

DICKRAN KOUYMJIAN

**WHAT IS ARMENIAN ART?
A REFLEXION ON ARMENIAN ART FOR A HANDBOOK OF
ORIENTAL STUDIES**

In 2005 the Association internationale des études arméniennes held a conference-workshop to develop a Handbook of Armenian Art and Architecture, one of a series of volumes on various aspects of Armenian studies. It was organized by Jasmine Dum-Tragut in Salzburg; some here today were there ten years ago. Formal papers were presented on a variety of topics, some broadly theoretical, others on very specific Armenia art questions. A small committee of scholars was asked to continue the work of organizing a volume, but due to a number of factors little was accomplished. With the publication of the first volume of the AIEA Handbook devoted to philology and the near completion of other volumes, the art handbook project was revived. I was asked to try to formulate a plan for such a volume using ideas from Salzburg, but providing a more specific structure. I am using this occasion, with the blessing of the AIEA executive, to probe deeper the questions that a volume of Armenian art provokes. One might say it is an exercise in thinking out loud.

Part I. Making of a Handbook

In preparing these remarks, I found myself constantly moving from its intended subject to another closely related one. I had to remind myself to speak about the organization of a Handbook and not about the current status of Armenian art studies: its achievements, its problems, its needs, areas of concentration, direction for the coming years, its confrontation with modern technology, coordination between scholars and institutions, and between Armenia and the diaspora. All of these are important and deserve to be considered, but they are not the main objectives of a Handbook, although they might be addressed by some of its authors, similar to what Tim Greenwood, Bernard Coulie, and others have done in their essays in the Philology volume to be discussed below.

In examining the status of Armenian art studies, my original idea was to present in broad terms the major scholarship on the subject since World War II, as an introduction to the more dynamic topic of what

"needs to be done". Despite more time for this presentation than normal, it is still impossible to include this historical aspect, which I have addressed elsewhere¹.

Long in preparation, volume one of the Handbooks of Armenian Studies has just been published: *Armenian Philology in the Modern Era: From Manuscript to Digital Text*, under the editorship of Valentina Calzolari with the collaboration of Michael Stone². The last of the projected seven-volume series of the Armenian section of Brill's vast Handbook of Oriental Studies will be on Armenian art.

Toward this end, an analysis of recent research was envisaged to assess what has been accomplished. But again this is beyond the parameters of this presentation. To what extent should such a Handbook be descriptive—explaining clearly what has been accomplished in the field of Armenian art studies—or proscriptive, tracing a path toward the future of the discipline? No doubt some of both.

Inevitably comparisons will have to be made with general art scholarship, whether known by national labels—Greek, Chinese, Flemish, Italian—or supra-national—European, Asian, Global—or religious—Islamic, Christian, pagan, Jewish— or art with no direct attachment to people, languages, religions or even geography, but to style—naïve, abstract, impressionist, expressionist. The national paradigm has become the accepted mode of presenting the arts whether through publications or university classes: but need there be a commentary on such classifications within a Handbook on the art of a language-nation group? No one seems to question the endless collections offered by specialized publishers devoted to the arts of one country after another; this is the homogenization engendered by the accepted concept of the nation-state. Such classification is a product of the scholarship of the second half of the nineteenth century, when terms like French Art or Chinese Art were introduced, and perhaps when the term Armenian art also found its name, though I am not aware of research on just when the idea took hold.

Furthermore, before drawing up a proposed table of contents need we consider the question of the so-called major and minor arts? The former is confined to architecture, painting, and sculpture, whereas cera-

¹ The longest of these, entitled "Armenian Painting and Christianity" was presented at a conference organized by Kevork Bardakjian, "Where the Only-Begotten Descended: The Church of Armenia through the Ages", in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 2004 and submitted for publication, but the volume is still in preparation.

² *Valentine Calzolari*, ed. with the collaboration of *M. Stone*, *Armenian Philology in the Modern Era: From Manuscript to Digital Text*, Leiden: Brill, 2014.

mics, textiles, or metalwork, for instance, tend to be relegated to the minor arts. How then to best integrate an examination of all the arts and, of course, how to define the many different domains? Even posing such questions leads to others such as organization of artistic domains: should it be by medium—sculpture, mosaic, painting, engraving, architecture—or by chronological periods—ancient, medieval, modern—or by regions of production—Greater Armenia, Arc‘ax, Cilicia, the diaspora? Finally in seeking to be thorough are we condemned to include all such approaches in our overview of Armenian art?

What is Armenian Art? The National and Nationalist Question

These are only some of the considerations that need to be examined (or do they?), yet without avoiding what some consider to be the most fundamental question: What, after all, is Armenian art? Is it art produced in Armenia, either today or in its historical dimensions? Or is it art crafted by those who are Armenian? Would that include half, quarter Armenians, and other fractions, or non-Armenian artists who have an Armenian name through marriage? What about Armenians born or living in other countries who follow the artistic trends in those lands? Or the non-Armenian artists who choose to live in Armenia or among Armenians? One can say, or would like to believe, that these are questions more pertinent to modern times than they are to pre-modern, medieval, or ancient periods. But reflecting on ancient artifacts, are they Armenian because they were excavated in Armenia? Or for paintings, are they Armenian because they illustrate Armenian manuscripts or books? The overwhelming majority of these images through the medieval period are better qualified as Christian painting rather than Armenian; they share basic elements of Christian iconography and even style. One can argue that such questions are childish or silly, and say the important thing is to describe and explain the art that is accepted, for whatever reason, as Armenian. Yet, for just this kind of approach Armenians and others are quick, and rightly so, to criticize certain nation-states, perhaps Turkey and Azerbaijan are the most egregious examples, for claiming all art found within the borders of their state and under its soil as Turkish or Azeri, even if fashioned before their ancestral tribesmen ever set foot in Asia Minor, and even if they bear inscriptions in other languages. Surely in these cases there is more than scholarship and art historical analysis at work in defining what is or is not such and such a national art.

Tools and Methodologies

Leaving such theoretical, perhaps polemic, questions aside, such a

volume cannot avoid discussing new methodologies, for instance statistical analyses or digital and other advanced technologies, as was done in part in the just published philology volume. In the domain of Armenian art, statistical analysis or data mining or materials analysis, and specifically for manuscripts, codicology, are in their infancy. Whereas such auxiliary disciplines as epigraphy and paleography have a respectable tradition³. It is imperative that all these dimensions be considered in preparing a collaborative book on Armenia art, whether or not they are ultimately accepted as valid criteria to advance the project.

Major Versus Minor Arts

One speaks of the minor arts, suggesting that there are major arts. In that latter category beside painting and sculpture, there is always architecture, by size alone considered the grandest of the arts. In certain, predominantly religious, buildings other arts are incorporated—frescoes, stained glass, mosaics, sculpture, painting, liturgical implements, reliquaries; such buildings often represent a repository or museum of the arts. Even the proposed name of the AIEA volume, Armenian Art and Architecture, semantically suggests that architecture is somehow different. General surveys have tended to integrate architecture with the other arts, but many of these have been organized into broad categories often structured chronologically, then within each period arranged by medium. Others have, however, been arranged by medium and within each follow a chronological progression. This was the case of *The Arts of Armenia* sponsored by the Gulbenkian Foundation in 1992⁴. It started with architecture, than manuscript painting, sculpture both stone and wood, followed by other arts, some regarded as minor: frescoes, mosaics, ceramics, metalwork including coins, textiles, engravings in printed books, and tooling on leather bindings. Since such medieval crafts as ivory carving, wall mosaics, and enameling have no consistent artistic development in Armenia; they along with some other art forms were excluded. The book did not treat modern Armenian art, neither did earlier

³ For epigraphy the *Corpus Inscriptionum Armenicarum* is the most important of these works, discussed by Tim Greenwood, “Armenian Epigraphy”, *Armenian Philology*, pp. 101-121. For palaeography, **Michael E. Stone, Dickran Kouymjian**, Henning Lehmann, *Album of Armenian Paleography*, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2002; Armenian edition, Erevan, Holy Ejmiacin, 2006, and earlier works by Garegin Hovsēp’ian and others cited in the bibliography.

⁴ **Dickran Kouymjian**, *The Arts of Armenia (Accompanied by a Collection of 300 Slides in Color)* Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1992, available online at: http://armenianstudies.csufresno.edu/arts_of_armenia/index.htm.

works like *The Armenians* of 1969 or *Armenian Art* of 1977 both by Sirarpie Der Nersessian or *Les arts arméniens* (1987) by J.-M. Thierry and P. Donabédian⁵, or even earlier surveys from Armenia proper. The remarks above could suggest that a decision needs to be made between an overall structure based on chronology with subsections or one centered around media with divisions based on period or region or both, unless there is an appropriate and more interesting third approach.

How to Treat or Integrate Modern and Contemporary Art?

The question of whether to include modern art or perhaps establishing a *terminus post quem* for inclusion is more serious. The Armenian Handbook series has projected three volumes out of seven for history, and among them is one on modern history. Why should not art be given equal treatment or at least a second volume for modern and contemporary art? The Philology volume has a section on the latest advances in the discipline based on computer driven techniques, which finally are tools rather than the analysis of modern texts. However, there is a whole section on "Modern and Contemporary Philology" with a chapter on Armenian literature to the year 2000 by Haroutiun Kurkjian⁶, as well as a challenging history of the development of philology by Bernard Coulie⁷.

For the contemporary period one must determine how to incorporate art produced by Armenians in the diaspora (of course implicitly in Armenia too) into a Handbook when the diaspora is today everywhere in the world, and self-identifying Armenians create so much? There have been exhibitions of contemporary artists from Armenia that have toured diasporan communities, such as the Colors of Armenia some years ago. The pendant to that is the work of Armenian artists of the diaspora, which is exhibited regularly in Armenia; such art has made its way into national museums of Armenia and some of these creators from abroad even have museums bearing their names. There was an early attempt to bring this diaspora art together in a single volume by Onnig Avedessian

⁵ **Sirarpie Der Nersessian**, *The Armenians*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1969; *eadem*, *Armenian Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1978, French edition, Paris: Arts et Métier Graphiques, 1977; **Jean-Michel Thierry with Nicole Thierry and Patrick Donabédian**, *Les arts arméniens*, Paris: Éditions Mazenod, 1987.

⁶ **Harout Kurkjian**, "Literary Production in Twentieth-Century Armenia: From Stifling State Control to the Uncertainties of Independence", *Armenian Philology*, pp. 466-503.

⁷ **Bernard Coulie**, "Text Editing: Principles and Methods", *Armenian Philology*, pp. 137-174.

in Cairo, but that was at a time when it was still manageable⁸. There have been many other efforts to coordinate such an undertaking in and outside of Armenia. But to the best of my knowledge there is no organism that keeps a formal or even informal database of contemporary Armenian artists. Indeed, at Salzburg there was a presentation on modern and contemporary Armenian art by Levon Chookaszian, and though limited to painting, it seemed infinite in its dimensions⁹.

Traditional diaspora communities have received consistent attention on the part of art scholarship. Its artistic diversity reflects a great separation in time and especially space. Jerusalem from the fifth-sixth centuries to the present, Fatimid Egypt in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Italy in the eleventh century and after, the Crimea in the thirteenth century and after, Constantinople from the Ottoman conquest to the present, Hungary, Poland, the Ukraine, and Romania from the thirteenth century on, and toward the East, New Julfa-Isfahan from the first years of the seventeenth century. These centers collectively are responsible for a massive artistic creation that has received considerable attention in areas like the architecture of New Julfa¹⁰ and Fatimid Cairo and Sohag in Lower Egypt,¹¹ Kütahya ceramics through the thousands of tiles in the Armenian Cathedral and churches of Jerusalem as well as Ottoman structures of various kinds¹². The recent burst of activity in the study of

⁸ **Onnig Avedissian**, *Peintres et sculpteurs arméniens du 19ème siècle à nos jours. Précédé d'un aperçu sur l'art ancien*, Cairo: Amis de la Culture Arménienne, 1959.

⁹ **Levon Chookaszian**, "The Question of Modern Painting in Armenian Art".

¹⁰ **John Carswell**, *New Julfa. the Armenian Churches and Other Buildings*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968; **Karapet Karapetian**, *Isfahān, New Julfa: Le case deglie Armeni, The Houses of the Armenians*, Rome: IsMeo, 1974; **Murad Hasratyan**, "Hay-Iranakan čartarapetakan zugahefner XVII d. (Spahani haykakan ekelec'ineri ōrinakov)", Iranian and Armenian Architectural Parallels in the 17th Century (on the Examples of the Armenians Churches of Ispahan), in Armenian and English, *Banber hayagitut'yan* (2013), nos. 2-3, pp. 91-101.

¹¹ **K. A. C. Creswell**, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, 2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959, I, pp. 161-219; **Angèle Kapoian-Kouymjian**, *L'Égypte vue par des Arméniens*, Paris: Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1988, pp. 14-17; **Denys Pringle**, "Crusader Castles and Fortifications: The Armenian Connection", in *La Méditerranée des Arméniens, XIIIe - XVe siècle*, **Claude Mutafian**, ed., Paris: Geuthner, 2014, pp. 355-366; **Claude Z. Mutafian** and **Agnès Ouzounian**, "Le Monastère Blanc en Égypte et ses inscriptions arméniennes", *Banber hayagitut'yan* (2013), nos. 2-3, pp. 106-129.

¹² **John Carswell**, *Kütahya Tiles and Pottery from the Armenian Cathedral of St. James, Jerusalem*, I, *The Pictorial Tiles and Other Vessels*, with an edition of the Armenian texts by **C. J. F. Dowsett**, II, **John Carswell**, *A Historical Survey of the Kütahya Industry and A Catalogue of the Decorative Tiles*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, reissued in one volume, Antelias: Armenian Catholicosate, 2005. and **Garo Kürkman**,

Armenian painting and other arts throughout central Europe, with books and conferences on Armenian art and culture following in rapid succession, has engaged local art historians in this rich legacy¹³.

To what extent has this diasporic art been integrated into serious presentations of the arts of Armenia? How is it to be incorporated? Or should it be incorporated? Such questions, like many others asked in this reflection, can only be answered through a serious effort of contextualization, or perhaps simply a detailed outline. This is not as easy as it might seem because in the limited space available, assuming the proposed volume to be about the same size as that on philology, drastic compromises would have to be made such as numbers of pages per locality and the number of lines for each discipline. Such limits are both disturbing and distorting.

Perhaps other general remarks ought to be made, either as hypotheses or based on credible observation, for instance the complex question of influences of neighboring art practices. When considering illuminations in Armenian manuscripts or sculptural elements on churches or on textiles and decorative arts, tracing foreign influence is often detective work, with the analysis of motifs more complex as we move back in time to the earlier years of Christianity or of the Hellenistic period, when there was, at least for early Christian art, a common early source from which all active early Christian communities could draw directly as well as borrow from each other. Yet, turning back to the art of diaspora communities the foreign influence often is self-evident: the effect of Safavid art and architecture in New Julfa, the influence of Ottoman decorative art of Constantinople¹⁴, or in central Europe the evident European manner

Magic of Clay and Fire. A History of Kütahya Pottery and Potters, Istanbul: Suna and Inan Kiraç Foundation, 2006; **Dickran Kouymjian**, "Le rôle des potiers arméniens de Kütahya dans l'histoire de la céramique ottomane", *Des serviteurs fidèles. Les enfants de l'Arménie au service de l'État turc*, **Maxime Yevadian**, ed., Sources d'Arménie, Montélimar, 2010, pp. 64-85.

¹³ For example, **Beata Biedrońska-Słota**, editor and curator, *Ormianie polsey Obrebnosc i asymilacja*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Krakow, 1999; **Waldemar Deluga**, editor, *Ars Armeniaca. Sztuka ormianska ze zbiorow polskich i ukraińskich*, exhibition catalogue, Muzeum Zamojski, Zamość, 2010; **Balint Kovács** and **Emese Pál**, *Far Away from Mount Ararat: Armenian Culture in the Carpathian Basin*, exhibition Budapest Historical Museum and the National Széchényi Library, Budapest, 2013.

¹⁴ For instance a recently published Armenian altar curtain with clear Ottoman influence in its textile designs, **Dickran Kouymjian**, "An Armenian Liturgical Curtain", *Cleveland Art*, The Cleveland Museum of Art Members Magazine, September/October 2014, pp. 12-13.

found in Armenian churches and canvas painting. Additionally, as we have seen during the recent celebration of 500 years of Armenian printing, the enormous direct borrowing of the art of book illustration through engravings of the European artists especially of the Dutch and Flemish schools¹⁵. Some of these contrasting perceptions have been studied in isolation but not as generalized phenomenon.

Of course, there is the other side of these exchanges that is the Armenian contributions to the art of its neighbors near and far. I will not get into the complex question of the origins of Gothic architecture examined carefully by others present today¹⁶, but in architecture one might look again at the claim that monuments of Fatimid Egypt were in great part Armenian inspired and executed, or, that Ottoman arts from ceramics to metalwork, both base and precious, and large sectors of textile production was by Armenians who in the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries often constituted the plurality if not the overwhelming majority of craft guild members according to Ottoman registers¹⁷. Many of you can no doubt cite other examples.

I repeat: Is this mass of art to be examined in such a Handbook or is it to be regarded as not directly related to the central point, the arts of historical Armenia in the ancient, medieval, and early modern epochs? Until today modern art has been relegated outside the core interest of

¹⁵ The matter has been discussed often recently, most recently in a paper presented at the Society for Armenian Studies 40th anniversary conference in Erevan, 3-5 October, **Dickran Kouymjian**, "Grigor Marzvanec'i and Armenian Book Illustrations"; earlier treatment of the topic can be found in **Thomas F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck**, editors, *Treasures in Heaven. Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts*, New York: Morgan Library, 1994, pp. 121-2, 187, 190, 201; also **D. Kouymjian**, "Between Amsterdam and Constantinople: The Impact of Printing on Armenian Culture," *Die Kunst der Armenier im östlichen Europa*, **Marina Dmitrieva and Balint Kovacs**, eds., Köln-Weimar-Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2014, pp. 19-26, pls. 1-2, and *idem*, "The Year of the Armenian Book: The 500th Anniversary of Armenian Printing," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 22 (2013), pp. 309-330, *idem*, "Eighteenth Century Printing in Constantinople: The Role of Grigor Marzvanec'i", Proceedings of the 40th Anniversary Conference of the Society of Armenian Studies, Erevan 3-5 October 2014, forthcoming.

¹⁶ **Christina Maranci**, *Medieval Armenian Architecture: Constructions of Race and Nation*, Louvain: Peeters, 2001.

¹⁷ For ceramics, **Garo Kürkman**, *Magic of Clay and Fire. A History of Kütahya Pottery and Potters*, Istanbul: Mathusalem Publications, 2006, pp. 108-115 with reproduction of Ottoman archival documents and their translation; for metalwork *idem*, *Ottoman Silver Marks*, Istanbul: Mathusalem, 1996, pp. 259-289 for Ottoman archival documents and their translation with lists of the names of silver and goldsmith, almost all Armenian; for textiles, **Robert Mantran**, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVII^e siècle*, Paris: Librairie Adrien Maisonneuve, 1962, pp. 419, 451, 482.

what we call the arts of Armenia. The expression 'modern' or 'contemporary' art means more than the paintings of a Saryan or a Gorky or a Carzou, rather it includes thousands of painters, sculptors, and photographers most still alive and producing. It also embraces modern textiles and rug weaving, woodworking, jewelry, ceramics, and other artistic crafts, especially creations of the prodigious artisans of Armenia and Arc'ax, and more than a century of modern Armenian architecture. This latter, the first of the arts as has been suggested above, has been neglected, especially in the diaspora. Perhaps because precisely in the building of Armenian churches, a larger endeavor shared by every community, certainly in the diaspora, and now more and more in former communist lands, the architectural imagination has been impoverished, copying over and again medieval monuments which were guided by certain constructional constraints that have not been operative since at least the era of reinforced concrete and even more innovative construction materials. Perhaps the very failure by art historians to speak openly about the dominance of tradition over innovation has in fact stifled new departures. But this is probably getting away from the subject: Should the *Handbook of Armenia Art* engage in these discussions? If not directly, perhaps there should be a discussion of the history, or the lack thereof, of speculative inquiry into the arts.

Case Study: Epigraphy

Though Armenian epigraphy has been collected in a number of corpora, the *Corpus of Armenian (Stone) Inscriptions* being the most famous¹⁸, and paleography or style of the writing has been analyzed, few specific works are devoted to the treatment of inscriptions on works of art; the exceptions are *xac'k'ars*, a volume devoted to inscribed objects in the National Historical Museum, another to inscribed objects in the Museum of the Forty Martyrs in Aleppo, and some exhibition or collection catalogues of the past decade¹⁹. At first this might seem as a rather tangential aspect of art studies, but in the Armenian experience this is not at all the case. Without repeating the often-discussed practice of leaving colophons in Armenian manuscripts, on which a splendid ana-

¹⁸ **B. N. Arakelyan, S. G. Barkhudaryan and K. G. Ghafadaryan**, *Divan hay vimagrutyan, Corpus Inscriptionum Armenicarum*, 8 vols., Erevan, 1960.

¹⁹ **Evkine Mušelyan**, *Hayeren arjanagrut'eamb ařarkaner* (Objects with Armenian Inscriptions), vol. I of the Catalogues of the State Historical Museum's Collection, Armenian Academy, Erevan, 1964; **Raffi Kortoshian**, *Halepi arjanagrut'unnerə* (The Inscriptions of Aleppo), *Research on Armenian Architecture (RAA)*, vol. 16, Erevan, 2013.

lysis by Anna Sirinian is included the new Philology volume²⁰ it is important to emphasize that this usage was also the norm for nearly every form of Armenian artistic expression. Inscriptions were engraved on metal objects, engravings, and bindings, sewn into textiles, struck on coins, carved on stone and wood, and painted on ceramics; they accompany the earliest Armenian mosaics in Jerusalem and wall paintings and frescoes, such as the recently discovered one in the interior of the seventh-century church at Mren for which a detailed assessment of the art historical value of epigraphy services as the central focus of the forthcoming study of Christina Maranci²¹. One can now also refer to Greenwood's epigraphy article in the Handbook for an in-depth analysis of the use of inscriptions beyond pure philology²².

In the first instance, especially in manuscript colophons, inscriptions provide date, place of execution, name of the patron, scribe, and artist and much more, however, they contain no direct remarks about the style or iconography of the illuminations, yet by means of that data a style or iconography can be dated and ascribed to a town, monastery, or regional school. In that sense epigraphy and paleography are essential tools for the study of Armenian art.

Since the scribal colophon was a near requirement for the copyist, in theory all of the 30,000 plus manuscripts once had them. Statistically, based on a large sampling of published catalogues of Armenian manuscripts, between 57 and 60% are precisely dated²³ and probably another 5 to 10% are attributable to within a few years. By interpolation, one can imagine that 80% of all illuminated manuscripts, perhaps as many as 10,000, have scribal memorials that are indispensable tools for understanding more thoroughly their artistic aspect. Scholars from other traditions have confirmed that no other manuscript tradition used the dated colophon as consistently as the Armenian.

This methodology would also apply to inscriptions on thousands of churches and tens of thousands of *xac'k'ars*. The recent publication of the complete corpus of 667 urban *xac'k'ars* from Jerusalem and New

²⁰ **Anna Sirinian**, "On the Historical and Literary Value of the Colophons in Armenian Manuscripts", *Armenian Philology*, pp. 65-100.

²¹ **Christine Maranci**, "'Holiness Befits Your House' (Ps. 92 [93]: 5): A Preliminary Report on the Apse Inscription at Mren," submitted to the *REArm*.

²² See note 3 above.

²³ **Dickran Kouymjian**, "Dated Armenian Manuscripts as a Statistical Tool for Armenian History", in *Medieval Armenian Culture*, ed. by **Thomas J. Samuelian** and **Michael E. Stone**, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983 [1984], pp. 427-428.

Julfa-Isfahan²⁴, almost all commemorative and of small size embedded in walls, through their inscriptions adds to those already published in the *Corpus* volumes and those published before the recently destroyed cemetery of Julfa on the Arax by Argam Ayvazyan. Sedrak Barxudaryan, who helped direct the earlier series of the *Corpus*, did a primitive form of what we call today data-mining by producing a volume devoted to Armenian sculptors and stonemasons entirely through epigraphy²⁵. Different kinds of what one might call proto-statistical analysis have been undertaken since the mid-twentieth century, with acceleration in the past decade or two. Often they are components of inventories of collections, such as that of the National Historical Museum with its elaborate indexes²⁶. Others have been devoted to inscribed rugs and carpets²⁷, and more recently liturgical metalwork, vestments, and textiles²⁸. In every case such volumes are useful for art historical and statistical analysis only if complete inscriptions are provided. This was not, and to some extent is still not, the case with fancy albums, usually beautifully illustrated and very useful for standard art research on style and iconography, but much less so for the more exacting details of production discussed above. Already thirty years ago statistical analysis of precisely dated manuscripts produced a series of frequency graphs showing the high and low moments of manuscript production over several centuries (see note 23 above). More recent examination of other parameters of this same database of dated manuscripts graphically showed the exact moment within a decade of just when *bolorgir* script replaced *erkat'agir* as the standard manuscript hand, and also precisely when paper replaced parchment as

²⁴ Haroutioun Khatchatrian and Michel Basmadjian, ԽԱՉԿԱՐՆԵՐ *L'art des khatchkars. Les pierres à croix arméniennes d'Isfahan et de Jérusalem*, Paris: Geuthner, 2014.

²⁵ Sedrak Barxudaryan, *Miġnadaryan hay čartarapetner ev k'argorc varpetner* (Medieval Armenian Architects and Stone Masters), Erevan: Armenian Academy, 1963.

²⁶ Mušelyan, *Hayeren arjanagrut'eamb aġarkaner*, see note 19 above.

²⁷ Lucy Der Manuelian and Murray L. Eiland, *Weavers, Merchants and Kings: The Inscribed Rugs of Armenia*, Fort Worth, Texas: Kimbell Art Museum, 1984. The Armenian Rugs Society for years kept a database of inscribed Armenian rugs, but it is unavailable online. On the question, see also Dickran Kouymjian, "Les tapis à inscriptions arméniennes", in Raymond H. Kévorkian and Berdj Achdjian, *Tapis et textiles arméniens*, Marseille: Maison arménienne de la jeunesse et de la culture, 1991, pp. 67-72.

²⁸ *The Catholicosate of Cilicia: History, Treasures, Mission*, Seta Dadoyan, ed., Antelias, Lebanon: Catholicosate of Cilicia, in press (2015), Marielle Martiniani-Reber, "Paramentique et autres textiles", pp. 123-157, Dickran Kouymjian, "Catalogue of the Liturgical Metalwork," pp. 158-295.

the preferred writing surface²⁹. Nevertheless, there is clearly a need to exploit further information that has already been published. What place and what space such research should have within a Handbook of Armenian Art is still a matter for reflection.

Part II. A Glance from the Point of View of the End-User

After preparing this presentation and thinking what use it might have, it occurred to me that one must take a look at the value of such Handbook volumes from a different angle, namely that of the end-user, the person or persons who we expect to consult them. Who is the end-user? Is it a scholar who is not a specialist in Armenian art? Or a student or younger scholar of Armenian art? Or simply an inquisitive but sophisticated intellectual? The *Handbücher der Orientalistik* were intended, very clearly, for scholars who were not themselves Orientalists and for students and younger scholars fresh to the field. Let us assume this is still the case. In most volumes the intent was to present a discipline and its parameters: in our case, Armenian art. What media was it expressed in? What was the geographical extent of its flourishing or practice? Who were its practitioners: its painters, architects, sculptors, metalworkers, and weavers? These are all reasonable questions for someone consulting such a handbook. These were, in part, the underlying questions in the statement of purpose of an earlier Handbook on Oriental art in the gigantic Brill series, *Arab Painting* issued in 2007: I quote, “Arab painting is treated here as a significant artistic corpus in its own right. Rejecting the traditional emphasis on individual paintings, the distinguished contributors to this volume stress the integration of text and image as a more productive theoretical framework”³⁰. To be sure the work is not on the Arab arts but specifically on painting, with a subtitle that serves as an excuse to present a unified work: “*Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*”. Its organization offers some suggestions about how such an art handbook can be assembled. The thirteen essays are divided into four sections, two of which contain nine contributions dealing with specific texts and their illustrations. The long introduction by the editor together with the first and last sections are of interest for the Armenian volume.

²⁹ **Dickran Kouymjian**, “Notes on Armenian Codicology. Part 1: Statistics Based on Surveys of Armenian Manuscripts”, *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter* no. 4 (July 2012), pp. 18-23, and *idem*, “Notes on Armenian Codicology. Part 2. Armenian Palaeography: Dating the Major Scripts”, *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter* no. 6 (July 2013), pp. 22-28.

³⁰ **Anna Contadini**, ed., *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007.

Section one is entitled “Theoretical Issues”, and the second essay by the late Oleg Grabar evokes the same question posed above: “What Does ‘Arab Painting’ Mean?”³¹ Grabar suggests, among other things, that illustrative painting should be seen outside the ethnic constraints of the Arabic text in which it is placed, in a sense denationalized, a theme echoed by Levon Zekiyan in the final essay of the volume on Armenian Philology³². Approaching the thorny problem philosophically, Fr. Zekiyan warns against dogmatism, emphasizing that if national content is regarded *a priori* as an axiom, there is no room for genuine discussion because axioms are not susceptible to proof (p. 536). The final section of Arab Painting (pp. 147-176) is entitled, “The European Connection”, also pertinent to the study of Armenian art and its relationship to neighboring traditions. What artistic currents influenced it directly or indirectly, when and where? And perhaps the more difficult enquiry: what art traditions might have been influenced by it. Finally at the end of the volume on Arab Painting before the detailed index is an introductory Bibliography with a disclaimer, “What follows is designed to serve as a compact introduction to the literature on Arab painting and thereby provide the general scholarly background to the subject matter dealt with in a more specialized way in the present work” (p. 177).

But before putting aside the volume on Arab Painting, one might consider the pertinence of such a venture for Armenian art and Armenian studies. What kind of books will institutional libraries be acquiring in five year's time? What will the end users want to consult in the future? Will they really buy an expensive book? Probably not. Assuming that libraries will continue to buy them, will our end-users consult such a book in a library? This too is doubtful from my own teaching experience. A slightly cheaper eBook format will not much increase the potential sales of such a volume either. Furthermore, Brill's Arab Painting Handbook is currently available in its entirety as a free download from the Internet seven years after its publication. I have no idea if and at what moment Brill allowed this to happen. But it is the trend of the future. The just finished Handbook of Comparative Oriental Manuscripts Studies, issued by COMSt, which will be accessible before the end of 2014 with a strong Armenian component will be free to download on the web, all 600 plus pages of it, plus an impressive bibliography covering studies in all

³¹ **Oleg Grabar**, “What Does ‘Arab Painting’ Mean?” *Arab Painting*, pp. 17-22.

³² **Boghos L. Zekiyan**, “Towards a ‘Discourse on Method’ in Armenian Studies: A Survey of Recent Debates with Special Regard to the Problem of Textual Hermeneutics”, *Armenian Philology*, pp. 532-557.

ten language manuscript traditions included in this five year long project. Those who might wish to own a bound paper copy can pay for a book-on-demand. Additionally, it will be a flexible work to which additions can and will be made, certainly to its bibliography; and through the COMSt *Newsletter*³³, a felicitous by-product of the whole undertaking, the field of Oriental manuscript studies will be kept up-to-date. The entire project is being housed at the University of Hamburg, thus providing it with institutional support. Is this the direction the Association's Armenian Art Handbook should be seriously considering? I for one think so. Thank you.

Տիգրան Գույումճեան

Անդրադարձներ Հայ արուեստը ընդգրկող արևելագիտական ձեռնարկի մը ատրի

2014 թուականին Հայկական Ուսումներու Միջազգային Ընկերակցութիւնը (ՀՈՄԸ/AIEA) հրատարակեց History of Armenian Studies Series խորագիրը կրող մատենաշարի առաջին հատորը՝ նուիրուած՝ Հայ բանասիրութեան, եօթը հատորով շարք մը, որ մաս կը կազմէ Brill հրատարակչական տան կողմէ Handbook of Oriental Studies հեղինակաւոր շարքին:

Հատորներէն մէկը պիտի նուիրուի հայ արուեստին: ՀՈՄԸ գործադիր կոմիտէն խնդրեց, որ յատուկ զեկուցում պատրաստեմ՝ ինչպէս ներկայացնել այս տեսակ հաւաքական ուսումնասիրութիւն մը:

Հայ արուեստի հսկայական տարածքը կ'ընդգրկէ աւելի քան երեք հազար տարիներու պատմութիւն մը, իր մէջ ներառելով նաեւ բազմաթիւ մարզեր: Քննարկուող հիմնական հարցերէն են հետեւեալները – Ինչպէ՞ս սահմանել Հայ արուեստը: Ինչպէ՞ս քննարկել գլխաւոր մարզերը (օրինակ, ճարտարապետութիւնը) եւ մանր արուեստները: Ինչպէ՞ս ընդգրկել արդի եւ ժամանակակից արուեստները կամ ընդգրկել՞ թէ ոչ, եթէ այո՞, ինչպէ՞ս: Ինչպէ՞ս ներկայացնել հայ արուեստը, որ ստեղծուած է սփիւռքի մէջ: Վերջապէս, որո՞ն պէտք է ուղղուի, եւ թէ ինչպէ՞ս պէտք է ապահովել նիւթի մատուցումը՝ մասնագէտներուն եւ նաև անոնց, որ քիչ կամ ոչինչ գաղափար ունին Հայ արուեստին մասին:

³³ All COMSt *Newsletters* are available online at: <http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/COMST/newsletter.html>, viewed 15 October 2014.