

The Messages of the Figure of Judas in the Miniatures of Mkrtič' Nalaš and in Those of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

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Abstract: The article examines the miniatures of an illuminated Bible created by Mkrtič' Nalaš, one of the distinguished figures of the fifteenth century. According to the colophons, Nalaš was among the most prominent ecclesiastical figures of his time, ordained as the leader of all Christians of Amida by a Turkmen tribal ruler.

The study focuses on the representation of Judas in three scenes: the Raising of Lazarus, the Communion of the Apostles, and the Betrayal. It examines the iconographic changes in these scenes within the framework of established iconographic tradition, considering their representation in earlier periods. Considering the historical and doctrinal issues that characterized the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the iconography of the Raising of Lazarus and Communion scenes is examined in connection with the doctrinal debates of the period. Furthermore, the iconography of the miniatures is discussed in the light of the Armenian exegetical tradition. For the first time, the study presents Armenian medieval exegesis concerning the characters of Judas and Peter, as well as texts relating to the Eucharist, with both the relevant passages and their English translations provided. The analysis shows that the figure of Judas in the miniatures functions as a metaphor.

Keywords: Judas, Communion, Lazarus, Council, pope, bishop

Introduction

The study presents the first focused analysis of the miniatures of the V280 Bible preserved in the Library of Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice,¹

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¹ Henceforth, Armenian manuscript sources are cited according to the system established by Bernard Coulie: for manuscripts preserved in the Mekhitarist Library, Venice (V, p. 461); the Matenadaran, the Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, Yerevan (M, p. 456); the Library of the Armenian Patriarchate, Jerusalem (J, p. 455); the Church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator, Galata, Istanbul (ITU, p. 455); the Mekhitarist Library, Venice, Kurdian Collection (V, Kurd., p. 461); and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (NKM, p. 458). See Coulie, Bernard, *Armenian Manuscripts: Catalogues, Collections, Libraries*, 2nd rev. ed. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

illuminated by Mkrtič' Nalaš, an eminent fifteenth-century Armenian bishop, theologian, poet, and miniaturist.

The extant biographical data reveals that Nalaš lived in Amida (present-day Diyarbakir, Turkey) in a period when the Southern Caucasus and Asia Minor were under the rule of Tamerlane and, following his death, those of Turkic tribal rulers.² Information regarding Nalaš's biography is available in the colophons of the manuscripts,³ from which we learn that he was a prominent historical figure and a distinguished clergyman acknowledged among the rulers of the time.

As the colophons record: "...his reputation spread throughout the world, extending to the King of Persia and the Ruler of Egypt and even beyond the Great Sea to the Pope of Rome and Constantinople...".⁴ According to the same sources, he was ordained leader of all Amida Christians by Ōt'man Amira, one of the Turkmen tribal rulers.⁵ We also learn from the colophons that in 1430 Catholicos Constantine VI of Vahka ordained Nalaš a bishop over 24 dioceses.⁶ A significant historical episode is

² Xaç'ikyan, Lewon, *ŽE dari hayeren jeḡagreri hišatakaraner* [*Colophons of the 15th-century Armenian manuscripts*], vol. 1 (Yerevan: The Academy of Science of Soviet Armenia Press, 1955), VII–XXXVIII; Xondkaryan, Ēdoward, *Mkrtič' Nalaš* (Yerevan: The Academy of Science of Soviet Armenia Press, 1965), 11-24.

³ The colophons can be found in three manuscripts: M2379 (fols. 244r-262v); M2748 (fols. 354v-357v); and M9004 (fols. 1r-5v), preserved in the Matenadaran. While compiling the origin of the text, Lewon Xaç'ikyan gave priority to M2379, which is the most complete version. See Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari hayeren jeḡagreri hišatakaraner*, 622-631.

⁴ See Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari hayeren jeḡagreri hišatakaraner*, 624. Henceforth, all translations from Armenian sources, including colophons, exegetical, historiographical, and verse texts, are the author's own.

⁵ "Ōt'man Amira held him in high regard and vested him with authority over all Christians that were under his control..." See Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari hayeren jeḡagreri hišatakaraner*, 624; Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Nalaš*, 29, 30. In his work, *History of Tamerlane and His Successors*, T'ovma Mecop'ec'i, a contemporary of Nalaš and an Armenian historiographer, represents Ōt'man Amira as "the ruler of Amida, named Ōt'man Aḥōyinlow, who holds profound esteem for the Armenian people..." See T'ovma Mecop'ec'i, *Patmowt'yown Lank T'amowray ew yajordac iwroc'* [*History of Tamerlane and His Successors*] (Paris: K. V. Šahnazaryan Press, 1860), 72. According to Goṙ Eranyan, the incessant incursions of Turkmen tribes (Kara Koyunlu) and the Kurds, resulted in a migration from the southern regions of Greater Armenia to Amida. The relocation of a significant number of Armenians to Amida was prompted by the favourable attitude towards Christians held by the Turkmen Ak Koyunlu leaders Kara Osman and his son Hamsa. See Yeranyan, Goṙ, "Haravayin Hayastani ēt'nožoloṽrdagrakan xčankarə" ["The Ethno-Demographic Image of Southern Armenia in the XV Century to mid XVI."], *History and Culture* (Yerevan: Yerevan State University, 2016), 230-231. The study of the population of Amida shows that, even following the Ottoman conquest in the sixteenth century, the Christian communities of Amida were recorded as "Armenians," apparently including members of the Nestorian, Jacobite, Greek, and other churches, sometimes identified individually by their names. See İlhan, Mehmet Mehdi, *Amid (Diyarbakir) 1518 detailed register* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Printing House, 2000), 24–25.

⁶ Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari hayeren jeḡagreri hišatakaraner*, 625; Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Nalaš*, 30.

likewise associated with Nalaš's name: the Armenian Catholicos Constantine VI of Vahka entrusted to Nalaš a letter of response to Pope Eugenius IV's invitation to take part in the 1438–1439 Council of Ferrara-Florence, the Council of the Union of Eastern and Western churches.⁷

Nalaš was also known among his contemporaries as a prominent illuminator.⁸ However, the Bible V280 is the sole surviving manuscript that is abundantly illuminated by him. The current article examines the miniatures that feature the figure of Judas, namely: the Raising of Lazarus, the Communion of the Apostles and the Betrayal. The choice of the following miniatures is made based on their non-canonical iconography. The study focuses particularly on the figure of Judas and the messages it conveys. The iconography employed by Nalaš is observed in comparison with the miniatures from previous centuries and those created during his own period. The article attempts to present the changes that were made in miniature iconography during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In this respect, the iconography of the Raising of Lazarus and the Communion of the Apostles is subjected to particularly detailed study and observed within the doctrinal and historical context of the time.

The article aims to show the peculiarity of the iconography employed by Nalaš and the messages conveyed through it. To that end, it emphasises Nalaš's biography and the historical backdrop.

Bible V280

According to the manuscript colophons, the copying of the manuscript began in 1418 and was completed in 1422. The manuscript had two commissioners: Archimandrite Hovhannes and Vardapet (Doctor of Theology) Hovsep. The scribe of the manuscript was Karapet, and the miniaturist was Mkrtič' Nalaš. The manuscript was compiled in Xlat' (Axlat' present-day Turkey)⁹ and contains Nalaš's notes from different periods of his life. In the first, Nalaš refers to himself as "... I, Mkrtič', the peccable painter and the humblest of all servants of God...",¹⁰ referring to a period when he was either still a deacon or had already become a priest. Extant biographical data indicates that he was ordained a priest in 1420–25, suggesting that he

⁷ See Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Nalaš*, 34-37; Ōrmanyān, *Małak'ia, Azgapatowm* [National History], vol. 2 (Ĕjmiacin: Ĕjmiacin Press, 2001), cols. 2424–25. For the letter content see [Hovsep'yan], Garegin, "Mkrtič' Nalaši t'owł'tə Florentioy žolovi art'iw" ["The Letter of Mkrtič' Nalaš on the Council of Florence"], *Ararat*, no. 3-4 (May–June 1916), 418-423.

⁸ See Kostanianc', Karapet, "Mkrtič' Nalaš," *Ararat*, no. 1 (January 1898), 20.

⁹ See Sargisean, Barsel H., *Mayr c'owc'ak hayerēn jeragrac' matenadaranin Mxit'areanc' i Venetik* [Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts of the Venetian Mekhitarist Congregation Library], vol. 1 (Venice: S. Lazzaro Press, 1914), 102.

¹⁰ See Sargisean, *Mayr c'owc'ak*, 114.

had already been ordained by the time the copy of the manuscript was completed. In other notes, Nalaš represents himself as a bishop and as the builder of the St Barjahayac' Astvacacin Church of Arłni¹¹ Fortress: "I, the peccable Mkrtič', only by name bishop of Amida, Mardin,¹² Owrfa,¹³ T'ilkowran,¹⁴ Hini,¹⁵ and Arłni"¹⁶ and then as "Again, remember me in your prayers to Christ...peccable Mkrtič', nominal bishop, with a pseudonym Nalaš, the one who erected the cathedral of the capital of Amida and Barjahayac' Astvacacin [church] of Arłni Fortress...".¹⁷ These notes mark a prolific period of his life as a bishop over 24 dioceses.¹⁸

The New Testament of the manuscript is abundantly illuminated, whereas the Old Testament contains only some marginal depictions of prophets, a feature common to many other Armenian manuscript Bibles.¹⁹

The Gospel cycle illuminated by Nalaš opens with the Tree of Jesse (fol. 544 v), followed by the Annunciation and Joseph's Dream (fol. 545 r), the Birth and the Adoration of the Magi (fol. 546 v), the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (fol. 547 r), the Baptism of Christ (fol. 548 v), the Transfiguration (fol. 549 r), the Raising of Lazarus (fol. 550 v), the (Triumphal) Entry into Jerusalem (fol. 551 r), the Communion and the Washing of Feet (fol. 552 v), the Betrayal and Arrest (fol. 553 r), the Crucifixion (fol. 554 v), the Burial and the Harrowing of Hell (fol. 555 r), the Resurrection and the Incredulity of Thomas (fol. 556 v), ending with the scene of Ascension (fol. 557 r). Miniature representations of the evangelists and apostles appear on the following folios of the manuscript: Matthew (fol. 564r), Mark (fol. 593v), Luke (fol. 613v), John (fol. 640v), James (fol. 684v) and Paul (fol. 717r).

¹¹ Arłni known today as Ergani, a district in Diyarbakir Province (present-day Turkey).

¹² Present-day Mardin Province, southeastern Turkey.

¹³ Owrfa (Urfa), a city in present-day southeastern Turkey.

¹⁴ T'ilkowran, a settlement approximately located in present-day Diyarbakir Province, Turkey; location approximated according to the *Dictionary of Toponyms of Armenia and Adjacent Regions*. See in Hakobyan, T'. X., Melik'-Baxšyan, S. T., and Barselyan, H. X., *Hayastani ew harakic' šrjanneri telanownneri bařaran* [*Dictionary of Toponyms of Armenia and Adjacent Regions*] (Yerevan: Yerevan State University Press, 1986), 456.

¹⁵ Hini, an ancient city, located near the area of present-day Diyarbakir Province, Turkey, according to the *Dictionary of Toponyms of Armenia and Adjacent Regions*. See Hakobyan, Melik'-Baxšyan, and Barselyan, *Hayastani ew harakic' šrjanneri telanownneri bařaran*, 415.

¹⁶ See Sargisean, *Mayr c'owc'ak*, 115.

¹⁷ See Sargisean, *Mayr c'owc'ak*, 116.

¹⁸ See in Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari hayeren jeřagreri hiřatakaraner*, 625; Xondkaryan, *Mkrtič' Nalaš*, 30.

¹⁹ The miniatures in the Old Testament are: Moses holding the two commandment tablets (fol. 104r), Joshua of Nun with a shield in his hand (fol. 153v), Hannah, the mother of Samuel, kneeling (fol. 188v), Judith beheading Holofernes (fol. 316v), Jonah in the whale's mouth (fol. 457r), Daniel (fol. 471r).

The Iconography of the Miniatures of the Raising of Lazarus, the Communion of the Apostles and the Betrayal

As previously stated, the study focuses only on miniatures depicting the figure of Judas (figs 1, 2, 3). The first, which represents the scene of the Raising of Lazarus, features the figure of the resurrected Lazarus in front of the tomb and Christ with the entire group of disciples standing behind him (fig. 1). In the iconography of medieval Armenian miniature, the depiction of the entire group of the disciples in the scene of the Raising of Lazarus is comparatively rare. Generally, this scene features two or three disciples,²⁰ of whom the figure of Peter is iconographically distinguishable,²¹ with John also being identifiable in some Cilician miniatures.²² In Armenian miniatures of the Raising of Lazarus, where the complete group of disciples is depicted, the central figures observing the scene, namely, those depicted in full height at the foreground, are John and Peter (fig. 4).²³ Nalaš depicts the full group of disciples, with Judas positioned at Peter's side, shown in profile and with an open mouth (figs 1, 5). The figure of Judas in Armenian miniature paintings has been represented in this scene since the fourteenth century; prior to that, in miniatures depicting the entire group, he is either not distinguished iconographically²⁴ or not represented at all. The figure of Judas is depicted and iconographically identified in fourteenth-century manuscripts such as J1941 (fol. 5r),²⁵ M6230 (fol. 442r),²⁶ M206 (fol. 503v).²⁷ In manuscript

²⁰ For comparison, see the illustrations in Der Nersessian, Sirarpie, *Miniature Painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century*, vol. 2 (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1993), figs 75, 176, 204, 370, 595 and Hakobyan, Hravad H., *Vaspowrakani manrankarč' owt' yownə* [The miniature of Vaspurakan], vol. 1 (Yerevan, 1976), fig. 66; vol. 2 (Yerevan, 1982), fig. 36.

²¹ Peter is always depicted mature with short grey hair and a short grey beard. For the iconography of the apostles see Kouymjian, Dickran, "Identifying the Apostles in Armenian Art," in *From Byzantium to Iran: Armenian Studies in Honour of Nina G. Garsoïan*, ed. Jean-Pierre Mahé and Robert W. Thomson (Atlanta Ga: Scholars Press, 1997), 453–474.

²² In the scene of the Raising of Lazarus, John is depicted in the foreground as the author of the story. According to the Armenian miniature iconography John is depicted young and beardless in the Gospel scenes (Communion/Last Supper, Raising of Lazarus, etc.). The bearded representation of John appears only on the frontispiece of the Gospel of John. See in Kouymjian, "Identifying the Apostles," 458.

²³ For comparison see also Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting*, fig. 370.

²⁴ The earliest known example of such iconography is the Mowłni Gospel miniature (eleventh century), which represents the full group of the disciples in the scene of the Raising of Lazarus. The figure of Judas is not distinguishable. See M7736, fol. 16v.

²⁵ In J1941 manuscript, Judas is depicted not only in the foreground with a distinctive iconography, but also with the inscription of "Judas" [Յուդա] inside his nimbus.

²⁶ The manuscripts J1941 and M6230 were illuminated by Avag, one of the remarkable miniaturists of the fourteenth century and a representative of the renowned Armenian medieval school of Glajor (Armenian medieval school located in present-day Vayoc' jor, Armenia). For an overview of the life and work of the fourteenth-century miniaturist Avag, see Sargsyan,

M6230, the iconography resembles that of Našaš: Judas is positioned immediately behind Peter and shown in profile (figs 6, 7). By contrast, in manuscript M206, Judas is excluded from the group of disciples, shown separately with a pale halo and his back turned to the scene of the Raising (fig. 8). In the case of Našaš, Judas and Peter are the key figures who observe the event, represented in the foreground in full height and with the same hand gesture pointing to the scene (figs 1, 5). Judas is marked by a large open mouth baring his teeth.



Fig. 1. *Raising of Lazarus, Bible, Venice, Mekhitarist Library, V280, fol. 550v (fifteenth century).*

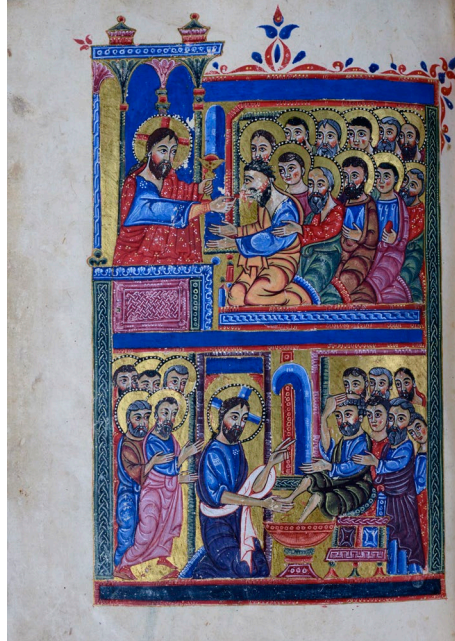


Fig. 2. *The Communion of the Apostles, Bible, Venice, Mekhitarist Library, V280, fol. 552v (fifteenth century).*

Lusine, “Armenian Scribe and painter Avag Tsaghkogh,” in *New Europe College, Publication Series of Black Sea Link Programm, Yearbook 2014-2015*, ed. I. Vainovski-Mihani (Bucharest: New Europe College, 2018), 163-194.

²⁷ Bible M206 illuminated by T’oros Taronac’i, a leading fourteenth-century miniaturist of the Armenian medieval school of Glajor. For an overview of the life and work of the fourteenth-century miniaturist T’oros Taronac’i, see Korchmasian, Emma, “T’oros Taronac’i, ein armenischer Buchmaler des 14. Jahrhunderts und seine französischen Vorbilder,” in *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, herausgegeben vom Bundesdenkmalamt Wien und vom Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Universität Wien, Band XLII, Sonderdruck (Wien, Köln. Böhlau Verlag, 1989), 81-100.

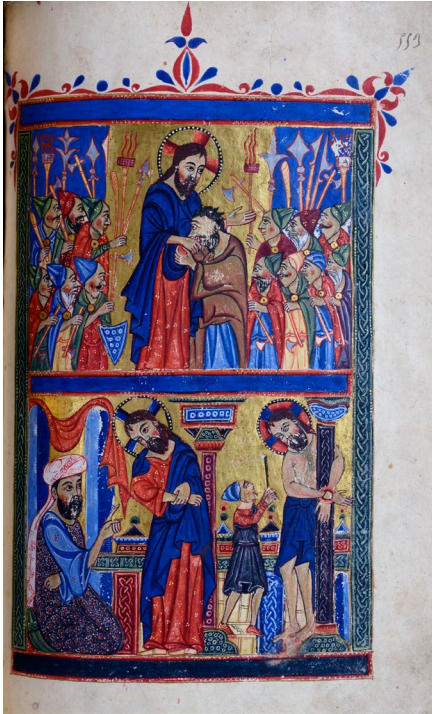


Fig. 3. *Betrayal, Bible, Venice, Mekhitarist Library, V280, fol. 553r (fifteenth century).*



Fig. 4. *Raising of Lazarus, Gospel, Yerevan, Matenadaran, The Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute, M9422, fol. 16r, School of Cilicia (thirteenth century).*

The next miniature, where Judas's character is highly emphasized, is the scene of Communion (fig. 2). Nalaš represents the Communion of Judas (figs 2, 9). In Armenian medieval art, the earliest known example of the iconography representing the Communion scene dates back to the thirteenth century,²⁸ while miniature paintings depicting the Communion of Judas

²⁸ For Armenian miniature illuminations depicting liturgical iconography, particularly the Communion of the Apostles, see M2816, fol. 4r; M7651, fol. 73r. Also see in Rapti, Ionna, "Image et rite dans l'enluminure arménienne du Moyen Âge," in *Pratiques de l'eucharistie dans les Églises d'Orient et d'Occident (Antiquité et Moyen Âge)*, Série Moyen Âge et Temps Modernes 46, ed. Nicolas Bériou, Béatrice Caseau, and Dominique Rigaux, vol. 2 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2009), fig. 16; Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting*, fig. 226. In one of the 13th-century Gospel miniatures (ITU35, 202) Paul is depicted as one of the twelve disciples to take Communion, while Judas is not presented. For the image see Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting*, fig. 124. It is noteworthy that this iconography with Paul's figure did not gain popularity in Armenian miniature.

appear only since the fourteenth century (figs 6, 10, 11).²⁹ In Naľaš's miniature, Judas is depicted as the first to take communion and presented in the front of the line, while the figure of Peter is situated at the end³⁰ (figs 2, 9). Judas and Peter, depicted side by side in the scene of the Raising of Lazarus, appear on opposite sides in the Communion scene (figs 1, 9). The iconography employed by Naľaš differs from that of the miniatures of the fourteenth century, where the figures of Judas and Peter are generally represented side by side in the Communion scene (fig. 10).³¹

The last miniature featuring Judas represents the scene of Betrayal (figs 3, 12). According to the established iconography, Naľaš depicts the procession of the soldiers with Christ and Judas in the middle. In this miniature, Naľaš adds a small detail, thereby condensing the message of his pictorial narrative, where the major focus is again on Judas. He depicts Judas kissing Christ's hand while also devouring the red coin purse in his hand (fig. 12). The representation of Judas in this particular iconographic manner is unique and not observed in any other manuscript of the same period or prior to it. In Armenian miniature painting, the iconography of kissing Christ's hand instead of his face is observed from the fifteenth century,³² whereas the iconography of Judas devouring the coin purse is not observed in any other manuscript of the period.³³

²⁹The earliest preserved miniature painting of Judas's Communion is from 1311; it is a detached folio from a Gospel Book. See *Folio from a Gospel Book*, Armenian, 1311, detached folio, Harvard Art Museums/ Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Cambridge, Mass., Acc. no. 1960.200. For the images of Communion of Judas see also Rapti, "Image et rite," fig. 18, 21.

³⁰The final figure in the sequence is identified as Peter, as the figure following Judas does not align iconographically with Peter's representation (this figure is depicted with a receding hairline and a long beard). The figure positioned at the end of the line exhibits a closer resemblance to Peter in terms of iconography (Peter is typically depicted with his grey hair slightly covering the forehead), moreover, it is situated next to John's figure (John is represented as a beardless youth). In Armenian miniature painting, Peter is typically depicted next to John in this scene. This can be observed in a 14th-century miniature (detached folio, acc. no. 1960.200, Harvard Art Museums), in which Peter is depicted standing next to Judas and John is positioned next to Peter. Such placement can be detected also in the miniatures of the manuscripts J1941, fol. 6r and M7650, fol. 21v.

³¹In the Communion scene Judas and Peter are depicted side by side also in the 15th-century manuscript miniature (M2670, fol. 6v).

³²See M5513, fol. 5v; see also Rapti, "Image et rite," fig. 22.

³³The iconography where Judas is depicted kissing Christ's hand and meanwhile devouring the coin purse is observed in much later seventeenth-century miniatures. As is the case with the miniature of the manuscript of V, Kurd. 154, fol.10v where again, as in the miniature of Naľaš, the purse is represented in red. For the miniature of the seventeenth-century manuscript see Arakelyan, Mikayel, *Mesrop of Xizan: Armenian Master of Seventeen Century* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2012), fig. 15.

The Problem of the Communion of Judas

The position of medieval exegetes on Judas taking communion is not clear-cut. Some deny that Judas took communion, while others deny the idea of depriving him from taking communion.³⁴ Nor is the position of medieval Armenian exegetes on the subject matter entirely clear. In the Armenian exegeses, particular emphasis is placed on John 13:30, which is the only verse that makes mention of Judas's leaving. Therefore, the emphasis is placed on the moment of his departure, with the intention of determining whether he left before or after the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion.



Fig. 5. *Raising of Lazarus, Bible, Venice, Mekhitarist Library, V280, fol. 550v (fifteenth century), detail.*



Fig. 6. *Bible, Yerevan, Matenadaran, The Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute, M6230, School of Glajor, fol. 442r, (fourteenth century).*

³⁴ See Schiller, Gertrud, *Iconography of Christian art*, trans. Janet Seligman, vol. 2 (London: Lund Humphries, 1972), 28-35. Żaluska, Yolanta, Bøespflug, François, and Fernandez, Antonio, "Le cycle de la Cène dans la Bible moralisée au XIIIe siècle," in *Pratiques de l'eucharistie dans les Églises d'Orient et d'Occident (Antiquité et Moyen Age)*, Série Moyen Âge et Temps Modernes 45, ed. Nicolas Bériou, Béatrice Caseau and Dominique Rigaux, vol. 1 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2009), 86-89.



Fig. 7. *Raising of Lazarus, Bible, Yerevan, Matenadaran, The Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute, M6230, fol. 442r, School of Glajor (fourteenth century), detail.*



Fig. 8. *Raising of Lazarus, Bible, Yerevan, Matenadaran, The Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute, M206, fol. 503v, School of Glajor (fourteenth century).*

In his exegesis of Matthew's Gospel, Hovhannes Erznkac'i (Corcorec'i)³⁵ confirms that Judas was present during the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion and took communion: "Judas was present among the others. It was surprising how thoughtless Judas was, and how compassionate Jesus was in caring about making him a tablemate, too. Despite being a villain, he should have become vigilant after taking communion and being reproached at the table. However, he never regretted."³⁶

³⁵ Hovhannes Erznkac'i [Corcorec'i] [ca. 1270–1338] was a philosopher, exegete, grammarian, philologist, and a pedagogue. He worked and studied at Glajor school (Armenian medieval school located in present-day Vayoc' jor, Armenia). Hovhannes Erznkac'i translated into Armenian the section on *The Seven Sacraments of the Church* from Thomas Aquinas's treatise, *Summa Theologiae*. For Hovhannes Erznkac'i's biography see Ayyvazyan, Hovhannes and Xaç'atryan, Hayk, eds., *K'ristonya Hayastan Hanragitaran [Encyclopedia Christian Armenia]* (Yerevan: Armenian Encyclopedia Publishing House, 2002), 619.

³⁶ See in Nerses Šnorhali and Hovhannes Erznkac'i, *Meknowt'iw'n Sowrb Awetaranin or ast Matt'ēosi [Commentary on the Holy Gospel of Matthew]* (Constantinople: Mahtesi Abraham Press, 1825), 554. The hereafter quotations from this book are also taken from the part authored by Hovhannes Erznkac'i. Although Hovhannes Erznkac'i is known to have held a



Fig. 9. *The Communion of the Apostles*, Bible, Venice, Mekhitarist Library, V280, fol. 552v (fifteenth century), detail.

Matt'ēos Ĵowlayec'i³⁷ shares the same position. In his exegesis of John's Gospel, he confirms that Judas partook of communion. He notes the existence of interpretations denying this and seeks to demonstrate that excluding Judas from communion would be contrary to Christ's nature:

pro-Catholic stance, later exegetes adhering to traditional positions, such as Grigor Tat'ewac'i and his disciple Matt' eos Ĵowlayec'i interpreted this episode in a similar manner.

³⁷ Mkrtič' Nalaš's contemporary. A prominent scribe and a teacher, author of numerous exegetic works and homilies. His "Exegesis on the Acts of the Apostles" written in 1411 is especially valued. In 1402, he was ordained an archimandrite at Tat'ew Monastic School (Armenian medieval school in the south of Armenia, Syunik). See Xaç'ikyan, *ŽE dari hayeren jeřagreri hiřatakaraner*, 731.

Thus, the question arises whether the Lord gave His body to Judas or not. Some deny declaring that ... if Judas took it, he wouldn't betray [Christ], since the command of the Lord merits observance... Yet [John] Chrysostom and all the vardapets (doctors of theology) claim that He did give it to him, and this is evidenced firstly, because this chapter tells that after the supper, He washed the feet of the disciples and said, "One of you will betray Me", and after John's question, dipped the morsel and gave it to Judas who took it and went away. So, it is clear that Judas was there when He delivered His body. Secondly, Luke explicitly states that after the Lord gave His body, He said, "But behold, the hand of him who betrays Me is with Me on the table." This makes it clear that he was present and that it would be impossible for the Lord to disclose the sin without giving communion to Judas. Whereas the Lord graciously gave His body to Judas out of four reasons: first, to show the amazing kindness and humbleness of Christ towards the villain; second, to teach us to love our enemies completely...³⁸

Ĵowłayec'i, to confirm the presence of Judas, proceeds with the text of Luke, which is the only account that places the revelation of Judas's betrayal chronologically after the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. In the accounts of Matthew (26:21–28) and Mark (14:17–24) the disclosure of the betrayer takes place before the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Therefore, to assert Judas's participation in the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, Matt'ēos Ĵowłayec'i refers to Luke's text (Luke 22:19–23), where the sequence of events confirms the presence of Judas, as according to John, he leaves only after the revelation of the betrayer.

A somewhat different position is found in twelfth-century exegesis. In his commentary on Luke 22:14-23, Ignatios Sewleṛnc'i³⁹ begins with the account of the Washing of the Feet (John 13:1-17), followed by the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, making it clear that the sacrament was administered to all the disciples. He then presents the revelation of the betrayer as narrated in John's Gospel (John 13:26,30). At the same time, Sewleṛnc'i interprets the act of dipping a piece of bread in

³⁸ See in Matt'ēos Ĵowłayec'i, *Meknowt'iwñ Awetaranin Yovhannow* [Commentary on the Gospel of John], M5232, fol. 200r-201v. It should be stated that the quoted passage of the exegesis is also included in Grigor Tat'ewac'i's exegesis on John's Gospel. Grigor Tat'ewac'i was Ĵowłayec'i's teacher and was head of the famous Tat'ew Monastic School. See in Grigor Tat'ewac'i, *Meknowt'iwñ Yohannow awetaranin* [Commentary on the Gospel of John], ed. Aršavir Gabowjyan (Ējmiacin: Ējmiacin Press, 2005), 549-50.

³⁹ Ignatios Sewleṛnc'i composed the commentary on the Gospel of Luke at the behest of the Armenian Catholicos Grigor III Pahlavowni. The incipit of the work in the manuscript reads: "A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, composed by Ignatios at the request of His Holiness Grigoris, Catholicos of the Armenians" (M1342, fol. 5r). Sewleṛnc'i's exegesis on the Gospel of Luke is preserved in twelve manuscripts, six of which are housed in the Matenadaran.

John 13:26 as washing with water “the morsel soaked in blood” to remove the blessing—a reading that may suggest Judas was excluded from receiving Holy Communion:

Before all this, He poured water into the basin and began washing their feet...Then He instituted the sacrament of His body and blood, ... Jesus...did not openly disgrace him [Judas] by name ... , He spoke in a veiled manner, saying, “it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it.” And He took the morsel that had been soaked in the blood⁴⁰ and which He had blessed, dipped it in water, and washed it from the blessing, and then gave it to Judas. Upon taking the morsel, Satan entered into him, for from that moment he was left without His care, and thus Satan took possession of him.⁴¹

Later exegetes, seeking to avoid identifying the morsel given to Judas (in John 13:26) with the communion bread, draw a distinction between the morsel associated with the institution of the sacrament and that by which the betrayer was revealed. The above-mentioned Ĵowłayec'i, for example, who accepts that Judas received communion, points out that the piece of bread mentioned in John's Gospel was ordinary bread rather than communion bread.⁴²

From an iconographic perspective, the theological issue has a more definite answer, which is primarily observed in the liturgical iconography of the Last Supper.⁴³ The liturgical iconography regarding the institution of the

⁴⁰ The phrase “the morsel soaked in the blood” alludes to the Eucharistic practice of the Armenian Apostolic Church, in which bread and wine are administered together—specifically, a morsel of bread dipped into the undiluted wine.

⁴¹ See in Ignatios Sewleřnc'i, *Meknowt'iwñ Srboy awetaranin or əst Łowkaasow* [Commentary on the Holy Gospel of Luke], M1342, fol. 214r-215v.

⁴² Matt'ēos Ĵowłayec'i, commenting on John 13:26, writes, “It is known, that that morsel was not of the body of the Lord, for the body which He gave did not remain there, since they partook of it; rather, that [morsel] was from the loaf on the table, which they ate during supper.” See in Matt'ēos Ĵowłayec'i, *Meknowt'iwñ Awetaranin Yovhannow*, M5232, fol. 201r. The same position is held by the prominent fourteenth-century theologian Grigor Tat'ewac'i. See in Grigor Tat'ewac'i, *Meknowt'iwñ Yohannow awetaranin*, 552-53.

⁴³ Two distinct iconographic approaches can be identified with regard to the depiction of the Last Supper. The first of these refers to the church ceremony and is called “Communion”. The second is a narrative version, which is mainly known as the “Mystical Supper” or the “Last Supper”. The narrative iconography is the around-the-table representation of the event, which doesn't depict Judas receiving communion, but rather the revelation of the betrayer. In Armenian miniatures, the scene of the Last Supper is represented in accordance with the gospels of Matthew (Matt. 26:21-23) and Mark (Mark 14.18–20), in which Judas is depicted reaching for the dish. For the Armenian miniature with such iconography, see in Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting*, figs. 225, 387; Mathews, Thomas F. and Taylor, Alice, *The Armenian Gospels of Glajor: The Life of Christ Illuminated* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2001), fig. 22.

Sacrament of Holy Communion and the church ceremony depicts the Communion of Judas (figs 10, 11).

Naláš depicts the scene of Communion, in which Judas is given a morsel of bread already dipped in wine: the morsel is painted red (fig. 9). In the ceremony of Communion in the Armenian Apostolic Church a morsel of bread dipped in wine is distributed. The iconography of Communion with a red morsel of bread has been used in Armenian miniature iconography since the fourteenth century, and in most cases Judas is depicted as the first one to take the morsel (fig. 11).



Fig. 10. *The Communion of the Apostles, Bible*, Yerevan, Matenadaran, The Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute, M6230, fol. 442r, School of Glajor (fourteenth century), detail.



Fig. 11. *The Communion of the Apostles, Gospel*, Yerevan, Matenadaran, The Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute, M8772, fol. 10v, School of Vaspowrakan (1391, fourteenth century).

Judas and Peter in the Armenian Exegetical Tradition: Character Comparison

In the exegeses, importance is given to the interpretation of the reasons behind Judas's betrayal and Peter's denial and to the comparison of their characters.

John's Gospel serves as a key source for the interpretation of Judas's nature. It alone characterizes Judas as a thief (John 12:4–6), and unlike the

Synoptics, addresses his character more than once (John 6:64, 6:70–71, 12:4–6 and 13:10,11).⁴⁴ The characterizations of John's Gospel lay a basis for interpreting the betrayal as a consequence of Judas's nature: "But the traitor betrayed ... not for the salvation of the world or to fulfill the predictions of the prophets but out of avarice and lack of faith ..."⁴⁵

The aspect of nature also serves as a basis for interpreting Peter's denial, where the emphasis on the will of God is particularly significant: "The denial was triggered by fear and through God's will and not out of spite and hatred."⁴⁶

In relation to the betrayal of Judas, exegetes seek to prevent potential misinterpretation of his deed, particularly any attempt to justify the betrayal through predestination: "But beware of the prophecy of the Holy Spirit. For Judas didn't do it because the Holy Spirit commanded but rather, he couldn't hide his intention from the Holy Spirit."⁴⁷ or "But he betrayed for bearing ill will and of his own volition and not to fulfill all that was written therein."⁴⁸

Exegetical texts offer a comparison of the characters of Judas and Peter (and the motives behind their actions), with particular emphasis on the role of free will.

⁴⁴ John ascribes to Judas the criticism of the woman anointing the feet of Christ, whilst in the Synoptics the criticism is ascribed to the whole group of the disciples without mentioning anyone in particular (Matthew 26:8,9; Mark 14:4,5; John 12:4,5).

⁴⁵ See in Sargis Kownd, *Meknowt' iwn Awetaranin Lowkasow* [Commentary on the Gospel of Luke], ed. bishop Yeznik Petrossian (Ējmiacin: Ējmiacin Press, 2005), 513. Sargis Kownd was a twelfth-century exegete and one of the prominent archimandrites of Greater Armenia. Studied at Hałpat Monastery (Lori Province, Armenia); the acknowledged center of the time.

⁴⁶ See in Barseł Maškeworc' i, *Meknowt' iwn Srboy Awetaranin or əst Markosi* [Commentary on the Holy Gospel of Mark], ed. Adreas arch. Narinian Aknetsi, vol. 2 (Constantinople: Hasanp'aša Xan Press, 1826), 319. Barseł Maškeworc' i lived around 1280–1345. He studied at the Maškewor Monastery (Cilician Armenia). The only known work of Barseł Maškeworc' i is the Commentary on the Gospel of Mark the first part of which is lost. The commentary was written in 1325. The book was erroneously printed under the name of Čon [Շոն], however, the author of the exegesis to the Gospel of Mark is Barseł Maškeworc' i, who was active in the 14th century. For biographic data see P'olaryan, Norayr, *Hay grohner 5–17 Dar* [Armenian Writers of 5th–17th Centuries] (Jerusalem: Saint James Monastery Press, 1971), 377.

⁴⁷ See in Gēorg Skewřac' i, *Meknutiwn Gorcoc' Arak'eloc': XIII Dar* [Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles: XIII century], ed. Hasmik Badalyan and Geworg Ter-Vardanyan (Ējmiacin: Ējmiacin Press, 2013), 45. Gēorg Skewřac' i [Lambronac' i], (1246/47 Lambron fortress, Cilicia, 1301), was an archimandrite, exegete, scribe. He had a direct participation in the struggle against the union of Armenian and Roman churches. For biographic data see Ayyazyan and Xaç' atryan, *K'ristonya Hayastan Hanragitaran*, 209.

⁴⁸ See in Maškeworc' i, *Meknowt' iwn Srboy Awetaranin*, 2: 271.



Fig. 12. *Betrayal*, Bible, Venice, Mekhitarist Library, V280, fol. 553r (fifteenth century), detail.

In his exegesis of Matthew's Gospel, Hovhannes Erznac'i ascribes to Judas the choice of refusing the help of Jesus.⁴⁹ With regard to Peter, Erznac'i suggests that he denied Christ because God deprived him of help, and thus his lack of succour is justified by the will of God: "Blessed with the succour of God and yet devoid of yearning we will all the same go astray. And these two, Judas and Peter, reflect this, as Judas who had the protection did not benefit from it since he wished not to attain salvation and never aspired to, while Peter, despite his willingness, did not receive any help and failed likewise...."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ As a help the exegeses mention the fact of making Judas a tablemate. Besides, according to some exegeses, Judas's feet were washed first to make him change his mind. See in Maškeworc'i, *Meknowt'iw'n Srboy Awetaranin*, 2: 267, 269.

⁵⁰ See in Šnorhali and Erznac'i, *Meknowt'iw'n Sowrb Awetaranin*, 566. Also see Kownd, *Meknowt'iw'n Awetaranin*, 520. Both Hovhannes Erznac'i and Sargis Kownd use this commentary for the words Peter uttered in response to Jesus's prediction of his denial (Matthew 26:34-35, Luke 22:33-34).

To condemn Judas's character Erznkac'i also compares the way in which Judas and Peter repent for their deeds. There is a particular focus on the death of Judas: "Since, as it seems to me, he wished not to receive remission or as I said, because he repented only in words not in deeds as Peter and even more hang himself, ..." ⁵¹

In miniatures, the comparison of the characters of Judas and Peter can be detected from the fourteenth century. The juxtaposition of these characters in the iconography is expressed through the depiction of these two figures either side by side or at opposite ends. For example, in the fourteenth-century manuscript Judas and Peter are represented standing next to each other in the scenes of the Raising of Lazarus and the Communion (figs. 6, 7, 10). Našaš achieves the comparison of these two characters by representing them side by side in the scene of the Raising of Lazarus and at opposite ends in the scene of the Communion (figs. 1, 9).

In the miniatures, the aim of depicting Judas and Peter in close proximity, or at opposite sides, may serve not only to express the deeds of the characters as recounted in the Gospel (Peter's denial and Judas's betrayal), but also to condemn the character of Judas by creating a comparison, as is commonly done in exegeses.

The Figure of Judas: Historical and Doctrinal Perspectives

The depiction of the figure of Judas in these scenes can also be analysed within historical and doctrinal contexts. To contextualise the subject matter, it is necessary to provide a brief historical overview of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The Armenian Catholicosate, established in Cilicia,⁵² consistently confronted the issue of union with the Roman Catholic Church. In this respect, in the fourteenth century the pro-unionist Councils convened in Sis (in 1307) and Adana (in 1317) were of particular significance. In the hope of securing the Pope's military support in halting Mamluk incursions, the Councils decided to unite with the Roman Catholic Church at the cost of doctrinal and ceremonial concessions.⁵³ This aroused considerable resistance

⁵¹ See in Šnorhali and Erznkac'i, *Meknowt'wn Sowrb Awetaranin*, 584.

⁵² Cilicia as an Armenian principality was established in 1080 by the Rubenyd dynasty. In 1198, it was elevated to the status of a kingdom with the coronation of Leo I of Rubenyd dynasty, as King of Armenia. The Catholicosate was transferred to Sis, the capital of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, in 1292.

⁵³ The concessions concerned the acceptance of the seven ecumenical councils (of which the Armenian Apostolic Church had accepted only the first three), including the formulation of the creed at Chalcedon; the adoption of the Latin calendar of feasts with Christmas observed on the 25th of December instead of the 6th of January; the addition of water into the eucharistic wine; the addition of the word "Christ" to the text of the Trisagion hymn, etc. For a detailed

among the clergy of Greater Armenia,⁵⁴ who denounced and rejected the decisions made in these Councils.⁵⁵ The clergy of Greater Armenia, notably of Syunik, played a crucial role in opposing both the pro-Latin decisions and the activities of the members of the Dominican and Franciscan missionary orders active in Greater Armenia during the period.⁵⁶ Throughout the

account see Ōrmanyan, *Azgapatowm*, 2: 2089-2090. See also Mathews, Thomas F. and Sanjian, Avedis K., *Armenian Gospel Iconography: The Tradition of the Glajor Gospel* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1991), 27.

⁵⁴ The term *Greater Armenia* refers to the historical region of Armenia, distinguishing it from the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, which is often identified in contemporary sources as Armenia Minor. For a map of Greater Armenia see Mathews and Sanjian, *Armenian Gospel Iconography*, 10-11.

⁵⁵ Prior to the Council of Sis, the Armenian Catholicos Grigor VII Anavarzec'i, who was known for his Latin proclivity, having resolved to make ceremonial and doctrinal changes in the Armenian Church, dispatched a legate to Armenia to Stepanos Orbelyan, metropolitan of Syunik, with the paper containing these changes. To discuss the programme of changes proposed by Grigor VII Anavarzec'i, the Metropolitan of Syunik summoned a synod. The names of the four princes and the clergymen (eleven altogether) who signed against these changes have been preserved. Each of the signatories affirmed his loyalty to the tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church and rejected the changes introduced by Grigor VII Anavarzec'i. The data on the clergymen and princes who signed against the changes is from the historical account written by Metropolitan Stepanos Orbelyan (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries), who is also known as a historian. See Step'anos Ōrbēlean, *Patmowt'iw nahanjin Sisakan* [*The History of Sisakan Province*], ed. Karapet Šahnazareanc', vol. 2 (Paris: Šahnazareanc' Press, 1859), 208–210. See also Ōrmanyan, *Azgapatowm*, 2: 2063-2066. Despite this rejection, a council was convened in Sis in 1306, at which the changes for the union with Rome, proposed by the Catholicos, were accepted. In 1317, by order of Pope John XXII, the Council of Adana was convened to reaffirm the decisions made during the Sis Council (Ōrmanyan, *Azgapatowm*, 2: 2122-2123). Catholicos Constantine III, the successor of Catholicos Grigor VII Anavarzec'i, who also had a pro-Latin stance, threatened the clergy of Greater Armenia, particularly that of Syunik, with the deprivation of holy chrism if they refused to accept the decisions of the Council. This was followed by a response letter from the clergy of Syunik, in which they rejected any proposed changes to the Armenian Apostolic Church. For the letter contents see Hovsep'yan, Garegin, *Xalbakeank' kam Prošeank' hayoc' patmowt'ean mēj* [*Xalbakeans or Prošeans in the history of Armenia*] (Antelias: the printing press of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 1969), 397-399. See also Mathews and Sanjian, *Armenian Gospel Iconography*, 27, 28. For the analysis of the councils of Sis and Adana see also Bundy, David, "The Trajectory of Roman Catholic Influence in Cilician Armenia: An Analysis of the Councils of Sis and Adana," *Armenian Review* 45, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 73-85.

⁵⁶ By the fourteenth century, the Dominicans had already established diocesan houses in Greater Armenia. The extant data indicates that they administered approximately fifty monasteries and maintained a clergy of around seven hundred members, all of them Armenian. The official establishment of the Armenian–Dominican order of the United Brethren dates back to the 1330s. See Palčean, Alek'sandr V., *Patmowt'iw kat'olikē vardapetowt'ean i Hays ew miowt'ean noc'a and Hromēakan ekelec'woy i P'lorentean siwnhodosi* [*History of the Catholic Doctrine among Armenians and that of the Union with the Roman Church in the Florence Council*] (Vienne: Mekhitarist press, 1878), 71-72; Zek'iyān, Połos Lewon, "14rd dari kronakan večera. Naxak'ayler hayoc' ekelec'ow hetaga bažanowmneri ew ekelec'abanakan kargavičaki" ["Religious Arguments in the 14th Century. Presage to Further

fourteenth century, one of the primary problems was the resistance to Latinisation.

The situation in the fifteenth century was even more challenging. The Armenian kingdom of Cilicia no longer existed.⁵⁷ The Armenian Catholicosate left in Cilicia was in a state of decline. Therefore, the issue of the union of churches was once more seen as a way out of a difficult situation, and the invitation sent by the Pope to the Armenian Catholicos to participate in the Council summoned for the purpose of the union of the Eastern and Western Churches, was viewed as an opportunity to receive support from the Pope.

The Armenian Catholicos Constantine VI of Vahka, intending to ascertain Nalaš's opinion on the matter of the union of churches, entrusted Nalaš with the response to Pope Eugenius IV's invitation to participate in the 1438–1439 Council of Ferrara-Florence.⁵⁸

Nalaš's stance on the issue of the union of the churches is stated in this response letter, where Nalaš stipulates that the union would only be possible if the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon, traditionally rejected by the Armenian Apostolic Church, were not imposed.⁵⁹ Considering the preceding unsuccessful attempts to unite the churches, Nalaš deliberately made such a demand, fully cognizant that the unification would require

Divisions in Armenian Church and to Ecclesiastical Status"], *Etchmiadzi Journal of Religious and Armenological Studies* 56, no. 1 (January 2000): 111. For the overview on the itinerary of the Dominican and Franciscan missionaries to Greater Armenia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries see Der Nersessian, Sirarpie, "Western Iconographic Themes in Armenian Manuscripts," in *Byzantine and Armenian Studies*, vol. 1 (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1973), 618–630. See also La Porta, Sergio, "Armeno-Latin Intellectual Exchange in the Fourteenth Century: Scholarly Traditions in Conversation and Competition," *Medieval Encounters* 21 (2015): 269-294.

⁵⁷ In 1375, the Mamluks invaded Sis, the capital of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia. The kingdom fell in 1375, but the Catholicosate remained in Cilicia until 1441.

⁵⁸ Małak'ia Ōrmanyān posits that the Catholicos's decision to consider solely Mkrtič' Nalaš's standpoint as sufficient to answer the Pope's letter can be explained by the fact that, during this period, opportunities for communication on the matter of the union of churches were limited, since Greater Armenia was under foreign rule, and Nalaš was the only person the Catholicos could address. According to the Armenian Apostolic Church Canon, however, the Catholicos was required to address not only Nalaš, the bishop of Amida, but also the clergy of Greater Armenia (of Syunik and Vaspurakan). See Ōrmanyān, *Azgapatowm*, 2: 2424.

⁵⁹ It is noteworthy that Nalaš, in his letter concerning the union of churches, mentions that he wrote the response letter at the behest of the Catholicos and T'ovma Mecop'ec'i, a prominent figure among the clergy of Greater Armenia at the time. The response letter of Mkrtič' Nalaš bears the title "A response to the letter of the Latins that wrote Mkrtič' at the behest of the Armenian Catholicos and the remarkable teacher T'owma." [Patasxani Latinac'oc' T'htoyn i Mkrtič' nkaragrē, zor greac' hramanaw kat'olikosin hayoc' ew mec rabownapetin T'owmayi]. For the letter content see [Hovsep'yan], Garegin, "Mkrtič' Nalaši t'owlt'ə Florentioy žołovi art'iw," 418-423.

doctrinal and ceremonial changes. Nevertheless, the Catholicos gave his own consent to the union of the churches, which, judging by his response, appears to have been unconditional.⁶⁰ As with the previous Councils of Sis and Adana, this Catholicos again acted against the traditional position and, without the consent of all Armenian diocesan clergy, decided to unite with the Roman Catholic Church.⁶¹

The clash of positions of the advocates of the union at the cost of concessions, and those who condemned such a union, remained crucial since the establishment of the Catholicosate in Cilicia.⁶²

Regarding the dissemination of Roman Catholicism in Greater Armenia, the issue also persisted during the fifteenth century.⁶³

⁶⁰ The Catholicos appoints four legates, who then present themselves to the Pope on his behalf. For the contents of the letter on the agreement regarding the union of churches see Palčean, *Patmowt' iwn kat'olikē*, 87-89; Manowkean, Abēl, “Hay ew hromēakan kat'olik ekelec' inerow miowt' ean verjin p' orjə P' lorentioy meĵ ew 'decretum pro armenis' kam «hrahang ar hays» kondakə” [The Last Attempt of Unity between the Armenian and the Catholic Church in Florence and the “decretum pro armenis”], in *Akademikos Sen Arewšatyanı cnndyan innsownamyakin nvirvac hayagitakan miĵazgayin gitažolovi nyowt'er (22-23 mayis, 2019) [Sen Arevshatian 90: Proceedings of the International Armenological Conference, Dedicated to the 90th Anniversary of Academician Sen Arevshatian's Birth (22-23 May, 2019)]* (Yerevan: Matenadaran Press, 2020), 58-94 at 73.

⁶¹ It is known that in the papal bull issued at the Council of Ferrara-Florence and addressed to the Armenians, Rome imposed changes on the Liturgy and doctrine of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which have traditionally been rejected by the Armenian Apostolic Church. The changes imposed included: the creed of Constantinople with the added phrase “and the Son”; the Chalcedonian doctrine of the two natures, will, and economies of Christ; the addition of water to the eucharistic wine; the adoption of Latin calendar of feasts and other related practices. The final council bull required the Armenians to venerate Pope Leo I, whose *Tome* to Patriarch Flavian formed the doctrinal basis of Chalcedon's (451) definition of Christ's nature, historically rejected by the Armenian Apostolic Church. For the contents of the bull of the Council of Florence addressed to Armenians, see Pelikan, Jaroslav and Valerie R. Hotchkiss, eds., *Creeks and Confessions of the Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 755–765.

⁶² It should be stated that the decisions taken at the councils of Ferrara-Florence, Sis and Adana are considered invalid according to the canons of the Armenian Apostolic Church, because only the decisions made by all Armenian diocesan clergy and lay deputies are deemed legally valid. While, as is known, not all Armenian diocesan clergy were involved in the decision-making processes of the councils. Furthermore, the majority of them rejected the adoption of the proposed changes (as was the case with the councils of Sis and Adana). The decisions of the councils of Sis (1306) and Adana (1317) were officially declared not valid by the council of Sis convened in 1361. See Manowkean, “Hay ew hromēakan kat'olik ekelec' inerow miowt' ean verjin p' orjə,” 74; Örmanyan, *Azgapatowm*, 2: 2245–2246. Although the decisions taken at the council of Ferrara-Florence were not formally rejected, according to the Armenian Apostolic Church canons, the decisions were considered invalid, as the Catholicos's decision was unilateral. See Manowkean, “Hay ew hromēakan kat'olik ekelec' inerow miowt' ean verjin p' orjə,” 58-92. For the Armenian Apostolic Church canons, see Melik'-T'angean, Nerses, *Hayoc' ekelec' akan iravownk'ə* [*Armenian Church Law*], vol. 2 (Shushi, 1905), 123-25.

Basically, throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, preserving the tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church was one of the primary issues, and the role of the traditionalist clergy of Greater Armenia was pivotal in this regard.⁶⁴

It is essential to consider this context when analysing the iconography of the miniatures. From the perspective of doctrine and church tradition, the scenes of the Raising of Lazarus and the Communion of the Apostles are of particular importance. The symbolism of the Raising of Lazarus is significant in the context of Christological debates on the nature of Christ between proponents of Dyophysitism and Miaphysitism.

In the fourteenth-century Armenian recension of the Homily on the Raising of Lazarus and the Harrowing of Hell, a symbolic interpretation of the inseparability of Christ's two natures is attributed to the voice of Christ calling the dead Lazarus.⁶⁵ This interpretation posits that Christ's human and divine natures are inseparable, as is the voice by which Lazarus is called. The content of the homily is of a Christological nature and is directed against those who profess the doctrine of Dyophysitism.⁶⁶ All the manuscripts preserving this version of the homily date from the fourteenth century,⁶⁷ a period in which the traditionalist clergy of the Armenian Apostolic Church fought against the activities of the Latin missionaries in Greater Armenia and

⁶³ It is known that the Catholic principality of Artaz, which became an Armenian Unitarian movement center in the fourteenth century, persisted until 1426. Lewon Xaç'ikyan quotes from the travel notes "Historia del gran Tamerlan" (1403–1406) by Ruy González de Clavijo, the ambassador of Henry the third of Castile, where Ruy González de Clavijo presents the ruler of the Armenian principality of Artaz province and the entire population of the fortress as Catholic, and states that they were all Armenians. For the full quotation, see Xaç'ikyan, Levon, "Artazi haykakan iṣṣanowt'yownə ew Corcori dproc'ə" ["The Armenian principality of Artaz and the school of Corcor"], *Bulletin of Matenadaran*, no. 11 (1973): 159–61. For the fall of the Armenian principality of Artaz see Xaç'ikyan, "Artazi haykakan iṣṣanowt'yownə ew Corcori dproc'ə," 163–67. In her article, Claudine Delacroix-Besnier provides information about the activities of the United Brethren in the 15th century. See in Delacroix-Besnier, Claudine, "Les Missions Dominicaines et les Arméniens du Milieu du XIVe Siècle aux Premières Années du XVe Siècle," *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 26, (1996–1997): 173–91.

⁶⁴ In 1441, a council was convened in Ējmiacin, during which around 700 clergymen of the Armenian Church assembled and made a decision to move the Catholicosate from Sis (Cilicia) to Ējmiacin, where it has remained to the present day. See in Ōrmanyan, *Azgapatowm*, 2: 2455–2456; Ōrmanyan, Małak'ia, *Hayoc' Ekelec'in ew ir patmowt'iwənə, vardapetowt'iwənə, varč'owt'iwənə, barekargowt'iwənə, ararolowt'iwənə, grakanowt'iwənə ow nerkay kac'owt'iwənə* [*The Armenian Church and Its History, Doctrine, Administration, Reform, Liturgy, Literature, and Present Condition*], 2nd ed. (Constantinople, 1912), 75–77.

⁶⁵ For the content and study of the homily on the Raising of Lazarus and the Harrowing of Hell see Der Nersessian, "Western Iconographic Themes," 457–467.

⁶⁶ See Der Nersessian, "Western Iconographic Themes," 463.

⁶⁷ See Der Nersessian, "Western Iconographic Themes," 457; Mathews and Sanjian, *Armenian Gospel Iconography*, 154.

the pro-Latin decisions of the Councils. The homily functioned as a means to oppose Latinisation and to reinforce the Christological position that professed Miaphysitism.

Regarding the iconography of the miniatures, it should be noted that from the fourteenth century there were changes in those scenes that were especially important from the perspective of church tradition and doctrine. These include the scenes of the Raising of Lazarus and the Communion of the Apostles.⁶⁸

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the figure of Judas came to be particularly emphasised in the scenes of the Raising of Lazarus and the Communion.⁶⁹ Whereas in earlier centuries Judas had not appeared in the Raising of Lazarus (fig. 4),⁷⁰ in the manuscripts under discussion he was not only included in the scene but was also placed in a central position and represented with a distorted facial expression (figs. 1, 5).

The figure of Judas was also introduced in the scene of the Communion, where he was often depicted as the first to receive communion (figs 9, 10, 11).

⁶⁸ It is important to note that the conditions imposed on the Armenian Church for the union of churches included both doctrinal and liturgical demands. These included the acceptance of the Chalcedonian formula concerning the nature of Christ in place of the Miaphysite formula and the adoption of a mixed chalice in the Eucharistic rite instead of the traditional use of an unmixed chalice.

⁶⁹ It should be noted that in contrast to the Communion scene, where Judas is frequently depicted, often as the first to receive communion and attested in numerous fourteenth and fifteenth century manuscripts, in the Raising of Lazarus the figure of Judas appears only in the three mentioned fourteenth century manuscripts and in the manuscript illuminated by Našaš. It is noteworthy, however, that these fourteenth century manuscript miniatures were executed by prominent illuminators of the distinguished medieval school of Glajor, namely Avag and T'oros Taronac'i.

⁷⁰ Although some of the miniature paintings from previous years feature twelve apostles, as is the case with the Mowłni Gospel (eleventh century), the figure of Judas is not distinguishable iconographically. Unlike in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in a thirteenth-century Armenian Gospel preserved in the Freer Gallery of Art (WAF 32.18), despite the unusually frequent inclusion of scenes featuring Judas—such as *Jesus at the House of Simon*, *Judas Receiving the Thirty Pieces of Silver*, *Judas Leading the Jews* and *The Suicide of Judas*—his figure receives no distinctive iconographic emphasis in the Communion scene; in the Raising of Lazarus, only three apostles are depicted, none of whom is Judas. In the manuscript illuminated by the prominent thirteenth-century Armenian miniaturist T'oros Roslin, Judas is depicted in the scene of the Washing of the Feet but not in that of the Raising of Lazarus, where approximately five disciples are shown, with Peter represented in full height. For the figures in the thirteenth-century Armenian Gospel preserved in the Freer Gallery of Art see Der-Nersessian, Sirarpie, *Armenian Manuscripts in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 1963), figs. 96, 97, 100, 157, 158, 170. For the eleventh century Gospel see Mowłni Gospel M7736 (fol. 16v). For T'oros Roslin's miniatures see Der-Nersessian, Sirarpie, *Miniature Painting*, figs. 204, 224.

Meanwhile, it was during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that a red morsel was introduced in Christ's hand in the depiction of the Communion scene, which appears to be a reference to the ceremony of the Communion of the Armenian Apostolic Church, whereby bread was dipped into an unmixed chalice. In this iconography, Christ is represented with a goblet in one hand and a red morsel in the other, reflecting the ceremony of the Armenian liturgy (figs 9, 11).⁷¹

In the fourteenth century, these iconographic changes were particularly pronounced in the miniatures of Avag, a miniaturist from the renowned school at the Monastery of Glajor (figs 6, 7, 10).⁷² This school played a significant role in resisting the activities of Latin missionaries and the pro-Latin decisions of the councils convened in Sis and Adana.⁷³

In one of his illuminated manuscripts (M7650, fol. 21v), Avag depicts Judas mocking the sacrament in the Communion scene. The miniature represents the Communion scene according to the tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Here, Christ is represented holding the goblet of wine in one hand and offering the red morsel to Peter with the other, while Judas, positioned behind Peter, is depicted pointing at the sacrament with his tongue sticking out (fig. 13). In another manuscript of the same miniaturist (J1941, fol. 5r), Judas is depicted in the foreground in the scene of the Raising of Lazarus. He occupies the central position, baring his teeth and pointing at the Raising of Lazarus. The name "Judas" [Յուդա] is inscribed within his nimbus (fig. 14).

⁷¹ In the Armenian liturgical tradition, the priest holds the goblet with undiluted wine in one hand and dips the morsel into the wine with the other before administering it to the communicant.

⁷² In her article, Lilit Zakarian characterizes this miniaturist as an anti-unionist ("*Avag, artista anti-unitore*"), considering his opposition to the unionist activities of members of the Franciscan and Dominican missionary orders. She highlights one of the miniaturist's illustrations of the Last Judgment, in which, according to Zakarian, a Catholic priest is depicted in hell (M212, fol. 79v). See in Zakarian, Lilit, "Un Artista Anti-Unitore del XIV secolo," in *Roma-Armenia*, ed. Claude Mutafian (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1999), 175-76.

⁷³ The director of the famous school at the monastery of Glajor Esayi Nč'ec'i was known for his activities against Latinisation. He was among those who signed against the decision of Catholicos Grigor VII Anavarzec'i regarding the Latinisation of the Armenian Apostolic Church. See Örbēlean, *Patmowt' iwn nahangin Sisakan*, 2: 208-210. The name of Esayi Nč'ec'i also appears in another letter addressed to the Catholicos Costantine III. In this letter, the clergy of Syunik, including Esayi Nč'ec'i, reject any changes to the doctrines and practices of the Armenian Apostolic Church. For the contents of the letter by the clergy of Syunik addressed to the Catholicos, see Hovsep'yan, *Xalbakeank' kam Prošeank'*, 397-399. For the Glajor school's activities against Latinisation, see Xaç'eryan, Lewon, *Esayi Nč'ec'in ew Glajori hamalsaranə* [Esayi Nč'ec'i and the University of Glajor] (Los Angeles: Alco Printing, 1988), 336-366. See also the historical account in note 55.



Fig. 13. *The Communion of the Apostles, Gospel, Yerevan, Matenadaran, The Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute, M7650, fol. 21v, School of Glajor (1329, fourteenth century).*



Fig. 14. *Raising of Lazarus, Four Gospels, Jerusalem, The Library of the Armenian Patriarchate, J1941, fol. 5r, School of Glajor (1334, fourteenth century).*

In the miniature paintings of the fifteenth century, the iconographic changes in the scenes of the Raising of Lazarus and of Communion were especially marked in the miniatures of Nalaš, who had a traditional position regarding doctrinal issues (figs 1, 9).

The prominence of the figure of Judas in these scenes can be contextualised in light of the doctrinal controversies of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. My working hypothesis is that the insertion of the figure of traitor Judas into these scenes can be seen as an allusion to those who chose heterodoxy – to the “traitors” of the Armenian Apostolic Church, in this case, the clergy of the Armenian Church favouring Roman Catholicism and those who converted to Roman Catholicism.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Nalaš’s contemporary and an Armenian historiographer of the fifteenth century, T’ovma Mecop’ec’i, in his *History of Tamerlane and His Successors*, addressing the growing unionist movement, calls those who converted to Roman Catholicism “deniers of the truth”. In this work, Mecop’ec’i tells about a Latinised Armenian monk who confesses to a clergyman of the Armenian Apostolic Church his regret for converting to Roman Catholicism, saying: “I was a

Regarding Nalaš's iconography, the three miniatures in question bear a distinct emphasis on the figure of Judas, which occupies a central position. In the Raising of Lazarus he is shown in full height at the front beside Peter, and in the Communion scene he appears as the first to receive Communion (figs 1, 9). Judas is also represented with a devouring mouth. This is especially stressed in the scene of Betrayal (Judas is depicted kissing Christ's hand and devouring the coin purse), which is remarkable from the perspective of Armenian miniature iconography of the time (fig. 12). The depiction in these miniatures of Judas's avaricious nature through exaggerated iconography could also allude to contemporary events.

By 1421, the Catholicosate had already become corrupt as the Catholicoi were ordained by bribes.⁷⁵ In one of his verses, Nalaš addressed the contemporary issues, where he noted the growing numbers of Catholicoi, the transgressions of bishops, and the increased corruption. He saw greed as a source of transgression, such as corruption and the offences of the contemporary clergy:

The Catholicoi grow in number
By violence and impiousness,
They ordain bishops lawlessly,
And all this owing to greed.
The bishops have transgressed the morals,
When ordering the whores
To take gold coins as a bribe,
And all this owing to greed.
The emerging vardapets (doctors of theology)
have become sellers of the Word
And preach to please men,
And all this owing to greed.
Monks renounced the monasteries
And wander in the villages,

monk who was one of you, but the devil led me astray and made me Chalsedonian". See T'ovma Mecop'ec'i, *Patmowt'yown Lank T'amowray*, 37, 39.

⁷⁵ During the years 1377–1432, the last six Catholicoi would take up the position by killing the predecessor and buying the succession. See T'ovma Mecop'ec'i, *Patmagrowth'yown [Historiography]*, ed. Lewon Xaç'ikyan (Yerevan: Magalat', 1999), 22; Örmanyan, *Hayoc' Ekelec'in ew ir patmowt'iwnə*, 75.

They no longer sing Psalms,
And all this owing to greed...⁷⁶

Nalaš begins his verse with a condemnation of greed, drawing comparisons to biblical characters. Specifically, he parallels the subject with Judas stating, “But Judas Iscariot...betrayed the Master unto death. The malady of greed is fierce, making a disciple into a wild beast. The master was led to the cross by him—all this owing to greed.”⁷⁷

Considering the pronounced and unconventional iconography of the figure of Judas, it can be assumed that the character of Judas (the avaricious traitor) serves as a metaphor through which the miniaturist conveys his critical view of contemporary problems.

Conclusion

The iconography of Nalaš’s miniatures, particularly regarding the interpretation of Judas’s character, is distinctive from the perspective of Armenian miniature iconography. The figure of Judas is emphasised through different iconographical means. In the three scenes in question, Judas is depicted in the central position, with an open devouring mouth that alludes to his avaricious nature (of particular note is the scene of Betrayal, in which he is depicted devouring the coin purse). The figure of Judas is also emphasised by means of comparison. In the miniatures, Nalaš presents a Judas-Peter comparison in the scenes of the Raising of Lazarus and the Communion.

Nalaš was a significant figure among the Armenian clergy of the time. He was directly involved in the decision-making process concerning the union of the churches and, judging from his response letter on the matter, he had a traditional and uncompromising stance on doctrinal issues.

The challenges inherent in the period, together with Nalaš’s well-known traditional stance on doctrinal matters, make it possible to interpret the iconographic changes in the miniatures, particularly the depiction of Judas, within their historical and doctrinal contexts. These factors also allow for a retrospective, historically contextualized interpretation of the

⁷⁶ The verse of Mkrtič’ Nalaš, «Xratakan baners agahowt’ean ew anənc’owt’ean i Nalaš vardapetē asac’cal» [*Admonitions on greed and poverty by Archimandrite Nalaš*], has been preserved in around 20 manuscripts of Matenadaran (M424, 2736, 2127, 1779, 3411, 3595, 523, 33, 7508, 2236, 7732, 8968, 8605, 3488, 7714, 9271, 7717, 7712, 3768, 2672). The quoted version of this verse is from the manuscript booksong, which was written in Theodosia (Crimea) in 1656 and published by Karapet Kostanianc’ in the appendix of his study. See Kostanianc’, Karapet, *Mkrtič’ Nalaš ew iwr talerə* [Mkrtič’ Nalaš and his verses] (Vałaršapat: Ĕjmiacin Press, 1898), 18.

⁷⁷ See in Kostanianc’, *Mkrtič’ Nalaš ew iwr talerə*, 16.

iconographic changes in the fourteenth-century miniatures (the depiction of the figure of Judas in the scenes that were particularly important from the perspective of church tradition and doctrine) created by the miniaturists of the Glajor school, an institution known for its traditionalist stance. In turn, this retrospective understanding shows that the changes in Nalaš's fifteenth-century miniatures, the depiction of Judas in the scenes of the Raising of Lazarus and Communion, are not blind imitations of fourteenth-century iconography. Rather, they serve a deliberate purpose, conditioned by the historical circumstances, namely, the efforts to resist the Latinisation of the Armenian Apostolic Church, a phenomenon that is characteristic of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

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