



UNESCO Office in Venice – ROSTE



DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI EURASIATICI - UNIVERSITÀ "CA' FOSCARI" DI VENEZIA



CENTRO STUDI E DOCUMENTAZIONE DELLA CULTURA ARMENA

present

THE "CRYING STONES" OF ARMENIA

Thirty years of study, documentation, restoration and enhancement of Armenian monuments

EXHIBITION

realised under the patronage of:

Ministero degli Affari Esteri

UNESCO Division for Cultural Heritage

Consiglio Regionale del Veneto

Comune di Venezia – Assessorato alla Cultura

Congregazione Armena Mechitarista

VENEZIA

Palazzo Zorzi — Castello 4930

from June 9th to July 2th 2004

from 9.30 to 18.00 from Monday to Friday

Opening on June 8th, 2004, h. 5.00 p.m.

The exhibit, through spectacular images of the landscapes and the architectures of Armenia, offers to the visitor a particular "travel" in a fascinating cultural reality. The work implemented by Italian experts for the documentation, restoration and valorisation of Armenian monuments is presented with many images that also shows the collaboration with Armenian experts and labourers.

Scientific Committee Adriano Alpago Novello, Gaiane Casnati, Gianclaudio Macchiarella, Boghos Levon Zekiyani

Design and editing: Gaiane Casnati, CSDCA

Texts: Adriano Alpago Novello, Gaiane Casnati, Gabriella Uluhogian

Graphic design: Maria Cristina Alberghini, Carmen Pellizzi

Translations: Alessandra Ghezzi

Technical management: Onnik Pambakian, *Image Consult*

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Organization in Venice: Minas Lourian

THE "CRYING STONES" OF ARMENIA

Thirty years of study, documentation, restoration and enhancement of Armenian monuments

Objectives

The purpose of this exhibition is to present the past achievements as well as the ongoing activities of Italian experts in the protection of the inestimable monumental architectural heritage of Armenia to the public at large. This heritage is currently at risk due to the scarcity of local financial resources available for its preservation.

For the first time ever, the experts of the Centro Studi e Documentazione della Cultura Armena and those of the University of Venice will present to the Italian and international public a body of past, present and future works encompassing a decade of continuous operations for the preservation of the architectural heritage of Armenia. These interventions have yielded important results, notably the completion of the restoration of the Church of Marmashen inaugurated last summer under the auspices of the Italian Embassy in Armenia and re-consecrated by His Holiness Karekin II the Catholicos of all Armenians, and were made possible with the support of national and international institutions.

Designed as an accessible and informative exhibition for a wide range of visitors, it is composed of approximately thirty richly illustrated panels giving a comprehensive overview of the various facets and challenges of architectural conservation. In addition to the spectacular images of the monuments, photographs documenting activities at the sites during actual restoration will create an integrated narrative that while didactic, also demonstrates the social impact such works have for the preservation improvement and dissemination of traditional native skills through the employment of local masters and craftsmen. This will be contextualized through an introduction to the characteristics of Armenian architecture with panels covering the evolution of the typologies and techniques.

The choice of panels as an exhibition means was dictated by a number of criteria including cost, mobility and easy installation so as to increase the venues. The exhibition is expected to travel to Milan, Livorno, Geneva, Paris, Bruxelles, Amsterdam, New York, etc., after opening in the UNESCO's Palazzo Zorzi in Venice.

Inputs

Other similar exhibitions organised by the Centro Studi e Documentazione della Cultura Armena in the past have had great success and travelled all over the world. Particular mention worth the exhibition "Architettura Armena" realised in 1968 that, after travelling all over four of the 5 continents, is now exhibited permanently in the Museum of Architecture of Erevan.

Furthermore the interactive CD "*Quattro secoli di architettura armena*" published by Ca' Foscarina will be presented to the public for the first time, and all the publications of the last 30 years by the Centro Studi e Documentazione della Cultura Armena will be available for consultation and sale.

Music events

The exhibition will also constitute the occasion to present to the public the preview of the first two music Cd of the series on Armenian Sacred Hymns promoted by Centro Studi e Documentazione della Cultura Armena and recorded in the 1700's Temanza's loggia.

The series is the result of a project of documentation of the entire non written Armenian medieval liturgical repertoire conserved following the Mekhitarist tradition finalized to the conservation and transmission to the following generations of an outstanding and rare musical heritage.

The hymns (more than 1.000) are sung by Father Vartanes Uluhogian (from Mekhitarist Congregation) and the liturgic vocal ensemble AKN under the direction of Aram Kerovpian.

Other events

During the exhibitions will be organized, in co-operation with the University Ca' Foscari of Venice, seminars and conferences the calendar of which is indicated below.

CULTURAL EVENTS

Palazzo Zorzi — VENEZIA - Castello 4930

June 8th, 2004 h. 11.00 a.m.

Press Conference

June 8th, 2004 h. 05.00 p.m.

Opening

June 9th, 2004 h. 02.30 p.m.

Round Table:

"The international intervention for the safeguard of Armenian monuments"

June 10th, 2004 h. 05.00 p.m.

Presentation of the CD-rom

"Quattro secoli di architettura armena" edited by Francesca Villa

June 17th, 2004 h. 02.30 p.m.

Round Table:

"Historical studies on Armenian monuments"

24 giugno 2004 ore 17.00

"Armenian Music and architecture"

Presentation of the publications by Oemme edizioni and Oemme/Musicam

25 giugno 2004 ore 17.00

Conference by Arà Zarian:

"Armenia: a travel with an expert aimed to the discovering of 3000 years of history and traditions"

“The international intervention aimed to the safeguard of Armenian monuments”

ROUND TABLE

Palazzo Zorzi — VENEZIA - Castello 4930

June 9th, 2004 h. 02.30 p.m.

INVITED PERSONS

1. S.E. **Gagik Baghdassarian**, of the Republic of Armenia in Italy
2. **Gagik Gurjyan**, deputy Minister of Culture of the Republic of Armenia
3. **Francis Childe**, Chief of Section for Europe, Asia and the Pacific, Operational Activities, Division of Cultural Heritage, UNESCO
4. **Mikhaël de Thyse**, Responsible for the Technical Co-operation Unit, Direction de la Culture et du Patrimoine culturel et naturel/Conseil de l'Europe/Council of Europe
5. **Peter Glidewell**, Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities
6. **Marina Djabbarzade**, World Bank consultant for culture
7. **Francesco Amodei**, president, Istituto per l'Arte e il Restauro Palazzo Spinelli
8. **Padre Elia Kilaghbian**, General Abbot of the Congregazione Armena Mechitarista
9. **Liova Ghukassyan**, director, Aragatsotn Arvesdanotz, Ashtarak, Armenia

Chairman: Gaiane Casnati, Centro Studi e Documentazione della Cultura Armena

"Armenian Architecture in its Cultural context"

ROUND TABLE

Palazzo Zorzi — VENEZIA - Castello 4930

June 17th, 2004 h. 02.30 p.m.

INVITED PERSONS

1. Prof. **Francesco Gandolfo**, University of Rome "Tor Vergata": *Early Armenian Christian Architecture in Syria*
2. Prof. **Raffaele Biscione**, Institute of Studies of the civilizations of the Egean Sea and of the Near East, C N R , Rome: *The italo-armenian Archaeological Mission: the basin of Lake Sevan, 1994 – 2003.*
3. Prof. **Neda Parmigiani**, Institute of Studies of the civilizations of the Egean Sea and of the Near East: *The Tsovinar Fortress and the reconstruction of the level of the lake in Urartian times.*
4. Arch. **Ara Zarian**: *The Fortresses of Syunik Region in medieval Armenia.*
5. Prof. **Adriano Alpago Novello**, Center for Studies and Documentation of Armenian Culture: *The conservation of minor heritage of rural armenian villages: some examples from Northern Syria.*
6. Prof. **Boghos Levon Zekiyan**, University "Cà Foscari" of Venice: *Liturgy and Spirituality in Armenian Architecture.*

Chairman: Prof. Gianclaudio Macchiarella, Departement of Euro-Asian Studies, University "Cà Foscari", Venice

DRAFT LIST OF PANELS

Section 1 - The context

- 1. Armenia in the history**
- 2. The Republic of Armenia today**
- 3. The marsilii Map**
- 4. Armenian architectural heritage**
- 5. The Armenian alphabet**

Section 2 - Armenian architecture

- 6. The Khatchkars**
- 7. Architectures from the IVth to the VIIth c.**
- 8. Architectures from the IXth to the XIIIth c.**
- 9. Monasteries and gavits**
- 10. Fortified architecture**

Section 3 – Building technologies and problems of conservation

- 11. Armenian architectural peculiarities**
- 12. Building technologies**
- 13. Maintenance of buildings along history**
- 14. Actual conservation problems**
- 15. Restoration methodologies adopted in Armenia**

Section 4 - Interventions aimed to the heritage documentation and safeguard

- 16. Study and documentation**
- 17. Heritage inventory**
- 18. The restoration of Marmashen**
- 19. Preliminary studies for Marmashen**
- 20. Restoration works in Marmashen 1**
- 21. Restoration works in Marmashen 2**
- 22. Marmashen – Northern Church and the surroundings**
- 23. The restoration of Hovhannavank**
- 24. The restoration of Ererouk**
- 25. The project for Tatev**
- 26. The restoration of Tatev monastery**

Section 6 – Intervention aimed to the Community driven development

- 27. The project for Anberd**
- 28. The project for Tekher**
- 29. The project for the village of Tatev 1**
- 30. The project for the village of Tatev 2**

Section 7 - The Armenians in Venice: San Lazzaro

- 31. San Lazzaro degli Armeni**

THE ARCHITECTONIC HERITAGE OF ARMENIA

Thanks to their excellent skills, Armenian architects were able to give life to a splendid artistic and architectonic movement that permeated many centuries of history. They built works of art equipped with excellent antisismic features, always characterised by original shapes but at the same time gifted with a surprising uniformity of style. The choice of such consistency of style was dictated by the need to provide recognisable landmarks and to confirm a cultural identity within an unstable political scene.

Notwithstanding the difficult geo-political situation of this territory, it was possible to preserve a great part of the Armenian architectonic heritage thanks to the clever building techniques adopted in the past and thanks to the regular conservation efforts carried out by Armenians on their monuments since Medieval times.

Unfortunately in the past few years the conservation and restoration work has been put to a sudden halt. The Armenian Republic is no longer able to afford the costs that are required to safeguard such a rich and endangered cultural heritage, whose precarious conditions, already undermined by the terrible earthquake of 1988, worsen each day. Therefore, today most of the Armenian monuments are badly abandoned to the point that some of them are at risk of being destroyed.

The conservation of the Cultural and, as a consequence, the architectonic Heritage, is nowadays considered a vital factor in preserving the identity and history of a nation. The urgent need to formulate conservation policies for Armenian architectonic monuments is therefore unmistakable. A dedicated office that can ensure such policies are followed, must be put in place first of all within the Armenian Republic and secondly overseas (where many Armenian monuments exist). Environmental and territorial issues must course be always taken into careful consideration. The independence of the Armenian Republic has finally allowed tourists to enjoy its cultural and environmental heritage. At government level, tourism is seen as a potential economic resource and various solutions to increase tourist influx in Armenia are currently under study. Unfortunately, such evaluations are not supplemented by analyses on how to manage the increased fruition of an already endangered cultural and environmental heritage.

The government offices appointed to monument conservation – although equipped with qualified personnel and tools – are in great financial difficulty: the resources available are so scarce that even buying office supplies has become an issue.

The international community must step in urgently in order to guarantee the conservation of Armenian monuments and enable future generations to enjoy such fine works of art.

As to give an idea, the monuments ranked by the General Department for the Conservation of Armenian Monuments are more than 33,000 of which 3 are listed by UNESCO in the World Heritage List.

Armenian people are extremely attached to their monuments, as the still existing architectonic heritage is mostly religious buildings. *Amongst the many personal recollections of my various trips to Armenia, I was especially touched at the ruins of Gyumri (former Leninakan) cathedral by the request of an old lady who, in tears, cried out: "rescue our church before all else and our houses later".*

Adriano Alpago-Novello

ABOUT THE CENTRO STUDI E DOCUMENTAZIONE DELLA CULTURA ARMENA (CSDCA)

The CSDCA was founded in 1976 by Prof. Alpagò Novello and a number of Scholars interested in the Armenian history and culture who, since 1967, when the first Italian scientific mission to Armenia was realised, collaborated with Armenian Institutions, namely the Academy of Sciences at Yerevan, the Ministry of Culture, and the Holy See of Echmiadzin.

The activities of the CSDCA are distinct in three main directions:

1. Architecture, Conservation and Restoration
2. Cultural Enterprises
3. Ancient and contemporary Music

1. Architecture, Conservation and Restoration

This Section developed a great deal of research activities, in archives and on the field, with several Scientific Missions in Armenia, of architectonic and photographic survey, with particular concern for building and restoration techniques besides the artistic and historical characteristic of the studied monuments.

The outcome of this scientific work give rise to a numerous papers presented at Scientific Congresses, published on specialised texts, and discussed among international experts in six especially organised International Symposia on Armenian Art.

Through the publisher Oemme Edizioni (named after the initial of Onnik Manoukian, the inspirer and financier of many of the activities of the Centre), the CSDCA realised a series of 24 monographs, each of them dedicated to a specific Monument of Armenian Architecture, illustrated by photographs and graphic surveys, and accompanied by texts of distinguished Italian and Armenian Scholars.

The Documentation work pursued in collaboration with the University of Venice, Department of Euro-Asian Studies, aimed at the inventorying and digitalisation of all the documents in possession of the CSDCA (including more than 10.000 slides of Armenian architectonic monuments, a great deal of photographic negatives and prints in black or in colours and graphic surveys of very numerous edifices. This program, under the direction of Prof. Gianclaudio Macchiarella, holder of the Chair of History of the Byzantine Art, is co-ordinated by arch. Gaiànè Casnati and arch. Francesca Villa. The elaborated data are on the internet site (www.unive.it/EAADA).

In November, 2001 was signed an agreement by General Direction for Restoration of Historic and artistic monuments of Armenia, Karedaran NGO, Virtuality NGO, University of Venice and CSDCA, aimed at the realisation of a digital catalogue of all architectonic monuments of Armenia.

Since 1998 is activated a convention between University of Venice and CSDCA realising a didactic Cupertino with the course of Byzantine and Islamic Art and Architecture of the prof. Macchiarella, by Lectures given By Arch. Gaiànè Casnati (years 1999-2002) and Arch. Francesca Villa (since 2003).

Since 1999 is operating a co-operation with the Polytechnic of Milan, by mean of the realisation of stages on Armenian Architecture for students and graduates, also held in Armenia, and by mean of the promotion of graduation theses in Architecture, section Architectonic Restoration, regarding Armenian Monuments.

In the last years the initiatives of CSDCA became even more oriented at the realisation of technologically advanced interventions of restoration of Armenian monuments, in joint co-operation with the General Direction for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Monuments of Armenia . Plans for restoration interventions regarding important historic monuments have been drawn up and realised, often with the support of International Institutions (UNESCO, World

Monument Fund, Ministero Italiano degli Affari Esteri, World Bank, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Politecnico di Milano, University Ca' Foscari of Venice, Libera università Carlo Cattaneo, ecc.). Among the completed works we have the restoration of the Principal Church of the monastic complex of Marmashen, the remaking of the roofing of the Monastery of Hovhannavank and of the northern church of the Marmashen complex. In the present, work in progress are the conservative restoration of the Ererouk Basilica, the projects for the consolidation and revalorization of the Anberd Fortress (project "adopted" by UNESCO) and of the site of Tether, and, by commission of His Holiness Karekin II, the project of restoration and reuse of the Monastery of Tatev. For the nearing village of Tatev, the World Bank is financing the realisation of a Site management plan.

2. Cultural Enterprises

This Section of CSDCA promotes the knowledge of Armenian Culture in the frame of its relation with other cultures; organises Seminars of study, lectures, exhibitions and publishing of the outcomes deriving from the various activities of CSDCA. Provides for the management of the Oemme Publishing House, that, besides the 24 volumes of the Monographs on Armenian Architectural Monuments edited many others books on architecture, History, Anthropology, Sociology, Economy, and also an illustrated book on Armenian Cuisine. It was also edited a Technical Manual for restoration of monuments in Armenia (Printed in Armenian and in Russian) and there is in preparation a book on Armenian sun-dials by Prof. Alpago Novello.

Since 1998 is operating a Convention with the University of Venice for an annual Cycle of Lectures, open to the general public, on themes regarding Armenian Art and Architecture (Onnik Manoukian Lectures). The Cycle was directed By Prof. Alpago Novello till 2001, and next by Prof. Setrak Manoukian.

3. Ancient and Contemporary Music

This Section of CSDCA is aimed at the salvaging and valorisation of the musical Armenian heritage and at the promotion of the knowledge of ancient and contemporary Armenian music by mean of collection and recording of original musical documents subjected to the risk of extinction.

Through the action of Minas Lourian (secretary of the OM Association since 1992) the Section has realised several musical events, in co-operation with various private and public Institutions such as Asolo Musica, Veneto Musica, Euromusica, Ravenna Festival, Fondazione Malipiero, etc.

Since 1997, in the eighteenth-century Loggia del Temanza, venetian seat of CSDCA, there is a recording study, in a room with excellent acoustic features, equipped with sophisticated devices. The recording and discography editing (with the mark Oemme Edizioni – Musicam Records) operates under the art-direction of Minas Lourian, and technical advice of the phonic Ermanno Velludo.

Since 1998 started the recording of the entire repertory of the Medieval Hymns of the Armenian Church (more than 1800 hymns of the Liturgical Year). These Hymns, composed between the V and the XVI century, conserved through the amenian neumatic notation system (Khazagruthiun) now obsolete, are performed according to the tradition of the Mechitarist Congregation by authoritative experts (Father Vartanes Uluhogian and the Vocal Liturgical Ensemble AKN from Paris, conducted by the music master Aram Kerovpian).

The CSDCA pursues also the activity of the MUSICAM Institute, founded at Munich in 1989 by the composer Ludwig Basil and by Herman Vahramian, editing Armenian contemporary music.

THE DEPARTMENT OF EURASIAN STUDIES IN THE UNIVERSITY "CA' FOSCARI" OF VENICE

The Department of Eurasian Studies always showed a particular concern toward the Culture and History of the Armenian People, entertaining teaching activities either on Armenian Language or on Armenistic themes. Of basic importance for the evolution of this concern was a Convention signed between the Department of Eurasian Studies and the Centre Studies and Documentation of the Armenian Culture (CSDCA). Thank to this convention were and are still realised many activities of research, teaching and restoration, in Italy and abroad.

Since 1996, promoter of this co-operation, in all didactic and scientific aspects was Prof. Gianclaudio Macchiarella, professor of History of Byzantine Art and of History of Byzantine and Islamic Architecture, who, since 2002 is also Director of the Special Project "Protection and Valorisation of Architectural Heritage. Innovating Technologies and Traditional Techniques" in the Republic of Armenia, co-financed by Ministero Affari Esteri, whose executive director is Arch. Gaiànè Casnati, of CSDCA.

Eurasian Art and Architecture Digital Archive

Since 1998 is in operation at the University Cà Foscari of Venice the systematic indexing and digitalisation of the graphic and photographic material kept in the archives of CSDCA . Under the supervision of an International Scientific Committee, aim of this project is that of the safeguard of a precious patrimony of documents regarding Caucasian and near-oriental architecture, often rare and sometimes unique original witness of architectures, restoration interventions, or decorative details by now lost or seriously damaged.

In the first phase of realisation of this project the students of the courses of History of Byzantine Art and of History of Byzantine and Islamic Architecture have been involved by mean of the proposition of a Seminar of inventoring co-ordinated by Arch. Gaiànè Casnati and Arch. Francesca Villa. In this occasion the Student have the opportunity of knowing the Armenian Architecture: typologies, materials, decorative apparatus and conservative problems. The outcome of these efforts is a bilingual (Italian and English) database that very soon shall be at disposition of the Scholars on World Wide Web.

Onnik Manoukian Lectures series

The "OM Lectures" take their name from the industrialist and philanthropist italo-armenian Onnik Manoukian and consist in Thematic cycles of Lectures on Armenian civilisation, the Caucasus civilisations and those adjacent in Persia, Syria, Turkey and Slavonic world, annually organised in collaboration with the CSDCA in the frame of the university courses held by Prof. G. Macchiarella at Cà Foscari. Director is Prof. Alpago Novello, assisted by a scientific committee composed by Dott. Setrak Manoukian, Arch. Gaiànè Casnati, Prof. Levon Zekiyàn, and Prof. Gianclaudio Macchiarella. Thank to these contributions it was possible to delineate a detailed picture of the Armenian culture, intended in its multiple meanings , investigating not only the artistic manifestations flourished at the local scale, but also their relations with Nations and civilisations with whom the Armenian culture, in its extraordinary diffusion, historically entered in contact, or with whom, *ab antiquo* came into conflict, being more or less influenced by them.

Seminar of History of the Medieval architecture in Caucasus Area

Since academic year 2002-2003, within the courses held by Prof. Gianclaudio Macchiarella has been activated a Seminar on Techniques of Conservation of Medieval Monuments in Caucasus Area.

The Seminar, held by Arch. Francesca Villa, has been instituted in order to give to the students a propedeutic knowledge required for the comprehension and criticism of medieval architecture

Four centuries of Armenian Architecture

In the Scientific Series Hyperfolia of the Department of Eurasian Studies has recently been published the interactive CD-ROM: "Four centuries of Armenian Architecture", by arch. Francesca Villa. This publication presents all architectural monuments erected on the territory of the republic of Armenia during the period that Paolo Cuneo named "formative period", comprised between IV and VII century AD. The information presented has been integrated with writings of Prof. Alpagò Novello and of others Scholars. A vast chapter has been dedicated at the works of restoration completed on the Marmashen complex, to the relative preliminary studies, to the politics of conservation adopted for the survival of the monuments and for the promotion of a cultural tourism.

"Alpaghian", collection of writings in honour of Adriano Alpagò Novello

This book, edited by a Committee co-ordinated by Prof. Gianclaudio Macchiarella, collects the writings dedicated by friends and colleagues to Prof. Adriano Alpagò Novello, Director of CSDCA, but most of all attentive and concerned studios of Caucasus and near-oriental civilisations.

Armenian culture, with all its historical implications has been always the centre of the interests of the Professor, and frequently theme of his publications.

The outcome of the appreciation of many Scholars toward Prof. Alpagò Novello is an interesting text, which by mean of a plurality of contribution and of points of view presents Armenia and "Armenities" in its various and manifold features.

THE ARMENISTIC ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EURASIAN STUDIES

Teaching of Armenian Language and Literature

The teaching of Armenian Language and Literature by Prof. Boghos Levon Zekiyán started since the Academic Year 1976-77. At the outset course of teaching of "Iranic dialects", has been reactivated as course of Armenian language and literature since the Academic Year 1981-82. At present it is a quadrennial course for the Graduation in Oriental Languages and Civilisations at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the Cà Foscari University and is part of the Department of Eurasian Studies.

Memorandum of co-operation between University Cà Foscari of Venice and State University of Yerevan.

Since 1994 is into action an agreement for student exchange between the University Cà Foscari of Venice and the State University of Yerevan.

Didactic and Scientific Activities in the Armenistic Field

Numerous types of armenistic activities, of research and of culture spreading were originated by the Venetian Chair.

Among them, the Congress "Armenia between Orient and Occident", of 1978, the Study-days "Armenians in the Italian Culture", organised in 1982 and 1987, the "Mostra del cinema armeno" at Venice, 1983, the Intensive Course of Armenian Language and Culture, held every august from 1986 until now, in co-operation with the association Padus-Araxes, and which has been frequented by some 750 people, coming from 32 nations, the audio-visual Course of Armenian Language, published in 1993, the first at international level.

Prof. Zekiyán took a relevant part in the organisation of the 1999 Congress on the Transcaucasian Cultures and, together with Prof. Alpagò Novello was the promoter of the Symposia on Armenian Art.

ARMENIANS AND VENICE

Among the seats of Armenian communities in Italian cities in the past centuries, Venice was the more intimately tied to Armenian people.

city. According to tradition, the Byzantine exarch of Ravenna, the Armenian Nerses, built the church of St. Geminiano in St. Marc's Place, on the site where now stand the Napoleonic Wing. Surely Was another Armenian, Isaccio, who built the first Cathedral at Torcello. In the following centuries, the armeno-venetian relations grew stronger, particularly during the period of the existence Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, which bestowed privileges on the Venetian. Due to the continuation of economic trades, several Armenians settled in Venice, where in the XIV century, in the *sestiere* Castello there was a monastery of Armenians brothers. Venice reciprocated the privileges of the Cilicia Kingdom, and in the XIII century, the Doge Marco Ziani bestowed a house to the Armenians. In the XV century the church of Santa Croce was built, in Calle delle Lanterne, now Calle dei Armeni. This church still exist, and is the sole medieval church in Italy where religious functions are celebrated in Armenian rite. In the San Giorgio island there was, up to the end of the XVI century, an Armenian cemetery.

In the following centuries the work of Armenian merchant resident in Persia. Became important the members of the Sceriman family, owners of a big commercial fleet. Another Armenian, Anton Surian, became well-known in Venice as inventor of a medicine that stopped the plague epidemic of 1575. The same Surian was a skillfull engineer who renovated the Arsenal and prepared the artillery for the Lepanto battle.

Venice became also an important cultural centre for the Armenians, it was in Venice that the first Armenian book was printed in 1512.

In the XVIII century the Armenian community in Venice was in decline, but in 1715 arrived in Venice, escaping from Turkish persecution, arrived the Armenian monk Mechitar, together with a number of friars. Two years later, the Serenissima bestowed him the St. Lazzaro island, where he founded the still existent Monastery. There were instituted a Seminary, and later a Library, a Museum and a Typography.

The St. Lazzaro Monastery, became a very important Armenian Cultural Centre. There numerous books of History, Geography, Literature and Religion were published. On the initiative of the St. Lazzaro monks numerous Schools in various Armenian communities were established. The most important among these was the Lyceum Moorat-Raphael, founded in Venice in 1836, due to the grant by two rich Armenian from India. In this School, as in any other of the Schools founded by the St. Lazzaro Monks, thousands of young Armenian were educated, and among them we can find many of the protagonists of the Armenian's civil and cultural revival.

St. Lazzaro Museum is open to the public every day from 3.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.