

The miniature art of Vaspurakan

Uniqueness of Style

The Vaspourakan Miniature art represents a unique direction in the medieval Armenian Fine Arts, which stretched basically from the 13th, to the 18th, centuries. The miniature art of Vaspourakan, in its manuscripts, artistic illustration on a page, variety of imagery and variety of style has a unique place in the Medieval Armenian Fine Arts domain.

According to the ancient rule, the miniature art of the illustrate manuscripts would be placed in the beginning of a record book, followed by miniature art featuring the lord, and eventually the altars. Therein material on which the artist is drawing is paper (we almost do not come by books/records made of sheepskin). The dominating principles in the Vaspourakan miniature arts' artistic creativity are the symbolic meaning and the narrative. In which case the imagery is presented in brief, in an almost symbolic version and the other by strictly narrative in a more formal way, we have come by handwritten scriptures where these principles have been applied together.



The Sacrifice of Abraham, (Matenadaran, N 3717), Gospel 1394, Painter Hovhannes Khizanetsi.

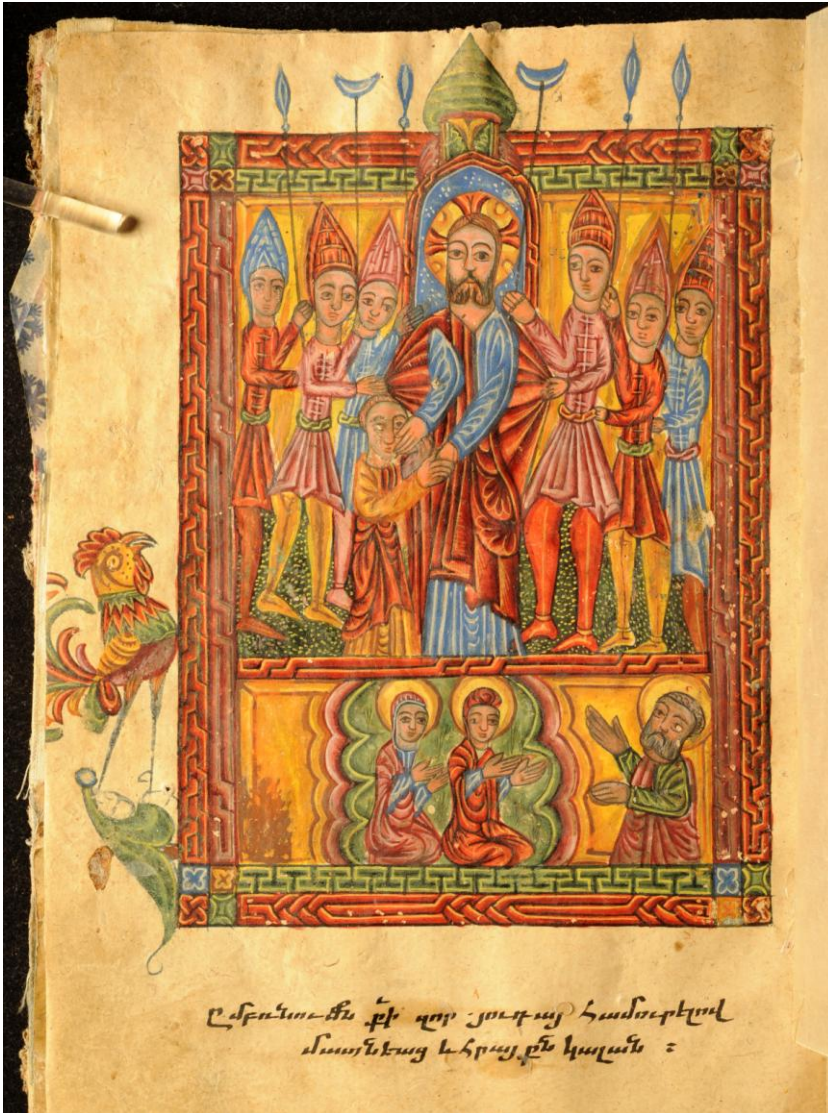
The use of imagery space on the handwritten page by the the miniature art artist of Vaspourakan is unique. The artist could fill the designated space for imagery through a few figures, or decorative motifs, but because of the right distribution of them he gets a solid and complete creation set up. He could also use the whole surface of a page from top to bottom, and come up with a solid creation, the artist could place the image at the central part of the page encircle it with a thin line or ribbon, and get margins which would help with a comprehensive understanding of the imagery, because thee pose as a second frame of the imagery.



The Descent of the Holy Ghose, (Matenadaran, N 5543), Gospel 1436, Painter Daniel.

The figures in the Vaspourakan miniature art are presented in a smooth, almost molded to the surface graphics, when a clear outline separates the figure from the paper, and dimensionally when forming the folds of the clothing line emphasizes the image of the human body structure. In Such images the color, and a combination of various hues and saturation also highlight the body volume. The application of narrative is very important for the Vaspourakan miniature artists, for centuries they have applied this principle to the art of bookmaking. The brief notes placed near the figures are an unseperable part of this art, and they are usually placed at the top, bottom or next to this or that figure. The se

explanatory notes are related to the scenes and they refer to the scene in the miniature art. Through reading the notes on the manuscripts, the readers sometimes get additional theological (or ritualistic) knowledge related to the image or picture in the scene. There are times when instead of these writings, the illuminators or the scribes have left a small record or a note requesting absolution. Similar to the icons, the writings above or near the top of the post, which is basically their names, also have theological and liturgical meaning.



The Arrest of Christ, (Matenadaran, N 11203), Gospel 1619, Painter Mesrob Khizanetsi.

The miniature artists of Vaspourakan have had preferred iconographic versions which have been used for centuries. They are either brief or detailed. The brief versions is usually, a depiction of the Lords' scenery. Sometimes that imagery starts with any scene from the Old testament. The Narrative wide version , however, besides the depiction of the scenes of the Lord but also of Jesus, his miracles and sufferings, and episodes related to the apostles.

The Vaspourakan Miniature artists have preferred imagery, subjects, which we read about in their narrative details. For example: The scenes of laying Jesus Christ in his tomb, The second Advent, The last testament, etc. The most preferred scene or theme from the old testament is the Isaaks' sacrifice, (the same scene is sculpted at Aghtamar). The self images and of those who ordered the book are often part of the Vaspourakan miniature art works. They are often depicted in the images, on their knees, at the lower part of the cross in the Second Advent scene.

There are highlighted differences in the style of miniature art creation centers between the Vaspourakan, Khizan, Van and its territories. That difference became more obvious when in the 15th century, Minas Dzaghgogh/scribe/artist, introduced/adopted the special iconographic miniature art versions of Cilicia. That specific introduction spread especially in the miniature art and manuscript creation centers in Van, Aghtamar and its surrounding areas. Naturally, the change in artistic thinking was reflected in the stylistic nuances.

The specifics of the Khizan style Miniature art are the roundedness of the heads of the figures, the eyes placed relatively close to each other, surprised faces, eyes looking up to heaven, arched eyebrows, the cheeks, the blushing cheeks, the general colorlessness of the image, its depth etc.

Among the more famous in Vaspourakan and its surrounding counties are: Simeon Ardjidjetsi (Simeon of Ardjidj), Rsdakes, Garabed Vanetsi, (Garabed of Ani), Asdvadzadour Ardjidjetsi, (Asdvadzadour of Ardjedj), Zakaria Aghtamartsi, (Zakaria of Aghtamar), Dzeroun, Krikor Khlatesi (Krikor of Khlat), Giragos Aghpagetsi (Giragos of Aghpag), Hovhannes Khizanetsi (Hovhannes of Khizan), Touma Minasents, Minas, Nerces, Zakaria Avanetsi (Zakaria of Avan), Mardiros Khizanetsi, (Mardiros of Khizan), Mesrob Khizanetsi (Mesrob of Khizan) and others.

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Matenadaran