

Illuminating an Armenian Set of Manuscripts A Forgotten Treasure in the Layard Collection

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Abstract In 1902 Enid Layard bequeathed four illuminated Armenian manuscripts, belonging to her late husband, to the Armenian Mekhitarist College of Venice and to the Correr Museum. This survey retraces the manuscripts' earlier provenance and their arrival in the Venetian collections. Austen Henry Layard's private papers and publications attest to a close relationship with the Armenian community, both in Constantinople and Venice. The aim of this paper is not only to show more fully the early reception of Armenian artworks in a Western context, but also to present a first study of these manuscripts by providing some comparisons.

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Keywords Henry Layard. History of Collecting. Provenance. 19th century. Bequests and donations.

The study of provenance has now become an essential tool for establishing authenticity, quality and legality of artworks, yet it represents “an alternative way of narrating a history of art” (Feigenbaum, Reist 2012, viii). In this framework, I would like to conduct my survey of four illuminated Armenian codices, which once belonged to the Layard collection.

Armenian manuscripts possess in themselves a wonderful feature that records ownership that is the *yišatakarank'* – namely, the colophon. It furnishes an abundance of details on the history of the codex until its change of use, at the time at which it became a mere object of art and retained no more its original devotional function. These manuscripts were in essence pledges for the salvation of the donors. Consequently, owners had their names recorded into the colophon in testimony of their pious act, and so that those who might later use these codices could recall them in the prayers. Provenance and notably the “social life of provenance”, as Anne Higonnet has remarked, become a valuable tool for investigating the history of these manuscripts. For that purpose, this paper will try to fill the hiatus, the gap between the origin and the actual collocation of these four manuscripts. After all,

In the gap are hidden the dramas of global power dynamics, military conquest, massive movements of wealth from one continent to another, and the tragedies of racism. (Higonnet 2012, 197)

One aspect of this article, therefore, aims at investigating why those manuscripts are in Venice, and how they entered the Layard collection, by delving into Henry and Enid Layard's private papers. An examination of how such artefacts were displayed and used enables us to gain a better understanding of the meaning of this part of the collection to both its owner and his contemporaries. I also provide a first, though not exhaustive, analysis of these manuscripts.

1 Souvenirs d'Orient

Since February 1902 the catalogue of the Correr Museum's Library counts among its innumerable treasures an Armenian illuminated Gospel of early seventeenth century.¹ The presence of this artefact should come as no surprise given the close and constant relationship that Venice had entertained with the Armenian community, due

¹ The manuscript corresponds to Inv. No. PD 10a. This is not the only Armenian specimen possessed by the Library; there is also another manuscript, bequeathed by Emmanuele A. Cicogna in 1852. See Uluhogian 2010, 383, 401-3.

to the establishment of a Mekhitarist Convent on the island of Saint Lazarus. Nonetheless, as its provenance will show, the Convent was only the last stage of its ultimate history. The Gospel, in fact, came from the collection of the British archaeologist and diplomat, Sir Austen Henry Layard (Paris, 1817-London, 1894), who, in 1881, had decided to make his abode in Venice.² Layard had gathered the vast majority of his collection at Ca' Cappello. Not only did the palace display Assyrian bas-reliefs, Italian Old Masters, and Flemish tapestries, but the building itself reflected the collection; together, the collection and its setting served to enhance the reputation of the well-known Englishman.

In the terms of his will, Layard's painting collection was destined to the National Gallery of London, of which he had been a Trustee for almost thirty years (1866-94); the remainder of the collection would pass into the hands of his wife, Lady Enid Layard (London, 1843-Venice, 1912).³ Among Spanish wooden sculpture, old Venetian glass and Caucasian rugs, the collection also included four Armenian manuscripts. Layard was not a bibliophile, and appears more simply as a collector of curiosities in this field. It is in this light, therefore, that his collection of manuscripts and old books ought properly to be seen.⁴ The evidence that emerges in his private correspondence further helps underpin this point. In a letter addressed to the well-known Italian art critic Giovanni Morelli (Verona, 1816-Milan, 1891), Layard admitted that he had exchanged "quelques-unes de mes bibles auxquelles je n'attachais pas de grand valeur",⁵ for the purchase of an old tapestry through the dealer Michelangelo Guggenheim.⁶ Yet, the question remains as to how these Armenian manuscripts entered his collection.

2 Early Contacts with Armenia

In his wanderings in pursuit of cuneiform inscriptions, Layard had extensively explored the Southern Caucasus, in company of his assistant Hormuzd Rassam (Mosul, 1826-unknown, 1910) (cf. Wright 2004). *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, with Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan and the Desert*, published in 1853, and subsequently, in 1867, *Nineveh and Babylon*, reveal Layard's early curiosity and relish for "eastern Armenia and Kurdistan, both on account of the novelty of part of the country in a geographical point of view, and its political interest" (Layard 1853, 4-5). By means of those expeditions, he could experience how "enterprising and industrious people" (Layard 1867, 206) Armenians were, their social organization and their school system. Layard's attention chiefly lingered over the district of Lake Van, of which he provides descriptions of its beautiful scenery and "its numerous remarkable monuments of antiquity".⁷ Notably, the Fortress, the Church of Akdamar and the Monastery of Varag fascinated him. Inspections of "early Christian ruins of Armenia" allowed him to recognise a "connection between Eastern and Western architecture" (Layard 1853, 33), and led him to recommend accurate studies on the matter, as well as the Monastery of Varzahan, that reminded him of certain Gothic masonry and decoration. Despite those direct surveys, it appears that Layard hardly saw any Armenian manuscripts during this time, since most of the libraries he visited had been ransacked. Nonetheless, at a later stage, he had the chance to examine several "valuable MSS with their splendid bindings set with precious stones",⁸ as Lady Layard penned in her journal.

2 For a general account on Layard, see Parry 2004. On his painting collection, see Penny 2004. Forthcoming studies on his collections are due.

3 London, British Library (hereafter BL), Layard Papers, Vol. XLVIII, Add MS 58196, fols. 36-37: Last Will and Testament of the Right Honourable Sir Henry Austen Layard, 2 August 1892.

4 Layard possessed several first editions of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries books; see Layard 1904.

5 London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XXXVI, Add MS 38966, f. 319: Letter A.H. Layard to G. Morelli, 26 November 1880.

6 The tapestry, presently untraced, was considered a Flemish XV century specimen, later restored by Eraclito Gentili. See London, National Gallery Archive, NG7/292/13(vii)(e): Payment Agreement, December 1880. For a full account on the Venetian art dealer Michelangelo Guggenheim, see Martignon 2015.

7 Layard 1853, 336. His interest for Armenian culture permeates in his notebooks as well. See London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CLIII, Add MS 39083, fols. 22, 46-8.

8 Lady Layard's Journals are kept in London in the repositories of the British Library, Layard Papers, Add MSS 46153 - 46170. It exists a digitalised version - to which we will refer throughout the paper - provided by the Armstrong Browning

This precocious interest Layard nurtured for Armenia and its culture developed, during his ambassadorial appointment at the Sublime Porte (1877-80, see fig. 1), into a concrete engagement both at a political and diplomatic level. Needless to say, Layard was well aware that the Ottoman Empire should

Represent a population composed of heterogeneous races and sects, a Society made up of a complication of religious interests, an aggregate of incompatible elements, which, though they may be reconciled can never be moulded into an homogeneous whole.⁹

Several volumes of general correspondence and dispatches between Layard and diplomats across Europe chart the issues he dealt with whilst ambassador, as well as his advocacy for an anti-Russian policy. Letters relating to the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78) highlight tensions and the embittered conditions of the Christian communities.

In fact, the *Armenian question* had become exceedingly urgent and was worthy of serious and immediate consideration. In Layard's own terms, it

Is destined, if I am not mistaken, to have no inconsiderable influence on the future of the Ottoman Empire in Asia. The interest I felt in it arose both out of sympathy for the people as an oppressed and suffering race, and from a personal knowledge of them and of their country acquired during my travels in early life in that district chiefly inhabited by them in the Sultan's Asiatic Territories which was little known at that time in England. Travellers in Asia Minor had occasionally mentioned them in their books [...] I was, I believe, the first

to penetrate in these districts and published a description of them in my work. (Kuneralp 2009, 439)

Therefore, in these years, Layard looked after minor religious communities, such as the Protestant Community,¹⁰ and strove for their recognition. For this purpose, he was acquainted with the heads of all these parties, and especially he "was in constant and intimate communication" with the Patriarch of the Armenian Church, Nerses Varjabedian (Constantinople, 1837-1884), whom he considered "a learned and very intelligent priest"¹¹ (fig. 2). He had also supported the Protestant Armenian Community of Constantinople in the matter of Constitution – "a footing of equality with other Christian bodies in th[e] Empire"¹² – by having it sanctioned by the Turkish Government.

It is no accident that Layard had looked favourably on the reforms of the Armenian provinces proposed by the Treaty of San Stefano (3 March 1878, Art. XVI).¹³ However, in the immediate aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War, he could but write:

Tout ce qui s'est passé pendant la domination Turque n'est absolument rien en comparaison avec l'état des choses actuel. Les Bulgares, sous la protection de leurs libérateurs, ayant à peu près exterminé les malheureux Musulmans, se dirigent maintenant sur les Grecs, les Catholique et les Juifs. C'est enfin une persécution générale.¹⁴

Turkish misbehaviour towards the Christians was unfortunately due to rise. And further dramatic reports, on the conditions of some remote Armenian provinces, reached him through Hor-

Library, Baylor University, Texas, USA. Lady Layard's Journal, Jerusalem, 20 September 1879. URL <http://pops.baylor.edu/layard/xml.php?fn=18790920.xml&h=> (2018-06-12)

⁹ London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXV, Add MS 39055, fol. 46: Remarks concerning representation in the Turkish Parliament, 24 March 1877.

¹⁰ See London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXIV, Add MS 39054, fols. 214, 219, 222; fols. 263-264: Protestant Armenian Community of Constantinople thanks for assistance to A.H. Layard, Constantinople, 1 June 1880; Vol. CXXV, Add MS 39055, fols. 59-65.

¹¹ Kuneralp 2009, 443. See also, London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXV, Add MS 39055, fol. 55: 1874.

¹² London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXIV, Add MS 39054, fol. 264: Protestant Armenian Community of Constantinople to A.H. Layard, Constantinople, 1 June 1880.

¹³ On this topic, see Nalbandian 1963, 27; Soderini 2010. All the documents related to the Treaty and its development are kept in London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXIV, Add MS 39054, fols. 77-195.

¹⁴ London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XXXVI, Add MS 38966, fol. 275v: Letter A.H. Layard to G. Morelli, British Embassy, Constantinople, 22 March 1878.



Figure 1. Unknown photographer, The British Embassy at Pera. Undated. Postcard, 10 × 13 cm. © The Levantine Heritage Foundation

muzd Rassam and Reverend George C. Knapp, an American Missionary in Bitlis.¹⁵ Despite the fact that Layard adhered to no orthodox belief, but in an attempt to sooth the situation, he provided both economical support and assistance by devising measures for the protection of the Christian communities. “His argument to the Foreign Office was that two great principles were at stake, firstly religious liberty and secondly the rights of foreigners under the agreements known as the Capitulations” (Waterfield 1963, 437). Furthermore, he took an active role in the educational programs, supervising the creation of a scholastic program for the “Real Schule Ira-

gan Varjaran”.¹⁶ As he had already pointed out, improving education would “ultimately tend to raise their political, as well as their social, position” (Layard 1853, 404). Lady Enid, in turn, was committed to charitable activities, especially to the Kavak Hospital and “[presida] une petite société des dames qui s’occupent nuit et jour, faisant des vêtements des draps de lit, des bandages etc.”,¹⁷ named “Ladies’ Association for the relief of Turkish sick and wounded fugitives from the seat of war”.¹⁸ Evidence of this support can be found in one of the additional manuscripts of the Layard papers, held at the British Library, which retains the “Liste des familles Israélites

¹⁵ London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XCIV, Add MS 39024, fols. 89-92: Letter H. Rassam to A.H. Layard, Mosul, 22 December 1878; fols. 93-96: Letter G.C. Knapp to H. Rassam, Bitlis, 2 September 1878; fols. 245-249: Letter H. Rassam to A.H. Layard, Mosul, 12 January 1879.

¹⁶ London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CCVIII, Add MS 39138, fol. 94: Letter T. Tersian to A.H. Layard, 20 August 1878; and fol. 126: Letter G. Infiedjian to A.H. Layard, 24 December 1878.

¹⁷ London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XXXVI, Add MS 38966, fols. 270v-271r: Letter A.H. Layard to G. Morelli, British Embassy, Constantinople, 7 September 1877.

¹⁸ London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XLVIII, Add MS 58196, fol. 30: Appeal, 19 September 1877. See also Vol. CXXIV, Add MS 39054, fols. 95, 96; fols. 128-137: photographs of wounded people; fol. 138: sample of the Scutari infirmary; fol. 196-202: Project on the establishment of Refugee in Asia Minor; fols. 248-251: Project of resettlement of Turkish Refugees in Asia Minor, 15 December 1879; fols. 252-259: Project of resettlement of Turkish Refugees in Asia Minor, 14 November 1878. For a detailed account on these facts, cf. Lady Layard’s Journal.



Figure 2. The photograph shows, according to Lady Layard's journal (but without allowing us to distinguish between the five standing figures) Austen Henry Layard, Lady Layard and their niece Alice Du Cane, Mr Nicholson, Mr Noel Temple Moore, the Armenian Patriarch, Mr Salami, Sir Arthur Sandison, on 20 September 1879 on the roof of the Armenian Convent in Jerusalem. © The Levantine Heritage Foundation

réfugiées à Philippolis”, a note of other refugees at Konstchouk and Sophia, and a “Collecte de vêtements en faveur des émigrés de Bulgarie faite à Constantinople par les Israelites”.¹⁹

3 A Sign of Respect and Gratitude

Layard's *good offices* were even known to the Prefect of the Congregation for Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni (Paliano, 1816-Rome, 1892). In a letter of thanks, the Cardinal acknowledged Layard's unflinching support “in difesa degli oppressi”, and exhorted him in sparing no effort to wield his power in favour of the “sventurati cattolici orientali di tutti

i riti”.²⁰ Nevertheless, Layard's reports of Christian massacres of Turks, along with his heated and outspoken dispatches exacerbated his relationships with the British Prime Minister, W.E. Gladstone (Liverpool, 1809-Hawarden Castle, 1898). Hence, in June 1880, Layard was recalled from Constantinople.²¹

It is possible, however, that his benevolent attitude towards the Christian communities and the high regard in which he was held by the Christian authorities, resulted in a gift to him of the four illuminated Armenian manuscripts. There is no definitive record of when they entered the collection that Layard had been accruing since the late 1850s, nor regarding their provenance, but, according to Lady Enid, “he must have got

¹⁹ See London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXV, Add MS 39055, fols. 50-54.

²⁰ London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XC, Add MS 39020, fol. 54: Letter Card. G. Simeoni to A.H. Layard, 7 May 1878. Layard and Simeoni were acquainted since 1875 ca, see London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. LXXX, Add MS 39010, fol. 370: Letter G. Simeoni to A.H. Layard, Rome, 9 December 1876. Layard's influence, and consequently that of the British Government, on the Sultan Abdul Hamid II was so apparent that, after the cession of Cyprus, Layard was awarded the GCB in June 1878.

²¹ In Layard's own words: “Considering the enemies I have in the Cabinet, who will never forgive me for being a real liberal and sympathising with Musulmans [*sic*] as well as Christians when exposed to oppression and [harm], a personal appeal could be fruitless”. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Gregory Papers, Dep. d. 970, fol. 117: A.H. Layard to W.H. Gregory, Rome, 11 December 1880.

[them] while at Constantinople".²² Indeed, they were to appear at the Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Art and Applied Art in Venice in September 1881.²³

For this occasion, Sir Henry had also lent other objects still less known to the Venetian public, such as several archaeological objects, either from Nineveh or Samos, two Spanish armours, and a Hispano-Moresque plate.²⁴ The choice seems by no means to have been accidental. Layard envisaged re-establishing his public persona; therefore, he had carefully combined antiquities that had contributed to his fame with others of less acknowledged merits. But Venice, where he had decided to settle since early 1881, was exempt from "English snobberies" (Parry 2004). Effectively, the exhibition proved to be successful and Layard's collection garnered great attention. After a short while, Layard received a request from the Director of the State Archive, Bartolomeo Cecchetti (Venice, 1838-Rome, 1889), to donate specimens akin to those lent to the exhibition for scholarly purposes.²⁵ The manuscripts, too, had captivated the attention of the Armenian Mekhitarist Fathers of Saint Lazarus, with whom the Layards appear to have been well acquainted.²⁶

It should be thus unsurprising that, in May 1885, Layard resolved to sit for a portrait with one of these codices (fig. 3).²⁷

The portrait, made by a young and little-known artist named Charles Vigor, depicts Sir Henry in the foreground of a generic interior with a greyish wall, seated in a red velvet, wooden armchair, and holding on his lap an open codex, which I have identified as one of his Four Gospels (now at the Library of the Armenian Mekhitarist Fathers of Saint Lazarus, inv. 1591), open on the Gospel of Luke (fig. 4).²⁸ The brightness and exuberance of the pages of the manuscript are counterbalanced by the solemnity of this "Victorian worthy of later years".²⁹ Ironically, Layard wrote to his friend Elizabeth Rigby, wife of the late Sir Charles L. Eastlake (Norwich, 1809-London, 1893):

I have been sitting for my portrait to a young artist, Mr Vigor, who has produced what is genuinely considered a very good likeness. I can only say that I look so virtuous, benevolent and pious that it only requires that an aureola should be put round my head to make me a perfect Saint!³⁰

Despite Lady Eastlake's reply, "I fear I sh[oul]d not recognize it! or rather you",³¹ essential aspects of Layard's late diplomatic career, in this

22 Lady Layard's Journal, Ca' Cappello, Venice, 26 February 1902. URL <http://pops.baylor.edu/layard/xml.php?fn=19020226.xml&h> (2018-06-12).

23 The Exhibition was held to coincide with the meeting in Venice of the *Third International Geographical Congress*, to which Layard participated as delegate for England, India, and colonies. See the articles appeared in the *Illustrazione Italiana*, 1881, 38, 190; and in the *Gazzetta di Venezia*, 27 September 1881, 2: *Esposizione d'arte antica e moderna e d'arte applicata all'industria*. Cf. the articles published between 27 August and 19 October 1881.

24 See *Esposizione d'arte antica e moderna 1881*, room I, nos. 25, 3; room II, nos. 81-2, 94-7, 118, 120, 133.

25 For a full account of the archaeological bequest that Layard made to the Venice State Archive, see Ermidoro 2018.

26 Lady Layard's journals chart many visits to the island of Saint Lazarus.

27 Charles Vigor, *Portrait of Austen Henry Layard*. 1885. Oil on canvas, 120.5 × 80.5 cm. London, British Museum, 1968,0518.1 On Charles Vigor there is little information, he was active in London between 1882 and 1907 and if one considers that among the portraits painted by Vigor in that same 1885, there were those of Lady Layard (BM, 2006,0307.1), General Layard, Edward Layard, Alexander Malcolm, Antonio Cortelazzo and Lord Hammond, it can be fairly said that Layard played the role of Maecenas with him. With the exception of the latter portrait, the rest were displayed in Layards' London house, at 1 Queen Anne, and by terms of Sir Henry's will passed to Major Arthur Layard in 1912, and are presently untraced.

28 Charles Vigor was a British painter, distinctly of portraits and figurative subjects. He was active between 1881 and 1917. Among the principal venues where he exhibited his works are the Manchester Art Gallery (1888), the Grosvenor Gallery (1889), and the Royal Academy (1894). In 1912, Queen Alexandra bought one of his paintings entitled *A Golden Stream*; see *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 July 1912.

29 Curtis, Reade 1995, 221.

30 Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland (hereafter only NLS), John Murray Archive, MS.42336, fol. 94v: Letter A.H. Layard to E. Eastlake (née Rigby), Ca' Cappello, San Polo, Venice, 1 July 1885. On Lady Eastlake, see Sheldon 2009, 1-27; Avery-Quash, Sheldon 2011, 50-80.

31 Edinburgh, NLS, John Murray Archive, MS.42171: Letter E. Eastlake (née Rigby) to A.H. Layard, 7 FitzRoy Square, 12 July 1885. Quoted in Sheldon 2009, 547.

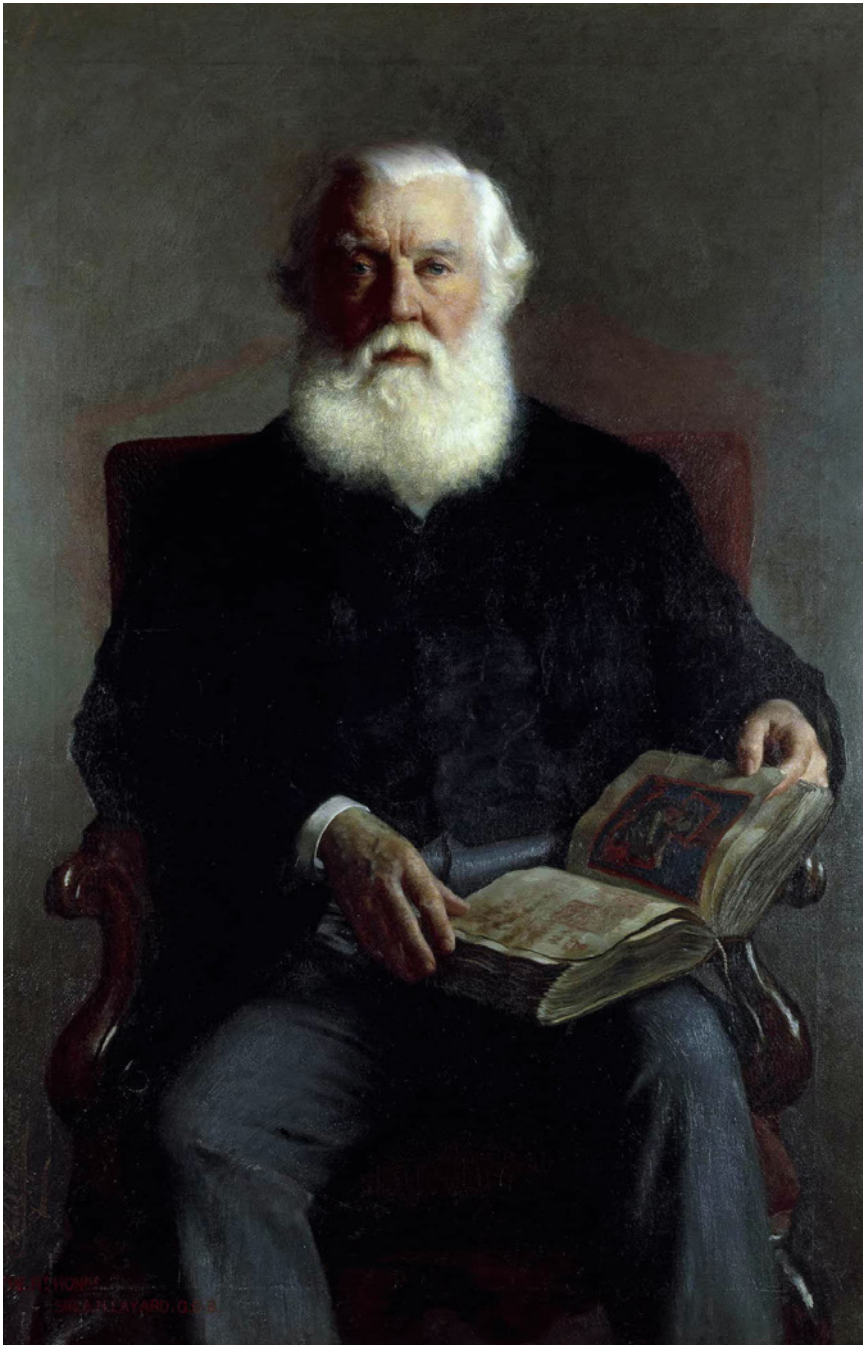


Figure 3. Charles Vigor, *Portrait of Austen Henry Layard*. 1885. Oil on canvas, 120.5 × 80.5 cm. London, British Museum. © Trustees of the British Museum

portrait, come alive before one's very eyes. Yet paradoxically Layard, "the man who unintentionally had proved the Bible true" through his discovery of Nineveh, again recurred to a hint of early Christianity to restate his image.³²

His joking aside, Layard was fairly proud of the result of portrait, as appears from his correspondence with Sir William H. Gregory (Dublin Castle, 1816-London, 1892), another dear friend and fellow Trustee of the National Gallery.³³ In

³² In 1886 Layard was elected President of the Society of Biblical Archaeology. London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XVI, Add MS 58164, fol. 68: W.H. Rylands to A.H. Layard, 12 January 1886.

³³ On William Henry Gregory, see Falkiner 2004.



Figure 4. Unknown miniaturist, *Portrait of St. Luke*. 1469. Paper, 255 × 180 mm, fol. 134v. Venice, Mekhitarist Library. 2018. © Biblioteca dei Padri Mechitaristi di San Lazzaro

it, Layard happily asserted that the portrait “is certainly clever and is said to be like”.³⁴ By December of that same year, the painting was sent to 1 Queen Anne Street, the Layards London house, and there hung.

4 The Bequest

Some months following Sir Henry’s death (5 July 1894), the Armenian Father Ghewond Ališan (Constantinople, 1820-Venice, 1901), to whom the codices had already been made available for study, dared requesting them for the Mekhitarist library.

Illustrissima Signora,
Giacché ha piaciuto a Lei, secondo mi riferirò le Sig.ne Holas, che o personalmente o per scritto, io chiarisca la mia idea intorno i manoscritti Armeni del compianto Sir H. L., prendo la libertà di esporla. Quanto mi ricordo [sic] erano quat[t]ro i Manoscritti armeni, tutti libri di chiesa, comunissimi, di conservazione assai buona, di esecuzione mediocre. Forse vi si troveranno le mie note che in schede separate ho messo in ciascheduno.

Supposto che non siano rigorosamente destinati pel Museo Britannico, (il quale avendo mezzi forti ci ha rapito tanti e tanti altri Manoscritti), e che Lei, Signora, potesse disporne, io desidererei per memoria della lunga ed onorevole amicizia del nobile Possessore che ci ha mostrata e a me e alla mia nipote (Stavrides), di collocare i detti Man[oscrit]ti fra gli nostri di S. Lazzaro, e perpetuare in pari tempo la sua e la di Lei compiacenza. Tutto però se non ci sia nessuna difficoltà, e che aggredisca [sic] a Lei, Signora, al cui resto con rispetto,

Umil. Servo

P. Leon M. Alishan Mekit ³⁵

It is apparent that, at this time, Lady Layard, who was still busy reordering her husband’s papers, did not know how to dispose them and no evidence of a reply has come to light yet.³⁶ Notwithstanding, the gift was then granted, though partly. In February 1902 Lady Layard resolved to present to the Armenian Mekhitarist College of Venice, Moorat Raphael, located at Palazzo Zenobio, one Psalter (inv. 1583), Four Gospels (inv. 1591), and a third manuscript of which no current record can be found. The fourth codex, instead, was destined for the Correr Museum at Michelangelo Guggenheim’s suggestion (fig. 5).³⁷

Lady Layard, in fact, had chosen to donate the manuscripts, not only “where they are understood & appreciated”, but also “as a remembrance of [Sir Henry]”.³⁸ No better place than these two institutions can be imagined for these codices that Layard had so much appreciated.

5 Conclusion

The turning point in the history and meaning of these manuscripts, retraced here, illustrates a change both in attitude and collecting. Notably, it contributes to explaining the rise of interest in this kind of artefact, not only in Europe, but also throughout United States, especially if we consider figures like John Pierpont Morgan (who started collecting this type of manuscript about 1917), Chester Beatty (ante 1920), Calouste Gulbenkian (1926-35), Edgar Johnson Goodspeed (1927ca), and Henry Walters (by 1931). The manuscripts were a remarkable expression of Layard’s multifaceted interests and tastes and, no doubt, immensely useful to the recovery of his reputation as a discerning collector and scholar of Eastern topics.

If a collection is to be intended as a dialogue space, as well as self-celebratory, then Layard’s decision to be portrayed with one of the latest and most representative pieces in his collection, testi-

³⁴ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Gregory Papers, Dep. d. 972, fol. 64: A.H. Layard to W.H. Gregory, Ca’ Cappello, San Polo, Venice, 16 June 1885.

³⁵ Venice, Library of Mekhitarist of Saint Lazarus: Letter Fr. G. Ališan to E. Layard, 2 November 1894.

³⁶ Lady Layard did not even acknowledge receipt of the letter in her journal.

³⁷ Venice, Archivio Museo Correr (hereafter AMC), Registro Doni, no. 750a. Venice, AMC, no. 51/1902: Minute for the letter of thanks to E. Layard, 28 February 1902; Letter A. Scrinzi to E. Layard, 28 February 1902. On this occasion, Lady Layard also donated four Spanish combs to the Correr Museum, which she believed “interesting for the history of costumes”. Lady Layard’s Journal, Ca’ Cappello, Venice, 26 February 1902. URL <http://pops.baylor.edu/layard/xml.php?fn=19020226.xml&h> (2018-06-12)

See also, AMC, Registro Doni, no. 795. Guggenheim took a great interest in expanding the collections of the Correr Museum, to which he donated over 350 pieces of textiles, see Moronato 1988.

³⁸ Lady Layard’s Journal, Ca’ Cappello, Venice, 26 February 1902.

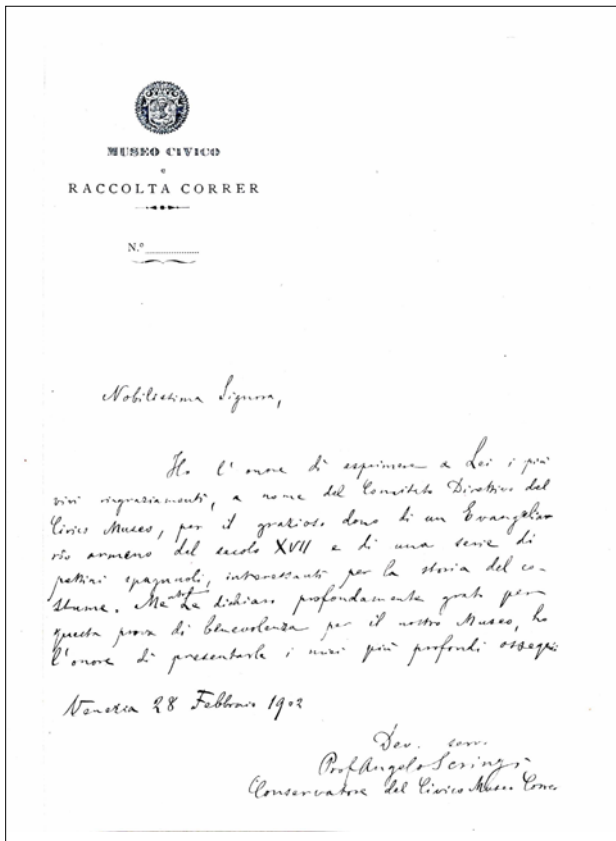


Figure 5. Angelo Scrinzi, Letter to Enid Layard. 28 February 1902. Venice, Library of the Correr Museum. 2018. © Biblioteca Correr - Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

fies to his wish to be remembered for his supportive interventions in the Armenian Question.

This study is thus aimed not only at making public a lesser-known part of the Layard collection, but also at renewing scholarly attention to it.

6 Analysing Layard's Armenian Manuscripts

The codices presented here range from 1469 to early seventeenth century and consist of a Psalter and two so-called Four Gospels, each representing a different artistic trend. The information gathered derives mainly from a direct analysis of the manuscripts, combined with the notes of Father Ališan.³⁹

6.1 The Four Gospels in the Library of the Correr Museum

This pocket tetra-gospel (inv. no. PD 10a) presents the typical Armenian style binding, in wooden boards covered with blind-stamped brown leather, embellished with a floret border and intertwining motifs. In the centre, there is a cross with floral arms inscribed in a rhombus. The surface of both boards shows the holes left by studs or by a dust jacket, now missing as well as the clasp. The *ex libris* of the Correr Museum and a vignette reminiscent of Lady Layard's donation are glued on the front counter-plate.

There is no evidence either about the copyist or the miniaturist. A handwritten loose note reads: "Four Gospels without date; it seems written at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The first pages of St. Mark and St. Luke are missing, certainly cut for their ornaments, as well as the figures of the four Evangelists".

The text, written in black ink on a compact and polished paper of oriental origin, is arranged on two columns bounded by thin red ink lines. The number of lines varies between 18 (fol. 1v) and 24 (fol. 112r), depending on the size of the *bolorigir*. The codex, severely mutilated and trimmed, consists of 24 gatherings of varying sizes and is numbered in Armenian letters (fols. 2-24).

The recent foliation, pencilled on the recto of each folio in the upper right corner, numbers 271 folios. Apart from the removal of the incipit of the Gospels of St. Luke and Mark and the full-page portraits of all the evangelists, the Gospel of St. Mark preserves only the chapters from I, 14 to XVI, 8. Further mutilations involve the rear guards, *membranaceous* like the anterior ones. Most folios have water staining and consequently mould damage, causing some brown flecking throughout the manuscript. Due to trimming, all of the pages have lost pieces of decoration in the upper part. Often paint has been transferred from marginal ornaments to the adjacent page (see e.g. fols. 10, 121, 201) and has somewhat faded. Some folios are loose. Despite the common quality of the work and the numerous subtractions, the codex is qualitatively discreet thanks to a profuse ornamentation and its rich palette.

The structure is that of the Byzantine type

³⁹ A concise analysis of the Correr *Four Gospels* (Inv. No. PD 10a) and the *Saghmosaran* (Inv. No 1583) has been presented for the exhibition *Voglia d'Italia. Il collezionismo internazionale nella Roma del Vittoriano*, held in Rome and curated by Emanuele Pellegrini. See Riva 2017, 360-2. I would like to acknowledge my warmest thanks to Father Hamazasp for having provided me with all the details relating to the manuscripts at San Lazzaro.



Figure 6. Unknown miniaturist, *Xoran, or headpiece, and incipit of St. Matthew's Gospel*. XVII century. Paper, 135 × 105 mm, fol. 10r. Venice, Library of the Correr Museum, 2018. © Biblioteca Correr - Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia



Figure 7. Unknown miniaturist, *Xoran, or headpiece, and incipit of St. John's Gospel*. XVII century. Paper, 135 × 105 mm, fol. 201r. Venice, Library of the Correr Museum, 2018. © Biblioteca Correr - Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

of gospel, with the only addition at the end of the text being the pericope of the adulterous woman (fol. 227): Eusebius of Caesarea's epistle to Carpianus (fols. 1v-2r); four tables of concordances (fols. 3v-7v); Gospel of Matthew (fols. 8r-83r); Gospel of Mark (fols. 185r-122r); index of the Gospel of Luke (fols. 122v-123v); Gospel of Luke (fols. 124r-199r); index of the Gospel of John (fol. 199v); incomplete Trinitarian doxology, perhaps written by another hand (fol. 200r); Gospel of John (fols. 201r-227r); glosses (fol. 227v).

The proemial pages of Matthew (fig. 6) and John (fig. 7) are thus the richest: under the elaborate headpieces, *xoran*, embellished with guilloche plant volutes and crowned with colourful striped birds, the initial letter of each Gospel is formed by the symbol of the Evangelist, engaged in supporting the book. Along the right-

hand margin extends the typical incipient ornament with floral interweaving, for the whole length of the text field. The first lines of the text are ornate and written in gold, blue and red *erkat'agir* - namely, letters of forged iron, a standard script used from the fifth to the thirteenth century. Conversely, the rest of the text is in *bolorgir*, which corresponds to the rounded, minuscule hand. The decoration is then expressed in the initials by the ornithomorphic motifs of each pericope and in the numerous marginalia, sometimes aniconic (see e.g., fols. 51r, 77v, 188v), sometimes figurative (fols. 81v, 121r, 196v). Rubrics are in red, as small secondary initials.

For the structure and the ornamental apparatus of the Eusebian canons, Macler used to compare the Correr Gospel with the Codex Parisinus no. 21 and the MS of Bologna no. 3290.⁴⁰ Further

⁴⁰ Macler 1913, 593. The parallel with the Bologna manuscript is also sustained by Uluhogian 2010, 400.

stylistic parallels, particularly in the structure of the figures and in the modelling of the faces, can be found in the Hymnal W. 547 (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, see e.g. fol. 7v), in the MS Or. 14161 (London, British Library) and in the John Frederick Lewis Oriental MS No. 116 (Philadelphia, Free Library).

These stylistic features, typical of seventeenth century Constantinopolitan scriptoria, anchor the origins of the manuscript more firmly in this context.

6.2 The Psalter in the Library of Mekhitarist Fathers of Saint Lazarus

With regard to the *Saghmosaran* - namely, an Armenian Psalter - the colophon informs us that the codex was produced at Constantinople during the catholicosate of Melkisetek (1599-1600, inv. no. 1583). It was drafted by the Bishop Lazarus in the Monastery of Saint George, on behalf of a "cultivated person and astronomer", who was also a bibliophile, but whose name had been obliterated "per mala voglia o invidia". Further alterations, though discrete, are due to the preservation of the codex, which shows little colour falls, traces of burnishing of the paper and trimming in the top. It appears to be complete in pages. Altogether the manuscript is well preserved.

The binding, which appears to have been re-backed in modern times, is Moroccan red on cardboard plates, bordered by three gilded frames, stamped as well with the small floral iron cross at the centre of the field. The spine, in brown leather with five ribs, is decorated with golden geometric patterns. The *ex libris* of the Armenian Fathers of Saint Lazarus is glued on the front counter-plate, under which the origin of the gift has been handwritten in ink. The foliation, which corresponds to the same period, is affixed in Arabic numerals by means of a mechanical stamp on the front of each folio, in the bottom right hand corner.

The parchment flyleaves belong to an older manuscript written in *erkat'agir*.

The manuscript, which measures 151x104 mm, is written in black ink on oriental laid paper, thick and yellowish white in colour and contains altogether 320 folios (plus the four unfoliated pa-

per flyleaves). The text is in alternating colours of red, blue and gold. Red only is used for small secondary initials and rubrics.

The codex comprises: letter of Epiphany, bishop of Cyprus (fols. 1r-9r), the Prayer of the scribes (fols. 9v-11r), a full-page illumination of King David (fol. 11v), canonical psalms (fols. 12r-298v), apocryphal psalms (fols. 299r-300r), the Prayer to Manassé, King of Judas (fols. 300v-302v), the *Magnificat* (fol. 303r), the *Benedictus* (fols. 303v-305r), the *Nunc dimittis* (Canticle of Simeon, fol. 305v), antiphon composed by the scribe (fol. 309), prayer of San Nersēs of Glay called the Gracious (fol. 311), the *Gloria, Pater nostrum* and *yišatakarank'* (fol. 318).

The *mise en page* is refined and accurate: the text is written in *bolorgir* in one column of 17 lines per page. With the exception of the first folio, which appears incomplete in decoration and has been severely damaged, the others bear rich ornamentation, mainly of floral and geometrical patterns. Emphasis is given to the opening of the sections, that usually displays a larger ornithomorphic or zoomorphic initial; the first three lines alternate gold and red ink, the incipit is further highlighted by the presence of marginalia. These mainly consist of birds, scrolls and flower elements, executed in gold, blue and green. Colours are brilliant and intense, and richness is asserted also by chrysography.

There is just one full-page illumination depicting King David seated on a throne, resting his bare feet on a green pillow (fig. 8). A red frame borders the scene: *the Beloved* is portrayed with white beard and moustache, sporting on his head a crown richly adorned with pearls and gems, surrounded by a golden halo. In his hands he holds a zither, whose end part terminates in a goose shape. He wears a blue robe, above which there is a purple mantle. Above, in the upper right corner, the hand of God appears through round-disk clouds to bless him. Thanks to divine inspiration, King David intones the psalms, which start on the adjacent folio. Another figural illumination appears at fol. 223v, in which the prophet Ezekiel is represented sitting on a throne, wearing the robe of the sultan and a crown, and holding a scroll of parchment with his right hand, while with his left hand he supports his chin in a meditative attitude.

6.3 The Four Gospels in the Library of the Mekhitarist Fathers of Saint Lazarus

Codex inv. no. 1591 is the oldest among the three Layard manuscripts. It contains both figural and ornamental miniatures, though figural representations are limited to the full-page portraits of the four Evangelists.

According to the colophon, the manuscript was commissioned by Normanuk, the wife of the scribe Stephen, in memory of her parents, cousin and son. It was then donated to the church of the Holy Mother of God, which, together with the Churches of Saint John the Baptist and the Holy Apostles, was part of the Monastery of Avak Vank'.⁴¹ Dated 1469, it measures 255 × 180 mm and is bound in thick dark leather and decorated with a central stepped cross, flanked by ornamental motifs intertwined. The volume should have been adorned with a book cover, as suggested by the presence of hollows and grooves on both boards. The spine is decorated with vine-scroll stamp in the vertical and shows a modern label for shelf marking, written both in Armenian letters and Arabic numerals.

As indicated earlier, the scribe named Stephen wrote the manuscript. The miniaturist remains anonymous, or might be the same Stephen, as suggested by Father Ališan.

The extant binding, due to a certain Peter, dates back to 1636 and replaces the original one made by Knar. The parchment flyleaves having been lost were replaced by a sheet of parchment of an older manuscript, maybe a lectionary, written in two columns in angular, square *erkat'agir*. A part from those four unfoliated pages, the codex counts 278 folios with 23 lines each.

The manuscript is in fairly good conditions, apart from occasional creases and small deteriorations: some pages have brown flecking, and there is water staining, perhaps caused by mould damage, notably in the outer bottom and top margins throughout. Some folios were trimmed (fols. 123, 134) and others repaired with new paper. However, the missing pages are part of Mark 8:9-20; John 5:4 and 7:53- 8:11. The pericope of the woman caught in adultery might come from another manuscript, since the comments on the text and the chapter's numbers appear to be different.

The text is written with perfect, very regular calligraphy, in black ink in *bolorgir*. The first let-



Figure 8. Unknown miniaturist, *King David*. 1599-1600 ca. Paper, 151 × 104 mm, fol. 11v. Venice, Mekhitarist Library. 2018. © Biblioteca dei Padri Mechitaristi di San Lazzaro

ters of the Gospels adopt the shape of their symbols and the first three lines are entirely illuminated with foliate motifs. At the beginning of each section, the initial is a large uncial red ink letter.

The manuscript opens with the *Epistula ad Carpianum* (fols. 2v-3r). The Canons of Concordance then follow (fols. 4-11); these are included within multi-coloured columns and arches surmounted by shelducks (fols. 4, 5), glossy ibis (fols. 6, 7), pheasants (fols. 8, 9), and curlews (fols. 10, 11). Furthermore, the Canons's headpieces are filled with carpet-like designs and display a wide variety of red, green and blue flowers, birds, lions, anthropomorphic figures, and other decorative patterns. Arches are richly filled with geometric features, each one distinct. Marginal ornaments contribute to the animation

⁴¹ On the Monastery of Avak Vank', see Thierry de Crussol 2005, 109-12.



Figure 9. Unknown miniaturist, *Portrait of St. Mark and incipit of his gospel*. 1469. Paper, 255 × 180 mm, fols. 15v, 16r. Venice, Mekhitarist Library. 2018. © Biblioteca dei Padri Mechitaristi di San Lazzaro

of the composition, and vary between stylised palmette and acanthus scrolls, striped birds, eagle-headed men (fols. 89r, 123r, 135v), crosses, and elegant circumvolutions.

Each Gospel is preceded by the index. Full-page illuminations are devoted to the Evangelists only, and in spite of being deprived of their original golden embellishment, they display bright and vivid tonalities, which are yet one-dimensional. Attempts at shading are limited to the face, arms and feet of the Evangelists. Their figures are plastically modelled, in contrast to the ample bulging draperies and the more schematised architectural elements that fill the background.

Matthew (fol. 15v), Mark (fol. 88v), and Luke (fol. 134v, fig. 4) are seated on a wide wooden bench. Matthew is accompanied by the angel (fol. 16r, fig. 9), clad in a long skirt and a belted tunic, Mark

by two facing lions (fol. 89r), and Luke by the ox (fol. 135r). John (fol. 211r), instead, represents an “iconographic variant [...] commonly used in Byzantine art from the 11th century on” (Nersessian 1963, 63); he is traditionally depicted standing and dictating to his disciple Procoros on the island of Patmos. The Gospels are concluded by short summaries that were later added.

Similarities in the decoration of this codex can be found in some contemporary manuscripts designed in Constantinople or in its surroundings. The most remarkable parallels appear with the Four Gospels, dated 1488, inv. W. 542 (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery), especially with regard to the epistle of Eusebius and the Canon Tables (fols. 3v-10r), and with most of the headpieces at the beginning of the Gospels (fols. 15r, 89r, 219r). However, the Venetian specimen is richer.

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