

The Relationship of the Urartian Material Culture with the Modern Armenian Artworks

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From the early times of human history, the production of a culture shaped the evolution of human beings and their survival strategies. Culture is characteristic of everyday life shared by people in one place or time. It is also the development and shaping of the mind through all kinds of activities. The production of tools, the process of materials, the creation of artifacts, and the emergence of arts and crafts were the signs of the human mind to cope with nature and death. The creation of these early tools affected the development of culture, lifestyles, environment, and technology. The expression of the earliest tools is marked by their diversity. Throughout history in different societies, cultures and the transmission of cultural findings with written, visual and phonic items determined the paths of human creativity. In this article, an example of this route created in a specific time and space by a specific society i.e. the route from Urartian visual language to modern Armenian visual culture will be investigated.

Introduction

From the early times of human history, the production of a culture shaped the evolution of human beings and their survival. Culture is characteristic of everyday life shared by people in one place or time. It is also the development and shaping of the mind through all kinds of activities. The production of tools, the process of materials, the creation of artifacts and the emergence of arts and crafts were the signs of the human mind to cope with nature and death.

One of the oldest tools that were used to survive in the environment was stone tools (Figure 1). Oldowan stone tools can be a good example of the first endeavor of human beings to create tools for their daily needs.¹ The Oldowan industry represents the oldest known manifestation of material culture. The creation of these

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1. Ed. Erella Hovers & David R. Braun, *Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Oldowan*, (Springer: Netherlands, 2009); John J. Shea, *Stone Tools in the Paleolithic and Neolithic Near East: A Guide*, (Cambridge University Press: US, 2015); Ed. Nick Toth & Kathy Diane Schick, *The Oldowan: Case Studies into the Earliest Stone Age*, (Stone Age Institute Publication Series: US, 2006); *Oldowan stone tools*, (<http://www.bradshawfoundation.com>) *Material culture* is the tools, weapons, utensils, machines, ornaments, art, buildings, monuments, written records, religious images, clothing, and any other everyday objects produced or used by humans. The study of material culture centers upon objects, their properties, and the materials that they are made of, and how these material facets are central to an understanding of culture and social relations. (www.britannica.com; www.oxfordbibliographies.com, 31.07.2019).

early tools affected the development of the culture, lifestyles, environment and technology.



Figure 1. *Oldowan Stone Tools are the Earliest Example of Tool Usage*

The expression of these earliest tools is marked by their diversity. Throughout history in different societies, culture and the transmission of cultural findings with written, visual and phonic elements determined the paths of human creativity. Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.²

From a Marxist point of view everyday objects are very important for analyzing and interpreting the social structure of society. Karl Marx explained in detail how the economic mode of production i.e. infrastructure, determines the superstructure of a society. This circle of life enabled the culture determined by the economy to be transferred from ancient times to the present day.

Many historians, artists, sociologists or archeologists have worked on the authentic structure of both Urartian culture and Armenian culture. From a Marxist point of view as Stefan Morawski argued in the book *"A Selection of Writings: Marx and Engels on Literature and Art"* that art objects are not isolated phenomena, but are mutually dependent on other cultural activities of predominantly social, political, moral, religious or scientific character."³

The aesthetic phenomena embedded in a specific culture are the result of the process of maintaining the lives of people. Each society has its way to solve daily natural, technological and economic problems. As it is explained and theoretically analyzed by Marx and Engels, all cultural activities and aesthetic understandings

2. Culture: "Some definitions", <https://people.tamu.edu/~i-choudhury/culture.html>.

3. Ed. by Lee Baxandall & Stefan Morawski, *A Selection of Writings: Marx and Engels on Literature and Art*, (Telos Press: US, 1973).

are related to an endeavor to survive and to transfer cultural information through the next generations so that future generations can survive too. Modern Armenian culture and aesthetic understanding are good examples of this endeavor.

According to Marx, “the aesthetic experience is synthetic in character: a mingling of the intellectual, emotional and sensual.” Therefore we can say that the artist as a living being uses all equipment to form a new artwork. Marx argued that the capitalist market transformed art into a commodity which it had never before been; in fact he talks about the changing structure of artistic understanding concerning economic developments with or without the awareness of the artist.

The Urartian Culture

The Urartian culture is a very powerful example to understand the connection between daily economic activities and production of artworks in a specific society. The Urartian people have created one of the most important civilizations of Anatolia and they were ancestors of modern Armenian society. Urartu was a civilization developed in the Bronze and Iron Ages of ancient Armenia, eastern Turkey, and northwestern Iran from the 9th to 7th century BCE. ⁴ It is the name of the geographical region centered on Lake Van in the historical Armenian mountainous regions. The Kingdom of Urartu was governed by a feudal monarchy. The King ruling from Tushpa is the King of Kings. ⁵ Urartu was a theocracy and the King represented Khaldi, the supreme god of Biana. He was the native god of the people, visualized as a man standing on a lion or a bull, symbolizing physical courage, power and fecundity. In Urartian society, people believed themselves to be his children. He has sanctuaries in numerous places within the kingdom.

4. Rafet Çavuşoğlu, *Urartian Belts*, (RHM: İstanbul, 2014); https://www.ancient.eu/Urartu_Civilization/.

5. M. Chahin, *The Kingdom of Armenia- A History*, (Curzan Press: England, 2001), p.111.

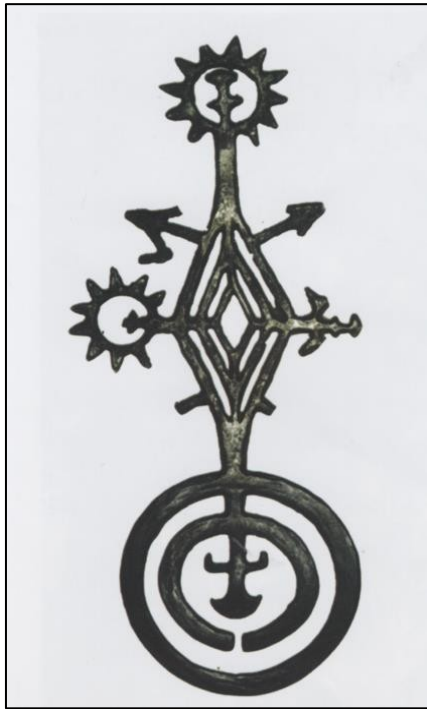


Figure 2. Bronze Armenian Model for the Solar System that was made in 12th- 11th centuries BC found in Sevan Basin, Armenia. In this model, at the bottom side we can see a small hatchet and two circles around it. The hatchet symbolizes the Earth, the first uncompleted circle symbolizes the sphere of water and the second one symbolizes the sphere of the atmosphere. Both of them surround the Earth. At the top of the model, there is the symbol of the Sun. Between Earth and Sun, we have other planets Mars, Venus, Mercury, Moon, Saturn and Jupiter (from top left to right left).
Source: National History Museum of Armenia.

As in the case of many other religions, the religion of Urartu had a trinity formed by Khaldi, Teisheba and Shivini. Khaldi, the father god was a warrior in whose name the king went to war, prayed to him for victory and gave an account of his conquest. Many Urartian cities were named after native gods or goddesses. In ancient times, the words Urartu, Urashtu, Ararat, Armenia and Harminuia were used as synonyms. Thus, there appears to have been a well-established, important tradition of dedicating precious materials and weapons of war to the gods Khaldi, Teisheba and Shivini to propitiate them. Moreover it was to associate them closely with priest and temple, king and palace as well as with the ordinary people who looked to their priest-king for protection against human enemies and evil spirits.⁶ The model for the solar system created by Armenians (Figure 2) in ancient times is a good example of the gifts prepared for gods.

The Urartians have been very successful in processing different materials such as iron, copper, gold, silver in the making of daily objects. The history of Urartu

6. M. Chahin, *The Kingdom of Armenia- A History*, (Curzan Press: England, 2001), p. 138.

remains fragmentary due to a lack of extended written sources and an overreliance on potentially biased sources from contemporary enemy states such as Assyria. Nevertheless, surviving inscriptions, architecture, and artifacts, together with ongoing archaeological investigations have helped re-create a sufficiently detailed history to indicate the undoubted importance of one of the region's most influential ancient cultures. Controlling territories through military might and the construction of fortresses, the kingdom boasted a lively production in the arts, especially metalwork. Surviving only two centuries, the kingdom mysteriously disappeared in the 6th century BCE and was only rediscovered as a distinct and recognizable ancient culture by excavations carried out in the 19th century. The historic Armenian kingdom was a continuation of the kingdom of Urartu also known as "The Kingdom of Van" which is apparent from ancient records.⁷

The Armenian Religion and Religious Artworks

Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion in 301 AD, in establishing this church.⁸ Medieval Armenians dominated international trading routes that reached Europe to China and India to Russia. As the first people to convert officially to Christianity, they commissioned and produced some of the most extraordinary religious objects of the Middle Ages. These objects—from sumptuously illuminated manuscripts to handsome carvings, liturgical furnishings, gilded reliquaries, ceramics decorated with religious issues, and printed books—show the strong persistence of their own cultural identity, as well as the multicultural influences of Armenia's interactions with Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Muslims, Mongols, Ottomans, and Europeans.⁹ Armenian people have been used many different ways to express their beliefs, ideas, philosophies and memoirs within various art and craft branches. Khatckars are very special and elegant examples of Armenian religious artworks created through their historical craftsmanship in stone carving.

⁷*World History Encyclopedia*, Urartu Civilization

⁸<http://hygradaran.weebly.com/brief-history-of-armenian-church.html>

⁹Ed. by Helen C. Evans, *Armenia: Art, Religion, and Trade in the Middle Ages*, Exhibition Catalogue, (The Metropolitan Museum of Art: NY, 2018)



Figure 3. Urartian Bronze Helmets, 8th- 7th Centuries BCE. These helmets were formed of hammered sheets with a lining, conical in form. The shape of the tapering to a tall point was designed to deflect arrows. In front of the helmets, they had a lightning symbol in relief. At the below side, three horizontal encircling ridges can be seen. Urartian people were very good at in artistically using bronze material.

Armenian Stone Carving, Khatchkars

One of the most distinct examples of Armenian religious artworks is “*khatchkars*” (cross-stones) which means big gravestones with specially decorated cross images. Khatchkars are outdoor steles carved from stone by craftspeople in Armenia and communities in the Armenian diaspora.¹⁰

They act as a focal point for worship, as memorial stones and as relics facilitating communication between the secular and divine. As in the above examples *khatchkars* reach 1.5 meters in height, and have an ornamentally carved cross in the middle, resting on the symbol of a sun or wheel of eternity, decorated by vegetative-geometric motifs, carvings of saints and animals (Figure 4). Khatchkars are created by local stone and carved via the chisel, die, sharp pens and hammers. Once finished, the khatchkar is raised during a small religious ceremony. After being blessed and anointed, the khatchkar is believed to possess holy powers and can provide help, protection, victory, long life, remembrance and mediation towards the salvation of the soul. Among more than 50.000 khatchkars in Armenia, each has its pattern, and no two are alike.¹¹ Khatchkar craftsmanship is transmitted through

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

11. *Armenian Cross- Stones Art, Symbolism and Craftsmanship of Khatchkars*, <https://ich.unes>

families or from master to apprentice, teaching the traditional methods and patterns, while encouraging regional distinctiveness and individual improvisation.



Figure 4. (From left to right khatchkar examples from Armenia)

1. Khatchkar in the wall at Arates Monastery with a wheel of eternity symbol at the bottom side
2. Aseghnagorts Khatchkar (The Needlecarved) with vegetative-geometric ornaments created like a "lace" by Master Poghos in 1291, Goshavank Monastery
3. All Saviour Khatchkar showing the Crucifixion, 1273, Haghpat Monastery

Medieval Times: Armenian Gospels and *Trchnakir*

In medieval times the writings, ornamentation and decoration of Bibles i.e. Medieval Gospels, were also very important and gospel writing was an important part of Armenian art. Toros Roslin, Momik and Grigor Tatevatsi were important artists specialized in this area. In the decoration of Bibles artworks the usage of soft, vivid colors were very common. The gold pieces were being used for decoration by which the pictures became more shining. The symbolic figures that are used for ornamentation within these books include architectural and geographical images such as rooms, buildings, grid formed patterns, geometrical shapes, mountains, seas, columns, arches, borders, strips, pools; images of daily objects such as books, curtains, vases, stools, writing desks, egg- shape ornaments, swords; images of plants such as life trees, the branch of trees, trees and fruits of pomegranate, leaves, flowers; religious items such as crosses, prophets, truncheons, angels, female and male profiles, medallion shaped ornaments, eternity signs; animal figures such as birds –doves, cocks, peacocks, crows- rabbits, fishes, horses, mystical creatures (figures composed of human head and animal body).¹² As it is summarized by historians, "There is only a single subject for Armenian miniature painting, at least until

[co.org/en/RL/armenian-cross-stones-art-symbolism-and-craftsmanship-of-khachkars-00434](https://www.co.org/en/RL/armenian-cross-stones-art-symbolism-and-craftsmanship-of-khachkars-00434).

12. Ed. by A. Sh. Mnatsakanian, *Ornaments of Armenian Manuscripts*, 1978, p. 19.

the late medieval period: *The Life of Christ.*"¹³



Figure 5. On the right side ornamental figures from 13th century gospel from Cilicia and at the left side a gospel from 1304 with trchnakir letters, Nakhidjevan city (Painter and binder are Simeon, Hraç Arslanyan Collection, Mahrec Arthouse).

“The ornamentation of Armenian manuscripts appeared at the same time as the Armenian script and its literature. Christianity which initially contended against pagan conceptions and against the cultural heritage connected with them later gradually gave way both in Armenia and in other countries and began to use ancient ornamentations... The ornamental designs used for the framing of dominical miniatures are also fascinating. In all of that the talented Armenian painter has masterfully reproduced the likeness of the objects, even giving them a realistic quality: for example, the marble columns, the Ionic capitals, and the rainbow like arch which is similar to the vaults of the main entrance of monumental buildings. The painting of the birds and vegetation is particularly life-like and convincing. The skill of the artist and his fine sense of taste are displayed especially in the coloration. The rich range of colors and the synthesis of bright and warm shades (dark, red, brown, green and blue), along with the restrained application of gold, create a cheerful mood and, with the dominical illuminations, they give to the entire manuscript solemnness, a festive appearance and magnificence. In those beautiful and invigorated creations the painter has reached a deep level of artistic persuasiveness.”¹⁴

Another artistic element which can be seen in these miniatures is a special, original visually oriented alphabet formed by bird- formed letters called *Trchnakir*. Armenian people have created a unique alphabet especially in the inscription of religious writings. In addition to *Trchnakir*, in 450 AD the Armenian alphabet

13. www.fresnostate.edu.

14. Ed. by A. Sh. Mnatsakanian, *Ornaments of Armenian Manuscripts*, 1978, p. 18- 2.

which is an alphabetic writing system used to write Armenian, was created by Meshrop Mastots. With a synthesis of typography, painting, decorating and printing Armenian masters created a special way of telling religious stories effectively. Just like the stone carving, metal works, ceramics and paintings in Trchnakir “the idea of ornamentation” becomes prominent and this point is very important in their mastership over accessories, decorations, compositions and arrangements. The Armenian people came to the fore with their ornaments made on daily items, swords, books, objects, costumes, rags, buildings and jewelry.

The Armenian Ceramics

The drawings of the Uartian people on their ceramics, jewels, arches, inscriptions and monuments were a narrative depicting their public and private lives, memories, wars, weddings, entertainments, celebrations, religious ceremonies, rulers, beliefs, ideas, hopes and dreams (Figures 6-7).



Figure 6. Armenian oval ceramic egg with a drawing of Seraphim on it, made in Kütaahya, the 1750s. These eggs were used to prevent animals from coming over the lamp oil. Although they were daily objects when they were created they transformed historically into art objects. Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Figure 7. Armenian ceramic plate (at left) with the figure of archangel Mikael with its colophon (at right), Kütahya, 1718.

The Urartians were craftsmen and produced many artworks and objects. These works of art regarded as the origin of the modern Armenian visual culture.¹⁵ Another important example from Armenian visual culture is Armenian ceramics. During Ottoman Empire, Kütahya was an important district where Armenians reproduce ceramics. Mostly decorated according to the needs of religious rituals, these products were special with the production methods, visual styles similar to miniatures, coloured expressions and unique forms. An important historian of Armenian art, Dickran Kouymjian explains these ceramics,

“In the post-medieval period the Armenian ceramics industry flourished at one major center: Kütahya. An Armenian colony is already noted there in the 13th century and in the 14th and 15th centuries there was an active scriptorium too. Armenian manufactured ceramics came to dominate the craft industry of the city. The earliest dated pieces, inscribed on the bottom in Armenia, are from the early 16th century. They are decorated in the characteristic blue and white of early Kütahya ware. By the 17th century highly polychrome ceramics were manufactured with yellow, green and the famous tomato red or “Armenian bole.”¹⁶ The town became renowned as an Armenian ceramic center in the Ottoman Empire, and was the major competitor of Iznik, the famous source of

15. Ed. Hrant Dink, *Armenian Painting From Beginning to the Present*, (AGOS Publishing and Printing Services: İstanbul, 2005); M. Chahin, *The Kingdom of Armenia- A History*, (Curzan Press: England, 2001); Mirjo Salvini, *Urartu Tarihi ve Kültürü*, (Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları: İstanbul, 1995); Nora Emma Khatcherian, *Armenian Crafts in the Ottoman Empire: Cultural Exchange and Armenian Identity*, Thesis, University of South Florida, 2015, St. Petersburg; Onnik Jamgoçyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sarraflık: Rumlar, Museviler, Frenkler, Ermeniler (1650- 1890)*, (YKY: İstanbul, 2017); Atilla Batmaz, *Urartu Kültürünü Oluşturan Temel Öğeler*, Ege Üniversitesi, 2011, İzmir.

16. *Armenian bole*: A soft clayey bright red earth found chiefly in Armenia and Tuscany and used especially as a coloring material.

most "Islamic" tiles and vessels. The Kütahya potters also produced square tiles for wall decorations. These were used in several mosques, mostly in Constantinople, as well as churches. The most spectacular display of Kütahya tiles is in the Armenian Cathedral of St. James in Jerusalem... One of the most popular forms originating from the kilns at Kütahya was the egg-shaped ornament hung on the chains from which oil lamps were suspended in churches and mosques. They may have had more than just an ornamental use; some experts considered them as barriers against mice who, attracted by the animal fat used in these lamps, would slide off the slick surface of the egg as they made their way down the chain to the vessel bearing the oil. Kütahya eggs are variously decorated, but the most common type displays seraphim, the famous six-winged guardian angels. Other popular shapes of these ceramics are the demitasse cups without handles, saucers, monogrammed plates, rose-water flasks, and lemon squeezers. Armenian inscriptions abound on Kütahya vessels, whether eggs or water jugs, flasks or incense burners. The Armenian ceramic industry in Kütahya flourished until the Armenians were forced to leave the city during the troubles of World War I. Several families settled in Jerusalem, where they continue to produce the polychrome Kütahya style ceramics as souvenirs of the Holy Land."¹⁷

The Armenian Metal Works

Armenian people also specialized in metalworking. With a rich land of different materials such as stones, metals and clays they can create various artworks for daily usage, for religious ceremonies, for loyal people and soldiers. The inhabitants of this country created different forms, shapes and designs for these objects and decorated them with special ornaments symbolizing the sun, eternity, life, earth, war, angels, gods etc. What is important here is that, there is continuity between the artworks of ancient civilizations and the artworks of modern countries; they share a common know-how and they are produced with similar aims.

"The Armenian plateau, rich in metal ores, was one of the first regions of the world to practice metallurgy and was in advance of its neighbors in the use of bronze and iron... Gold and silver objects were by definition luxury items destined for royalty, the church, and the rich. The earliest examples are rhytons or drinking vessels in silver found at the Urartian site of Arin Berd-Erebuni; they date, however, from the post-Urartian period. Armenia was one of the first and most important wine producing regions in the world, explaining in part the popularity of such vessels in metal and ceramic... It is only from the 13th century on that we have a nearly continuous series of objects in silver, often washed with gold, and a few pure gold items. They are almost exclusively objects related to the cult: bindings of Gospel manuscripts, reliquaries, chalices, patens, and other vessels... In the 18th and especially 19th centuries large quantities of silver belts, buckles, earrings, purses in filigree work, and communion

17. Dickran Kouymjian, *Armenian Art: An Overview*, a paper for a project in Paris in 1995, (https://www.academia.edu/37170915/Armenian_Art_An_Overview).

boxes were manufactured in such centers as Van, where the black and silver niello¹⁸ technique was popular, but also Constantinople and other cities... The first major artistic use of baser metals, copper and bronze, was during the Urartian Kingdom (9th-6th century B.C.). The excavations of sites such as Toprakkale/Van, Arin Berd (Erebuni-Erevan), and Karmir Blur have yielded a vast quantity of weapons, domestic objects and votive statues. Urartian bronzes were coveted throughout the Mediterranean world, thus explaining their appearance in excavations in many parts of the Middle East and Europe, especially Etruscan Italy. Embossed shields and helmets, large caldrons, and statues are now in the major museum collections from Leningrad and Erevan to London and New York... The great bulk Armenian bronze, copper, and occasionally pewter vessels date from the 17th century and after. The cities of Tokat and Caesarea/Kayseri were major centers of this Armenian metalwork."¹⁹

Although they have a powerful, unique and strong historical and cultural background, Armenian people have suffered from tragic events after the 19th century. With the beginning of 20th century, the Armenian Genocide was lived through the Ottoman government's systematic extermination. This event caused the loss of one and a half million Armenians with the specifically organized plans of the Committee of Union and Progress within the Ottoman Empire.²⁰ Although Armenians have lived a brutal and violent practice of genocide and had to change the geographical locations in which they lived for many centuries they were able to keep their artistic, aesthetic and cultural characteristics wherever they live and work in. These artworks became a way to memorize, to remember and to live their identities.

Armenian Jewelry

As Marx argued specific cultural forms always arise in certain historical situations; they depend on certain socio-economic variables and perform important social functions. If we come to Turkey, as we all know, Istanbul which was an imperial capital, has museums, galleries, antique shops, private collections and so on. It is famous for its historical accumulation. One of the most important production and consumption places of this cultural heritage is the Grand Bazaar in Sultanahmet.²¹

18. *Niello*: The black metallic alloy of sulfur with silver, copper, or lead that is used to fill designs that have been engraved on the surface of a metal (usually silver) object; *savat*.

19. *Ibid*.

20. Raymond Kevorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: The Complete History*, (Tauris: London, 2011); Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*, (Princeton University Press: US, 2013); *The Armenian Genocide Museum- Institute Foundation*, (<http://www.genocide-museum>); www.wikipedia.com; Ayhan Aktar, *Debating the Armenian Massacres In The Last Ottoman Parliament, November-December 1918*, *History Workshop Journal Issue 64*, 2017.

21. The foundation of the Grand Bazaar was laid in 1461. The Grand Bazaar, which has an architectural structure resembling a domed inn with large multi-rooms, is as big as



Figure 8. The copper plate from a family collection with the name of the Nerseyan Family and the date in the Armenian language inscribed on it. (Hraç Aslanyan Collection, Mahrec Art House)

With the annihilation of the Armenian people in the 20th century, many Armenian artists, their material properties as well as artistic knowledge were being destroyed. During the Armenian genocide art establishments, schools, institutions were also destroyed. According to the historians who argue that “the acts and measures undertaken to destroy any nations’ or ethnic groups’ culture is called, *cultural genocide*”²² we can try to analyze the tragic dimensions of these violent acts over people. Therefore it can be said that the Armenian genocide exterminated not only people but also culture in general (artifacts, artworks, buildings, objects, etc.)²³

It is very difficult to reverse the history but at least we can protect cultures. The memorial objects, the properties and the cultural knowledge of the Armenian people became very important to understand our society not only in those as well

a maze; spread over an area of 110.868 m², it has 3600 shops, 2 mosques, 10 wells, 4 fountains and 14 inns on 65 streets. These shops include ceramics, paint, jewelry, textiles, gold, copperware, glassware, embroidery, china, touristic objects, souvenirs, rugs, leather, books, fez, hats, bags, clothing, shoe sellers, herbalists, bookshelves, shops such as barbers and numismatics.

22. The Armenian Genocide Museum- Institute Foundation, (<http://www.genocide-museum>).

23. There is a debate over the concept of “genocide” therefore it is better to define the concept before using it. According to the Armenian Genocide museum Institute Foundation the extermination of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and the surrounding regions during 1915- 1923 is called the Armenian Genocide The word genocide coined by Raphael Lemkin, not only refers to the physical extermination of a national or religious group, but also its national, spiritual and cultural destruction. The concept of cultural genocide has not yet been accepted into the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Many proven facts concomitant with the massacres and deportation are witness to the fact that the Young Turk government premeditated and planned a systematic method aiming to destroy the material testimonies of the Armenian civilization. In 1974 UNESCO stated that after 1923, out of 913 Armenian historical monuments left in Eastern Turkey, 464 have vanished completely, 252 are in ruins, and 197 require repair.

as in contemporary times.²⁴ This route brought us to a point in which we can easily perceive the importance of protecting the historical properties and archives of daily objects and artworks for a specific culture. The everyday objects are bridges between the history and the future of the Armenian society. It can be said that these objects are a kind of carrier that maintains the Armenian traditional culture; these historical objects protect the existence of what is “old, original, authentic and real” from the modern transformation created by capitalist production and capitalist lifestyle. Here the organization of various artists and craftsmen from various areas is also very important. During the Ottoman Empire, the grouping of people from the same professionalization made them more powerful and effective within their areas. The jewelers in general were an important part of this hierarchical stratification. The “guild”, “corporation” or “ahi order”²⁵ were the common names of these organizations.

“It is important to say a few words about the general characteristics and functions of Ottoman craft guilds. Like European craft guilds, the Ottoman variety were urban industrial organizations in which manual work or handicraft production was organized by people of the same occupation who provided each other with mutual support and agreed to follow a number of internal rules. As local organizations of industrial producers they were in full control of product quality, set prices for raw materials, helped government authorities with tax collection, and, when required, appear to have supplied goods and services to soldiers on campaign. Ottoman craft guilds had close relations with the government, from which they obtained licenses to assert their monopolistic role in the production or sale of certain commodities – characteristics they shared with their European counterparts.”²⁶

24. As an important example of a place protecting the cultural heritage of Armenian people living in İstanbul, Mahrec Art House, has a close relationship with the economic and artistic fabric of the Grand Bazaar. Established by Hraç Arslanyan, Mahrec Art House is a private Armenian art school specializing in the education of jewelry design and jewelry making. In this art school, which can be defined as a “big historical workshop”, we can see that there are many different objects: historical craft specific tools such as hand drills, ceramic melting pots, ring size, enamel tools, oil vitriol furnaces; visual materials such as religious writings, miniatures, icons; memorial objects such as family portraits, unique jewelry samples and various ornaments. These materials constitute the “traditional Armenian cultural infrastructure” on which Mahrec Art House’s modern and contemporary understanding of jewelry design is built. These everyday objects also keep the political as well as social identity of an ethnic group alive. The continuation of the special methodology of developing ideas, making designs, drawing and using tools to apply a design is the continuation of a special understanding of Armenian culture.

25. Nalan Turna, *Ottoman apprentices and their experiences*, Middle Eastern Studies, 2019; *Tomb of Ahi Evran*, (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5902/>).

26. Onur Yildirim, *Ottoman Guilds in the Early Modern Era*, IRSH 53 (2008), Supplement, pp. 73–93, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis.

Based on this information, the production of jewelry and bejeweled within the frame of special guilds collected great power for the producers. They were not only jewelers but also moneychangers, dealers, bankers, money lenders. This economic, political and cultural power made them arbiters in the hierarchical structure of the Ottoman Empire especially until the construction of the Turkish Republic. Even after the construction of Republic through the 20th and 21th century, they still own this characteristic throughout the world.²⁷

“In the urban economy, laborers in trade and manufacturing remained mostly under the umbrella of the guilds until the second half of the 19th century. Even though religious themes played an important role in guilds, the evolution of the Ottoman guilds was shaped primarily by economic and political factors. The guilds tried to regulate the labour markets by employing a wide range of restrictions, including wage rates. They often sought the support of local or central government to enforce guild rules, secure raw materials at low prices and obtain tax exemptions. The government, in turn, needed and relied on the guilds for the provisioning of the urban areas and the military. The guilds also offered the government an instrument for the supervision of the urban population. Nonetheless, there existed a considerable amount of tension between the government and guild membership both Muslim and Christian. While the guilds tried to preserve their independence, they were viewed with suspicion for the heterodox religious beliefs of their membership and the janissaries, the permanent army soldiers. Growing numbers of janissaries or traditional soldiers amongst guild members in both capital and the provinces increased the ability of the guilds to resist government pressure and intervention. After the abolition of the janissaries in 1826 and the establishment of a new permanent army, however the ability of the guilds to resist government encroachment was sharply reduced.”²⁸

The daily objects, which were produced under the protection schemas of guilds, became important for the transmission of the culture. They are resistant to time through history. Moreover, the existence of these objects means that the owner and the first users of these objects were real persons who have their own life stories. Armenian historian Dickran Kouymjian analyzes these objects and their qualities in his article “*Reflections on Object From the Pre- 20th century Diaspora with Armenian Inscriptions*”:

“Objects, artistic, liturgical or personal, have been inscribed from the earliest times, whether in hieroglyphs, cuneiform, Greek and Latin, Hebrew, Chinese or other languages... Armenians had a strongly developed habit of using their alphabet to record, often precisely, the circumstances relating to the creation of an artistic or literary work. Armenian scribes for instance were perhaps the most consistent of any

27. Onnik Jamgoçyan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sarraflık: Rumlar, Museviler, Frenkler, Ermeniler (1650- 1890)*, (YKY: İstanbul, 2017).

28. Şevket Pamuk, “*Changes in factor markets in the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1800*”, *Continuity and Change* 24 (I), 2009 (1-30).

medieval manuscript tradition in leaving a memorial or colophon with name, date of copying as well as the place and patron. A survey of surviving manuscripts established that 60% were exactly dated...It is extremely rare to find a complete manuscript which lacks a dated scribal colophon, when such is missing, usually it means folios at the end have been dropped or disturbed in successive rebindings."²⁹

To argue that art is genetically transmitted "as a way of experience"³⁰ means that knowledge about art is being transmitted. Talent, creativity, production, methods of production, methods of using various equipment, qualities of materials and presentation of products are protected and transmitted too. Human beings are capable of producing tools, artifacts and artworks according to special criteria. This capability and style of production change according to socio- historical conditions of each group. As we all know Armenian masters are very talented and powerful in the jewelry production area and the answer to the question of how they have achieved this status can only be explained by a Marxian understanding.

"...Labor is the source of all wealth... (it) is the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that *labor created man himself* ³¹... Before the first flint was fashioned into a knife by human hands, a period of time may have elapsed in comparison with which the historical period known to us appears insignificant, but the decisive step was taken; the hand had become free and could henceforth attain ever greater dexterity and skill, and the greater flexibility thus acquired was inherited and increased from generation to generation."³²

29. Dickran Kouymjian, "Reflections on Object from the Pre- 20th century Diaspora with Armenian Inscriptions", Paris (Series Byzantina IX, pp. 00-00).

If we turn back to the modern Armenian art school called Mahrec Art House, we can see that jewelers testify these objects and present their knowledge to the new candidates for apprenticeship. These everyday objects make people to feel the passing of time over the country. In fact according to jewelry master Hraç Aslanyan who argues that jewelry making is a special way of production: "This is not only a profession but an art. Art is genetically transmitted. There is something special changing according to the nations. I think the tendency of our Armenian people toward jewelry is also genetic. I think it's in our genetics not to put into mass production, because we love this art. We have many successful friends who produce in a factory-assembled system but they are not the majority. Both in Istanbul or abroad, Armenians are in the art side of this production process." (Hraç Aslanyan, *Murassa Sanatı*, 17.05.2013, Sultanahmet from the book by Rita Ender, "Kolay Gelsin" *Meslekler ve Mekanlar*, (İletişim Yayınları: İstanbul, 2017), pp. 289- 293.)

30. The emphasis belongs to me.

31. This argument can be explained simply: by time, energy, money and value, any person from various craftsmanship can create, develop or use his/her talent. Here we can think about the traditional conflict whether a genetically transmitted talent or the effect of artistic education is important for the production of the artworks.

32. Engels, from "The Part Played by Labor in the Transition From Ape to Man, 1876; From the book Baxandall & Morawski, *Marx and Engels on Literature*, p. 54.

Conclusion

Urartian people created one of the most important civilizations of Eastern Anatolia with their developed socio-historical structure. They have rich metal supplies and they developed the ability to process them. This is how ancient Urartian society made such important, beautifully ornamented, original daily objects and artworks. As one of the ancient societies of Eastern Anatolia, the Urartian kingdom was one of the ancestors of Medieval and modern Armenia. People living in those areas are still producing metalwork, jewelry and daily objects. This continuation is related to the richness of raw materials, the power of the mode of production, the beauty of the products, the culture of living people and the transmission of the *techne* (know-how).³³ As a damaged culture by the politics of wars, forced migration, the genocide of Ottoman Empire, Armenian art and craft production are very important for Turkey because these ancient methods have very unique dimensions which complete the missing parts of the culture of our geographical region. For the people living in this geography, to notice, to care and to support various cultures is the only way to experience ourselves in full term.

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33. Mahrec Art House in Istanbul or other similar private minority art schools have managed to play a role in this transmission of *techne* by which these ancient art methods are surviving.

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