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FACES FROM THE PAST: AGHTAMAR, THE ANGLO-SAXON ALFRED JEWEL, AND THE SASANIAN CHOSROES DISH – IDEAS AND INFLUENCES IN PORTRAITURE

This discussion about ideas and influences in portraiture is presented as work in progress, rather than as an argument that fully answers the questions that it raises.

In 2003, the Byzantinist Jonathan Shepard published a comparison of the images of the emperor Leo VI of Byzantium, who ruled 886-912, and the tsar Symeon of Bulgaria, who ruled 893-927¹. He compared them with each other and with that of the Anglo-Saxon King Alfred, who ruled in Wessex (in southern England) 871-899. Shepard concluded that they have much in common, and that all three probably derived inspiration from the court of the west European Charles the Bald, a member of the Frankish Carolingian dynasty, who was emperor of the Franks 875-877, and was the father of Alfred's step-mother, Judith.

In 2010 I myself published a comparison of Alfred and Gagik Artsruni, who was king of Vaspurakan 908-943, concluding that Gagik too belongs to the 'wider field' to which Shepard ascribed Alfred, Leo and Symeon². What Alfred's and Gagik's ideas about kingship, and their royal images, have in common includes drawing on King Solomon, as depicted in the Old Testament, and an emphasis on humility as a major kingly virtue.

My 2010 study considered the visual portraits that are associated with Alfred and Gagik. In Alfred's case, it is a figure in cloisonné enamel under a rock crystal. This takes up nearly two thirds of the whole length

¹ **Jonathan Shepard**, 'The Ruler as Instructor, Pastor and Wise: Leo VI of Byzantium and Symeon of Bulgaria' in *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 339-58.

² **Anne Elizabeth Redgate**, 'Liturgy, law and self-representation: Christian kingship in England and Armenia from the late-ninth to the mid-eleventh century', published 2010 on the website of the 21st International Congress of Historical Sciences (held Amsterdam, August 2010) and 2013 at <http://www.academia.edu/4591394>

of what is known as the Alfred Jewel³. The Jewel measures only 6.2 x 3.1 x 1.3 centimetres and is inscribed 'Aelfred had me made'. It was almost certainly commissioned by Alfred himself, and it was probably one of the precious book-markers, or pointers, that Alfred sent to each of his bishops with his English translation of Pope Gregory I's *Pastoral Rule*, which he wanted them to read⁴. The portrait may be of Alfred himself, or a personification of Sight, but it is more likely a depiction of Christ as the embodiment of Wisdom. This Christ has kingly elements - for example, the colours of His robes - and was probably meant to suggest a parallel between Alfred and Christ⁵. Certainly whoever used the book-marker would have been reminded of Alfred, his authority and his orders. Thus, this portrait is a kind of 'portrait' of Alfred.

Gagik Artsruni is depicted in stone, on the exterior of his palace church at Aghtamar on Lake Van, which was built 915-921. On the west façade, over life-size, Gagik holds the church, to present it to Christ⁶. On the east façade, much smaller and less prominent, is a figure in a medallion in a vine frieze, seated, holding a drinking goblet that resembles a chalice, which is probably Gagik⁷. The faces of these two figures do not seem dissimilar to the Alfred Jewel's⁸. There is also a similarity between the face on the Alfred Jewel and the face of Adam that is below the figure of Gagik on the east façade at Aghtamar.

³ See picture N 29, The Alfred Jewel. Photo: Genevra Kornbluth. A colour picture is available on the website <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com> (click on Indexed Historical Archive, then Location Index, then United Kingdom, then Oxford) (last accessed 1 December 2014). The Alfred Jewel is held by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, UK.

⁴ See **Leslie Webster**, 'Edificia nova: treasures of Alfred's reign', in *Alfred the Great* ... , ed. Timothy Reuter (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 81-87.

⁵ **Catherine E. Karkov**, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 30-4.

⁶ See picture N 30, The west façade of the Church of the Holy Cross, Aghtamar, showing King Gagik Artsruni. Photo: Hrair Hawk Khatcherian.

⁷ Other identifications have been suggested, most recently the biblical King David. **Edda Vardanyan**, 'Décor sculpté de l'église de la Sainte-Croix d'Alt'amar: les sujets bibliques de la frise de la vigne', in *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Mahé* eds **Aram Mardirosian, Agnès Ouzounian, and Constantin Zuckerman** (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2014), pp. 707-736. For a photograph see Vardanyan p. 710 Fig. 2.

⁸ See picture N 29, The Alfred Jewel © Genevra Kornbluth. See picture N 31, King Gagik Artsruni's face, west façade of the Church of the Holy Cross, Aghtamar. Photo: Hrair Hawk Khatcherian.

The Chosroes Dish, or Cup of Chosroes, now in Paris, was made in Sasanian Persia, but was probably already in France during the reign of Charles the Bald, where it was known as the cup of (King) Solomon⁹. It too depicts a ruler, possibly Chosroes II who ruled Persia 591-628. The ruler is at the centre, in rock crystal¹⁰. Leslie Webster has suggested that this was an inspiration for the Alfred Jewel portrait¹¹. Like the Alfred Jewel face, the face in the Cup of Chosroes is not dissimilar to the face of King Gagik Artsruni¹².

Direct or significant links between all of these images are not the concern of this essay, though it is possible that there were some. Royal and aristocratic Christian art of this period had a current, international character. Its function was to impress both a domestic audience and visitors from foreign rulers, Christian and non-Christian alike. Alicia Walker has interpreted ninth- and tenth-century Byzantine adoption of non-Byzantine motifs within imperial artistic programmes as claims and metaphorical demonstration of imperial conquest and superiority over foreign rivals, not as imperial recognition of artistic inadequacy or political inferiority or dependence¹³. Walker's interpretation could surely be applicable to Aghtamar too. If so, it would modify the interpretation of Lynn Jones, that Aghtamar's elements of Islamic court iconography reveal and proclaim that Gagik owed his royal power and status to Arab support¹⁴.

There were various mechanisms and conduits that spread 'foreign' artistic elements, including the movement of craftsmen. According to his

⁹ A colour photograph of The Cup of Chosroes, full interior, is available on the website <http://www.kornbluthphoto.com> (click on Indexed Historical Archive, then Location Index, then France, then Cabinet des Médailles, then Roman through Merovingian and Sassanian. The Cup has its own page) (last accessed 1 December 2014). The Cup of Chosroes is held by the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France.

¹⁰ See picture N 32, The ruler in the Cup of Chosroes (centre rock crystal cameo from interior – upper part). Photo: Genevra Kornbluth. A colour photograph is available at the KornbluthPhoto website as cited above in note 9.

¹¹ Webster, pp. 96-98, 102-103.

¹² Compare the faces in picture N 29 (The Alfred Jewel ©Genevra Kornbluth), see picture N 31 (King Gagik Artsruni's face © Hrair Hawk Khatcherian), and see picture N 32 (The ruler in the Cup of Chosroes © Genevra Kornbluth).

¹³ Alicia Walker, *The Emperor and the World: Exotic Elements and the Imaging of Middle Byzantine Imperial Power, Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries C.E.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 21-23, 76.

¹⁴ Lynn Jones, *Between Islam and Byzantium: Aght'amar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Rulership* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 61, 65, and more generally, pp. 120-123, 127.

contemporary, Welsh, biographer, Bishop Asser, King Alfred had ‘assembled’ very many very skilled craftsmen ‘from many races’ for building and for producing ‘precious things’¹⁵, which would have included the Alfred Jewel. According to the contemporary continuator of Thomas Artsruni’s *History of the House of the Artsrunik*, at Aghtamar many artisans were assembled, ‘from all nations’, to implement Gagik’s plans for the island¹⁶. Since such recruitment was something that King Solomon had done¹⁷, both writers are reiterating their king’s Solomonic qualities. The material remains do however confirm that the work was of international stature. Not long after Gagik’s church was finished, the interior paintings of the famous church of St. Peter and St Paul (built between 895 and 906), at Tatev, in Siunik in eastern Armenia, were consecrated, in 930. According to the thirteenth-century Stephen Orbelian of Siunik, these paintings were by Frankish artists from far away, commissioned by Tatev’s bishop, and the surviving fragments do indeed show links with Frankia, especially Fulda and Reichenau¹⁸. We do not know how or why this bishop had conceived and implemented his decision to employ Frankish artists, how he met or contacted them, or what they were doing and where they were working before they worked at Tatev.

Roughly at the time that Gagik was building, another interesting, and newly made face of a ruler was to be seen, and heard about, in Constantinople. The narthex of Hagia Sophia, which was the Patriarch’s church, not the palace church, has a mosaic, above what was the imperial entrance, which shows an emperor prostrate before Christ. It probably represents Leo VI (886-912), either as a penitent for his personal sins – his marital history had caused scandals – or, demonstrating a more general humility. The Christ is probably Christ embodying Sophia, that is, Holy Wisdom, and the scene may be depicting the emperor asking for the gift

¹⁵ **Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge**, *Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), pp. 101, 106, 249-50.

¹⁶ **Robert W. Thomson**, *Thomas Artsruni, History of the House of the Artsrunik^c: Translation and Commentary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), pp. 356-57, 359.

¹⁷ **Matthew Kempshall**, ‘No Bishop, No King: The Ministerial Ideology of Kingship and Asser’s *Res Gestae Aelfredi*’, in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*, eds **Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 106-127, esp. pp 109-10 for the Solomonic model.

¹⁸ **Nicole Thierry and Jean-Michel Thierry**, ‘Peintures murales de caractère occidental en Arménie: Église Saint-Pierre et Saint-Paul de Tatev (début du x^{me} siècle)’, *Byzantion* 38 (1968), pp. 180-242.

of wisdom from Him, as patron of the church¹⁹. In fact it was probably meant to have several meanings, for ambiguity was valued in Byzantine art. In the ninth-century Christian West and in late-ninth- and early-tenth-century Byzantium, humility was regarded as an essential attribute of a ruler. In western perception, public penance was a method of placating God's anger and hence protecting realm and people, whilst prostration before Christ was an imitation of Christ that gave the worshipper hope of elevation for himself, to correspond to Christ's own elevation that followed His humiliation at the Crucifixion²⁰. So to depict an emperor as humble before God did not humiliate him. The opposite was true. It advertised his qualification to rule, his legitimacy, authority, claim to respect and obedience, that his reign had been, or would be, blessed and free of disaster, because his relationship with God was correct.

These attitudes to humility may throw light on Thomas Artsruni's continuator's describing the large image of King Gagik 'as if begging forgiveness for his sins'. Gagik's demeanour makes this description seem strange²¹. But Lynn Jones has suggested that what the scene shows is the ultimate success of Gagik's request, his entry to Paradise: and also that its location gave it a penitential significance. According to the canons, Armenian penitents had to face west and renounce their sins. The contemporary Katholikos, John, recorded in the *History* that he wrote, that after the murder of the Bagratuni King Smbat in 913/914, Gagik 'did penance in accordance with the canons'. This was for his earlier alliance

¹⁹ The mosaic has been much discussed. **Robin Cormack**, 'The Emperor at St. Sophia: Viewer and Viewed', in *Byzance et les images* ed. André Guillou (Paris: La documentation Française, 1994), pp. 223-253. **Z. A. Gavrilović**, 'The humiliation of Leo VI the Wise (the mosaic of the Narthex at Saint Sophia, Istanbul)', *Cahiers Archeologiques* 28 (1979), pp. 87-94 supports the interpretation of André Grabar that Leo is asking Christ for wisdom, and disagrees with **Nicolas Oikonomides**, 'Leo VI and the Narthex Mosaic of Saint Sophia', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 30 (1976), pp. 151-172, who argues that the mosaic alludes to Leo's repentance of his personal sins, and to his humiliation by the Patriarch.

²⁰ **Robert Deshman**, 'The Exalted Servant: the Ruler Theology of the Prayerbook of Charles the Bald', *Viator* 2 (1980), pp. 385-417, considers humility and prostration. **Mayke De Jong**, 'Power and Humility in Carolingian Society: the Public Penance of Louis the Pious', *Early Medieval Europe* 1 (1992), pp. 29-52, considers political dimensions of royal penance. **Paul Kershaw**, 'Illness, Power and Prayer in Asser's *Life of King Alfred*', *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001), pp. 201-224.

²¹ See picture N 30, The west façade of the Church of the Holy Cross, Aghtamar, showing King Gagik Artsruni © Hrair Hawk Khatcherian.

with the Arabs and against Smbat²². As in Leo VI's case, personal sins, royal humility, and fitness to rule are all evoked in one image.

The Artsruni writer called Gagik's image 'a true likeness'. He may have meant 'evocative of his true character', for example, his penitence. Ancient portraiture of rulers was not about physiological resemblance. Clothing and headgear were used to signal status and identity. Physical features were used to suggest continuity or discontinuity between reigns, and similarity or difference to or from other rulers (past or present) or gods, and also particular moral and physical attributes, such as physical beauty proclaiming moral perfection, and height and gradations of naturalism indicating rank in a group. For example, the coin portraits of the Armenian King Tigranes the Great, in the first century BC, have been seen as communicating grandeur, steadiness and resoluteness²³; Byzantine empresses who are depicted on sixth- and seventh-century Byzantine steelyard weights cannot be identified²⁴; and surviving Byzantine imperial imagery has been regarded as having an idealised nature²⁵.

In the imperial art of the Achaemenids, whose Persian Empire lasted 521-331 BC, hair signified health, strength, and virility. Long, full, luxuriant hair on the head meant health and high social status, and hence, fitness to rule. The hair was dressed, in order to 'tame' it²⁶. In Roman art, loose long hair marked divinity, and was transferred from pagan gods to Christ²⁷. The beard has been significant in several Near Eastern cultural traditions. On the contemporary rock relief at Bisitun, recording his

²² **Lynn Jones**, 'The visual expression of power and piety in medieval Armenia: the palace and palace church at Aghtamar', in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium* ed. **Antony Eastmond** (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 221-241, esp. pp. 232-236; **Jones**, *Between Islam and Byzantium ...* pp. 80-82.

²³ **Gevork A. Tiratsyan** in *From Urartu to Armenia: florilegium Gevork A. Tirats'yan in memoriam*, ed. Rouben Vardanyan, tr. Sveta Mardanyan, Gohar Muradyan, and Aram T'op'chyan (Neuchâtel: Recherches et publications, 2003), p. 96.

²⁴ **Anne McClanan**, *Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses. Image and Empire* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 3-4, 29-64 esp. pp. 41, 45.

²⁵ **Antony Eastmond**, 'Between Icon and Idol: The uncertainty of imperial images', in *Icon and Word. The Power of images in Byzantium. Studies Presented to Robin Cormack* eds **Antony Eastmond and Liz James** (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 73-85, esp. p. 78.

²⁶ **Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones**, *King and Court in Ancient Persia 559 to 331 BCE* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 56, 58-59.

²⁷ **Thomas F. Mathews**, *The Clash of Gods. A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (revised and expanded edition Princeton, NY and Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 108-109, 123-126.

coming to power, Darius, the first Achaemenid king, has the best beard²⁸. In Roman art, a full dark beard was another divine attribute that came to be used for Christ²⁹.

There was a long tradition of attaching special importance to the eyes. A statue of Gudea of Lagash, dated about 2110 BC, has enlarged ears and eyes. He was perceived as possessing wisdom, but the original Sumerian literally means 'of wide ear', and his contemporaries' perception was that Gudea's god looked at him with a 'legitimizing gaze', and that Gudea should concentrate on his god in return³⁰. Sight was not simply a means of connection with divinity, but something that good men shared with divinity. The third-century *Apocryphal Acts of John* states that Christ was different from other men in that He never closed His eyes³¹. According to H. P. L'Orange, eyes came to play the most important part in images of Christian saints and Roman emperors. They were unnaturally wide open, as if paralysed in wonder, looking into an imaginary world of their own, giving the impression of supernatural spiritual powers and capacities³².

A ruler's eye had governmental implications. It saw his subjects' actions, and communicated with them. In Roman art the emperor's 'burning gaze' appears in portraits in the early fourth century, and its message was that the emperor would detect immorality. Roman imperial ideology was that morality and the safety of the empire were linked³³. Similarly, in ninth-century western thought, the ruler was responsible for the moral well-being of his subjects. Falling short in effective moral supervision exposed him to charges of negligence, and to criticism from his bishops, and made him, and his subjects, liable to divine punishment³⁴.

²⁸ **Llewellyn-Jones**, p. 59.

²⁹ **Mathews**, pp. 108-109, 123-124.

³⁰ **Irene J. Winter**, 'The Affective Properties of Styles: An Inquiry into Analytical Process and the Inscription of Meaning in Art History', in *Picturing Science, Producing Art* eds **Caroline A. Jones and Peter Gallison** with **Amy Slaton** (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 55-77 (pp. 67-70 for Gudea).

³¹ **Mathews**, p. 178.

³² **H. P. L'Orange**, 'The Antique Origin of Medieval Portraiture', in *Likeness and Icon: Selected studies in Classical and Early Medieval Art* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1973), pp. 91-102 (pp. 96-98 for eyes).

³³ **Roland R.R. Smith**, 'The Public Image of Licinius I: Portrait Sculpture and Imperial Ideology in the Early Fourth Century', *Journal of Roman Studies* 87 (1997), pp. 107-202, esp. pp. 180-182.

³⁴ **De Jong**, p. 39.

In Byzantine culture, sight was regarded as the most reliable and important of the senses. Sight, memory - which was visual - and recollection, were thought to provide the best vision of Christ³⁵. As Paul Kershaw pointed out, in relation to Alfred, sight is emphasised in the biblical passages that rulers and their advisers looked to for guidance about kingship and government³⁶. For example, King David, a role model for both Byzantine and Carolingian rulers, says, in Psalms, 'My eyes are ever turned to the Lord'³⁷, and in Proverbs, when a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out evil with his eyes³⁸. Thus the king's eyes are associated with law-giving, upholding law, and being just and merciful, as well as with wisdom.

Sight was also associated with trustworthiness, especially with keeping oaths, whilst blindness was associated with treachery and oath-breaking. Blinding was punishment for treason in Achaemenid Persia according to Greek sources, and on his Bisitun rock relief, Darius blinds two traitors³⁹. The Bayeux Tapestry shows the English King Harald being shot in the eye by an arrow in 1066, at the Battle of Hastings against William the Conqueror, perhaps to remind viewers that Harald had sworn to support William's claim to the English throne.

Oath-swearing and oath-breaking both featured in early-tenth-century Armenian politics. King Gagik's cousin, Hasan Artsruni, had been disloyal towards Gagik's two predecessors as Prince of Vaspurakan, his father, and his brother Ashot. In 904 Prince Ashot captured Hasan and demanded the fort of Sevan from Hasan's mother. She complied only after Ashot swore not to harm Hasan, but Ashot broke his oath and blinded him⁴⁰. Bagratuni examples include King Ashot II and his father-in-law, who in 919 swore to end the animosity between them. The father-in-law broke his oath. King Ashot himself had taken Vasak of Siunik captive in 918, despite previously having sworn him an oath of friendship⁴¹.

³⁵ **Liz James**, 'Art and Lies: Text, image and imagination in the medieval world', in *Icon and Word ...* eds **Antony Eastmond and Liz James**, pp. 59-71, esp. pp. 60-67.

³⁶ Kershaw considers the association between sight, sexual lust, and sin pp. 213-215.

³⁷ **Kershaw**, p. 212.

³⁸ **Llewellyn-Jones**, p. 22.

³⁹ **Llewellyn-Jones**, pp. 47-48.

⁴⁰ **Thomson**, pp. 288-289, 337-339. John Katholikos's *History* (translated into English in **Krikor H. Maksoudian**, *Yovhannēs Drasxanakert'ci. History of Armenia* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987)), Chapter 38.

⁴¹ John Katholikos's *History*, Chapters 60, 59.

Oath-breaking could have serious consequences. In connection with Ashot Artsruni, Katholikos John remarked that perjurers will bring about their own destruction and lack a secure life. Excommunication might be a penalty, as it was for Ashot Artsruni⁴². A likely result of oath-breaking would have been a loss of support and hence less success. John attributed King Ashot II's later failures, which occurred after his oath-breaking, to sin, and commented that by blinding his father-in-law, he (King Ashot II) made everyone mistrust him⁴³.

The pen portrait of King Gagik's appearance that the Artsruni continuator composed includes features that this essay has discussed. Apparently, Gagik was glorious in stature, elegant and upright; his hair was dark, long and curly, carefully arranged, in thick and dense waves; his fresh beard flowered like violets on beautiful cheeks; his ears, quick to hear and believe good news, shone; his eyebrows were black and arched, his eyelids shaded his eyes like a flowering lily. Furthermore, Gagik's nose was wide and elegant, his lips were like a red line, his teeth close together and stainless⁴⁴.

Gagik's face shared features with the biblical King Solomon's, though sometimes with a variation. (And Robert Thomson has noted greater similarities with Samson, in the Armenian version of (Ps.-) Philo, *De Sampson*)⁴⁵. In Chapter 5 of the Song of Songs, Solomon is white and ruddy, his eyes like the eyes of doves, his lips like lilies, his mouth most sweet, his hair bushy and raven-black, his cheeks like a bed of spices, as sweet flowers. In Chapter 4, the beloved's lips are like a thread of scarlet, their teeth like a flock of sheep that are evenly shorn and washed.

In both the pen-portrait and the stone images⁴⁶, Gagik's eyes and face proclaim several important things about himself as king. His eyes tell the viewer the following. He sees and watches his subjects. He sees and knows Christ. He is righteous in concentrating on God. Unlike his late brother and his Bagratuni rival, he is not an oath-breaker. He is David-like. His rule, realm and people will be favoured by God. His face as a whole proclaims that he is like King Solomon, and like Solomon's son King David. It thus offers a riposte to the claim of the Bagratuni dynasty, which was current at the time, that the Bagratunis were descen-

⁴² John Katholikos's *History*, Chapter 38.

⁴³ John Katholikos's *History*, Chapter 60.

⁴⁴ Thomson, pp. 365-366.

⁴⁵ Thomson, p. 366, note 4.

⁴⁶ See picture N 31, King Gagik Artsruni's face © Hrair Hawk Khatcherian.

ded from King David. King Gagik Artsruni's portrait is part of a claim not only that his royal authority was entirely legitimate, but that its legitimacy was greater than that of the Bagratunis.

Էնն էլիգաբեր Ռեդգեյթ

Դեմքեր անցյալից՝ Աղթամար, անգլո-սաֆսերի արքա Ալֆրեդի թանկարժեք դիմանկարը և Սասանյան Խոսրովի սկուտեղը. Գաղափարներ և ազ- դեցություններ դիմապատկերներում

Ուեսսեքսի (Անգլիայում) Ալֆրեդ (871-899) և Վասպուրականի Գագիկ Արծրունի (908-943) թագավորների միջև բավական մեծ ընդհանրություն կա թագավորական իշխանությանը վերաբերող գաղափարների առումով՝ ներառյալ մասնավորապես այն, որ երկուսի համար ոգեշնչման աղբյուր էր ծառայում աստվածաշնչյան Սողոմոն արքան և երկուսն էլ թագավորի համար էական հատկանիշ էին համարում խոնարհությունը: Սույն ակնարկում նախ և առաջ քննարկվում են նրանց դիմապատկերների (Ալֆրեդի թանկարժեք դիմանկարի և Գագիկի՝ Աղթամարի Սուրբ Խաչ եկեղեցու դրսի պատի դիմաքանդակի) նմանություններն ու հնարավոր առնչությունները, նաև նրանց նմանությունները 7-րդ դարի պարսից Խոսրով արքայի սկուտեղի հետ, որը միջնադարում հայտնի էր որպես Սողոմոնի սկուտեղ, ինչպես և թեմատիկ նմանությունները Գագիկի դիմաքանդակների և Կոստանդնուպոլսի Այա Սոֆիայի Լեոն Զ-ի դիմանկարի միջև, որտեղ Լեոնը պատկերված է ապաշխարելիս: Հոգվածում առաջարկվում է թեթևակի վերանայել Լիոն Ջոնսի հայացքները Աղթամարում իսլամական արքունական պատկերազրույթյան տարրերի և Աղթամարում ու պատմական աղբյուրներում Գագիկին որպես ապաշխարողի պատկերելու մասին և փորձ է արվում ապացուցել, որ դրանցում ընդգծված է նրա իշխանությունը, անկախությունը և իշխողի դերին համապատասխանելը: Երկրորդ՝ սույն ակնարկում դիտարկվում է հին և միջնադարյան դիմապատկերներում ֆիզիկական առանձնահատկությունների խորհրդանշային համակարգը և այս լույսի ներքո հետազոտվում է Գագիկ արքայի դեմքը պատկերելու եղանակը: Հիմնական շեշտադրումն աչքերի վրա է, և փաստարկներ են բերվում առ այն, որ ըստ դիմաքանդակի՝ նա ավելի մեծ վստահություն էր վայելում, քան ժամանակակից Բագրատունի թագավորը: Բացի այդ ցույց է տրվում, որ Գագիկը համեմատվում է Սողոմոն թագավորի հետ, քանի որ նրա դեմքն ունի Սողոմոնին և Սողոմոնի որդի Դավթին բնորոշ գծեր: Նրանում այսպիսով հակահարված է տրվում Բագրատունիների այդ ժամանակվա պնդմանը, թե իրենք սերում են Դավիթ արքայից: Գագիկ Արծրունու դիմաքանդակը դրսևորումն է այն հավակնության, որ իր թագավորական իշխանությունն ավելի օրինական էր, քան Բագրատունիներինը: