

Armenian Amulet Scrolls in Collections of Paris*

▼ **ABSTRACT** This paper describes the Armenian amulet scrolls kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) and in the private collection of Garig and Varvara Basmadjians in Paris. It is based on the author's research carried out in 2016, when he was a recipient of the "Sirarpie Der-Nersessian Association" scholarship. Before listing and describing those items, the author refers to the etymology of the word *hmayil* ("amulet scroll"), mentions the other Armenian names of amulet scrolls, provides general information on what they are, lists the most important libraries where those scrolls are kept, and classifies the miniatures (of the fifteenth–nineteenth centuries) found in them into 5 groups.

▼ **KEYWORDS** amulet scroll, manuscript, The National Library of France, Basmadjians' collection, Janine Altounian's collection, unique miniature, Saint Cyprian, Wise and Foolish Virgins, the Evil Eagle.

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1. Introduction

Hmayils (amulets) — collections of spells — differ from other medieval Armenian manuscripts by their scrolled shape and distinctive miniatures. They contain "magical" prayers aimed to preserve their holders from various misfortunes (cf. Meshcherskaia 1981, 96).

The root of the word *hmayil/hamayil* is *hmay-* ("magic, enchantment, augury"), a borrowing from Pahlavi (*humāy-* = "blessed" or "a bird of good omen", see Achařyan 1971–1979, vol. 3, 103; cf. Mackenzie 1971, 44); *homāyūn* means "auspicious, fortunate" in New Persian. Scribes also called these collections of spells *kiprianos*, *kēprianos*

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or *niatagir*.¹ As a rule, amulets including the story of the patriarch Cyprian are called *kiprianos*. The story relates that Cyprian was a sorcerer, who had many demons and devils as servants. Later he converted to Christianity (Ghazaryan 2014, 243–64).

The roll is the oldest form of magical miscellany, and its roots go back to ancient magic traditions. People used to believe that rolled prayers or maledictions are not affected by spiteful influences from outside and thus acquire great power (Meshcherskaia 1981, 96). This is why the oldest form of Armenian amulets or magical miscellanies is a roll or a long strip. The form of printed amulets is inspired by the old handwritten examples. From 1659 to 1731, 18 amulet scrolls were published by four printing houses (Ghazaryan 2013, 142–47 and 2018, 73–85). In the early period of Armenian book printing (1512–1800), one does not find any amulet in the form of a book.

The miniatures in amulet scrolls are somewhat elongated; their dimensions are dictated by the size of the scrolls. The fact that the manuscripts of this type were usually illuminated by the scribes themselves, who were not professional miniaturists, resulted in a non-natural depiction of human figures — in some amulet scrolls they are hardly recognizable. As a rule, the miniatures in amulet scrolls have no perspective or coloured background. The natural colour of the parchment or paper served as background, and, to show a perspective, some miniaturists set up the human figures under arches or represented them one behind the other. Many images in amulets differ from traditional Armenian miniatures by the simplicity of execution, which is typical of Armenian paintings in folk tradition. However, one can also find unique examples of miniature art in those scrolls.

The miniatures of amulets are connected with their content and the texts of invocations. They also represent images of the authors or personages to whom the texts are dedicated or related. Those miniatures can be divided into five main groups: figurative representations, decorated headings, ornamented letters, and marginal ornaments. In the miniatures of amulet scrolls, dogmatic adherence to the Biblical canons is not traced. This demonstrates some of the artists' creativity. Since the miniatures are simple and, sometimes, even primitive and lacking skill, it can be concluded that most of the scribes illustrated the amulet scrolls themselves.

The earliest examples of Armenian amulet scrolls known to us belong to the fifteenth century (Ghazaryan 2012a, 142–47). Being held by private owners and repeatedly re-read for ritual purposes, they were worn, deprived of their original appearance and came down to us partially, with significant losses. This has caused certain difficulties to me during my study of those amulets. Also, some of them are still in use today and inaccessible to scholars, because people keep them for protection and luck.

The biggest collection of Armenian amulet scrolls is in the Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran in Yerevan (Armenia), which holds 568 items. There are amulet scrolls in the collections of the Holy Savior Monastery in New Julfa (Iran, 57 items, see

¹ The name *niatagir* occurs only in the amulet scroll No. 544 of the Matenadaran (1716, commissioner – Yakob, son of Petros Kaghzvanets'i).

Minasean 1983–1984; Ghazaryan 2019, 460–67), the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin (Armenia, 46 items, see the *Catalogue of Holy Etchmiadzin* 1952/April, 59–60; 1961/December, 59; 1962/August, 63; 1963/May, 61–62; 1970 / December, 58–59; 1971/May, 61–62; 1971/November, 46; 1975/November, 60–63), the Libraries of the Mekhitarist Congregation of Venice (44 items) (see Feydit 1986; Ter-Vardanean 2013, 62–98) and Vienna (11 items) (see Oskean 1963, 383–85, 879–80; Szekula 1983, 378–79, 1000), the History Museum of Armenia in Yerevan (13 items), The British Library in London (13 items) (see Nersessian 2012, vol. 2, 1077–1110 and vol. 1, Plate XXVIII) and in other state and private collections.²

2. Three Collections in Paris

There are 16 handwritten Armenian amulet scrolls in three collections in Paris: a) The National Library of France (Bibliothèque nationale de France [BnF], 7 items; for 6 of them, see Kévorkian and Ter-Stépanian 1998, 295–303); b) The private Musée arménien de France (6 items, see Vardanyan 2012, 333–70);³ c) The private collection of Garig and Varvara Basmadjians (3 items + 1 old-printed amulet, see Ghazaryan 2017, 124–51).

As a recipient of the “Sirarpie Der Nersessian Association” scholarship in 2016,⁴ I studied most of them (except the collection of the Musée arménien de France). Also, I examined an amulet of the private collection of Janine Altounian, which is now kept in The National Library of France.

These amulets, dated from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, were written and illuminated in different places: Bakhchysarai (Crimea), Smyrna (Zmiwřnia), Istanbul, and others. The place of origin of some items is unknown.

2.1. The Amulet Scrolls in the National Library of France

There are 7 amulet scrolls in the collection of the National Library of France.

1. BnF Arménien 97, date – 1643, scribe – Reverend Grigoris, commissioner – Margar, size – 288.4 × 6.8–7.2 cm. The amulet scroll is incomplete, a part is missing and the edges are worn at the beginning. It contains 10 prayers and 2 miniatures: *The Cross* and a *Rosette*. There are a headpiece and 4 ornamented letters in the amulet: ornithomorphic (2), vegetal (1), and nodal (1). The colour palette is poor: red (light and dark), green, and black.

² See, for instance, Uluhogian 1984, 605–14; Russell 2013, 105–91; Ghazaryan 2011; 2012b; 2015a–b; Ghazaryan and Sargsyan 2016; 2017, and 2020.

³ The museum was closed due to legal issues, and I didn't have an opportunity to study the collection. It is still closed.

⁴ I am grateful to the “Sirarpie Der Nersessian Association” and to Anna Layloyan-Yekmalyan, without whose support this study could not have been accomplished.

2. BnF Arménien 98, date – eighteenth century (before 1730), size – $182.4 \times 8-8.3$ cm. This manuscript is incomplete; the edges of the paper are worn, parts of the text are damaged, and a large part is missing at the end. At the beginning, the paper has become yellowish from oil. The miniatures' colours have penetrated through the paper because of moisture and are seen on the backside. The amulet was partly repaired at the beginning of the twentieth century. It contains one incomplete prayer ("In Faith I Confess..." by Nersēs Shnorhali) and 7 miniatures: *The Lord*; *The Original Sin*; *Flowers in a Vase*; *The Annunciation*; *Adoration of the Magi*; *Nersēs Shnorhali*, and *Presentation at the Temple*. The decorations include a headpiece and an ornamented letter (ornithomorphic). The colours of the amulet are red, yellow, green, rose, white, black, and silver. The marginal parts are coloured yellow.
3. BnF Arménien 99, date – eighteenth century (before 1732), commissioner – Ovanes, son of Maskhud (1732), size – 802×7.9 cm.⁵ The amulet scroll contains 23 prayers and 17 miniatures: *The Lord*; *The Original Sin*; *The Annunciation*; *Adoration of the Magi*; *Presentation at the Temple*; *Entry into Jerusalem*; *Wise and Foolish Virgins*; *Nersēs Shnorhali*; *The Lord*; *The 12 Apostles*, *Prayer to the Virgin Mary*; *Virgin with the Child Jesus*; *Saint Stephen the Protomartyr*; *Saint John the Baptist with the Haloed Jesus in His Arms*; *Saint Gregory the Illuminator*; *The Sacrifice of Isaac*; *Saint Sargis on Horseback*, and *Saint Shiat Chides the Devil*. There are 4 ornamented letters in the amulet: ornithomorphic (3) and vegetal (1). The colours used by the unknown artist (possibly the scribe himself), are red, yellow, green, orange, rose, white, brown, black, and bronze. The margins of the scroll are coloured yellow.
4. BnF Arménien 100, date – 1766, commissioner – Yakob, son of Ghazar Toghrumaji, size – 674.6×12 cm. The amulet scroll is incomplete, a part is lost and the edges are worn at the beginning. It contains 30 prayers. Spaces are left for 12 miniatures, which have never been painted. There are only graphical black ornamented letters in the amulet: ornithomorphic (15), vegetal (7), and ornithomorphic with a human face (1). The margins are decorated with two lines; the one closer to the edge is red, and the other is bronze (the bronze colour is worn and has partially become green).
5. BnF Arménien 101, date – seventeenth century, later owner – Yovanēs, size – 447.3×6.9 cm. The amulet scroll, containing 11 prayers, is incomplete (a small part is lost at the beginning). It was restored in the eighteenth century, the missing part of the paper was added, and the text was rewritten. The 10 miniatures include: *Flowers in a Vase under an Arch*; *a Vegetal Decoration under an Arch*; *Nersēs Shnorhali*;⁶ *Virgin with the Child Jesus*, and *6 Rosette-Crosses*. There are also 4 headpieces and 10 ornamented letters: ornithomorphic (1), vegetal (4), nodal

⁵ The paper has become yellowish from moisture. The bronze colour of the miniatures is partially-missing. The amulet was restored in the eighteenth century; the 9th and 10th pieces were sewn together with a white cotton thread, and a paper with a French text was sewn with the same thread along the verse of the last two pieces. The scroll was again partially restored in the mid-twentieth century.

⁶ The gold colour of this miniature has partially peeled.

(2), and geometric (3). The colour palette of the miniatures is rich: red, blue, green, yellow, orange, rosy, white, brown, grey, black, and gold. The margins are coloured orange (the left) and yellow (the right).

6. BnF Arménien 102, date – seventeenth century, commissioner – Aṙak'el, size – 587.6 × 7.8–8.4 cm. Parts of the amulet scroll are missing at the beginning, the middle and the end.⁷ It contains 30 prayers, some of which are incomplete. The manuscript is illuminated with 24 miniatures: *Presentation at the Temple*; *The Lord*; *The 6 Apostles*; *The Lamb of God*; *The 6 Apostles*; *Crucifixion*; *Virgin with the Child Jesus*; *Saint John the Baptist*; *Saint Stephen the Protomartyr*; *Saint Gregory the Illuminator*; *Kneeling Jesus Praying on the Mount of Olives*; *The Sacrifice of Isaac*; *Saint Cyprian Heals by Reading*; *Saint Paul Chides the Snake*; *The Archangel Chides the Evil Crow* (which is on a branchless, leafless, and rootless tree); *Saint Peter Chides the Devil*; *Saint Nicholas Thaumaturgus*; *Saint George on Horseback Slaying the Dragon*; *Saint Sargis and His Son Martiros on Horseback*; *Saint Demetrius on Horseback*; *Saint Andrew the General on Horseback*; *Saint Theodore the Soldier on Horseback*; *Saint Menas on Horseback*, and *Saint Mercurius on Horseback Slaying a King*. There are a headpiece and ornamented letters in the amulet: ornithomorphic (3), vegetal (13) and nodal (7). The colours are red, blue, green, yellow, orange, rosy, brown, umber, black, and gold (mainly peeled).
7. BnF Arménien 348, date – 1865, scribe – Yarut'iwn Prusats'i, son of Yakob Vank'ian, commissioner – Yarut'iwn (the scribe) and Petros (his brother), 2776.7 × 11.2–11.7 cm.⁸ This amulet (Fig. 9) is the longest among the 900 Armenian scrolls all over the world. The typical size of an Armenian amulet is 600–800 cm, except the amulets of the New Julfa school. The size of the amulets from this school is between 88.9 and 168.9 cm (see Ghazaryan 2019, 462). There are not too many Armenian amulets longer than 1000 cm (about 20 are from 1000 to 1600 cm, one is 2264.8 cm (Matenadaran, No. 41, date – 1836, place – Astrakhan, scribe and painter – Movsēs Yovhannisean Khzlarats'i, commissioner – Yovsep).

The amulet contains 73 prayers and 31 miniatures: *God the Father*; *Nersēs Shnorhali*; *Adoration of the Magi*; *The Baptism*; *The Lord*; *The 12 Apostles*; *The Lamb of God*; *The Risen Jesus in the Chalice and the Instruments of Torture*; *Crucifixion*; *The Tomb of the Lord*; *Resurrection*; *Virgin with the Child Jesus*; *Saint John the Baptist and The Lamb of God*; *Saint Stephen the Protomartyr*; *Saint Gregory the Illuminator*; *Angel with a Trumpet* (Fig. 10); *Archangel Gabriel Takes the Soul of a Deceased Man*; *Seraphim*; *The Sacrifice of Isaac*; *Gregory of Narek*; *Saint George on Horseback*; *Saint Sargis and his Son Martiros on Horseback*; *Saint Matthew the Evangelist*; *Saint Mark the Evangelist*;

⁷ The paper has become yellowish from moisture. The colours of the miniatures have also changed. At some places the text is faded and hardly readable. The edges are worn, and some parts of the text are missing. The amulet was restored in the twentieth century; a paper was glued along the back side, and a piece (11.1 cm) from the end of the scroll, containing miniature 24 and prayer 30, was cut and glued at the beginning.

⁸ The edges are worn, and the paper has become yellowish from moisture. The red ink of the text is partly seen on the back side. During a restoration in the mid-twentieth century, a paper was glued along the verso of the amulet.

Saint Luke the Evangelist; Saint John the Evangelist; Solomon Chides the Lord of Demons; Saint Cyprian; The Glorious Holy Cross; Saint Jacob, and The Prophet David with a Lyre (Fig. 11). At the end of the scroll, one can see a coloured etching – *The Holy Trinity*. The colour palette of the miniatures is rich: red, blue, green, yellow, orange, rosy, violet, white, brown, grey, black, and gold. 3 lines, black, red, and black, are drawn in the margins.

2.2. *The Amulet Scrolls in the Basmadjians' Collection*

There are 4 amulet scrolls in the private collection of Garig and Varvara Basmadjians. It was formed during the years when they were students in Armenia and were not yet married. Interested in Armenian culture, they collected works of art. Garig Basmadjian, born in 1947 in Jerusalem, was a poet, translator, publisher, editor, amateur artist, art-historian, and curator. His literary heritage is summed up in the collection entitled *Avartakhagh (The Final Play)* and published in Yerevan in 2005 (see Basmadjian 2011, 58–60). Varvara Basmadjian is an art-historian and curator. She was born in Constantinople, and later her family settled in Paris. Garig and Varvara Basmadjians started their life together in Paris. Their private collection was growing and they decided to open a gallery in 1977. It was first named “Gorky Gallery” in honour of the famous Armenian artist Arshile Gorky. Two years later, this gallery dedicated to the Armenian art in France, was renamed “Basmadjian gallery”. Garig had organized about 60 exhibitions before his mysterious disappearance in 1989. The gallery existed until 2003.

The three handwritten amulets of the Basmadjians described below are in a very good condition despite some minor losses at the beginning. They all are very interesting not only thanks to the variety of prayers but also the vivid miniatures in rich colours.

1. Date – 1680, place – Bakhchysarai (Crimea), scribe – Deacon Petros, commissioner – Ulukhan, son of Khoja Awetis, size – 656 × 7.5–7.6 cm. The amulet scroll contains 28 prayers. An unknown artist (perhaps the scribe himself) illuminated it with 6 miniatures: *The Cross; Nersēs Shnorhali (the Gracious)* (see Fig. 1); *Gregory of Narek; Virgin with the Child Jesus; Crucifixion, and Archangel Gabriel* (Fig. 2). Among the miniatures of the amulet, one can also see a vignette-headpiece, 2 other headpieces, and 17 ornamented letters: ornithomorphic (5), vegetal (7), nodal (4), and vegetal with a human face (1). The colours are red, blue, green, yellow, orange, and black. The marginal parts are coloured with light yellow.
2. Date – 1711, place – Smyrna (Zmiwŕnia), scribe – unknown, commissioner – Papay, size 823.6 × 9.3–9.9 cm. The amulet scroll contains 23 prayers and 23 miniatures, some of which are repeated: *Annunciation; Adoration of the Magi; Nersēs Shnorhali; Virgin with the Child Jesus; Crucifixion; The Lord; The 12 Apostles; The Risen Jesus in the Chalice; The 12 Apostles; Saint John the Baptist; Saint Stephen the Protomartyr; Saint Gregory the Illuminator; The 6 Apostles; The Lamb of God; The 6 Apostles; Archangel Gabriel Takes the Soul of a Deceased Man* (see Fig. 3); *The Sacrifice of Isaac; Saint George on Horseback Slaying the Dragon* (Fig. 4); *Saint*

Sargis and His Son Martiros on Horseback; Saint Peter Chides the Demon; Gregory of Narek, and Gregory of Narek and Saint Mark the Evangelist. The colour palette of the miniatures is quite rich, comprised of red, blue, green, yellow, orange, rose, violet, black, silver, and gold.⁹ The amulet scroll is also decorated with ornamented letters: ornithomorphic (16) and vegetal (1).

3. Date – 1711, place – Istanbul, scribe – Kiraykos, commissioner – Ōhanēs, size – 646.8 × 10 cm. The amulet scroll contains 14 prayers and 19 miniatures:¹⁰ *The Original Sin; Annunciation, Adoration of the Magi; Nersēs Shnorhali; The Magi; Crucifixion; The Lord; The 6 Apostles; The Lamb of God and 6 Apostles* (Fig. 5); *Virgin with the Child Jesus; Saint John the Baptist; Saint Stephen the Protomartyr; Saint Gregory the Illuminator; The Sacrifice of Isaac; Saint Sargis on Horseback; Archangel Gabriel Takes the Soul of a Deceased Man; Saint George on Horseback Slaying the Dragon, and Saint Peter Chides a Demon* (Fig. 6). The decorations of the amulet also include a headpiece and 9 ornamented letters: ornithomorphic (1) and geometric (8). The colour palette is rich: red, blue, yellow, orange, white, brown, black, bronze, and silver (which is rarely used in the miniatures of Armenian manuscripts). On the first three pieces, the unknown artist has also decorated the margins with a black stylized vegetal belt.
4. Old-printed amulet: date – 1724, place – Constantinople (printing house of Astuatsatur Kostandnupolsets'i), illustrator – Grigor Marzvanets'i,¹¹ commissioner – Hoṛomsim), size – 580.4 × 9.8–10 cm. It has come down to us with losses at the beginning and in the middle.¹² Though some parts are missing, this amulet remains the longest printed example I have ever seen. It contains 28 prayers and 21 etchings: *The Family Tree of Christ; Nersēs Shnorhali; The Lord; The 12 Apostles; The Lamb of God; The Risen Jesus in the Chalice and the Instruments of Torture; the Tomb of the Lord* (Fig. 7); *Crucifixion; Virgin with the Child Jesus* (Fig. 8); *Saint John the Baptist; Saint Stephen the Protomartyr; Saint Gregory the Illuminator; Archangel Gabriel Takes the Soul of a Deceased Man; Seraphim; The Sacrifice of Isaac; Gregory of Narek; Saint Matthew the Evangelist; Saint Mark the Evangelist; Saint Luke the Evangelist; Saint John the Evangelist, and Solomon Chides the Lord of Devils.* There are also a vignette-headpiece, a headpiece, and ornamented letters: ornithomorphic (3), zoomorphic (5), and ornithomorphic with a human face (1). The etchings are coloured red, blue, yellow, orange, rose, brown, and bronze. The bronze of the coloured images has partly peeled.

9 The edges at the beginning of the amulet scroll are worn. The silver and gold colours of the miniatures are partly missing. The paper has become yellow from moisture. The manuscript was restored in 1809 and has some repairs from the late nineteenth century.

10 The scroll is incomplete, a little part of it is missing at the beginning. The edges are worn, the first three miniatures are damaged, and at some places the silver and gold colours are missing. The manuscript was partly repaired in the late nineteenth century.

11 Some illustrations are signed by him: "GM" (ԳՄ), "GR" («ԳՐ»), "GD" («ԳԴ»).

12 The edges at the beginning are worn. The amulet had been partly restored in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and its parts had been confused. During my study (in April 2016), I took apart its pieces and rearranged them, so that the scroll can be restored in the correct order. However, it has not been restored yet and consists of 21 separate pieces.

3. Some Examples of Miniatures

It is worth saying a few words about several most typical or unique miniatures found in the above-mentioned amulet scrolls. Some of these examples are remarkable for their artistic value and unusual features not only among the miniatures of amulet scrolls but also in the whole Armenian art of manuscript illumination.

BnF Arménien 99: *Presentation at the Temple* (Fig. 12), which is one of the episodes of the *Festive Cycle*, frequently found in the illustrations of amulets. In this scene, Jesus is presented not as a 40-day-old baby but as a 6–7-year-old child. Under the arch, which symbolizes the temple or the church, one can see 3 personages: Mary, Jesus, and Simeon. The image depicts the meeting of people with God.

BnF Arménien 99: *Wise and Foolish Virgins* (Fig. 13), a scene typical of the Artsakh school of miniature painting (see, for example, M316, 6r; M4820, 4v, M6319, 1c; Hakobyan 2014, 87, 112–13, 140–41). In this sample, the artist represents Jesus in front of a group of women at night. Those women are the wise virgins. They are awake, waiting for Jesus, and are saved by the Lord.

BnF Arménien 102: *Saint Cyprian Heals by Reading* (Fig. 14). One can see images of Saint Cyprian already in the earliest amulet scrolls of the fifteenth century. In some of them, Cyprian is depicted together with Justina the Virgin, in others, without her. In the second case, we have different versions: Cyprian with the Devil, Cyprian represented with a Wooden Staff, with the Four Gospels, or with the Bible in his hand. In this miniature, Bishop Cyprian is reading the Holy Scriptures and healing a sick man. According to a legend, Cyprian was formerly a pagan sorcerer, who was converted to Christianity by Justina the Virgin. After becoming a Christian, he conveyed the word of God to people and thereby healed them (see Ghazaryan 2014, 243–64). This image depicts one of such episodes from the life of Cyprian.

Finally, I would like to mention an extraordinary miniature, in which the imaginary world of a mystic prayer is represented. BnF Arménien 102: *The Archangel Chides the Evil Eagle* (in the image, it is more like a crow, which sits on a branchless, leafless, and rootless tree [Fig. 15]).

The miniature precedes the following prayer:¹³

Prayer against all kinds of pains and all troubles from demons and sorcerers, and heresies and all evils – There was a tree on the earth, which had no branches, no leaves and no roots. An eagle lived on it, which had no head and no wings and no feet. Those angels and archangels asked the eagle and said: “What art thou, sitting on the tree that has no branches, no leaves and no roots?” The evil eagle says: “I

13 «Աղոթք ամենայն ցեղ զանի եւ ամենայն ցաւոց դիւաց եւ կախարդաց եւ աղանդաց եւ ամենայն չարեաց – Ծառ մի կայր ի մեջ երկրի, որ ոչ ճեղ ունէր եւ ոչ տերեւ եւ ոչ արմատ: Արծիւ մի [քնակ]եալ էր ի վերա նորայ, որ ոչ գլուխ ունէր եւ [ոչ թևք] եւ ոչ ոտք: Հարցմունք եղեն արծիւին ա[յդ հր]եշտակք եւ հրեշտակապետքն եւ ասեն. «[Զի՛նչ ես, որ նստեալ] ես ի ծառդ, որ ոչ ճեղ ունի եւ ոչ տերեւ եւ ոչ ա[րմ]ատ»: Ասէ պիղծ արծիւն. «Երդամ նստիմ ի գլուխն մարդուն, զմիսն ուտիմ եւ զղեղն ծըծեմ, զաչից լուսն պակասեցնեն»: Լսեցին զայս հրեշտակք եւ հրեշտակապետքն, հրամայեցին եւ ասեն. «Կապենք զքեզ, չար եւ անիծեալ, ի ԳՃԿԵ. (365) սրբովքն, որ կան ի սիրտ արեքականն, ոչ հրեշտակք գիտեն եւ ոչ հրեշտակապետք, բայց միայն Հայր»:

go and sit on the head of a man, eat his flesh, suck his brain and impair the light of his eyes". The angels and archangels heard this, ordered and said: "We tie thee, evil and cursed one, by the 365 saints, who are in the heart of the sun; they know neither the angels, nor the archangels, but only the Father."¹⁴

This text is illustrated by an unknown painter or the scribe himself as follows: an archangel on the left side of the miniature is talking with a bird sitting on a tree. The tree has no branches, no leaves and no roots, as it is written in the text of the prayer, and the evil bird has no wings and no feet. This prayer can be found in almost the half of the Armenian amulet scrolls, but this illustration of the text is unique.

4. Conclusion

My purpose was to provide brief preliminary information on the Armenian amulet scrolls kept in two collections of Paris. As we have seen, most of them are in the National Library of France and some others form part of the Basmadjians' private collection. Among these items, I referred with a special emphasis to the longest Armenian amulet scroll, 2776.7 cm in length, a unique sample, which had formerly been in the private collection of Janine Altounian and is now housed in the BnF. All this very interesting material has never received proper scholarly attention and deserves detailed study within the wide context of the Armenian amulet scrolls in general. In the near future, I hope to carry out further research, which will also include the collection of the Musée arménien de France — so far, it has not been accessible to me. The miniatures found in the amulet scrolls, of which I mentioned several remarkable examples, are another fascinating and little-studied subject worthy to be considered by experts, especially art historians.

¹⁴ Or "neither the angels, nor the archangels know them, but only the Father".



Fig. 1: *Nersēs Shnorhali*, 1680, Bakhchysarai (Crimea),
scribe – Deacon Petros

The first eight miniatures are from Garig and Varvara Basmadjians' collection. Thanks to Hrair Hawk Khacherian for the photos, which are part of Davit Ghazaryan's personal archive.



Fig. 2: Archangel Gabriel, Bakhchysarai (Crimea), scribe – Deacon Petros



Fig. 3: Archangel Gabriel Takes the Soul of a Deceased Man, 1711, Smyrna (Zmiwŕnia), scribe – unknown



Fig. 4: Saint George on Horseback Slaying the Dragon, 1711, Smyrna (Zmiw̄nia), scribe – unknown



Fig. 5: *The Lamb of God and 6 Apostles*, 1711, Istanbul, scribe – Kiraykos



Fig. 6: Saint Peter Chides the Devil, 1711, Istanbul, scribe – Kiraykos



Fig. 7: *The Tomb of the Lord*, Printed in 1724, Constantinople, illustrator – Grigor Marzvanets'i



Fig. 9: The longest Armenian amulet scroll, 1865, scribe – Yarut'iwn Prusats'¹⁶

¹⁶ This and the following two photos of the amulet scroll (BnF Arménien 348) were taken by Davit Ghazarian when it was still in the collection of Janine Altounian.



Fig. 10: Angel with a Trumpet, 1865, scribe – Yarut'iwn Prusats'i



Fig. 11: The Prophet David with a Lyre, 1865, scribe – Yarut'iwn Prusats'i



Fig. 12: *Presentation at the Temple*, eighteenth century (before 1732)



Fig. 13: *Wise and Foolish Virgins*, eighteenth century (before 1732)



Fig. 14: *Saint Cyprian Heals by Reading*, seventeenth century



Fig. 15: *The Archangel Chides the Evil Eagle*, seventeenth century

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