

The Culture of Julfa *khachkars* and their Repatriation Movement

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Abstract The destruction of Julfa *khachkars* by Azerbaijani authorities in 2005-2006 at the state level became a stimulus for a unique awakening aimed at the proclamation and dissemination of Jugha classic *khachkars*. Today, if the number of Julfa original *khachkars* in the world does not exceed three dozen, the number of their replicas exceeds three hundred. The article presents the *khachkar* culture of Julfa, the process of copying the destroyed *khachkars*, the experience of digital repatriation.

Keywords Khachkar. Julfa. Destruction. Replica. Repatriation movement.

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1 A Brief Introduction to the Culture of *khachkars*

As a rule, a *khachkar* (խաչքար, 'cross-stone') is a stele erected vertically outdoors, positioned in relation to the four cardinal points. Its flat western side has an ornamentally carved central cross, surrounded with vegetal and geometric ornaments, and sometimes sculptural compositions with birds, animals or anthropomorphic images.

Khachkars are a unique product of Armenian Christian cultural development, one of the most widely recognised symbols of Armenian identity. With their amazing sculptural compositions, the redemptive symbolism of the cross, and the stone's solidity that recalls a sense of eternity, *khachkars*



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have always been the most venerated sacred objects for the Armenian faithful, and one of the most accessible because of their position outdoors and their great number (Petrosyan 2008; 2015).

In recognition of the essential role of *khachkars* in the historical image of Armenian culture and the formation of Armenian identity, as well as their important role today, in 2010 UNESCO added *khachkars* to its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (with the sub-title 'The Symbolism of *Khachkars* and the Art of their Creation').¹

The first winged crosses and artistic compositions with crosses in Armenia date to the fourth century AD. By the late sixth and early seventh century, all of the conditions necessary for the development of *khachkars* were in place. However, two centuries of Arabic rule in Armenia, beginning in 640 AD, and the subsequent ban on crosses placed outdoors nearly stopped this development. Gaining their classic size and compositional form in the ninth century and reaching their greatest flourishing in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, *khachkars* continued to be produced until the eighteenth century. These monuments that stand 1 to 3 meters in height, 0,5 to 1,5 meters in width and 10 to 30 centimetres in depth are spread widely over the Armenian Highland: in ancient settlements and cemeteries, at crossroads and on hills, close to rivers and bridges, on the sacred grounds surrounding chapels, churches and monasteries. Armenian refugees spread *khachkars* along their migration paths in Georgia, Caucasian Albania, the Northern Caucasus, on the banks of the Volga, in Crimea, in Moldova and the Carpathian Mountains, as well as in Iran, Syria, Palestine and elsewhere.

The greatest visual appeal of *khachkars* comes from their braided vegetal and geometric sculptural decoration, created by means of uninterrupted twisting and interlocking lines. *Khachkars* were monuments in the open air, very accessible, visible and touchable for the faithful [fig. 1]. The idea of eternity evoked by the continuity of the lines is one of the fundamental characteristics which give *khachkars* a sense of visible solemnity and the power of the Holy Sign [fig. 2].

Being placed at the centre of the composition of a *khachkar*, the cross connects the bottom of the composition (the ornaments of which symbolise the Earth, human life, the past and the evil) and the upper part (which symbolises Heaven, sacred things, the future and goodness). The cross embodies the universal intercessor between the believer and God, both in earthly life and especially at the end of times, during the Christian Last Judgment.

¹ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/armenian-cross-stones-art-symbolism-and-craftsmanship-of-khachkars-00434>.



Figure 1 Medieval cemetery with khachkaras, 12-17th cc, Arinj, Kotayk province. © Author, 2006

Figure 2 Khachkars, 13th c. Hovhanavank monastery, Argatsotn province. © Author, 2005

2 An Introduction to the Culture of Julfa *khachkars*

Julfa *khachkars* have time and again become a subject of interest for Armenian specialists. However, the Julfa *khachkars*' complex and unique iconography and symbolism have continued to require in-depth research and explanation. In fact, this situation made the Julfa *khachkars* become the subject of the Azeri pseudo-research in the eighties. The pretend examination had one goal – to reinvent the indigenous Christian Armenian heritage as 'Albanian-Azerbaijani'. This intentional academic dishonesty has given birth to the Azerbaijani historiography's absurd and inconsistent methodology. The main argument brought forward by the father and son Achundovs about the origin of Julfa *khachkars*, as well as all the *khachkars* in the regions of Artsakh, Syunik and Gegharkunik, is as follows. Those *khachkars* are not Armenian since unlike classical *khachkars* they harmonise Christian, Mithraic, Mongolian or other foreign images and themes (Achundov, Achundov 1983, 11-12; Achundov, Achundov 1986, 246-7). Unfortunately, for preservation, even Azerbaijan did not take this political research seriously. Following the 1992-1994 Artsakh war, during which the formerly Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous *oblast* won independence from Azerbaijan in a 'do-or-die' struggle to preserve its Armenian identity, Azerbaijanis abandoned pseudoscience and addressed the issue of historical legitimacy by systematically destroying the entire medieval Armenian heritage under their control. Of the ten thousand *khachkars* of Julfa existing in the seventeenth century, only three thousand remained at the end of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, i.e. nowadays, the Azerbaijani government organised a barbaric action under the indifferent look of the 'civilised' world, as a result of which the last three thousand *khachkars* of Julfa were destructed. At the end of 2002 they were overthrown; the land was flattened and covered by earth. In December 2005, the Azerbaijani military detachments broke the last ones with heavy hammers, hacked them to pieces, transported them in cars and finally threw them in the River Araxes. This criminal action was photographed from the Persian bank and spread all over the world. This old land of *khachkars* is now a firing field [fig. 3].

Thanks to its exceptional economic and cultural importance in Armenia, the city of Jougha, located in the left bank of the Araks river and on the trade road going from Persia to Caucasus and to Europa, was able to support the development of a new style of *khachkars* [fig. 4].

Proportions of the stele were changed (the length exceeded the width three or four times), the steles did not narrow to the end [fig. 5], they had no pedestals and they were dug in the earth. The cornice was slightly expressed in the architectural aspect and projecting frontons did not exist at all. Instead of it the lancet niches reached a real-architectural depth thanks to its multi profiling edges [fig. 6]. The ob-

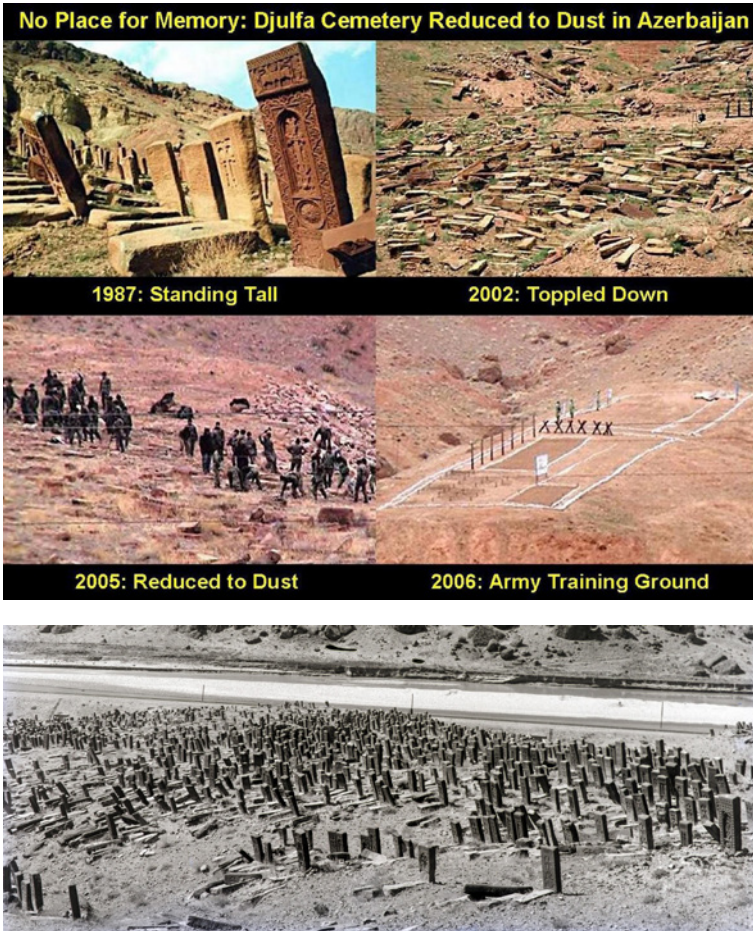


Figure 3 Poster, showing the annihilation of Julfa's cemetery, <https://blog.amnestyusa.org/djulfa-cemetery-destruction-timeline/>

Figure 4 Julfa's cemetery, Araxes riverside area. 1915. Aram Vruyr's archive, Service for the protection of historical environment and cultural museum-reservations, digitized by Julfa cemetery repatriation digital project. Photo by Aram Vruyr

long stele dictated a new principle of stele fragmentation. As a rule, the central cross was replaced by two parallel rows of crosses which weakened the structural entity of the composition and contributed to add decorativeness [fig. 7]. The composition consisted of four vertical elements: the cornice, the apse (or apses), the rosette, the inscription and (or) the relief [figs. 5-7]. Ornamental patterns were given the same thematic and technical treatment, almost reaching the standard.



Figure 5 Khachkar. 1602. Julfa. Master Grigor, now in Holly See Echmiadzin. © Author, 2005



Figure 6 Khachkars. 1597, 1599. Julfa. Aram Vruyr's archive, Service for the protection of historical environment and cultural museum-reservations, <https://escs.am/am>. Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of RA, digitized by Julfa cemetery repatriation digital project. Photo by Aram Vruyr, 1915



Figure 7 Khachkars. 1588. Julfa. Aram Vruyr's archive, Service for the protection of historical environment and cultural museum-reservations, <https://escs.am/am>, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of RA, digitized by Julfa cemetery repatriation digital project. Photo by Aram Vruyr, 1915

At the same time, Julfa khachkars are not creations in isolation. The distinct composition division into cornice, niche, rosette (and sometimes scenes with human beings), for example, is a standard feature for khachkars from the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries with one exception: Julfa khachkars make a vibrant architectural statement. The same can be said about a number of decorations: the use of small crosses and stars as well as the absorbing of rosette in the slab are commonplace. But in Julfa's case, their use is more expressive, symmetric, and perfect. There are unique Julfa decorations as well, such as acanthus blossoms enclosed in trefoil arches that along with oval blossoms border the edges and sometimes the cornice; and of course, the lancet shape arches show absolutely new architectonic feature [figs. 5-7], borrowing from Muslim or even European architecture.



Figure 8 *The Last Judgement*, khachkar's cornice. 1602. Julfa, now in Holly See Echmiadzin. © Author, 2005

The cornice is embellished with four-winged acanthus blossoms, lancet arches, trefoil arches, plant motifs or simply perfect squares, diamond-shapes, and astral decorations. The presence of squared holes suggests that some khachkars might have been decorated with natural stones or glass inserts of different colours. Iconographic carvings are notable for detailed relief and pronounced mastery. On the cornice one can notice evangelic themes: the Annunciation, Nativity, Maria with Jesus, Wise Men, Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, Deesis, Last Judgment [figs. 8, 10]. The composition usually depicts Christ in Majesty with the Symbols of the Four Evangelists. As a general rule, the iconographic composition is situated on the cornice, but there are a few examples of the portrait of Christ in the centre of the cross with an Evangelist depicted inside each of the corners. The most prominent feature of some Julfa khachkars is the mysterious presence of a two-bodied hybrid creature placed on the cornice [figs. 7, 9]. This creature has eight legs; both bodies are distinctively spotted, which may represent a biological quality (perhaps a leopard or a lynx) or even body armour; each shoulder has double angel wings; the feet are human-like and bear no resemblance to ordinary animal hoofs or claws seen in other metaphorical animal iconography. Each side of the body has a tail that, at its end, is a dragon with an open mouth facing in or out. The two bodies are joint in the form of a bearded human profile. Outside Julfa, this creature is also found on two other khachkars in Noravank and Hayravank crafted around the same time in the sixteenth century, probably by the craftsman known as Jacob the Paint-



Figure 9 *The Sphinx*, khachkar's cornice. 1601. Julfa, now in Holly See Echmiadzin. © Author, 2008

er (Յսկոք նկարող). My colleague Argam Ayvazyan, who has extensively photographed and publicised Julfa khachkars when the area was still part of the Soviet Union, calls this creature Sphynx but offers no interpretation (Ajvazyan 1984, fig. 37). The thorough discussion of this image with wide parallels in Armenia, Near East and Middle Asia allowed us to summarise that the Julfa hybrid is most likely an allegory of the Last Judgment and an artistic rendition of an otherwise standard depiction of the Almighty and his Evangelists (Petrosyan 2004, 68-73). One khachkar is of a particular interest since it applies the same principle but, instead of the Portrait of Christ, it depicts Crucifixion with a disproportionately small body of the Christ. Sometimes iconography can outspread throughout the entire composition, as seen in a 1588 khachkar depicting Nativity [fig. 11]. At the centre of the cross, we see Mary and Jesus with a donkey and a bull; on the upper sides of the cross are two angels; on the central side we see the Wise Men, followed by the shepherds and their sheep; on the lower left of the composition is deacon Mirzabakhsh holding a Bible. This 'cross-stone' has been erected as intercession for the Deacon, as explained in the inscription. In other cases, the central cross (or the four even crosses) has formed a sort of autonomous look and appears separate from the rest of the composition. This distinct appearance is also enabled by the architecturally-distinct background - the niche with enclosed cross. At the bottom of the cross, we see a base made of steps which has its own small rosette where the cross is leaning.



Figure 10 *Nativity cycle* (Annunciation, Maria with Jesus, Three magi, Presentation of Jesus at the Temple), khachkar's conice. 1602. Masters Grigor and Sargis, Julfa, now in Tbilisi Open Air Museum of Ethnography. © Author, 2016

Figure 11 (right) *Nativity cycle* (The manger, Angels, Three magi, Shepherds), khachkar. 1558. Julfa. Aram Vruyr's archive, Service for the protection of historical environment and cultural museum-reservations, <https://escs.am/am>, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of RA, digitized by Julfa cemetery repatriation digital project. © Aram Vruyr, 1915



Incidentally, the small rosette and steps are three-dimensional and appear to represent the earth and foundation/Golgotha, respectively [figs. 5-7]. All of this is done with such a deep relief that it seems that the niche is the storage of the cross and that the latter can be taken out and placed back. As a matter of principle, the rosette is separated from the entire composition with a square section. The round rosette is of particular interest, which is intricately carved with oval-chain decorations that span from the centre to the edges. The rosette often looks like a hat due to a thick overextended line, which often carries the relief or bulging inscription.

Another unique feature of Julfa *khachkars* is the depiction of the deceased on the lower section of the stelae [figs. 5-7, 11-12], which is a perfect documentation of secular life (Petrosyan 2008, 299-310). Such worldly imagery is also present on earlier, twelfth-fourteenth century Artsakh *khachkars*. Some compositions depicted deceased persons riding a horse and holding a cross, or on rare occasions attending a feast. The Julfa *khachkars* usually depict the deceased mounted and armed with a bow and arrow, as well as a sword. In one example, the armed cavalry has an infantryman behind him, who is probably his servant. Incidentally, a 1573 *khachkar* depicting an infantryman named Manuk has a remarkable inscription. It mentions that the cross is in memory of the brave soldier who, along with his father, was captured by aliens but with archery defeated their enemy (Ajvazyan 2004, 106, fig. 404). In addition to the deceased, secular themes of Julfa *khachkars* depict horses in motion. The rider is holding a cross in his right hand, similar to 12th century imagery that is connected to themes of the Second Coming of Christ. The cross, in this case, is a testament to the deceased's Christian identity, and will lead them to the real cross and, eventually, to eternal kingdom (Petrosyan 2008, 291-4). It should be noted that on several occasions the cross in the hand of the deceased consists of two intersecting ellipses [fig. 12]. According to facts gathered by Aram Vruyr, who documented Julfa and contemporary Armenian traditions during the First World War, similar crosses were made from wax and placed in the hands of deceased children (Vruyr 1967, 77, fig. 9). Some of the ram-shaped Julfa gravestones have engraved compositions where a cross-bearing cavalymen stands near the Tree of Life. We can conclude that such compositions suggest that the deceased appeared in paradise through the mediation of the cross. The major iconographic theme on Julfa's ram-shaped tombstones is the deceased pictured around a feast table, a folk imagination that apparently sees feast as a means to overcome death. Interestingly, sometimes the feast theme is confined to the mere presence of a pot of wine and a grail. Alas, the ram-shaped tombstone transferred from Julfa to Holly See Etchmiadzin - the Armenian Holy See - appears to be unfinished since it is missing intricate carvings and inscriptions.



Figure 12 *The Horseman*, khachkar's relief. 1502. Julfa, now in Holly See Echmiadzin. Master Grigor. © Author, 2005

To summarise, the Julfa khachkars – more than other contemporary Armenian khachkars – synthesise Christian ideals of salvation with folk ideas for overcoming death. As such, the Julfa khachkars are holistic documents of contemporary Armenian life, as well as a testament to the progressive role that the Julfa community played in paving the way for a more inclusive Armenian culture.

3 The New Wave of Cross-Stone Making

To understand the specific character of Julfa khachkars repatriation movement, we first need to consider a new wave of cross-stone making which began in the sixties of the last century. The national awakening of the Khrushchev's period, first of all, removed the architectural monumental forms from the cultural heritage store. In many various public places it began to appear monuments dedicated to the Patriotic War, and in exceptional cases, monuments with various khachkar attributes, dedicated to the victims of the Genocide. The need and possibility to restore the classical examples of architectural small forms (early medieval monuments, khachkars, springs) was a wave of monument creation dedicated to the Victims of the Great Patriotic War. This movement was widely supported by the official propaganda of the Soviet state.

In the sixties-seventies, monuments dedicated to the victims in war were set up in almost all large and small settlements of Armenia. This unique opportunity was used by a number of architects to revive the traditional forms and styles of Armenian medieval architecture. This revival of traditions was a well-known result of the sixties national-cultural movement, in which the researchers, writers and architects of Armenian culture played a primary role. As a matter of fact, in recent years, the final formation of the *khachkar* as the symbol of Armenian identity took place. Undoubtedly, the *khachkar*, unlike many other Armenian symbols (for example, the holy mountain, the temple, the book), was in the centre of attention of the Armenian *intelligentsia*. In the case of the medieval Armenian community, the *khachkar* was one of the main organisers of spiritual and ritual life.

The Armenian national ideology, which has been developing the ideal image of Armenia and the Armenian past from the seventeenth century, has not provided any place for *khachkar* in this system. Only in the sixties, when he discovered the culture of *khachkars*, which survived for centuries, did Sedrak Barkhudaryan restore the 'behaviour' of the masters who constructed it; architect Rafael Israelyan not only studied the *khachkars*, but also used a number of forms of *khachkars* in the realistic architectural practice (Petrosyan 2008, 373-6). The monument in the yard of the Echmiadzin cathedral [fig. 13], preceding the genocide memorial, was the first attempt of a complete reconstruction of this cultural phenomenon, nearly two and a half centuries later. Although in its iconography it had many motifs, including the elements of Urartian sculpture parallel to the cross-stones', it is remarkable that the inscription reads "Cross-stone prayer and pilgrimage, in commemoration of the victims of the April 1915 Genocide". In parallel with this, it was during these years that the Mother church began a *khachkar* gathering process with the initiative of the Supreme Patriarch Vazgen. Actually this process had a double effect. On the one hand, it was absolutely disadvantageous to remove the *khachkars* from their historical-cultural environment, and on the other hand, a number of Julfa *khachkars* were saved thanks to that assembly. It should be noted that *khachkars* were also brought from Artsakh, from the suburban Azerbaijani-populated villages of Armenia taking into account the existence of the same danger.

The *khachkar* was re-lunched with the function with which it interrupted its historical mission, as the vertical part of a burial monument [figs. 14-15]. In cemeteries ancient cross-stones began to emerge with new stylistic features. However, the *khachkar* was also included in the monument building which was widely spread during that period. In these and similar ways, old *khachkars* became an object of public attention and interest, and new ones have not only increased in cemeteries, but also gradually emerged from the cemetery, becoming a memorable spring, memorial column, decorative monument, state-



Figure 13 Khachkar on memory of Genocide. 1965. Author Raphael Israelyan, Holly See Echmiadzin. © Author, 2019



Figure 14 Replica of Tute Khachkar. 1970. Master Edik Harutyunyan, Avetaranots, Artsakh. © Author, 2012



Figure 15 Khachkar of Tute. 1184. Sanahin monastery, Lori province. © Author, 2005

national gift to different countries and to the cities, a national currency ornaments, a souvenir. The final stage of the *khachkar* as the symbol of the national identity can be considered as getting a publicly-known (i.e. recognisable) and acceptable image, just as every Armenian knows what the message of Avarayr is, the importance of Ararat or the invention of Mesrop Mashtots.

In general, it should be noted that any symbol of national identity is known as a result of attribution. Not only is the circumstance what the emblem or phenomenon represents, but rather what it is attributed to, how it is perceived or to what extent it corresponds to the current acceptable mentality or ritual. Moreover, often scientific commentary and generalised attribution may not coincide, and attribution can 'predetermine' the trends in scientific research.

The above mentioned phenomenon to a certain extent also refers to a *khachkar*. First and foremost, it is imagined as unique, unrepeatable. There is a common opinion that no two cross-stones look like each other; it is said that even the proportional components of the same *khachkar* do not look like each other. In this case, it is not important whether it is about the identity or similarity, about the ideology or technical performance. Or if it is the perception of similarity the same for us and for the medieval masters. It can be seen that there is a certain spread, at least among intellectuals, of the idea that the ideology and the meaning of cross-stone compositions is still unclear. This idea is figurative-ly (in an artistic way) found in Hrant Matevosyan's novel titled *Lord*:

We stood before the *khachkars*, we adored and admired by them, we rolled our heads in that detailed work, and yet we did not understand neither their meaning nor their beauty, there was some alienness between us and these stones. (1985, 488)²

If we take into consideration that these words belong to the main character of the novel, the master (that is, the landowner, the people), then one can think that these words are attributed to the whole Armenian community.

The modern masters of *khachkar*-making often represent themselves as specialists and interpreters of *khachkar* culture. And if in one case they manage to rebuild the *khachkar* ideals, it is difficult to meet a single *khachkar* or to repeat a famous *khachkar*. In some cases the contemporary *khachkar*-makers manage to make the copies of the famous *khachkars*, but more often the *khachkars* are being degraded, and even turning into a counter-*khachkar*, pointing out how different the cultural phenomenon of the past and the modern general perceptions about it can be.

² If not otherwise stated, all translations were made by the Author.

Khachkar culture had approximately such an image until the demolition of Jugha cross-stones: a. copies of the classical ones; b. new classic-like compositions; c. new compositions, creations and themes.

4 The Movement of Julfa's Annihilated *khachkars*

After the destruction of Julfa historical cemetery, a process has begun in Armenia, the deeper causes of which remain unclear. My PhD student Marianna Arutjunjan presented the first copies of Julfa *khachkars* five years ago and also gave the interpretation of the duplication process (Arutjunjan 2014). By referring to her article with more details, I would like to focus on the phenomenon of cultural repatriation. The first duplicates appeared in 2007, first in Vanadzor, then in Gyumri [fig. 16] and then in Yerevan [fig. 17], in monasteries [fig. 18], churches [fig. 19] and cemeteries. Just as in the sixties, now neither the state nor the Ministry of Culture has taken part in the process. The initiative was individual, regardless of the initiator's social-professional status (*khachkar*-maker, official, clergyman). Let us notice that the answer to the destruction of the *khachkars* has been given also by the individuals, not only by the state. It was a kind of public reaction in the absence of national-state adequate response. And regardless of the exact cross-stone, it seems to be the continuation of the *khachkar* gathering that the Vazgen Patriarch began.

During the second phase, which began approximately in 2012-13, on the contrary, duplicates were spread throughout the world. Now there are over three hundred replicas of Julfa's *khachkars* in Armenia and worldwide from Australia to Canada. By which term can we characterise this process? In anthropology now the term 'digital repatriation' is very popular, which means the return of items of cultural heritage in a digital format to the communities from which they originated. The term originated within anthropology, and typically referred to the creation of digital photographs of ethnographic material, which would then be made available to members of the originating culture (Lyons 2011, 16-18; Rossi 2017, 657-69). However, the term has also been applied to museum, library, and archive collections, and can refer not only to digital photographs but also to digital collections and virtual exhibits including 3D scans and audio recordings. It is interesting that this movement was began in eighties of 20th century and was directed to the indigenous people of Canada and USA. It was a scientific initiative based on the achievement of digital technologies. But in case of Julfa, we have fully folk initiative without any scientific or cultural policy approaches.

It is interesting that the destruction of Julfa's cemetery stimulated the digital repatriation movement too. It is important that the initiator of this project was the Catholic University of Australia, a coun-



Figure 16 Replicas on Julfa khachkars, Gyumri. © Author, 2012

Figure 17 Replicas on Julfa khachkars, Surb Hovhannaes Church, Yerevan © Author, 2019

Figure 18 Replicas on Julfa khachkars, Geghard Monastery, Kotayk province. © Author, 2016



Figure 19 Erection of replica of Julfas khachkar in the yard of the Surb Gevorg Church in Tbilisi, 3 April 2014, master Varazdat Hambartsumyan. © Author, 2014

try where digital repatriation of indigenous culture is essential too. A research group formed by Judith Crispin in 2014 has been formed, a number of sites have been visited, the archives of Argam Ayvazyan and Zaven Sargsyan have been studied, the collection of glass negatives of Aram Vruiy has been digitalised, a copy of the description of separate cross-stones was made, a few examples of khachkars have been digitised and documented [fig. 20] for future digitalisation process.³

Unfortunately at the end of 2016 Julfa Cemetery Digital Repatriation Project announced that

We will be unable to continue past December 31 this year due to a lack of funding. The Australian Catholic University has generously supported this project since its inception. They have done so on the understanding that we would find support from philanthropy to match their contributions. While we have tirelessly pursued this aim, we have been unable to find a financial partner and the university will not fund our work into 2017. We would need to find a grant of \$500.000 to continue to rebuild Julfa cemetery and, with only a few weeks left of the year, it seems unlikely we will achieve this.

3 For more details see <https://julfaproject.wordpress.com/>.



Figure 20 The Julfa cemetery repatriation digital project team at the digitizing work in the State museum of history of Armenia, 29 May 2016. © Author, 2016

We have fought very hard to restore Julfa cemetery in light, with a view to making Azerbaijan accountable for their act of vandalism in 2006, which robbed all Armenians of their cultural heritage. We have accumulated a vast archive of photographic evidence and have presented exhibitions of the cemetery, as a 15 m 3D visualisation, in Rome. We have risked our lives to get precious photographs of the Julfa site in Azerbaijan and have travelled across the Caucasus to gather almost every existing photograph of Julfa cemetery. We have photographed every surviving stone. Our goal of creating a huge 3D reconstruction of the cemetery and using it as proof of cultural genocide against Armenians to the world is not achievable without support. I want to thank everyone who has contributed to this project, especially our Armenian supporters. I would like to ask our friends in the Armenian apostolic church to pray for a miracle.⁴

At present, there is not any digital repatriation project, but the process of making Julfa *khachkars* replicas is going on.

⁴ Citation from the letter of Judith Crispin addressed to the members of Digital Repatriation team.

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