ISSN 2385-3042

Annali di Ca' Foscari

Serie orientale

Vol. 50 – Supplemento – 2014

Edizioni
Ca'Foscari

Annali di Ca' Foscari
Serie orientale

ISSN 2385-3042

Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
Dorsoduro 3246
30123 Venezia
http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/riv/dbr/9/AnnaliCaFoscari

Annali di Ca' Foscari | Serie orientale
Rivista annuale

Direzione e redazione
Dipartimento di Studi sull'Asia e sull'Africa Mediterranea
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
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Progetto grafico di copertina: Studio Girardi, Venezia | Edizioni Ca' Foscari

ISSN 2385-3042

Annali di Ca' Foscari

Vol. 50 – Supplemento – 2014
(Serie orientale 42)

Summary

Annali di Ca' Foscari ISSN 2385-3042
Vol. 50 – Supplemento – 2014

Expulsion (*tehcir*) and Genocide (*soykırım*): from Ostensible Irreconcilability to Complementarity

Thoughts on *Metz Yeghern*, the Great Armenian Catastrophe

Boghos Levon Zekiyan

Abstract The Armenian Genocide is still the object of a hard denial in the official attitude of Turkey's government and political circles. The Turkish term used to define what happened to the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, in 1915, is *tehcir* meaning expulsion or deportation. The increasing pressure of international media, of public opinion and of the recognition process of the Armenian Genocide by a growing number of states induced, in recent years, the Turkish authorities to sustain the thesis that being a historical question, the issue of the Armenian Genocide must be discussed and resolved by historians. It happens however that, if a Turkish historian affirms the factuality of the Armenian Genocide, this can cause him/her serious problems. Hence the question seems to be entrapped in a deadlock. The paper wants to be an attempt to analyse some principles, factors and methodologies, which can help in showing a possible way out from the deadlock. It tries to elaborate some theoretical, practical and concrete proposals that will get the discussants on the way. It also examines some specific problems and hardships, which either side faces, and seeks to indicate ways that might be helpful, and tasks that might be necessary in order to overcome them. The main questions the paper faces are: the conceptual/semantic relation between Genocide and *tehcir* in the Armenian case, the issue of trauma and the overcoming of trauma, and going beyond recognition.

1 Approaching the Theme

1.1 A View to the Past and Personal Memories

Before I turn to the major arguments of this paper, I think it will be helpful, to contextualize better its subject and the problems we shall be dealing with, to express briefly some memories and thoughts related to Istanbul and to some of my personal experience of its scholarly and

cultural ambiance, anterior to the great outburst of the Armenian issue in Turkey's intellectual, political and daily life and to the emergence of some new approaches to that issue in these nearly last twenty years.

I defended my PhD in Philosophy, at the Istanbul State University in January 1973, to a committee composed of the late Macit Gökberk and Nermi Uygur, and of Prof. İsmail Tunalı. My thesis supervisor, the late Halil Vehbi Eralp, was absent due to his travels to Paris. I will always remember my mentors as exceptional personalities. They have honoured me with their generous support and friendship.[1] With none of them, however, was the 'Armenian issue' mentioned. Even among close friends, this theme remained outside the cultural, social and political context of the time. This issue was a taboo in the broadest sense of the word: it was not

1 The present study is the English version, adapted and re-elaborated in some points, of a paper originally presented in Turkish to the International Conference held in Istanbul, on 15-17 March 2006, under the general title *New Approaches in Turkish-Armenian Relations*. The Turkish version (*Tehcir ve soykırım: Bağdaşmaz görünümden tamamlayıcı işleve. Büyük Ermeni Felâketi, 'Medz Yeğern' üzerine antropoljik ve felsefi-hukuki görüş açısından düşünceler*) is published in the Proceedings of the Conference (*Türk-Ermeni ilişkilerinde yeni yaklaşımlar. The new approaches to Turkish-Armenian Relations*. Uluslararası Sempozyum/ International Symposium, Yayına Hazırlayanlar: Prof. Dr. Şafak Ural; Prof. Dr. Feridun Emecan; Yrd. Doç. Dr. Mustafa Aydın. İstanbul Üniversitesi Basım ve Yayınevi, 15-17 Mart 2006. İstanbul, 2008, pp. 807-839). The translation from the Turkish original was realized in a short time by Dr. Kerem Öktem whom I wish to thank profusely for his very valuable and generous contribution. I also thank Dr. Sossi Kasbarian for her precious suggestions as to the English form of this paper.

As to the transcription of Armenian names I follow the standard Library of Congress system. It is known that there are two possible phonetic versions of Armenian names in Latin letters as, f.i., Komitas/Gomidas. This differentiation stems from the linguistic history of modern Armenian, which developed as a literary language during the 19th century. Since then, two dialects, Eastern and Western Armenian emerged. The different conventions pertaining to pronunciation in these dialects go back to the seventh century AD. The eastern dialect was used by Armenians living in the Russian and Persian empires, who represented nearly one third of the Armenian people at the time. The western prevailed by the Ottoman Armenians, who made up the majority of the general Armenian population before 1915. I had chosen, in the prior Turkish version of this study, in rendering the names of persons, the western pronunciation, as it was in the Ottoman lands that Western Armenian flourished and reached highest levels of literary expression. For the same reason and especially not to change the traditional resonance of well-known names, also in the present English version I follow, as a principle, the Western Armenian pronunciation, while authors' names in bibliography, titles and common names are transcribed according to the East Armenian standard which is nearer to the phonetic values of Classical Armenian. I also transcribed as *Metz Yeghern* the typical Armenian expression referring to the Genocide of instead of *Mets Yeghern* as it should be according to the Library of Congress system standard, since the transcription as *Metz* has had already a large diffusion in western languages, and even in Turkish, starting from its apparently first use, as an added subtitle, in the Italian translation of Claude Mutafian's book (1995): *Metz Yeghérn: Breve storia del genocidio degli armeni*; first published in French under the title: *Un aperçu sur le génocide des arméniens*. What moved me most profoundly was their insistent offer for me to stay on at the department, once I had completed my doctoral thesis on «The principle of inwardness in the theory of knowledge of Augustine and the self-knowledge of the knowing subject (*memoria sui*)».

only a political taboo, but a societal one. Raising the issue was not only 'politically incorrect', it was simply 'impossible', it was 'unthinkable'. This taboo existed not only for Armenians, for different reasons, but also shaped the discourse of Turks. During our conversations, the few references to the issue were framed in general terms. My thesis supervisor Vehbi Eralp would now and then remark «We Turks and Armenians have lived entangled lives for centuries». Sometimes, he would quote the great poet Yahya Kemal, whose poetry we both cherished, saying «Our Armenian citizens are part of our homeland».

I witnessed a further opening of the theme of Turkish-Armenian relations with a well-known personality, whose name I would like to commemorate. This person was the once famous medical doctor and X-ray specialist Dr. Tarık Temel, who passed away in 1979.[2] During our extensive and sincere conversations in his villa overlooking the bay of Bebek in Istanbul, themes like the recent history of Turkey, 1915 and the Genocide never came up directly, even if we often touched upon the margins of these issues. One day, when the fading lights of a splendid afternoon were disappearing behind the gentle hills opposite his house, he turned to me all of a sudden, emphasising every word emphatically, «Boghos, my son – he said – in this country, Armenians were made to go through a terrible suffering; nevertheless, I am convinced that one day our people will be able to live together in peace». This was one of the last meetings we had; soon after, news reached me of his departure.

1.2 The Meaning and Importance of the Istanbul University Conference of 2006

My aim in sharing these memories is far from evoking an atmosphere of romantic sentiment for my Turkish audience. Rather, I have tried to give a brief summary of the more reasonable views and attitudes on the Armenian issue, which were held by a few personalities representing the cultural elite of Turkey in those years. I assume that on the backdrop of these memories, the significance of the conference at the State University of Istanbul, in March 2006, becomes apparent. I put special emphasis on the fact that the only organiser of this conference was a State University, the one, moreover, which is the oldest of the country, whose foundation is dated back to the Conqueror of Constantinople/Konstantiniyye, Fatih Sultan Mehmet II personally. The case was different with the prior great conference held on the Armenian issue in Septem-

2 Dr. Tarık Temel served for years as a physician many members of the Republic's Government and Parliament. My late mother had worked with him in her youth.

ber 2005, at Istanbul's Bilgi University: this was co-sponsored by three Universities, of which two were private, and was promoted by some of the most open-minded intellectuals in Turkey. It was a significant development, I think, that Armenian and other scholars, who share the belief that the events of 1915 constituted Genocide, were invited to the conference of the Istanbul State University, even if a strongly nationalistic wave prevailed in the assembly. Being one of those invited, I would like to stress how remarkable it was that the proponents of this view were given the opportunity to express their views publicly and openly, with no limitations. Even one year before, few people would have expected this to happen, as even less would have foreseen the realisation of the above-mentioned conference on *Armenians in the late Ottoman Empire* at Istanbul's Bilgi University in September 2005.

This is my point of departure when I consider the conditions of our current situation. I know that there are many, probably the majority of scholars adhering to the view that the Armenian case constitutes Genocide in the proper sense of the term, who think that the Istanbul University conference was politically motivated, a tactical move, or even a 'trap'. Many have therefore declined to participate. My personal choice in such situations is to concentrate on the empirical indicators, and prioritise actions over motivations. There is little doubt that there were certain shortcomings in the organisation of this conference, perhaps due to time constraints. Among those shortcomings, we may cite the fact that the invitations to some of esteemed Turkish colleagues, who sustain the Genocide thesis or at least do not share the alleged justifications for what happened, advanced by the Turkish official version of the facts, were considerably delayed, hence making it impossible for them to participate. In addition, the conference programme reached prospective participants at a very late stage, not to mention the strongly nationalistic wave, I already hinted at, of many a paper, which rather seemed to be manifestos than scholarly work.

1.3 An Exceptional Thinker

Dr. Tarık Temel was my mentor who introduced me to a group of Istanbul's Turkish intellectuals. Among them, there is one, whom I would like to commemorate, again not in order to appeal to emotions. This man was unique among the intellectuals I met in those years, as he transcended the confines of the debate, which I described above. Even if it was only in personal conversations, he broke the taboo of the time, and I would like to cite here his words exactly as I remember them. His name was İlhan Şevket. I addressed him as İlhan *Bey*, yet did not know his family name. Even his close friend Tarık Temel would not recall his family

name. On the day I first met him, he advised me insistently not to mention his name to anybody with the words «This would ruin you, Boghos». I learnt his family name, Aykut, only after his death. Zeki Coşkun's book *The remains of the Sword: A portrait of a poet in hiding* (Kılıç Artığı: Gizlenen bir şairin portresi), published by Yapı Kredi Pulishers (İstanbul) in 2000, lifted, in part, the veil of mysteries pertaining to the character of İlhan Şevket Aykut, his sharp intellect, his cultural depth, his love affairs, and his excellent poetry.

It was in a winter night in 1969 that I invited İlhan Bey to dinner at the Bomonti Armenian Catholic School, where I lived back then. The school building was the converted mansion of the Egyptian princess Münevver Hanım, an illustrious name in Istanbul society. We were three priests at the school. Our superior was Father Hagopos Posbıyıkyan, born in 1884 in Bilecik, a true Istanbul gentleman of the old school. Only two years ago, I learnt from Orhan Karaveli's book (2004) *Bearded Celal: The life story of a 'renowned unknown'* (Sakallı Celal. Bir bilinmeyen ünlünüm yaşam öyküsü) that İlhan Şevket had stayed in the mansion, when it still served as the Aydın School, established by Münevver Hanım. İlhan Bey arrived that evening, had a look around the place and began telling his memories of Münevver Hanım.[3] Despite his urbane attitude, his talk would never lose a poetic quality. Later on, we sat down for dinner. İlhan Şevket clasped Father Hagopos' arm and said «Father Superior, allow me to put forth a couple of words». «The permission is yours» he responded. İlhan Şevket continued: «It is the first time that I sit at this Armenian table. I have sat at many Armenian tables. I have Armenian friends. May they be protected, for if it were not for my friends, I would have died of hunger. But it is the first time that I sit at this particular Armenian table. And whenever I sit down at an Armenian table, I need to settle a debt of conscience so that the bread that I will eat is *helal*.[4] This task is upon our superiors, but it seems that they are not great enough, as they lack the courage to do so. Excuse me for counting myself as a superior for one day, and for speaking on behalf of my nation».

Father Hagopos, who anticipated where these words were leading to, interrupted him, trying to change the conversation: «İlhan Bey, let us talk about more joyful things». Yet İlhan Şevket, with his own directness and some nervousness insisted: «I requested, Father, your permission to speak, allow me to finish my words. When my father, an army captain was dispatched to the War of Çanakkale, I was six years old, my brother

3 Münevver, a name of Arabic origin, means «enlightened». The originally Turkish equivalent of this word is *aydın*. It is remarkable that both terms can also mean «intellectual», both as a substantive and an adjective, emphasizing the «enlightening» quality of intellectual activity.

4 A word of Arabic origin: blessed, legitimate, similar to *kosher*.

four, and my mother a beautiful woman of twenty-two. There was only one man in our village to whom one would entrust a young and pretty lady with two children; his name was Bedros Efendi. He was an institution of trustworthiness and honesty. If you had money, silver, gold or jewellery, you would deposit it with Bedros Efendi. Moreover, you would leave your virgin daughter, your fine and young wife with him, and you could be certain that nothing unseemly would happen to her. One day, as a reward, we cut his throat. And not only Bedros Efendi's throat, we cut the throats of hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of Bedros Efendis». Springtime had come, and we went to the countryside with our class. There were blood spots all over the soil, and there were skulls. We asked, «Teacher, what are these skulls all around?». «Children, these are the heads of *Gâvur*s, you won't understand now, but you will understand when you grow up… Thus is our history, such is the history our superiors cannot acknowledge!».

I do not cite these words in details in order to provide yet more proof from the increasingly widespread body of knowledge emanating from the field of 'oral history'. Nor do I cite them in order to create an emotive atmosphere by showing the clarity and forcefulness of a Turkish 'Other'. Finally, I do not seek to appraise myself by adding rhetorical excellence to my talk, in order to cause a confrontational discussion. Above all, I wish to ensure that the memory of a man is not lost from our present discussion. A man of such distinguishing features, who had to survive in the intellectual atmosphere of the 1950s and later years as what Ayça Atikoglu so aptly called an «underground intellectual» (*Milliyet*, Daily, 27 April 2000). The ideas, which İlhan Şevket held, once whispered and barely audible, are expressed in Turkey today by many. This is maybe a small, but nevertheless a steadily increasing minority. From this angle, İlhan Şevket's position in those years, his personality, his exceptional intellect, his presentiment, and his hope for a brighter future remain a legacy that widens our horizon.

There is no doubt that the emotive force of the words, which I cited, is as sharp as a sword, and as incinerating as a thunderbolt. Yet, it cannot be argued that they do not raise a series of problems. I am adamant that these are problems, which are inescapable, for those who think like İlhan Şevket, as much as for those, who differ. In any case, I guess that there should be little disagreement in discussing what happened in 1915-6. Let us, for a moment, leave aside the term 'Genocide'. Let us consider the term *tehcir*, as employed by official Turkish circles, translatable into English as «expulsion» or «deportation». And let us, for the sake of the argument, accept the number of 1.2 million Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire before April 1915, a number suggested by those same

circles.[5] There remains, nevertheless, one reality. In the wake of these terrible deportations, next to nothing was left of this population, and of the 2,000 plus churches and as many schools, associations and other buildings that made up its social and cultural fabric. That the Armenian presence in Anatolia has been excised does not need to be proven by documents, books or archives! This is an empirical fact, which can be established with a bare gaze on today's Anatolia. This excision/uprooting, as I would like to underline, is the result of a total deportation/expulsion of Armenian Ottoman citizenry, elaborated, intended/desired and organised by the then ruling government of *Ittihad ve Terakki*, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Unlike in the case of the forced eviction of the *Rum* element in Anatolia, the deportation did not occur after a war between two sovereign states and following an internationally recognised treaty.

1.4 Theme and Goal: Approaches to History: the 'Virtuous' in Massacre and Genocide

Let us now examine some of the issues resulting from this excision. Before that, however, allow me to clarify the content and intent of this paper.

Above all, I should elucidate that this examination does not pretend to cover all issues related to the debate. The themes and problems are manifold, and I should consider myself content if I succeed in suggesting a few contributions as to how to access certain themes.

The theme, I would like to dwell on, develops on two levels:

a. Questions pertaining to the conceptual framework that covers the most crucial dimensions of the Catastrophe of 1915.
b. The reasons for the acceptance or denegation of the term 'Genocide', and the question as to whether and how this problem can be overcome.

Let me mention some topics that, while closely related to our examination, shall remain outside our investigative framework.

5 This traditional estimation by official Turkish circles of the Armenian population in Anatolia on the eve of the *tehcir*, should be now revisited, even to consider but sources linked to those same circles, after the publication of Talât Pasha's famous note-book «with a black cover» (*kara kaplı defter*), brought to light recently by Bardakçı, *Talât Paşa'nın Evrak-ı Metrukesi*.

Murat Bardakçı, who himself is firmly lined up with the official Turkish theses, asserts however explicitly that the real number of the Armenians in the empire could have been between 1.8,5 and 1.9 milion (Bardakçı, *Talât Paşa'nın Evrak-ı Metrukesi*, p. 109). The data of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantiople, as to 1913, gave a number slightly superior to 2 milion.

a. The evidence that the Catastrophe of 1915 was Genocide. There is ample and in my views sufficient evidence in personal memories and narratives, and in scholarly work, that it indeed was Genocide. In addition and as I have argued earlier, incontrovertible evidence is to be found in the current spatial set-up of Anatolia, even more than in documents, books and archives.
b. The analysis and differentiation of semantically related terms such as 'Genocide', 'ethnocide', 'democide' and others.
c. The psycho-analytical approach, which I find crucial and beneficial for both sides to overcome the trauma. This approach, however, remains outside my field of expertise.
d. The analysis, from the vantage point of international law, of legal issues pertaining to the problem, especially those of «responsibility» and «compensation».
e. Finally, the Armenian terror activities of the 1970s and the Karabagh issue will also rest outside the limits of this inquiry.

Having established the limits of this paper, I will now elaborate on the intent of this examination.

1.4.1

Above all and as I have suggested in all my earlier papers and presentations on the issue, I maintain forcefully that the intent of such examinations is not and should not be to blame or incriminate a nation or a people in general or, in our present case, the Turkish nation or the peoples of Turkey in particular. Whatever has happened in the past, it was a programme executed by a government. It is common sense that at any given place and time, there are people with good and bad intentions. Yet, even more important than this general and simple judgement is the certainty that once governments declare their intentions and the state apparatus starts its all-invasive propaganda, even in the most sophisticated societies reason is left aside and masses are galvanised into hatred and rage. As we see again and again in our very own days, this appears to be one of the gravest failings of humankind. Nevertheless, we should not forget that, even during this most merciless of catastrophes there were men and women who saved lives in the name of humanity, rather than succumbing to the temptation to use the opportunity for settling their own scores.

If you will allow me, let me dwell on this theme and relate to you a memory, which I have listened to in person. The Armenian Mekhitarist monastic Order of San Lazzaro in Venice, Italy, used to maintain a college for its students pursuing their ecclesiastical studies in Rome. Between 1959 and

1964, the college's Prior was Vart Hemayiag (Hmayiag) Ghedighian, who was also my spiritual father, born in Trabzon in 1905. Young Vart, separated from his parents and his four sisters is forced into a deportation convoy. He is saved by a Turk, and educated in his house as a child of the family. On his sixteenth birthday, this man calls Vart: «My son, until this day, you have lived among us as a child of ours. You may want to stay with us, or you may want to return to your people. If you want to stay with us, you will need to adopt our faith. But feel free to make your own choice. Whatever you decide, you will remain a beloved child to us.» Vart decides to return to his own people. Unable to find a member of his family or friend, he applies to the orphanage in Trabzon, run by the monks of the Mekhitarist Order. Via Istanbul, he travels to Venice, where he decides to join the Order. Between 1964-1970 he serves as the General Abbot of the Order and is elected Armenian Catholic Patriarch in Beirut in 1976. In 1982, he resigns from his office for reasons of age and withdraws to Rome, where he dies at the age of ninety-three. Whenever I visited him, he would commemorate with gratitude the family who had saved his life. He saw them as the human intermediaries of God's grace, who determined his personal fate and guided him towards the monastic life, which he embraced with such ardour.[6]

Comparable humane behaviour was witnessed in many places, especially in Dersim and its vicinity,[7] and sometimes such behaviour extended to state officials, and even high-level bureaucrats and government representatives who were duly removed or executed! Such behaviour might not have prevented the final consequences of the Catastrophe. The research and documentation of these personalities, however, will play an important role in the quest to establish new links between the two communities, and should be high on the agenda of intellectuals and scholars working on Turkish-Armenian relations. Hence, inspired by the research on the 'righteous' men and women who took a stand during the Jewish Holocaust, and by the celebrations made to commemorate them, a group of searchers was formed in Italy in 1998 and a series of events were launched to research and commemorate those righteous men and

6 For more details see: Zekiyan, «Reflections on the Semantic Transposition of the Concept of 'Righteousness'», pp. 215-218.

7 Dersim and its vicinity were mainly dwelled by Alevis, a particular ethno-religious group, often identified as Kurds. This identification, however, does not seem to be welcome any more by the majority of the group. Dersim became later, during the repression of the Kurds in the Republican period, one of the most ravaged cities. Here are some recent memories and witnesses, appeared in the Armenian press, on Armenians in Dersim or saved by the people of Dersim: Kureyşan, «Dersimts'i Hayer: Dersim Ermenileri...»; Cengiz, «T'urk'ioy mēj aprogh Zazanerë kë verahastaten irents' ink'nut'iwnë»; Garagashian, «Dersim yew Hayerë»; Baghdasaryan, Hrand «"Dersimi mēj kan giwgher..."»; Cengiz, «Dersimis et Arméniens se battent pour les mêmes droits». On Armenians in Dersim, prior to the Genocide, see: Andranik, *Dersim: Chanaparhorduthiwn ew teghagruthiwn*.

women, who acted humanely during the Armenian *Metz Yeghern* risking their position and reputation, and sometimes their life. An important step in this regard was an international conference, convened in Padua in 2000, under the auspices of Padua's Municipality and having as a general title *There is Always an Option to say «Yes» or «No»: The Righteous Against the Genocides of Armenians and Jews* (see note 6). I would like to remember with respect and compassion some of those Ottoman officials, who showed the determination and courage to oppose the commands, and thereby saved lives: the mayor of Malatya, Mustafa Azizoğlu, who was murdered by his own son because of his refusal to implement the deportation orders; the deputy governor of Deir Al Zor, Suat Bey, who was eventually discharged from his office; Colonel Nurettin Bey, who worked in the region, and Maritime Officer Naki Bey; the governor of Alep Celâl Bey, and the Governor of Ankara Hasan Mazhar, who were also discharged from office; the governor of Kütahya, and many more.[8]

Burçin Gerçek, in a paper published in February 2006, provides information about these persons, and continues:

> One of the obvious results of decades of misinformation is that many feel uncomfortable, when they hear the words 'Armenian' and 'Genocide' in a row, others will feel a chill creeping down their spine, and respond that «our predecessors were not Nazis, they cannot be Nazis». To those, Celâl Bey and the others would say: «Look at the issue from a different angle». They stood against the Unionist's commands, risking their careers, and sometimes their lives, and protected the Armenians and other people who were prosecuted. They ask us from ninety years ago: «Why do you identify yourself with the guilty? Why, in order not to see yourself as grandchildren of 'Genocide culprits', do you protect them and say "They wouldn't have done such things"? We opposed them back in those years. If you feel so hurt being their grandchildren, why do you not see that you are also *our* grandchildren?» While working on this issue, I have sought to stay true to this spirit. Rather than focusing on a group of nationalist adventurers, who wrought havoc upon the Empire, I have tried to draw the profiles of those personalities, who could provide examples for a new ethical model. The Unionist leaders of that time had entered a state of ideological insanity. They were a catastrophe for the Empire. We cannot hold everybody living in Turkey responsible for what happened.[9]

8 Cf. Kevorkian, «Pour une typologie des 'Justes' dans l'Empire Ottoman face au Génocide des Arméniens»; among others, let us also mention Celâl Bey, the governor of Alep, a very sensitive centre in the final phase of deportations, who also was discharged from his office: cf. *Krikor Zohrab Yeghernin mēj*.

9 Gerçek, «Celal Bey ve diğerleri».

1.4.2

The second point, which I believe to be crucial for determining the intentions of this study, is the following.

The aim of remembering a past calamity should certainly not be to reopen old wounds. Yet, we should also not forget a few issues:

a. history is a standing reality which cannot be wiped out. History can be instructive and guide us, if it is examined and written in a way that neither exalts, nor denigrates, and refrains from inciting hatred and enmity, even if human ignorance makes this often impossible.
b. In a case where there exist open wounds stemming from the past, such an approach to history is an inescapable necessity for the treatment and the healing of these wounds. To approach the tragedies, calamities, pogroms and Genocide in this manner might allow us to overcome their inciting effects, and transcend old tensions and antagonisms between the communities. This is what Fethiye Çetin often calls «to share the grief» (*acıyı paylaşmak*) when presenting her famous book, *Anneannem* (My grandmother), which became for many years a best-seller in Turkey.

2 Term and Concept, Details of Comprehension and Scope

2.1 The Meaning of the Term 'Genocide'

I should start with a brief explanation of the origins and meaning of the term 'Genocide'. As is known, it was Raphael Lemkin, who started insisting on this term in 1943. It is beyond doubt that it was the Catastrophe of the Holocaust inflicted on the Jews, his own people, that led him to insist on the legal aspect of this new term, which he wanted to be distinct from «crimes against humanity». Yet, Lemkin's initial ideas pertaining to the crime conveyed by this term go back to 1933, and developed in the context of the Armenian events.[10] When Lemkin coined this neologism from the Greek root *gen* (*genos*) and the Latin root *caed/cid* (*caedere*), he certainly employed the word *genos* in the sense of lineage/ancestry and race. Johannes Lepsius' earlier term *Völkermord*,

10 Cf. «Prevent Genocide International»: *Acts Constituting a General (Transnational) Danger Considered as Offences Against the Law of Nations*. Available at http://www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/madrid1933-english.htm (2014-06-05), see also http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCebMq-GmH4 (2014-06-05); Martin, «Raphael Lemkin and the invention of 'Genocide'»; Akçam, *Gündüz Aktan ve soykırımda saik meselesi*; Morgenthau, *Diario, 1913-1916*, pp. 315-316 note 1.

used with reference to the Armenian case, was already in circulation at that time. Lemkin needed a more concise concept including race and lineage, probably because the term '*Volk*' (=people) seemed to him too general to be operational. The term's Turkish (*soykırım*) and Armenian (*tseghaspanut'iwn*) translations are both based on the notions of 'lineage' and 'race'.

The UN Convention on the Prevention of Genocide, signed in 1948, accepts four alternative factors in the definition of 'Genocide', which are put in relation to a 'group': nation, *ethnos*, race and religion. In this approach 'religion' can be seen as distinct from the preceding three notions. The same could be said for the 'nation'. As a matter of fact, the principle of the 'nation' in Western culture, ideology and languages is based on perceptions of state and citizenship, and hence distinct from *ethnos*. With the inclusion of the aforementioned notions, the concept of 'Genocide' in the UN takes on a wider and more comprehensive meaning. Furthermore, the use of the word 'group' in the UN Convention *ipso facto* prevents from requiring the intent to destroy a nation or a race in its entirety in order to establish whether Genocide has occurred. Indeed, the definition of 'Genocide' proposed in that convention speaks of «acts committed to destroy, *in whole or in part*, a national, ethnical, racial or religious *group*, as such» (emphasis by B.L.Z.). In this case, the term *genos* takes on the meaning of 'generation', also contained in the etymon of the term, rather than race and lineage. In short: the intentional 'destruction', either by killing or equivalent acts, of a 'group' whose members share either national or ethnic, racial or religious characteristics is Genocide according to the UN's Convention, while Lemkin's original idea covered a stricter semantic field, with a stronger emphasis put on the ethnic and/or racial component.

At this point, the question arises as to how we should define a 'group'. Is there, according to the UN, a clear-cut benchmark defining a 'group'? In the years following the promulgation of the Convention, the answer to this question developed on the grounds of social and legal common sense, through scholarly analysis and international legal practice. Court decisions and scholars agree on the concept of a 'substantial' part to define a group. A substantial part of the group is affected if the criterion 'the living conditions of a group are substantially affected' is applicable. In this frame the word 'partially' of the UN definition has two dimensions: a) demographic partiality; b) geographical partiality. Most scholars and practitioners of international law have accepted the premise of geographical partiality. In the context of demographic partiality, the accepted approach is «a substantial part that will jeopardize the

survival of the group».[11] However, there is no universally agreed standard definition of this concept. It is unfortunate that international bodies often do not revise their regulations in good time. A major manifestation of this is the obvious contradiction between the two basic principles of the inviolability of borders in international law and the right of self-determination. Although this has been the cause for many violent inter-ethnic conflicts, the international community has failed to address such a central contradiction.[12]

There is no reference to a special case in the Convention. On the contrary, its aim is to serve as a universal legal principle and as a guide. Despite some shortcomings, the Convention is an authoritative, respected and useful tool in international law for the diagnosis and prosecution of the crime of Genocide. Among its major shortcomings are to be mentioned the lack of a clear definition of what the notion of 'group' means and the absence of a clear statement on ideologically motivated mass murders; a statement that was prevented from entering the Convention by Josef Stalin. I would add to these shortcomings the absence of a clear statement on mass murders motivated by any other factor than the four aforementioned ones of the given definition, as for instance those related to physical or mental handicaps or to sexual behaviour.

The view shared by some that the Convention cannot be applied retrospectively to the Armenian Catastrophe contains a self-defeating historical contradiction. The Jewish Genocide, after all, occurred before

11 Cf. Schabas, *Genocide in International Law*; Lippman, «A Road Map to the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime Genocide»; Jørgensen, «The Definition of Genocide»; Morton, Vijay Singh, «The International Legal Regime on Genocide»; Aksar, «The 'Victimized Group' Concept in the Genocide Convention»; Akçam, *Gündüz Aktan*. I wish to thank Taner Akçam for information on some most recent studies related to the subject and for useful exchange of opinions.

Here a special mention should be made of the 'humanistic definition' of Genocide as proposed by Israel Charny (1987) in the article *Genocide: The Ultimate Human Rights Problem*, where he points out that «a combination of legal considerations and political pressures brought about a definition under the existing United Nations Convention Against Genocide that emphasizes the wilful effort to destroy the identity of any national, ethnic, racial, or religious entity». The result was that cultural measures such as forbidding the use of a language, or preventing marriages among members of a faith, would qualify as Genocide. In contrast, the mass murder of millions of opponents of a regime does not constitute Genocide since murder on a political basis is excluded from the current legal definition. This happened then, as we know, under Soviet pressure. Therefore, Charny proposes his «humanistic definition»: «To me the issue is the wanton murder of a group of human beings on the basis of any identity whatsoever that they share – national, ethnic, racial, religious, political, geographical, ideological».

12 Cf. Pomerance, *Self-Determination in Law and Practice*; Guarino, *Autodeterminazione dei popoli e diritto internazionale*, see for a wide bibliography pp. 381-410; Gilson, *The Conceptual System of Sovereign Equality*; Detter De Lupis, *International Law and the Independent State*; Blake, *Sovereignty: Power beyond Politics*; Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World*.

its promulgation. A general consensus has also emerged that the massacres of the Herero people by German Imperialists in Namibia in 1906 constitute Genocide.[13] In saying this I would like to stress the fact that I am speaking within a 'historical-ethical' perspective to judge historical facts and deeds from a strict viewpoint of human behaviour. As stated since the beginning, I do not enter any discussion regarding either the legal implications or any eventual retroactivity of the UN Convention. It is a matter of fact that even the Nazi criminals were judged and condemned on the basis not of that Convention but of other legal premises.

2.2 Terms that Do Not Exclude Each Other

In light of the aforementioned deliberations, we can state that different names for catastrophic events existing in the collective memory of societies and in history do not exclude each other. To play these terms against each other, to instil into them contradicting readings, would be to question the meaning of collective memory. Take the terms *Holocaust* and *Shoah*, widely used to refer to the Jewish Catastrophe. These assignations do not exclude or replace the term Genocide, they rather complement it. To put it more bluntly: the difference between these terms should be considered as the difference between an abstract, categorical definition of a historical event, and a name chosen to denote it in its very special and concrete factual reality. As a logician would put it, it is the difference between the general notion as 'man' on one side, and the concrete, individual names as John, Ahmet or Vahan on the other. Thus, specific names do not express a quality; rather they signify that a general essence or quality is reified in a concrete reality, which defies any attempt for generalisation. In the case of genocides and other inapprehensible catastrophes, such 'specific names' emerge among their survivors, who lack the capability of denominating the event in generalizable terms. In many ways, this is a continuation of the tradition of folk 'laments'. Likewise, the term *Metz Yeghern*, eponymous with the

13 Numerous sites dealing with genocides make explicit reference to Hereros. As the first centennial of this tragedy was commemorated in August 2004, many international organizations of human rights have requested Germany to officially acknowledge that it was Genocide. Up to that moment there had been no such initiative on behalf of the German government. Nonetheless, the German Minister of Development and Humanitarian Aid, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, was the first German representative to openly acknowledge, on the 16th of August 2004, that the tragedy suffered by Hereros was Genocide and apologized. She refused however any claim for damages sustaining that the economical aid, given by the German Government for many years to Namibia, had widely righted past wrongs.

Cf. *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*: `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki//Herero_Genocide` (2014-06-05).

great Genocide memorial in Yerevan, is used to refer to the Armenian Catastrophe, together with *Aghēt*/Catastrophe, *Metz Aghēt*/Great Catastrophe. These terms in no way exclude or annul the term Genocide. As we explained earlier, they complement each other.

2.3 Deportation/Expulsion (*tehcir*)

Now, we should also consider the term *tehcir* (deportation or expulsion) and its semantic comprehension. This word is the infinitive of the transitive verb *hağğar*, inflected from the Arabic root *hiğr* (to leave, to migrate). Above all, it contains the meaning of 'forcing to migrate', or 'subjecting to migration'.[14] The 1945 edition of the Turkish Dictionary of the Turkish Language Foundation confirms this definition. In this respect, the term signifies an involuntary and forced change of place, inflicted on a group or individual either by the decision of a higher authority, or by forces of nature such as earthquakes or disasters. The analogy of this comprehensive meaning in western languages is to be found in concepts like 'deportation' or 'forced migration'. Therefore, the term 'relocation', as it appeared in the Conference programme, did not convey the comprehensive semantics of *tehcir*. 'Relocation' in its English original does not have a negative connotation *per se*, as it does not necessarily comprise the act of involuntary migration.

The semantics of *tehcir* in Armenian linguistic tradition show quite a depth regarding the *Metz Yegern*.[15] There are mainly three terms used in Armenian in this context: *ak'sor, teghahanut'iwn*, and *taragrut'iwn*. The first term, *ak'sor*, is synonymous with the Latin *exilium* and its variations in western languages, as well as with the Turkish *sürgün*. It comprises the psychological and existential trauma of being compelled to leave one's country for a place of exile. The second is very similar, as its inflection, to the Latin *de-portatio* and to its Neo-Latin derivations, precisely meaning being removed from one's own place. The last term is inflected from the roots *tar* (external, excluding) and *grut'iwn* (writing, register, proscription) and therefore forms an immediate equivalent of the Latin *pro-scriptio*. Since the *tar* prefix in Armenian stresses the notion of 'exclusion', it is semantically even stronger than proscription.

There are countless examples of the historical and literary usage of these terms, but let me confine myself to the most symbolic one: This is the book *Armenian Golgotha: Moments from the Armenian Martyrology. From*

14 I thank to Dr. Elie Kallas of the Arabic Department of the University of Trieste for his explanations.

15 For a first approach see: Peroomian, *Literary Responses to Catastrophe*.

Berlin to Zor (1914-1922), vol. 1, published in 1922, in Vienna at the Mekhitarist Fathers' Press, by the spiritual leader of the Armenian community in Manchester, Father Krikoris Balakian, who had miraculously survived the 1915 detentions of 24 April. Among the many volumes written on the Great Catastrophe, his book is probably the most sorrowful, but also the most instructive.[16] The book develops in three chapters, following an appeal to the surviving Armenian people in place of an introduction. The first chapter is titled *From July 1914 to October 1914*. However, the title of the second chapter is *The First Expulsion* (arajin taragrut'iwn), with the following chapter titled *The Second Expulsion* (yerkrord taragrut'iwn). The second chapter is introduced with a subheading: *From April 1915 to February 1916*, while the last chapter's subheading reads *The convoys of death to Zor [Dair al Zor] from February 1916 to April 1916*.

It is interesting to observe that the usage of the term *tehcir* in its narrow meaning of deportation is employed by those who do not recognise the Genocide. However, if the expulsion and forced migration inflicted on Armenians is understood in its historical reality and entirety, it conveys the most painful and darkest dimension of the *Metz Yeghern*. I am adamant that we need to dwell on a particular point here. The Armenian Genocide actually exceeds the 'intentional slaughter' of a particular community, or an ethnic, national or religious group. The entirety of a people have been deracinated from the ancestral lands, that is the homeland that they inhabited for more than two millennia, and that has shaped its identity and collective memory. The notion of 'ancestral lands/homeland' is obviously not meant here in a political, but in a cultural-anthropological sense. What is more, a law passed in 1927, under the title *gayriavdet kanunu* (law against return), stripped off the survivors of the possibility to return to their regions of origin. Therefore, the 'forced migration' became a *radical exile*, a *complete expulsion* and *final deracination* for the survivors. In fact, not every Genocide results in the final exile of all of its survivors, and such cases are indeed rare. In my view, this is one of the specific and darkest sides of the Armenian Catastrophe. As I sought to elucidate earlier, the term *tehcir*, employed in the

16 The Armenian title is: *Hay Goghgot'an: Druagner hay martirosagrut'enēn: Perlinēn dēpi Zor (1914-1922)*. The second volume of the book was published much later, in 1959 in Paris, after the author's death. A new edition of both volumes was made in Beirut in 1977. Jacque Mouradian gives a *Biographie de l'auteur* in the *Avant-Propos* to the French translation.

According to Mouradian, Krikoris Balakian was born in Tokat in 1879; other indications for his birth year I met are 1872, 1873, 1875. An introductory information on Krikoris Balakian (Grigoris Palak'ean), is also available in: Balakian P., *The Burning Tigris*, p. 212. This book, recently published by the Bishop's great nephew Peter Balakian, became a best seller in the USA. Krikoris Balakian's book is now translated into English by Peter Balakian with Aris Sevag. A valuable attempt for a re-reading of the text in the perspective of the leit-motives of Armenian historiography was recently made by Calzolari, *1915 dans la littérature arménienne*.

narrow sense of forced migration or deportation to downplay the extent of the 1915 Catastrophe, conveys the most sorrowful dimension of this Catastrophe if correctly contextualised within the historical realities of the event.[17] As long as it is understood as a «total, radical and final expulsion», the term *tehcir* does not depreciate the extent of the Catastrophe/Genocide. Rather, it asserts the dimension of continuity, explaining why the wounds remain open and no healing is at hand.

Let me return to an issue that I brought to your attention earlier. The expulsion was the result of an all-out action of the Committee of Union and Progress government directed towards the Armenians as Ottoman subject people. This case is different from that of the departure of the *Rum* populations of Anatolia, who were forced to leave after the war between two sovereign states and an international treaty, the Treaty of Lausanne, which thereby followed. No doubt, whatever the various historical contexts and motivations may have been, any uprooting from a homeland, and especially from a millennial homeland, is traumatic and painful: a real disaster. The decision taken then in Lausanne was, in this respect, cruel and shameful, dictated by the blind ideology of the nation-state. It remains as a black stain and a heavy heritage in the history of all the signatories, of the Turkish Republic, which was then in its process of formation, as well as of the European powers, without forgetting that Venizelos himself made no significant opposition to such a regulation, thus aiming to increase the scarce population of Greece. Having made this point clear, what I mean to make explicit and to call attention upon is the difference of the historical circumstances and effective causes that lead to the total removal of the Armenians on one hand and of the Greeks on the other, from their Anatolian homeland. In this connection, we must add that the expulsion of the *Rum*s from Anatolia had its counter-part in the deportation of Muslim populations from the Balkans to Turkey, although this latter took place on a much more reduced scale. Furthermore, one must not forget that the solution based on the so called 'exchange of populations' (even if it was numerically a very asymmetrical exchange between the Anatolian Greeks and the Balkan Muslims) was regarded in the Twenties and later on as almost a model to be proposed to bring to an end inter-ethnic conflicts or, even, to prevent eventual bloody actions!

In-depth studies on the real meaning, extent, dimensions and subsequent impact of the expulsion/*tehcir* of the Armenians will be instrumental, I believe, in illuminating the coming generations on what really happened in 1915 and on what similar measures can signify in the life of a people.

17 Let me quote some prior studies in which I have touched upon this question: Zekiyan, «Reflections on Genocide»; Zekiyan, «Reflections on the Semantic Transposition of the Concept of the 'Righteous'»; Zekiyan, *Metz Yeghern*; Zekiyan, «Quale rapporto tra la definizione giuridica e la realtà storica dei genocidi?»; Zekiyan, *Dal 'tehcir' al genocidio*.

3 The Issue of Trauma and the Overcoming of Trauma

It is impossible to deny that 1915 lies at the heart of a deep trauma. Despite conflicting views and contentions, this trauma includes Armenians and Turks. It would be astounding if the opposite were the case. Yet, before delving into this issue, let us clarify that we need to abstain rigorously from mechanical, extreme and reductionist generalisations, when we speak of the collective trauma of a group. The concept of the 'collective trauma of a group' can only be used in the sense that certain behaviours and approaches are existent, and not only sporadic in a group. In order to purge subjective approaches and discuss on the grounds of empirical evidence, we need to resort to the methods of the social sciences. In addition, evidence from literature as well as from the media can play an important role.

3.1 The Armenian Trauma

Let us begin the discussion with an examination of the Armenian side. However we approach or analyse the matter, there is no doubt that it is the Armenian side, which had to suffer the greatest loss. I would like, once again, to return to a memory, this time from the 1970s. A friend, returning from the United States, who had probably never met a Turk in his life, relayed to me a story upon his arrival in Venice. As if he was stupefied, he told me «Do you know, I met two Turkish ladies on the plane». «So what?» I responded. With great admiration, he continued, «They were very beautiful, well-mannered and very cultured». «Why shouldn't they be?» I inquired. His answer was puzzled: «Yet, I don't understand. Is this the offspring of the ancestors who delivered us to the sword, or is this a new generation?»

The problem here does not lie, properly speaking, in the incapacity to comprehend the events, but in the stereotype of Turks shaped by these events. The problem is how to reconcile this stereotype with the qualities of a mature and cultured person, met coincidentally in every-day life. Will the stereotype take precedence, and hence disfigure his or her appearance, or will a notion of common sense prevail that insists on the proposition that among all people there are individuals with different qualities? One should not, however, forget that there are deeper secrets hidden in the root of this stereotype. In order to make sense of the leading personalities of the Committee of Union and Progress, we have to turn to Hannah Arendt's great work: *Banalität des Bösen* (The Banality of Evil). Most of them were educated, cultured gentlemen, who had manners, even a sense of *savoir faire* and *savoir vivre*. How is it that these individuals, however we want to name them, have come to be the

perpetrators of such horrifying murders? The answer to this question is anything but easy.

As I said earlier, we can only tackle this problem in the light of an anthropological-ethical and philosophical category that developed in the context of the 'Banality of Evil'. The case of Krikor Zohrab is noteworthy: Zohrab was one of the leading Jurists of the Ottoman Empire, a member of the Ottoman Parliament, familiar with Europe and with the upper echelons of *Konstantiniyye* of the Sultans, that is Republic's Istanbul.[18] He was a man of stature, and a friend of Talât Pasha, with whom he would play backgammon. In the many heartbreaking letters, he wrote to his wife from the stations of his gruesome journey through Konya, Ereğli and Aleppo, after his detention on April 24, he would beg her to request help from Talât and Halil Bey personally. He sincerely believed until the very end that Talât Bey was not aware of what was happening to him.[19] It is indeed hard to understand Zohrab's ingenuousness. Nevertheless, the fact that a person with the intelligence, knowledge and experience of Zohrab could get caught out so utterly ingenuous shows clearly that the dominant group of the time, including the men whom he knew personally, with whom he worked and whom he trusted, had something profoundly alien to the categories of normal human behaviour and sensitivity.

In my view, it is the relationship between Zohrab and Talât, which has been one of the most typical cases of personal betrayal in that historical context, to shape a Turkish stereotype in the Armenian collective consciousness, as much as the terrible events and murders. Unfortunately, one should say, Talât and his cronies in the leading cadres of the Union and Progress have become the symbols for Turkish identity for many Armenians. Armenian literature of the twentieth century provides an impressive insight into the deep roots of these stereotypes. One of the best-known protagonists of this literary tradition, Hagop Oshagan, even attempted to come up with a typology of 'Turks' and 'Armenians'.[20]

18 The official name of the capital during the Ottoman Empire was Konstantiniyye. It was changed into the 'vulgar' İstanbul in the first years of the Republic, under the urge of a grim nationalism, typical of the nation-states, especially in their formation period. Most probably people doing so were not even aware that also the name İstanbul was of Greek derivation!

19 Cf. *Krikor Zohrab Yeghernin mēj*, p. 14.

20 Cf. Peroomian, *Literary Responses to Catastrophe*, pp. 172-215, in part. pp. 197-209. Oshagan's masterpiece *Mnats'ortats'* (The Remnants), a big novel initially conceived to elaborate themes related to the Catastrophe (*aghēt*), was left unfinished. It consisted of three volumes: vol. 1, *Through the womb*; vol. 2, *Through the blood*; vol. 3, *The Hell*. The first volume contains three books; the second volume is divided into two parts, and contains nine books of which three are in the first part, six are in the second part. The novel starts towards the end of the 19th century, and arrives, with the second volume, to the brink of 1915. The fact that the novel was left unfinished is to be explained, with all probability, by the author's conviction, expressed more than once in his writings, that the Catastrophe can-

The state of mind and the reflexes caused by such a generalising imagination is self-evident. Yet, I should also refer to a sensitivity that might not be as self-evident, and this is the feeling of fear. I would share with you once again two personal recollections. It was about twenty-five years ago; I was to give a speech in an Armenian association in a western European city. The indicated programme was delayed, by twenty, thirty, even forty-five minutes…, yet I was still not invited to the podium. I asked one of the organizers, who told me that «There are rumours that there are two Turkish journalists in the hall». «My Brother», I retorted «Let there be twenty of them, what difference does it make! Let us start talking, otherwise there will be no end to this!» I commenced my talk, commenting on the rumours: «If there are Turkish journalists in the audience, they are welcome, and if they have questions, they should feel at ease to ask them». The second event, which I would like to recall, occurred in Yerevan, on the occasion of the 85th anniversary of the Genocide. The Germany-based «Association of Genocide-opponents» (*Verein der Völkermordgegner*, e.V. Frankfurt am Main - *Soykırım Karşıtları Derneği*), including as members a great number of ethnic Turks and Kurds and some of other ethnic groups of Turkey, had collected close to ten thousand signatures requesting from the Turkish government the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. A delegation had brought a copy of the petition to Yerevan. The petition was presented at the Academy of Sciences. A man sitting next to me, turned towards me instantly, and asked «Brother, what do they want from us? Do they now want to conquer our small country?» «Brother», I said «what is there to conquer! They have just brought the signatures, they have collected!» Both events might appear as strange, even implausible to people not traumatized by such an event as the Armenian Genocide; yet both show, together with numerous events that would make for a strong casuistry, how deep the trauma is that 1915 has inflicted on Armenian communities.

not be described, cannot be made an object of narrative; narrating/writing activity can but wander around it. For a deeper analysis of Oshagan's literary production and thought, with special regard to the Catastrophe, see the volume 3, entitled *Le roman de la catastrophe* of Marc Nichanian's pioneering work: Nichanian, *Entre l'art et le témoignage*.

These last years some Turkish psychologists have also tried to study the Armenian trauma mainly as a trauma or a complex of 'victimism'; so for instance: Göka, *Ermeni diasporasının psikolojisi*; Göral, «Turkish-Armenian Issue». Both essays, however, consider the trauma onesidedly as if it were exclusively an Armenian feature and raise the impression as if the authors were charged of the task to be the advocates of a political thesis. In order to show that there was no Genocide, they try to explain the acting trauma by current political factors, instead of trying to go deeper into its historical roots and motivations. Consequently, some confusion is produced between effects and causes: situations related to the Armenian diaspora, which are indeed a result of the basic trauma, are pointed at as its causes. Its real causes, on the contrary, that is the *tehcir* with all its disastrous consequences, of which we have been speaking, disappear from the observer's mental horizon.

As mentioned earlier, the examinations and analyses in this paper do not pretend to be comprehensive or seminal. The issue of trauma is open to investigation; it strongly needs to be investigated in its various dimensions. As long as historical, social and other empirical evidence pertaining to the issue is taken into account, trauma is, first and foremost, an object of psychology, and especially psychoanalysis. And we should add with satisfaction that due interest has been given in these last years to this dimension of the issue.[21] It is to hope that it may increase.

3.2 The Turkish Trauma

If we argued that the collective trauma of the Armenians stems almost in its entirety from 1915, we would not be far from the truth. In contrast, the trauma pertaining to the Turks does not appear to be confined to the Armenian issue. Thus, in order to appraise this specific case, we need to touch on a trauma of a more general order. In my view, this is the fear or the suspect of an international conspiracy against Turkey. Those who have the opportunity to watch the relatively high-quality political debates on the international channel of the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT Türk, formerly TRT Int.), will easily recognise a widespread feeling of suspicion and concern. There is an emblematic name for this feeling of suspicion and concern: The Sèvres Treaty. This is the understanding that the «Great Powers» (the *Düvel-i Muazzama* of the Ottoman tradition) could resort to imposing the stipulations of the long-obsolete treaty at any time. This fear is widely shared in the political discourse in Turkey to an extent that it causes incomprehension and bewilderment among non-specialist observers of the Turkish scene. The relevant insight for our analysis here is that this mindset of constant fear of an international conspiracy against Turkey is an empirical fact. It would be justified to argue that this conspiratorial mindset is the most tangible expression of the Armenian Trauma among the Turks. To be more precise, it is the concern, in the confines of this international conspiratorial mindset, that Armenians and the Armenian issue might be employed and exploited. Even if such a concern appears to belong to a politics of fantasy in the context of the current political conditions, international law and the almost ecclesiastically dogmatic principle of the «inviolability of borders» – but in exceptional cases of a super-powers dictate as in Kosovo or Abkhazia –, there is however a

21 It will be sufficient to mention here only some major titles: Altounian, *«Ouvrez-moi seulement les chemins d'Arménie...»*; Altounian, *La survivance: Traduire le trauma collectif*; Altounian, *L'intraduisible: Deuil, mémoire, transmission*; Piralian, *Génocide et transmission: Sauver la mort, sortir du meurtre*.

historical reference to it. In a similar vein to the Trauma among Armenians pertaining to the Turks, which is based on the behaviours and typology of the Unionist leading cadres, it has to be acknowledged that the Turkish Trauma pertaining to Armenians, expressed through the Treaty of Sèvres, hinges on the fact that most Armenians and Armenian Nationalist propaganda have employed the Treaty as a national and historical symbol for almost seventy years, until the promulgation of the Third Armenian Republic. Its succeeding governments took a clear distance from such utopian and irresponsible attitudes. However, this new approach of the whole question by the governments of newly independent Armenia was not enough to contain the inertial force of the prior propaganda, whose influence is still considerable both in Armenia and in diaspora, often in open contrast with Armenia's ruling governments.[22]

In addition to this traumatic axis that stems from political, or rather ostensibly political factors, we can discern a second axis of traumatic perceptions of Armenians among Turks. This is a trauma enacted through psychological reflexes, and could be summarised as the 'Ingratitude' of Armenians (*nankörlük*). According to this prevalent stereotype, the Armenians, who were often labelled in the past as the 'loyal/faithful *millet*', *millet-i sadıka* (On *millet* see below, note 31), had gained the trust of the state, and reached the highest levels of power in the empire, at some point – this view goes – were seduced and exploited by European powers and the Russians and galvanised into rebellion against the Ottomans, hence, acting treacherously and ungratefully. In the final analysis of this argument, and despite the acknowledgement of some non-desirable extreme occurrences in the course of events, it was the Armenians, who brought destruction upon themselves due to their 'ingratitude', or their 'ignorance of the value, which had been invested in them' (*kadir bilmezlik*). I think that the attempts to transcend the taboo of the Armenian issue in Turkey will contribute to curing this stereotype/trauma.

22 This situation can explain some accidental political blunders, committed rather for domestic use and also explainable for want of an attested diplomatic experience. They do not change the basic guidelines of the Armenian foreign policy, which was formulated by the first President of the Republic and did not undergo so far substantial alterations. An obvious proof of this attitude was also the signing, in October 2009, of *Protocols* with Turkey. They remained unfortunately dead letter. It is not our task at present to investigate the whys and wherefores of this failure.

4 The Multi-Layered Dimensions of the Problem: Political, Legal, Anthropological, Cultural, Ethical etc.

The *tableau* of 1915, which we have sought to establish in general terms so far, contains a much wider field of spheres of life and disciplines, stretching from political, legal, anthropological, social and cultural layers to its ethical dimensions. The in-depth discussion of these dimensions requires specialist investigations within all these disciplines. Even if not at all levels and in all disciplines, we can maintain that a sufficient body of research is indeed now available.

In this paper, I obviously do not intend to consider in detail any particular issues tackled within this multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary field. My wish is to make the following, if humble contribution: I suggest establishing the epistemological basis and the methodological perspective, which is required for meaningful research on the events of 1915, independent of the particular issue and the discipline in question. This will also give some hints as to how a less belligerent and more common-sense approach to the issue can emerge.

4.1 Catharsis

The first question in this context is that of the feeling or 'complex' of guilt. It was in 2004, a research group in Turkey asked me the following questions: «Is it more sensible to forget the events of the past, or to speak about them? How important is it that young generations know the past? In your view, is it important that past events are passed from one generation to another?» In my answer, I argued for a middle ground, as I have a deep conviction in Aristotle's 'golden' principle of '*mesotēs*', the *aurea mediocritas*, or in its more axiomatic form: «Virtue stands in the middle» (*in medio stat virtus*). I find it crucial and necessary to face the past, however, without turning this engagement into an obsession. While conveying the goals and intent of this inquiry, let us now deepen an existential theme, which we have briefly mentioned above.

To express our view in the most concise manner, we can say that a catharsis is necessary in order to be «liberated» from the past and its wounds. As I remarked earlier, history can neither be erased nor forgotten. We remember history, whether we like it or not. I concluded earlier that remembrance might be beneficial, as common sense suggests that history can play an instructive role. The following words, attributed to Konrad Adenauer, are most appropriate: «History is the total sum of the things that could have been avoided». This is indeed a disturbing insight, but it exposes, once again, the inevitability of history. Yet, the necessity to remember is not only justified by the instructiveness of history, it is

also a precondition for a confident and hopeful engagement with the future. As Søren Kierkegaard put it succinctly: «Life can be understood but looking backwards; it must be lived however looking forward».

We can establish without doubt that remembering the past can be harmful, even destructive, if it stems from the purpose to incite, to enflame ancient hatreds, and to rub salt into the wounds of a tortured memory. Nevertheless, let us not forget that healing these wounds is not possible without remembering the past, without facing history, without coming clean with collective memory and its consciousness. Such a catharsis, such a coming clean is inevitable for the healing process. Let us therefore turn to the concept of catharsis to further elaborate this line of thought. This rich and meaningful concept, refined by centuries of wisdom, has attained a deep meaning in the whole range of scholarly work dealing with human experience, from aesthetics to psychology.

Let us now explain the term catharsis. Indeed, the exit out of the deadlock, which Turks and Armenians are embroiled in equally, hinges on the resolve of both sides to search for ways of 'coming clean' with history, and to thereby undergo a cathartic process. This, in my view, requires the contribution of both sides. Undoubtedly, collective sentiment and perceptions of responsibility might differ between the two sides. After all, the current state of Turkish–Armenian relations is one of the most protracted situations in the international context. If we were to ask for the causal interrelations of this situation, we would arrive at the following underlying reason: the abyss between the two nations, which the Catastrophe of 1915 wreaked, is not the result of a conflict between two armies, which ended up fighting each other due to one reason or another. Hence, to ascend out of this abyss, it is not sufficient to address the consequences for the 'victors' and the 'vanquished'. Neither is it sufficient, therefore, to emancipate ourselves from the complexes pertaining to these two categories. The problem, in principle, is that of the appropriate concept of 'coming to terms with history', 'the ability to face history'. This is an approach taken by a number of Turkish intellectuals, who strive to bring in a new perspective on the issue. In order for such a perspective to prevail, opportunities have to be created that allow individuals to overcome their very specific perceptions of 'honour', and their very own 'sense of honour' that remains an obstacle to such a process. For the Armenian side, however, it is the 'victimhood complex' that has taken hold. It is based on the experience of 'victimhood' brought about by the Catastrophe, yet, it has to be overcome as well.

To transcend these two emotive constellations, and the complexes they entail, is much greater a challenge than emancipating ourselves from the complexes of the 'vanquished' and the 'victor'. In my view, such a step becomes possible only if the hand that is understood to be the victimiser's changes its appearance in the collective imagination of the other side. A

cathartic step will play a central role here. No matter how intractable the dilemma may be, I believe that it can be overcome. Furthermore, I believe that, if not the greatest, but certainly a very substantial contribution to the cathartic process as precondition for the overcoming of the current predicament will come from intellectuals. Or, to be more precise, it will come from those committed intellectuals, who think and act as autonomous subjects, independent from and critical of official points of view, state institutions, or 'group solidarities'. Such a dialogue between intellectuals, even if it is still in its fledgling stages, has now started. The first example for such a dialogue that comes to mind was the Armenian Studies list-serve (*Armworkshop*), based at the University of Michigan, which for nearly five years (2005-2010) provided a space for the interaction of intellectuals and scholars of Turkish and Armenian origin, but also of intellectuals with other citizenship ties and ethnic affiliations.

Turkish scholars who work in this field, have accepted a great role and responsibility in this process. Allow me to express my respect and appreciation for those who continue a remarkable struggle to enlighten the Turkish public on this matter, despite the many odds which they encounter. A great Armenian poet, Father Ghevont Alishan, once said that «those who deny their nation, will also deny God». Those personalities, who participate in this struggle, might be viewed by their compatriots with suspicion, and seen as disloyal to their nation. We know how hurtful such allegations are for the feelings and honour of Turks and Armenians in particular, and people of the Middle East in general. Hence, I am convinced that, as one of them said, they speak on behalf of the genuine interests of their country, and with the aim to support the democratic advancement of Turkey.[23] This road is a long and bumpy one, no doubt, and it requires understanding and endurance. Personally, I believe that this long and bumpy road will lead to a rewarding conclusion. I am confident and hopeful of this eventual conclusion, precisely because of this dialogue developing between intellectuals and scholars.

There is another important factor, which I will refer to later. The deepening of this dialogue will allow for new thoughts to be elaborated, and for these thoughts to be received by growing numbers of members of the civil society. Such a transformation within civil society will surely have an impact on the public debate and the realm of politics. Cicero's great dictum that «one needs time to time one's time in a timely fashion» (*Tempora tempore tempera*) appears to be a very 'timely' principle indeed in this field.

It is self-evident, that the groups that I have mentioned, their motivations and approaches differ greatly from Special Commissions that

23 Cf. Berktay, «1915'te ne oldu?».

might be set up to investigate the matter. Therefore, let me elaborate that scholarly research cannot be associated with officialdom: How could commissions set up by or under the patronage of state agencies possibly be the bearers and representatives of free and independent thought? Even if they were, how could they prove their trustworthiness and independence to the world? Let me add, with great sincerity, that such encounters between scholars should not focus on the question of whether the Catastrophe of 1915 constituted Genocide or not. It would be wrong, because Armenians, as indeed, the great majority of international scholars, believe that the case is evident and cannot be specified with any term but Genocide. As for the Turks, with the exception of a small, but growing, group who recognise the Genocide, such a focus would obstruct the encounter from the very first moment, and result in a series of monologues, rather than dialogue. As any other major historical phenomenon, the Catastrophe of 1915 poses a number of historical questions that need to be addressed. Moreover, almost a thousand years of Turkish–Armenian relations require new historical inquiries that do justice to the multiple dimensions of this relationship. The careful examination of this complex historical process by all sides will bring to the fore easily to what extent 1915 was an event that invalidated and reversed the flow of history. As a matter of fact, the possibility of agreement on this reality does not lie in the proofs that could be exchanged in intellectual or scholarly settings. It depends on the determination to enter a sincere and honest dialogue by both, and on the decision for certain psychological and epistemological principles.[24]

These psychological and epistemological imperatives are the same for both groups:

a. Do not search for guilt and culprits among the members of the opposite group. Guilt and culprits are to be found, above all, in history. In fact, there is a moral wholeness between individuals and history, which we cannot escape. Such a relationship with history, however, can only reach the level of consciousness, if the closed case of historical experience is opened anew, elucidated and explained. The opening of the closed case, and the recognition of openness, in many ways, is equivalent to *catharsis*. At this point, a 'guilt complex' should not prevail.

24 Some years ago, the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) agreed to consult a group of international experts, whether the tragedy of 1915 constituted Genocide according to international law. The Center for Transitional Justice established that the events indeed amounted Genocide according to the UN Convention. As the Turkish members of TARC did not accept this view, the Commission dissolved. Although unofficial, the Commission was made up of ex diplomats, some businessmen and other influential people.

b. The exchanges in such an encounter, the recognition of a certain phenomenon or evidence should not be understood as 'victory', or 'defeat' by any one of the sides involved. The aim of these conversations and encounters should be to seek and find ways to overcome the terrible abyss that divides two nations, which have lived as neighbours, or rather, with each other, for hundreds of years.

In addition to these two principled stances based on psychological and ethical deliberations, we need to concentrate on an epistemological-methodological principle. In the preface to the Turkish translation of my book *Armenians and Modernity*, I argued the following:

> Twentieth century historiography has been unidirectional in both the Turkish and the Armenian case. This unidirectional approach has to be superseded by a more balanced, rational and realist approach. Turkish historiography did not tire to depict the Ottoman Empire as an earthly paradise for Armenians. It is clear that such a claim is not convincing for any state or political system. On the other hand, Armenian historians of the twentieth century, largely as a result of the traumatic shock, have forgotten or subconsciously discounted the opportunities, which the Ottomans offered to the Armenian nation. It is late, but certainly not too late, to emancipate ourselves and the field of historical inquiry from societal preconceptions and emotive approaches.[25]

Another methodological issue stems from an *a priori* judgement, prevalent among many Turks: how could the state apparatus of the Ottoman Empire with its traditional tolerance be the culprit of such a grave crime? How could the Turks, who had recognised the religious identity of a community that lived amongst them for centuries, and how could a state, which had allowed for Armenians to rise to the highest offices even during critical times, embark on such a mission! Such *a priori* judgements might be written in good faith, yet they are instructive for the line of thought, which I want to elucidate. Such judgements presuppose that there is not a single inconsistency or dark moment in one's own history. Secondly, it denies the possibility of subversion, or a radical transformation of a society. Such presuppositions, we should not hesitate to emphasise, are meaningless, no matter which culture, history or nation we examine. Even without prior knowledge of the historical case, we can disqualify such presuppositions on the grounds of commonsense epistemological and methodological principles of historiography. Such

25 Cf. Zekiyan, *The Armenian way to Modernity*, pp. 9-10.

a presupposition, brought to its logical consequence, would suggest an exceptionally ideal society and a coherently just course of history. Ideal societies, however, only exist in the 'golden age' myths of early humanity. Historical reality, of course, is decidedly different. Even the Roman Empire, which created a civilisation of justice and rights that still provides the basic principles of our civil law today, subjected the emerging Christianity to torture for centuries, and inflicted on the Jewish people, whose ethnic and religious identity were recognised all over the empire, one of the worst massacres of history at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. *Ipso facto*, there can be no crime in history, which is *a priori* inconceivable. Such a presupposition can be made only, if one steps outside history, and settles for an ahistorical, I would even say, anti-historical perspective. Having said this, we owe to add the following: however true all this reasoning may be, valuable for any human society, for any phase in the evolution of human history, we cannot forget at all that the Union and Progress Party was inspired and moved by an ideology, the ideology of the nation-state, which is basically of Western origin and has little to do with genuine Ottoman tradition in the right and in the wrong. This is a very important point to make, if we wish to realise in its full dimension the *Ittihad* phenomenon.

Before concluding this section, I would like to draw attention to another point: there is no direct and necessary relation between expulsion (*tehcir*) and Genocide and the religion of Islam. Most scholars today agree that genocides, unfortunately, are products of 'modernity', of that modernity which stems and propagates from the West, and they represent the darkest side of a historical process that has otherwise been beneficial to humanity in so many ways. Genocides are the gravest mechanisms in the transformation of multi-national and multi-ethnic societies of pre-modern era to the monolithic nation-states of modernity. In such contexts, religion can only be abused as an instrument to incite ignorant masses. Regrettably, I will not be able to elaborate on this complex theme, not even in passing. Suffice it to say that the *Şeyhülislam* (the highest religious authority in the Ottoman Empire below the largely symbolic post of the Caliphate) of the time joined the voices opposing the Deportation Law (*Tehcir Kanunu*), because he deemed it contrary to the dogma and creed of Islam to punish a whole people for crimes committed by some.[26]

26 Cf. Lepsius, *Der Todesgang des armenischen Volkes*, p. 234. We can establish beyond reasonable doubt that the phenomenon of fundamentalism as such, as a mental category and a theoretical pattern, which is which gets itself so much talked about in our days and is associated regularly with the religion of Islam, is in reality of Western origin. To realize this, it is important to define fundamentalism in its proper terms. In fact, it is neither pure fanaticism, nor even bloody violence, nor is it simply theocracy or religious integralism.

4.2 Beyond Recognition

In the last few years, some Turkish circles raised questions regarding the possible consequences of Genocide recognition by Turkey. These discussions and comments rapidly led to a focus on the trilogy of recognition, territory and compensation. As the intent of 'recognition' is evident, we shall dwell on the latter terms, and begin with the most contested one, that is 'territory'. As I mentioned above, a certain propagandistic strand in Armenian nationalism emphasised, for the last seventy years, the slogans of 'territory' or 'Sèvres', especially in the Diaspora and also in a rather large proportion of popular feeling and mentality in Armenia. At the same time, it is also true, as mentioned above, that the Third Armenian Republic declared repeatedly that it recognised Turkey's territorial integrity, that it had no border disputes with Turkey, and that it wished to establish normal diplomatic relations without any preconditions, since the first days of its independence. I have argued in this paper that the dialogue unfolding between intellectuals and scholars is one of the two reasons for my hope in the future of Turkish–Armenian relations. The second factor that allows for such a hopeful perspective is this attitude of the government of independent Armenia. Under these circumstances, the issue of territorial claims is out of the political equation. I do not mean hereby that the so called 'territorial claim', intended as a political exchange of territories, even if politically unthinkable, has no weight at all. Its psychological impact on a remarkable portion of Armenian popular strata is still remarkable; hence, it is unavoidable to deny it any influence on eventual moves of the Armenian political apparatus. I hope, however, and I am prudently convinced that Armenian

Fundamentalism is a mental and practical attitude whose basic principle is the compulsory application of a religious law as state law indifferently to all the subjects or citizens of a given state, independently from their religious faith and confessional belonging. As such, fundamentalisms can be dated back to North American Protestant groups, who adhered to the Western philosophical-theological concept of the total and universal character of law. In Islam, however, law is a matter of communities. Neither the Ottoman Sultans, nor the Safavids of Iran ever forced the *Shariah* law on their Christian subject populations. There indeed was a theocratic conception of state in Islam, and, as elsewhere, oppression, fanaticism and massacres. The contention that fundamentalism in its technical sense is the essence of Islam, as it is argued by some, is indefensible, as the course of history of this religion shows quite clearly. For a general survey of the question see: Hemminger, Hansjörg (1991). *Fundamentalismus in der verweltlichen Kultur*. Stuttgart: Quell. I have touched upon this problem in more than one writing: Zekiyan, «The Armenian Self-Perception between the Ottomans and Safavids»; Zekiyan, «An attempt for a restatement of interethnic questions»; Zekiyan, «Models of Cross-Cultural Communication between Loss of Identity and 'Differentiated Integration'; Zekiyan, «Religione e cultura nell'identità armena»; Zekiyan, «Quando l'Armenia incontrò la 'modernità' europea»; Zekiyan, «The Iranian Oikumene and Armenia».

governments will not play an adventure card for their country.[27] Let us therefore turn to the question of 'compensation'.

As I remarked already, legal issues in general, and the legal analysis of 'responsibility' and 'compensation' in international law rests outside the scope of this inquiry. Hence, we will discuss the concept of 'compensation' in its moral, anthropological and ethical dimensions. The precondition for 'compensation' undeniably requires the admission of the committed crime, and the sorrow for having made a mistake. All actions and consequences will come from this attitude. I shall develop my thoughts with a few examples, again without claiming completeness. In this frame, I will articulate my conviction that Turkey owes compensation not only to others, but to itself. Let us examine this thought in three stages.

4.2.1 Memory and Monuments

Let us first appraise the problem of memory and monuments. Let us start with an example representing the situation a mere twenty-seven years ago: in 1987, a large exhibition of Anatolian Civilisations was held in Milan. All peoples that shaped the history of Anatolia – from the Hittites to the Ottomans and the Turkish Republic – appeared in this show, but one: There was no mention of Armenians. The only Armenian monument, that was visible, was the *Aght'amar* Church, labelled in its Turkified form as *Akdamar*, a compound word meaning 'white vein'. This masterpiece of medieval Armenian architecture, the court church of the Vaspurakan

27 Retired Turkish Ambassador Ömer E. Lütem thinks that some declarations made by Armenia's former President of the Republic, Mr. Rober Kocharyan, and leaked out from the press, are not reassuring in this sense (Cf. Lütem, «Olaylar ve yorumlar»). Such declarations, whenever ascertained, are probably due, as it is also suggested by Mr. Lütem, to some concerns of internal policy. It is desirable, however, that facts and comments which can raise suspicions or cause misleading in international policy may be cleared up before they may degenerate. The present writer has called attention upon the topic importance of this question in his intervention as a 'discussant' at the International Conference held in Yerevan, on 20-22 April 2005, *Ultimate Crime, Ultimate Challenge: Human Rights and Genocide*.

In this context I would also like to hint at the following point. In one of the objections moved to the present paper, after it was delivered at the Conference of Istanbul University, some objector sustained that there were 'territorial claims' from Armenia upon Turkey since the Armenian Constitution speaks of 'historic Armenia'. As it is known, the expression in question occurs in art. 13 in which, after having described the Armenian flag, the Constitution describes Armenia's state emblem explaining from which historic sources those symbols are inspired. We have to presume that the objection does not leave from the supposition that history can be cancelled. Otherwise there would be no reason or possibility to speak. Having made this statement, it is clear that symbols, and especially religious and national symbols, are inspired mostly from myths and history. It is also well known that myths and history, independently from any current political connection, are among the main factors in forging and shaping group identities, and especially ethnic/national identities. Hence, to interpret the explanation of a historic symbol as an actual political claim, implies an undue shift in the subject of discussion at issue.

dynasty, was shown as the church of a Byzantine monastery. I learned from my Italian colleagues that the Turkish ambassador to Rome requested this labelling on pain of cancelling the exhibition. Important steps have been taken in the last few years regarding the Aght'amar Church whose restoration is moreover generally appreciated, as to its technical and artistic results, by architecture and art specialists.[28] Yet, one would have hoped that these positive steps were not limited to internationally renowned monuments such as Aght'amar, while the ruins of Ani, another internationally renowned site with numerous pearls of world architecture, have been the object of disastrous restoration projects. Indeed, the protection and renovation of monuments can be one of the most important corrective steps to redress historical errors. The salvation of the remains of the thousands of monuments, which we have remembered earlier in this paper, would be, above all, an enrichment for Turkey itself. These monuments are not only the great treasures of Armenian art and culture, they represent the riches of this country and its people, and are part of the heritage of humanity. Turkey is a country, which hosts the remnants of numerous cultures and civilisations. The protection and development of this wealth is in Turkey's interest. In this context and with an eye on debates on the reconstruction of the monuments of Ani, we should be aware that the reconstruction of historical monuments is a delicate business that requires special qualification and adherence to internationally established norms and principles.

Let me draw attention to a crucial point here: the development of the pluralist, and very rich indeed, cultural heritage of the various ethnic groups and populations who left a trace or still live in Turkey can find a fruitful ground in the country's history and the current societal set up. This ground is the *millet* approach in the Ottoman tradition.[29] A reconsid-

28 The restoration of the church was completed in 2007, after this paper was delivered in Istanbul in March 2006. The celebration of the first Divine Liturgy in the Armenian rite, following the restoration work and the re-opening of the church as a museum in 2007, took place in 2010. It gave rise to lively discussions and strong reactions, starting from its date and other details, as the absence of a cross at the top of the restored church, also by some Turkish intellectuals. However, the fact itself that a Turkish government took care to restore an Armenian church, after almost one century of continuous profanation, desert, and even destruction, was a first, yet hesitant, signal of a changing attitude. Mentioned reactions were not, I think, dispassionate enough to duly appreciate that signal in its positive dimension.

29 On the legal concept and the social-administrative system of *millet* in the Ottoman Empire, see: Grignaschi, «L'Impero ottomano e le minoranze religiose»; Donini, *Le minoranze nel Vicino Oriente e nel Maghreb*; Ye'or, *Les chrétientés d'Orient entre Djihâd et Dhimmitude*; Benlisoy, Benlisoy, *İ parusia ton ethnikon mionotiton stin Konstantinupoli ton 19. eona*; Benedicty, «La formation politique théocratique: essai de définition»; Vercellin, «Islam: dalla tolleranza delle origini alle moderne tendenze d'intolleranza»; Pedani, *Dalla Frontiera al Confine*; Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı millet sistemi*.

eration of the *millet* tradition that corrects its shortcomings might be a welcome contribution, not the least for western societies and civilisation. After all, one of the most crucial issues of our day is the phenomenon of global migration, and the consequences for inter-cultural and inter-community tensions, it engenders. It becomes increasingly obvious that a rigid understanding of the nation-state, as it has become the norm in the West since Enlightenment, fails to address these new challenges.

I would like to make some short comments especially on three of the above mentioned works. Bat Ye'or sees of the *dhimmitude* rather the negative, repressive aspects; hence the outline he traces of it remains captive of this one-sided approach. For Robert Bendicty the *millet* system was responsible for the collapse of the Empire. The subject, however, is much more complex and complicated. If the *millet* system was finally pushed into a blind alley an important, undeniable, role was played in this process by the assimilation of the 'modern' concept of the 'nation' and of its most typical, strongest expression, the nation-state ideology, which were inspired by western models and, especially, by France and its Revolution. As to Macit Kenanoğlu's extensive study, this aims, as it is expressly declared, to present a general vision on the *millet* system which, both from a theoretical and a practical viewpoint, may go beyond the 'myth'. The fact is that, the impact of a conception inspired to the nation-state ideology, even if not declared, lets itself be felt, all through the book, both in the approach of the subject and the conclusions drawn. That «the state must not be deprived of its authority» or that there is no reason to speak of such an 'autonomy' that might cause a similar conditioning, does not mean that the *millet* system, must be regarded as lacking of any «serious and sufficient» argument (Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı millet sistemi*, p. 395). The *millet* system was one of communitarianism or, with a more contemporary expression, one where an ethnic identity was officially acknowledged at the highest level of the state's legal structure, without being necessarily connected to a territory having belonged to that ethnic unit in that given area. This is the basic principle lying at the foundations of the *millet* system. Such an acknowledgment is not yet achieved even in the most advanced democratic systems of the West (I mean Europe, USA and countries having a basically similar ordination). That's why, in my opinion, the Ottoman *millet* system, can offer a highly topic model to face the manifold and, often, extremely complicated emigration and ethnicity problems of our days, besides the fact that the achievement to acknowledge ethnic identities in the frame of a state unity will, mark, without any doubt, a real progress towards a society more equitable and more respectful of human rights, thus filling in a gap in our current system of international law. Such an achievement can be realized, however, at one basic and unequivocal condition: to all members of given communities or ethnic groups be recognized (all rights of citizenship have to be recognized fully and without any restriction to all the members of given communities or ethnic groups), differently from what happened in the Ottoman system. If we like to make use of another concept of large diffusion in social and legal sciences, the concept of 'minority', the advanced proposal means simply to acknowledge ethnic/communitarian identity, together with full citizenship rights, to the non territorial minorities. Since 'minority' is not as such – one has to concede (it should be admitted) – a very pleasant word, many a scholar today prefers to speak of 'group', and of 'ethnic group'. Within this frame the notion of *millet*, as different from the notion of 'nation' tied to the nation-state ideology in the western tradition, can join the notions of 'ethnos' and 'ethnic group', more and more usual nowadays, enriching them of a new legal dimension. Needless to say that the western tradition itself has different facets and a remarkable variety of ramifications. The difference between the French and German conceptions of 'national' identity, the varieties between such excellent state and population administration systems as the Swiss confederation, the Canadian federation, and the United Kingdom, are too well known to be emphasised here. But the fact is that in all these systems the acknowledgment of a peculiar group identity is based on its link to a given territory and is in function of that territorial link.

Even if there are still many groups in the developed democracies of the West, which resist such a conclusion, I believe that they will have to realise sooner or later that reality suggests otherwise. As a matter of fact, the classical tradition of the West and hence, international law, has no or only a very subdued concept of 'communities', that is non-territorial minorities. Of course, it is a major question that to what extent a political system that gives non-territorial minorities a legal status can be reconciled with the great achievements of equality, human rights and the rule of law. This is a cumbersome but important discussion, which has engaged many and well-known philosophers from Jürgen Habermas to Charles Taylor, as well as other thinkers, jurists and sociologists. Personally, I believe that these two approaches can indeed be reconciled, and that such reconciliation is the only sensible response to the aforementioned challenges. The European Union has made some progressive steps to this effect, especially by expressly introducing the concept of 'linguistic minorities', and we may expect that these steps will continue. In short, the western tradition needs to recognise the legal constitution of the 'community/ethnic group', whose historical roots also go back to ancient Rome. On the other hand the Ottoman *millet* system, to be proposed as a social-administrative pattern for a modern society, needs a major revision on two vital issues:

a. abolishing all kind of discrimination, of disparity, and of subordination among citizens, all kind of residual reminiscence of the status of *reaya* (subordinate non-Muslim communities), and granting the members of these communities complete equality under public law and, hence, equal citizenship rights;
b. abolishing the religious-confessional parameters, influential, sometimes even pivotal, in the Ottoman conception, in defining communities and ethnic groups so that these may have their place in a secular society as an essentially non-denominational entity. It is useless to add that the secular approach, we are speaking of, does not exclude in any way the legally recognized peculiar status and rights of the various religious groups and denominations.

Many of the limitations imposed on Turkey's minorities in the Republican era appear to stem from the lack of a sensible synthesis between these two systems, whose principles and modes of action seem to have existed in a parallel vein. On the one hand, the western ideal of the nation-state in its most rigorous French variety, capturing the imagination of Turkish intellectuals and statesmen since the emergence of the Committee of Union and Progress; on the other, the heritage of the Ottoman Empire that recognises communities in legal terms, albeit in a rather inadequate manner, while it fails to ameliorate their subordinate status.

Once we adopt this synthetic perspective, we will be able to reconsider the significance of the Armenian architectural heritage in this country, destroyed, defiled, yet existent nevertheless. Within such a perspective, this heritage does not appear as a dividing, antagonistic presence, but as the expression of a human and humanistic synthesis that adds to the wealth of Armenian identity, to the entire country and to humanity. To return to the initial purpose of our argument, a leap forward in the preservation of this heritage would be an eminent contribution to the reparation of historical errors and injustices, and would indeed constitute a major step for 'compensation', and if the term is allowed, for the 'redemption' of both Turks and Armenians to overcome their respective awful disease, even if this disease, for both sides, has very different obvious causes and very different syndromes.

4.2.2 The Yearning for the Ancestral Soil

It was in the beginnings of the 1980s. A young Armenian girl from France, with next to no knowledge of Armenian, yet with a very strong sense of her Armenian identity, visited me in Venice. She was eager to learn more about Armenian history, about Turkey and Anatolia. Her ancestors were from Van, and her goal was to go there. I asked her for her reasons. Her greatest wish was to visit the graves of her great-grandparents. She even said «I would like to be buried next to them, when I die». Two generations of separation; the loss of her mother tongue; the seductive, yet hegemonic societal and cultural atmosphere of a city like Paris, and even the void of almost seventy years; none of these had sufficed to extinguish this young girl's yearning for the gloomy and desolate Anatolian soil, which she had never set foot on. In my view, this is a decisive matter, if we want to understand what an average Armenian associates with the soil of their ancestors: it is often the yearning for the soil, not for territory in a political sense. Let us not forget that, until recently, it was not easy, if not risky, to travel on Anatolian soil, especially for Armenians without Turkish citizenship. There have been favourable developments in the last few years regarding the possibilities of travels and visits. Armenians from Armenia and the Diaspora, as well as visitors interested in Armenian culture and its monuments have been able to travel in Anatolia without major obstructions, despite occasional hardships. Saying this, I do not mean to depict an ideal picture, simply I wish to point at the positive developments which, certainly, took place.

However, not every Armenian will be satisfied with the opportunity to travel those lands as tourists. Without doubt, the descendants of Armenian survivors, now in their third and fourth generations, can settle in Turkey according to the laws, and buy properties, as every other

foreigner. Yet, experience suggests that this is not at all easy; a number of cases in the last few years confirm that it is next to impossible. To remove these obstacles, and to make possible an environment in which the social psychology of the common people evolves towards welcoming those who arrive, would be a very important step in the treatment of the scars, which history has inflicted on us. In fact, it is a human right of the remaining generations to return to the lands of their forefathers, from which they have been banned involuntarily.

4.2.3 Family Histories

The last theme, which I would like to bring to your attention, does not only concern Armenians, but all citizens of this country, and even almost all peoples of the Middle East, and probably of several other countries too. We Armenians, and according to my experiences, most peoples of the Middle East, have a memory of their family history that does not extend beyond the second half of the nineteenth century. As we know, most church archives were lost. I, myself, have been living in Italy for nearly sixty years. A characteristic of many Italians, which I have often envied, is the deeply entrenched consciousness of family history. No matter whether of noble or common extraction, people know their family histories going back to the eighteenth or seventeenth century, many even back to the sixteenth and fifteenth century. Families of noble extraction might be able to trace back their ancestors to the thirteenth and twelfth century. I have to admit that the wealth of archival records in Italy, both secular and ecclesiastical, is quite exceptional. Still, a comparable continuity can be established for most other Western European countries, even if only for a more limited period of time. My humble impression is that Turkey, as a successor of the Ottoman Empire with its rich bureaucratic tradition, can take a step forward in this matter.

This thought stems from an experience, which I gained before I began my military service in the Turkish army as supplementary officer in 1970. In those years, the respective law provided for an inquiry into the ancestry for prospective officers. It was necessary to prove that no foreign woman had married into the family for three generations. My father was born in 1908, or in 1324 according to the old calendar. When the large registry volume was opened for the required investigation, there was only one senior registry clerk present in the office who could read the Ottoman letters of the earlier entries. Only my brother's and my own name were written in new, that is Latin letters, and we were at the bottom of a very long page. I saw with surprise and joy that our family tree extended to the very top of that page, yet I was also saddened that the identity of my ancestry was concealed from me. It was a secret, almost like a state

secret. Once again I have to admit that Turkey is not the only country, in the frame of Middle Eastern and Balkanian reality, to keep population and family registers closed to normal citizens. I do not doubt, however, that to make accessible their family memory to the Armenians would be a remarkable contribution to healing their bleeding wound.

Some may fear that such an opening might lead to ethnic tensions. We know that the aforementioned book *My Grandmother* (*Anneannem*) by Fethiye Çetin, which has known a great editorial success both in Turkey and abroad, and the one named *Children of Expulsion* (*Tehcir Çocukları*) by Irfan Palalı, even if this latter moves in the frame of an ideological approach which gets nearer the official line of the government, were met with such concerns by certain circles. The deeper reasons of concern seem to be inspired, in any case, by that strongly nationalistic conception of statehood, which has been for all these past decades the leading ideology of Turkey's ruling circles. Leaving these latter motivations aside for their extreme attitude, it is evident that the former concerns are baseless in a mature society that trusts in the strength of its democratic values. The basic question that arises in this context is probably the question of how deeply those democratic values are rooted and perceived in a society that has to undertake some exacting steps to improve its mental and behavioural structure. It is true that sudden leaps, without sufficient socio-psychological preparation, can even generate effects contrary to the ones expected. In any case, such a consideration cannot be a pretext to keep things stationary as they are; rather it must motivate undertaking a programmed action to achieve the goals proper to a real and advanced democracy. It goes without saying that an analogous history of melting various ethnic or regional identities in the process of formation of new 'national' identities – intending here 'nation' in its typically French/Western acceptance – lies at the origins of almost all European nations. There is however many a difference. A basic difference is in that while similar processes took place in the West in the course of centuries, the *Ittihad* aimed to achieve it in a few years and, as a result of such an ahistorical perspective, did not hesitate to use violent, even extremely methods.

5 Conclusion

It will have become evident by now that the Turkish-Armenian problem is deeply rooted in the Catastrophe of *Metz Yeghern*/Genocide. It is a problem of great magnitude, whose solution will be cumbersome. Yet, it should also be clear by now that it is not impossible to address and transcend it.

We are at the outset of a long and demanding road; probably we are just at the point, where we are trying to estimate this road from afar. I have attempted to appraise in detail some principles, factors and methodologies, which can help us in opening the gates to this road. Furthermore, I have tried to elaborate some theoretical, practical and concrete proposals that will get us on the way. I have also examined the specific problems and hardships, which either side faces, and sought to recommend ways that might be helpful, and tasks that might be necessary in order to overcome them.

I assume that it is imperative for both sides to establish normal relations. It is a cardinal challenge for both sides to transcend this grand trauma that holds us back from addressing the future with confidence. Such an effort is essential and indispensable, as fate has 'destined' Turks and Armenians to live side by side, whether they like it or not.

Venice, May 2014

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voronk' amboghjut'iamb hay yen" k'ysē dersimts'i yergch'uhi Aynur Doğan» («There are Villages in Dersim, Which Are Wholly Armenian» Says the Singer Aynur Doğan). *Horizon*, 22 September 2008.

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Appendix: Images of a Perished World

From the Photographic Archive of Houshamadyan

Figure 1. Sis. The Catholicosate complex. Nubarian Library, Paris. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Houshamadyan is the name of a non-profitmaking association that was founded in Berlin, Germany, in 2010. It has a basic mission: to reconstruct and preserve the memory of Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire through research (http://www.houshamadyan.org).

The Author and the direction of the journal *Annali di Ca' Foscari* thank Houshamadyan for the permission to publish these images.

In the captions, proper names were transcribed respecting the information in the sources.

Figure 2. Sis. Catholicos Sahag I Khabayan (1902-1939). Hermann Goltz, *Der Gerettete Schatz der Armenier aus Kilikien*, Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2000. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 3. Dersim. Yeritsakrag (post 1908), school pupils. Teacher Vahan Hovnanian is seated in center. Vazken A. Andreassian, *Hazariabadoum* [in Armenian], vol. 1, Beirut: G. Donigian Printers, 1985. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 4. Hussenig. Furniture makers (*marangoz*) in their workshop. Center, standing, Garabed Nadjarian. G.H. Aharonian (ed.), *Hussenig*, Boston: Hairenik Publishing House, 1965. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 5. Harput. A view of the town. The Euphrates College buildings can be seen in upper part. Hourig Zakarian collection. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

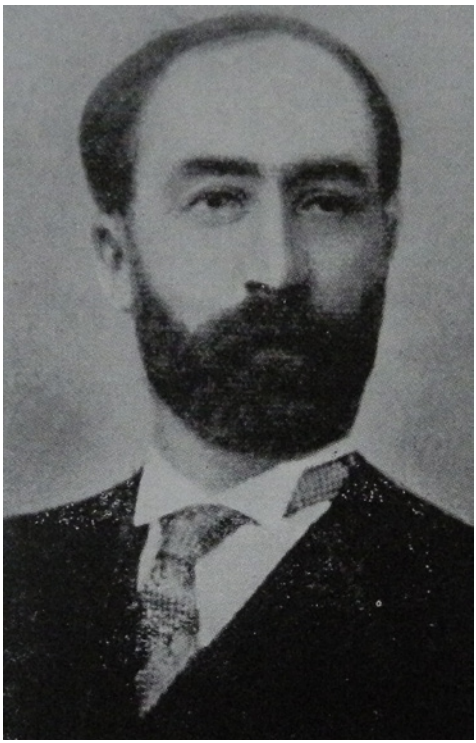

Figure 6. Khosrov Kiurkdjian, the owner of a silk factory in Harput. V. Haig, *Harput and its golden plain* [in Armenian], New York, 1959. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 7. The Fabrikatorian brothers, the owners of a silk and knitwear factory in Mezire. V. Haig, *Harput and its golden plain* [in Armenian], New York, 1959. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 8. Van. Khrimian and local Armenian notables. December 1879. Michel Paboudjian collection, Paris. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

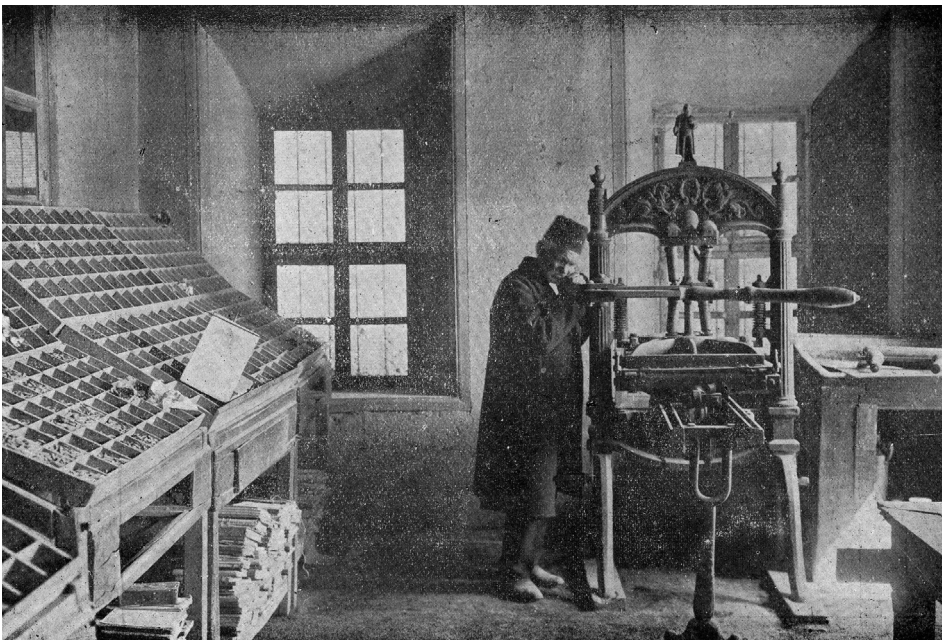

Figure 9. Van. The printing press of Artzvi Vaspurakan. Հայրենի թանգարան [Native museum], Sofia: Hayastan press, 1915). Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

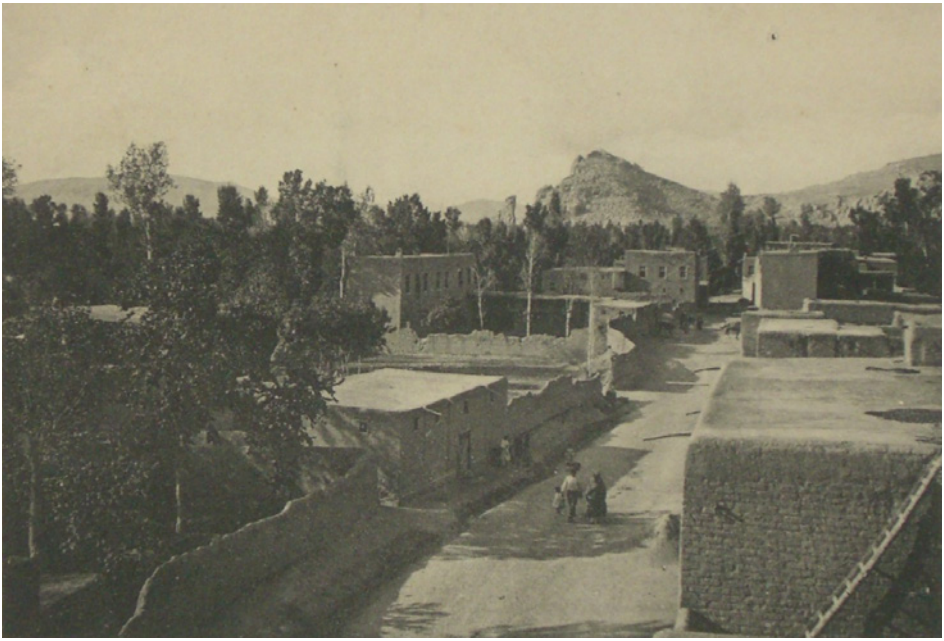

Figure 10. Van. A view from the Van Aykesdan. Michel Paboudjian collection, Paris. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

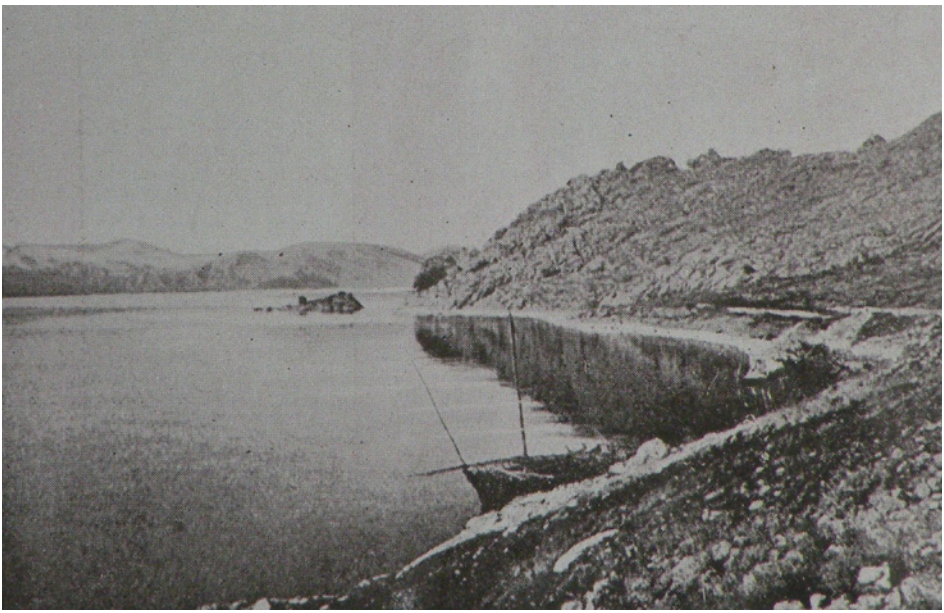

Figure 11. The Dock of the Aghtamar island of Lake Van. *Keghuni*, illustrated Armenian journal, 1905, Venice, St Lazzaro. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 12. Van. The monastery of the Lim island, present-day Adır. Michel Paboudjian collection, Paris. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

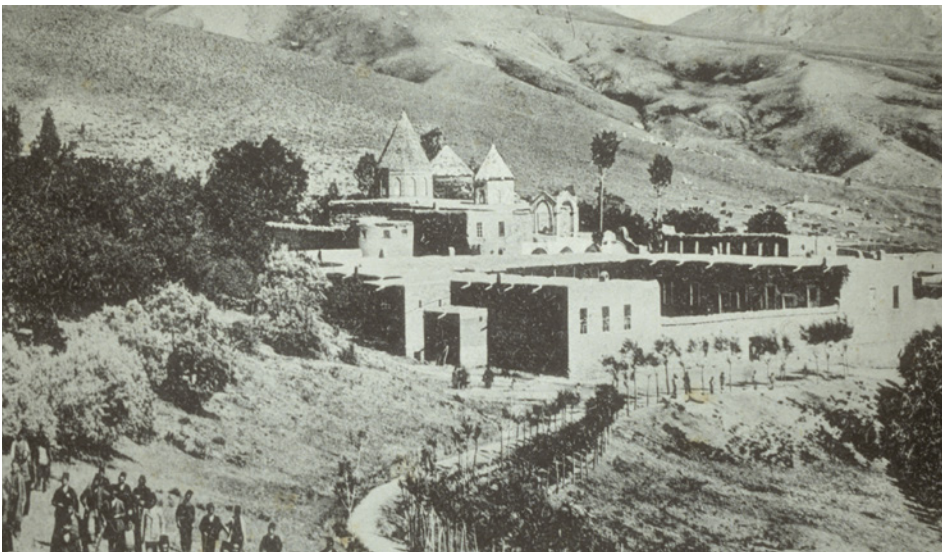

Figure 13. Varag. The monastic complex of Varag. The Zharangavorats Boarding School is visible next to the St. Khatch (Cross) Monastery. AGBU Nubarian Library, Paris. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 14. Rev. Der Ghevont Nahabedian of Marash and family. 1894. Memoirs of Rev. Ghevont of Marash [in Armenian], Yerevan, 2013. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

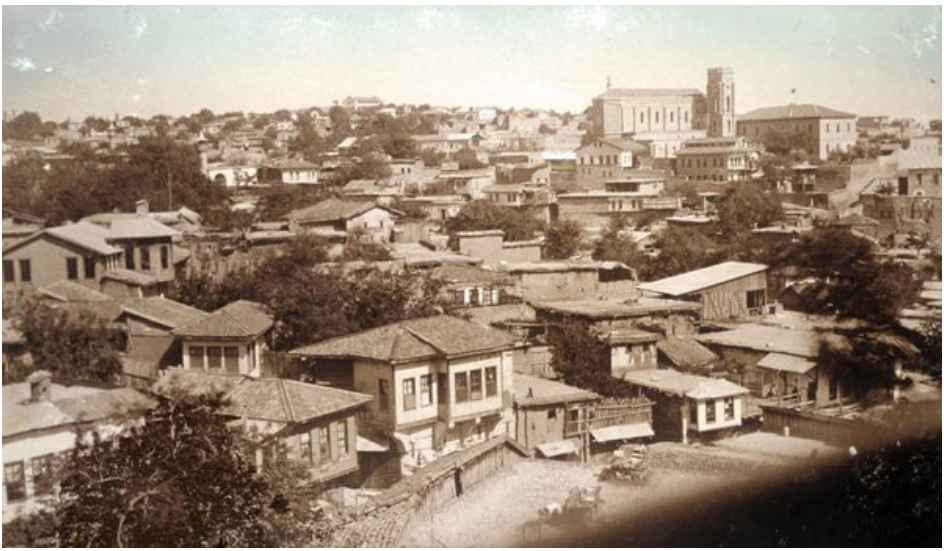

Figure 15. Marash. Panorama: to the right, on a hill, is the Franciscan St. Anthony of Padua Church. Michel Paboudjian collection. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

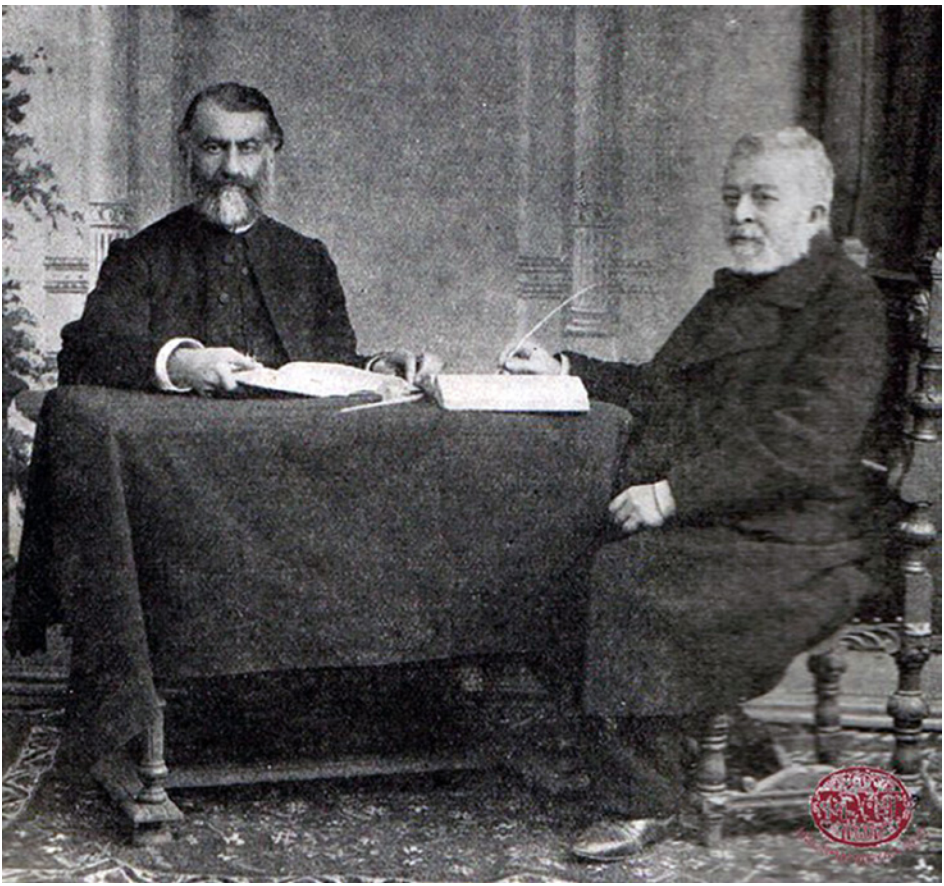

Figure 16. Marash. Pastor Avedis Gosdanian (left) and Madatia Karakashian (right). Krikor Kalusdian, *Marash or Kermanig and Heroic Zeytun*, New York, 1934. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

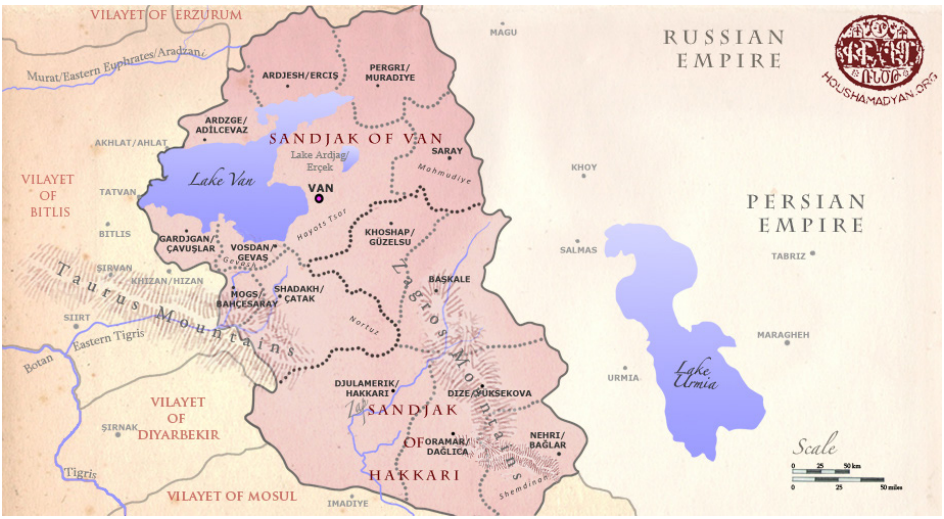

Figure 17. The province (*vilayet*) of Van at the beginning of the 20th century. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

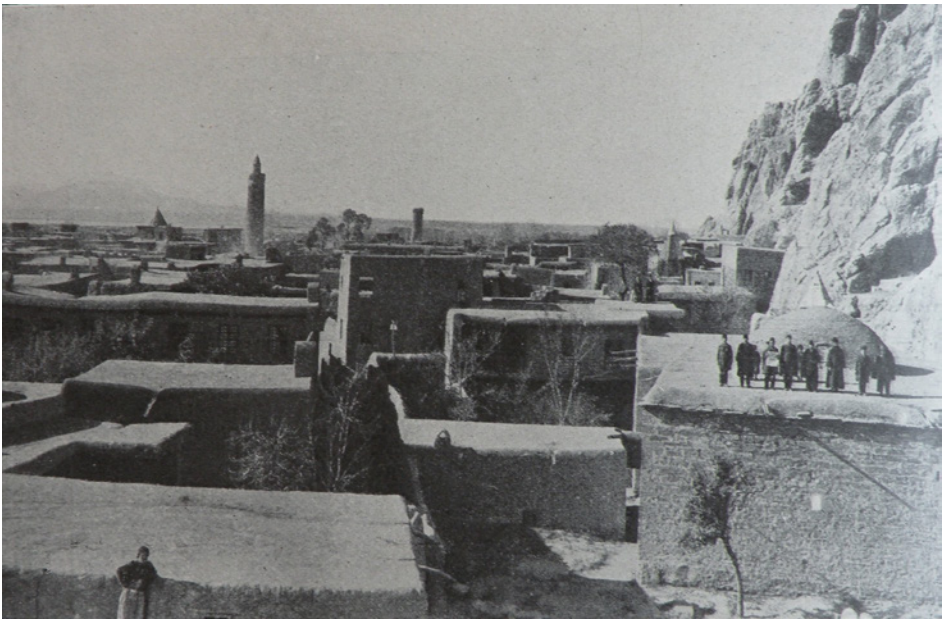

Figure 18. The Old city of Van viewed from the fortress. C.F. Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien Einst und Jetzt*, Berlin; Leipzig, 1926. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 19. Van. The Varak Mountain can be seen in the background. V. Pietschmann, *Durch kurdische Berge und armenische St%odte*, Wien, 1940. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 20. Van. Vintager in the village of Shahbagh (current Beyüzümü). *Keghuni*, illustrated Armenian journal, 1905, Venice, St Lazzaro . Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 21. Erzurum. A panoramic view. H. Hepworth, *Through Armenia on horseback*, London, 1898. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 22. Erzurum. A scene from the city. E.-J. Graf von Westarp, *Unter Halbmond und Sonne*, Berli, ca 1913. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 23. Erzurum. The students of the Sanasarian School. H.F.B. Lynch, *Armenia: Travels and Studies*, vol. 2, London, 1901. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 24. Erzurum. A picture of a group of Armenians. The photograph was taken by the Voskeritchian Studio, owned by (most probably Diran) Voskeritchian and his brothers. Taline Voskeritchian collection. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 25. General view of the village of Khodorchur/Hodiçor (present day Sırakonaklar). *Keghuni*, illustrated Armenian journal, 1905, Venice, St Lazzaro). Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 26. Diyarbekir. The Armenian Tufenkdji family. Dzovig Torikian collection. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 27. Diyarbekir. General view of the town. F. Brockes, *Quer durch Klein-Asien*, Gütersloh, 1900. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 28. Adana. The Armenian quarter and Protestant church. Mekhitarist Order, St. Lazzaro, Venice. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

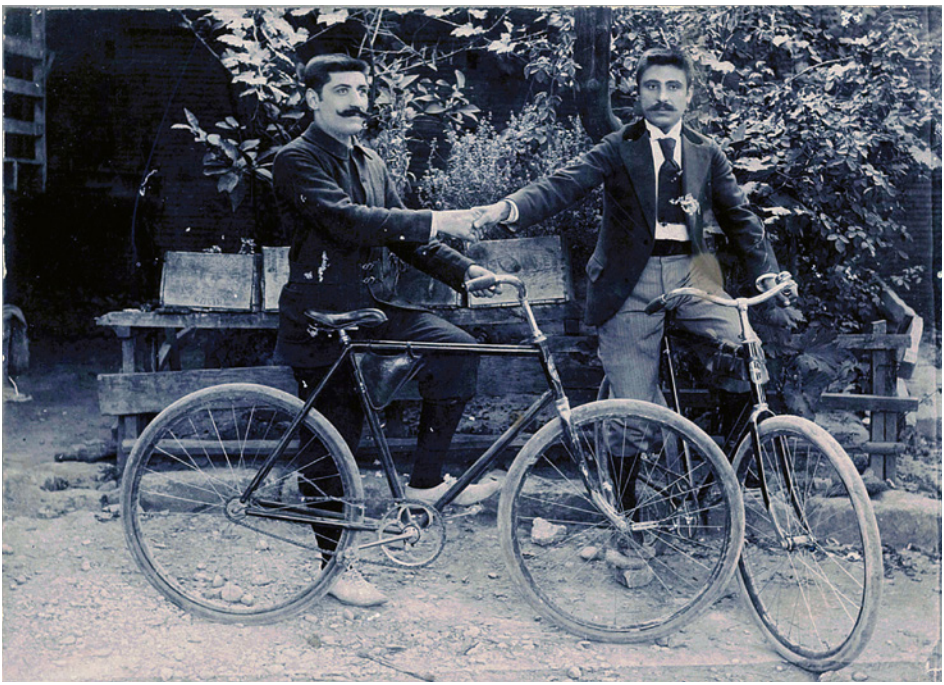

Figure 29. Adana. Bedros Yeghiayian (left) and Levon Yeghiayian (Bedros' cousin, rigth). ca 1900. They are photographed with their imported German 'Hercules' bicycles. Bedo Eghiayan collection. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 30. Adana. Wedding photograph of Bedros Yeghiayian and Haiganush Bzdigian. 1899. Bedo Eghiayian collection. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

Figure 31. Adana. The Yeghiayian family. Seated, left to right: Haiganush (née Bzdigian) and Bedros; the small boy is Lutfig, the girl is Arshaluis. 1906. Bedo Eghiayian collection. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

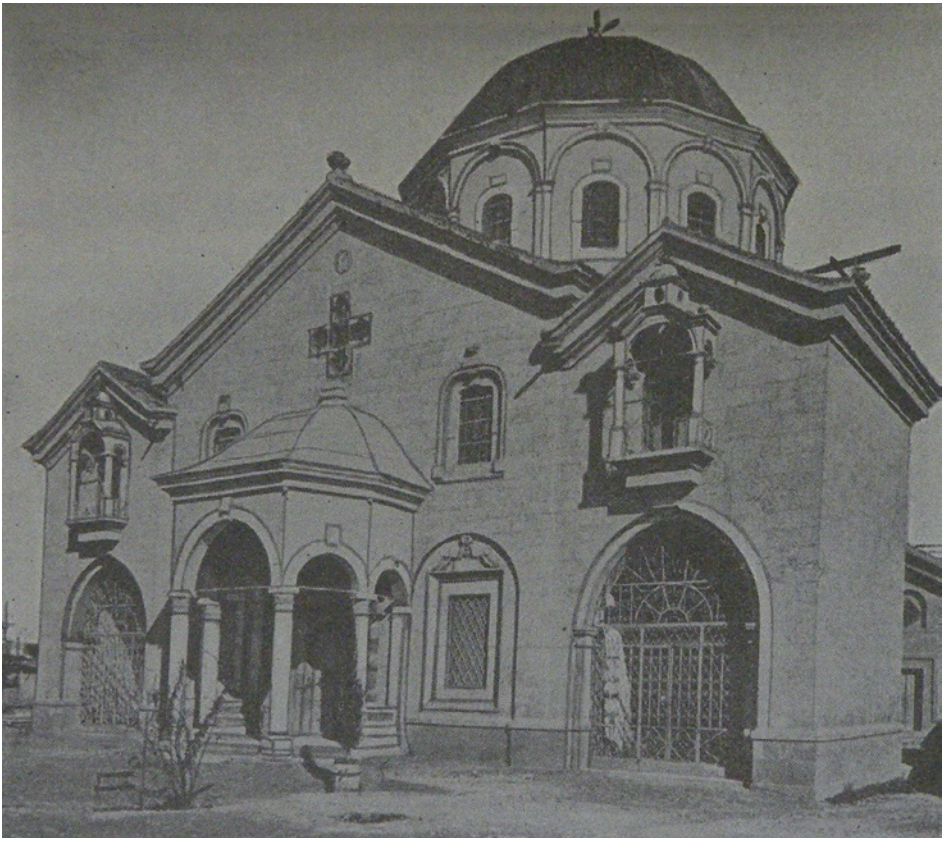

Figure 32. Tarsus. The Armenian church of St. Paul. F. Brockes, *Quer durch Klein-Asien*, Gütersloh, 1900. Courtesy of Houshamadyan website

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