessian** 1993, figs. 430–432, 435–436.

Illustrating a Fourteenth Century Armenian Old Testament...

These are to be found in the upper relief of the window arch of the narthex (*gavit*) of St. Stephanos Church in Noravank' and the relief inside the dome of Spitakavor Church of the Holy Mother of God. At the center of both sculptural compositions are the images of God the Father, the Holy Spirit and Adam. Moreover, if the relief at Noravank' contains a richer and more comprehensive iconography (Crucifixion of Christ on the left side, etc.), then the relief at Spitakavor is closer to Avag's miniature, as the composition is surrounded by a tetramorph. Both sculptures depict three personifications of the Holy Trinity¹⁸ with Christ, acting as the New Adam as discussed by Karen Matevosyan¹⁹.

In the next row the Prophet Isaiah is depicted standing, and not on his knees as traditionally depicted, holding an open sheet of parchment in his left hand. He raised his right hand to the six-winged seraph flying towards him with the mission of purifying his sins: "Then one of the seraphims flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said:

Behold, this has touched your lips;
Your iniquity is taken away,
And your sin purged" (Is. VI: 6–7).

In this image the artist reproduced the image of Isaiah that appeared within the Initial letter of the title page of the Prophet's prophecy. The similarity of facial features, hair and clothing allows one to observe and admire Avag's skill as a portrait painter. Isaiah is depicted looking at the seraph flying towards him, who touches his lips with hot coal with the help of a pair of tongs.

As seen from the above discussion, the Sultanieh Bible is important as it reveals the miniaturist Avag as an interpreter of the biblical text; it is equally important for the study of his technique. As noted by Hovsepian, "We have a lot to learn from the point of view of technique"²⁰. Through the image we can observe the sequence of steps taken during manuscript illumination: firstly, drawing with pencil or ink, and secondly, coloring. At the same time, these images provide an opportunity to identify miniaturist Avag as a skilled master of drawing. The line in his art is so smooth and clear that in their charm these outlined miniatures are not inferior to ones that have been colored. The wings of the seraphim, their fac-

¹⁸ Thierry 1987, 204, fig. 101.

¹⁹ Մաթևոսյան 2017, 54, 61, ill. 19, 24.

²⁰ Յովսէփեան 1948, 207.

es, even individual hair, are all drawn in minute detail. Due to their linear rhythm these images are dynamic, such dynamism being a characteristic feature of Avag's style unsurpassed by any other medieval Armenian artist.

Other Comparable Contemporary Representations in Armenian Art

A further comparison with Avag's depiction in the Sultanieh Bible, with a contemporary mural and a relief found respectively in the churches of Kiranc' (the 13th century, nowadays in the region of Tavush) and St. Stephanos of Noravank' (the 14th century, nowadays in the region of Vayoc' Ĵor), would also be instructive. The first of these involving a detail from Isaiah's Vision is depicted on a mural located at the southwestern part of the drum of the Church of Kiranc'²¹. The scene represents the Prophet Isaiah on his knees, with the seraphim flying toward him. The second, another interesting detail, is depicted in the relief of the Mother of God and the Christ on the facade of the narthex (*gavit*) of St. Stephanos Church in Noravank' (ill. 3). There are various hypotheses about the exact dating of this relief, but it is certain that it belongs to the first half of the 14th century²². The relief represents John the Baptist on his knees with a halo around his head. On the other side of relief is the Prophet Isaiah, who is shown, raising his right hand to the Mother of God and Christ holding an open scroll.

Let us consider an interesting detail in the image of Isaiah in the relief, which has hitherto been overlooked by researchers: this is the depiction of a sharp instrument with a double-sided end depicted touching the lips of the prophet. The implement can hardly be considered an ornament or a letter (such as e.g. the letter «Ձ» of the word «ՁԱՅԼ» (*"The voice"*) next to the image of John the Baptist, or the letter «Ա» next to the Mother of God). It is possible that this instrument is the symbolic or stylized depiction of the abovementioned pair of tongs²³, with

²¹ These wall paintings were studied by N. Thierry and L. Durnovo; see **Thierry** 1983, 208, sch. 6, fig. 10, **Дурново** 1990, 9. Due to the Georgian inscriptions on the wall paintings of this church and some iconographic elements with Georgian art, N. Thierry considers them in parallel with Georgian art, while L. Durnova studies them as a reflection of Armenian-Chalcedonian art.

²² The literature on this sculptural composition is quite extensive, so it will suffice to refer to a recently published study, see **Մաթևոսյան** 2017, 57–61.

²³ The pair of tongs are depicted in art in various forms; they appear as a sharp instrument with a double-sided end in the example discussed, as well as in the Three Crosses Church of Cappadocia; for the drawing see **Садовская** 2000, 323.

which the hot coal touches the lips of Isaiah and purifies his words, and after which Isaiah pronounced his prophecy. A quote from the prophecy is engraved on a scroll: «ՀԱՅ ԿՈՅՍ. ԵՍԱՅԻ» that is «Ահայ Կոյսն յղացի եւ ծնցի որդի ...» (*Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son ..., Is. VII:14*)²⁴. Between the images of Isaiah and Christ there is a decorative zone and a curved ornament, the function of which appears to be the separation of the two images in order to emphasize the action that occurs with Isaiah.

The argument regarding, the abovementioned detail from the Vision of Isaiah as depicted in the famous relief of Noravank' becomes more convincing when it is compared to a fragment, depicting the Vision of Isaiah from a Gospel illuminated by T'oros Sarkawag (ill. 4) and dated 1311 (the mother manuscript (Ms. 10859) is stored at the Matenadaran)²⁵. The miniature represents the purification of Isaiah's lips by the angel flying from the sky. The prophet is depicted, standing while holding a scroll, upon which the following quote from the Gospel of Mathew (1:23) is written: «Ահայ կոյս յղացի եւ ծնցի որդի եւ կոչեսցեն զանունն նորա Էմանուէլ, որ թարգմանի՝ ընդ մեզ Աստուած» ("Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, and bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us"; the text is identical to that in Is. VII:14²⁶). It must be noted that the same iconographic detail was repeated in the abovementioned relief of Noravank' (with the absence of the angel or seraph). Sylvie Merian associates the above miniature of Isaiah's Vision with the Annunciation, which is the next miniature of the Gospel²⁷. I see the same association in the relief of Noravank' where the depiction of the Vision of Isaiah is situated next to the image of the Mother of God and Christ. Since the purpose of this paper is not the actual study of the

²⁴ The reading of the inscription is taken from Մաթևոսյան 2017, 56, 110–112.

²⁵ This fragment sheet from the Gospel of Toros the Deacon is kept at The Bernard and Mary Berenson Collection of European Painting at I Tatti (no. 100b). It was studied and published for the first time by S. Merian; see Merian 2015, 595–596, plate 100b. Later, my colleague from Matenadaran, the art historian Lusine Barseghyan discussed this illumination of "The Vision of Isaiah" in her paper-presentation on the Gospel of Toros the Deacon ("The Miniaturist T'oros Sarkawag", Youth 5th Conference, "Matenadaran", Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, Yerevan, 29 November, 2019). I am grateful to Ms. L. Barseghyan, who drew my attention to this miniature.

²⁶ For the full reading see Merian 2015, 595–596.

²⁷ Merian 2015, 596.

relief itself, I am inclined to hope that my suggestion will be considered by others in future.

A Question of Prototype

It is hard to say what kind of prototype would have been available to the miniaturist Avag. The dearth of visual material does not allow the art historian to provide a definitive answer. One should not suppose with certainty that the abovementioned examples would have had a direct influence. It is likely that other prototypes that have either not reached us or are yet unknown may have existed. The miniatures such as that of T'oros Sarkawag, created several years before the Bible of Avag, seem to be prototypes. The parallels between the art of the two painters as appearing in the Gospel of Avag, illustrated in 1329 (Matenadaran, Ms. 7650), and the only known Gospel of T'oros Sarkawag, illustrated in 1311²⁸, underline an artistic relationship between the two. However, one should not forget that Avag's depiction of the prophetic Vision of Isaiah utilizes a broader iconography.

Furthermore, the interaction with Eastern Christian art, where the scene can often be found both in miniatures and in frescoes²⁹, should not be excluded. One of its earliest depictions in miniature art is the well-known 9th – century Greek manuscript of the “Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes” (Vat. Greek Ms. no. 699, f. 72v)³⁰. The earliest examples of wall paintings are known in the Churches of Cappadocia, and according to Catherine Jolivet-Lévi, there are eight of them, with the more interesting example represented in the conch of the arch of Holy Three Crosses Church³¹. There are general iconographic approaches

²⁸ **Der-Nersessian** 1958, XXXII; Archives of S. Der-Nersessian, Matenadaran, document No. 695, 1v, No. 368, 40r, 41r, 42r, 43r, 45r, 46r and 47r, No. 367, 3r; **Zakaryan** 2003, 96–106; **Սարգսյան** 2018, 85–101.

²⁹ E.g. for miniatures such as the Greek Psalter in Athens National Library (Ms. no. 7), the Greek Homiliary in the National Library of Paris (Ms. no. 1208), or the Psalter of the Vatopedi Monastery (Ms. no. 760, f. 280v, 11th c.) on Mount Athos, another Greek Homiliary (Vat. Greek Ms. 1162, f. 119v, 1250 A.D., Constantinople), see **Садовская** 2000, 322; **Вусир** 2019, 176, 178, 181, figs. 6.1, 6.3, 6.5.

³⁰ The digital copy of the manuscript is available via https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.699.

³¹ **Садовская** 2000, 323, see the drawing in **Садовская** 2000, 326. Besides the Cappadocian images, this scene appears in Coptic churches in Egypt a little later, e.g. in the Monastery of Saint Anthony the Great, **Садовская** 2000, 327–329.

between the abovementioned examples and the miniature of Avag, as the quote of Is. VI:1 “I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne” in comparable examples is represented only by the image of Christ or God sitting on the throne.

Theological Considerations

Beyond the question of the iconographic prototypes, the illustrator’s theological considerations must also be noted. Avag depicted the quote from Isaiah’s Vision “I saw the Lord” with the image of the Trinity: God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ the Son. The concept of the Holy Trinity in this depiction is not in doubt. It is enough to recall the image of Christ on the tetramorphic throne, accompanied by inscriptions on the Holy Trinity in the scenes of the Last Judgment³². The quote from the Gospel of John “No one has ever seen God” (I: 18), which contradicts the reading “I saw the Lord” of the Vision of Isaiah (VI: 1), is interpreted by St. Gregory of Tat’ev as follows: “They do not contradict each other in saying that no one has seen God – that is, the essence of the nature of God. For, no one amongst the created is able to see, for the vision of prophets may be encompassed, whereas God is infinite in nature. Yet the prophet saw as far as man is able – albeit in mere semblance and similitude. Hence, his sense is manifested in saying “I saw the Lord seated” – for God is not of a place, as he is infinite and is not said to be sitting”³³.

Bogdan Bucur explains the idea of the Holy Trinity in the vision of Isaiah according to Genesis XVIII:2 “*Three men stood above him ...*”, and refers to the commentary of Philo of Alexandria (preserved only in Armenian): “*The One in their midst is called Being; this name, “Being,” is not his own and proper name, for he himself is unnamable and beyond expression, as being incomprehensible ...*”

³² Sargsyan 2018 (B), 141.

³³ I thank Dr. Haig Utidjian for his translation into English from the Armenian «Չեն հապառակ միմեանց, զի ասելն զԱստուած ոչ որ երես, այսինքն՝ զէութիւն բնութեանն Աստուծոյ: Զի ոչ որ ի յեղականացս տեսանել կարող է, զի տեսութիւն մարգարէիցն բովանդակելի է: Իսկ Աստուած անբովանդակելի է բնութեամբ: Բայց մարգարէս երես, որքան կար է մարդոյ, այլ կերպարանաւ եւ նմանութեամբ: Ուստի յայտ է, զի ասէ. տեսի զՏէր նստեալ, զի Աստուծոյ ոչ է տեղի, զի անբովանդակելի է եւ ոչ ասի նստել նմա», see **Ս. Գրիգոր Տաթևացի** (1346–1409) 2008, 25. Although the activity of St. Gregory of Tat’ev is a bit later than the period that interests us, I refer to his interpretations since the author relied on the commentaries of the authors of the past, in particular on Hovhann Vorotnec’i’s commentaries on the Vision of Isaiah; see **Ս. Գրիգոր Տաթևացի** (1346–1409) 2008, 8, 17.

*Of his two body-guards on either side, one is God, the other Lord, the former being the symbol of the creative, the latter of the royal virtue. The idea concerning the three men ... in the midst of whom he is found shows clearly by calling them "cherubim". One of these is ascribed to the creative power and is rightly called God; the other to the sovereign and royal virtue and is called Lord*³⁴ ...to see the lordly and holy divine vision – whereby a single apparition appears to him as a trinity, and the trinity as a single union”³⁵. The Eastern Christian father Gregory of Nazianzus interprets the idea of the Holy Trinity with the threefold “Holy, Holy, Holy”, which is glorified by the seraphim, attributing each separately to the persons of the Holy Trinity³⁶. In the Vision of the prophet Isaiah, the symbolic depiction of the Holy Trinity in the image of God the Father is complemented by the presence of two seraphim, explained as angelic images of the Son and the Holy Spirit³⁷. Meanwhile, in the miniature by Avag one can see the image of the Holy Trinity without the usage of allegories in the depiction of God the Father, the Holy Spirit and Christ.

The scene of the Vision of Isaiah is complemented by an image of the purification of the prophet. Based upon readings of holy scriptural commentaries, sermons, and prayers, theorists consider this episode from the Old Testament as being a precursor to the New Testament. They identify the meaning of the pair of tongs with the communion spoon based on the fact that the latter was called by the same word as the tongs, λαβίς³⁸, and building on the exegetical assumption that the designation of λαβίς was given to communion spoons (from the 7th century Palestine onwards)³⁹. As we know, there is no use for a spoon during the Eucharistic liturgy in the tradition of the Armenian Church, unlike its Byzantine equivalent⁴⁰. How is this tradition reflected in Avag’s iconography of the miniatures of the Eucharist? The painter depicted Christ, holding a chalice of wine in one hand, and communion bread in the other. Any depiction of a spoon is

³⁴ As reproduced in **Bucur** 2019, 165–166 (his translation).

³⁵ I thank Dr. Haig Utidjian for his translation into English from the Armenian «... Կեսանել զգէրունի եւ զսուրբ զաստուածային Կեսիլն ըստ այնմ՝ որ մի երեսոյթն երեսի նմա իբր երրորդութիւն, եւ երրորդութիւն իբր միութիւն» see in **Տէրեան** 2018, 20–21.

³⁶ **Bucur** 2019, 171.

³⁷ **Bucur** 2019, 169.

³⁸ **Bucur** 2019, 185–186, **Садовская** 2000, 321–322.

³⁹ **Bucur** 2019, 186.

⁴⁰ **Պարոնյան** 1976, 27.

missing from the image (e.g. Matenadaran, Ms. 7650, f. 21v, Ms. 6230, f. 442r, Jerusalem, Ms. 1941, f. 6r, Brit. Lib. Or. Ms. 5304). This would suggest that in this case the episode of the purification of Isaiah may be associated with the Eucharistic meaning, i.e. purification from sins, and not in parallel with the instruments (pair of tongs or spoon) used in it. The identical significance of both episodes allows one to conclude that Avag has represented the connection between the Old and New Testaments, which, according to Lilit Zakaryan, is one of the characteristic features of this painter's art⁴¹.

Considering the current state of preservation of the Sultanieh Bible and with the full-page miniatures of the Visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel available to scrutiny (yet without excluding the possible existence of other unknown or missing images) is allowed one to conclude that in his Old Testament illuminations, Avag the artist appears to have preferred those that reflect the idea of Theophany. It is enough to consider the artist's images of the Holy Trinity or of Christ surrounded by the tetramorph on the throne in the scene of the Last Judgement. The depiction of the idea of Theophany in accordance with the Vision of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, and then in accordance with the Revelation of John, has, according to theorists, an early Christian origin⁴². The idea that apocalyptic literature derives to some extent from the interpretation and reception of the books of the Latter Prophets (among them Isaiah's) has a distinguished lineage⁴³.

Conclusion

With its many lost pages and incomplete images, the Sultanieh Bible cannot be considered as a complete sample of 14th century Armenian manuscript illumination. However, what has been preserved from the Old Testament illustrations of this Bible, shows that its illuminator, the painter Avag had used a

⁴¹ **Զաքարյան** 1985, 51. The author expresses this opinion by examining the miniatures of the Genealogy of Christ, followed by the image of the Virgin and Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Matenadaran, Ms. 212 (fols. 16v–18r). The union of the Old and New Testaments is also reflected in the miniatures of the Gospel of Luke; see for details **Սարգսյան** 2015(Բ), 94: **Sargsyan** 2018 (A), 50–55.

⁴² **Садовская** 2000, 327, **Vardanyan** 2014, 574–575, refs. 5–7. It is depicted with both Visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah on the conch of the apse of the Holy Three Crosses Church in Cappadocia, it also appears in Romanesque art, e. g. 11th century wall painting at the St. Mary Esther Church in Catalonia (currently at the Museum of Barcelona), see in **Садовская** 2000, 326, 328.

⁴³ **Hendel** 2008, 277.

new system of illustration. This can be seen, in particular, in the full-page depiction of the Vision of Isaiah. A comparison with surviving parallels shows Avag's introduction of novel ideas not encountered in the known Armenian illuminated Bibles of previous or even contemporary periods. Whilst the art of Avag has used the conventions of traditional art prototypes, it is also dynamic with artistic innovations. Furthermore, the study has argued that interconnections between the holy scriptures have found their clear reflection in Avag's miniatures of the prophetic vision of Isaiah. No matter which prototype or prototypes Avag might have used, it is obvious that as an innovative artist who possessed deep theological knowledge he left his individual stamp on the Bible he illustrated.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Աճէմեան Շ. 1992, Յուցակ Աստուածաշունչ մատեանի հայերէն ձեռագիրներուն, Լիզպոն, Գալուստ Կիլպէնկեան հաստատութիւն, CXXVIII – 1073 էջ:

Գէորգեան Ա. 1998, Հայ մանրանկարիչներ. Մատենագիտութիւն (IX–XIX դդ.), տպագրութիւն Գահիրէ, 822, XXXII էջ:

Զաքարյան Լ. 1985, Ավագ Ծաղկող, «Էջմիածին» հանդես, պաշտօնական ամսագիր Հայրապետական Աթոռոյ Ս. Էջմիածնի, Էջմիածին, Է, էջ 47–52:

Զաքարյան Լ. 2003, Մի դրվագ հայ-արաբական մշակութային հարաբերություններից, «Էջմիածին» հանդես, պաշտօնական ամսագիր Հայրապետական Աթոռոյ Ս. Էջմիածնի, Էջմիածին, Ը., էջ 96–106:

Խաչիկյան Լ. 1950, ԺԴ դարի հայերեն ձեռագրերի հիշատակարանները, Երևան, ՀՍՍՌ ԳԱ հրատարակչություն, 758 էջ:

Մաթևոսյան Կ. 2017, Նորավանքի վիմագրերը և հիշատակարանները, Երևան, Մուղնի հրատարակչություն, 244 էջ:

Յովսէփեան Գ., 1948, Մխիթար Անեցի գրիչ եւ նկարիչ. (գործակցութեամբ Գլաձորի նկարիչ Աւագ դպրի), «Հասկ» հայագիտական տարեգիրք, Ա. տարի, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, տպարան Կաթողիկոսութեան Կիլիկիոյ, էջ 192–219:

Պարոնեան Զ. 1976, Հայոց պատարագի հատկանշական գծերը՝ համեմատված քրիստոնեական մյուս պատարագների հետ ընդհանրապես, «Էջմիածին» հանդես, պաշտօնական ամսագիր Հայրապետական Աթոռոյ Ս. Էջմիածնի, Էջմիածին, Զ, էջ 26–30:

Ս. Գրիգոր Տաթևացի (1346–1409) 2008, Մեկնութիւն մարգարեութեան Եսայեայ, աշխատասիրութեամբ՝ Հ. Քյոսեյանի, Հին Կտակարանի գրքերի մեկնություններ 15, Էջմիածին, Մ. Աթոռ Ս. Էջմիածնի հրատարակչություն, 216 էջ:

Սարգսյան Լ. 2015(Ա), «Մարիամի և Եղիսաբեթի հանդիպումը» մանրանկարն Ավագ Ծաղկողի արվեստում. պատկերագրությունը և իմաստաբանությունը, Երիտասարդ հայ արվեստաբանների գիտական իններորդ նստաշրջանի նյութեր (նոյեմբեր, 14, 2014), Երևան, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Գիտություն հրատարակչություն, էջ 91–99:

Սարգսյան Լ. 2015(Բ), Մանրանկարիչ Ավագը. կյանքը և ձեռագրական ժառանգությունը, Բանբեր Մատենադարանի, Հ. 22, Նաիրի հրատարակչություն, Երևան, էջ 73–88:

Սարգսյան Լ. 2018, Դիտարկումներ մանրանկարիչ Ավագի ինքնադիմանկարի շուրջ (ԺԴ դար), «Էջմիածին» հանդես, պաշտոնական ամսագիր Հայրապետական Աթոռոյ Ս. Էջմիածնի, Էջմիածին, Բ., էջ 85–101:

Սարգսեան Լ. 2019 (Ա), Եսայի մարգարէի տեսիլքը մանրանկարիչ Աւագի արուեստում, «Սիոն», կրօնական, գրական, բանասիրական պաշտօնաթերթ Երուսաղէմի հայոց պատրիարքութեան, 91 տարի, թիվ 1–2–3, էջ 48–57:

Սարգսյան Լ. 2019 (Բ), Հին Կտակարանի նկարագրողումը ԺԴ դարի մի Աստվածաշնչում (Ավագ մանրանկարչի արվեստը), Բանբեր Մատենադարանի, հ. 28, Նաիրի հրատարակչություն, Երևան, էջ 296–332:

Տեր-Ներսեսեան Ս. 1966, Երզնկայի 1269 թ. Աստվածաշունչը, Երուս. թիվ 1925, «Էջմիածին» հանդես, պաշտոնական ամսագիր Հայրապետական աթոռոյ Ս. Էջմիածնի, Էջմիածին, ԺԱ.-ԺԲ., էջ 28–39:

Տէրեան Ա. 2018, Նարեկեան մի քանի պատկերներու Փիլոնեան նախապատկերները, Բանբեր Մատենադարանի 25, Երևան, Նաիրի հրատարակչություն, էջ 14–29:

Ցուցակ ձեռագրաց Մաշտոցի անվան Մատենադարանի 1965, կազմեցին՝ **Եգանյան Օ., Զեյթունյան Ա., Անթաբյան Փ.**, ներածությունը՝ Եգանյան Օ., խմբ.՝ Խաչիկյան Լ., Մնացականյան Ա., Երևան, ՀՍՍՌ ԳԱ, հ. Ա., էջ 1634:

Archives of S. Der-Nersessian, Matenadaran, document No. 695, No. 368, No. 367.

Bucur B. 2019, “Scripture Re-envisioned, Christophanic Exegesis and the Making of a Christian Bible”, in *The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, v. 13, D. J. Bingham (editor), Leiden, Boston: Brill, 332 p.

Der-Nersessian S. 1958, *The Chester Beatty Library: A Catalogue of the Armenian Manuscripts with an Introduction on the History of Armenian Art*, V. I, Dublin, Hodges, Figgis, XLIV – 216 p.

Der-Nersessian S. 1993, *Miniature Painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century*, jointly prepared for publication with Agemian S. with an Introduction by Weyl Carr A., V. II, Washington, D. C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 666 illustrations in black and white, 67 in colour.

Garibyan N., Sahakyan A. 2018, *The Iconography of the Oskanian Bible in the European Art Context*, Yerevan, “Antares”, 511 p.

Hendel R. 2008, “Isaiah and the Transition from Prophecy to Apocalyptic”, in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism* presented to Shalom M. Paul, Eisenbrauns, pp. 261–279.

Merian S. 2013, “The Armenian Silversmiths of Kesaria/Kayseri in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries”, in *Armenian Kesaria/Kayseri and Cappadocia*, edited by R. Hovhannisian, Costa Mesa, California, Mazda publishers, pp. 117–185.

Merian S. 2015, Catalogue Entry “T’oros Sarkawag (T’oros the Deacon)” in The Bernard and Mary Berenson Collection of European Painting at I Tatti”, edited by C. Strehlke, M. Israels, Florence, pp. 595-602

Sargsyan L. 2018 (A), “Illustrated Story of Jesus Christ and John the Baptist according to the Gospel of Luke (Armenian Miniature Art of the 14th century)”, in *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, Tome LVI (no. 1–4), Bucharest, editura Academiei Romane, pp. 43–67.

Sargsyan L. 2018 (B), “The Scene of the Last Judgement in the Art of Armenian Miniaturist Avag (14th century)”, in *International Review of Armenian Studies*, edited by Kharatyan A., Yerevan, “Gitutyun” publishing house of NAS RA, n. 2, pp. 139–158.

Thierry J.-M. 1987, *Les Arts Arméniens, principaux sites Arméniens par Donabedian P., notices complètes par J.-M. et N. Thierry*, Paris, edition Mazenod, 623 p.

Thierry N. 1983, “A Propos de l’Église de Kiranc’, Rapport préliminaire, Bedi Kartlisa”, *Revue de Kartvelologie, Études Géorgiennes et Caucasiennes*, v. XLI, Paris, pp. 194–228.

Vardanyan E. 2014, Voir Dieu: L’iconographie Arménienne de la Vision du Trône d’Ezéchiel dans le contexte de l’art de l’Orient chrétien, in “*The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition, A Comparative Perspective*”, Essays Presented in Honor of Professor Robert W. Thomson on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday, ed. by Bardakjian K., and La Porta S., Leiden: Brill, pp. 572–602.

Дурново Л. 1990, Фрески монастыря Киранц. Материалы из архива Л.А. Дурново, подготовка материалов к изданию и предисловие Аракелян А., редактор Корхмазян Э., Ереван, «Айастан», с. 24.

Садовская Ю. 2000, Очищение уст пророка Исайи, Альфа и Омега, Ученые записки общества для распространения священного писания в России, No. 2 (24), Москва, с. 321–329.

Юзбашян К. 2005, Армянские рукописи в Петербургских собраниях. Каталог, Православный Палестинский сборник, выпуск 104 (41), С. Петербург, 344 с.

List of Abbreviations of Manuscript Collections

Athens Nat. Lib. – National Library of Athens, Athens, Greece.

Brit. Lib. – Oriental Manuscripts, British Library, London, United Kingdom.

IOM RAS – Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Jerus. – Saint Theodorus Library at St. James Cathedral, Jerusalem, Israel.

Matenadaran – “Matenadaran” Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, Yerevan, Armenia.

Vat. – Greek manuscripts, Apostolic Library of Vatican.

Venice – Library of Mekhitarists’s Congregation of Venice, Italy.

Vienna – Library of Mekhitarists’s Congregation of Vienna, Austria.

Paris Nat. Lib. – National Library of Paris, France.

Illustrating a Fourteenth Century Armenian Old Testament...

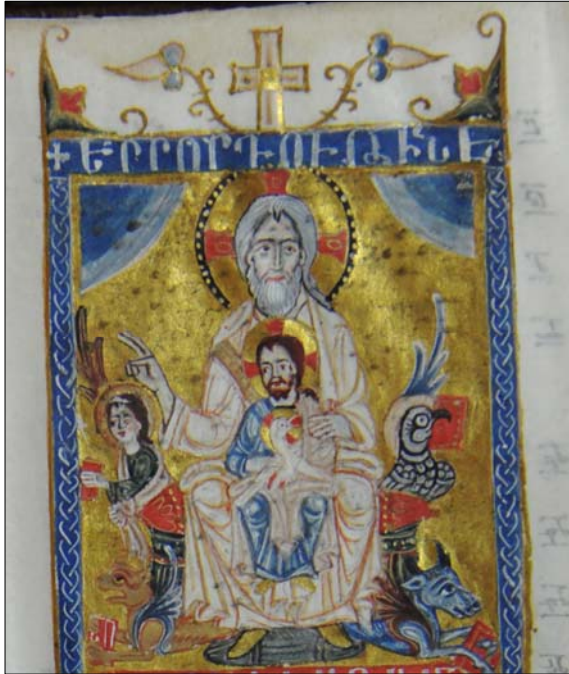
Table of Transliterations from Armenian

Ա ա – A a	Կ կ – K k	Ս ս – S s
Բ բ – B b	Հ հ – H h	Վ վ – V v
Գ գ – G g	Ձ ձ – J j	Տ տ – T t
Դ դ – D d	Ղ ղ – Ł ł	Ր ր – R r
Ե ե – E e	Ճ ճ – Č č	Յ չ – C' c'
Զ զ – Z z	Մ մ – M m	Խ խ – W w
Է է – Ē ē	Յ չ – Y y	Փ փ – P' p'
Ը ը – Θ θ	Ն ն – N n	Ք ք – K' k'
Թ թ – Դ' Դ'	Շ շ – Š š	Օ օ – Ō ō
Ժ ժ – Ž ž	Ո ո – O o	Ֆ ֆ – F f
Ի ի – I i	Չ չ – Č č	Ու ու – U u
Լ լ – L l	Պ պ – P p	+ւ – e
Խ խ – X x	Ջ յ – J j	
Ծ ծ – C c	Ռ ռ – Ř ř	



III. 1. Avag, “The Vision of Prophet Isaiah”, red ink and lead-pencil on paper, 165x115 mm (painted image), 1338.

**Matenadaran, Ms. 4429, fol. 22v.
Reproduced by the kind permission of
the Matenadaran.**



III. 2. Sargis Picak, “The Holy Trinity”, tempera and gold on parchment, 234x160 mm (sheet), 1338.

Matenadaran, Ms. 2627, fol. 2v.

Reproduced by the kind permission of the Matenadaran.



III. 3. A Relief depicting God the Mother and Jesus with John the Baptist and Prophet Isaiah, St. Stephanos Church in Noravank' (the 14th century, Region Vayoc' Ĵor). The photo was provided by Dr. Karen Matevosyan.



III. 4. Toros Sarkawag, Isaiah, pigment, ink, and gold on paper, 377x364 mm (sheet), 256x195 mm (painted image), 1311.

Florence, I Tatti, Berenson Collection, reproduced by the President's permission and the Fellows' of Harvard College. Photo Paolo De Rocco, Centrica srl, Firenze.

ԵՍԱՅՈՒ ՏԵՍԻԼՔԸ ՄԱՆՐԱՆԿԱՐԻՉ ԱՎԱԳԻ ԱՐՎԵՍՏՈՒՄ (XIV Դ.)

ՍԱՐԳՍՅԱՆ Լ.

Ամփոփում

Քանալի բառեր՝ Եսայու տեսիլքը, Հին Կտակարան, մանրանկարչություն, Ավագ, Սուլթանիե, Աստվածաշունչ, պատկերագրություն:

XIV դարի հայ մանրանկարիչ Ավագի հինկտակարանային թեմաներով նկարազարդումներից մեկը Եսայի մարգարեի տեսիլքը պատկերող մանրանկարն է ՄՄ 4429 Աստվածաշնչում (ընդօրինակող՝ Մխիթար Անեցի): Ավագ սարկավազն այն նկարազարդել է 1338 թ. Սուլթանիեյում (պատմական Ատրպատականում, ներկայիս Իրանի հյուսիսում): Ամբողջ էջով գծանկարված այս մանրանկարը Եսայու տեսիլքը պատկերող առայժմ մեզ հայտնի ամենավաղ օրինակն է հայերեն Աստվածաշունչ մատյանում:

Ներկա աշխատանքը մանրանկարի պատկերագրության և իմաստաբանության ուսումնասիրության առաջին փորձն է, որտեղ կարևոր են հետևյալ հարցադրումները. ա) Աստվածաշնչի նկարազարդման համակարգի նորարար մոտեցումները և դրանց հարաբերակցությունը ձևավորված ավանդույթի հետ, բ) թեմայի պատկերագրության ձևավորումը հայ և քրիստոնյա այլ արվեստների հետ՝ զուգորդումներով, գ) նախատիպի խնդիրը, դ) բնագրային աղբյուրները, որոնք ազդել են պատկերագրության ձևավորման վրա, ե) թեմայի աստվածաբանական մեկնությունը:

Եսայու տեսիլքը պատկերող մանրանկարը հայերեն Աստվածաշունչ մատյանի նկարազարդման մի առանձին համակարգ է, տարբեր՝ նախորդ և ժամանակակից հայերեն մի շարք Աստվածաշնչերից:

ВИДЕНИЕ ИСАИИ В ИСКУССТВЕ МИНИАТЮРИСТА АВАГА (XIV В.)

САРГСЯН Л.

Резюме

Ключевые слова: видение Исаии, Ветхий Завет, миниатюра, Аваг, Султанье, Библия, иконография.

В традиции иллюстрирования армянской Библии особое место занимают миниатюры мастера XIV века Авага. Одной из таких миниатюр является видение пророка Исаии из Библии 4429 из собрания Матенадарана. Рукопись была переписана Мхитаром Анеци (Анийским) и иллюстрирована дьяконом Авагом в 1338 г. в Султание (историческая Атропатена, ныне – северный Иран). Занимающая полный лист миниатюра является самым ранним известным нам образцом сцены Видения пророка в армянских иллюстрированных Библиях.

В данной статье впервые делается попытка исследования символики и иконографии сцены Видения Исаии, в связи с чем возникает ряд важных вопросов, а именно: а) исследование новых подходов в системе иллюстрирования Библии и их сравнение с уже устоявшейся традицией; б) зарождение иконографии в контексте армянского и, в целом, христиан-

Illustrating a Fourteenth Century Armenian Old Testament...

ского искусства; в) выявление использованного Авагом прототипа; г) выявление текстов, повлиявших на формирование иконографии; д) богословская интерпретация согласно средневековым комментариям.

В рукописи есть недостающие листы. Тем не менее, на основе сохранившихся иллюстраций, в том числе миниатюры с изображением пророка Исаяи, можно с уверенностью констатировать наличие иной системы иллюстрации в данном варианте армянской Библии, заметно отличающейся от других иллюстрированных Библий того же периода.