

**“The Truest, the Best, and the Most Accurate [ճշմարտագոյնն լաւն եւ
անսխալն]”: Reading Color and Image in a Fifteenth-Century Armenian
Manuscript from Kaffa**

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Abstract

The illustrated fifteenth-century Armenian manuscript of *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* (MS 285, Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem) produced in Crimea belongs to a rich textual tradition. Despite its significance as an early and sumptuously illustrated copy of the *Lives*, however, Jerusalem 285 has received very little attention aside from one monograph published by Nira Stone in 1997. Stone focused on the political context and stylistic elements to explain the genesis and artistic choices of the manuscript. This paper instead uses the accompanying colophon written by the copyist and illustrator, Thaddeus Avraments', to understand the colors and images of Jerusalem 285. It places the visual and textual concerns of Thaddeus within the Armenian image making and viewing tradition, while also exploring further implications for understanding attitudes towards images in the greater medieval world.

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Introduction

This paper concerns an illustrated Armenian version of the *Lives of the Desert Fathers* produced in the fifteenth-century trade center of Genoese Kaffa (present-day Feodosia), a critical commercial port on the Black Sea. The manuscript dates to 1430 and is now held in the collection of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem with the shelfmark 285. An author and scribe by the name of Thaddeus Avraments' (Թադէոս Ավրամէնց ; active 1428-1432) records in its colophons that he wrote and illuminated this copy of the *Lives* during his time at the Armenian Monastery of St. Anthony.¹ Despite the scanty material remains of the Armenian community in Crimea, historical records and surviving manuscripts such as Jerusalem 285 provide a glimpse into the diverse cultural and artistic milieu of fifteenth-century Kaffa.²

¹ This paper uses the Library of Congress transliteration system for all relevant Classical Armenian texts. The author and scribe's name is transliterated into T'atēos, but this paper will use the more common spelling of Thaddeus. No currently known records document Thaddeus's years of birth and death, but remaining colophons from his manuscripts date his active years to 1428-1432, at least. See Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium: Subsidia (Leuven: In aedibus Peeters, 1997).

² Fewer than ten medieval Armenian churches or monasteries remain in present-day Feodosia; for further details on the founding dates and styles of a few of the remaining churches, refer to Ioanna Rapti, "Les Arméniens hors d'Arménie," in *Armenia Sacra: Mémoire Chrétienne Des Arméniens (IVe-XVIIIe Siècle)*, ed. Jannic Durand, Ioanna Rapti, and Dorota Giovannoni (Paris: Somogy, 2007). Ibid., 191-193, lists approximately 115 known manuscripts remaining from the once-thriving scriptoria of the Armenian monasteries in Crimea, primarily in Kaffa and neighboring Solkhat (present-day Saryi Krym). For a descriptive catalogue of Armenian manuscripts from Crimea, refer to Heide Buschhausen, Helmut Buschhausen, and È. M Korkhmazian, *Armenische Buchmalerei und Baukunst der Krim: Tafeln* (Erevan: Institut Alter Manuskripte Matenadaran Mesrop Mashtots, 2009).

This paper focuses on the approach to colors and images that informed the production and, perhaps, the reception of Jerusalem 285. Previous scholarship, published mainly by Nira Stone, posits a direct Byzantine influence behind the origins of the manuscript and the scribe and artist's choice of textual and visual markers. This paper instead uses the colophon, the scribal notes found in the margins or at the end, as its guide to interpreting the manuscript's images, colors, and iconography. Furthermore, it considers the wider implications that the colophon and its attendant viewing practices may have for the greater medieval Christian discourse. More specifically, this study presents the concepts of visuality found in Jerusalem 285 as relevant and important points of consideration for discussions of image theory in Byzantine studies.

A Brief History of the Armenian Community of Crimea

While the Monastery of St. Anthony in present-day Feodosiya no longer exists, remaining civil documents reveal the cosmopolitan nature of the city and its inhabitants.³ Under Genoese rule in the thirteenth-fifteenth centuries, the consulate administration of Kaffa categorized the city's population into five religious communities: Latin (or Roman) Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Armenian

³ In *The Colonies of Genoa in the Black Sea Region: Evolution and Transformation* (New York: Routledge, 2017), Evgeny Khvalkov describes the range of sources available on the subject of Kaffa, and in particular, Venetian and Genoese involvement in Kaffa. Sources include diplomatic, administrative, notarial, public law, as well as institutional documents, etc. In his book, Khvalkov favors in particular the *massariae*, or public records of the accounts of the Commune of Kaffa.

Gregorian, Muslim, and Jewish.⁴ Select *massariae* (or public account books) and notarial deeds also mention a variety of ethnic groups, such as Catalans, Bulgarians, Persians, and the French. The very organization of Kaffa points to the strong presence of Armenians in the city, as attested also in later records: French, Italian, and Russian travel accounts indicate the presence of about twenty to thirty-two Armenian churches in Kaffa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; about a dozen of those structures remained as of 2010.⁵ Michel Thierry's catalogue of Armenian monasteries both in and outside of Greater Armenia lists ten extant monasteries in Crimea.⁶ Of those, Ioanna Rapti specifically mentions two churches, the Church of St. John the Baptist (1348) and the Church of the Archangels (1408), that remain today.⁷

The region of Kaffa was located on the eastern point of the Crimean peninsula's southeastern coast.⁸ The Byzantine Empire controlled this area and much of the Black Sea region through the twelfth century. Then, following the

⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁵ Rapti, op. cit., 284-5; Donabédian. For further details on the number of monasteries and their state of preservation, see "Un Des Premiers Exemples d'hybridation: L'architecture Arménienne de Crimée (XIVe-XVe Siècle)," in *Studies on Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, Series Byzantina (Art of the Armenian Diaspora, Zamosc: The Polish Society of Oriental Art: Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, 2010), 47–67. To date, relatively little information exists on the afterlife and archaeological state of medieval Armenian structures and materials from Kaffa. For diplomatic documents as well as documents detailing civil disputes, see S. P. Karpov, "New Documents on the Relations between the Latins and the Local Populations in the Black Sea Area (1392-1462)." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995): 33–41. I thank Cristelle Baskins for discussing this with me.

⁶ Jean Michel Thierry, *Répertoire Des Monastères Arméniens*, Corpus Christianorum (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1993).

⁷ Rapti, op. cit., 285.

⁸ Khvalkov, op. cit., 5.

first Fall of Constantinople to Crusaders in 1204, the Byzantines lost their dominant position in the Black Sea, leaving an opening for competing powers.⁹ Having allied themselves with the Latins in sacking Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade, the Venetians added to their republic new territories carved from the former Byzantine Empire and gained control over the region. Genoese merchants and other Italian merchants soon began to appear in this area as well. While specific dating of significant Genoese and Pisan settlement in the area remains disputed, a treaty drawn in 1238 between Genoa and Venice regarding trade relations in the Black Sea region indicates increased presence of and conflict between various Italian states.¹⁰

In 1239, with the second Mongol raid, Crimea became part of the Golden Horde.¹¹ Mongol conquest and expansion opened up further trade routes between Europe and Asia, connecting Crimea to the rest of Eurasia. Kaffa reached the height of its prominence as a site of trade and exchange in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries during the *Pax Mongolica*.¹² Italian city states returned with more incentive to vie against one another for control over areas along the Black Sea.¹³ Despite initial violent encounters between the Mongols and the Genoese,

⁹ Ibid., 60.

¹⁰ In Khvalkov, op. cit., 41, he cites Urcunden zur alteren handels—und staatgeschichte der Republik Venedig (Amsterdam, 1964), 341, 343. The use of “Italian” in this context is, of course, anachronistic, but the scholarly literature on this topic frequently categorizes the Pisans, Genoese, and Venetians together under “Italians.”

¹¹ Carlos Cordova, *Crimea and the Black Sea: An Environmental History* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

¹² Khvalkov, op. cit., 59.

¹³ Ibid., 60-3.

the Mongols eventually allowed the latter to trade in the region.¹⁴ The Genoese and Venetians fought throughout the *Pax Mongolica* over control in both the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions. Kaffa—as well as Cilician Armenia—became collateral damage in these conflicts.¹⁵ Though much of the Black Sea area fell under Venetian jurisdiction after the first Fall of Constantinople, Genoese entry to the Black Sea during the *Pax Mongolica* eventually led to the establishment of Kaffa as a Genoese city in the late thirteenth century.¹⁶

Seljuk invasions in Greater Armenia in the eleventh century and the collapse of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia in 1375 led to a massive influx of Armenians to Kaffa. Kaffa continued to occupy a significant position on the Black Sea and between Europe and Asia, making this region, and the Crimea more generally, a crucial nexus on the Silk Route and the many maritime routes that linked Genoa, Venice, the Empire of Trebizond, and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷ By the fifteenth century, more than 300,000 Armenians inhabited the Crimean peninsula, which subsequently acquired the European epithet of “Armenia

¹⁴ Cordova, op. cit., 138. See also George A. Bournoutian, *A Concise History of the Armenian People: From Ancient Times to the Present*, 2nd edition (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Pub, 2002).

¹⁵ Steven A. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese, 958-1528*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

¹⁶ Khvalkov, op. cit., 68. Cordova, op. cit., 139, Ottoman takeover in Crimea ousted the Genoese by the end of fifteenth century, and then the Russian Empire annexed Crimea in 1783; Ibid., 143. See also Michael E. Martin, “The Venetians in the Black Sea: A General Survey,” in *The Eastern Mediterranean Frontier of Latin Christendom*, ed. Jace Stuckey, vol. 6, *The Expansion of Latin Europe, 1000-1500* (Farnham, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014), 63–84.

¹⁷ Khvalkov, op. cit., 68.

Maritima.”¹⁸ Forty Armenian churches and monasteries inhabited Kaffa alone.¹⁹ While little information survives on the details and original site of the Monastery of St. Anthony where Jerusalem 285 was copied and illustrated, the manuscript’s accompanying colophons describe a prospering monastery that had recently been “ornamented...with brethren (*eghbayrk* ‘)...and with a splendid chapel [Arm. *zhamategh*—possibly also definable as an antechamber]” in the metropolis of Kaffa.²⁰ Thus, Nira Stone concludes that the Monastery of St. Anthony was particularly well-known and celebrated for its vibrant scholarly community and flourishing scriptorium.²¹

Materials and Physical Characteristics

The original manuscript of Jerusalem was copied and illustrated on “thick, yellow oriental paper.”²² A parchment page featuring the portrait of an unknown bishop was pasted directly onto the binding. Drypoint ruling and pricking can be seen on the yellow paper. The manuscript contains in total 823 pages organized into 26 chapters. The entire book measures 27 x 18 x 9 cm and comprises 34 gatherings. Several pages have been removed since Thaddeus’s original version and the

¹⁸ Bournoutian, op. cit., 245.

¹⁹ Ibid., 245.

²⁰ See main colophon translated by M.E. Stone for N. Stone, *ibid.*, 186. The closeness in word forms between *zhamategh* and *zhamatun* (ժամատուն), the latter signifying a church antechamber, might suggest that the colophon refers to an auxiliary building rather than a church or chapel.

²¹ N. Stone, op. cit., 8.

²² *Ibid.*, 32, it is unclear what definition of “oriental” Stone specifically refers to; possibilities include China and other East Asian countries on the Silk Route or Persia and its neighboring states.

manuscript was rebound with a new pagination system.²³ Stone notes fading in the colors of the illuminations, which was common amongst Crimean manuscripts because of the chemical makeup of the ink and the relatively low quality of the paper.²⁴

N. Stone characterizes Thaddeus's script as a transitional *bolorgir-notragir* form between the earlier miniscule *bolorgir* originating in the tenth century and the later miniscule *notragir* popular in the seventeenth century. She refers to similar, though not especially frequent, examples of *bolorgir-notragir* seen in the fifteenth century.²⁵ The text is written largely in black ink, excepting the rubricated titles, *nomina sacra* (or abbreviated divine names). Thaddeus also deliberately wrote the names of select fathers in red ink, a point of significance to which I shall return.

The binding of Jerusalem 285 is likely from the nineteenth century. It consists of red leather over cardboard, both of which appear to be more recent than the manuscript's fifteenth-century origins as well as its seventeenth-century renovation period.²⁶ Various additions and changes can be seen in the manuscript itself as well, including the adhesion of a single parchment page to the binding on page six, and the addition of a gathering of four leaves. Page six also includes an

²³ Ibid., 32-33.

²⁴ Ibid., 32.

²⁵ Ibid., N. Stone provides a brief account of this script. For a more detailed description of various scripts found in the Armenian textual tradition and the periods in which they were most commonly used, refer to M. E. Stone, *Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Armenian Studies: Armenian Manuscripts, Textual Studies, and Holy Land* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2006).

²⁶ N. Stone, op. cit., 34, Stone relies on the expertise of D. Kouymjian of Fresno, California for conclusions on the binding dating.

added table of contents written in a different hand. A smaller parchment stub follows the initial gathering.²⁷ On the whole, Jerusalem 285 remains in good condition despite worm damage and evidence of later tampering and restoration that includes the cutting out and adding of pages.

Text of *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*

No clear, single source emerges in Stone's study as a textual model for Jerusalem 285. Thaddeus himself details in his colophon that he "chose the best exemplars and sought after the most correct words...gathered (and) accumulated not a few copies...[and] would take from these most satisfactory manuscripts and copy, having adjusted and perfected the text by constructing the most accurate (version)."²⁸ As Michael Stone notes, this colophon gives us a remarkable sense of the working practice of text editing, as I will explore in a later portion of this paper.

The text of Jerusalem 285 likely derives, however, from a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century Armenian translation of the *Lives of the Desert Fathers*.²⁹ The source of this translation comes from an emended Greek version of the original *Lives* and deviates from preexisting Armenian translations of the earlier fifth-century Greek *Lives*.³⁰ Following the initiation of desert monasticism by Saint Anthony in the late third century, writings such as Athanasius's fourth century

²⁷ Ibid., 33.

²⁸ Refer to main colophon in *ibid.*, 185.

²⁹ Bezalel Narkiss and Alexander Peli, eds., *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem* (Oxford: Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1980).

³⁰ Ibid., 90.

The Life of Antony, Jerome's *Life of Saint Paul the Hermit* from 377 CE, and travel accounts such as the *Historia Monachorum* provided records of the lives and sayings of these Desert Fathers. Both the Lives and the Sayings maintained great popularity in Christian communities in both the western and eastern medieval spheres.³¹ This can be seen in the various iterations copied and translated repeatedly from the early Middle Ages to the present day.³² In addition to St. Anthony's Monastery in Kaffa, various notable monastic communities on Mount Athos and in Egypt, Florence, Pisa, Padua, and Genoa proper also kept the *Lives* and devoted themselves to studying it. Stefanie Solum notes that the first translation of the *Lives* made in Italy was done in the fourteenth century by a Genoese archbishop from Pisa. It was then copied and spread rapidly. The appearance of this translation reflects the growing interest in the desert fathers at this time in the Mediterranean region.³³ It is important to note, however, that amongst the known versions of the *Lives*, Jerusalem 285 appears to be the first extensively illustrated manuscript copy of the text.³⁴

Thaddeus organized the body of his text into two evenly-divided columns, each column containing thirty-seven lines of text.³⁵ In some cases, folios that

³¹ See, for example, Tim Vivian, "St Antony the Great and the Monastery of St Antony at the Red Sea, ca. A.D. 251 to 1232/1233," in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven, CT, 2002).

³² Benedicta Ward, ed., *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks*, Revised edition (London: Penguin Classics, 2003).

³³ See Solum, *Women, Patronage, and Salvation in Renaissance Florence: Lucrezia Tornabuoni and the Chapel of the Medici Palace* (Burlington: Routledge, 2016).

³⁴ N. Stone, op. cit., 3, 36.

³⁵ Ibid., 32, 39.

include with the text an image occupying the full width of the page retain the two-column arrangement, such as in the illustrated page of *Macarius, Markus, and the Blind Cub* on p. 631. In other cases containing such images, the text foregoes the two-column arrangement and also occupies the full width of the page.³⁶

Four colophons from different stages of the life of Jerusalem 285 can be found throughout the manuscript. The main colophon written by Thaddeus at the completion of Jerusalem 285 is on p. 757. Thaddeus also wrote several shorter colophons on p. 77, p. 107, column 1 in 1428, p. 559, column 1 on 30 December 1439, p. 639 on 4 February 1430 and p. 782 on 2 October 1430. In 1443, Ghazar of Crimea wrote a colophon on p. 783 when he transferred the manuscript to Jerusalem. Lastly, “Yovhannēs the Copyist” added his own colophon as well on p. 328 when he repaired Jerusalem 285 in the Church of St. Sargis in Amida (present-day Diyarbakir) in 1615. According to a colophon penned by the same Yovhannēs in a seventeenth-century Gospel book (Vienna Mekhitarist 451), Jerusalem 285 was taken to Amida twice – once for copying in 1593-1599 and once for repairs.³⁷ The copy made in the sixteenth century is currently located in the British Library as BL Add. 27.301.³⁸

Arrangement of Images

³⁶ Ibid., 39.

³⁷ For more on the Armenian presence in Amida, see Richard Hovannisian, *Armenian Tigranakert/Diarbekir and Edessa/Urfa*, UCLA Armenian History and Culture Series. Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces ; 8 6 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2006).

³⁸ N. Stone, op. cit., 35. See also Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *Armenian Manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery* (Baltimore, MD: Walters Art Gallery, 1973).

As mentioned, no earlier copy of the *Lives* contains such an extensive program of illustrations. Jerusalem 285 has approximately sixty full-page, half-page, and quarter-page illustrations. Five hundred smaller illuminations marking individual sections populate the margins or even intermingle with the text itself. The smaller marginalia include narrative scenes and more frequently individual or group bust figures related to the text.³⁹ Column-wide headpieces initiate major text subdivisions; page 15 alone receives a richly decorated headpiece that extends across the width of the full page. This headpiece features the haloed bust of Christ with long hair and a beard (Figure 1).⁴⁰ The larger illustrations include both portraits and narrative scenes.

The manuscript in its present condition begins with the aforementioned illustration of a bishop pasted directly onto the binding.⁴¹ A full-page portrait of St. Anthony constitutes the frontispiece of the manuscript, which may have been the original first page (Figure 2). On occasion, full-length portraits occupy part or the entirety of one of the columns, as can be seen in the depictions of Mary the Egyptian on page 620 (Figure 3) and Euphrosyne on page 690 (Figure 4).

While the majority of the images in Jerusalem 285 take their subject matter from the *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, several additions occur in scenes and figures such as the Paphnutius cycle, and portraits of Simeon the Stylite from Edessa and Hilarion, the founder of Palestinian monasticism and a follower of St. Anthony. Moreover, Thaddeus inserted into this version of the *Lives* two notable

³⁹ N. Stone, op. cit., 32.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 175.

⁴¹ Ibid., 33, 103.

Armenian ecclesiastics: Grigor Narekats‘i (Gregory of Narek) (Figure 5) and Nersēs Shnorhali (the Gracious) (Figure 6) from the tenth-eleventh and twelfth centuries, respectively.⁴² In general, Nira Stone explains the inclusion of these figures with the manuscript’s focus on asceticism and monasticism. All of the above figures enjoyed particularly elevated positions as founders or propagators of monasticism.⁴³ Stone then argues that Thaddeus included the two Armenian figures to highlight the Armenian interest and involvement in the greater monastic and ascetic movement. Narekats‘i (951-1003), who penned the celebrated mystical poems known as the *Book of Lamentation*, sought to revive monasticism in the spirit of early practices in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt.⁴⁴ Stone calls attention to Narekats‘i’s discussion of the “divine light” and the role of prayer in reaching this light. She argues for Narekats‘i’s role in prefiguring the hesychastic movement, which would then motivate the creation of Jerusalem 285. The other Armenian figure, Nersēs Shnorhali (1102-1173), was a famous Armenian catholicos and poet. His poetry and literature contributed to the definition of a distinctive Armenian Christian identity. At the same time, Shnorhali also worked to reconcile the Armenian and Byzantine churches and cultivate church unity.⁴⁵

The depiction of Shnorhali appears in a Garden of Eden scene following two

⁴² Ibid., 153.

⁴³ Ibid., Stone describes the text and iconography of these figures in detail; Hilarion on p. 136, Symeon on p. 142.

⁴⁴ Stone, 153; See also Helen C. Evans, ed., *Armenia: Art, Religion, and Trade in the Middle Ages* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018), 139, on the significance of Narekats‘i’s poetry.

⁴⁵ Rachel Goshgarian, “Greater Armenia and the Medieval World,” in *Armenia: Art, Religion, and Trade in the Middle Ages* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018), 86.

other Edenic episodes that occur in the Paphnutius cycle. Stone interprets Shnorhali's presence as part of this larger series of Edenic scenes that also include episodes from a Greek source.

Chapter One

Previous Scholarship

Surprisingly, little work has been done on Jerusalem 285 except for the important monograph published by Stone. Subsequent to that 1997 publication, Jerusalem 285 is rarely mentioned; those scholars who mention the work typically refer to Stone's as the primary or only resource.⁴⁶ In her own work, too, Stone remarks upon the paucity of resources on this topic; among them Norayr Bogharian's *Grand Catalogue of St. James Manuscripts* (1966), Emma Korkhmazian's *Armenian Miniature Painting of the Crimea* (1978), Arpag Mekhitarian's *Treasures of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem* (1969), Bezalel Narkiss and Michael E. Stone's *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem* (1979), and her own "The Kaffa Manuscript of the Lives of the Desert Fathers" published in *Mediaeval Armenian Culture*, edited by Thomas J. Samuelian and M.E. Stone (1983). The descriptions of Jerusalem 285 in these volumes exceed no more than a few paragraphs in length. For closely-related comparanda and other manuscripts produced in Crimea around the same time, Stone makes reference to Heide and Helmut Buschhausen's 1981 *Armenische Handschriften der*

⁴⁶ For example, see James R. Russell, "The Shrine beneath the Waves," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 51 (March 2007): 136–56.

Mechitharistenbibliothek in Wien, Frederick C. Conybeare's *A Catalogue of the Armenian Manuscripts in the British Museum* (1913) and Sirarpie Der Nersessian's *The Chester Beatty Library: A Catalogue of the Armenian Manuscripts* (1958) and *Armenian Manuscripts in the Walters Art Gallery* (1973). These volumes also focus on providing general information rather than detailed discussion. To build her contextual framework, Stone draws upon scholarship concerning monasticism, Byzantine spirituality, Armenian and Genoese history, and the visual traditions of the Byzantines, Armenians, and Balkan regions.

While Jerusalem 285 still receives very little attention, Stone's 1997 monograph provides valuable information on many aspects of the manuscript, effectively paving the way for additional research. She begins her study by highlighting the significance of Jerusalem 285 for being the first of its kind, an extensively illustrated copy of the *Lives of the Desert Fathers*. Stone devotes Chapter One to the historical and intellectual context in which Jerusalem 285 was made, illustrating for her readers the central and strategic location of Crimea. She also details Crimea's formation by both the Genoese traders who controlled the peninsula and the Byzantine Empire that maintained close ties with the Genoese.⁴⁷ Stone describes the mid to late fifteenth century as a period of flourishing for the Crimean Armenians, a time during which numerous Armenian churches and monasteries were built. In Kaffa, she points to the Monasteries of St. Sargis and

⁴⁷ N. Stone, op. cit., 3-5.

St. Anthony as the two most famous monasteries known for their scholarly activities.⁴⁸

While both Nira and Michael Stone note that Thaddeus explicitly mentions following several different sources, they maintain that Thaddeus had no direct model for the manuscript's illustrations.⁴⁹ Nira Stone includes, in brief list form, a range of manuscripts and fresco paintings in Greek, Latin, and Coptic traditions that depict the desert fathers in order to state their differences from the images found in Thaddeus's *Lives of the Desert Fathers*. Alternatively, she connects the existence of Jerusalem 285 exclusively with Byzantine influences of hesychasm, which she argues engendered an "Armeno-Crimean" interest in the desert fathers. A careful reading of Stone's study in this paper will revisit this long-held position.⁵⁰

For Stone, the subject matter of this manuscript and the generous use of white in the miniatures reflect and attest to the hesychastic movement that swept through Kaffa in the fifteenth century. According to Stone, hesychasm rose to prominence on Mount Athos in the fourteenth century and then slowly spread to

⁴⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 45. M.E. Stone, op. cit., 492-3.

⁵⁰ Recent scholarship has demonstrated the problematic nature of narratives of unidirectional influence. See, for example, Cecily Hilsdale's work on the movement and adaptation of the iconography of *Barlaam and Ioasaph* in Byzantium, "Worldliness in Byzantium and Beyond: Reassessing the Visual Networks of Barlaam and Ioasaph," ed. Christina Normore, *Reassessing the Global Turn in Medieval Art History*, *The Medieval Globe*, 3, no. 2 (2017): 57–96. I thank Cecily Hilsdale for sharing her insights with me. For a rethinking of the integration of "exotic" elements into Byzantine art, see 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).

Kaffa in the fifteenth century. More generally, Stone argues for the existence and characteristics of a distinct “Armeno-Crimean” style that resulted from the transmission of Byzantine and Cilician Armenian ideas.

To explain the conditions that gave rise to a manuscript such as Jerusalem 285, Stone discusses the turbulence in fourteenth-fifteenth century Byzantium. She states that as a result, this time of unrest led to an increase in monasticism starting in the early fourteenth century, as Christians sought security and comfort during this time. Christians retreated in fear of the oncoming Seljuk Turks who continued to carve away at Byzantine territory as the Byzantine ruling powers floundered. Hesychasm began to gain popularity on Mount Athos and spread outwards. Followers found solace in the hesychastic teachings to “live in quiet” and to aim to separate from the world in order to see “the Divine light” and achieve union with God.⁵¹

Stone describes parallel developments in Byzantium and in the Armenian world. She argues that Armenian Christians also turned to monasticism in response to the incoming Turks.⁵² The Armenians along with the Byzantines found in the attitudes and lives of the desert fathers spiritual models who sought peace in the desert far from the turmoil of the political centers. Stone states that while there is no literary evidence of hesychasm in the major Armenian religious and intellectual centers, Armenians must have adopted these ideas because of the widespread nature of this movement. Prior to the spread of the movement to

⁵¹ N. Stone, *op. cit.*, 9-11.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 14.

Kaffa, monasteries and associated universities in Greater Armenia, such as those at Gladzor and Siwnik⁵³, would have also embraced hesychasm in parallel to the Byzantine church.⁵³ Stone then accounts for the century-long delay between the rise of the hesychastic movement on Mount Athos and the subsequent spread to Kaffa with what she considers to be the city's distant location on Byzantium's periphery. In fact, she argues that hesychasm only took hold in Crimea because of the spread of the movement via Crimea to its actual destination in Russia and the Balkan countries.⁵⁴ Noting that as the hesychasts in Byzantium in fact rejected art, Stone argues that the manifestations of hesychastic ideas in art in the Kaffan context took on a unique form. In this case, the Crimean Armenians received the inspiration to illustrate their newfound hesychastic ideas from their Russian and Balkan neighbors.⁵⁵

Following her observations, Stone proposes a new stylistic category for objects such as Jerusalem 285. She acknowledges the preexistent category of the Crimean school, which bears many similarities to Armenian Cilician painting. Like Cilician painting, paintings from the Crimean school are defined by bright colors and dramatic movement. Stone then presents the new category she calls the "Armeno-Crimean" school.⁵⁶ This "Armeno-Crimean" style includes seven main

⁵³ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 19-20.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 18-9. In terms of material from the Russian and Balkan regions, Stone cites works such as Nikodim P. Kondakov's *The Russian Icon* (1927), V. Lazarev's *Mosaics and Frescoes of Ancient Russia, 11th-15th Centuries* (1973), and M. Vasič's "L'hésychasme dans l'église et l'art serbes du moyen âge." *Recueil Th. Uspenskij*, 110-123 (1930).

⁵⁶ Ibid., 20.

characteristics: realistic characterization of figures, simplicity in design and color palette, attempts at perspective, the shifting of the central axis, emphasis of depth, the generous use of white highlights in order to give form to the Divine Light, and the depiction of monastic figures in the spirit of hesychasm.

Stone carefully describes throughout her volume the stylistic and iconographical details of all the portraits and narrative scenes, thoroughly assessing any possible visual sources by means of visual analysis. Stone concludes that Thaddeus had no direct visual exemplar. She highlights specific elements such as the abstraction of figures, shared subject matter, and the use of the color white to demonstrate possible connections between the visual and monastic traditions of the Byzantines and Crimean Armenians.⁵⁷ She argues that tenth-eleventh-century Byzantine manuscripts portend the later emergence of the illustrated *Kaffa Lives*, in spite of the aversion to images that developed in the fourteenth-century Byzantine hesychastic movement. Stone compares the *Lives* to Byzantine hagiography and menologion. For example, she refers the reader to the figures depicted in the tenth-century *Menologion of Basil II* to point to the “abstraction of the body” as an ascetic ideal.⁵⁸ Stone also characterizes the dress of most of the figures as Byzantine in appearance and assesses the depictions of the figures as “iconic,” comparing the painting style with that prescribed in the eighteenth-century Greek painting manual of Dionysius of Fourni. She uses these descriptions to support the argument of a predominantly Byzantine Greek

⁵⁷ Ibid., 24-25.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 43.

influence on the manuscript. As comparanda, Stone brings in monastic scenes from the fifteenth-century frescoes at Campo Santo in Pisa, noting the Byzantine influence found in Pisa and the frescoes' possible relation to the *Kaffa Lives*. Finally, Stone compares the color white seen in Jerusalem 285 with the white used in Byzantine and Russian depictions of the mandorla to show divinity.⁵⁹

For example, Stone cites as illustrative of hesychasm *The Meeting of Paphnutius and Onophrius* (Figure 7). In this scene, Paphnutius Cephalus, a follower of Saint Anthony, goes into the desert to seek out solitary monks and finds the ascetic, Onophrius, who subsisted on well water and fruit from a palm tree for sixty years. The illustration of this scene depicts a clothed Paphnutius, slightly hunched over in deference while standing in front of Onophrius. Onophrius stands, nearly nude, in front of the cave in which he lives. Behind Paphnutius, a lush palm tree bears several large fruits. Onophrius stands in front of the completely black interior of his cave. A stream of water flows from the bottom left corner of the cave. The exterior is covered with broad strokes of white. Stone argues that the white seen here expresses the divine light sought after in hesychastic beliefs, which she construes as proof of the spread of hesychasm from Mount Athos to Crimea. Stone thus views white as a marker of sacred

⁵⁹ Ibid., 24. Stone cites Meyendorff to explain the use of white in Byzantine art, but does not provide specific examples. See also Earnestine Qiu, "Is White Divine? A Reevaluation of the 'Armeno-Crimean' Lives of the Desert Fathers (Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate, MS 285)", presented at the Forty-Fourth Annual Byzantine Studies Conference, San Antonio, TX, 2018.

individuals and locations, thereby arguing for the correlative relationship between white and divinity.⁶⁰

A New Reading of Jerusalem 285

Stone's conclusions give rise to several questions. Considering Crimea's central location and frequent exchanges with the Byzantine Empire, how likely would it have been for the hesychastic movement to take an entire century to reach the Armenian monks in Kaffa? Additionally, if hesychasm only found its place in Kaffa on its way to Russia and the Balkans, how could it have flourished in the latter regions in the early fourteenth century, prior to Stone's claims of hesychasm landing in Kaffa in the fifteenth century? Furthermore, if the hesychastic movement did indeed have as big of an impact on Armenian intellectual centers in Kaffa and beyond as Stone claims, why are there no confirming records among the surviving documents in these centers? It is of course not out of the question that any relevant records may have disappeared over the years given the complete eradication of even the Monastery of St. Anthony itself. Though at the same time,

⁶⁰ Apart from the correlation of white with hesychasm in Jerusalem 285, there is a longstanding tradition of associating white with divinity and purity. Fabio Barry explores the understanding of the color white and its significance in the use of marble in sculpture and architecture. See Fabio Barry, "A Whiter Shade of Pale: Relative and Absolute White in Roman Sculpture and Architecture," in *Revival and Invention: Sculpture through Its Material Histories*, ed. Sébastien Clerbois and Martina Droth (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 31–62. I thank Robert Nelson for pointing me to this article.

ample material evidence exists to support the strong presence of Latin Christian teachings in Armenian Kaffa in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries.⁶¹

Although she does not make mention or use of it, there is in fact record of a Byzantine connection for MS 285. Thaddeus himself mentions in his colophon a Byzantine manuscript that served as his reference. In one specific example, Thaddeus had to sift through multiple sources of the story of Alexios the Pauper. In the end, “it was necessary to bring a copy from the Greeks, by means of a friend.”⁶² This passing remark offers important written testimony of the travel of Byzantine manuscripts to Armenian Crimea while also establishing Thaddeus’s connections beyond the monastery and the Armenian community of Crimea.

My analyses of Jerusalem 285 depart from Stone’s conclusions and visual analyses to rely instead on available primary sources. In addressing the meanings of color in the present manuscript, I call attention to its six colophons. As noted earlier, Stone is right to observe a Byzantine connection in the Kaffa *Lives*; this is in fact mentioned by Thaddeus himself. However, the colophons provide much more information than previously addressed. In fact, the approach to color described in the colophons differs significantly from Stone’s descriptions. Thaddeus’s account gives readers a sense of his understanding of images and his intentions for them.

⁶¹ For Armenian manuscripts produced in Crimea that reflect exchanges with the Latin West, see Evans, *op. cit.*, 164-69. See also Durand et. al., *op. cit.*, 284, for more information on the Franciscan and Dominican missionaries that went along the Eurasian trade routes and established thriving ministries in Crimea.

⁶² “...յուրևաց բերել օրինակ ի ձեռն պարտկամաց...” M.E. Stone for N. Stone, *op. cit.*, 187

First however, a general, if brief, description of Armenian colophons is in order. Colophons appear frequently in Armenian manuscripts and supply readers with valuable information. While not unique to the Armenian tradition, colophons found in Armenian manuscripts often differ from those found in Western manuscripts in terms of length, detail, and content. Shorter colophons closer in length to western colophons frequently occur in the margins of the book, or sometimes in the frame of an illumination. Longer colophons that span several pages can usually be found at the end of the manuscript.⁶³ Possible authors of colophons include copyists, illustrators, commissioners, restorers, binders, and even readers.⁶⁴ The colophons preserve details on the life of a manuscript and its producers and sponsors, as well as the political and economic circumstances surrounding the production process.⁶⁵ A typical Armenian colophon begins with a doxology, followed by a dedicatory element, other personal details, and then, as mentioned earlier, descriptions of the circumstances surrounding the production of the manuscript.⁶⁶ Colophons can also take the form of prose or verse.⁶⁷ Additional logistical details routinely state the date and location of production, the names of the scribes' teachers, and the manuscript's sources or exemplar. Copies

⁶³ Michael E. Stone, "Colophons in Armenian Manuscripts." In M.E. Stone, op. cit., 477–85. For more on Western manuscript traditions and colophons, see Christopher De Hamel, *Making Medieval Manuscripts* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 2018), Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

⁶⁴ M. E. Stone, op. cit., 477

⁶⁵ Ibid., 479. Sylvie L. Merian, "Scriptoria Practices in Greater Armenia." In Evans, op. cit., 190-91.

⁶⁶ M.E. Stone, 479.

⁶⁷ M.E. Stone, 480.

of manuscripts also frequently replicate the colophons of the parent manuscript as well.⁶⁸ Perhaps more interestingly, a colophon can also convey artistic and textual concerns. Condemnations of those who destroy or displace the manuscript, and supplication for those who preserve it, reveal the central role of, and reverence for, books in medieval and early modern Armenian society and spirituality.⁶⁹

As is common in the Armenian manuscript tradition, Thaddeus's colophons serve as invaluable firsthand accounts of his approach to the creation of a textual edition of the *Lives*. Yet Thaddeus also provides instructive commentary that deviates from the standard content of documentary information found in most other Armenian colophons. In writing about text and the use of color and images, he communicates his attitudes towards image-making and the function of images in a monastic community. Therefore, rather than focusing on visual imagery as a marker of hesychastic spirituality, I would now like to explore the written expressions of the scribe as a guide to the imagery found in Jerusalem 285.

Reading Red and Gold

As mentioned above, while Thaddeus's colophons follow a prescribed Armenian scribal practice, they do, however, deviate from the usual colophons. In this rather unusual example, Thaddeus instructs his readers explicitly on the elements to which they must pay attention. In the later portion of the main colophon, following his brief description of the manuscript's decorations and pictures and

⁶⁸ M.E. Stone, 481.

⁶⁹ See M.E. Stone, *op. cit.*, 480.

before making supplications to his readers on page 757 of the manuscript, Thaddeus turns his readers' attention to colors and their functions. Thaddeus takes care to note that he:

highlighted the names of the saints by the use of red ink, first so that they might attract readers; second, so that we might aspire to be like them... (third) so that it would be distinguished from all earthly names, the dominical name was written in red ink and gold; similarly also the names of the saints, of the companies of the blessed were made to resemble it, being written with red ink and gold as it was.⁷⁰

Though this passage refers to the textual portions of the manuscript, Thaddeus nonetheless expresses his concern with and attitude towards color. We can note that red ink and gold, rather than white, is utilized to delineate the holy. This passage offers precious insight into the visual experience of texts. Can we, additionally, read Thaddeus's images in like manner?

Below, I select three images to test this possibility. The first scene comes from a lost commentary of Genesis written by the twelfth-century Armenian theologian Nersēs Shnorhali, (or the Gracious, ca. 1102-1173) (Figure 6).⁷¹ In it, Nersēs records his encounter with six monks who found “the terrible mountain” after six years of searching for the Garden of Eden. The monks circled this

⁷⁰ M.E. Stone for N. Stone, op. cit., 187. See third to last paragraph of English translation by Michael E. Stone included in the appendix. Armenian: Եւ դարձեալ զի եւ զանուանս սրբոց յայտնիչ կարմրագեղով արարի . մի , զի յորդորիչ լիցին կարդացո զացն որք ոչ սիրով , եւ երկրորդ , զի նման նմա լինել ակն ունիմք մեք , բայց նոքա եղեալ իսկ են նրան նմա , որ վասն մեր աղքատացաւ ճոխն եւ Տէրն բոլորից զի որոշեալ են յամ . Անուանց երկրաւորաց , անուն տերունական , կարմրադեղով եւ ոսկով , սոյնպէս եւ սրբոցն անուանք ՝ երանելեացն դասուց , նմանեցան նմա կարմրադեղովն եւ ոսկով որպէս եւ նայն :

⁷¹ Ibid., 82; image found on page 650 of the manuscript.

mountain for six months and eventually found a place where they could smell the “perfumes of Eden.”⁷² An angel comes at this point to tell them that the Garden of Eden was indeed at the top of the mountain, but they were to wait until the Day of Judgment to enter. While five of the monks remained at the mountain, one of them returned to their community to share all that they had seen. Nersēs Shnorhali meets with him and writes down the events of the monks’ encounter at “the terrible mountain.”⁷³

Thaddeus depicts in a half-page illumination the scene at the mountain as well as the meeting between Nersēs and the monk who returns. On the left, a rugged green mass representing “the terrible mountain” takes up more than half of the composition. Strokes of white mark the uneven surfaces of the mountain. The five monks that remain in this mountain perch in the center of the image. Shown only from the waist up, they turn their heads upwards towards the top of the mountain. Unfortunately, direct observation of the image would be necessary to confirm the exact object of their gaze. If the monks are indeed looking above, the image would correspond well to the text, in which the monks can only wait and gaze longingly at the Garden of Eden above. One sees here no sign of the angel who speaks to the monks. Eden, illustrated as a lush and vibrantly colored garden or forest, occupies the top portion of the illumination. A variety of trees and plants bearing green, red, and golden leaves and flowers stand in contrast to the ashen green below, delineated by a clear line between Eden and the mountain. Four blue

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

streams of water flow between the grounds of Eden and the mountain as they pass through four dark openings on the exterior of the mountain.

The edge of the mountain arches to reveal the smaller, right side of the image that features Nersēs's conversation with the sixth monk. As in the other illustrations found in this manuscript, the background consists of a simple blue upper plane and a green lower plane. In the bottom right hand corner, Nersēs sits on a golden seat in a red structure topped with the conical roof frequently found in Armenian churches. The veined pattern on the red interior of the building evokes the appearance of marble. A haloed Nersēs wearing a pointed hat holds a book in his left hand and a staff in his right. He faces the sixth monk, who is also haloed, and dressed in a knee-length robe and sandals.

As mentioned earlier, Stone focuses on the presence of white in the illuminations, reading white as an indicator of divinity. One may note that white is used here to indicate the jagged craggy surfaces of the mountain. More conspicuous, one could argue, are the vibrant shades of red and gold, highlighted by the red text underneath the image. Dark, muted colors dominate the majority of this composition, seen in the background and mountain. In contrast, the paradisiacal image of Eden and the structure which envelops Nersēs are executed in vibrant reds, greens, and golds. Earthly and heavenly spheres are thus divided by the color choices, and the most sacred zones conform to Thaddeus's sacred reds and golds.

The rendering of another paradisiacal scene on page 591 of the manuscript reinforces the deliberate choices made in presenting Eden in a particular color

scheme. This image depicts the meeting of the bishop Paphnutius and four young monks and frames them within rich shades of red and green (Figure 8).

Additionally, each of the figures is nimbed with a bright golden halo.

Paphnutius was a fourth-century monk and follower of St. Anthony; his stories can be found in Greek, Latin, and Coptic sources.⁷⁴ The four scenes illustrated in Jerusalem 285 include the meeting with Timothy (p. 573), the meeting with Onophrius (p. 578), the meeting with the old monk (p. 585), the meeting with the four old monks (p. 587), and the meeting with the four young monks (p. 591), the last of which I will focus on below.

The stories of Paphnutius describe his journeys into the desert to seek out solitary monks.⁷⁵ On one of the days on his journey, he comes upon a cave and rests by it after a day of travel in the desert. A stream of water flows from within the cave, and the landscape surrounding the cave is lush and beautiful. As Paphnutius thinks to himself that the Garden of Eden must look like this tree-filled enclave, four handsome young men dressed in sheep skins appear before him. They spend seven days eating and conversing with Paphnutius.⁷⁶ The young men, John, Adrian, Heraclion, and Philotheus, recount to Paphnutius their own journeys into the desert to pursue the monastic life. On their journey, they encounter a man of God, who took them to an old man living in the present spot. This old man becomes their teacher for a year before his death. In this year, the

⁷⁴ See also Nira Stone, “The *Peregrinatio Paphnutiana* and Jerusalem MS 285,” *Revue Des Études Arméniennes* XVIII (1984).

⁷⁵ N. Stone, *Kaffa Lives*, op. cit., 59, 71.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

young men and the old man ate only fruit from the trees. The young men also tell Paphnutius of an angel who appears each Sunday to give Mass to them.⁷⁷

Wishing to see this Sunday Mass, Paphnutius waits until the following Sunday. On Saturday, strong “perfumes” engulf the area, and the angel of God appears to deliver the Mass. Here, one is of course reminded of the six monks who find the Garden of Eden on the “terrible mountain” by means of the “perfumes of Eden.” The heavenly realms and figures seem to be accompanied and identified by a tangible sensorial experience that involves the olfactory and visual senses. During Mass, the angel puts the communion bread and wine into the mouths of Paphnutius and the young men, and disappears. The angel returns on Sunday to hold Mass again, and then tells Paphnutius to return to Egypt and share his experiences with fellow Christians.⁷⁸

The illustration of the meeting of Paphnutius and the young monks in Jerusalem 285 captures the moment of Paphnutius taking communion from the angel. The manuscript page itself is divided into three sections. The image occupies the center of the page and spans the width of the entire folio; two columns of text fill the top and bottom portions of the page. The angel stands in profile on the left side of the image. His right leg bends slightly to step forward as his left hand holds a golden chalice, and his right hand reaches out to place the communion host in Paphnutius’ mouth. The angel wears purple and blue robes, and his brown wings extend slightly upwards behind his head, which is encircled

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

by a golden halo. A rectangular structure topped by a small cross stands behind the angel and directly beneath his wings. The angel's sandaled feet step on a green ground marked by strokes of white. Though the story tells of the angel coming to Paphnutius and the four young men in the tree-filled desert, the angel occupies a distinctly separate zone. Much of the angel's body occupies a red background dotted with white and gray brush strokes. He steps into the lush forest scene upon his right foot and reaches his hand across a tall green tree. A bearded Paphnutius stands amidst the vegetation with his hands held out and head tilted forward, ready to receive the communion host with his mouth. He stands in the center of the image between the angel and the four young men. The arrangement of the figures further highlights Paphnutius' central position as he stands with his feet at the bottom of the image while both the angel on the left and the four men on the right stand on slightly higher ground. Paphnutius and the four young men also have golden halos around their heads.

Much like the image of Eden in the scene of the six monks described above, the landscape consists of rich foliage abounding with colorful and ripened fruits. The delineation of the angel with a contrasting, red background in the meeting of Paphnutius and the young monks suggests a parallel with the red, church-like structure in which Nersēs sits in the six monks in the Garden of Eden. In compositional terms, both scenes feature a central figure who mediates between a figure of authority and a group of figures in or near the Garden of Eden. In the case of the meeting of Paphnutius and the young monks, the placement of the young monks behind Paphnutius and away from the angel

demonstrates a visual and perhaps spiritual removal from the angel's sphere. In the case of the six monks in the Garden of Eden, the positioning of the six monks in the mountain away from the Garden illustrates the removal of the divine sphere despite its proximity, as enforced by the angel in the written narrative. While one can not claim a directly analogous relationship between the two scenes, the significant parallels in visual rhetoric can be noted. In both cases, red and gold illuminate the areas and attributes associated with the sacred and the paradisiacal.

Beyond depictions of Eden, other illuminations within the manuscript also present images of holiness marked by color scheme. The overarching use of red and gold can be found in the portrayals of other sacred figures, confirming Thaddeus's intentions. Greeting the viewer at the beginning of the book, the frontispiece also corresponds to Thaddeus's scheme (Figure 2). It shows the full-length portrait of Saint Anthony surrounded in gold. Yet it obviously also observes Byzantine convention, as Nira Stone notes.⁷⁹ Here, Anthony stands in the center of the image on a square platform lined with a rich, red cloth or cushion.⁸⁰ His figure measures to nearly the full height of the page. He is haloed and has wrinkles on his forehead and a white beard. He stands fully frontal, but looks at a downward diagonal away from the viewer. A blue robe wraps around Anthony's shoulders over a full-length tunic.⁸¹ The robe reaches his calves and

⁷⁹ Ibid., 106.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 105, Stone describes the platform as a podium with a blue frame and colored flowers painted onto a green background, which is unfortunately impossible to see in the image included here.

⁸¹ Ibid., the tunic appears to be yellow in the image that Stone provides, but she describes the tunic as brown.

opens in the front. A clasp holds together the two edges over his thighs. Anthony wears a blue scarf on his head and a green *analabos*, or liturgical garment that drapes over his shoulders and reaches down to his ankles. Part of his shoes show underneath his long and conspicuously golden tunic. Anthony clasps his hands together on a long, brown staff that stands up to the height of his chest.

A blue trefoil arch framing Anthony rises from two red columns that join with the overall rectangular frame of the portrait. Both the arches and columns contain geometric designs that allude to marble or stone architectural elements, further drawing the eye to these parts of the image. Much of the pigment to the right of Anthony's head has eroded and faded. The background of the portrait is divided into two distinct zones, splitting slightly below the cinched portion of Anthony's blue robe. The upper zone in the present state appears to be gold or brown, and the lower zone is green with tufts of darker green grass distributed throughout. Four beasts or animals occupy the lower zone. On Anthony's right, a yellow lioness approaching Anthony turns to face the viewer as its long red tongue dangles out and touches the platform. A blue bear behind the lioness stands on his hind legs and seems to reach towards the saint with his front paws.⁸² Both of these animals emerge halfway into the portrait from a hidden space beyond the frame. On Anthony's left, a very thin deer also standing on its hind legs walks away from him, but turns its head to look up at the saint. Its antlers

⁸² Once again, it is difficult to see the exact expressions and physiognomy of these animals in the image provided, but Stone mentions that they appear to approach Anthony in friendship. For more on the significance of the presence of animals in the monastic or utopian space, refer to Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

extend past the red column frame and into the space of the yellow manuscript paper. At the same time, a black pig with a long snout emerges from the edge of the page and steps into the grassy space by Anthony's feet. The depiction of this wild pig here is perhaps evocative of the Christianization story of Armenia. In the fourth century, the first Christian king, Tiridates, turns into a wild boar just prior to his conversion to Christianity. Armenia's conversion to Christianity followed.⁸³

While much of Anthony's portrait shows signs of heavy damage and aging, the contrast in colors between the darker greens and blues and the bright reds and gold remain striking. Anthony's floor-length golden robe stands in great contrast to his overlapping green and blue garments. The cushion beneath Anthony's feet appears particularly brightly against the green background. It also stands to reason that the background of the upper zone was at one point a bright golden color. Despite its present state, the page still exhibits a gold sheen. Thus, the adornment of the manuscript in both image and script matches Thaddeus's position on the use of color.⁸⁴ As in the two scenes described above, Thaddeus uses both red and gold as markers of the sacred in the portrait of St. Anthony. In the images of the six monks and Nersēs, Paphnutius and the young monks, and St.

⁸³ According to the fifth-century Armenian historical text, *History of the Armenians*, King Tiridates turns into a wild boar after killing the Christian nun Hripsime and her companions. Tiridates eventually sends for Saint Gregory the Illuminator, who changes Tiridates back to his human form, and Tiridates and his people convert to Christianity. See Evans, *op. cit.*, 30 and Christina Maranci. *The Art of Armenia: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, for more on the story of Tiridates and the Christianization of Armenia.

⁸⁴ M543 in the Vienna Mekhitarist Library, writings of Nersēs the Gracious, illuminated in St Anthony's Monastery in Kaffa in 1432, contains a series of figures nimbed with gold and red haloes, see Buschhausen, *op. cit.*, 75-79.

Anthony, red is used to fill the sacred spaces occupied by Nersēs and the angel who gives Paphnutius communion, and draw attention to the architectural and furnishing elements which frame and support St. Anthony. In the case of the narrative scenes, the red in the images is further highlighted by the red text below or around the images, tying together sacred text and sacred image. Gold then colors and draws attention to the figures' halos, the seat on which Nersēs sits to receive news about the finding of Eden, parts of the forest of Eden itself, the golden chalice for communion wine, and the upper zone surrounding St. Anthony, the very saint after whom the monastery is named. Spaces and elements glittering with gold function as signs and vessels that embellish and hold the divine.

Chapter Two

Reading and Community: Text and Image in the Armenian Tradition

As discussed earlier, Thaddeus's colophon provides valuable information for understanding the approach to text and images within an Armenian monastery in Crimea. Thaddeus describes his manuscript, in various ways, as an object that "can illuminate" (լ ուսաւորել) and one which contains "luminous" (լուսաւոր) or "light-bringing" words.⁸⁵ Furthermore, Thaddeus anthropomorphizes the manuscript as "a custodian father," (մխիթարիչ), "parental compassion" (գուրթ ծնողական) and "faithful counsel" (խրատ անխարդախ). One finds in these short passages a great respect for the manuscript and its contents. For Thaddeus, the words of instruction copied in his

⁸⁵ M. E. for N. Stone, op. cit., 185.

manuscript have the ability to interact actively with readers. He writes in the beginning of his main colophon, a few lines after the doxology, that “the luminous words of their instruction...[can] illuminate, restore and vivify. Furthermore they are equally admonishers, reproachers and revealers to those who do not go uprightly.”⁸⁶ In the absence of the desert fathers themselves, their words taken on particular power as instruments of instruction.

Thaddeus clearly displays his reverence for both the written language and the process of copying and reading a sacred text. Immediately following the opening doxology of the colophon, Thaddeus relates, “I already had desired greatly for a long time to copy, to assemble and to store up the holy lives of the blessed and the wholly happy ones and the wonders of the extraordinary incorporeal ones.”⁸⁷ After describing his love for the words of the fathers, as excerpted above, Thaddeus describes his process, as he “...began the work with fervent love and with hope in Him who gives plenteously to all and does not insult I am now about to complete the work, but with great suffering and toil.”⁸⁸ Thus, as Thaddeus makes clear, the task of copying such a manuscript requires

⁸⁶ Ibid. Armenian: Եւ զբանս լուսաւորս հոգեւորական խրատու լոցա ...լուսաւորել խորոզել եւ կենսագործել : Եւ զի յանդիմանիչ եւս է եւ կշտամբիչ , եւ յայտնիչ անուղայ գնացելոց :

⁸⁷ Ibid. Armenian: Չոր ի հերուն հետե ցանկացեալ կարօտանայի տենչմամբ մեծաւ , գրել ժողովել ամբարել գերանելեացն եւ զամեներջանկացն վարս սուրբս եւ գերաշ խարհիկ անմարմնոց նմանս :

⁸⁸ Ibid. Armenian: Եւ արդ այսպէս սկսայ զսա ջերմեանդն սիրով , եւ յուսով առ այն , որ տայն ամենայնի առատապէս եւ ոչ նախատէ . հասուցանել յաւարտ սորա : Այլ յոյժ տառապանօք եւ աշխատութեամբ [...]

wholehearted devotion. In this, Thaddeus is not unique in his outlook: his careful approach to all aspects of writing, from the work process to the appearance and meaning of the letters on the page, places him within a longer tradition within Armenian literature. The very makeup of the text, beginning with the letters which constitute each word, occupies a prominent position in the Armenian textual and religious tradition. I will return to this point below.

Despite the inherent significance of the text, however, Thaddeus also takes into consideration those who may not read with ease or pleasure. He explains in his colophon his method of inviting readers to the page with colors and images. After describing in his main colophon the physical, political, and financial conditions of the monastery around the time of the manuscript's completion, Thaddeus returns to writing about the manuscript itself. He explains his thought and working process, writing that he “decorated” the manuscript so that “those who grow easily tired to listen...participate in the companies of the blessed by reading and considering (it).”⁸⁹ In so doing, Thaddeus does not deprive those who choose to look at the images, or need their enticement, from a spiritual experience along with the rest of the Christian community. The act of reading a manuscript, Thaddeus makes clear, goes beyond an absorption of verbal knowledge. Even by setting eyes on the manuscript alone, the reader becomes part of “the companies of the blessed.”⁹⁰ Ultimately, for Thaddeus, interaction with the manuscript by

⁸⁹ Ibid., 187. Armenian: Իսկ ձանձրացկոսացն լսել զսա , առիթ կամելով լինել `ել սոցա հազորդի ընդ երջանկացն զասուց , կարդալով եւ ի միտ առնելով [...]

⁹⁰ Ibid.

means of visual contact on any level grants the reader the opportunity to draw close to the divine.

In this context, we may return to the important theologian, mystical poet, and monk, Grigor Narekats'i, who is represented in a standalone portrait on p.773 of the *Lives*. Narekats'i wrote extensively on immersive devotional experiences that allowed for intimacy with God. Narekats'i's work conveys his intense desire to experience God on both a physical and sensorial level.⁹¹ For example, he provides in the *Book of Lamentations* a noteworthy description of his encounter with the Eucharist. In this text, Narekats'i writes about the power of vision, and the special character of a visual encounter with the divine. In partaking in the Eucharist, Narekats'i says to God, "You emboldened my terrestrial eyes [to look] at You... You did not obscure the vision of my eyes in Your signification."⁹² Vision thus plays a crucial role in the poet's understanding and conceptualization of the Eucharist; the most intimate and multisensory rite is described by the poet as direct and obscured sight. Thaddeus focuses not on the Eucharist but on reading and looking as intimate encounters with God. Yet for both Thaddeus and Narekats'i, approaching the sacred involves the activation or even transformation of one's visual senses.

⁹¹ See Sergio La Porta, "The Liturgical Imagination of Medieval Armenian Monasticism," in *Worship Traditions in Armenia and the Neighboring Christian East: An International Symposium in Honor of the 40th Anniversary of St. Nerses Armenian Seminary*, Avant 3 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006).

⁹² Ibid., 197.

How does one who draws near to God through the Eucharist also join the “company of the blessed” through the viewing of a manuscript? As mentioned above, Thaddeus’s work expresses belief in the sanctity of Armenian text, a belief which conceivably dates as early as the fifth century, when the Armenian alphabet was invented by the theologian and linguist Saint Mesrop Mashtots. A commentary written centuries later by the famed monastic and scholar, Gregory of Tat‘ev (Grigor Tat‘evats‘i; 1346-1409/10), points to the eminent and sacred status of the alphabet in the Armenian tradition. Tat‘evats‘i’s commentary contains an entire section devoted to the first letter of the Armenian alphabet, Ա [A]. He declares that the entire Armenian alphabet was a gift from God.⁹³ Such reverence for the Armenian alphabet and text works in tandem with Armenian beliefs surrounding Christian texts. The Christian belief that “all scripture is God-breathed” is quite literally expressed through the Armenian word for the Bible, Astuatsashunch‘/Աստուածաշունչ, or breath of God.⁹⁴ In the case of the Armenian alphabet and text, the divine experience thus occurs as soon as the words are written.

Thus, even prior to reading, the process of copying and illuminating a manuscript was itself considered an act that drew the monk closer to the divine.⁹⁵ Sergio La Porta’s close reading of Tat‘evats‘i’s commentary astutely observes the transcendent nature of ‘seeing’ and ‘knowing’ God, posited by Tat‘evats‘i, whereby knowledge and intellectual engagement can lead to a physical experience

⁹³ Ibid., 200.

⁹⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16

⁹⁵ La Porta, *op. cit.*, 199.

of the divine.⁹⁶ As La Porta discusses, the goal of such a physical and intimate experience extends to all aspects of monastic life, particularly the task of manuscript production, which itself plays a central role in monastic existence. More specifically, Tat‘evats‘i argues that sacred meaning can be ascribed to the act of writing and the very page on which the monks wrote and painted. He describes the page as the space on which the divinely given Armenian letter and word have descended. He uses the Armenian word for “page” (ēj/Էջ) to evoke its homonym, “descent.” This homonym in turn evokes mankind’s descent from Eden to earth, God’s descent to earth, Christ’s ascent into heaven, and Christ’s return and descent to earth to judge mankind. The act of writing, then, mimics and simulates God’s descent as *Logos* into the womb, and Christ’s communication with mankind.⁹⁷ Perhaps as the page can be read as the place of God’s descent and Christ’s ascent, the pages of Thaddeus’s manuscript can also function as a space in which one partakes in union with the divine and with a holy community. The divine experience, initiated by the copyist, is then passed on to the reader, who likewise “participates in the companies of the blessed.”

A richly decorated copy of Tat‘evats‘i’s “Commentary on the Psalms,” produced in Kaffa in 1449 provides further and contemporary proof of the impact of Gregory’s teachings in the region.⁹⁸ In a full-page miniature on folio 14 of the manuscript, Tat‘evats‘i sits in the center, surrounded by a group of much smaller

⁹⁶ La Porta, *Ibid.*, 198-9.

⁹⁷ Refer to *ibid.*, 199-200 for La Porta’s nuanced interpretation of Tat‘evats‘i’s commentary.

⁹⁸ MS 1203 from the “Matenadaran.”

students (Figure 9). Tat‘evats‘i wears a brown cloak over a long, golden robe reminiscent of Anthony’s robe seen in the frontispiece of Jerusalem 285. A golden halo surrounds Tat‘evats‘i’s head, which is covered by a pointed *vardapet*’s habit. Tat‘evats‘i’s halo would completely blend into the equally bright golden background if not for the circular pattern lining the halo. The gold background then contrasts sharply with the red-colored roofs of the structures located behind Tat‘evats‘i. Additionally, three bust figures hover directly above Gregory’s head. The Virgin and Child bust in the center stands prominently against a bright red medallion background. The prominent use of red and gold in this context may suggest a larger artistic convention to which Thaddeus subscribed. After all, Jerusalem 285 and MS 1203, produced within twenty years of each other, both come from the Armenian Kaffa milieu. They both illustrate themes of monastic learning and place utmost importance on the holiness of ascetic teachers. Perhaps the shared context also evidences shared visual conventions.⁹⁹ Perhaps, then, Nira Stone is correct to approach an “Armeno-Crimean” style insofar as identifying the existence of a shared regional convention. While the differences in formal stylistic elements between Jerusalem 285 and MS 1203 may not fit within Stone’s assessment of an overarching style, the prioritizing of colors could point to shared theological concerns and ideas about visuality.

⁹⁹ Durand et al., op. cit., 291, Ioanna Rapti notes the possible inspiration of Jerusalem 285 for this manuscript page.

Pleasure, Imagery, and the Position of Thaddeus within the Armenian-Language Discourse on Images

Thaddeus's instructions become all the more meaningful for engaging with a preexisting conversation on visuality, and reading and viewing text. Yet Thaddeus himself adds to this conversation in significant ways. It is important to note that Jerusalem 285 presents a rare case in which the author and illustrator provides explicit guidance to understanding the manuscript's text and images.¹⁰⁰ While Thaddeus explicitly privileges text over image, his lengthy explanations and directions for understanding the function of Jerusalem 285's illuminations clearly indicate a marked concern with images. Beginning with the motivations behind including such rich illustrations, Thaddeus describes in his main colophon the methods he uses to entice those who do not "read it with fervent love (jērmērandn sirov/ջերմեռանդն սիրով)."¹⁰¹ This follows Thaddeus's description of his own engagement with the manuscript, as he tells his reader towards the beginning that he "began the work with fervent love."¹⁰² Thaddeus joins the desert fathers in enjoining his readers to orient themselves towards discipline and devotion.

As mentioned earlier, Thaddeus expresses his hope for easily exhausted readers of the manuscript. Furthermore, he explains, "wishing there to be a reason for those who grow easily tired to listen and for them to participate in the companies of the blessed by reading and considering (it), I decorated it with

¹⁰⁰ I thank Christina Maranci for discussing this with me.

¹⁰¹ N. Stone, *op. cit.*, 187.

¹⁰² See Appendix, paragraph 3 in Michael E. Stone translation.

portraits and golden flowers so that at least by love of the brilliance of decorations and the pictures they might undertake to read it.”¹⁰³ As we can observe from the illuminations, Thaddeus uses eye-catching colors and images to appeal directly to the viewer’s aesthetic sensibilities in order to attract his readers. Thaddeus also instructs his readers on which textual content is pleasing. He explains, “at the end of every chapter, the red cross-head *yi* in the lower margin was copied from a different exemplar; but the red signs and the brown, thickheaded mark placed in the side margins are useful and helpful and notable and I put a sign in so as to be able to find the most pleasing things quickly.”¹⁰⁴ Here, it is not enough merely to read; the reader must also turn his attention first to that which is “most pleasing”, as dictated by Thaddeus’s markings. The pleasing nature of a text or image dictates on some level the importance and hierarchy of the content: Thaddeus expects his reader not only to comprehend the words and images, but also to derive enjoyment from them.

It is noteworthy, in this context, that his “most pleasing” is literally rendered in the text as “best tasting” (ախորժակագլխսսն), using the root

¹⁰³ Ibid. Armenian: Իսկ ձանձրացկոսացն լսել զսա , առիթ կամելով լինել `եւ նոցա հագորդի ընդ երջանկացն զասուց , կարդալով եւ ի միտ առնելով , զարդարեցի կենդանագիր պատկերոք եւ ձաղկօք ոսկով , զի գոնէ ի սիրոյ պայծառութեան ծաղկանց եւ պատկերաց `կարդալ ձեռնարկեսցեն :

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Armenian: Արդ յամ . Գլխոյն վերջքն որ կարմիր յի խաչագլուխ կայ ի լուսանցքն ներքին `այն յայլ գրոց օրինակեալ է : Իսկ ի կողման լուսանցին կարմիր նշան եւ թուխ կռագլուխ խաղ բազմեալն `այն պիտանի եւ օգտակար նշանաւոր բանք են , եւ եղի նշան , առ ի փոյթ զտանել զայնպիսի ախորժակոյնսն .

word *ախորժակ* , which in its primary definition refers to “appetite” and “taste.” This gustatory theme is found elsewhere in his colophons: in describing the motivation behind the creation of this manuscript, Thaddeus describes the “luminous words of [the fathers’] instruction, which are sweeter to the palate of those who lovingly consume them than honeycomb or resin.” Thaddeus engages his reader with ample information on how they should respond to the book. As he gives the reader the finely produced manuscript, he also teaches them to read it, calling attention to senses of sight and taste.

As noted above, Thaddeus’s connection of the reading of a manuscript with the sensorial experience places him within a fascinating and also robust Armenian tradition of image defense. In order better to understand Thaddeus’s context, I will now make an excursus to discuss image theory in medieval and early modern Armenia. In her 1946 article, “Image Worship in Armenia and Its Opponents,” Sirarpie der Nersessian conducts an overall survey of image worship in Armenia and organizes the progression of image veneration into three phases of Armenian iconoclasm.¹⁰⁵ Her study provides an important diachronic perspective on attitudes towards images in Armenia. Through an examination of Der Nersessian’s work, which, though extensive, only addresses material up to the thirteenth century, this paper hopes to intervene with an early modern perspective that incorporates the work of Thaddeus.

¹⁰⁵ Sirarpie Der Nersessian, “Image Worship in Armenia and Its Opponents,” *Armenian Quarterly* 1 (1946): 67–81.

Der Nersessian begins her periodization of image worship with what she considers to be the first phase of iconoclasm. She examines the crucial early seventh-century treatise, “Concerning the Iconoclasts,” attributed to the vardapet Vrt‘anes K‘ert‘ogh. This text documents an early iconoclastic controversy in the Armenian church. It is noteworthy that this conflict preceded the more thoroughly studied Byzantine iconoclastic controversies that took place in the eighth to ninth centuries.¹⁰⁶ Following her own translation and annotation of the Vrt‘anes in 1944, Sirarpie Der Nersessian contextualizes the treatise within the overall context of image worship and iconoclastic disputes in Armenia.¹⁰⁷ I will explore Vrt‘anes’s text in further detail below. In addition to Vrt‘anes’s text, Der Nersessian also finds evidence of the first iconoclastic phase in the writings of vardapet John Mayragometsi and Catholicos John of Odsun.¹⁰⁸ A letter written around 682-3 from Mayragometsi to David, the bishop of Albania, speaks of three priests calling for the destruction of images painted in churches.¹⁰⁹ While the Armenian church managed to subdue and contain much of this iconoclastic movement, a group known as the Paulicians took up this cause again later on in the eighth century.¹¹⁰

In his treatise, “Against the Paulicians,” John of Odsun rails against the earlier iconoclastic “heretics” entangled with the Armenians and Albanians, as

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 69.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., see also Sirarpie Der Nersessian, “Une Apologie Des Images Du Septieme Siecle,” *Byzantion* 17 (1944): 58–87, and the *History of the Albanians*, Moses Kaghankatvatsi (Tiflis, 1912).

¹¹⁰ Der Nersessian, “Image worship,” op. cit., 71.

well as the Paulicians who later condemned images and crosses.¹¹¹ Standing firmly in support of the use of images in the church, John of Odsun argues that God became man in the incarnation, allowing humans to visualize and worship the human form of Christ.¹¹² At the same time, like Vrt‘anes who distinguishes between the powerful images of the Christian faith and the images of heathens, John of Odsun distinguishes between divine matter and ordinary matter. He specifies that “when the churches, altars, crosses, and images are anointed with oil, we believe that divine power enters into them. They are thus distinguished from other, similar matter, just as we ourselves are distinguished from those who wrongly believe that matter is divine.”¹¹³

A recent study by Christina Maranci examines the consecration rites for such objects, as recorded in the *Mayr Mashtots*‘, or the *Great Ritual Book*.¹¹⁴ In particular, Maranci focuses on the consecration rite of the painted church to bring to light attitudes towards images. She engages with Der Nersessian’s article, as well as previous studies by Ioanna Rapti and Yakob K‘ēosyēan to frame an understanding of the consecrated church. Maranci places the church and its paintings within the larger context of image worship and devotional practices in relation to crosses and images while also urging readers to consider the ways in which the *Mashtots*‘ may have shaped image devotion. As described above, John of Odsun stresses the difference between the blessed and anointed cross and the

¹¹¹ Ibid., 70-71.

¹¹² Ibid., 72.

¹¹³ See John of Odsun, *Complete Works* (Venice, 1833), p. 43, cited in *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Christina Maranci, “‘Open My Eyes So That I May See’: Some Art Historical Remarks about the *Consecration of a Painted Church*, 2019.

profane matter of an unconsecrated cross. On the other hand, images as described in the *Mashtots* function as memorials and not as subjects of worship.¹¹⁵ Maranci also carefully highlights the language in Psalm 118, which is recited during the rite and illustrative of the understanding of vision. Read in the context of the consecration of the painted church, supplications for God to guide the believer's eyes and keep them on God's laws find particular resonance in the visual depictions of Christ and his saints in the church.¹¹⁶

Returning to the general chronological development of image worship outlined by Der Nersessian, the issues raised by John of Odsun continued to evolve. Der Nersessian notes a shift in focus in image making, concluding that Christian art flourished after the end of the first period of iconoclasm in Armenia and after the toppling of Abbasid rule in the ninth century.¹¹⁷ She cites many examples of figural sculpture and painting, and images in general, in the form of images on the altar, wall paintings, and crosses. There existed also several miraculous images, such as a portrait of the Virgin at Hagiats Vank' and a wooden relief of the Descent from the Cross at Echmiadzin.¹¹⁸ With the presence of these various types of images, Der Nersessian notes that the Armenian church still favored having only one picture or cross over the altar.¹¹⁹ A council convened in Ani to depose the Catholicos Vahan in 969 for bringing into the church images

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁷ Der Nersessian, "Image worship," op. cit., 73.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 73-74.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 74.

and icons from the Georgians and the Greeks.¹²⁰ Der Nersessian argues that the practice of having one picture or cross over the altar does not in fact demonstrate the prevalence of iconoclastic tendencies in Armenia, but points to a more restrained use of images, in comparison to the Georgians or Greeks.¹²¹ She concludes that the limited use of images in the church is actually an assertion of the Armenian stance against the expression of Chalcedonian beliefs displayed by the Georgians and Greeks. In this case, the catholicos' sin lay in his alignment with the Chalcedonian churches of the Greeks and Georgians. Der Nersessian dismisses this event as a false case of iconoclasm.¹²²

The third phase of iconoclasm that Der Nersessian presents takes place in the late ninth to eleventh centuries and relates to the T'ondraketsis, another heretical Christian sect that had much in common with the Paulicians in terms of theological belief.¹²³ Much like the Paulicians, the T'ondraketsis also condemned crosses as matter that should not be worshiped. The Pahlavuni prince, Gregory Magistros, responded directly to this issue by urging iconoclasts to honor the cross and pictures of saints, remembering the suffering of Christ and his saints.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Ibid., 74-75. The Council of Chalcedon held in 451 is generally cited to mark the beginning of the division between the miaphysite Armenian Church and the Chalcedonian Byzantine Greek and Georgian churches. For more on the Council of Chalcedon, see for example, Sarah Coakley, "What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian 'Definition,'" in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 143-63.

¹²¹ Der Nersessian, "Image worship", op. cit., 74-75.

¹²² Ibid., 75.

¹²³ Ibid., 76.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 76.

On the other hand, while also supportive of devotion to images, the vardapet John Sarkavag, abbot of Haghbat (late-eleventh century) writes to establish a more limited and regulated form of image worship.¹²⁵ He clearly delineates the types of worship appropriate before the different images and relics. The most important and most exclusive type, *proskynesis*, or the act of prostrating oneself, was reserved only for God. Acceptable representations of God took specific forms, including the cross, painted images of Christ in churches, the Virgin portrait at Hogiats Vank‘, and the image of Edessa, the imprinted image of Christ given by Christ himself to the Syrian King Abgar.¹²⁶ In worshiping these representations, the faithful must also direct their honor appropriately. One does not honor the cross for its materiality, but for the fact that Christ died on it. These concerns about forms and objects of worship continue on through the eleventh century.

In the twelfth century, Nersēs the Gracious, (painted on page 650 of Jerusalem 285) as described above, also writes on the distinctions among the types of worship. He criticizes individuals that revile images, and declares, “we, who have the rank of an archbishop, we accept them; we bow down before the image of our Saviour; we respect the images of all the saints, each one according to his rank; we represent them in our churches and on our sacred vestments.”¹²⁷ Additionally, Nersēs also writes about the honor that must be accorded to the cross. He describes the cross as the visible vehicle through which the faithful can

¹²⁵ Ibid., 76-77.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 77.

¹²⁷ Saint Nerses the Gracious, *Encyclical Letters* (Jerusalem 1871), p. 98, cited in *ibid.*, 78.

worship the invisible God. As believers offer their *proskynesis* to the cross, Christ receives the honor and responds to his followers.¹²⁸ At the same time, Nersēs states very clearly that the honored cross must have undergone anointment, which changes a cross of mere matter to one which has been yoked to the power of God.¹²⁹ In tracing the arguments surrounding the worship and representations of the divine, Der Nersessian concludes that the main conflict in the Armenian Church centered not around the validity of image-worship, but the worship of crosses.¹³⁰ The official stance of the Armenian Church consistently supported the use of images, though with more moderation in comparison to the Greeks and Georgians. Unlike the two Chalcedonian churches whose main representation of the divine consisted of painted images, the Armenians preferred the cross and used this practice as a point of differentiation.¹³¹

Ioanna Rapti's more recent study from 2009 more or less follows Der Nersessian's conclusions. Rapti outlines in her study the importance of the book and the cross in the early medieval Armenian tradition and then the simultaneous use of figural and aniconic images through the later periods in Cilician Armenia (1199-1375) and under Georgian rule.¹³² She concludes that the persistent use of

¹²⁸ Ibid., 78.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 78-79.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 80.

¹³¹ Ibid., 80. Der Nersessian cites Mekhit'ar Gosh who wrote, "the Greeks and the Georgians honored the images more; the Armenians, the cross, Archbishop G. Hovsep'ian, *The "Amenap'rkitch" of Havuts T'ar*, p. 44.

¹³² Ioanna Rapti, "Le Statut Des Images Dans l'art et Le Culte Armeniens," in *L'aniconisme Dans l'art Religieux Byzantin: Actes Du Colloque de Geneve (1-3 Octobre 2009)* (Geneva, 2009), 59–74. see Maranci, "Open my eyes," op. cit., 92-124, for more on the Armenian kingdom in Cilicia.

various forms of visual representation do not necessarily have a direct correlation to iconoclastic disputes of the Byzantine Empire.¹³³ As N. Stone posits a direct Byzantine influence in the genesis of Jerusalem 285, Rapti's study provides an interesting perspective.

Additionally, following Der Nersessian's translation and commentary on Vrt'anes's text as well as her summary of iconoclasm in Armenia, Thomas Mathews' study in 2008 focuses on engaging Vrt'anes with theologians outside of Armenia.¹³⁴ Mathews remarks that despite Der Nersessian's French translation, Vrt'anes's "Concerning Iconoclasts" still has not received adequate attention from scholars of icons and iconoclasm in the greater medieval world. Mathews then conducts thorough readings of Vrt'anes's treatise in direct relation to two Greek texts. The seventh-century "Apology against the Jews" by Leontius of Cyprus, contemporary to Vrt'anes, defends the use of images by citing the role of the Incarnation. In response to the Jewish argument against the divine taking on sinful human flesh and entering the world through a human mother, Leontius declares that Christ only made God's creation "more pure and more holy."¹³⁵ In the same vein, icons and the matter which comprises icons also underwent sanctification as a result of Christ entering into the world. Mathews observes that this important point serves as Vrt'anes's starting point. As icons and the matter which make up

¹³³ Rapti, "Le Statut", op. cit., 73.

¹³⁴ Thomas F. Mathews, "Vrt'anēs K'ert'oł and the Early Theology of Images," *Revue Des Études Arméniennes* 31 (2009 2008): 101–26.

¹³⁵ Vincent Déroche, "L'Apologie Contre Les Juifs de Léontius de Néapolis," *Travaux et Memoires* 12 (1994): 45–104, cited in *ibid.*, 106.

icons have been sanctified by Christ entering the world, can the same be said of the materials which make up manuscripts and the images included within?

A century after Vrtʿanes and Leontius, John of Damascus writes the famous “Three Orations on the Divine Images” in 730 at the height of the Byzantine iconoclastic controversy following the Byzantine edict in 726-27 that banned icons.¹³⁶ Mathews remarks that Vincent Déroche has shown the ways in which John of Damascus includes and credits Leontius in many of his arguments. Looking towards Leontius’s contemporary, Vrtʿanes, Mathews finds similarities between *Concerning Iconoclasm* and “Three Orations” that do not appear in Leontius’s text. Specifically, he points out the parallel structures used in structuring their arguments. Both Vrtʿanes and Leontius proceed in their texts by addressing images in Moses’s teachings, patristic sources, and the validity of established church practices. Furthermore, Vrtʿanes and Leontius both argue that devotion to icons continues a scripturally sound apostolic tradition whereas iconoclasts deviate from tradition.¹³⁷ Mathews states that while John of Damascus most likely did not know Armenian and did not read Vrtʿanes’s text, he may have learned of Vrtʿanes’s arguments while living and working in Jerusalem, which also housed an Armenian community.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Mathews, op. cit., 119. See John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, trans. Andrew Louth (Crestwood, N.Y: St Vladimirs Seminary Pr, 2003). See also Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680-850: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹³⁷ Mathews, op. cit., 121.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

In his article, Mathews effectively demonstrates the common concerns expressed in the defenses of image devotion by Vrt‘anes, Leontius, and John of Damascus. Clearly, the status and nature of images occupied a significant place in the religious discourse of the Mediterranean region and the Caucasus for a considerable amount of time. Yet, a detailed and instructive text such as Thaddeus’s colophon offers no direct statement of the correct approach to such an extensively illustrated manuscript. We do find, however, that the most compelling aspects of Thaddeus’s viewing instructions guide his readers by focusing on the sensorially pleasing texts and images that are “luminous” and “brilliant.” While Mathews and Der Nersessian center on the validity and nature of the image, the evidence offered in Jerusalem 285 in context with the Vrt‘anes presents an unexplored aspect of image worship, namely, the sensorial.

The very beginning of the Vrt‘anes provides rich context for considering Thaddeus’s concerns. Vrt‘anes introduces his rhetorical text by stating, “all creatures are decorated by vivifying light, and heaven and earth rejoice, freshly brightened by its rays, because the light of truth has filled the entire universe with its light, it has dispelled the dark fog from the darkened and hardened hearts, and the world is filled with the teaching of God.”¹³⁹ This opening primes the reader for considering the universe and its inhabitants in relation to the divine that has affected an ontological change in its creation. The light of God has illuminated creation in body and mind. One is reminded here of the beginning of Thaddeus’s

¹³⁹ Christina Maranci with Theo Maarten van Lint, “Concerning Iconoclasts” working draft translation. I thank Christina Maranci for sharing this translation with me.

colophon, wherein he also emphasizes the presence and significance of light and illumination: Thaddeus, it will be remembered, describes the instructions of the desert fathers as “luminous words” that can “illuminate, restore, and vivify.”¹⁴⁰ In the case of Thaddeus, words alone from the holy fathers have the capacity to enlighten and bring life. Yet in speaking about images, Thaddeus also guides his viewers to pay attention to the “brilliance of decorations.” Both words and images have the ability to attract the eyes and direct the viewers’ attention to the divine.

Under what circumstances, then, would the use of images prove dangerous? Throughout his text, Vrt‘anes cites and reinterprets Old Testament passages used by the iconoclasts to condemn images. In response to references to idolatry in the Old Testament, Vrt‘anes differentiates between the “idolatry of the heathen” and the use of images that refer to Christ and the saints.¹⁴¹ He notes, in fact, that Moses himself first put images on the altar, under the instruction of God.¹⁴² Such images forged in service of the worship of God occupy a separate, permissible category from the “idols” of other religions. In the construction of the ark of the covenant, the cherubim themselves serve as types of images. God called this tabernacle, furnished and decorated with images, “a temple for his name.”¹⁴³ Furthermore, the prophet Ezekiel describes in no meager detail the painted decorations of the temple shown to him in a vision from God.¹⁴⁴ Rather than

¹⁴⁰ M.E. Stone for N. Stone, *op. cit.*, 185; see paragraph one of translation included in Appendix A.

¹⁴¹ Maranci and Van Lint, *op. cit.*, 2.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

denouncing images in the worship space, the Old Testament tells of the integral role and presence of images in the worship of God even from the beginning of Christian history. This text, well known to later Armenian authors, thus provided an Armenian-language defense of images which would have formed a foundation for subsequent attitudes towards images, including that of Thaddeus.

Following the description of the cherubim which were fashioned to cover the table of the atonement, Vrt'anes also raises an analogous earthly example used by the fifth-century Syrian bishop, Severianos. An image of a king takes the place of the absent king, so that princes and commoners may pay their respects. The princes and commoners direct their attention and respect not to the materials used to make and frame the image, but to the depiction of the king.¹⁴⁵ The power of images notwithstanding, not all images are of the same nature. Throughout the text, Vrt'anes continues to make the distinction between the image of the Christian faith and the images of the heathens. Images of heathen gods such as Ap'roditēs and Anahit would of course be useless and evil, incurring the wrath of God, whereas images of the church, such as the cross and the prophets, point to the true God and His saints.¹⁴⁶

Further to defend the importance and validity of images, Vrt'anes cites St. Gregory the Illuminator to account for Christ's choice to redeem images worshiped by the people. Vrt'anes describes the Crucifixion as Christ "became a dead image on the cross." Vrt'anes even goes as far to say that Christ "died and

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 14.

became breathless so they would establish the worship of the cross of wood, and the image which is on it and his human face; in order that he would make obedient to his divine image those who made images and loved images and worshipped images.”¹⁴⁷ In Vrt‘anes’s rhetoric, the validation and redemption of the image come to the forefront as the reason for Christ’s sacrifice. Vrt‘anes continues to emphasize the paramount role of the image by juxtaposing pictures with writings. He claims, “the writings are only heard with the ears, but the pictures are seen with the eyes and heard with the ears, and understood and believed by the heart.”¹⁴⁸ Maranci incisively points out in her translation the thorough effects of images on the eyes, ears, and heart. She cites Nersēs Shnorhali to further draw out the complex implications of this text for the understanding of the senses.¹⁴⁹ I will return to this important observation in a later portion.

Of particular importance for our study, Vrt‘anes addresses questions on the nature and function of the materials used to make images. He compares the donkey that carries Christ in the entrance to Jerusalem to the pigments in the pictures. The faithful worship not the donkey, the vehicle which transports Christ to the people, but Christ himself, who also inspires the painting of the image.¹⁵⁰ At the same time, the dyes and materials themselves serve a valuable function and should not be reviled. The materials used, including things such as milk and eggs, are also sources of nourishment, and were created by God. Vrt‘anes concludes

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 14. See also Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-44, and John 12:12-19.

this section by enjoining his reader to cut open his stomach and purge it of these same materials deemed evil in the iconoclastic argument.¹⁵¹ An interesting parallel occurs between Vrt‘anes’ careful account of the ingestible physical materials and Thaddeus’s comparison of the desert fathers’ instruction with honeycomb or resin. As mentioned above, Thaddeus encourages his readers to “lovingly consume” the words of the fathers’ instruction.¹⁵² In the case of Vrt‘anes, the matter of the painted images provide nourishment, and in the case of Thaddeus, it is the words that become sustenance. Despite the markedly lavish production of images in Jerusalem 285, Thaddeus turns his readers’ attention to the text.

Given the focus on the “luminous” qualities of the words and the “brilliance of decorations” in the colophon, Thaddeus demonstrates the emphasis on a visual engagement based on the sensorial experience. Viewing can be a pleasing, communal activity as readers can join the “companies of the blessed.” In terms of the viewers’ relationship to the image, Thaddeus places more emphasis on the image’s ability to stimulate a meaningful sensorial experience that draws the viewer closer to the divine. This emphasis places Thaddeus’s approach in close relation to the theology of Nersēs Shnorhali, the twelfth-century theologian and catholicos seen in the Garden of Eden scene above. Shnorhali describes in his commentary on Gospel canon tables the “luxurious herbs and multicolored flowers and various inventions” intended to instruct the faithful in matters of truth

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁵² M. E. Stone for N. Stone, *op. cit.*, 185.

and spiritual pleasure.¹⁵³ He equates the canon tables to “cleansing baths” for the readers’ eyes and ears.¹⁵⁴ Though ostensibly meant to play a primarily informative role, the canon tables according to Shnorhali serve important spiritual functions that engage the viewers’ physical and spiritual senses. This approach to the canon tables continues after Thaddeus. In the seventeenth century, Armenian painter from Sepastia, Mik‘ayel, writes in his commentary in homage to Nersēs that the canon tables are capable of “filling the palate with sweet scent/Administering remedy to sick flesh.”¹⁵⁵ Mik‘ayel adds another sensory element, that of taste, to the visual and aural that Nersēs mentions. Mik‘ayel’s description of the canon tables’ ability to heal sick flesh recalls Vrt‘anes’s defense of dyes and ink.

Mentioned above in more detail, Vrt‘anes calls attention to the healing and nourishing properties of the materials used in image making. Thaddeus’s work in the fifteenth century on sensorial pleasure thus positions him as one who follows Vrt‘anes and as an intermediary between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries as Jerusalem 285 evokes and makes mention of taste, smell, sight.

Indeed, the details and colors of Thaddeus’s illustrations echo the *Lives*’ colophon in attracting the eye and instructing in a pleasing manner that also stimulates the other senses. The palm tree in the Paphnutius scene swells with ripened fruit, and the stream of blue water flows against the dark background of the cave. The viewer is invited to imagine the taste of the fruit and water that readily provide nourishment to Onophrius. As in Thaddeus’s comparison of the

¹⁵³ Maranci, op. cit., 118.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 151.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 230.

church fathers' instruction to honeycomb or resin, in which the reader who sees the words also consumes them, so here, the viewer of the Onophrius scene also consumes and is nourished by the image.

Likewise, the vibrant colors and almost overcrowded Eden in the image of the six monks stimulate the sensorial imagination of the viewer who beholds the abundance in life and growth of the Garden, which the monks only manage to find because of the sweet “perfumes” of Eden.¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, Paphnutius in the other paradisiacal scene with the angel and the four monks has contact with the angel through receiving communion. His experience with the divine happens through taste. As the six monks and the ascetic Paphnutius who wander through the desert in search of instruction and nourishment, spiritual and otherwise, the reader of this manuscript participates in their journeys. The reader witnesses the scenes that occur, and encounters with the wandering monks the holy figures of Onophrius, Saint Nersēs, and the angel. The reader, through sight, is also able to engage the senses of smell and taste, becoming fully immersed in the religious experience depicted in this manuscript, which details the experiences of figures

¹⁵⁶ There also exists in Byzantine hagiography a tradition of focusing on the olfactory senses. In the ninth-century *Life* of Theophanes the Confessor, Patriarch Methodios describes the followers or bride of Christ “pursuing” Christ by focusing on their sense of smell: “they imagine him as fragrance and are eventually rewarded with the miraculous manifestation of ‘real’ fragrance to their noses.” A parallel may be noted here between the two in the search for the proleptic vision of God. See Dirk Krausmüller, “The Rise of Hesychasm,” in *Eastern Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold, vol. 5, The Cambridge History of Christianity (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101–26, 107. See also Sheldrake, *op. cit.*, 33, on the search for and creation of sacred space in the monastic and liturgical context.

whose lives very much revolved around the deprivation and stimulation of bodily senses.¹⁵⁷

Authority of Text and Image

Thaddeus, while instructing his reader on how to approach the manuscript, also affirms the authority of the manuscript. After telling his reader that he worked with “fervent love”, Thaddeus describes his process of assessing multiple copies of the *Lives*, “not to make do with one copy, but (to search) until the (mss) corroborated one another. And as I worked gladly in this way, I found the text in which they corroborated one another. Then I wrote down the truest, the best and most accurate text.”¹⁵⁸ With multiple sources at his disposal, Thaddeus makes even clearer his deliberateness in choosing his text. What is the significance of Thaddeus’s purposeful emphasis on “the truest, the best and most accurate”? Furthermore, does this attitude towards text differ from his attitude towards images?

In fact, the word “accurate” does not do justice to the Armenian, as Thaddeus uses the Armenian word, (anskhal/անսխալ), which translates literally to “flawless.” What, then, are the connotations of a “flawless” text? How

¹⁵⁷ Many studies of the multi-sensory in the medieval Christian context exist in Byzantine studies. See, for example, Susan Ashbrook Harvey and Margaret Mullett, eds., *Knowing Bodies, Passionate Souls: Sense Perceptions in Byzantium*, *Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposia and Colloquia 9* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2017); Bissera V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium*, 1 edition (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010); Liz James, *Light and Colour in Byzantine Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

¹⁵⁸ See paragraph 3 of M.E. Stone translation in Appendix A.

can a text or image be flawless and is this indeed possible? Can we read visual elements such as the largeness of figures or sparseness of earthly landscape for truth and perfection? Should one's sight and other senses be drawn to meditate on figural proportions, facial features, or engagement with landscape and animals? In the larger medieval Christian context, one does find in Byzantine art a similar interest in truthfulness and accuracy in figural depiction. For one, Henry Maguire's *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (1996) addresses precisely the criteria for accurate representation in sacred portraiture. Maguire explores the identifying formal elements for saint's images and the impetus behind developing such a system.¹⁵⁹ While it would be difficult to assume a direct translation of artistic conventions and iconographic elements between Byzantine and Armenian traditions, it is important to examine the shared interest in these depictions. It is significant that Thaddeus leads his readers to consider these issues. Additionally, the words "flawless" and "truest" may be considered in the overall context of the manuscript. Throughout the *Lives*, different monks retreat to a cave or search for Eden in hopes of returning to man's perfect state prior to the Fall. In other words, the monks of the *Lives* spend their lives seeking to return to a flawless state, unmarred by sin. Fathers, such as Anthony and Onophrius, in their pursuits of asceticism and perfect union with God, provide their followers with the proper moral and theological guidance. An

¹⁵⁹ Henry Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

important question for future research may involve asking: how does one find this authority and flawlessness in textual and visual representations?

Epilogue: Beyond Armenia Maritima

So far, this paper has focused on contextualizing Jerusalem 285 in the Armenian tradition. Nira Stone's important monograph on Jerusalem 285 provides valuable information and findings on the manuscript that invite further questions. Stone focuses on categorizing formal elements, particularly the use of white, to identify an "Armeno-Crimean" style and overall influence of hesychasm. This paper instead uses the colophon to observe copyist and artist intentions. Thaddeus's manuscript and accompanying colophon raise important questions on visibility and viewing practices that require further exploration. This paper has also engaged with these questions of visibility through studies of the larger Armenian artistic and textual tradition. In touching on Narekats'i's poetry on visibility and sensorial experiences, Tat'evats'i's commentary on the sacredness of the alphabet and the copying process, and Vrt'anes's document against iconoclasm, I hoped to expand and advance the conversation on approaches to image making and viewing. The works of Der Nersessian, Rapti, Mathews, and Maranci already demonstrate the richness and complexity of image making and veneration in the Armenian church. The three images selected as case studies for this paper attest to a fascinating approach that emphasizes the colors, red and gold, and focuses on stimulating a sensorial spiritual experience.

At present, the dominant discussion on vision has primarily taken place in Byzantine studies. Thus, this project attempts to widen the conversation to add questions of Armenian visuality into the greater medieval dialogue. This paper aimed to build off of the scholarship by Mathews and Der Nersessian, which has engaged the Vrt'anēs text with Byzantine writings on viewing and understanding images.¹⁶⁰

On the Byzantine front, studies of visuality and the status of images abound. Discussions surrounding iconoclasm call on theological treatises by individuals such as John of Damascus (676-749) and council documents such as those from the Quinisext Council (692).¹⁶¹ In *Writing in Gold*, Robin Cormack uses texts spanning the years before, during, and after the iconoclastic controversies to contextualize and understand art and its function.¹⁶² A decade later, Robert Nelson's seminal work on Byzantine visuality examines Byzantine ekphrasis, another important category of Byzantine text.¹⁶³ These descriptions of

¹⁶⁰ Mathews, op. cit.; Der Nersessian, op. cit.

¹⁶¹ Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002). Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680-850: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹⁶² Robin Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and Its Icons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹⁶³ Nelson, Robert S. *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000. See also Antony Eastmond, ed., *Viewing Inscriptions in the Late Antique and Medieval World* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), on the function of inscriptions in relation to images or as images across the medieval world; and the study of Ivan Drpić on the role of epigrams in the production and reception of art, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion in Later Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

art provide information on Byzantine perceptions of color, form, and images in general. In a similar vein, Armenian colophons, as seen in Thaddeus's manuscript, also engage with the image and its audience through description and sometimes instruction. Thaddeus's colophon presents a precious source as a copyist and illuminator's explicit instructions and explanations for viewing a manuscript and its text and images. Further study of this manuscript and introduction into the active discussion of visuality in neighboring Christian traditions is necessary to broaden and enrich the conversation about image theory in the middle ages. Directions for future study will involve further investigation of questions of truth and accuracy in visual depictions and deeper examination of the role and effects of multi-sensory experiences as compared between the Byzantine and Armenian traditions. Broader investigations beyond the localized approach taken in this paper will also include looking at the greater medieval visual context to trace the origins or development of such a massive corpus of images. In particular, the conspicuous use of white can be examined further, as well as the text-image relationship found in the manuscript. The placement of bust figures throughout the text and the use of the *yi* to attract attention will serve as important points of consideration.

Appendix A

Main Colophon of Jerusalem 285

Փառք ամենասուրբ Երրորդութեանն եւ մի Աստուածութեան Հօր եւ Որդւոյ եւ Հոգւոյն Սրբոյ. Ամեղ գոյին եւ միայն բարոյն եւ գոյից հաստողին, որ շքնորհեաց անպիտան եւ աղկաղկ եւ անարժան ծառայիս տեսանել զաւարտումն շնորհագարդ դրոցս սբ. Հարանց Վարուց: Զոր ի հերուն հետէ ցանկացեալ կարօտանայի տենչմամբ մեծաւ, գրել ժողովել ամբարել գերանելեացն եւ զամէներջանկացն վարս սուրբս եւ գերաշխարհիկ անմարմնոց նմանս: Եւ զբանս լուսաւորս հոգեւորական խրատու նոցա, որ քաղցր է ի քիմս սիրով նաշակողացն գաս, առաւել քան զմեղու խորիսխ, եւ զոտիին: Եւ զիտէ լուսաւորել նորագել եւ կենագործել: Եւ զի յանդիմանիչ եւս է եւ կտամբիչ, եւ յայտնիչ անուղայ գնացելոց: Արդ նայելով ի գործս քննայոց ծուլացելոյս եւ անիմաստ շաղկապ մտելոյս եւ անտէրունջ ընթացելոյս, ըզմամբ մեծաւ վափագեցայ գրել եւ արձանացուցանել, եւ առ իս պահել, եւ ունել յար եւ հանապաղ, ինձ կտամբիչ եւ յանդիմանիչ, եւ յայտնիչ խորհրդոց մաքուր կարծեցելոյս, եւ դարձեալ սիրովիչ եւ միտքարիչ եւ տածիչ ակնարացեալ եւ գուր ծնողական եւ խրատ անխարդախ գաս վարվարանելով սիրեցի զըրգալով ի վերայ սորա: Զի գոնէ միայն ի լուր աստուածագարդ բանից խրատուց սբ. Հարց եւ երկնանման կրօնից գործոց նոցին զիտութիւնն, զիմ անգէպ եւ կարծելի միայն զնացեալս ամաչեցուցեալ զլիտարեալ զզուխս յերկիր հայեցուցեն: Եւ արդ այսպէս սկսայ գաս ջերմեռանդն սիրով, եւ յուսով առ այն, որ տայն ամենայնի առատապէս եւ ոչ նախատէ, հասուցանել յաւարտ սորա: Այլ յոյժ առապանօք եւ աշխատութեամբ, քանզի գործնական զաւագոյնն ընտրելով եւ զհեմարդագոյնն խուզելով, եւ զհամառօտն քողեալ, զկատարեալ պատմութեանն հետեւելով, ժողովեցի բարպեցի օրինակք ոչ սակաւ, որչափ ձեռնահաս եղէ գտանել; Եւ երէ ի մինն սխալ գտանիր ի գրչաց կամ օրինակաց, եւ կամ համառօտեալ զնայ իմանայի, նա զիւրաքաջիւր օրինակքն աւրերբեր բերելով գտանէի զնոյն բան, ոչ վկայելով միմեանց; Այլ ի նոցանէ խնդրեալ, զընտրելագոյնս եւ զհանելին, ի նոցունց առեալ գրէի, յարմարեալ եւ կատարեալ քան զհեմարդագոյնս շարագրելով: Այլ ի հասանել պատմութեան կամաւոր աղբատին սրբոյն Ալեքսիանոսի՝ տարակուսեալ արգելայ, քանզի այլեւայլ պատմէին օրինակքն զնմանէ: Ոմանք ի Կոստանդնուպօլիս լեալ ասէին, եւ ոմանք ի Հռոմայ. Եւ այլն երկուստասան ամ ի դուռն ծնողաց ասէին, եւ կէսք ԲԺան օր, եւ այնլ է ամ: Եւ այլք զԵմ. Տեսեալ ասէին զնա, եւ կէսք յԵդեսիայ միայն՝ այլ ոչ ուրեք զընացեալ; Այսպէս ամ. Պատմուատեան այլեւայլ եին գրեալ: Մինչ հարկ եղեւ եւ ի յունաց բերել օրինակ ի ձեռն պարեկամաց, եւ ոչ շատանալ միով՝ այլ մինչ վկայեացեն եւ նոքա միմեանց: Եւ ա՛յսպիսի սիրով աշխատեալ՝ գտի զայն որ միմեանց վկայեցին, եւ գրեցի զհեմարտագոյնն զլուսն եւ զանսխալն: Այսպէս եւ զամենայնն արարի՝ այլ ոչ որպէս սրբոյն Ալեքսիանոսին աշխատեցայ: Եւ բագուն վարք եւ բան աւելի եղի ի սմայ՝ զայն որ ոչ գայր ի մեծ օրինակն: Արդ յամ. Գլխոյն վերջին որ կարմիր յի խաչագլուխ կայ ի լուսանցքն ներքին՝ այն յայլ գրոց օրինակեալ է: Իսկ ի կողման լուսանցին կարմիր նշան եւ թուխ կոագլուխ խող բագմեալն՝ այն պիտանի եւ օգտակար նշանաւոր բանք են, եւ եղի նշան , առ ի վայր

գտանել գայնալիսի ախորժագոյնսն: Եւ ի վնար մե՛ծ օրիանկն յիշատակարա՛ն եղեալ՝ սկսայ եւ գայլն որ ոչ գոյին ի մեծ օրիանկն: Եւ ո՛րչափ կարո՛ղ եղէ հաւաքեցի եւ գա՛յնասիկ՝ նմանապէ՛ս աշխատելով զընտի՛րոն եւ զհօգրտագո՛յնսն խնդրելով գրել: Իսկ աւարտ սորա եղեւ ի թոււին ամաց յելանելոյ Ադամոյ ի դրա[խ]դէն ի ց.ո.լ. ամի, ըստ մեծ հային տոմարական արեւստին: Եւ դարձեալ յԱդամայ ի ց.պ.ծ.ե. ամի, ըստ հինգհարիւրեկին, որ է Էասանց, իմաստասիրին որ ի յԱղեկստանդրիայն ժողովին, եւ սայ է բուն թուական կիկլոնին: Եւ դարձեալ յԱդամայ ի ց.չ. ա. Ամի, ըստ Անանիա Վարդապետին շիրակայնո: Եւ ծննդեկէ կենարար Փրկչին մերոյ ՅԻ Քի . ի ո.ն.բ ամի: Իսկ ըստ հռոմայեցոց ո.ն.լ. ամի: Եւ ի թուին հայոց ըստ արեթական տոմարի պ.հ.թ.ամի, ի յօգոստոս ամոյ իե, օրն զԵ: Յաշարիս Հննաց եւ Գագարիյա կոչեցելոյ, յերկիրն Սուլդարայ, ի մայրաքաղաքս Կաֆայիս, մեհաստանիս՝ որ յանուն մեծի հգնավորին Սրբոյն Անտոնի եւ ընդ հովանեաւ նորին արժանաւոր աղօթիցն: Եւ յառաջնորդութեան սորին վանից մեծի երջանիկ քապունապետի Սարգսի լուսաւոր վարդապետի՝ արթուն եւ ժիր մշակի, որ գաւերս գայս եւ գամայացեալս՝ որ մուրավով էին ձերակուր բնակչաց սորա, նորոգեաց շինելով եւ յօրինեաց զբոլոր պակասութիւն սորա, եւ զարդարեաց եղպարբ եւ պայծառ ժամատեղաւ, եւ հաստատեաց մտօք եւ արդեամբք, զոր ընդ երկայն աւուրս արասցէ Տէր Ած. Չսա, բազմամեա ժամանակօք տեւել մնայ առ մեզ: Իսկ ի հայրապետութեան տեառն Կոստանդեաւաստաւածաւէր եւ իմաստուն խաղաղասիրի, եւ ի նուիրակութեան եւ եպիսկոպոսութեան տէր Կարապետի, սրբաւընունդ եւ խոհեմի, ձեռամբ անարժան եւ պիտակ անուն կրօնաւորի Թատէնսի Ավրամեկնց, ի վայելումն ծարաւելոյս եւ կըշտամբող միտրարիչ վտարանգելոյս, եւ յիշատակ յետ իմոյ ելանելոյն յաշխարհէս՝ կամողացն գաւ ջերմեռանգն սիրով կարգալ: Իսկ ձանձրացկոսացն լսել գաւ, առիթ կամելով լինել՝ եւ նոցա հագորդի ընդ երջանկացն գասուց, կարգալով եւ ի միտ առնելով, զարդարեցի կենդանագիր պատկերօք եւ ձողիօք ոսկով, զի գոնէ ի սիրոյ պայծառութեան ծաղկանց եւ պատկերաց՝ կարգալ ձեռնարկեցեցն: Եւ դարձեալ զի եւ գանուանս սրբոց՝ յայտնիւ կարմրագեղով արարի. Մի, զի յորդարիչ լիցին կարդացողացն որք ոչ սիրով, եւ երկրորդ, զի նման նմա լինել ակն ունիմք մեք, բայց նոքա եղեալ իսկ են նըան նմա, որ վասն մեր աղքատացաւ հոխն եւ Տէրն բոլորից՝ զի որոշեալ են յամ. Անուանց երկրաւորաց, անունն տէրունական, կարմրադեղով եւ ոսկով, սոյնպէս եւ սրբոցն անուանք՝ երանելեացն դասուց, նմանեցան նմա կարմրադեղովն եւ ոսկով որպէս եւ նայն: Արդ՝ երեսանկեալ աղաչեմ զձեզ ով դասք լուսերամից եւ գումարք խաչակրօնից՝ որք հանդիպիք սմա կարգալով եւ կամ օրինակելով, թողութեան մեղաց հայցեցէք եղկելի գծողիս թողէնսիս, եւ հօրն իմոյ Ավրամին, հանգուցելոյն ի Քս., եւ մօրն իմոյ պարեպաւտի եւ անմեղ գառնինն, եւ եղբօրն իմոյ Յովանիսի իմաստասէղ պատանեկի, որ օտարամահ եղեալ՝ սուգ անտանելի երող ծնողին. Եւ քերց եւ եղպարց հանդուցելոցն, եւ ամ. Արեան մերձակայիցըն իմաց: Եւ Ածլ., որ առատն է ի տուրս բարեաց, յիշելոցս եւ յիշողացդ առհասարակ ողորմեցի, ամեն.

Արդ՝ սգեղութեան գրոյս եւ սխալանաց անմեղարիք լերուք, եւ եթէ մեղախորէք՝ ձեր կամց է եւ մեր արժանքս:

Այլ եւ գիւղող թխտիս՝ զԱճատուր սպասաւոր Սրբոյն Անուի, զբարեգարուն եւ զբարեմիտն ըզհեզահոգի երիտասարդն, եւ զողջախոհ մանուկն՝ զորպիսն Խօհայ նուրատիւնին, որպոյ խոհայ մղնասին, յիշեսցիք ի բարի մասին:

Translation by Michael E. Stone:

Glory be to the all-holy Trinity and One Deity, Father Son and Holy Spirit, uncreated Being and sole Good Creator of the existent beings, who granted to this worthless and poor and unworthy servant to see the completion of this illuminated book of the *Lives of the Holy Fathers*. I already had desired greatly for a long time to copy, to assemble, and to store up the holy lives of the blessed and the wholly happy ones and the wonders of the extraordinary incorporeal ones. And the luminous words of their instruction, which are sweeter to the palate of those who lovingly consume them than honeycomb or resin. And they can illuminate, restore and vivify. Furthermore they are equally admonishers, reproachers and revealers to those who do not go uprightly.

Now, contemplating my deeds, I, the lazy one who had entered upon foolish ways and proceeded without guidance, aspired greatly to copy and inscribe this book and to keep it with me always, to be for me a motivating force, reproving and a revealer of pure thoughts. And furthermore, to help, relieve and sustain me who have become foolish. And considering it to be for me a custodian father, parental compassion and faithful counsel, I love it, delighting over it. For above all, in the hearing of the divinely-decorated words of the instructions of the holy fathers and the knowledge of their deeds of heaven-like faith, it will show my worthless deeds and conduct.

And now, I thus began the work with fervent love and with hope in Him who gives plenteously to all and does not insult; I am now about to complete the work, but with great suffering and toil, because, when I chose the best exemplars and sought after the most correct words, I left aside the shortest since I was searching for the full story. I gathered (and) accumulated not a few copies, as many as I could get. If a mistake was found arising from the copyist or from the exemplar or (if) I realized that (the text) had been abbreviated, then, by laying the various copies side by side, I would locate the same section, in which they did not support one another. But I would seek the best and most satisfactory of them. I would take from these most satisfactory manuscripts and copy, having adjusted and perfected the text by constructing the most accurate (version).

However, when I reached the story of Alexius, the Voluntary Pauper, I stopped, because various copies related different things about him. There were some who said he was from Constantinople and others who said that he was from Rome. There were some who said he remained in his parents' house for twelve years, and half said twelve days and another seven years. Some of the copies said that he saw Jerusalem and half said that he only saw Edessa and did not visit any other place. Thus each story said something different. It was necessary to bring a copy from the Greeks, by means of a friend, and not to make do with one copy, but (to

search) until the (mss) corroborated one another. And as I worked gladly in this way, I found the text in which they corroborated one another. Then I wrote down the truest, the best, and the most accurate text. Thus I did the whole job, but I did not always work as I had in the case of St. Alexius. I included many biographies and dicta which were not included in the chief exemplar.

Now, at the end of every chapter, the red cross-headed *yi* in the lower margin was copied from a different exemplar; but the red signs and the brown, thick-headed mark placed in the side margins are useful and helpful and notable and I put a sign in so as to be able to find the most pleasing things quickly. At the end of the original exemplar, after I had written a colophon, I started the other things which were not in the original source. And, as far as I could, I gathered these things as well and I worked in similar fashion, trying to write the best, and most accurate (text).

Now, its completion has arrived in the year 6630 from the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden by the reckoning of the calendrical art of Greater Armenia; and again, in the year 6855 from Adam according to the 500 year reckoning, which is the era of Ēas the philosopher, which was calculated in Alexandria according to the reckoning of Anania *vardapet* of Shirak, and in the year 1432 from the birth of our life giving Savior Jesus Christ, but according to the Byzantines in the year 1430, and in the year 879 of the Armenians according to the Japhethite Calendar, in the month of August, on the 25th day, a Tuesday, in the land of the Huns which is also called Khazaria, in the land of Sulghat, in the metropolis of Kaffa, in the Monastery bearing the name of the great ascetic St. Antony, and under the protection of his worthy prayers. During the primacy of that monastery of the great blessed doctor Sargis, luminous *vardapet*, vigilant and diligent husbandman, who restored these empty ruins, whose residence have subsisted on charity. He provided all the needs of the place, and ornamented it with brethren and with a brilliant chapel and he planned and established it. May the Lord God grant him length of days and may he remains with us for many years.

Now in the time of the Pontificate of the God loving and wise lover of peace Rev. Konstant, and in the Nunciature and Episcopate of the pious and judicious Rev. Karapet, by the hands of the unworthy and false monk Thaddeus Avraments, for the pleasure of me the thirsty one, and as a reproaching comforter for me the erring one, and as a memorial after my departure from this world for those who wish to read it with fervent love, (I wrote this book). But wishing there to be a reason for those who grow easily tired to listen and for them to participate in the companies of the blessed by reading and considering (it), I decorated it with portraits and golden flowers so that at least by love of the brilliance of decorations and the pictures they would undertake to read it.

And again, I also highlighted the names of the saints by the use of red ink, the first so that they might attract reluctant readers; second, so that we might aspire to

be like them, while they were like Him who, being Master and Lord of all, became poor for our sake; (third) so that it would be distinguished from all earthly names, the dominical name was written in red ink and gold; similarly also the names of the saints, of the companies of the blessed were made to resemble it (i.e. The nomen sacrum), being written with red ink and gold as it was.

Now, prostrate, I beseech you, O companies of the celestial choruses and assemblies of Christians who encounter it (i.e. The ms) either in reading or copying, ask the forgiveness of the sins of the miserable scribe Thaddeus, and of my father Avram who has fallen asleep in Christ and of my mother the pious and innocent lamb, and of my brother Yovhannes, a lad flowing with wisdom and who died in a foreign land and left his mother in unbearable grief, and of my sisters and brothers who have fallen asleep and of all my blood relatives. And may God, who gives abundant good things, have mercy on those remembered as well as those who remember them. Amen.

Now, do not condemn the ugliness of the writing and the mistakes and if you do find blame, that is your desire and our deserts.
Also remember for a good portion the paper-polisher, Astuatsatur, servant of saint Anthony, noble, well intentioned and gentle youth and modest child, son of Khoja Nuratin, son of Khoha Mghchas, for a good portion.

Appendix B



Fig. 1 Headpiece of opening page, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, MS 285; reproduced in Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination*, fig. 14.



Fig. 2 Anthony the Great, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, MS 285; reproduced in Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination*, fig. 1.



Fig. 3 Mary the Egyptian, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, MS 285; reproduced in Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination*, fig. 11.



Fig. 4 Euphrosyne, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, MS 285; reproduced in Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination*, fig. 10.



Fig. 5 Figure 5 Gregory of Narek, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, MS 285; reproduced in Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination*, fig. 42.



Fig. 6 The Six Monks in the Garden of Eden, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, MS 285; reproduced in Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination*, fig. 7.



Fig. 7 The Meeting of Paphnutius and Onophrius, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, MS 285; reproduced in Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination*, fig. 6.



Fig. 8 The Meeting of Paphnutius and the Young Monks, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, MS 285; reproduced in Nira Stone, *The Kaffa Lives of the Desert Fathers: A Study in Armenian Manuscript Illumination*, fig. 5.



Fig. 9 Commentary on the Psalms, “Matenadaran” Mesrop Mashtots’ Institute-Museum of Ancient Manuscripts, Yerevan, MS 1203, fol. 14v, 1449; reproduced in Helen C. Evans, ed., *Armenia: Art, Religion, and Trade in the Middle Ages*, cat. 74.

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