

The Armenian Holdings of the Bavarian State Library

Wolfgang Schmitt-Garibian

Bavarian State Library

As a treasure trove of cultural heritage, a multimedia information service provider for scholarly research and as an innovative force in the field of digital services, the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek - the Bavarian State Library - is one of the prime national and international addresses for researchers, students and all those seeking information. Founded in 1558 as court library of the house of Wittelsbach, the Bavarian State Library is one of the prime European universal libraries and of world renown as international research library. It forms Germany's virtual national library together with the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Berlin State Library) and the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (German National Library) in Frankfurt and Leipzig. The Bavarian State Library is also the central state library and repository library of the Free State of Bavaria. With 10 million volumes, about 62,000 current periodicals in electronic or printed form and about 96,000 manuscripts the Bavarian State Library is one of the most important knowledge centres of the world. Every year approximately 130,000 volumes are added, which are selected and catalogued systematically according to scholarly criteria. The library's unique collection profile is characterised by extremely precious manuscripts, rare printed books and comprehensive special collections from thousands of years of cultural heritage. But at the same time, the library rises to the challenges of the future: The Bavarian State Library is continuously enhancing its digital and Internet-based services, for example in the areas of electronic journals, mass digitisation of its collections and the development of innovative digitisation technologies. With one million digitised works, the Bavarian State Library holds the largest digital data stock of all German libraries. A large variety of services is offered in the field of innovative digital use scenarios.

The Armenian holdings - part of the Oriental Department - have a long history which dates back to the library's foundation in 1558. Today the Armenian holdings of our library comprise 28 Armenian Manuscripts, 85 printed books dated to 1513 to 1800, roughly 320 printed books from the 19th century and about 5000 from the 20th and 21st century. I can't give any exact information on literature in other languages dealing with Armenian themes especially the Armenian question.

The acquisition of the Armenian holdings is closely connected with the history of the Bavarian State Library and the history of its Oriental collection. When in 1558 the Bavarian Duke Albrecht V purchased the library of the deceased diplomat and orientalist Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter (1506 – 1558) he laid the cornerstone of the Munich Court Library (Münchener Hofbibliothek) and at the same time of the library's oriental collection.

Widmanstetter was not only one of the most learned scholars at that era, he absolved a most remarkable diplomatic career in the service of high ranking ecclesiastical and secular dignities. A typical humanist, Widmanstetter was one of the most passionate bibliophiles of his time and collected a treasury of oriental writings documenting the unusually spectrum of his knowledge and language skills. Due to his knowledge of oriental languages he became one of the pioneers of Oriental studies. Widmanstetter's collection, amounting in its surviving from between 1100 and 1500 volumes, was astonishingly large for a private scholarly library of the Renaissance and was highly admired by his contemporaries. Widmanstetter purchased the greater part of his books in Italy where he could rely on his good connections to scholars, princes and book merchants to gain access to the book market. Among of the around 200 oriental manuscripts in the Widmanstetter's collection were 3 Armenian manuscripts.

13 years later in 1571 the today oldest Armenian manuscript of the Bavarian State Library was added to the Armenian collection. Financial reasons forced the German merchant and bibliophile Johann Jakob Fugger from Augsburg – once one of the richest men in the Holy Roman Empire – to sell his huge library to the Bavarian Duke. As well as Widmanstetter's collection was Fugger's library an important acquisition for the Munich Court Library and its Oriental collection.

But the most spectacular acquisition was the purchase of the famous private library of the French Orientalist Etienne-Marc Quatremère in 1848. Due to political reasons Quatremère disposed by will that after his death his library should be sold to abroad. The purchase of this library was not undisputed at that time in the Bavarian Kingdom and presupposed enormous efforts. But finally the former director of the Royal Court and State Library succeeded and purchased some 30 000 volumes and 1250 Oriental manuscripts of Quatremère's library. This collection contained 9 Armenian manuscripts and 34 rare printed Armenian books.

The accrual of Oriental respectively Armenian manuscripts and books had proceeded more or less by chance. This changed radically in the beginning of the 19th century as the universities established chairs for Oriental studies, creating thus a demand for relevant literature.

Responding to this stimulus, the Munich Court Library instituted a policy of purposefully acquiring books corresponding to the needs of the respective faculties.

Caused to his interest in Asiatic studies and to the lack of relevant Armenian literature the Munich professor of Chinese Studies Carl Friedrich Neumann (1795-1870) went to Saint Lazarus of the Armenians in Venice and studied the Armenian language. From his journeys to Venice Neumann brought Armenian books for the Munich Court Library and already in 1828 Neumann started cataloguing for an appropriate fee the Armenian books. It was also Neumann who for the first time described and listed the Armenian manuscripts and in 1836 he published a history of the Armenian literature. Unfortunately Neumann did not list the books brought by him from Venice to the Munich Court Library.

Friedrich Windischmann (1811-1861) a theologian and philologist and like Neumann professor at the university purchased 39 Armenian printed books during his stay in Saint Lazarus in 1833.

Since middle of the 19th century the former Munich Court Library and the nowadays Bavarian State Library acquired continuously literature in Armenian language. After the Second World War the German Research Foundation reorganized the areas of collection emphasis. According to this organization the Bavarian State Library collects literature on Soviet-Armenia and today on the Republic of Armenia.

Manuscripts

As mentioned above the oldest Armenian manuscript was acquired with the private library of Fugger in 1571. The Cod.armen. 1 contains the four Gospels in Armenian and is the most precious Armenian manuscript of the Bavarian State Library. It was written, illuminated and bound in the monastery of Grner in the kingdom of Cilician Armenia in 1278. It is written in beautiful Bolorgir, its size is 18x13 cm. Initially in the possession of its scribe, Archbishop Hovhannes, brother of King Levon II. and abbot of the monastery in Grner, it migrated to the church of St. Basil in Cyprus. In the 16th century it was owned by the merchant Johann Jakob Fugger.

The translation of the Four Gospels into Armenian is one of the oldest examples of Armenian literature, created in its so-called Golden Age, between 400 and 450. As is common in Armenian texts of the Four Gospels, they are preceded by the explanatory letter of Eusebius

to Carpianus and the canon tables. Unfortunately, the usual decoration of the canon tables with arcades and columns has not been carried out in this manuscript; in the space provided for them has been left blank. The four full-page pictures of the Evangelists and the 203 ornaments in the margins exemplify the high standard of Armenian illumination in 13th century Cilicia under the painter T'oros Roslin. The marginal ornaments, which have been very carefully painted, depict candelabra composed of palm-leaves and blossoming plants and also small drawings of temples and bearers of palm-branches. A note in the manuscript names a painter called Barsegh (Basilius) as the executer of the illuminations and the binder as Arak'el Hnasandents'.

This manuscript is already completely digitized and online freely accessible via OPAC.

<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00070502-5>

The Cod.armen. 6 consists of two parts. One of them is a breviary - *Žamagirk'* - from the monastery of Metsop' situated North of Lake Van, which was written in 1432 by Vardapet Mkrtitch' and illuminated by the painter Abraham. The other part is a liturgicon - *Pataragamatoytc'* – dating from 1432 from the monastery Urts in the historic province of Syownik', part of South-Eastern Armenia. The text was written by the vardapets Hovhannes and Zakharia; the paintings were probably executed by the monk Sargis from the monastery Dzag near Yerevan. The two parts were acquired by the monk Nerses, who probably had them bound together. In the 16th century, the codex was owned by Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter on April 9 in 1538 in Rome, according to his own handwritten note on folio 4 v. The breviary or *Žamagirk'* contains prayers for the canonical hours. The liturgicon or missal or *Pataragamatoytc'* contains the anaphora or the mass formula of the saints who created the Armenian mass liturgy, among them Saint Gregory the Illuminator, the first bishop of Armenia and organizer of the Armenian Church. Furthermore, the mass formula of the Roman-Latin rite, a translation of the *Missale Romanum*, was included in the manuscript. This indicates that the manuscript originated from members of a circle united with Rome.

The miniatures, which are of comparatively high quality and comprise seven full-page illustrations, are included in the liturgicon. Full-page miniatures depict the saints mentioned above. Eight title pages contain decorated initials. There are for instance architectural openings of the text, knotted letters or letters shaped like a bird. Some of these miniatures are repeated in the breviary, however in a lower quality.

The Codex Armenicus 25, which contains also the Four Gospels and finely executed full-page miniatures, is an outstanding example of illumination on the Crimea in the 17th century. Due to their wealth, the Armenian communities of the Crimea were able to cultivate and revive their cultural heritage. Illuminated manuscripts were considered to its most valuable treasure. After the decline of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia in the 14th century, many manuscripts were rescued and brought to the Crimea by refugees. Byzantine illuminators fled after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the Crimea, where they played a leading role in the art of book decoration. The manuscript opens with scenes of the life of Jesus Christ represented in twelve full-page miniatures. The subsequent letter of Eusebius to Caprianus and the canon tables are set in opulently decorated borders. Originally, the texts of the Gospels were preceded by portraits of the Evangelists and most certainly by richly decorated pages. Unfortunately, these have been removed, with the exception of the picture of St. John. The famous art historian and byzantinist Prof. Buschhausen from the university in Vienna who deceased this year in July arrived at the conclusion, that the preserved picture of St. John was copied from the portrait of St. John in a manuscript now held in the Matenadaran in Yerevan (Cod. Nr. 7644). Although only the scribe Nikoghayos is mentioned in the manuscript, Prof. Buschhausen assumed that the scribe Nikoghayos was also the illuminator, the well-known Nikoghayos Caghkarar, of whom 34 illuminated manuscripts are known. With the exception of this codex with the Four Gospels owned by the Bavarian State Library, only one manuscript is held by an European institution, a hymnal-book in St. Petersburg.

Beside Bernard Coulié's reference to the Armenian manuscripts in the Bavarian State Library in his *Répertoire des bibliothèques et des catalogues de manuscrits arméniens* exist several descriptions of these codices. The corresponding catalogues are compiled by Petermann in 1875, Kalemkiar in 1892, Julius Aßfalg and Joseph Molitor in 1962. The other Armenian manuscripts in the Bavarian State Library contain mostly theological texts and dictionaries.

Early printed books and imprints

Every title of the 85 early imprints of the Bavarian State Library is listed in the *Hay girk'e* 1512 – 1800. Furthermore these treasures of early book printing are completely digitized and

are available online in the Digital Library (Digital Collections) and the OPAC of the Bavarian State Library.

The oldest Armenian imprint of our library is the Parzaytowmar hayoc' - a calendar - from Venice 1513, recorded as number 4 in the Hay girk'e is also the oldest Armenian printed book in Germany. As you all know, in 1512 the first Armenian book was printed in Venice. It is not accidental that Venice is the cradle of Armenian book printing, because the political situation in the 16th and 17th centuries made the foundation of a printing press in Armenia impossible. Between 1511 and 1513 the first Armenian printer Yakob Megapart commissioned five Armenian books to be printed in a Venetian printing press with the mark D.I.Z.A. The Parzaytowmar one of these five printed books contains interpretations of dreams, traditional alchemistic texts and recipes. Originally our Parzaytowmar was preserved in the municipal library of Regensburg. When in 1810 the former free imperial city Regensburg was ceded to the Kingdom of Bavaria the librarian Johann Baptist Bernhart searched manuscripts and imprints for the Munich Court Library. The most precious discovery of his successful search was the Armenian Parzaytowmar which is preserved since 1812 in the Bavarian State Library.

Of course you will find Breydenbach's Peregrinatio in terram sanctam from 1486 with the first printed Armenian alphabet in the holdings of our library.

Both the early Armenian imprints of our library and the printed books cover all topics of Armenian literature. Beyond that the printing places of these books give an overview of the widely branched centers of Armenian book printing. The majority of the books appeared in print until 1850 came from Venice: 131 books, 28 from Konstantinopel, 19 from Rome, 17 from Amsterdam, 13 from Paris, not less than 42 from Vienna, one rare book from Leipzig. Other printing places are Vagharshapat, Ejmiacin, Nor-Julfa, Tbilisi, Moscow, St Peterburg, Smyrna, Jerusalem, Trieste, London and Oxford. From Calcutta the farthestmost printing place of Armenian books the Bavarian State Library owns the English translation of Č'amč'ean's History of Armenia from 1827.

The Armenian holdings of the Bavarian State Library are online searchable and not only our early imprints but nearly all books edited until 1870 are already digitized and online freely accessible via OPAC.

Exhibitions

The Bavarian State Library has always laid emphasis on making not only its Occidental collection, but also its collection of Oriental and Asian manuscripts and imprints accessible to a wider public. These unusual cultural products were presented in exhibitions with accompanying catalogues. For example in 1982 the library displayed several Armenian manuscripts and early imprints in the exhibition *Das Buch im Orient* (freely translated: Manuscripts and printed books from the Orient), also in 2004 on the occasion of the International Conference of the Middle East Librarians Committee the library presented the exhibition *Precious Oriental manuscripts and rare printed books of the Bavarian State Library*. And in 2008 on the occasion of the 450 anniversary of the library two Armenian manuscripts were presented in the exhibition *Culture cosmos of the Renaissance*. But the Armenian treasures are not only presented in the Library's own exhibitions. In 1995 three manuscripts were sent to the exhibition *Armenia in Bochum*. In 2012 the oldest manuscript and the *Parzaytowmar* the oldest imprint were loaned to the exhibition *Bilderzauber und Schriftkunst in Halle* on the occasion of the 500 anniversary of the Armenian book printing. Next year the Bavarian State Library will commemorate the Armenian genocide in an exhibition.