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SYRIAC NARRATIVES ON THE OTTOMAN GENOCIDE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Tessa Hofmann

*He who fights with monsters should look to it
That he himself does not become a monster.
And if you gaze long into an abyss,
The abyss also gazes into you.*
Friedrich Nietzsche, aphorism 146

This contribution explores the narrations and narrative styles of three Syriac authors and genocide survivors from the Diyarbakır province of the Ottoman Empire: Naaman Abed *Qarabashi*, Ishāq bar Armalto (Armale) and Henno, comparing them with the Armenian and Greek survivors Rev. Grigoris Balakian (Գրիգորիս Դավազեան, Grigoris Palagean), Yervant Odian (Երվանդ Օտեան – Eruand Ōtean¹), Elias Venezis and Dido Sotiriou, who all wrote and published memoirs of events they were close to. The three Syriac authors developed an antagonistic narrative shaped by biblical narrative styles, Christian martyrology and their perception of contemporary events as inter-religious war and traditional *Jihad*. The non-Syriac authors that have been considered here replaced, in various degrees, this approach by internalization. Greek authors from Asia Minor, such as Venezis or Dido argued, in their narrations, against the ethnic or religious ascription of guilt by emphasizing cases of solidarity between Ottoman Turks (Muslims) and Orthodox Greeks. The two Armenian authors examined here represent a middle position between Syriac moral antagonism and the differentiating introspection of Greek authors. In spite of their very different backgrounds and professions as clergyman and secular journalist, both tried to present their testimonials as documentary, unvarnished and “unliterary” as possible.

Is it possible to survive in a system based on violence and terror without the loss of human empathy and dignity? The Syriacs saw this possibility mainly in individual martyrdom. Elias Venezis and Dido Sotiriou, however, named culprits and victims on both sides of the ethno-religious divide and included Muslim rescuers in their narrations. The Armenian authors Yervant Odian and Grigoris Balakian focused their narrations on suffering as such. In the face of their numerous compatriots who had been silenced forever, they cleared their “survival debts” by writing about the unspeakable and witnessing genocidal destruction.

Key-words: survivor’s memoirs, Syriac Christians, Christian minorities, Ottoman Empire, genocide, literary narration, literary narratives.

1. Also transcribed as Yervand Otyan (Otian).

Introduction

The experience of genocide frequently leaves survivors, eyewitnesses and sometimes rescuers speechless. The high degree of traumatization that their parents underwent also affects the post-genocidal generation, i.e. the children of genocide survivors, and, to a lesser degree, subsequent generations. Besides psychological and inter-generational long-term effects, there are further reasons for the delayed attention given to testimonials and reports on the Ottoman genocide against Christians and, in particular, against Syriac Christians by academia. Not only was the number of Syriacs lower by a factor of 3.5 compared to Armenians and by more than a factor of 4 if compared to Greek Orthodox Christians but, as David Gaunt, a Swedish scholar of the Assyrian genocide pointed out, high denominational fragmentation appears as an additional major obstacle:

The declining Ottoman Empire found Oriental Christians that, for centuries, were split into antagonistic churches which had been locked into denigrating one another. Each cult had a strong exclusive in-group identity that militated against the very idea of a multi-layered pan-Assyrian identity. (...) One aspect of this invisibility is that the narratives of the Assyrian genocide are built on testimonials of survivors whose perception was limited to local issues such as the struggle with nomadic tribes for agricultural land and the religious fanaticism of local Muslim sects. In the final analysis the Assyrians had no clear idea why they were being annihilated. They recognized only the local dimensions of their sufferings and had no understanding of the overall policies and interests of the Young Turk government.²

In addition, most of the people that identified themselves as Suryoye, Suraya, Assyrians or Chaldeans lived dispersed over vast territories in remote and rural areas, with the exception of some more urban communities in provincial cities such as Diyarbakır, Bitlis, Mamuret-ül-Aziz or Kharberd (Harput), in district towns such as Mardin, Midyat, Siirt, Nusaybin, Hakkari, Başkale or the Iranian towns of Salmast and Urmia. Moreover, the societal fragmentation of Syriac Christians was increased by tribalization, which seemed to be particularly strong among the Eastern Syriacs, who, perhaps under Kurdish influence, described themselves as “ashirets,” or “tribes,” as did Patriarch Benyamin Shimun in his declaration at Salmast in October 1918:

My people comprise 80,000 souls, who live in Turkey as free ashirets. Like Kurdish ashirets, they neither have taxes to pay nor men to send to conscription. Not a single Turkish functionary ever set foot in our regions. Our tribes have been armed since time immemorial and our children are taught from the age of ten how to use weapons so that, with our 20,000 armed men, we can always defend ourselves against attack from the Kurds that surround us.³

2. David Gaunt, “Failed Identity and the Assyrian Genocide,” in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov, Eric Weitz (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 317.

3. Joseph Yacoub, *Year of the Sword: the Assyrian Christian Genocide: a History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 52.

Western Syriac Christians in Diyarbakır province were characterized by extended families or clans.

As the Syriac scholar Joseph Yacoub summarized, the testimonials of Syriac survivors recount “*in detail, with striking similarities, the nature of the tragedy*.”⁴ Despite their small numbers, geographic dispersion and denominational fragmentation, there are numerous accounts and testimonials written close to the events by Syriac survivors, usually in Aramaic, and in some cases in foreign languages such as Arabic, French or English. Most authors and editors of such testimonials were male clerics or tribal leaders and their descendants such as Malik Yacoub, chief of the Upper Tyari tribe, or Joseph Malik Khoshaba, son of the leader of the Lower Tyari. The memoirs of Surmad’ Bait Mar Shimun, sister of the murdered Nestorian patriarch Benyamin Shimun, were released in London as early as 1920 in an English edition, but this was a rare exception. Journalism in Aramaic or Arabic languages existed predominantly in clerical contexts, for example in the monthly journal *Mghalto Phatriarqueto, The Review of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate* in Damascus, where articles on the events that took place during the First World War were published. As was the case with Armenian memoirs, recollections and testimonials, most accounts were translated into internationally used languages, English in particular, only six decades after their first release in the original Eastern languages. Only with the emergence of Syriac communities in Europe were translations into English and German released from the 1980s onwards.

Qarabashi, Armale and Henno: Survivors, Witnesses, Documentarists

This contribution explores the narrations and narrative styles of three Syriac authors from the Diyarbakır province of the Ottoman Empire, comparing them with the Armenian and Greek survivors Grigoris Balakian (Palagean; 1876-1934), Yervant Odian (1869-1926) and Elias Venezis (a *nom-de-plume*; he was born in Mellos in 1904 and died in 1973), who all wrote and published similarly contemporary memoirs.

Chronologically, the first survivor and collector of survivors’ testimonials was Naaman Abed (Abdal) Mshiho *Qarabashi* (Abd al-Masīḥ Numān, 1903-1983)⁵ from the Syriac village of Qarabash (Qarabashi), east of Diyarbakır. He was a novice at the seminary of the fortified Zafaran Monastery (Dayro d-Mor Hananyo, in Ottoman Turkish *Deyrüz Zaferân Manastırı*) and, at the age of just 15 years old, began to write down and cross-check the testimonials of those co-religionists who had sought refuge in that monastery during the years 1915-1918. In the introduction to his collection, known under the title “Spilled Blood,” Qarabashi explains the motives of his work:

4. Yacoub, *Year of the Sword*, 62.

5. Aydin Polycarpus, George Kiraz, “Qarabashī, ‘Abd al-Masīḥ Nu‘mān,” in *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, eds. Sebastian P. Brock et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 343.

I have also recorded them so that they, on the one hand, can sound in the ears of future generations like a warning voice as they open their ears to hear the complaints of the oppressed and, secondly, as a warning presented to the sight and mind of mankind in order to stir it to tears of repentance. It is also presented as a terrible example, in order to show this unjustly treated people the truth, once it has been relieved and can breathe freedom once more.⁶

Father Ishāq bar Armalto (Isaac Armale, 1879-1954) was a Syriac Catholic archpriest and scholar from Mardin who survived the massacres, deportations and kidnappings there and where he spent his entire time during the First World War. He was one of those Christian clerics who were used by the Ottoman authorities as a point of contact, among other things: these “clerical, responsible people” as Armale called them, had to communicate orders from the authorities to their congregations and ensure their implementation. The authorities expected Christian clerics to betray deserters in their denominations and to surrender suspected weapons caches. On various occasions, Armale conveys the tremendous psychological pressure put on the clergymen. Although the author lived deep in the province, he received information and news from abroad, to which he could compare official Ottoman information.

In his epilogue, Armale speaks with the authority of an eyewitness who also included the testimony of other survivors and eyewitnesses:

If you ask what has happened to me, I'll answer you only with tears. For I have seen how my parents and brothers were thrown into prisons without any explanation, beaten, slapped, whipped like sheep, humbled and obediently led to slaughter, as well as actually being slaughtered as despised people in the mountains, in caves and being thrown, thirsty and hungry, into rivers and wells. (...) Dear Reader, please note that what we did not see with our own eyes, we took from the mouths of eyewitnesses who were saved from death by divine care, to tell us what they had had to endure with the purpose of having their reports spread in order to reprimand the oppressors and to comfort the mourners.⁷

6. Abed Mschiho Na'Man Von Qarabasch, *Vergossenes Blut: Geschichten der Greuel, die an den Christen verübt, und der Leiden, die ihnen 1895 und 1914-1918 zugefügt wurden* (Glane/Losser: Bar Hebraeus, 2001), 19.

7. The first and original edition of Armale's memoirs was published in Harissa (Lebanon), 1919, in Arab under the title “*Al-Qusārā fī nakabātin-Nasārā*” and translates as “The worst of all catastrophes for the Christians” (Harissa: Imprimerie des Paulistes, 1919). In 2017, a French edition was released: Père Isaac Armalet, *Les calamités imposées aux chrétiens: Par un témoin oculaire - Recueil des événements malveillants, injustices, kidnappings, déportation, massacres, exode, injures et autres actes hideux survenus en Mésopotamie, principalement à Mardin, en 1895-1914-1919* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2017). The references and quotations used in this article come from a recent German translation from the Arab original, which will soon be released in the Peter Lang publishing house. I relate to the unpublished manuscript, which was provided by courtesy of Amill Gorgis. The full title and subtitle of the German edition read: “Die schlimmsten aller Katastrophen für die Christen: Eine seltene historische Abhandlung, die ausführlich beschreibt, was den Christen in der Türkei und in Mesopotamien, insbesondere in Mardin, an Unterdrückung, Übergriffen, Entführungen, Vertreibung, Verschleppung, Massakern, Ermordung und vielfältigen Abscheulichkeiten widerfahren ist, die sich im Jahre 1895 und in den Jahren 1914 bis 1919 zugetragen haben.” Armale, *Katastrophen*, 10.

In 1919, Armale settled in the Syriac Catholic monastery of Dayr Charfe (Sherfat)⁸ in Harissa (Lebanon), to which he belonged from the age of 16 and where he spent the rest of his life. There he transcribed the notes that he had secretly made and preserved, in constant fear of being discovered during the period of persecution, i.e. from July 17, 1914 until the end of the war.⁹ In the same year, Armale published, still in fear of persecution, a voluminous book of 504 pages, sub-divided into five parts, as an anonymous eyewitness.¹⁰ During the war years and the period of deportation, writing a diary or taking notes was a highly hazardous pastime for Ottoman Christians. The Armenian deportee and journalist Yervant Odian mentioned in his memoirs that only in Hama (Syria) did he feel safe enough to keep a diary: “*In this way I’d filled three notebooks, which I kept with great care in the niche above my window.*”¹¹

Armale’s book appeared at a time, when France, enthusiastically paraphrased in Armale’s recollections as the “mother of kindness and helpfulness,” controlled the north of Syria, Lebanon and Alexandretta according to the Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916 and when the surviving Ottoman Christian deportees in Syria and Lebanon gained hope for the return to their homelands and the restitution of, or compensation for, their properties.

In contrast to Qarabashi and Armale, the Syriac Orthodox sub-bishop and archpriest Süleyman Henno (Sleman Henno, 1918-2006) was neither an eyewitness, nor a survivor. Born in the village of Arkah (Harabali) in the Tur Abdin region, he served the community of Syriac refugees in Syria as an ordained priest; he gathered the information used in his account *Gounhé d’Souryoyé d’Tour Abdin*, which was published in the Netherlands in its original Aramaic version as late as 1987, from among his flock. Again, in contrast to Armale and Qarabashi, Henno’s account saw translations into Turkish (Athens, 1993), Swedish (Örebro, 1998), German (Glane/Losser, 2005) and Arabic (Syria, 2004).

Syriac “historicism”

Typically, Syriac authors of genocide accounts do not limit their self-imposed task to the documentation of more-or-less recent events, but reach far back into history, including ancient and medieval times, in order to contextualize the present. Armale, for example, starts his historical introduction with the Assyrian ruler Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 BC), but as it is the case with other Syriac authors, his focus is on the Christian period

8. Sébastien Courtois, *The Forgotten Genocide: Eastern Christians, The Last Arameans* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 160; Yacoub, *Year of the Sword*, 51.

9. “On Thursday, April 22, Ḥabīb Tarzī Dī Ġarwe delivered, through a high-ranking person, the following message to the Syriac community: “Hide all your letters, documents and books related to politics, as well as any French and Armenian writings because the government is determined to seek inexorably and severely punish the holders of such writings!” All (...) began to burn, among other things, their letters and to hide the important ones. For example, the author hid his manuscripts, the transcript of the daily events which he had written since the declaration of the World War until that day, in a pit, and burned all Armenian and French books out of fear.” Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part II, Chapter 19, 78

10. Armale, *Katastrophen*, 9.

11. Yervant Odian, *Accursed Years: My Exile and Return from Der Zor, 1914-1919*, translated by Ara Stepan Melkonian (London: Gomidas Institute, 2009), p. 111.

and the Christian denominations of the Near East. In this context, much attention is given to the history of the Armenian people (Chapter 11) and their church (Chapter 12), albeit with several flaws and inaccuracies; for Armale, the “Armenian Church” is almost synonymous with Armenian Catholicism (Uniates). In general, Armale narrates and evaluates history from a non-secular, clerical and Catholic perspective. For example, he praises the reign of the early Armenian catholicos Nerses I the Great (died 373) for the harmony between church, state and society: “*Thus Armenia at that time became like a group of monks: a monastery with an abbot.*”¹²

By and large, Armale’s extensive historical introduction represents an enumeration of atrocities and cruelties committed against Oriental Christians by non-Christians, mainly by Muslims; only turning to the present in the 15th Chapter of Part I. By contrast, *Abed Mshiho* Na’man Qarabashi focused his 7th Chapter (“Suffering and persecutions to which Christians have been exposed throughout the centuries”) on the early Christians and their persecution by Jews, Romans and Persian rulers, while the events that took place between the Islamization of Mesopotamia and the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Abdül-Hamid II (1878-1908) are treated summarily. Henno starts his historical introduction relatively “late” in the 15th century.

As a result of the historicist approach, the events of WWI appear as the continuation or climax of events that had developed centuries before. The persecution, deportation and subsequent annihilation of Ottoman Christians are therefore embedded in a literary tradition, which is characterized by the authors’ self-perception as being martyrs of faith. Thus, martyrology and its enumeration of the martyrs’ virtues are the models for Armale’s narration.¹³

German Guilt? Interpreting the Motives for War and Extermination

In addition to the continuity of religious antagonism and subsequent persecution, Armale and Qarabashi (the latter perhaps under the influence of the former) blamed the Great Powers - and Germany in particular - for the persecution of Ottoman Christians during

12. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part I, Chapter 11, 22.

13. For example, he presents one of the Syriac Catholic victims from Diyarbakir in the following way: “*Al-Maqdasi Habib belonged to the noble Dī Ġarwe family from Aleppo, known for their zeal for the Catholic faith since the mid-eighteenth century. He is the son of Malkē, son of Ġabrā’īl, son of deacon Yūsuf, son of noble Miḥā-īl, son of cavalier Ġabrā’īl, son of deacon Ni’matullāh, son of Miḥā-īl, son of Aṭallāh Dī Ġarwe. His grandfather migrated from his home town of Aleppo to Mardin. He liked the weather there, so he stayed there. Out of this family emerged the very ingenious thinkers and heroes who defended the Catholics and protected Aleppo and Mardin by their influence and power. The best-known among them are: Ġriġoryōs Šukrallāh Dī Ġarwe, the Metropolitan of ‘Urshalim (†1773), the Blessed Patriarch Miḥā-īl (†1880), the late Patriarch Buṭros (†1851), the Archpriest Rafā-īl (†1892), son of Faṭhallāh Dī Ġarwe and the priest Miḥā-īl, son of Shukrallāh, son of the deacon Ni’matullāh Dī Ġarwe. Maqdasi Habib was, like his great and noble grandfathers deeply faithful, eager in his faith. He went to Syria several times. He was arrested on June 14, 1915, imprisoned with the other Christian prisoners, and after six days taken away from the city with the others, where he was martyred.*” – Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part I, Chapter 16, 32.

WWI. As many reports in the *Political Archives of the German Foreign Office* reveal, the assumption that Germany, as the most important military ally of the Ottoman Empire, had extraordinary political influence on the ruling nationalist Committee for Union and Progress (C.U.P.: *Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) was widespread among Christian and Muslim Ottomans at the time. For example, Grigoris Balakian was convinced that the C.U.P had planned the systematic destruction of the two largest Christian nations of the Ottoman Empire - the Armenians and Greeks - for years “*with the tacit agreement and indirect encouragement of the militaristic and imperialistic Hohenzollern government.*”¹⁴

For Armale, Germany was not only a tacit accomplice and beneficiary of Armenian forced labor on the Berlin to Baghdad Railway, but a direct culprit, because it had incited Muslim hatred of Christians. As an ardent Catholic, he was especially shocked that Catholic Austria was in alliance with the Ottomans, too, without any consideration for religious or denominational solidarity:

If so, how could Austria, the Catholic Empire, go with Germany and let the crime against Christians happen for no reason? The same question can also be raised as far as Germany is concerned, for it is also a Christian empire and today more than 30 million Catholics live there. How could it harbor hatred and resentment against Christians among the Turks, instructing them to shed the blood of the guiltless? (...) Unfortunately, we met neither an Austrian nor a German who condemned the genocide of Christians (in the Ottoman Empire) or fought for their rights. On the contrary, they, the Germans and Austrians, gave the Turks a free hand to do what they wanted, inciting them against Christians, encouraging them to do the most frightful and inhuman things to them. It went so far with the Germans, that when they came to Mesopotamia after the massacres and abductions, when we thought they would help us to gain our rights and to get out of our poverty as well as protecting us from attack, they did not recognize us; on the contrary, they settled in our homes, ignoring the injustices committed against us. Their main concern lay in their personal interests, the increase of the importance of their state and the extension of their rule over all countries.¹⁵

Qarabashi, who treats the Ottoman entry into the World War, including some of Armale's errors,¹⁶ in a very similar way, blamed German business and lust for power:

The Germans do not even have a false reason to escape the responsibility of participating in the slaughter of Christians. For if they wanted to save these wretched souls, a hint by them would suffice to put an end to, or relieve, all the

14. Grigoris Balakian, *The Armenian Golgotha: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1918* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 48.

15. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part II, Chapter 3, 48.

16. For example, Armale and Qarabashi believed that Field-Marshal Otto Liman von Sanders was the German ambassador to Constantinople; both mention an incident in Dört-Yol, where four Germans allegedly disguised as British, provoked the local Armenians to rebel against the Ottoman authorities, as evidence for German complicity. Both mistook the Prussian cavalry general and Ottoman Marshal Otto Liman von Sanders with the German Ambassador to Constantinople, wrongly accusing Sanders of having ordered “kill the Christians.”

ferocity of reckless repression, but their sole and only aim was to conquer, even if all Christendom is destroyed and annihilated.¹⁷

Both Armale and Qarabashi mention the “Dörtöl unrest” of early March 1915 as a key event in terms of German treachery against the indigenous Ottoman Christians¹⁸:

Woe to mankind if Germany had won the war! The Germans were not content with words alone, but their treacherous spirit led four spies to Dörtöl, where several influential Armenians lived, with the order to pretend to be English and to demonstrate. And when they reached the agreed end point of the demonstration, they were to gather the inhabitants of the village around them, have them write on a sheet of paper words of reproach, reproach, and abuse about Turkey, and make an urgent appeal to the English to save them from the claws of their enemies. Then, in January 1915, they delivered those leaves of the capital, rushed the Turks against the Christians, especially against the Armenians, and so the Turks burned in rage and hatred, shed blood of Christians and planned their annihilation.¹⁹

Neither Armale, nor Qarabashi were residents of the town of Dörtöl, which was mainly inhabited by Armenians and surrounded by Turkish villages. Nevertheless, both Syriac authors constructed an implausible tale about alleged German intelligence activities by German spies, disguised as Englishmen, whose purpose was to discredit the Ottoman Christians and, specifically, the Armenians in the eyes of the central Ottoman government. Although Armale does not disclose his sources on the alleged German spies and their mission in Dörtöl, we may assume that this “information” stems from Catholic and/or French channels. Like many Ottomans, Armale and Qarabashi had rather exaggerated ideas of German influence in the Ottoman Empire and on its ruling Muslim elites. But this belief in German omnipotence somehow contradicts the fantastic Dörtöl episode: if Germany had direct influence on Ottoman decisions it would not need to disguise Germans as Englishmen to incite hate against Ottoman Christians.

An opposing and more detailed contemporary report, written by the Armenian Simon Agabalian, who was an assistant official at the German consulate at Adana, was sent to the German Ambassador Wangenheim in Constantinople on 13 March 1915,²⁰ indicating

17. Qarabasch, *Vergossenes Blut*, 48.

18. Qarabashi's version of the “Dörtöl unrest” starts with the same phrase as Armale's Dörtöl paragraph: “Woe to humanity if Germany had won victory. It would destroy humanity. One of the diabolical means the Germans used to justify the extermination of the Christians was that they had disguised four Germans as Englishmen, sent them to Dörtöl to the Armenians, where they met in secret with the Armenian leaders, who were deceived into writing letters of complaint about the torments inflicted by the Turks, appealing to the English to help them and to quickly come to their aid in order to free them from the evil deeds of the Turks. In January 1915, the four men brought these letters to Constantinople and incited the Turks to persecute Christians, and especially Armenians. From that time began the torments and hardships that weigh heavily on the Christians, for the Turks called them ‘traitors.’” Qarabasch, *Vergossenes Blut*, 49.

19. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part II, Chapter 3, 48.

20. “A few weeks ago a former deserter by the name of Saldshian, who received his education from the local Jesuits and who later taught French at the Armenian school, went to Dört-Yol. He had gone to Cyprus two years before and had most likely joined the English. He went with an Armenian from Alexandretta to Dört-Yol and stayed there for 6-7 days. You could almost say he tried to recruit the

that behind the “Dörtyol unrest” were just two or three local Armenian residents with links to the British fleet, which nevertheless served the Ottoman authorities as a pretext for mass arrests and forced labor among Dörtyol’s Armenian population. In his report to the German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, Ambassador Wangenheim summarized the information in the following way:

At the beginning of March [1915], after Englishmen from the fleet had repeatedly landed and made various purchases undisturbed, there were two Armenians staying in the Armenian town of Dörtyol who originated from that area and who were acting on behalf of the British. One of these emissaries fell into the hands of the Turkish authorities and was executed in Adana. A further consequence was that the whole of the male population of Dörtyol was conscripted and led to the Aleppo Vilayet where they were set to building roads; three individuals, because they tried to flee, being shot. Another fact was that at the time of these occurrences numerous deserters were hiding in Dörtyol; it had also not been forgotten that the townspeople had defended themselves against the Turks with weapons in their hands during the massacre of 1909.²¹

With his focus on Germany, Armale scarcely mentions internal Ottoman political factors and developments that led to the “catastrophes,” as he paraphrased the deportations and massacres of Ottoman Christians (“Nazarenes” in the Arabic original). Neither the Unionist coup d’état of 1908, nor the C.U.P. are mentioned at all; nor is the triumvirate of the “three Pashas” Talaat, Djemal and Enver, as architects of the “catastrophes.” Instead, Armale singles out the 1914-1918 War Minister Ismail Enver, whom he presented as a German-friendly and corrupt traitor to his Ottoman homeland:

inhabitants for the British Foreign Service. It is not known how far he succeeded and some merchants’ claim the trip involved Saldshian’s private business and had nothing to do with the general public. The notables of the town did not know about the visit and some of them were not even there at that time. Saldshian managed to obtain identity papers and introduced himself as a merchant. Even the police were informed of his presence. By sheer coincidence, after Saldshian returned to the English warship, the police became aware of the fake merchant, and could only arrest the man who had accompanied him. A few days later another Armenian by the name of Köshkerian from the village of Ocakli came ashore from the warship. After the murder of his wife during the massacre by the Turks he had gone abroad. This man is supposed to have carried money with him amounting to 40 Ltq. One cannot deduce, from all these actions and events, that the Armenians had any kind of conspiratorial or revolutionary organization. But one can surely say that the arrival of the warships and their aggressive behavior generated joy among the majority of the Christian populace and especially among the Armenians. If it should ever be possible for the English or French to reach land, they would be heartily welcomed by the Christians.

One night all the male Armenians of the town were arrested and sent from the area due to the emphatic requests from the Turkish population of the neighboring houses to remove the Armenians from Dört-Yol and because they wanted to arrest deserters and avoid any unforeseen actions. The Armenians were sent to Aleppo under strict supervision and are now employed on road construction. During the arrests the Armenians were submissive and did not resist the officials. Three people were shot while trying to flee. Even these did not use any weapons. – Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA/AA), Botschaft Konstantinopel, Bd. 168, zitiernach, [http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/\\$\\$AllDocs/1915-03-13-DE-012](http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs/1915-03-13-DE-012).

21. Report of 15 April 1915 at [http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/\\$\\$AllDocs/1915-04-15-DE-002](http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs/1915-04-15-DE-002)

As a result, we can say that Turkey, Germany's friend and accomplice, consecrated itself to death, according to Enver's plans, because Enver was a puppet in the hands of the German ambassador, who played with him whenever and wherever he wanted, like a game ball. It must be noted that the decline of Turkey was not without price: Enver received large sums of money from Germany and Turkey in return for his contribution to the demise of his country. In 1916, his share in money alone was 40 million. He thus became one of the richest people in a very short time and continued to collect wealth until recently, removing some people from office, while hiring new ones, until he himself left office, turned his back on Turkey, and went to the land he had loved, honored, and did everything to make his name famous. His love for Germany was so great that he even betrayed his homeland.²²

Remarkably, none of the three Syriac authors mentioned the prominent German military commander, Field Marshal Colmar von der Goltz Pasha, who was commissioned by the German Foreign Ministry on 26 September 1915 to mediate between the Ottoman authorities and the "rebellious" Syrians (and some Armenians) in Azakh (in Arab Azekh). However, this mediation materialized not *en lieu*, but in correspondence, for von der Goltz did not want to delay his advance with the 51st and 52nd Ottoman Divisions to Baghdad. On November 12, 1915, the German Embassy in Constantinople notified the Consulate of Mosul in the name of the Field Marshal:

The Minister of War wishes to achieve a peaceful settlement with the rebels near Hazik²³ [Azakh; Azekh, sic!] in return for their immediately laying down their arms, but he refuses to allow participation by German officers and public officials. The 4th Army commander and Vali of Diyarbekir informed along these lines. I will approve instruction for Vali with the Minister of the Interior. Goltz.²⁴

On February 14, 1916, the German *Chargé d'affaires* in Constantinople, Paul Count Wolff-Metternich zur Gracht, notified the German Chancellor:

The difficulties that have arisen between the Syriac Christians near Mardin and Midia, and the Turkish authorities have now been resolved. Part of this was due to the influence which Field Marshal Freiherr von der Goltz was able to exert in the military field.²⁵

Next to the Germans and Minister Enver, Armale ascribed the responsibility for the destruction of Ottoman Christians to the Muslims, emphasizing once again the continuity of their collective guilt and their wickedness. According to Armale, the Muslims' main motive was revenge. However, it remains unclear why the Muslims wanted revenge on the Christians and how this vindictiveness related to the massacres of 1895:

22. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part II, Chapter 2, 47.

23. In German diplomatic correspondence also spelt "Azik".

24. The diplomatic correspondence about the Azakh/Azekh mediation is available on [http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/\\$\\$AllDocs/1915-11-04-DE-001](http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs/1915-11-04-DE-001); see also Carl Alexander Kretlow, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz Pascha; eine Biographie* (Paderborn, München, Wien: Schöningh, 2012), 690, footnote 787.

25. [http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/\\$\\$AllDocs/1916-02-14-DE-001](http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs/1916-02-14-DE-001)

We cannot mention all the hardships to which Christians were initially exposed: capital crimes, the looting of their wealth and the damage suffered later for these reasons. Those responsible, yes, all Muslims without exception, hated the Christians since 1895, but hid their feelings, waiting for a suitable opportunity to avenge them. When they realized that the government was willing to oppress the Christians, their evil souls rejoiced and waited until the beginning of summer 1915, then showed their malice, attacking Christians and doing everything God forbade (...).²⁶

Events during World War I

Which events were covered in the accounts and testimonials and are the basis for the three Syriac collections mentioned above, and how do they differ from the narratives of Armenian and Greek survivors?

Suleyman Henno's *Gounhé d'Souryoyé d'Tour Abdin* recounts, village by village and town by town, the massacres and atrocities in the Tur Abdin region and adjacent areas that were committed by combined forces of Ottoman regular soldiers and Kurdish irregulars.

Father Armale's narration covers, in chronological-thematic order, events in Diyarbakır province during 1895 (Part I, Chapter 16) and the deportations and massacres of the period 1914-1919; of these, the "Hamidiye massacres" of 1895 are described town by town.

Mardin, "lying in the heart of Syriac territory,"²⁷ was the center of an administrative unit – (*kaza*) of same name, with a population of "12,609 Orthodox Syriacs and 7,692 Armenians, the vast majority of them Catholic. All were Arabic-speaking."²⁸ Armale gives a total of 20,000 Christians in Mardin "before the terrible war".²⁹ In order to understand and interpret the events of 1915, it is necessary to remember that in the Ottoman political and societal system, ethnicities in the sense of the German term "Volksgruppen," did not exist. The Ottoman *millet* system differentiated between Muslim and non-Muslim populations, the latter traditionally divided into the Jewish, Greek-Orthodox and Armenian *millets*, or religious communities, to which, under Austrian, French and British pressures, Catholic *millet* and Protestant *millet* were added in the 19th century. However, as was the case in Mardin, denominational and linguistic commonalities blurred the boundaries between Armenian and Syriac Catholics.

It should be noted that several Christian families from Mardin that were counted as belonging to the Armenian Catholic denomination did not automatically derive from the Armenian community in the ethnic sense of the word. Many Syriac families that wanted to convert to Catholicism during the 18th century turned to the Catholic Armenian church since there was no Syriac Catholic clergy in the city. In fact, the

26. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part II, Chapter 5, 54.

27. Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 371.

28. Ibid.

29. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part I, Chapter 1, 11.

notion of “nationality” did not exist between Armenians and Syriacs, since they were all Arabic speakers, like the Armenians from Aleppo. An “Armenian” could become a “Syriac,” and vice versa, by simply changing churches.³⁰

Starting in summer 1914, house searches, confiscations of property, general conscriptions into the army, recruitment into the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* units and massive arrests of priests and secular notables all preceded the deportations and massacres that took place as they did in all other Ottoman settlements. Frequent, arbitrary actions created a general atmosphere of terror and helplessness. After the arrival of Mardin’s new police chief Memduh and the replacement of the mutasarrıf Hilmi by government officials more to the liking of the C.U.P., the majority of Mardin’s Christians were all deported, starting from June until late October 1915. Father Armale mentions deportations to Aleppo and Ras al-Ayn (Turkish Rasüleyn) taking place on June 10, June 14 and July 2, 1915, comprising “‘martyrs of all denominations.’”³¹ The first convoy comprised Mardin’s Christian elite of more than 400 men – 405 according to the Catholic Father Simon, 417 according to Father Armale, 470 according to Patriarch Rahmani³² – which left Mardin very early on the morning of June 10, 1915, through the west gate.

Mardin’s leading citizens were killed in three groups: 100 were massacred in caves in Şeyhan; 100 more had their throats slit and were thrown into the “Roman wells” at Zirzavan, an hour from Şeyhan; the last 200 were liquidated the following morning, 11 June, in a gorge further north.³³

The death toll in the second convoy was 88 and in the third convoy 600, according to Armale.³⁴

Most scholars of genocide studies dispute that Syriacs were deported during WWI. Hans-Lukas Kieser stated in a recent article:

Assyrian Christians were not deported to Syria. In the provinces of Diyarbakir, Bitlis and Van, 250,000 of them were massacred, with regional representatives of the Unionist government responsible. Explicit orders from Istanbul are not known.³⁵

30. Courtois, *The Forgotten Genocide*, 171.

31. Ibid 166.

32. Ibid 166.

33. Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 374.

34. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part III, Chapter 18, 135.

35. Hans-Lukas Kieser, Aus Anlass der Beratungen des Bundestagesam, 2 Juni 2016: Deutschland und der Völkermord an den Armeniern von 1915, accessed June 06, 2019, <http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/kommentar/aus-anlass-der-beratungen-des-bundestages-am-2-juni-2016>. The conclusion is, however, that the Unionist Turkish central government in Constantinople accepted the indiscriminate “persecution of Christians” in the province of Diyarbakir. After a formal diplomatic protest by the German embassy in Constantinople on 12 July 1915 against the conduct of provincial governor Mehmet Reşid Şahingiray, Minister of the Interior Talaat reprimanded him in two telegrams (12 and 25 July 1915), but kept him in office without the governor improving his conduct. For a more detailed characterization cf. Tessa Hofmann, “Statt eines Nachworts: eine Ergänzung,” in *Die Verfolgung und Vernichtung der Syro-Aramäer im Tur Abdin 1915, gesammelt vom Erzpriester Sleman Henno aus Arkab, Tur Abdin* (Glane/Losser: Bar Hebräus-Verlag, Holland, 2005), 159-167.

But even in the case of the Armenians, explicit deportation orders were not given: the Ottoman *Sevkve İskân Kanunu (Relocation and Resettlement Law)* passed by the Ottoman Parliament on 27 May 1915, which was enacted on 1 June 1915, does not contain any ethnonym, neither “Armenian(s)” nor others. Instead, it paraphrases the designated victim group as “suspicious persons” and as the “*population of towns and villages that they [the military commanders; TH] suspect guilty of treason or espionage.*”³⁶ The common practice of the central government was to send emissaries into the provinces in order to personally (and in oral form) interpret how such paraphrases were to be understood.³⁷ On the other hand, the law was very explicit on those groups that were to be exempted from deportation: (1) the ill, (2) the blind, (3) Catholics, (4) Protestants, (5) soldiers and their families, (6) officers, (7) merchants, some workers and masters. As a rule, these provisions were violated in countless cases, when Armenian Catholics and Protestants, the wives and families of Armenian Ottoman officers and soldiers, merchants and craftsmen, ill and disabled persons were deliberately and indiscriminately deported.

Armale “quotes” the *Relocation and Resettlement Law* of 14/27 May 1915, in a very deliberate way:

From the other side, the “Committee of Unity and Progress” said: “Because the Armenians act against the law and use every opportunity to disturb the government, store weapons, bombs and explosive substances to fuel the fire of revolution in the country in order to kill Muslims and support Russia, we have decided to deport them to the regions of Mosul, Syria and Deir-ez-Zor and to accommodate them there. Their honor, souls and wealth will stay intact and will be protected against invaders and offenders. We have already enacted the necessary laws to settle them in those regions until the end of the war.”³⁸

Armale added that “*this official announcement concerned only the Armenians.*”³⁹ In contrast to this qualification are the numerous depictions of “all Christians” as victims of local, regional or central C.U.P. officials and local Muslim tribes.

Were the “calamities” directed against the Armenians alone, or were all Ottoman Christians equally targeted? There are various indicators that Armenians were the main targets, even in a multi-denominational province like Diyarbakır, where in the districts (*kazas*) of Mardin and Diyarbakır “*conditions have led to a true persecution of [all; TH] Christians,*” as the German vice-consul at Mosul, Walter Holstein, telegraphed to his Embassy in Constantinople as early as on June 13, 1915. In the town of Mardin, Armenian and Syriac Christians were conscripted and formed into labor units (*Amele taburları*) of the Ottoman Army for road works and construction and a Syriac Orthodox Christian

36. *Deutschland und Armenien 1914-1918*, Sammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke, ed. Johannes Lepsius (Potsdam: der Tempelverlag in Potsdam, 1919; reprint, Bremen: Donat and Temmen Verlag, 1986), 78.

37. The usual practice was that a central government deportation inspector (*müfettiş* - inspector) presented the government’s deportation order to the regional and local incumbents, or read it out, explained it, but did not hand it over.

38. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part III, Chapter 2, 91.

39. Ibid.

was appointed to head this unit. But soon the Armenians were singled out to be killed, presumably on order of Mardin's mayor:

Then came Šukrī Bēg al-Mullī [Šükrü; TH] with a notebook in his hand containing the names of the remaining workers, with the Armenians' names marked in red ink, a color that only the *Mutasarrıf* was allowed to use. They let the Syrians go and kept the Armenians there. On the morning of August 11, Elyās went to the Citadel to visit the Armenian workers who had been detained there. He was told that they had been transported to Zinnār and thrown into the well there. Only one could escape: Elyās Ğirġī, which stayed in that well for about a month. Then he returned to Mardin and still lives today.⁴⁰

Equally indicative of the particular hazards faced by the Armenians is their camouflage as members of other Christian denominations. Qarabashi mentions an incident in the village of Akpınar near Mardin, where Mkrtich, one of the Armenian laborer soldiers claimed to be a Syriac, in order to escape certain death. The Syriac Salim, whom the Armenian had named as a witness for his claim, confirmed this and was killed together with the Armenian laborers.⁴¹ The two other cases of massive killings ("liquidations") of Christian labor units, mentioned by Qarabashi, were indiscriminate (190 men on 16th June, 1915) and selective (112 Armenians out of 212 workers).⁴² In the 10th chapter of his memoirs, the Greek author and survivor Elias Venezis narrates the young pianist Jacques of Soma's story. He had to join Elias' labor unit. His strange Greek accent and his inability to read Greek betrayed Jacques' non-Greek origin, but it is only after the young Armenian's death that Elias learnt the tragic details about this comrade in suffering:

It must have been something like pleurisy. He did not last more than a week. One night he remembered me. In his feverish delirium he had called me: "Elias, Elias." Then he seemed to call another person, with a lower voice, tenderer. They did not know whom he meant but assumed that it was his mother. He spoke Armenian to her, and they realized that he was an Armenian. Just think, a comrade said, "For how long we've not noticed! They are a cunning people, the Armenians, are they not?" In tears, I listened to him silently. Just a movement of the head - yes, yes, a cunning people ...⁴³

According to Armale, Armenians in the entire Ottoman Empire were the main victims. In Mardin and its vicinity, however, he saw both Armenian and Syriac Catholics as the main victims. This may be explained with the above-mentioned fact that in the early 20th century there were still no precise ethnic boundaries between the two Christian denominations; linguistic, denominational and cultural commonalities made it obviously difficult for the Ottoman authorities and Muslim perpetrators to differentiate between Armenian and Syriac Catholics, at least in Mardin and Midyat. An even more relevant reason, emphasized by Armale, is the fact that on April 14, 1915, the local Syriac

40. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part III, Chapter 34, 172.

41. Qarabashi, *Vergossenes Blut*, 68.

42. Ibid.

43. Elias Venesis, *Nr. 31328: Leidensweg in Anatolien* (Mainz: Philipp Zabern, 1969), 126.

Orthodox community gained an “amnesty” from deportation,⁴⁴ seemingly as the result of bribing and successfully distancing themselves from their less fortunate Armenian and Syriac Catholic brethren:

On Tuesday, when the Jacobite Metropolitan, the priest Elyas Dolabani, and a band of their responsible men were in the government house, their church bell rang. Young and old hurried to the church. The Catholics inquired about the reason. “The news has arrived that the government would be sending soldiers to massacre the Armenians in their homes. That is why we hastened to the church so they will not destroy the guilty and innocent indiscriminately.” Then their metropolitan came and ordered his followers to return to their homes immediately. After the Jacobite men had been released from the prison, thanking the government and praying for its victory, the leaders of the wicked began to torture the Catholic men.⁴⁵

Summarizing the difficult question of main and collateral targets and the subsequently difficult inter-denominational relations, one cannot but agree with the conclusion of the French-Armenian scholar Raymond Kévorkian, who differentiates between the town and the *kaza* of Mardin:

In the whole kaza of Mardin, as we have seen, only the non-Armenian Christians of the administrative seat of the kaza were, to a certain extent, spared. Elsewhere, in the countryside, the inhabitants of the Syriac villages were condemned to a fate similar to that of the Armenians. The procedures used were similar.⁴⁶

All Christian chroniclers of Ottoman history in the First World War emphasized the corruptibility of Ottoman officials at all administrative levels. To a certain degree, this particular feature undermined the Unionist intention to carry out extermination; for as long as arrested and deported Christians still possessed money or other valuables, they were able to bribe and to buy food or protection from attack by Muslim residents, in particular by Kurdish and Arab tribesmen. However, in order to get hold of the possessions in the hands of the deportees and arrestees more quickly, the guards would make sure that these possessions changed hands as soon as possible, if not by violence, then by guile. Armale quotes an example from the report of a Syriac Catholic priest:

The tribes and Kurds circled around us like the wasps, carrying axes, rifles, daggers, knives, swords and batons. They wanted to do us evil. We all started to tremble with fear. Then the officer came and started talking to us: “My children, you will spend the night here, but I am afraid that the Kurds and the tribes will attack you and take away your money, gold and silver rings. It is better for you if you trust them all to me, and I shall register them on a piece of paper; I will give them back to everyone when you reach Diyarbakir.” So the officer collected a lot of jewelry, filled his bag with gold, silver, watches, rings and chains, with which he made off in exultation; then the soldiers came and searched for what was left, taking what remained of our valuables, shoes, fezzes and clothes, leaving nothing but what we wore.⁴⁷

44. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part IV, Chapter 21, 228.

45. Ibid, Part III, Chapter 4, 95.

46. Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 376.

47. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part III, Chapter 13, 120.

Bribery didn't always save the endangered Christians. Monsignor Gabriel Tappouni, the Metropolitan of the "Syriacs," as Armale usually paraphrases the Syriac Catholics to differentiate them from the "Jacobites" or Syriac Orthodox Christians, paid 2,000 Turkish gold *liras* to the police chief Memduh. Nevertheless, Monsignor Tappouni could neither have the already deported Syriac Catholic families of Mamarbaşı and Doqmaq returned, nor could he prevent the deportation of more families, such as the Ayn Malak family.⁴⁸ It is not quite clear whether this bribe included the release of the monks of the Syriac Catholic monastery of Mar Afram (Efrem), who had been temporarily jailed, or whether Tappouni had to pay an additional amount of 2,000 gold *liras* to do so. Furthermore, Memduh confiscated the valuables that Armenian and Syriac Catholic people of Mardin and other places had trusted to the abbot of Mar Afram.⁴⁹

Jihad or Genocide?

In recent genocide studies, the WWI genocide carried out by the C.U.P. regime is generally perceived as a crime that was committed in a transitional period, i.e. during Turkey's nation-building process. Most scholars of today agree that the crimes were rather motivated by nationalism and the intention to forcibly homogenize the multi-religious and multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire into a culturally and linguistically unified and stabilized state. Interestingly, neither Sleman Henno, nor Qarabashi mention the Ittihadists, or "Young Turks" at all, Father Armale refers to them only six times in passing. Did the Young Turks' responsibility for the "catastrophes" escape their attention? To answer this question, we have first of all to remember that the present perception of those events differs greatly from those of Ottoman contemporaries in the early 20th century. Second, until today the role of religion and its instrumentalization for genocidal purposes has not been fully clarified. Obviously, the C.U.P. regime used Islam and traditional religious antagonism to implement its genocidal intentions. When on November 14, 1914, the Sheikh-ul-Islam, as the spiritual leader of Sunni Muslims, declared a Holy War, or *Jihad*, in the Fatih Mosque in Constantinople, this was understood to be not just a call to all Muslim citizens of the Empire to fight against foreign non-Muslims, but also against the Ottoman Christians who had already been branded as internal enemies since the Balkan Wars (1912/3). On the other hand, the Young Turkish coordinators of this genocide did not intend to convert the Armenians and other Ottoman Christians to Islam, but to destroy them. Time and again, the Young Turkish leadership and the Interior Ministry pointed out that the conversion of the "suspected persons," i.e. the Armenians, would not save them from deportation. However, as was often the case, this policy of the central government and the C.U.P.'s Central Committee was undermined at local and regional levels.

Yervant Odian mentioned that Hayri (Khayri) Feruzan, the mutasarrif of Hama (province of Damascus), whom the author praised as "*a very good, noble and enlightened man, who had the affection of both Arabs and Armenians*," ordered the Armenians' conversion to Islam within two days; otherwise he would not be able to protect them. This

48. Ibid, Chapter 29, 159.

49. Ibid, Chapters 30-31, 161-169.

official was obviously seriously intending to save the Armenian deportees in his realm from further persecution and destruction.

That sort of suggestion, concluded Odian, coming from such a man, was indeed very strange and showed that we were under the threat of something dire. The mutesarraf, by suggesting conversion, was trying to keep the danger away. We learnt later that it was exactly at this time that the terrible massacres at Der Zor were taking place.⁵⁰

Odian himself did convert but admitted that conversion was far easier to accept for individuals than for families or fathers as the heads of families, who feared that their daughters might be compelled to marry Muslims to prove the seriousness of their conversion.

The perspectives and the style of Syriac narrations differ greatly from Armenian or Greek Orthodox testimonials. As mentioned before, Syriacs from the Diyarbakır province interpreted the events as a continuation or the apex of a permanent religious antagonism. This point of view was seemingly confirmed by the attitude of Muslims, Kurdish tribal leaders in the province of Diyarbakır “mistook” ethnic homogenization for religious war or traditional “jihad.” The ideological intricacies of the essentially irreligious, “modern” approach of the Young Turks’ demographic policy may have escaped their notice. For them, the “Grand Alliance” with Turkish nationalism was predominantly religiously based, i.e. a pan-Islamic alliance, which Sultan Abdül Hamid II was the first to forge when, in 1892, he founded the irregular Kurdish *Hamidiye* cavalry that was named after him. This idea of religious war between Islam and Christianity was still common among the Kurds in the First World War and shared their perception with their Syriac victims, who, according to the Syriac authors, opted in large numbers for a martyr’s death, instead of gaining survival by denying their Christian identity.

In this “Jihadist” spirit, Sleman Henno interprets the massacres of 1915 as an integral part of repeated Muslim persecution of Christians:

Since the emergence of Islam, the Christians have been killed, robbed and plundered wherever they were. The Turks and the Kurds, who are known for their hard-heartedness and injustice, with or without reason, are especially to be mentioned in this regard. (...) Each epoch records testimony about the bloodbaths they organized.⁵¹

Henno also refutes the assumptions that the reason for the treatment of the Armenians in 1915 was of a secular or political nature: “*Just because they were not Muslims, they (the Armenian; TH) were merciless exterminated.*”⁵²

Henno’s account mixes elements of a documentarist and biblical, archaic style of narration, including many quotations from poems, the traditional genre of lyrical lament or elegy in particular, called *dourekta*⁵³ in Aramaic. His narrator frequently appeals to the reader: “*O knowledgeable reader, see and reflect on this unparalleled barbarism!*”⁵⁴ Such

50. Odian, *Accursed Years*, 13.

51. *Die Verfolgung und Vernichtung*, 29.

52. *Ibid*, 34.

53. Yacoub, *Year of the Sword*, 57.

54. *Die Verfolgung und Vernichtung*, 33.

stylistic peculiarities are likewise to be found with Armale and Qarabashi. Typically, the focus of Armale's interpretation is on the unshaken steadiness of the Christian martyrs and their refusal to renounce their faith; with their principled morals, they excelled over their tormentors:

I see the faces of the Muslims and their women radiate with joy among the Christians, whose eyes are full of tears. They could freely choose among them whoever they liked: children, boys, women and especially girls. They forcibly tried to make them renounce their faith, but without success! They promised to save them from death if they said "yes" to conversion, but without success! The Christians, though they suffered greatly and were subjected to various torments and sufferings, showed great courage and faithfulness which confused their tormentors. They repeatedly said, "We do not renounce our faith, we do not deny our God. Rob us, plunder us, abduct us, kill us, send us into the Sahara, throw us into the wells! We will endure everything until God brings us and you to account, since He is the righteous judge."⁵⁵

Armale idealizes the Christian martyrs of both sexes as triumphant heroes, giving numerous examples of prominent victims, such as the Armenian Catholic bishop Ignatios Maloyan (1869 - 6 June 1915), and other examples of anonymous victims, such as a mother with a six-year-old son, who decided to be slaughtered rather than to accept the "offer" of a Muslim:

The soldiers arrested two women at a time and handed them over to the Kurds standing at the mouth of a well, who told them, as usual: "Convert to Islam or we'll kill you!" Then they slaughtered them and threw them down the well. Finally, they called the steadfast woman. The man who wanted her tried to approach her, making big promises. But she said to him fearlessly, "Do you want me to betray my God and go with you, you mean man? Do you want me to deny my beliefs and confess your religion, you low person? No, no! Kill me, I'm no better than the others." Then she grabbed her son, threw him into the well with her own hands, laid her neck for slaughter and said, "Kill me and let me follow my son!" Full of anger, he killed her and threw her into the well. She and her child, crowned with the crown of victory went to heaven, to eternal life.⁵⁶

In Chapter 54, titled "Divine signs and various narratives that indicate the firmness of Christians in their faith," Qarabashi tells the incredible story of an orphaned Christian baby in Mardin that refused to be breastfed by Muslim women, but recognized and accepted Christian breasts. In the rigid, antagonistic structure of Syriac chronicles, converts appear as despicable anti-heroes. While Armale displays some understanding for Christian women who converted to Islam – the weak sex - he does not accept the conversion of men. In the 28th Chapter of Part III, titled "Armenians, who renounced their faith," he lists the full names of Armenian converts.⁵⁷ Armale's magniloquent narrative style corresponds with that of a ubiquitous narrator, who allegedly recites the last words

55. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part III, Chapter 23, 147.

56. Ibid, Chapter 37, 178f.

57. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part III, Chapter 21, 143.

of the dying, executed or raped victims, who all express their motives with the same eloquence.

There is a remarkable contrast between Armale's, Henno's or other Syriac authors' attempt to overwhelm their reader with emotion and to convince them of the wickedness of the Muslim perpetrators on the one hand, and the approach of the Armenian satirical author, journalist and survivor Yervand Odian on the other. The latter's autobiographical recollections *Accursed Years* (*Aniceal tariner*), about his deportation to Deir ez-Zor were printed shortly after the events in Constantinople in 1919 as a series in the Armenian paper *Žamanak*. In his memoirs, the professional journalist resigns himself as an author, and reports only as far as necessary about his personal fate. On January 23, 1919, Odian wrote in a letter about the challenges of his task as documentarist:

After three and a half years of a terrible, unimaginable odyssey, I am alive. I was driven to Der-Zor and beyond to El-Busera (...), where Ezekiel had his vision. I do not know if I can adequately describe what I saw, but I will try. It will be a great work, perhaps in several volumes.⁵⁸

At the end of his report Odian summarized:

This is the story of the three and a half years of my exile. The reader will, of course, have noticed that I have written them in the simplest manner and in a non-literary style. But above all else I wanted it to be a truthful story in which no fact was distorted, no event was exaggerated.⁵⁹

Odian's aesthetic ideal of a 'photographic', undisguised truth-log is especially evident in the conscious withdrawal of the evaluating and commenting narrator. In direct opposition to the narration of Sleman Henno, Isaac Armale or other Syriac survivors, Yervand Odian leaves evaluation and interpretation largely to the reader, before whom the author places all stages and actors of the genocide drama with equal distance: the victims and the perpetrators, the traitors and the countless informers. Odian himself remained faithful to satire in his "Accursed Years," but, as in his other work, this satire seems cool and distant, so that the protagonists appear neither sympathetic nor contemptuous. "*divine laughter*" is, according to Odian's conviction "*free from resentment and hatred*."

In a similar vein, Father Armale claimed preciseness as the guiding principle of his account:

We tried very hard to be as precise as possible, which is why we made sure to cite only those accounts that we heard from the very mouths of the rare survivors who escaped death, in our work.⁶⁰

But the literary approaches that Armale chose are the reverse to those used by Odian, and he is far from not being resentful and hateful.

The question about the historical reliability of Syriac accounts, in particular those of Syriac church leaders, has been raised. The French scholar Sébastien de Courtois pointed

58. Odian, *Accursed Years*, XII.

59. Ibid, 307.

60. Cited from: Courtois, *The Forgotten Genocide*, 160.

out that the comments made by the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Barsaum on the events of 1915 and other events frequently coincided with those of the official Turkish version.

“How could such indulgence on the Patriarch’s part be justified?”, asked de Courtois in his doctoral thesis, giving the following explanation: “The reason is to be found in the more recent history of the Syriac Orthodox church, for as the Patriarch was writing his memoirs after the Second World War, the majority of the Syriac community was still living in Turkey, in Tur Abdin, and he had reason to fear reprisals. This could also explain the Syriac Orthodox authorities’ hesitation to defend the memory of the genocide.”⁶¹

The long-lasting dependence of the Syriac Orthodox Church on the Turkish state caused self-censorship. As late as 2013, David Gaunt stated: “*Until recently it has sometimes been impossible to discuss the genocide issues within the official framework of the Syrian Orthodox Church.*”⁶²

The strong influence of biblical, archaic narratives on Syriac chronicles and testimonials shows also in the key word that is used to summarize the experience of extermination and catastrophe. While Armenian contemporaries used the term *Medz Yeghern* (or *Mec Yeğern*)⁶³, i.e. the *Great Sacrilege* or *Heinous Deed* and Greek Orthodox Christians spoke of *Sphagi*, or massacres, distinguished into *red* and *white massacres* as synonyms for massacres and deportation or indirect killings, Syriac contemporaries from the Diyarbakır province used individual and rather vague paraphrases: “fatalities” (*gunhe* in Aramaic; S. Henno;), “bloodshed” (*D’mo Zliho*; Qarabashi), “calamities” (Armale). In more recent usage, the Aramaic noun *Sayfo* – sword – prevails. The semantic connotation of “sword” comprises both the victimization, as suffered between 1914 and 1918 and one’s own violence, as exerted during cases of self-defense and retribution. This ambivalent term also includes the connotation of martyrs and the *militia Dei*, i.e. spiritual or armed fighters for the sake of the faith.

Seen from a psychological perspective, it is certainly easier to focus on cases of successful or attempted self-defense, than to face the profound helplessness, humiliation and destruction that victims of genocide suffer. Subsequently, Sleman Henno interprets the events in Tur Abdin as an inter-religious war:

From the following chapters the reader will learn how the war in the Tur Abdin ran, who was killed, who waged and lost the war, who fought, won and could not be conquered by any enemy.⁶⁴

The besieged village of Aynvardo (Invardo) that withstood attacks for several weeks and, in particular, the large village of Azakh, holding out until the end of the First World War and existing even until 1926, are recalled as epitomes of successful Christian self-

61. Ibid, 108.

62. Gaunt, “Failed Identity and the Assyrian Genocide,” 330.

63. Remarkably, this term contains a juridical connotation, for a “deed” or a “sacrilege” are crimes in secular and/or religious context. In difference to *Yeghern* as related to the 1894-96 massacres during the reign of Abdülhamit II.

64. *Die Verfolgung und Vernichtung*, 43.

defense. According to Sleman Henno's interpretation, God himself was on the side of the Syriacs:

The Syriacs attacked the enemy with great rage. God helped them and they won a victory over the godless, who had lost the fight, escaped, and had to leave some dead.⁶⁵

As this quotation also indicates, Henno explicitly qualified the Turkish and Kurdish besiegers as infidels, and at many other places as devious, wicked, bloodthirsty enemies; the same vocabulary is used by Armale and Qarabashi. However, Henno does not conceal the retributive violence exerted by Syriacs, such as the plunder and destruction of the Kurdish village of Shveshka by 350 young Syriacs from the village of Kafro on August 21, 1915:

Then they attacked the village, killed everyone they found and the rest fled from the village. (...) They plundered the village and then set it on fire.⁶⁶

The Syriac retribution is morally justified by the previous massacre in the district town of Nusaybin (Nisibin) on June 15, 1915, that became the epitome of the destruction of Syriac Orthodox Christians in the province of Diyarbakır. Father Armale conjures divine retribution and quotes, starting with Kain, biblical examples of the divine punishment, if the blood of the innocent was shed.⁶⁷

Elias Venezis sees retributive blood feuds as a senseless succession of mass violence that always hits the innocent and is harmful for civilization. To illustrate this opinion, his narrator mentions the approximately 40 Greek soldiers who had been horseshoed then slaughtered near Pergamon (Bergama) by Turks during the Hellenic occupation of Western Anatolia (1919-1922). This atrocity first caused numerous retaliations by the 4th Hellenic regiment then, after the withdrawal of the Hellenic Army, brutal acts of violence by the local Turkish population against local Ottoman Greeks.⁶⁸

Two sub-chapters of Henno's account are titled "Thanksgiving." The first contains the explicit gratitude to the Kurdish sheikh Fathallah, son of sheikh Ibrahim and head of the village Aynkaf, who attempted to mediate between the government forces and Kurdish tribes that besieged Aynvardo. According to Henno, Fathallah "...reprimanded the Muslims, telling them not to kill Christians, for there is no difference between the killing of a Christian and of a Muslim. Murder is murder. And he damned every Muslim who killed a Christian."

The second Muslim who sparked Henno's praise was Çelebi Ağa, son of Isma'il, the head of the Haferkan tribe from Mzizah: "*He was a well-known chieftain under the tribal leaders at that time. Individuals who resided with him testify that he treated all the people belonging to his area of influence equally and without any difference, whether they were Christians, Muslims or Yazidis.*"⁶⁹

65. Ibid, 89f.

66. *Die Verfolgung und Vernichtung*, 73.

67. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part III, Chapter 36, 174 f.

68. Venesis, *Nr. 31328*, 59.

69. *Die Verfolgung und Vernichtung*, 140.

Unfortunately, during the First World War, Çelebi Ağa was imprisoned in Ayntab and subsequently unable to exert his influence in favor of the Christians.

Father Armale dedicated three chapters to the Ezdi (Yazidi, Yezidi) people of the Sinjar Mountains (Jabal Sinjar), where many Christians found refuge during 1915-1918:

The Muslims, for their part, are disgusted by the name Yezîdî, reviling their dogma and their customs. But the Yezidis performed great deeds these days, showing nobility and self-sacrifice that will honor their memory, and also because they did no harm to Christians, but on the contrary, helped them, welcomed them warmly, were hospitable, defended them, made their lives easier.⁷⁰

Yervand Odian explains the pro-Armenian stance of the Yezidis in a more political way, quoting a discussion with an Arab in El Bousera: *“Is it true that the Yezidis are friends with the Armenians?” “Yes, because they’ve [the Armenians; TH] rebelled against the Turks. No Turk or Arab can approach their [the Yezidis; TH] mountain. But they accept Armenians with pleasure.”*⁷¹

Empathy, Internalization and Self-Criticism

As shown before, Syriac authors framed the genocidal events in the Diyarbakır *vilayet* a) in the tradition of Muslim *Jihad* and religious conflict between Muslims and Christians and b) in the tradition of Christian martyrology. Subsequently, Armale’s ideal is the female martyr, happily accepting the complete loss of her home, possessions and family, and even accepting sexual violence and, finally, her conscious death instead of conversion:

We cannot fail to mention how Christian women rejoiced while they were being led away. They sang happy and cheerful hymns as if they were going to a wedding to feed their eyes on the sight of their favorites, who had sacrificed themselves for them.⁷²

In the concept of antagonizing religions there is scarcely a mention of rescuers, with the previously cited exception of the Yezidis and a few Kurdish chieftains or neutral protagonists. Ottoman society, as perceived by Henno, Qarabashi and Armale, is divided into Christians and Muslims, just and unjust, faithful and infidel. This dualistic perspective excludes differentiation, self-criticism or criticism of members of one’s own ethno-religious group, as displayed by Odian. He was an acute observer, not just of the misery of his people; he also realized the sufferings of others. His criticism is likewise indiscriminate and includes Armenians. In Aleppo Odian met Greek deportees from the Syrian coast⁷³ and Hellenic nationals who were deported once Greece had entered the war.⁷⁴ In Deir ez-Zor he learnt

70. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part IV, Chapter 8, 204.

71. Odian, *Accursed Years*, 157.

72. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part IV, Chapter 21, 229.

73. Odian, *Accursed Years*, 235.

74. *Ibid*, 251.

...that the police had requisitioned the Chaldean church and transformed it into a brothel ... to satisfy the Germans,⁷⁵ who had demanded the establishment of controllable brothels in the name of hygiene. It must be said that a few Armenian women preferred to leave work, resign from honorable wages and find their living in dirty voluptuousness.⁷⁶

Odian described the late Ottoman Empire as a police state that was shaped by denunciation and spying; Armenians were an integral part of that system. In his place of exile, El Bousera, Odian encountered the Armenian “*betrayed and spy*” Santur Oğlu Aram (Aram, son of Santur) from Hajin (Cilicia), whose crimes against his compatriots even aroused the otherwise disinherited Odian with considerable indignation: “*I think there are very few people to be found who are monsters with such evil, corrupt, detestable characters. This young man had no moral sense and he would tell us of his evil deeds and crimes with a sort of boastful pride and bragging.*”⁷⁷

Aram had been arrested in his hometown with six other Armenians as a revolutionary and sentenced to death. He escaped execution because he offered his services to the authorities and betrayed not only the arsenals of the Hadjin Armenians, but also the 36 notables of the same town, whom he heavily burdened by his false statements. He whispered to Odian, “*I was present at this ceremony [of execution, TH] and pulled the chairs away from under the feet of some of them myself.*”⁷⁸

Asked about his motives, Aram frankly admitted, “*simply for pleasure and to give the Turks a good impression.*” Aram then married the 14-year-old daughter of one of his victims and moved up to become a deportation official and even a police lieutenant. In this position he blackmailed the Armenians of Adana with threats of deportation. After returning to Hajin, he brutally whipped his own father for a bet during an interrogation. But since Aram failed to smash an Armenian resistance group at Islahiye according to orders, he was released and finally, after another blackmail attempt in Adana, deported to Deir ez-Zor.⁷⁹

Elias Venezis narrates a similar case of profound betrayal among Ottoman Greeks: in a concentration camp near Manisa, the Greek overseer (*kapo*) Mikhál and a Turkish officer sold a column of Greek laborer soldiers to the Turkish population of Manisa who wanted to take bloody revenge for the burning of their city during the withdrawal of the Hellenic Army from Anatolia;⁸⁰ they bought the defenseless slave laborers in order to torture and eventually kill them.

Venezis wrote his memoirs as early as 1924, soon after the massive Greek-Turkish exchange of populations. A Greek youth of just 18 years from Ayvalık (Kydonies in Greek), Venezis was conscripted into a labour battalion and “*remained a slave without*

75. Ibid, 197.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid, 169.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid 170.

80. Venesis, Nr. 31328, 160f.

any rights and even without any official recognition of existence for fourteen months."⁸¹ In his memoirs, Venezis tells how the Ayvalık conscripts were kept in the local prison several nights, and how 15 were singled out to march outside the town to be bayoneted to death while the remaining 43 were marched to the various labour and concentration camps of Western Anatolia. His group was the fourth such convoy from Ayvalık, but in contrast to the first three convoys, numbering hundreds, his was fated to die in a slower way.⁸²

Despite the time of the year and the already cold nights – it was the end of October 1922 – the Ayvalık conscripts had to undress, with the exception of their underwear and were marched, without proper footwear, to the town of Manisa (Magnesia, Magnisa). En route, they were not allowed to drink anything but polluted swamp-water, with the clear calculation that typhus and other epidemics would decimate the undernourished, exhausted men. They were deliberately kept under catastrophic conditions without hygiene. Under such fatal circumstances, the mortality rate of the Greek slave labourers from Western Anatolia was extremely high. Out of the roughly 3,000 male labour conscripts from Ayvalık, only 23 survived – less than one percent!⁸³

One of the first tasks of Venezis' *taburu* in Manisa was to clear the area of the corpses of 40,000 Christian men, women and children from Manisa and Smyrna who had been tied to one another with wire before being killed and dumped in a huge ravine of Mount Sipyo (Kirtikdere). The corpses had already begun to disintegrate, and the water drove them to the ravine's edge, where "*they reached the road and railroad tracks.*"⁸⁴ The Turkish authorities feared that the floating remnants of the massive killings might be seen by the Spanish official Dellara, who was appointed to examine the conditions and treatment of the prisoners.⁸⁵

The most repugnant feature of genocide is its corruptive nature. Venezis exemplified this by two episodes as experienced by his narrator during the march from Ayvalık to Manisa. The completely exhausted Greek deportees were compelled by their guards to carry an infant whose parents lacked the strength to carry the child themselves. But each deportee tried to avoid this additional burden:

My turn came. It was a real martyrdom - because we had to walk; we were naked and starving and so exhausted that we ourselves fell at any given moment. I staggered away, then called out that someone else should take the child. Everyone ran to escape to the front ranks. (...) The child had become a specter. Anger hardened more and more in our tortured hearts.

"Why doesn't it want to die?" one suddenly said wildly.

"It will not last anyway," said another, looking for a reason. "Someone should kill it, so it could rest."

81. Speros Vryonis, "Greek Labor Battalions in Asia Minor," in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 276.

82. Vryonis, "Greek Labor Battalions," 278.

83. Ibid, 288.

84. Venezis, *Nr. 31328*, 207.

85. Ibid.

Nobody said that it would be a pity.
Was that hatred for a baby? Yes, it was hatred.⁸⁶

The growing lack of empathy also showed when the military escort of the convoy raped the girls that had been captured by the soldiers:

The two girls we had with us since Pergamon provided us with a lot of relief. They were still untitled ground and there were always rests. The soldiers divided them among themselves, withdrew with them, returned; then we marched on again. These marginal ornaments of the march did us good. We rested.⁸⁷

The interludes with the girls provide not only frequent rests for the exhausted deportees, but also saved the two 18-year-old male Greeks in the battalion from being raped themselves, as the narrator's friend Arjiris realizes: "*Without the girls it would have been our turn, the two boys...*"⁸⁸ Sexual violence against boys and men seems to have been a taboo among Armenian contemporaries, for it is not mentioned in the testimonials of Armenian survivors. The most outspoken in this context is Father Armale's report on the young Syriac Īsā Qaryō, who was raped, tortured and murdered in Mardin on May 23rd, 1915.⁸⁹ Even more taboo-breaking is Venezis' revelation about the sexual exploitation of Greek captives by Greek *kapos*.⁹⁰

It is interesting to compare the Syriac authors with the Armenian survivor and later bishop Grigoris Balakian, who had the same theological background and vocation as Armale, Qarabashi and Henno, albeit with the difference that he was the only one of the six authors under consideration here with a higher education gained abroad, in Germany. As the biblical title of Balakian's memoirs – "Armenian Golgotha" – indicates, this Armenian author mostly remains in the tradition of antagonistic narration and Jihadist traditions, for example, in his summary of the description of a massacre, committed against Armenian deportees on the road between Maraş and Bahçe:

It was obvious that the killers, after murdering these deportees, had played with their corpses for hours, stripping them naked and cutting them to pieces. That which centuries of human history had never witnessed in its blackest pages was carried out here, in the name of the Koran, in the name of Jihad.⁹¹

However, parallel to the traditional concepts of religious antagonism and martyrology, Balakian also offers a secular and political explanation of the event, contradicting the merely religious interpretations by differentiating between Turkish and non-Turkish Muslims. For Balakian the divide between the evil and the innocent runs between the Young Turks and others, including non-Turkish Muslims. This becomes evident in his Volume II, Chapter 8, where he deplores the sufferings of British prisoners of war who were brought to the Baghdad Railway construction sites in order to replace

86. Ibid, 61 f.

87. Ibid, 75.

88. Venezis, *Nr. 31328*, 78.

89. Armale, *Katastrophen*, Part II, Chapter 21, 83.

90. Venezis, *Nr. 31328*, 188.

91. Balakian, *Armenian Golgotha*, 292.

the Armenian workers, the vast majority of whom had been deported on the orders of the Ottoman War Ministry. Balakian explains the inhuman treatment of the British Indian POWs, of whom many were Muslims, in the following way:

As we gradually became familiar with these officers and enjoyed their friendship, they told us of the horrible suffering they had endured in the deserts. Thirteen thousand British and Indian soldiers, along with their general, had been awaiting reinforcements from the auxiliary British army in Kut-al-Amara, near Baghdad. They had been unexpectedly besieged by a large Turkish army and taken prisoner. They had walked for more than two months from Baghdad via Der Zor to Amanos. (...) The Ittihad officers had selected the roads across the longest deserts, in order to subject the defenseless prisoners to “white massacre.” They had committed all sorts of cruelties so that the prisoners would die along the way. (...)

These loyal agents of the Turkish state, who had formerly sent propaganda to the hundred million Muslims of India, now treated the Muslim Indian prisoners even more harshly for having dared to serve the Christian armies against the Muslim caliph and take up arms against the Turks.

Isn't it true that the Turks had always burned, broken, destroyed, violated, and massacred Arabs, Albanians, Circassians, and Persians under their dominion, even though they were their Muslim brothers? For this reason, all the Muslim races had wished to throw off the Turkish yoke, attempting revolt down the centuries. (...) the Turks were deeply convinced that in the end, owing to the invincible German armies, they would defeat the Allies; they would occupy the Caucasus, Persia, India, Egypt, and all the Muslim lands of North Africa and establish a huge Muslim world empire... Image the likelihood that a Turkish race numbering bare four million – two thirds of whose far-flung empire had already been lost, the remainder facing the threat of division – would be able to realize this dream. This says something about the extent of the chauvinism, pan-Islamism, and pan-Turkic dreams that the young leaders of Turkey had embraced.⁹²

Summary and Conclusion

All six Christian survivors and authors who are under consideration in this article relate to the same events during the last decade of the Ottoman rule with, however, with strong differences. Shaped by biblical narrative styles, Christian martyrology and the perception of contemporary events as inter-religious war and traditional *Jihad*, the three Syriac authors developed an antagonistic narrative. Nearly all Muslims without exception are perceived as evil, while martyrs offer role models for the behavior of good Christians. Members of other religions or denominations are good – like the Yezidis – if they protect Christians, and suspicious, if they, like some Syriac Orthodox, collaborate with the Ottoman authorities. As mentioned before, such an approach gives meaning to otherwise unbearably irrational genocidal destruction, at least in retrospect. Even more relevant perhaps is the fact that it allows survivors to interpret themselves as the moral

92. Balakian, *Armenian Golgotha*, 296f.

victors despite all humiliation and degradation that the victims suffered before they were eventually physically destroyed. A martyr's conscious decision to die for his or her faith is an act of self-determination instead of the extreme abuse of a helpless victim.

However seductive such literary procedures may be, they are useless in analyzing the most troubling aspects of mass violence and genocide because the dualistic view of the world does not permit differentiation and, above all, no internal, self-critical exploration or insight. The non-Syriac authors that have been considered here replaced, in various degrees, the dualistic and antagonistic approach by internalization. Greek authors from Asia Minor such as Elias Venezis, or Dido Sotiriou (1909-2004)⁹³ argued in their narrations against the ethnic or religious ascription of guilt by emphasizing cases of solidarity despite the religious divide between Ottoman Turks and Greeks. These authors also touched upon the aspect of guilt for violence against Muslim 'others' as well as against Greek compatriots. In Chapter 17, Venezis wrote about the elder Anatolian deserters of WWI, who were recruited after the war to guard the Greek "slaves," as the deported Greek Ottoman laborers were called. But soon these men from both sides of the divide discovered that they suffered equally from the violence, ill-treatment and corruption of the *kapo* system:

The soldiers who guarded us were elderly. All were from the interior of Anatolia. What made them different, whether they were Christians or Turks? How did they differ? We were unbelievers, captives. And they who were free? The blood ran in streams from all nine bodies - what was the difference?

(...)

So, over time, unexpectedly, without realizing it, we came closer to each other, the soldiers and us. In the evenings they came more regularly to keep us company. We told each other our sufferings. And in conversation, they no longer called us 'yes, sir' (prisoner). With their deep Anatolian voices, they spoke with warmth and kindness, calling us "arkadás," comrade.

When we went to work, they no longer beat or cursed us. If none of our Greek ks were around, they acted as if they saw nothing and let us sit down. These kapos, however, feared their merciless officers.

(...)

'What should we do, comrade? God have mercy on you and us.' He may have mercy on "you and us". That became almost a permanent saying for them. They could no longer distinguish the two destinies, theirs and ours. They were afraid of their officers and our kapos. We hated the same people, too. They longed for their homes: huts somewhere. Like us. So?⁹⁴

Venezis replaced the typical ethnic or religious divide of Armenian and Syriac narrations by a moral, transnational divide. During deportation, physical suffering led to

93. Her novel "Matomena Chomata" ("Bloodied Soil", 1962; English title "Farewell, Anatolia!"), bases on the 360 handwritten pages that were trusted to her by the Ionian survivor and eyewitness Manolis Axiotis from the village of Kirkica (today Şirince). Cf. Tessa Hofmann, "'Only those who look back, move forward!': Four Literary Responses to Genocidal Trauma in Greek and Transnational Prose," *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies* 2, No. 1 (2015): 19-37.

94. Venesis, *Nr. 31328*, 199-205.

the loss of empathy and humanity, bringing the Greek captives closer to their tormentors, while in the camp and during slave labor, the segregation between ‘them’ and ‘us’, between the evil and the good materialized differently. The discovery of similarities and even commonalities between the old Turkish soldiers and the exploitation by their own Greek compatriots, i.e. the *kaapos*, is a counterweight to the loss of humanity and to a certain degree a way of healing:

The camp became better organized. We were, so to speak, a small state. With each passing day, it got harder and more merciless. Our *kaapos* knew who the good artisans and workers were; they made a list of them and agreed it with the Turkish camp commander, a major. All these “cream” workers and artisans would each be hired out to private individuals for a day’s wages. Most of the money accrued as a result would go to the Turkish major - with a little going to the corrupt slaves. (...)

Thus, two camps gradually emerged from the one. On one side were the slaves who gave the orders and received bribes; on the other we, the people that sweated and polluted the air with our moans. (...) After money started circulating in our camp, our *kaapos* thought of something else: they opened canteens. They sold tobacco, salted fish, white bread, whatever was wanted. These small shops did golden business over time. The ‘aristocracy’ bought things and cooked them separately. We saw them and our mouths would start salivating.

Evening after evening, the *kaapos* invited one of the slave companies to be their hosts. They also drank schnapps secretly. They also had hashish. (...) ⁹⁵

The exploration of the dehumanizing force of genocidal violence connects Venezis with the Polish author and Auschwitz survivor Tadeusz Borowski (1922-1951). Similar to Venezis, he described the *kapo* system as the ruthless exploitation of profound human suffering, including the exploitation of compatriots. Both authors featured the genocidal system as a self-sustaining, profitable and hence corruptive mechanism. In his story “Please, the gentlemen to the gas!”, Borowski described the routine work of the international “Canada” command, which consisted in emptying the railway wagons with which Jews deported to Auschwitz arrived - a privileged activity offering the “Canadians” and especially their *kapo* extensive opportunities for personal enrichment and for their survival in the genocidal universe: ⁹⁶

The *kapo* is busy with a big teapot stuffing silk, gold, and coffee into it. This is for the sentries at the gate, so they will let him pass the command post without being checked. The camp will live off this transport for a few days, will eat its ham and its sausages, drink its liquor and its liqueurs, wear its linen and trade with its money and its jewelry. (...) For a few days the camp will speak about the transport “Bendzin-Sosnowiec.” A good, rich transport it has been. ⁹⁷

Is it possible to survive in a system based on violence and terror without the loss of human empathy and dignity? The authors from the Ottoman Empire give diverging

95. Venezis, *Nr. 31328*, 187.

96. Tadeusz Borowski, *Die steinerne Welt* (München: Erzählungen, 1963), 105-133.

97. *Ibid*, 132.

answers. The Syriacs saw this possibility in individual martyrdom. Elias Venezis and Dido Sotiriou, however, named, albeit to different degrees, culprits and victims on both sides of the ethno-religious divides and included Muslim rescuers into their narrations. The Armenian authors Odian and Balakian focused their narrations on the suffering as such. In the face of their many compatriots who had been silenced forever, they cleared their “debts of survival” by writing the unspeakable and witnessing genocidal destruction.

*“I faced a painful and weighty responsibility,” wrote Grigoris Balakian. “Writing this history meant reliving, on a daily basis, all those black days, whose very reminiscences filled me with horror. While I felt physically healthy, I was spiritually ill. Yet I had a sacred obligation to write this bitter story for future generations.”*⁹⁸

98. Balakian, *Armenian Golgotha*, 430.

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TRANSMITTED DEFIANCE: GENOCIDE RESISTANCE ACROSS GENERATIONS OF ARMENIAN WOMEN

Nikki Marczak

During and after the genocide, Armenian women resisted: silently, discreetly, but sometimes also loudly and overtly; and often in spiritual or cultural ways. A common thread through women's testimonies is a spirit of defiance - a sense of dignity, resilience and a refusal to allow their identity to be destroyed - that they have passed on to future generations. This article presents the concept of *transmitted defiance*, a gendered process that occurs transgenerationally. A hundred years after the genocide, women who are descended from survivors often view their relatives' actions as inspiration for their own lives. Further, many have inherited rebelliousness and an indelible sense of Armenian identity from their mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers, which manifests in their own contemporary acts of resistance.

Key-words: Armenian Women, Armenian Genocide, resistance, transgenerational trauma, resilience.

Introduction

In 1918, Aguline Dertazyan was volunteering at a Red Cross hospital in the town of her birth, Hadjin, when Turkish forces attacked. A bullet penetrated the hospital window, passed through the body of another nurse, killing her; and then lodged itself below Aguline's rib. She survived. After the war, Aguline, who had been educated at boarding school in Constantinople, staged a play called *The Valley of Tears* in an Adana theatre to raise relief funds for survivors of the genocide. Moving to Lebanon and eventually America, she continued to perform in the theatre until late in her seventies, the bullet still wedged in her flesh. In a characteristic act of rebellion, at the age of 86, Aguline told her family she refused to be buried with a Turkish bullet in her body.

"*She was very, very strong-willed, very stubborn,*" explains her granddaughter, Lory Tatoulian, a performer in Armenian theatre and film in Los Angeles. The admiration for her grandmother is palpable: "*She gave birth to children; she functioned with a bullet in her body!*"¹ Lory believes she has inherited some of Aguline: her love of performance and an artistic nature, a dedication to preserving Armenian culture and importantly, a characteristic she refers to in her grandmother as "tenacity": "*I see her story as a source of strength; when I face problems in my life I always think of my grandmother...and how she was so resilient.*" To honor Aguline's wishes, when she died her family arranged for the bullet to be surgically removed and donated to the Hadjin Museum in Armenia.²

1. Interview conducted with Lory Tatoulian, May 15, 2016.

2. Ibid.

During and after the genocide, Armenian women resisted: silently, discreetly, but sometimes also loudly and overtly; and often in spiritual or cultural ways. A common thread in women's testimonies (and unmistakable in the story of Aguline Dertazyian) is a spirit of defiance - a sense of dignity, resilience and a refusal to allow their identity to be destroyed - that they have passed on to future generations, in what I conceptualize as a process of *transmitted defiance*. A hundred years later, descendants of survivors view their relatives' actions as inspiration for their own lives and appear to have inherited elements of rebelliousness and resistance from them. The memories of mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers and great-aunts nurture their identity both as Armenians and as women.

In many cases, these have been passed directly from survivors to younger generations, especially from grandmothers to granddaughters. The USC Shoah Foundation's online collection contains video testimony of survivors being interviewed by their granddaughters, often with an emphasis on cultural tradition and continuity, which has provided descendants with a deeply-held Armenian identity and even perhaps, a capacity to transcend the trauma of the genocide. In one such video, Siranoush Boyajian follows her description of churches being burned down, with the memory of particular bread served at Mass. She says she has been making this type of bread for her church in America for over 20 years: "*We still have our customs... We try to teach our children... They're proud to be an Armenian, because they see what we went through to come this far.*"³

The relationships between family members, and the role descendants take on in preserving their relatives' memories, echo the historical importance of intergenerational relationships in pre-war Armenian families. Traditionally, many generations lived together, and cultural knowledge was transmitted between grandmothers, mothers and daughters. Survivor Bertha Nakshian Ketchian described her own grandmother, Mariam, who refused to give her away to a Turkish official, emphasizing her grandmother's courage and the importance of having been able to preserve her Armenian identity:

She was afraid of nothing and nobody. ... And now she was fighting with all her might and cleverness to protect what was left of her once thriving large family... You saved me from going to worse than death and staying in the house of the enemy to become a Turk. ... Dear Grandmother Mariam, I appreciate what you did with all my heart. Moreover, as the years go by, I realize more fully how very much it means to me to have lived as who I really am.⁴

Spiritual Resistance and Memory

Non-military forms of resistance, so often the only option of resistance available to women, have generally been sidelined in genocide historiography. An important exception is found in the work of scholar Yehuda Bauer, who developed the concept of *Amidah* or "standing up

3. Interview of Siranoush Boyajian, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Armenian Film Foundation, <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=56452&returnIndex=0>.

4. Bertha Nakshian Ketchian, *The Zoryan Institute Survivors' Memoirs Number 1: In the Shadow of the Fortress: The Genocide Remembered* (Massachusetts: Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation, Inc., 1988), 15.

against” to describe acts of survival and spiritual resistance by Jews during the Holocaust.⁵ I assert that such acts were fundamental to Armenian women’s experiences of the genocide, firstly because it was predominantly women who endured the inhumanity of death marches across the desert, witnessing the murders of loved ones and attempting to survive and protect their children. Further, women’s spiritual resistance was significant because of the centrality of cultural destruction and forced assimilation in Turkish policy and practice. The very act of a woman maintaining her identity, if only in her heart, was embedded with resistance and carried the risk of punishment, even death.

Survivor testimonies highlight countless examples of Armenian women clandestinely maintaining their language and traditional customs on deportation marches, and for those women who were abducted, in the homes of their captors. While acknowledging post-genocide attempts to find meaning in tragedy - an issue I will return to - it is important to note that women’s testimonies, in particular, do frequently refer to examples of “sisterhood”. Some testimonies describe women helping each other during childbirth or working together to dig shallow graves for family members who had perished, in order to maintain a semblance of humanity in inhuman conditions. Some child survivors describe how their mothers tried to instill a sense of pride, and urged them to remember their Armenianness. In the early stages of the genocide, women faced the brutal searches for weapons in their homes, frequently alone after husbands had been arrested. Occasionally women yelled at and cursed the gendarmes and other perpetrators. Many women stood up to pressure to convert or alternatively feigned conversion, speaking only to one another of their continuing Christian prayers. Others kept their will to survive with small acts of disobedience, seemingly minor, yet significant in the context of dehumanization and genocide. In her memoir, *Rebirth*, Elise Hagopian Taft describes a young abducted girl, regularly forced to search through the hair of the woman of the house for lice: “Instead of destroying those loathe-some parasites, mischievous Beatrice would add to the woman’s colony the lice from her own head.”⁶

There is a risk of retrospectively reading resistance into the actions of survivors,⁷ yet testimonies are replete with examples of women’s defiance; and while such examples are generally omitted from official history, they tend to occupy a prominent place in the memory of descendants. It is possible that descendants’ reverence for women’s resistance is influenced by the desire to transcend the legacy of trauma and dehumanization. As Arlene Avakian asserts, “the impulse to impute agency is very strong because we don’t want to see people as merely victims, and resistance is the part of the story that is not told, especially regarding women. We want to see that part of the story, or maybe we need to see it.”⁸ Avakian’s own grandmother told her story of fighting back against her son’s

5. Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001).

6. Elise Hagopian Taft, *Rebirth: The Story of an Armenian Girl Who Survived the Genocide and Found Rebirth in America* (New York: New Age Publishers, 1981), 83.

7. For instance, in relation to the Holocaust, Shirli Gilbert has noted the “tendency towards unsophisticated narratives of redemption and consolation,” in *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 2.

8. Arlene Avakian and Hourig Attarian, *Imagining our Foremothers: Memory and Evidence of Women*

abduction only once, yet it “*had a profound impact on my life ...My grandmother’s story, even with its silences, constructs women as agents in their own survival.*”⁹

The way survivors remember and describe events requires some analysis by contextualizing survivors’ stories in a time of post-genocide healing and meaning-making. In the aftermath of tragedy, survivors attempted to understand their experiences and this sometimes entailed the projection of meaning onto survival or death of loved ones, or onto particular events they had endured. Meaning can take the form of viewing the experiences through the prism of heroism and constructing narratives that align. The creation of a narrative contains its own biases, even in the choice of what to include or omit.

As Vahe Tachjian writes in his 2017 book, *Daily Life in the Abyss: Genocide Diaries, 1915-1918*, “*In the case of the Armenian Genocide, eyewitness testimony can take the form of retrospective narration, in which a survivor attempts to reconstitute his or her lived experience and transform it into common knowledge, whether in the guise of memoirs, correspondence, interviews, or art. When that happens, the narrative - apart from already being personal testimony with its own inherent value - simultaneously becomes subject to the influence of its present, that is, post-catastrophic times, and displays the traces of historical reconstruction.*”¹⁰

In addition, in post-genocide times, when a community is rebuilding both physically and emotionally, the need for “heroes” or “champions” to look up to is particularly strong. The “heroism” in stories told by survivors can become mythologized and then passed down from one generation to the next. One question that is addressed in this paper is how stories of women’s defiance affect the identity of future generations.

More broadly, it is important to frame this discussion of transmitted defiance within existing scholarly debates about heroism and resistance during genocide. In his 1946 book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*,¹¹ Viktor E. Frankl explores how and why some Holocaust victims survived and others did not, attributing to survivors, at least partially, some notion of having controlled their own fate by refusing to succumb to hopelessness and despair. In contrast, some Holocaust survivors viewed survival purely as a matter of luck and timing. Arguably implicit in Frankl’s concept is the notion that those who did not survive may have been themselves spiritually or psychologically responsible by “giving up hope.”

Further, it has been asserted that part of surviving the harsh conditions of ghettos, camps or deportation marches involved compromising one’s moral code, by behaving in ways one would not normally consider acceptable, such as stealing, smuggling or in some way collaborating with the perpetrators. This is what Primo Levi refers to as the moral

Victims and Survivors of the Armenian Genocide A Dialogue, https://www.academia.edu/13700380/Imagining_our_Foremothers_Memory_and_Evidence_of_Women_Victims_and_Survivors_of_the_Armenian_Genocide_A_Dialogue_Arlene_Avakian_and_Hourig_Attarian .

9. Ibid.

10. Vahe Tachjian, *Daily Life in the Abyss: Genocide Diaries, 1915-1918* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017), 3.

11. Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

“grey zone.”¹² In Levi’s analysis, “*Survival without renunciation of any part of one’s own moral world - apart from powerful and direct interventions by fortune - was conceded only to very few superior individuals, made of the stuff of martyrs and saints.*”¹³

We cannot know what combination of factors contributed to the survival of the women whose testimonies are examined here; what their testimonies tell us is that they emphasize particular themes like endurance and fortitude, which in turn, their descendants admire and attempt to mirror.

Gender has an impact on how women not only experience genocide, but how they remember and retell their experiences.¹⁴ For example, in analyses of Holocaust survivor testimony, it has been found that men tend to emphasize independence and autonomy while women, who have been “socialized to value relationships and interdependence,”¹⁵ often highlight their relationships with others. This could partly account for the many examples in women’s testimonies of protecting others, working together to find food or water, or collective acts of physical or emotional survival. It is also likely that as women, the survivors were influenced by entrenched historical and cultural tropes of self-sacrifice and gendered concepts of morality.

The small, daily acts of resistance or defiance described by survivors, whether overtly directed towards perpetrators or subtly performed as spiritual resistance, are part of the story of genocide that has been transmitted to Armenian descendants today. While taking a critical approach to the narratives, they undoubtedly contain a “truth” of human experience during genocide that tells us something about women’s experiences and the way in which they perceive those experiences in the aftermath. Such accounts also present the diverse forms resistance can take, that is, not only military or physical resistance mostly performed by men, but also emotional, cultural and spiritual. These stories resonate with current generations and influence their own conception of post-genocide identity.

Building on testimonial literature with primary interviews, I aim to highlight the unbreakable thread of resilience and identity between Armenian women today and their relatives who survived the genocide. I also rely on the extensive collections and archives housed at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan, including unpublished testimonies which are not available elsewhere. The small numbers of in-depth interviews were conducted with Armenians living in Australia, America and Armenia, individuals whose mothers, grandmothers or great-grandmothers were genocide survivors. Oral histories can give scholars access to intimate aspects of genocide and its aftermath, aspects that are often omitted from written or official history. This is particularly important in accessing details of women’s lives, so frequently dismissed as domestic, private and hence insignificant.

12. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (London: Sphere Books, 1989).

13. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 92.

14. Pascale Rachel Bos, “Women and the Holocaust: Analysing Gender Difference,” in *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust*, eds. Elizabeth R. Baer and Myrna Goldenberg (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 31.

15. *Ibid.*, 36.

This paper is not intended as a quantitative study, nor a psychological one, but rather an analysis of testimony and narrative, memory and identity. The concept of “transmitted defiance” captures how subsequent generations have been influenced by what they see as examples of resistance in the testimony of their relatives, whose stories remain sacred and fundamental to their identity. Remembering and honoring women’s stories not only helps to counterbalance the legacy of trauma for descendants, but also to confront Turkish denial today. As Rubina Perroomian writes, “These survivors have transmitted their memory to the next generation. Armenians know that remembering is a tool to resist the Genocide. Remembrance is a form of resistance that outlasted Genocide.”¹⁶

Transgenerational Transmission

The analysis in this paper is grounded in established theory of transgenerational transmission of genocidal legacies, though much of that scholarship focuses on trauma and has developed primarily in the context of the Holocaust. The theory of transgenerational trauma describes how survivors pass on trauma to their children (known as the second generation) and even to subsequent generations. Whether this occurs environmentally (via social and relational processes between parents and children) and/or genetically (epigenetics)¹⁷ is disputed, but regardless, academic research and psychological studies have found patterns of transmission and evidence of effects among the descendants of genocide survivors.¹⁸ Yet there is more to transgenerational transmission than trauma; this paper develops concepts of defiance, resistance and maintenance of cultural identity as elements that can be passed across generations. I locate the experiences of Armenian women in the framework of Marianne Hirsch’s theory of postmemory, and Uta Larkey’s notion of transmemory. Postmemory conveys the deep connection that the second generation has to their parents’ traumatic experiences, encompassing the idea that those experiences are felt by children of survivors like their own memories, although they were not themselves present.¹⁹ As psychologist Natan Kellermann has explained, “Offspring of trauma survivors often feel that they carry the memory of their parents. They were not alive at the time. They were not supposed to know. Often, they were not even told. But they know. They know it in their bodies, in every cell of their body. It’s almost as if they were born with that

16. Rubina Perroomian, *Armenian Resistance to Genocide: An Attempt to Assess Circumstances and Outcomes*, <http://asbarez.com/109615/armenian-resistance-to-genocide-an-attempt-to-assess-circumstances-and-outcomes/>.

17. Rachel Yehuda et. al, “Influences of Maternal and Paternal PTSD on Epigenetic Regulation of the Glucocorticoid Receptor Gene in Holocaust Survivor Offspring,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 171, no. 8 (2014): 872-880.

18. See the works of Natan Kellermann, including his book, *Holocaust Trauma: Psychological Effects and Treatment* (Indiana: iUniverse, Inc., 2009). For an Armenian study, see Anie Kalayjian and Marian Weisberg, “Generational Impact of Mass Trauma: The Post-Ottoman Turkish Genocide of the Armenians,” in *Jihad and Sacred Vengeance*, eds. J. S. Piven, C. Boyd, and H. W. Lawton (New York: Writers Club Press, 2002), 254-279.

19. Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory,” in *Poetics Today* 29, no.1 (2008): 103-128, <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019>.

knowledge.”²⁰ Hirsch’s postmemory concept is intended to apply to the second generation, yet it seems to extend beyond. I have found that granddaughters too sometimes describe a feeling of having inherited their grandmothers’ memories.

Marina Khachaturyan, who grew up in Tbilisi, Georgia, with her grandmother, says that during the 2016 Four-Day War in Nagorno-Karabakh, she was imagining soldiers entering her house, killing her family. “*But it wasn’t imagining, it was like genetic memory. I was already planning, if they take over Yerevan, where will we go? But I feel angry, I am ready to die for my homeland.*”²¹ Her words speak to some of the questions Hirsch has posed about manifestations and ramifications of postmemory, such as how descendants can carry these stories without appropriating them and importantly, whether “the memory of genocide [can] be transformed into action and resistance.”²²

In her 2017 article, “Transcending Memory in Multigenerational Holocaust Survivors’ Families,” Uta Larkey builds on Hirsch’s writing to explore a new notion – transmemory – which she applies specifically to the experiences of grandchildren of Jewish Holocaust survivors. Although transmemory, like postmemory, has been developed in the context of the Holocaust, it is relevant to Armenian descendants. As Larkey writes: “... *the grandchildren of the Holocaust survivors, the so-called third generation, have come of age and have begun their own inquiries and research. They have reflected on their family history and discovered their potential to act as ‘memory facilitators.’*”²³ Larkey’s theory explains why, for example, many members of the third generation view the maintenance of Armenian identity, as a sacred legacy that honors their grandmothers, whereas second generation survivors have frequently written of their rejection of genocide stories and of an unwanted obligation to maintain Armenian culture. Further, Larkey identifies a less loaded relationship between survivors and their grandchildren. Where there was once a “wall of silence” or gaps that children of survivors perceived as secrets (and thus contributed to their sense of trauma), grandparents exhibit a willingness to share their memories, and many grandchildren actively invite them to do so. “*It’s so important to me to remember that you survived,*” said one Armenian granddaughter to her grandmother, while encouraging her to share her story on video.²⁴

Women in particular have taken on the role as “memorial candles,”²⁵ the responsibility of remembering and passing on survivors’ stories. Armenian granddaughters like Lory Tatouljian, who recounts her grandmother’s story in an attempt to honor Aguline and their

20. Natan Kellermann, *Hereditary Memory: Can a Child Remember What the Parent Has Forgotten?*, <http://pro.psychcentral.com/hereditary-memory-can-a-child-remember-what-the-parent-has-forgotten/0010428.html?all=1#>.

21. Interview with Marina Khachaturyan, June 18, 2016.

22. Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory,” 104.

23. Uta Larkey, “Transcending Memory in Multigenerational Holocaust Survivors’ Families,” in *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939-Present: History, Representation, and Memory*, ed. Joanna Beata Michlic (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 209.

24. Interview of Siranoush Danielian, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Armenian Film Foundation, <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=56619&returnIndex=0>.

25. Larkey, “Transcending Memory,” 221.

close bond, are deeply impacted in their own lives by these transmitted memories but tend to focus as much, if not more, on the resilience, fortitude and tenacity of their relatives. This emphasis may be viewed as an attempt to break down traditional images of women as helpless victims or to balance the disturbing aspects of the history with images of heroism. In this paper, I explore some of these gendered aspects of trans- and postmemory, conscious of Hirsch's statement that "Using feminist critical strategies to connect past and present, words and images, and memory and gender, allows me to understand different roles that gender plays to mediate which stories are remembered and which are forgotten, how stories are told, which tropes make traumatic histories bearable for the next generation."²⁶

Women's Resistance

The historiography and collective memory of resistance during the Armenian Genocide has tended to focus on acts of physical defense and although some women did participate in military resistance, most of their stories have been forgotten or sidelined.²⁷ Moreover, women's testimonies contain common themes relating to *spiritual and cultural resistance* but these have not been integrated into the historiography of the Armenian Genocide, except as one-dimensional archetypes, such as the image of the woman who taught her children the Armenian alphabet in the desert sands.²⁸ Yet the concept of spiritual resistance, which Yad Vashem describes as the preservation of dignity, identity and humanity in spite of unthinkable circumstances,²⁹ permeates Armenian women's stories. In *Rethinking the Holocaust*, Bauer includes both armed and unarmed acts in his concept of *Amidah*, as well as strategies for survival such as smuggling food and acts of self-sacrifice to protect or save family members. Indeed, these are common themes in Armenian accounts. In adapting Bauer's theory to the context of women's experiences during the Armenian Genocide, I focus primarily on what he refers to as "cultural, religious, and political activities taken to strengthen morale" as well as the concept of "sanctification of life" or "meaningful" survival.³⁰ This is partly in order to focus on acts of rebellion that survivors and their descendants highlight, and partly to contain the scope of the paper, since not all of the myriad forms of resistance by women can be discussed in depth here.

26. Online interview with Marianne Hirsch, Author of "The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust," Columbia University Press Blog, October 10, 2012, <http://www.cupblog.org/?p=8066>.

27. With a few exceptions, such as Mariam Chilingirian (Urfa Resistance), Peroomian, *Armenian Resistance to Genocide*; and Vardouhi Nashalian (Moussa Dagh Resistance), see "The Heroine Vardouhi," in Verjine Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors* (Yerevan: Gitutyun Publishing House, 2011), 600, and testimony of Movses Panossian in Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 463-465. Also, interview of Shooshanig Shahinian, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Armenian Film Foundation, <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=56458&returnIndex=0>.

28. Vahé Tachjian, "Gender, Nationalism, Exclusion: The Reintegration Process of Female Survivors of the Armenian Genocide," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 1 (2009): 76.

29. Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, Jerusalem, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/spiritual_resistance.asp; http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/newsletter/13/main_article.asp#!prettyPhoto.

30. Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 120.

Frequently, survivor and descendant testimony highlights the ways women developed innovative survival strategies and adapted to new challenges. Daily survival and protection of children were imbued with the desire to live and overcome attempts at their destruction. Early on, Armenian women negotiated with authorities for the release of arrested relatives and hid weapons during searches. When preparing for deportation, they packed bedding and other essentials, organized donkeys and carts, and prepared bread and dried fruit for the journey. Many sewed valuables into the lining of their clothes or buried them in their gardens to prevent looting by Turks or perhaps in the hope they would one day return.³¹ On the deportation marches, they tied pieces of clothing together with a tin can on the end to pull water out of wells or used other makeshift vessels, and washed seeds from animal waste to fry in cans.³² Protection of children was paramount, and mothers hid their sons and daughters under blankets and mattresses, wrapped their feet in pieces of cloth, and repeatedly rescued them from peril.³³

In *Rebirth*, Taft emphasizes the resilience of the women, their practical resourcefulness and their stoicism: “The women proved more resourceful and adaptable, and made do with the situation at hand. They put together what there was of bread and food... And it was the women who kept up morale by singing *Der Voghormya* (Lord Be Merciful) “a religious chant.”³⁴ Spiritual resistance manifested in mothers and grandmothers imploring children to remember their Armenian identity regardless of what the future might hold, and instilling a sense of dignity, as in the case of child survivor Dirouhi Highgas, who felt ashamed of having become a refugee. Her mother told her, “*You know what a diamond is, Dirouhi? Sometimes you put the diamond in the mud. But when you take it out, it’s a diamond. Nothing will happen to it. So that’s what it’s going to be like for you and all the rest of the Armenians. They think we’re just mud, but we’re not!*”³⁵

Acts of resistance can be seen in survivors’ descriptions of women’s relationships and sisterhood, such as when unrelated women helped those unfortunate enough to endure

31. Serpouhji Tavoukdjian wrote: “I was only a little girl ten years old, but how vividly I remember those four sad days of preparation. My mother was ill from grief and sorrow, and my sisters sewed frantically on garments which we would wear on our long journey. Into the seams of the wide bloomers we were to wear they sewed money and our few precious pieces of jewelry, which might be bartered along the wayside for food when the little supply we could carry was gone,” Serpouhji Tavoukdjian, *Exiled: Story of an Armenian Girl* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1933), 24; see also Margaret Ajemian Ahnert, *The Knock at the Door: A Mother’s Survival of the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Beaufort Books, 2012), 78-79.

32. Story of Sion Abajian, <https://genocideeducation.org/resources/survivor-accounts/>; also several examples in Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999); and in Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide*.

33. There are countless examples of women taking action to protect their children, including in Serpouhji Tavoukdjian, *Exiled*; Shahan Derderian, *Death March: An Armenian survivor’s memoir of the Genocide of 1915* (California: H. and K. Manjikian Publications, 2008); Arusiag Manuelian, *The Secret Exile and Extermination of Armenians* (unpublished memoir, Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Collection); testimonies of Kadjouni Toros Gharagyozyan and Angel Srapian in Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 234, 400.

34. Taft, *Rebirth*, 40.

35. Interview with Dirouhi Kouymjian Highgas in William S. Parsons, “Everyone’s Not Here: Families of the Armenian Genocide: A Study Guide” (Cambridge: Intersection Associates, 1989).

childbirth while on the deportation marches (even continuing the tradition of burying the afterbirth),³⁶ or assisted mothers to bury their dead children. Carrying out traditions associated with death are a strong mechanism for retaining a sense of humanity during genocide. Vartuhi Boyajian recalled that when her sister starved to death, her mother's friends collectively dug a hole in the sand and placed the baby in it.³⁷ Similarly, when a twelve year old girl died after being raped, a group of women helped her mother bury her and then wrote on the wall, "Shushan buried here."³⁸

Cultural preservation and clandestine maintenance of religious practices represent perhaps the most pertinent forms of resistance against perpetrators who, in both policy and implementation, attempted to erase Armenian heritage and prevent its transmission to future generations. Maritza Chopoorian Depoyan recalled survivors in Der Zor marking a bittersweet Easter in 1916, noting both the gendered nature of the event and the Turkish response to Armenian survival. Having been invited by the Armenian women of Salihieh village an hour from Der Zor, the survivors held a church service in the desert - praying, crying, kneeling, crossing themselves. She remembered the Turks saying to one another: "No matter what we do, we won't be able to destroy the Armenian nation - these people who have such a strong faith."³⁹ Even prior to the deportations, prohibitions on customs and language were ordered by the Turkish authorities, including the burning of books and razing of churches and historical sites, restrictions on Armenian language or writing, and the closure of Armenian schools. Despite this, one survivor's grandmother led her students through a secret passage to the basement where she taught them classical Armenian, reading and writing, and traditional songs.⁴⁰ This account is echoed in a well-known Armenian song about a school mistress 'daring' to teach Armenian to her students. Her tongue was cut out as punishment.⁴¹ Here we can see how examples of resistance and martyrdom became part of post-genocide collective memory, with narratives of defiance and cultural maintenance leaving a lasting influence on descendants.

Peroomian has identified a shift during the 1800s, when Armenian women transformed their traditional responses to persecution and war. She argues that in the context of increasing Armenian desire for liberation from Ottoman rule, acts of resistance were encouraged.

36. Ajemian Ahnert, *The Knock at the Door*, 96.

37. Vartuhi Boyajian, *My autobiography – Written in Constantinople 1922: This is the story of the Black Days of my life* (unpublished memoir, Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Collection).

38. Takouhi Levonian, cited in Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, "Women and Children of the Armenian Genocide," in *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St Martin's, 1992), 160.

39. Maritza Chopoorian Depoyan, "The Easter of 1916 in the Desert of Deir-El-Zor," in Marderos Deranian, *Hussenig: The origin, history, and destruction of an Armenian town*, trans., revised and with additions by Hagop Martin Deranian (Belmont: Armenian Heritage Press, 1994), 110; also Armen Anush writes of survivors in the desert marking Christmas with special food, Armen Anush, *Passage Through Hell: A Memoir* (California: H. and K. Manjikian Publications, 2007), 53-54.

40. The story of Goussineh Basmadjian, <http://www.spiritofchange.org/Winter-2009/Survivors-For-All-Time-Stories-of-the-Armenian-Genocide>.

41. Armenian song "Ah Alas!" in Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 565, also available at http://www.cilicia.com/armo_geno-songs.html.

The deaths of husbands and sons were not to be grieved but treated as a source of pride. In this context, women's reactions shifted from sadness and grief to a focus on heroism. Perroomian refers to a poem about a woman whose son is murdered in a Turkish prison: "*Her lamentations... embody a rebellious spirit against the Turk and against the God of the Armenians... The mournful mother points to the enemy and calls for revenge...*"⁴² In another poem, she explains, a dying son encourages his mother not to weep but to be proud of his sacrifice for Armenian freedom. In an indication of how pervasive this became in Armenian culture, even lullabies encouraged heroism on behalf of Armenia.⁴³

The rebellious spirit is clear in a host of survivor testimonies which reveal that women defied the gendarmes' rules at great risk, and even questioned the perpetrators' cruel acts. Some refused to let go of their children's hands on the marches despite orders and beatings;⁴⁴ others chastised the gendarmes or questioned the perpetrators' religious faith. One survivor's grandmother persisted in cursing a gendarme as he stabbed her.⁴⁵

A witness reported hearing a women yell at a group of gendarmes who were trying to extort money from her: "*Ever since leaving the city, all we do is give you money...Where am I supposed to get more coins for you? You took everything we had... You snatched all our families...What's next? All we're left with is the breath of life. Go ahead, take that away, too.*"⁴⁶ When a mother managed to buy vegetables and began cooking them, a group of soldiers kicked over the pan and stepped on the food. She asked them: "*Aren't you afraid of God? It has been months since we have had a decent meal, so why can't you give us a chance to have this?*"⁴⁷ In her unpublished memoir, Arusyag Manuelian described the "mischievous" defiance of her sister, Arshaluys, in refusing to allow her home and belongings to be taken by the Turks, thereby resisting the expropriation of Armenian property:

Arshaluys said, "Mother, I will go and shut the inside doors and windows of the house..." We waited for a while, but Arshaluys did not come out of the house. Being worried my mother went back into the house and to her surprise she saw that Arshaluys had broken all the twelve glass windows which faced the back garden, poured petroleum on the carpets and furniture, and tried to set the house on fire.⁴⁸

In cases where Turkish men would proposition women or try to convince them to marry or give away their children, some Armenian women not only refused but spoke back or

42. Rubina Perroomian, "When Death is a Blessing and Life a Prolonged Agony: Women Victims of Genocide," in *Genocide Perspectives II: Essays on Holocaust and Genocide*, eds. Colin Tatz, Peter Arnold and Sandra Tatz, (Blackheath, NSW: Brandl & Schlesinger Pty Ltd, 2003), 314-332. For more on resistance as part of Armenian identity, see Harutyun Marutyan, "Trauma and Identity: On Structural Particularities of Armenian Genocide and Jewish Holocaust," in *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies* 1, no. 1 (2014): 53-69.

43. Ibid, Perroomian, "When death is a blessing," 319.

44. Interview of Sinan Sinanian, in Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 397.

45. Story of Haig Baronian, <https://genocideeducation.org/resources/survivor-accounts/>.

46. Derderian, *Death March*, 45-47. The woman was subsequently tortured and shot.

47. Florence M. Soghoian, *Portrait of a Survivor* (Hanover: Christopher Pub House, 1997), 25.

48. Manuelian, *The Secret Exile*.

insulted them, saying for example, “*I don’t exchange a horse for a donkey,*”⁴⁹ or “*I want neither your gold nor you.*”⁵⁰ While perhaps seemingly minor moments of women’s experiences of genocide, these capture something of their spirit of defiance, and are recalled vividly by survivors and their children. Haykouhi Azarian described her mother asking a gendarme for permission to sit in the shade; he agreed, if she would give him one of her daughters. “*My mother said, ‘I won’t give you any and I’ll sit in the sun.’ I remember this well.*”⁵¹

Both common and enlightening are the examples of women and girls who were forcibly converted, but who retained their Armenian identity over many years of captivity. In Margaret Ajemian Ahnert’s book, *The Knock at the Door*, survivor Ester’s comments to her daughter exemplify the kind of resistance that relies on an internal strength, knowing and holding onto one’s identity, and instilling this in the next generation: “*That’s what they all tried to do to me. They beat me to bend, but I fooled them. I never bent in my heart, only with my body... You know the Turks told me never to speak Armenian. I obeyed. But they couldn’t stop me from thinking in Armenian.*”⁵² There are cases of girls subconsciously recalling the correct way to cross oneself, or being able to recognize an Armenian lullaby their mother used to sing.⁵³ One survivor attributed her successful escape to her continued practice of the Armenian alphabet, as well as the memory she had retained of her name and birthplace, which proved to her rescuers that she was indeed a kidnapped Armenian.⁵⁴ Resistance was a clear motivation, as in the case of a girl overtly asserting her identity after she had escaped from a Turkish home: “*First of all, my name is not Ayshe. My name is Ovsanna. My father’s surname is Altoonian, my mother’s surname is Gyokbashian. I am an Armenian. I will stay with the Armenians.*”⁵⁵ Others revealed their Armenian identity to their children once their husbands had died,⁵⁶ or continued to carry physical symbols such as small crucifixes as a reminder of their religion.⁵⁷ Dirouhi Avedian recalled her escape from captivity in her memoir, *Defying Fate*:

49. Interview of Yeghsa Anton Khayadjanian in Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 259-260.

50. Interview of Hermine Ter Voghormiajian in Ibid, 364-5.

51. Interview of Haykouhi Azarian in Ibid, 406.

52. Ajemian, *The Knock at the Door*, 81

53. E.g., Sirena Aram Alajajian in Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 410-412; see also “Song Wins Babe from Turk,” in *The Red Cross Bulletin*, August 18, 1919, reprinted in Hayk Demoyan, *Armenian Genocide: Front Page Coverage in the World Press* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2015), 232-233.

54. Rouben P. Adalian, “The Armenian Genocide,” in *Century of Genocide: Eyewitness Accounts and Critical Views*, eds. Samuel Totten, William S. Parsons and Israel W. Charny (New York/London: Garland Publishing Inc, 1997), 73-77.

55. Tigranouhi Movsessian, “Ovsanna-Ayshe, Who Remained an Armenian,” in Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 538-539.

56. Gevork Chiftchian in Ibid, 523.

57. “An aga from Diyarbekir ... took my mother-in-law on to his horse. Her name is Silva, he renamed her Zeynep. They had always called her ‘Gavur girl...’ She couldn’t bear this word. One day she had the cross in her pocket, the crucifix. The cross fell out when she was taking the key out. The lady of the house said, ‘Gavur girl, are you still carrying this?’ Then she ran away.” Leyla Neyzi and Hranush Kharatyan-Araqelyan, *Speaking to One Another: Personal Memories of the Past in Armenia and Turkey* (Institut für Internationale Zusammenarbeit Des Deutschen Volkshochschul-Verbandes, 2010), 63.

One day an Armenian shepherd (my future husband) came to visit us. My Arab mother asked after he left: “Who is that nesrani [Christian] boy?” “He is Sheikh Eyara’s nesrani son,” I said. “I’m Armenian; that’s why he came.” “So you’re still a gavur nesrani?” she asked. I replied, without any fear, “I was born a gavur, and even if I were to be washed with ten slabs of soap, I’ll still be a nesrani.” She lunged at me, gave me a fierce beating, and pulled my hair, which was very long. But that was the last time she could beat me.⁵⁸

Considering the post-genocide context of these memoirs and testimonies, survivors appear to have found meaning in particular themes and many embody Bauer’s concept of *Amidah*, or “standing up against.” In defying attempts to erase their identity and ensuring the continuity of Armenian culture, these women resisted genocide and directly contributed to the survival of the Armenian community. Moreover, in passing on their memories to future generations, they tried to ensure that Armenian identity would continue to thrive, and that the history of the genocide would not be forgotten.

Descendants Remember

For some Armenian survivors, the need to tell their stories motivated them to try to endure the horrors of genocide;⁵⁹ for others, it represented a final act of resistance after the genocide. One scholar has suggested that descendants participate in resistance by listening to survivors’ testimony: “*The telling of the story is important in and of itself, but the transmission of the story to another transforms the telling into a collective act, which lends power to the voice by giving it agency.*”⁶⁰ Many descendants of survivors, particularly the third generation, not only seek out their relatives’ stories but view keeping those memories alive as both a sacred duty and a way to challenge ongoing Turkish denial.⁶¹ The profound need to remember their family stories combined with the emphasis on resistance and survival, and themes of heroism and ancient legends, emerges strongly in granddaughter Astrid Katcharyan’s *Affinity with Night Skies*:

I NEED to tell this story, for me, for all of them, but most of all, for Astra. Her story is our story and will not end with this book... I want to build a statue to her memory, for all our memories. I see her now, classic, heroic, noble, carved as a Greek caryatid carrying the temple of her family on alabaster shoulders...I need to tell this story because not to do so would be to deny her, deny me, and all of them...⁶²

58. Dirouhi Avedian (nee Cheomlekjian), *Defying Fate: The Memoirs of Aram and Dirouhi Avedian*, Genocide Library Volume 5 (California: H. and K. Manjikian Publications, 2014), 21.

59. E.g., Manuelian recounts her mother saying “Whoever survives must write down all the things which we have experienced on our endless road of exile,” in Manuelian, *The Secret Exile*.

60. Jennifer Rinaldi, *Survivor Song: The Voice of Trauma and Its Echoes* (University of Denver Digital Commons, Electronic Theses and Dissertations, Paper 552, 2011), 202.

61. For more details, see Rubina Peroomian, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature: The Second Generation Responds* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, 2015).

62. Astrid Katcharyan, *Affinity with Night Skies: Astra Sabondjian’s Story* (London: Taderon Press, 2005), 9.

For descendants who are named after their relatives, as in Astrid Katcharyan's case, the connection is further intensified.⁶³ Yerevan-based Ani Dekirmenchyan was named after her great-grandmother, Aghavni: *"They took the middle [of the name] and named me Ani after her. I feel very proud to have her name. She was a very strong woman."*⁶⁴ Ani explains that when the round ups of Armenians of Adana began, Aghavni protected her seven children by grabbing a skewer from the barbeque and killing the gendarme at her door. She says of her great-grandmother's role in the family in later years, *"Everyone was afraid of her. Even if her grandsons had problems with other boys, they would seek her help, not their father's help. She could catch mice with her hands and kill them."*⁶⁵

Ani's own powerful sense of identity has been influenced by this perception of resilience, as well as the importance instilled in her of cultural maintenance. Although Aghavni had only been allowed to speak Turkish in Adana, later in life she asked her relatives to speak to her and each other in Armenian. Ani now works as a language teacher with the Armenian General Benevolent Union. She says: *"It is hard to realize that another nation ... wanted to kill you, to erase you, but you survived. And you have to live and talk about this, tell this to the world but not with tears in your eyes, like we are poor, we were killed. No, you have to tell the world... this happened to my people and I lived, my relatives lived, my people lived. We were strong and we are strong."*⁶⁶

Testimonies of descendants highlight the cultural and religious preservation of their relatives and how this nurtured their own identity. Many survivors recall their own mothers and grandmothers consciously passing on Armenian heritage and imploring them never to forget it. Ajemian Ahnert recounts Ester's grandmother urging her to continue walking on the deportation march, pulling a small iron cross from her neck and handing it to her. Later, when Ester was discovered by her abductor secretly praying with her grandmother's cross, she was whipped every day for a week. Similarly, either refusing or feigning conversion are acts of resistance frequently retold by descendants, with women imagining themselves in their grandmother's place and wondering about the choices they may have made in the same circumstances.

Ilda Deryan, the Principal of an Armenian school in Melbourne, Australia, vividly recalls the night her grandmother Zarouhi shared with her - for the first and only time - the experiences she had endured during the genocide.⁶⁷ Ilda remembers that her grandmother was keeping her company while she nursed her newborn baby. This unique environment shared between grandmother, granddaughter and the next generation, proved conducive to opening up about tortures she had rarely revealed to anyone. Zarouhi spoke of being taken with her sister-in-law to a big hall and told that

63. Peroomian, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*, 9-10; and Larkey writes of the bond created between grandchildren named after victims or survivors of the Holocaust in Larkey, "Transcending Memory," 216.

64. Interview with Ani Dekirmenchyan, June 26, 2016.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Interview with Ilda Deryan, May 20, 2016.

if they denounced Christianity and became Muslims, their lives may be saved. They were told to put their hands on a Quran and repeat words they didn't understand. Her name was changed to Zehra. Ilda remembers Zarouhi exclaiming, "*These people were stupid, how can you change what's in someone's heart? We did what we had to do to survive.*" Having lost several relatives on the march, Zarouhi and her sister in law were selling their remaining belongings when a Turkish woman warned them they would all be slaughtered and asked Zarouhi to hand over her baby to save her life. "*Grandma said a hundred thoughts raced through her mind... She says for a few seconds she was tempted but something made her say, 'I'll never give up my child, if I die she dies with me.'*"⁶⁸

Zarouhi lived to the age of 99. Her strength and ability to adapt to life's challenges with grace have left their mark on Ilda's own identity:

Her story and the story of other survivors make me simmer with rage. These people deserved recognition... I'm a proud Armenian with a love for our language and traditions... I will continue to live as Armenian and fight to teach our history, culture and traditions to the young generations as I feel I owe it to my grandparents and relatives whose choices were brutally taken away from them.

Those Turkish descendants who have discovered an Armenian relative have complicated legacies to manage. In her pioneering memoir, Fethiye Çetin tells of the secret bond that developed between her and her elderly Armenian grandmother, as Heranus revealed the story of her abduction.⁶⁹ In an effort to eliminate her Armenianness, her captors converted her, forbade her from speaking her language, and gave her a Turkish name. Transmitting her history to her granddaughter - her birth name, her parents' names, her religion and culture - was her final act of resistance in old age.

Çetin's response to her grandmother's story is relevant to the notion of transmitted defiance because of the emphasis she places on her grandmother's agency. Çetin notes her grandmother would never participate in the singing of Turkish folksongs, and even more tellingly, she cites the clandestine practice of baking and sharing *corek* (braided sweet bread) at Easter by Armenian converts, even into their old age. She herself feels compelled to an act of resistance on behalf of her grandmother, an attempt to assert Heranus' identity and preserve the memory of her Armenianness. At her funeral, Çetin cried out: "*But that's not true! Her mother's name wasn't Esma, it was Isguhi! And her father's name wasn't Huseyin, but Hovannes!*"⁷⁰

The secret continuity of Armenian cultural tradition, such as marking the sign of the cross on dough before baking,⁷¹ represents ongoing resistance to forced assimilation. Many survivors even attribute their survival to the retention of identity, as Taft writes: "...I

68. Ibid.

69. Fethiye Çetin, *My Grandmother: A Memoir* (London/New York: Verso, 2008).

70. Ibid, 3.

71. Vardouhi Voskian, "The Muslim Armenians of Hamshen," in Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 536; see also Armen Anush, *Passage through Hell*, when she came across converted Armenians in Raqqa and Der Zor "they spoke the language of their fathers to describe the age-old virtues of their mothers. They were proud of their mothers."

survived by remaining Armenian in a world which had sought to devour me. *I would not let it destroy me* [original emphasis]. And it was only my ‘Armenian-ism’ - and all that it implies in terms of survival — that saved me as a human being.”⁷²

Even in cases where granddaughters did not experience a positive relationship with their grandmother, the influence of resilience and temerity is striking. Marina Khachaturyan describes her grandmother’s negative, quarrelsome attitude, her constant singing of sad songs: “*Everyone in the building called her a witch. I was ashamed of her. I didn’t understand then, as a child, what she had experienced.*” As an adult, however, she values the act of remembering and retelling the history of the genocide, saying, “*If you shoot your past with a gun, the future will shoot you with cannon. One should never forget!*”⁷³

Marina’s inherited spirit of defiance manifests partly in her choice of work teaching Armenian language and culture, but further, in specific acts of assertiveness and resistance in her own life. She recounts an episode in Tbilisi, when her Azerbaijani taxi driver took an unexpected route through a forest. He asked her, “*Aren’t you afraid? I could do anything to you here in the forest and no one would know.*” Marina says, “*So I took my umbrella, a very large umbrella, and I looked at him with this umbrella. I wouldn’t be afraid to kill him. At the end of the trip, he said, “Because you are Armenian, I am going to charge you ten Lari”* [instead of four] and I got out of the car and said, “*And I am going to pay you nothing.*”⁷⁴

Conclusion

In 2013, Lory Tatoulian’s mother read Aguline Dertazyian’s memoirs out loud, as Lory roughly translated them into English. Lory describes with enormous pride how Aguline was the only woman to participate in physical defense with the *fedayis* of Hadjin, hiding in caves and shooting if any Turks approached. When one of the group was shot, “*Aguline took his fatigues and gun ... she chopped off all her hair so that she could look like a man... she didn’t want to be raped, or taken in ... I’d rather die like this than like that.*”⁷⁵ But perhaps even more than physical resistance, Lory admires her grandmother’s will to survive, describing how she took an eight-year old boy under her wing and “*they walked – every time I say this I want to cry - from Hadjin to Adana which is about 90 miles... and they ate whatever they could find - animals, plants, cats, anything.*” Further, she emphasizes that Aguline raised five children alone after her husband died, at the same time as working as a school teacher and performing in the theatre. Lory is one of many of the third generation who has channeled their interest in the stories of their grandparents into political activism or artistic endeavors.⁷⁶ Her work as an actor has been inspired by her grandmother yet it is also influenced by contemporary Armenian identity: “*So I have a playbill where there are all these young people, their head shots, and then it’s [my grandmother], in her sixties! I*

72. Taft, *Rebirth*, 141.

73. Interview with Marina Khachaturyan, Yerevan, June 2016.

74. Ibid.

75. Interview with Lory Tatoulian, May 15, 2016.

76. Perroomian notes this is a frequent response by members of the third generation, *The Armenian Genocide in Literature*, 310.

*do this sketch comedy in English about the Armenian community. In a way it is cathartic... making sense of who we are as diaspora Armenians.”*⁷⁷

The act of transcending memory - not by forgetting it but by remembering and retelling it - aligns with Larkey's notion of transmemory, where the third generation honors their grandparents' memories by transforming them into positive action. The focus of women descendants on the concepts of survival, resilience and resistance described in survivors' stories is critical to this transformation. It has also developed from a longstanding culture of reverence for self-defense and resistance in the Armenian community. Where their relatives fought back against deliberate and gendered strategies to destroy family bonds and cultural heritage, Armenian women today remember and celebrate such acts, from small moments of refusal to cooperate to continuous efforts to secretly maintain their identity. Some descendants see themselves as resisting current attempts to silence the Armenian community and distort or deny the history of the genocide.

In writing of Jewish spiritual resistance, Bauer says, *“It is wrong to demand, in retrospect, that these tortured individuals and communities should have behaved as mythical heroes. The fact that so many of them did is a matter of wonderment.”*⁷⁸ Yet, whether they live in Armenia or the diaspora, Armenian women today are awed by their relatives' endurance and honor it by efforts to speak the language with their children and send them to Armenian schools, to perform in Armenian theatre or write their family's stories. The way the genocide is remembered and retold across the generations is as crucial to our understanding as the original experiences themselves. Significantly, the culture of Armenian women's defiance as portrayed in memoirs and testimonies seems to have filtered down the generations. Today, many Armenian women embody an attitude that their grandmothers and other women either intentionally or unconsciously transmitted, perhaps best summed up by Lory Tatoulian as *“nothing's gonna bring me down.”*⁷⁹

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77. Ibid.

78. Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 149.

79. Interview with Lory Tatoulian, May 15, 2016.

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“IF I DIE, I DIE”: WOMEN MISSIONARY WORKERS AMONG DANES, ARMENIANS, AND TURKS, 1900-1920¹

Matthias Bjørnlund

Based on extensive studies of archival material and little-known contemporary published sources, this article will explore how and why Danes – famous in certain circles like Maria Jacobsen, virtually unknown like Hansine Marcher and Jenny Jensen, but all women – ended up in remote corners of the Ottoman Empire before and during the Armenian Genocide. They were sent out as field workers for one of the world’s first proper NGOs, the Danish branch of the Evangelical organization Women Missionary Workers. What did these women from the European periphery experience, and how were they perceived at home and abroad during peace, war, massacre, and genocide? Why did the Armenians among all the suffering peoples of the world become their destiny, even after the genocide? And how did they try to make sense of it all, from everyday life and work before 1915 to the destruction of the Ottoman Armenians and the immediate aftermath? The article will put the missionary and experiences into an ideological, institutional, local, regional, and international context, and consider to what extent the Danish women could be considered feminist and humanitarian pioneers.

Key-words: Armenian genocide, missionaries, humanitarianism, gender studies, Christian millenarianism, Armenophilia, Middle East, Turkey, Ottoman Empire.

1. This paper is based to a large extent on heavily edited and updated parts of my two monographs in Danish: Matthias Bjørnlund, *Det armenske folkedrab fra begyndelsen til enden* (Copenhagen: Kristeligt Dagblads forlag, 2013) (*The Armenian Genocide from the Beginning to the End*), and idem, *På herrens mark: Nødhjælp, mission og kvindekamp under det armenske folkedrab* (Copenhagen: Kristeligt Dagblads Forlag, 2015) (*In God’s Field. Relief Work, Mission, and Suffragettes during the Armenian Genocide*), as well as a paper I wrote for the Workshop for Armenian-Turkish Scholarship (WATS) conference in Berlin, 2017. For a more complete list of primary and secondary sources used, see https://www.academia.edu/18733050/Komplet_kilde-_og_litteraturliste_til_Matthias_Bj%C3%B8rnlund_P%C3%A5_herrens_mark._N%C3%B8dhj%C3%A6lp_mission_og_kvindekamp_under_det_armenske_folke_drab_2015. See also, “*The League of Nations in Aleppo: Armenian Women and Children Survivors 1921-1927*,” eds. Dicle Akar Bilgin, Matthias Bjørnlund, and Taner Akcam, 2014, <http://www.armenocide.de/armenocide/orphan-children.nsf!OpenDatabase>; Matthias Bjørnlund, “Danish Missionaries in the Kharpert Province: A Brief Introduction,” *Houshamadyan: a project to reconstruct Ottoman Armenian town and village life*, <http://www.houshamadyan.org/mapottomanempire/vilayetofmamuratulazizharput/harputkaza/religion/missionaries.html>, November, 2015; idem, “The Big Death’: Finding Precise Terminology for the Murder of the Armenian People,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, 23 April 2015; idem, “Armenia as a State of Mind: 100 Years after the Genocide,” April 2015, 100lives.com; *The Armenian Genocide and Scandinavian Response*, ed. Matthias Bjørnlund, Hayk Demoyan, Suren Manukyan (Yerevan: AGMI, National Academy of Sciences, 2014); Matthias Bjørnlund, “A Fate Worse than Dying’: Sexual Violence during the Armenian Genocide,” in *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe’s Twentieth Century*, ed. Dagmar Herzog (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 16-58; idem, “At skabe håb i helvedes forgård: Da Industrimissionen i Armenien kom til Grækenland,” serialized article in *Dansk Armeniermission* (May and December 2017), 2-4 and 4-6. All online resources were accessed 03.12.2018.

Prologue: “The Misses Jacobsen, Jensen, and Petersen are still at their Posts and in Good Health”

It was early 1916 that the Armenia Committee of the Danish branch of Women Missionary Workers (*Kvindelige Missions Arbejdere*, hereafter KMA) wrote a letter from their headquarters in Copenhagen to the Danish diplomatic minister at Constantinople (Istanbul), Carl Ellis Wandel, with a simple, urgent question: Are there any news from our four missionaries in the towns of Harput (Kharpert) and Mezreh (Elazig) in the province of Mamouret-ul-Aziz? That was the province or *vilayet* that came to be known as the slaughterhouse province when the Armenian Genocide began in 1915, where tens of thousands of Armenian men, women, and children from this and other regions were murdered, enslaved, or died of thirst and exhaustion in front of the missionaries. From November 1914, when WWI reached the Ottoman Empire after the attack on Russia, censorship and other conditions of war had seriously hampered communication between the missionaries and their homeland. And now, February 1916, virtually nothing came through; no one knew if the missionaries were alive or dead. The KMA committee already informed through the press and visiting or returning Western missionaries about the ongoing genocide were well aware that no news might just be bad news.²

In the absence of information, the Armenia Committee saw no other solution than to contact Wandel posted at the posh Pera Palace Hotel near Grande Rue de Péra (Istiklal Avenue) in the Ottoman capital with what amounted to a missing persons-report on “Danish women missionaries who are at the moment staying in Asiatic Turkey”:

- 1) “Miss Maria Petrea Jacobsen, born 6 November 1882 in Dover parish, Jylland [*Jutland, mainland Denmark*]. Father: Jens Jacobsen, factory worker, now living in Horsens. Sent to Turkey in the year 1907 by the association Women Missionary Workers which sponsors her. Works for the American mission association *American Board* in Harpoot. Nurse and evangelization.
- 2) Miss Karen Marie Petersen, born 8 February 1881 in Nykøbing Sjælland. Daughter of Jens Ulrik Petersen, customs manager, now living in i Skælskør. Sent out in the year 1909 by the association Women Missionary Workers which sponsors her. Works in Mezereh as leader of an orphanage (Danish).
- 3) Miss Jenny Kristine Jensen, born 2 January 1873 in Lemvig. Daughter of now deceased draper Jensen; mother: widow M. Jensen – address: Mr. Dr. Andersen, Lemvig. Sent out in the year 1905 by *Deutscher Hilfsbund für christliches Liebeswerk im Orient* which sponsors her. Works in Mezereh as leader of an orphanage (German).
- 4) Miss Hansine Franciska Marcher, born June 1874 in Allinge, Bornholm. Father dead, mother: widow H. Marcher, Allinge. (Address in Copenhagen: merchant Hans Marcher, 12-14 Vesterbrogade.) Sent out in the year 1904 by *Deutscher*

2. Leslie A. Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province: An American Diplomat's report on the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917* (New Rochelle, New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1989). See also below, where Karen Marie Petersen describes Mezreh as “The Great Slaughterhouse.”

Hilfsbund für christliches Liebeswerk im Orient (Frankfurt am Main) which sponsors her.”³

There was in fact reason to be worried. That same month, for instance, February 1916, Jacobsen wrote extensively in her diary about the dire circumstances and tense atmosphere in the Ottoman province, where “many Turks openly acknowledge that this is the punishment for their sins.” “Their sins” were obviously the extermination of the Armenians, while “this” was the approaching Russian army from the north. That army never reached the slaughterhouse province, but, according to Jacobsen, still for a while it managed to simultaneously create widespread panic, occasional introspection or pangs of guilt, and plans for further atrocities among local Turks: “Why did we kill the women and children, they were innocent?” But at the same time they make plans to completely annihilate the Armenians before they leave the town themselves.”⁴ No one knew were that would leave Westerners protecting Armenians such as the Danish missionaries – at that point, Jacobsen was co-responsible with *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (ABCFM) for hundreds of Armenians at American compounds, while Karen Maria Petersen was sheltering more than 100 Armenian women and children at KMA’s *Emaus* orphanage, some of them secretly, and working with local Kurds to smuggle them to safety.⁵

The main part of the genocide had been completed in the region the year before, but it was by no means a finished project. In January 1916, for instance, the Armenian children from the German orphanage *Elim* (right next to *Emaus* in Mezreh) were taken by the local Ottoman authorities, allegedly to be reunited with their parents. The parents were dead, of course, and the children were sent to be murdered, burned or drowned a few hours journey from the town. KMA’s Jenny Jensen, head mistress of the *Elim* orphanage, could not believe that this could be true, but the next day she rode out herself and saw the charred bodies of the children with her own eyes.⁶ All four KMA missionaries had also witnessed the initial phases of the genocide, from dehumanization and fake accusations to imprisonment, torture, massacre, and death marches, which they describe in detail in letters, meeting protocols, diaries, and published works. Here is how Karen Marie Petersen remembers the massive, previously announced deportation from Mezreh, 3 July

3. Rigsarkivet (Danish National Archives), Udenrigsministeriets Arkiver (Foreign Ministry Archives; UM), 2-0355, Konstantinopel/Istanbul, Diplomatisk Repræsentation, 1822-1920, Korrespondancesager. Korrespondance om sunheds- [sic] og humanitære sager, 1897-1920.

4. Maria Jacobsen, *Maria Jacobsen’s Diary 1907-1919, Kharpout – Turkey* (Antelias, Lebanon: The Armenian Catholicosate, 1979), 444 in the original Danish diary. On the advance in north-eastern Anatolia in early 1916 that was halted a few months later, see, e.g., Ronald Grigor Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else: A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015), 296-297.

5. Matthias Bjørnlund, *Det armenske folkedrab & På herrens mark : nødhjælp, mission og kvindekamp under det armenske folkedrab* (Kristeligt Dagblad, 2015).

6. Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 402; James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916*, uncensored ed. (Princeton, New Jersey: Gomidas Institute, 2000 (1916)), 286-289.

1915, which she and some of her Danish, German, and American missionary colleagues followed as far as the Ottoman gendarmes would let them. It was an experience that, as she puts it, left the missionaries paralyzed at the time and served as the stuff of nightmares for her for years to come:

The summer morning when we had to bid farewell to our dearest friends in Mezreh who were driven from their homes that day was so awful! Early in the morning, I walked through town to say goodbye. Everyone is busy breaking up and loading their clothes on donkeys or carts. In the poor neighborhood in particular there is total confusion, since many have refused to believe it would become serious and have thus made no preparations, so they are being forced out as they are. They do not want to go, they cry and throw themselves to the ground: "Let us die here!," they plead. The gendarmes hit them with their rifle or drag them out by the hair, lock the door behind them, and put the key in their pocket. They have no home anymore – and walk with the crowd. – Down the road they move, constantly, until late in the afternoon. Young and old, the blind and the crippled, women so exhausted from fear and emotion that they cannot stand up, and old men with canes, struggling, wavering. A head of family surrounded by his children yells when he sees us: "We have taken up our cross and follow Jesus!"

I have met [German missionaries] Mr. and Mrs. Ehmann, and together we walk part of the way on the road with the caravan. They all want to shake our hands to say goodbye while the tears stream down their faces, and they say: "We walk to our deaths, pray for us!" It is as if our heart [sic] will burst; to watch this misery and not be able to do anything! Still the crowd grows; we see ox carts with a sun screen over a group of smiling children's faces, cows loaded with bedding and kitchenware, and finally whole columns of mounted gendarmes armed with rifles, filled cartridge belts, and knives and revolvers by their side – they go out "to protect," it sends shivers down our spine to see them!⁷

The Danish envoy Carl Ellis Wandel, well-informed and well-connected in the heart of Empire, knew better than most people the precarious situation for Armenians and missionaries, particularly in the eastern provinces. He had at this point already written numerous reports on various aspects on the genocide for the Danish Foreign Ministry, like in September 1915, when he outlined the CUP's (Committee of Union and Progress; Young Turks) "road of Turkification" and "xenophobic and nationalistic" policy, "which at the moment has as its main purpose the extermination of the Armenian population in the Empire."⁸ But 24 March 1916, after having examined the case through US consul Leslie Davis in Mezreh, Wandel could inform KMA in Copenhagen that three of the missionaries were in fact still in the *vilayet* and in good health (a bit of an exaggeration, as Maria Jacobsen was still recovering from serious illness), while the fourth, Hansine Marcher, had just left the province on a perilous and eventful journey home through

7. Quoted in Amalie Lange, *Et Blad af Armeniens Historie. Kvindelige Missions Arbejdere 1910-1920* (KMA, 1920), 47-48.

8. Matthias Bjørnlund, "'When the Cannons Talk, the Diplomats Must Be Silent': A Danish Diplomat in Constantinople during the Armenian Genocide," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1, no. 2 (2006): 203.

Diyarbakir, Urfa, and Constantinople. Not because she wanted to, none of the Danish missionaries wanted to leave their flock voluntarily, but because of what seems to be pressure from her German employers and the Ottoman authorities.⁹ On that journey Marcher was accompanied by a German colleague and an Assyrian assistant and, like several other eyewitnesses, including Karen Marie Petersen, passed through an area "sown with human bones" around the great massacre site at Lake Göljök (Hazar Gölü/Gölcük/Dzovk), witnessed how the great Armenian cathedral in Diyarbakir had been turned into an auction house for stolen Armenian goods, and how forcibly assimilated Armenian survivors lived in fear under Turkified or Kurdified names in the city, etc.¹⁰

Marcher, who was leader of a German girl school with 200 Armenian and Assyrian children in Mezreh as well as nurse at the local German Red Cross hospital, reached Copenhagen later that year. Here, she told KMA's Armenia Committee about how the children in her care were sent to their deaths. As it is put in the minutes of this 15 June 1916 meeting: "*After Miss Marchers return most of the ladies of the committee were gathered with her to learn about conditions in Mezreh, and at this meeting she elaborated on those matters. It may be that none of our sisters over there have suffered more personally from the systematic extermination of a people than her, as she has witnessed her whole school work destroyed and all her students leave, crying and wailing, with the expelled*".¹¹

March 1915, before the genocide began, Hansine Marcher had been informed by a visitor, the strongly Armenophobe and anti-Semitic German vice consul at Erzerum, Max Erwin von Scheubner Richter, that the newly appointed *vali*, Sabit Bey (Sagiroglu), had claimed that all Armenian in the empire were to be exterminated, as they had allegedly grown so numerous and prosperous that they threatened Turkish dominance. Many such rumors or pieces of information floated around at the time, but few Western missionaries or diplomats would believe them, including Marcher. In the summer of 1916, soon after Marcher had left, Jenny Jensen embarked on a similar journey with her adopted

9. Bjørnlund, "When the Cannons Talk," 197-223; www.armenocide.de – this website contains 80 documents (reports from Wandel on the Armenian Genocide and other relevant archival sources) in Danish as well as in English and German translation.

10. Hansine Marcher, *Oplevelser Derovrefra* (KMA, 1919), 10.

11. Rigsarkivet (Danish National Archives), Kvindelige Missions Arbejdere, (KMA), 10.360, pk. 42, "1912-1921," protokol fra møde i Armenierkomitéen, 15. juni 1916. On the persecution of Assyrians/Nestorians/Syriacs in the region and on the Assyrian Genocide/Seyfo/Sayfo in general, see, e.g., Anahit Khosroeva, "Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire and the Official Turkish Policy of Their Extermination, 1890s-1918," in *Genocide in the Ottoman Empire: Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks, 1913-1923*, ed. George S. Shirinian (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017), 123; Jozef Nacim, "Turkarnas Folk mord på Assyrier-kaldéer och Armenier," in *Händelserna i Kärme/Xarput/Harput*, ed. Jan Beth-Sawoce, Sayfe Beth-Nahrin (1920), 71ff; Sargon George Donabed and Shamiran Mako, "Harput, Turkey to Massachusetts: Immigration of Jacobite Christians," *Chronos, Revue d'Histoire de l'Université de Balamand*, no. 23 (2011): 20; *Let Them Not Return: Sayfo – The Genocide against the Assyrian, Syriac and Chaldean Christians in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. David Gaunt, Naures Atto, Soner O. Barthoma (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017); *The Assyrian Genocide: Cultural and Political Legacies*, ed. Hannibal Travis (London: Routledge 2017); Sargon Donabed and Ninos Donabed, *Images of America: Assyrians of Eastern Massachusetts* (Charleston, Arcadia Publishing 2006), 13.

Armenian daughter Margarit, a genocide survivor, while Maria Jacobsen and Karen Marie Petersen ended up staying in Harput and Mezreh to the bitter end.¹²

The experiences of the Danish missionaries during the genocide will be dealt with in some detail below, but why were they there, in the Ottoman Empire, in the first place, why was there such a relatively large representation of Danish women working with, for, and among Armenians and other Ottoman populations in the first decades of the 20th century (there were, as we will see, quite a few more during those years than the four abovementioned KMA missionaries), and why did they not all return home during the genocide and its aftermath when they had the chance?

The Start of Activities of Women Missionary Workers

“The church bells chimed on New Year’s Eve. [...] Solemn, full-toned, strangely earnest they sounded over the capital of Denmark in the beautiful moonlit night in the first hour of the new century, while resounding salvos, rockets, and the thunder of the cannons from the battleships anchored outside the harbor spoke their festive language.” That is how Women Missionary Workers ten years later with some pathos describe that fateful night in Copenhagen that marked not only the beginning of the 20th century, when 1899 became 1900, but also of the creation of Danish KMA. KMA was an organization explicitly founded in the service of sanctity with “women working for women,” as the official motto went, and on the agenda was first and foremost easing the continuing suffering of Ottoman Armenian women and children in the wake of the 1890s massacres during the reign of sultan Abdülhamid II (the Hamidian massacres). Like in the rest of the Western world, the massacres had been extensively covered in the media, creating public debate between Armenophiles on one side and Armenophobes (who were often pro-Turkish/Muslim as well as anti-Semitic) on the other. Mostly, though, the coverage created sympathy towards the persecuted in “the land of blood and tears,” as Ottoman Armenia was often referred to.¹³

But what to do in small, neutral, peripheral Denmark about the Armenians living in poverty and fear? To H. V. Sthyr, Danish bishop and conservative Minister of Culture, writing on the occasion of a large-scale pro-Armenian petition in 1896 supported by some of the most influential Danes at the turn of the century, including royalty, clergy,

12. Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province*, 40-42; Bryce and Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians*, 286; Elise Bockelund, *Høsten er Stor – KMA’s Historie Gennem 50 År* (København: KMA, 1950), 37; 1915-08-05-DE-002, Enclosure 1. by Scheubner-Richter, a few years later one of Adolf Hitler’s most faithful supporters, is counted as a particularly reliable and well-informed source. Already early 1915, he reported on violence against Armenians in Erzerum and of the likelihood of a coming great massacre, www.armenocide.de; Hilmar Kaiser, “‘A Scene from the Inferno’: The Armenians of Erzerum and the Genocide, 1915-1916,” in *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah/The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah*, ed Hans-Lukas Kieser and Dominic Schaller (Zürich: Kronos Verlag, 2002), 130ff. Alma Johansson likewise reports on how local officials in Mush such as Ekran Bey talked openly about massacres and extermination as early as November 1914 and April 1915; Göran Gunner, *Folkmordet på armenier: sett med svenska ögon* (Stockholm: Artos Norma Bokförlag, 2012), 189.

13. Matthias Bjørnlund, “Virtuous Victims? Imagining Armenians in the West,” *Armenian Weekly*, Special Issue (April 2012): 38-42.

intellectuals, and representatives of all major political parties, "We Danes could do absolutely nothing in a political sense; but everyone with a heart hurting for their suffering could give a little to ease their suffering. The petition is particularly meant for those sensing a brotherly bond with everyone who shares our faith in our Lord and Savior." The women of KMA were inspired by, supported, and initiated such initiatives, though the bond they felt with Ottoman Armenians was definitely more of a sisterly kind. But, like the other large Danish association dedicated to helping the Ottoman Armenians around the year 1900, the largely secular Danish Friends of Armenians (DA) that were to employ the famous teacher and relief worker Karen Jeppe in Urfa and Aleppo, a supporting role was not nearly enough for KMA. They wanted to go out, be on the frontline, and actively save the remnants of a people. Thus, with the creation of KMA and DA, began the first large-scale, long-term, country-wide, professional Danish humanitarian grassroots initiatives on behalf of a faraway, persecuted, "exotic" minority: The Armenian aid.¹⁴

For Danish KMA a main inspiration to enter the field of mission, humanitarian relief, and developmental aid came, as noted, from outrage and pity after learning about the Hamidian massacres through mass media reports that travelled faster and farther than ever before due to the proliferation of the telegraph, while newspaper correspondents and eye-witnesses had easier access to, e.g., Constantinople with the Orient Express as well as by sea. When trying to collect money for the Ottoman Armenians in the immediate aftermath of the 1890s massacres, Ingeborg Marie Sick, novelist and founding member of Danish Friends of Armenians, succinctly described the broad appeal of this new *cause célèbre* as well as the genuine outrage over these sometimes very public atrocities, like the 1896 slaughter of some 6,000 Armenians in the Ottoman capital following the ARF (Armenian Revolutionary Federation; Tashnag/Dashnag) takeover of the Ottoman Bank in August that year: "*The first contribution was given by the queen [Queen Louise of Denmark]. The next by a captain of a ship anchored at Constantinople when the Armenians were beaten to death in the streets; he saw cut-off ears, noses, and fingers float in the red water of the gutter. That was when he decided that the people who were treated like this should receive all the money he made from his journey.*"¹⁵

But in order to explain the sudden creation of a proper broad and viable Armenophile movement at that particular time and place, Denmark c. 1900, a number of factors have

14. Bjørnlund, *Det armenske folkedrab*, 105 and passim.

15. Bjørnlund, *På herrens mark*, 125; Arman J. Kirakossian, *The Armenian Massacres 1894-1896: U. S. Media Testimony* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), passim; Selim Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 206; Fuat Dündar, *A Crime of Numbers: The Role of Statistics in the Armenian Question (1878-1918)* (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 143; Armen Garo (Karekin Pastermadjian), *Bank Ottoman: Memoirs of Armen Garo, the Armenian Ambassador to America from the Independent Republic of Armenia*, translated by Haig T. Partizian (Detroit: Armen Topouzian, 1990); Yair Auron, *The Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), passim; Keith David Watenpaugh, *Bread From Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 63-64.

to be considered. There were, for instance, vital outside influences on the population in general and on KMA and DA in particular. DA was founded in 1902 after several members had attended the Pan-Armenian congress in Brussels in July that year, and further outside influences included European and American organizations such as Pro Armenia, National Armenian Relief Committee, and Friends of Armenia. A few years earlier, the impetus to create Danish KMA came when letters and visits were received from Swedish KMA (formed in 1894) urging a small Danish Bible study group of upper class Copenhagen women to form a committee of a similar nature, with Lutheran-Evangelical women working for women based on a fundamentalist, personal, deeply devotional reading of scripture. The letter writer was teacher and headmistress Fredda Hammer, who had a background in various Swedish women's organizations, and now, after having received a calling from God, aimed at uniting "the women of the North" – Sweden, Denmark, and Norway (in 1900 still part of Sweden), as well as smaller groups in Finland, a Russian principality – to help the Armenians and proselytize abroad, where "souls were to be won for Christ."¹⁶

"Winning souls for Christ" was in fact a rallying call for the new millenarian Evangelical movement emerging mostly outside established, mainstream religious circles worldwide. It was a virtual "Protestant International," as it has been called, aimed at reviving global ties between the faithful, revitalizing Christianity, and proselytizing at home and abroad in the face of modernity, Darwinism, and secularization, ideally to prepare the second coming of Christ, no less. Though in reality riddled with what some may deridingly call "white savior complexes," often Orientalist, and at times in the service of Western imperialism and colonialism, this International was envisioned as a trans-national peaceful love revolution conquering every inch of every soul and corner of the world through intense Bible study, mission work, education, and aid to the poor. It was simultaneously aimed at returning to the roots of faith, whether imagined or real, *and* at a new way of living, thinking, and acting that gave women a relatively prominent role. While most Evangelical organizations were still male dominated (not counting the Scandinavian KMA branches, obviously), it was widely recognized that without active female participation, no movement could be truly global or effective, especially when it came to reaching out to women and children at home and abroad. All of this deeply appealed to and influenced the women of KMA, who not only read about that broad, heterodox movement, but sought it out at conferences round the world.¹⁷

16. Svenbjörn Kilander, "*En Nationalrikedom av Hälsoskatter*": *Om Jämtland och Industrisamhället 1882-1910* (Gidlunds Förlag, 2008), 191-192; Kvinnliga Missions-Arbetare [Women Missionary Workers] (1894). Secretary: Miss Anna Baeckman, Brunnsgatan 3, Stockholm. Object: The spread of the Gospel, and the winning of souls for Christ, especially among the women in non-Christian lands. Income: 23,611 Kr. Organ: "När och fjärran." Fields: China, India, Africa, Armenia, Russia, Sweden, Lapland. In *World Atlas of Christian Missions*, eds. James S. Dennis et al. (New York: 1911). Encyclopedic entry on Swedish KMA; *Great Need over the Water: The Letters of Theresa Huntington Ziegler, Missionary to Turkey, 1898-1905*, ed. Stina Katchadourian (Ann Arbor, MI: Gomidas Institute, 1999), xv.

17. Bjørnlund, *På herrens mark*, passim; Hans-Lukas Kieser, "Johannes Lepsius: Theologian, Humanitarian Activist and Historian of Völkermord. An Approach to a German Biography (1858-1926)," in *Logos im dialogos: Auf der Suche nach der Orthodoxie*, eds. Anna Briskina-Müller, Armenuhi Drost-

By creating their own Evangelical organization, Danish KMA could actively work to answer that cry for help from Armenia which they genuinely believed in hearing, but also be part of an international movement to spread the Christian message of love through mission as well as seek or create opportunities for personal expression and growth, leadership, career, influence, respect, philanthropy, and adventure. Not always on equal terms, as there was an actual class divide in KMA in the early phase – Danish field workers tended to come from working class or lower middleclass backgrounds, while committee members were most often upper class. But fields workers, while having fewer privileges and taking greater personal risks, still gained opportunities in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere they rarely had at home, including meaningful roles in a religious community other than, say, making coffee while the men were talking.¹⁸

To name one example, the Danish Lutheran State Church only ordained the first women priests in 1948, while missionaries like Maria Jacobsen and relief workers like Karen Jeppe could and would on occasion go as far as to function as *de facto* priests at ecumenical services for what remained of their flock during the genocide, when all other spiritual leaders were absent, killed or in exile. As another trailblazing Danish missionary, Andrea Gehlert, expressed it around 1900: At home as well as abroad women have an important and ever growing role in “the crusade of our time, the struggle for heavenly Jerusalem.”¹⁹ To find religious and historical justification for this active role the missionary women would, e.g., refer to early Christian communities at the time of Jesus and Paul that could have more liberal views on women as active and prominent in religious matters, and they also seem to have been inspired by certain empowering interpretations of the ancient concept of “the priesthood of all believers” (a.k.a. universal priesthood) that was particularly popular among Lutherans.²⁰

Abgarjan, Axel Meissner (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011), 209-229. On an earlier incarnation of a Protestant International, see, e.g., David E. Lambert, *The Protestant International and the Huguenot Migration to Virginia* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010).

18. Bjørnlund, *På herrens mark*, passim. In contrast, the two Norwegian missionary field workers in the Ottoman Empire at the time, Bodil Bjørn and Thora von Wedel-Jarlsberg, came from wealthy, influential backgrounds: Bjørn's father owned a shipping company, while Wedel-Jarlsberg was a baroness. They both witnessed aspects of the Armenian Genocide: See, e.g., Inger Marie Okkenhaug, “Women on a Mission! Scandinavian Welfare and the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1905-1917,” in *Interpreting Welfare and Relief in the Middle East*, eds. Nefissa Naguib and Inger Marie Okkenhaug (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 57-82.

19. N. Dalhoff, *En Kvindelig Missionær. Efter hendes egne Breve* (Copenhagen: Diakonissestiftelsens Depot 1893), 4. Andrea Gehlert went to proselytize among the Karen-people in Burma (Myanmar) in 1888, but, after encountering Scandinavian sailors in Rangoon, decided they needed saving more than the “heathens”: Karin Lützen: “Andrea Gehlert Franks (1857-1942),” <http://www.kvinfo.dk/side/597/bio/1307/origin/170/>. For an early appraisal of female missionaries, see “Kvinden som Missionær,” in *Gudelige Smaaskrifter*, ed. Foreningen til gudelige Smaaskrifters Udbredelse, Vol. 11 (Copenhagen: 1868), 269-296. The term “crusade” often used by missionaries such as Gehlert should rarely, if ever, be taken literally. As it was put, Christians needed to be careful “not to imitate the example of the crusaders, those deluded champions of the cross.” Quoted in Judd W. Kennedy, *American Missionaries in Turkey & Northern Syria and the Development of Central Turkey and Aleppo Colleges, 1874 – 1967*, unpublished MA Thesis (Virginia: College of William and Mary, 2008), 11.

20. See, e.g. Christine Lienemann-Perrin, “Den Frauen in der Missionsgeschichte Namen und Gesichter

KMA was and remained at heart an Evangelical organization, unlike the non-proselytizing, largely secular organization Danish Friends of Armenians – created and mostly run by Danish-Jewish-Icelandic linguist and free thinker Aage Meyer Benedictsén, himself an eye-witness to the immediate aftermath of the Hamidian massacres when traveling in the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Caucasus, and Iran; with leading members and supporters from Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and non-confessional Danish circles; and led in the field by Karen Jeppe, a liberal and somewhat unconventional Lutheran with a deep distrust of mission work as well as a deep respect for the Armenian Apostolic Church. But in vital matters such as creating possibilities not only for themselves, but, for instance, for Armenian girls and women too, DA and KMA were united rather than divided. Danish KMA's Hansine Marcher is thus rather typical (although unusually direct) in her denunciation of gender inequality and oppression of females at home and abroad from fellow Christians as well as from Muslims in this 1911 letter from the German school for Armenian girls at Mezreh published in a Danish Christian women's journal:

...It is so wonderful to know that Christian women back home are awakening and fight for their rights [Marcher is referring to the feminist struggle in Denmark that, e.g., finally allowed women the right to vote and be elected for parliament in 1915 through a referendum, a struggle where some Christian women's organizations participated alongside more militant suffragettes, MB]. Out here we feel how painfully backwards women are, and the strange thing is that some may be interested in the matter, but those same persons easily come to look at the surface and lose focus of the matter itself. It is not difficult to get a class of children interested in a subject like this so that their thoughts are set in motion, but, e.g., once you begin to work with the female teachers you feel how inexperienced they are when it comes to logical thinking.

And yet these women are living in a wonderland when it comes to freedom. They get to attend the teachers' meeting Friday night and sit on chairs (though only on those close to the door). And since that meeting is also a prayer meeting they are not forbidden to pray as they are elsewhere. Indeed, we have even taken it so far that the female teachers are doing the introduction. That took 3 months of struggle! I felt violated on behalf of the female teachers when they had to sit on the floor and were generally treated with contempt, while the young male teachers sat on chairs; I therefore told the German missionary, who is leading the meeting, and the Armenian Badwilli (priest) that either this had to change, or the female teachers had to have their own prayer meeting. When they would not agree with the second proposal they had to put up with the first.

And when one of the teachers at the girl school that I lead was to introduce the next meeting I asked him to hand over that task to me. After having spoken with the female teachers first, the meeting was held in my living room, with the best seats given to the

geben," in *"Die Mission ist weiblich": Frauen in der frühen Hermannsburger Mission*, ed. Jobst Reller (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012), 7-24; Malcolm B. Yarnell III, "The Priesthood of Believers: Rediscovering the Biblical Doctrine of Royal Priesthood," in Thomas White et al., *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2008), 221ff; Timothy George, "The Priesthood of All Believers," *First Things* (31 October 2016), <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2016/10/the-priesthood-of-all-believers>.

female teachers, while the male teachers sat down by the door. They did not feel at home there at all; with the female teachers it was different, they participated enthusiastically in everything, and then I finally declared to the whole group (we have more than 30 male and female teachers) that the female teachers would hereafter lead the meetings. For two weeks the male teachers went along, then they started to long for supremacy again and speak against the agreement. The storm has passed now, though, and, even if the female teacher leading the meeting is not granted the spot that according to Oriental customs belong to the person introducing the meeting, the female teachers are joining in with death-defying energy. – At our teachers' conferences it is always the same struggle! – And yet we demand as much from a female teacher as we do from a male, even though she only gets less than half the salary!

– And we, who have gone out here, are trampled upon by Armenian and Turkish men if we don't time and again force them to show us even a moderate amount of respect. And with every single new male teacher who arrives here at the girl school there is a fight – without words – before he understands how he must behave. For the first couple of days he does not even greet you, while he bows down almost to the ground for a man. The Badwilli (the priest) is for instance in a Protestant congregation like a monarch; that you as a woman dare tell him the truth if he does not follow the school schedule is so unheard of that he is not capable of giving that bold woman a single answer.²¹

Field work was challenging in many ways for Western women, not least when they met resistance from patriarchal individuals and structures such as described by Marcher here. But the possibilities this work created for the missionaries, the spiritual and material rewards gained when, say, a life or a soul was saved and a hospital or an orphanage built, outweighed the negative aspects for most. It is thus no coincidence that if missionary wives (who very often played active roles with mission, relief, nursing, teaching, book keeping, etc.) are counted alongside women missionaries, there were perhaps twice as many women as men sent by missionary organizations to regions such as the Ottoman Empire.²² There were, of course, also practical reasons for this break with traditional gender roles in Evangelical circles. For instance, as mentioned above, women missionaries

21. Hansine Marcher, "Af et Brev fra Frk. Marcher i Armenien," *Kristeligt Kvindeblad* 2, no. 10 (1911): 78-79. On Jeppe's background in the liberal Protestant movement Grundtvigianism, the second major revivalist religious as well as socio-cultural 19th century movement in Denmark besides Inner Mission, see Matthias Bjørnlund, "Karen Jeppe, Aage Meyer Benedictsen and the Ottoman Armenians: National Survival in Imperial and Colonial Settings," *Haigazian Armenological Review* 28 (2008): 9-43.

22. Engelsviken, in *SMT* 91, no. 4 (2003): 498-99. On the importance of having specialized female missionaries, see *World Missionary Conference* (1910): 313, where Miss Rouse, *World's Student Christian Federation*, states: "We have passed through one stage and arrived at another as regards the requirements concerning the preparation and training of women for foreign missionary work. During the first stage the Missionary Societies, through their Candidate's Department, and in other ways, called for, on the part of the women they sent out, earnestness, love of souls, zeal, and success in the winning of souls at home, and Christian experience. But they did not call for specialized preparation. Later on, and now, we find the call coming from the mission field in every direction and from the Boards in every direction for women that have had specialized training. There is a call on all sides for trained teachers for kindergarten workers, for those with M.A. degrees, and doctors and nurses, even for those who have special training in literature, in music, and I have even had demands for specialists in agriculture. The specialist training is right if the specialist demand is right."

had easier access to working among women and children in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere.²³ Still, in most missionary organizations women were marginalized.²⁴

But, all things considered, the Protestant International did significantly overlap with a movement of what has been dubbed “missionary feminism” with scores of active, assertive women acting and negotiating on equal terms with men nationally and internationally, a direct consequence of the utopian Protestant millenarian belief of a radically new and different social and religious order at home and abroad. Here, beliefs in “progress” – which included “civilizing” measures such as modern approaches to teaching and health as well as ideas of increased gender equality – were combined with a transboundary, revolutionary, evangelical spirituality that would in turn help inspire contemporary and later feminist, pacifist, and anti-imperialist movements. Because in the ideals of these missionary feminists there were many things, including a good deal a critical potential directed not only against what they saw as ills of contemporary society – atheism, depravity, materialism, alcoholism, the destruction of family values, etc. – but also against inequality, violence, oppression, and imperialism.²⁵

Conquering Denmark and Coming to Armenia: Danish KMA as a Global Actor

The women running Danish KMA were well aware from the beginning that in order to take the leap from local to international affairs meticulous preparation was needed. So, besides from their sisters in Swedish KMA, they sought inspiration from the British Evangelical Keswick movement in particular in the early phase, and they received visits from charismatic individuals involved with the Protestant International such as the influential and controversial Welsh Pentecostal missionary, activist, and writer Jessie Penn-Lewis, as well as by British revivalist preacher Lord Radstock, who had shocked the Russian nobility by trying to bring English Evangelical Protestantism to Orthodox Russia. Other sources of inspiration were local, such as Rev. H. L. Larsen from the Bethlehem Church in one of the largest and poorest working-class neighborhoods in Copenhagen, where the nucleus that were to become Danish KMA was already involved with charity and mission work. Larsen had a background in another major source of inspiration for KMA, Inner Mission, a rural Danish Evangelical movement founded in 1861 on the fringes of the Lutheran State Church. He went on to become an early and active male

23. See e.g. Dalhoff, *En Kvindelig Missionær*, 16.

24. Anne-Lise Schou, *Ydre og Indre Mission i Vendsyssel 1870-1920* (København: G.E.C. GAD, 1987), 82.

25. Elisabeth E. Prevost, “Introduction: Missionary Feminism,” in *The Communion of Women: Mission and Gender in Colonial Africa and the British Metropole* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Kristin Fjelde Tjelde, “Lærerinnenenes Misjonsforbund gjennom 100 år” in *Norsk Tidsskrift for Misjon* 56, no. 2 (2002): 78-79; <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hic3.12383/full>; Hans-Lukas Kieser, “Some Remarks on Alevi Responses to the Missionaries in Eastern Anatolia (19th – 20th cc.),” 2000, <http://www.hist.net/kieser/pu/responses.html>; Inger Marie Okkenhaug, “Women in Christian Mission: Protestant Encounters from the 19th and 20th Century,” <http://kilden.forskningsradet.no/c18372/artikkel/vis.html?tid=17564>.

supporter of women's mission and the Ottoman Armenians, and, as such, a natural ally of KMA, especially in the early phase when they met significant resistance from circles within and outside the Lutheran establishment who believed women should not play too active a role in religious matters.²⁶

Further impulses came from German Pastor Ernst Lohmann from Bad Freienwalde, who toured Scandinavia with his brother and fellow priest Johannes on a lecture tour in 1897 arranged by local YMCA/YWCA branches to speak on the suffering Armenians. They had witnessed those sufferings themselves among survivors from the mountains of Tarsus through the plains of Mesopotamia to the river Tigris and the Black Sea.²⁷ Ernst Lohmann was outraged like so many others about the official German-Ottoman alliance and the resulting poor coverage of the massacres in the German press, where they compared to, say, the Danish or US press, were more often justified or denied. So, he dedicated most of his time to collecting money and raising awareness of the plight of the Armenians in and outside of Germany. In 1896 he founded *Deutschen Hilfsbund (Hilfsbundes) für christliches Liebeswerk im Orient*, the abovementioned organization for "Christian labor of love" in the Orient that soon was to employ Danish KMA-missionaries Jenny Jensen and Hansine Marcher in Mezreh.²⁸

As noted, the women of Danish KMA now knew what they wanted, which was to go beyond mere local charity work and Bible study to become active parts of mission and relief among Ottoman Armenian survivors. To achieve this they needed more than support and inspiration: they needed to grow as an organization, which they quickly did through a five-pronged strategy: 1) Writing bylaws, getting permissions, and making a long term outline for operations; 2) Write newspaper articles, pamphlets, etc., to highlight the Armenian cause, to show the general public that Armenians were worthy of sympathy and support, and to explain and defend why they, as women, had the right to not only play such an active role in religious life, but to do it in a potentially dangerous place such as the Ottoman Empire; 3) Networking among Copenhagen high society to get the (semi-)official stamp of approval and additional funding they needed as an NGO with no state support; 4) Cultivating their international network and professionalizing prospective field workers through academic and vocational training at home and abroad; 5) Creating an increasing base of support through numerous meetings, lectures, and bazaars in churches, meeting houses, etc., all over the country. Through this activity, KMA managed to get into contact with thousands of supporters over the years who would contribute through membership of the organization (the only role men could play in Danish KMA were as passive – but paying – members), as sponsors of Armenian children, etc.

26. Bjørnliund, *På herrens mark*, passim.

27. H. L. Larsen, in "Industrimissionen i Armenien," vol. 1, no. 1 (Juli-August 1922): 1-2. Rev. Larsen, who later was to co-found Jensine Ørtz's *Industrimissionen i Armenien*, functioned as an interpreter at these meetings. See also Ernst Lohmann, *Från blodets och tårernas land: En reseberättelse från Armenien*, (København & Jönköping, no year), 1.

28. Ernst Lohmann, 1860-1936: *Pioner, Gründer, Evangelist*, ed. Martin Knispel (Berlin, 2011), 17-18 and passim; Uwe Feigel, *Das evangelische Deutschland und Armenien: die Armenierhilfe deutscher evangelischer Christen seit dem Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts im Kontext der deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen* (Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1989), 72.

After some initial skepticism (not only because of the gender and lack of formal theological training of the KMA women, but also because of the foreign influences on their religious practice that some regarded as suspicious and alien), they had a major breakthrough when the new, unorthodox chairman of Inner Mission, dean and war veteran Frederik Zeuthen, in 1902 gave them permission to use the more than 500 mission houses all over the country to hold meetings as they pleased. That was a radically and sometimes frightening new experience for KMA as well as for pretty much everyone else. Because letting women speak in such facilities where merely men thus far had spoken, facilities that, besides from the regular parish church, quite often were the only religious, social, and cultural meeting places in any given village or small town, was nothing short of revolutionary. Here was a unique chance to speak to congregations – only women at first, then increasingly diverse groups started attending, including men – about the suffering Armenians and the active role women could play in their salvation, as well as in the salvation of humankind, even in the farthest, most inaccessible and conservative corners of the small kingdom of Denmark. For the aristocratic, urban women leading KMA, those parts of their own country were about as exotic as the Ottoman Empire.²⁹

So, with “the Lord’s permission,” as KMA put it, the organization grew rapidly: by 1907, out of a population of some 2,5 million Danes, there were 2,600 loyal paying members plus a significant number of children’s groups and sympathizers, a wide net to back up KMA’s international ambitions. They also established a professional mission school in Copenhagen attended by almost all Scandinavian missionaries in the Ottoman Empire before and during the genocide, published numerous books and pamphlets, e.g., by Ernst Lohman, Irish-Protestant writer Deborah Alcock, and Swiss missionary teacher Beatrice Rohner, as well as the journal *Bring Lys* (*Bring Light*) and a journal specifically for the youth branches.³⁰ The women and children that Danish KMA worked for were no longer found only in Denmark and the Ottoman Empire. In the years leading up to WWI, the organization’s mission fields reached from the Danish West Indies (Virgin Islands) to China, Syria, and North Africa. But even when KMA went truly global, the Armenians were never forgotten, “Armenia” – whether understood as a state, a part of the Ottoman Empire or the Turkish Republic, maybe a small group of exiled Armenians in an orphanage or a memory, an idea of past freedom and glory – remained the primary focus of Danish KMA until the end of the organization in 1981. The first impression of the suffering of Armenian women – “our sisters” – and children was permanent, inescapable, as expressed in KMA’s very first *Flyveblad for Armenien* (*Leaflet for Armenia*) from 1900, a humble, cheap four-page publication: “As women, our hearts are bleeding for our sisters in Armenia. They have suffered the very worst a woman can suffer. No one

29. KMA, *Jubilæumsskrift* (1910), unpaginated; *Ringsted Folketidende* (7 May 1902), 1; *Viborg Stifts-Tidende* (7 September 1907), 3.

30. D. Alcock, *For Kristi Skyld*, KMA pamphlet no. 2 (Copenhagen: Missionstrykkeriet, 1900); Beatrice Rohner, *Kristus vort Liv*, KMA pamphlet no. 29 (Copenhagen: Missionstrykkeriet, 1903); Ernst Lohmann, *Ruiner: Skildringer af Armeniske Forhold og Tilstande* (Copenhagen: Kristeligt Dagblads Bogtrykkeri, 1905).

*can imagine what Armenian women and little girls have gone through in the hands of the Turks, and many of these victims live in Turkish harems, in Kurdish towns, or wander about in their misery like those who seek death but do not find it. Something must be done! Christian women like us must do something for the multitude of miserable, homeless children. Many have already been taken in by Christian schools and homes, but thousands are still outside, exposed to worse things than we can speak of."*³¹

Something had to be done, and done by them. They wanted to be in the frontline, for they had a vision: *"A crowd of women slide past the eye; praying women, women united hand in hand, woman for woman across the globe. [...] The curtain is torn and the women from the forecourt have gained access to the holiest of holy by the blood of Christ. The world of women, conquered by a woman's hand [...], the nauseating prison of the harem opened to sun and air, women's hearts – lonely, empty, sad – opened to Jesus!"*³²

Orientalism, infantilization, Western arrogance, it is all there – the vision of the Middle Eastern woman sitting passively, imprisoned in her harem, waiting for the emancipated, enlightened Western woman to rescue her. That, though, is only part of it. The full KMA vision was in fact more universalist and Christian humanist than Orientalist, and, unlike some colleagues, they were highly skeptical of being used for any worldly cause, including Western imperialist purposes. Rather, their stated ideal goal, which I have no doubt they were sincere about, was to create God's kingdom on earth through mission, relief work, and developmental aid – a free, healthy, enlightened, grateful populace was believed to be more receptive to the words of the Gospel. Helping the poor, emancipating women, and educating the uneducated were also goals in themselves (and it was throughout the years what the women spent by far the most time and energy doing), but it was never the final goal.³³

It may appear a paradox that while the women of KMA had such grand ambitions and were extremely active, outspoken, and wrote extensively – reports, letters, post cards, books, etc. – we actually know little about them in terms of biographical details. As opposed to, e.g., Danish relief worker and teacher Karen Jeppe, the subject of several

31. Flyveblad for Armenien, no. 1 (København, 1900); *Bring Lys* 58, no. 4 (April-May 1960): 2; Suzanne E. Moranian, "The Armenian Genocide and American Missionary Relief Efforts," in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915*, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 185; *Urd* 6, no. 32 (8 August 1902): 380; Elise Bockelund, *En Tjenergerning blandt Martyrfolket. Kvindelige Missions Arbejdere 1900-1930* (KMA, 1932), 18; KMA, *Jubilæumsskrift*, unpaginated; Leon Arpee, *A History of Armenian Christianity: From the Beginning to Our Own Time* (New York: The Armenian Missionary Society of America, 1946), 275; Johanne Blauenfeldt, "Hvorledes Tysklands Troende Kvinder kom med i Kvindebevægelsen," *Kristeligt Kvindeblad* 2, no. 5 (1911): 34-35; Dalhoff, *En Kvindeligt Missionær*, 34-35.

32. KMA, *Jubilæumsskrift*, unpaginated. See also Lange, *Et Blad af Armeniens Historie*, 10-11: "The Armenian woman, too, has been degraded under the yoke and influence of Mohammedanism to such a degree that her situation is little better than the Mohammedan woman and, like her, will often be veiled in public."

33. Bjørnlund, *På herrens mark*, passim; Maria Småberg, *Ambivalent Friendship: Anglican Conflict Handling and Education for Peace in Jerusalem, 1920-1948* (Lund University, 2005), 27; Lange, *Et Blad af Armeniens Historie*, 10-11; Jensine Ørtz, *Fra Armenien*, KMA (no year), 18.

monographies, knowledge of the background of the women of Danish KMA, especially life before they received their calling and went into the field, is mostly sketchy at best. Like Jeppe, they rarely find their personal relations and early life particularly interesting. But unlike Jeppe, there are only few examples where the KMA women violate that unspoken principle for PR-reasons.³⁴ The answer lies in the ideal of self-sacrifice, even of “the death of the self,” as it was put at the Danish KMA’s third conference in Copenhagen in 1907, a state where one only lived and worked for the Lord and those who were suffering.³⁵ For the Danish women such ideas never excluded pragmatism when confronted with real world problems, nor did it stand in the way of love of life and the living, but those ideas were nevertheless seriously meant, even to the extent that they were ready and willing to pay the ultimate price as martyrs for the cause, as can be seen from this description in an official KMA publication from an international meeting of missionaries in the German city of Rostock in 1902:

We were a small crowd who had travelled there together from Sweden and Denmark, and days of earnest introspection with many blessings became a milestone on K. M. A.’s journey; a new carpet was added to the others. We saw the work of other women, heard the voice of other women bring new impulses, add new subject matters. [...] For all of us Countess Elisabeth Waldersee’s earnest words on, like Esther, “daring all to win all” were also an inspiration to not live oneself, not dwell on the “soft blanket” in the paneled houses, but, like Esther, to want to say and dare to say: “And if I die, I die” (Esth. 4, 16).³⁶

“And if I die, I die.” Those were not empty words: Late summer 1901, some 18 months after establishing Danish KMA, they were ready to send the first missionaries into the Ottoman field. At this point they already sponsored some 40 orphaned Armenian girls at German orphanages in and around Mezreh and Harput in the Mamouret-ul-Aziz province and in Bitlis by Lake Van, as well as a smaller number of Armenian girls and boys in American Board facilities further to the east and south in Marash, Mush, and Diyarbakir. But even that was not enough, well-aware of the risks and challenges of field work the Danish women wanted full control of an operation with mission, relief, and an orphanage of their own. So, in August 1901, head nurse Christa Hammer was sent to Mezreh as the first Danish KMA missionary in the Ottoman Empire, at first to gain experience at the German *Elim* orphanage for girls and to learn Armenian and Turkish. But, as planned, she quickly began to search for a suitable building for KMA’s own orphanage.

34. *Meddelelser fra Armenien*, K.M.A.s Komité for Armenien (1901), 4; *Et Tilbageblik. K.M.A. (Kvindelige Missionsarbejdere) 1902-1912* (Kristiania: KMA, 1912), 5, 11, 12-13; Inger Marie Okkenhaug, *Herren har givet mig et rigt virkefelt. Kall, religion og arbeid blant armenere i det osmanske riket*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, vol. 88 (2009), passim; *Great Need over the Water*, xii; *Bring Lys*, vol. 6, no. 7 (September-October 1908): 1-5.

35. *Kvindelige Missions Arbejderes 3. Konference i København, fra 13. til 15. Oktober 1907* (Copenhagen, 1907).

36. KMA *Jubilæumsskrift*, unpaginated. “Paneled houses” is a reference to Haggai 1:4, “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?”, <http://biblehub.com/haggai/1-4.htm>.

KMA never shied away from close cooperation with foreign or male dominated organizations – organizations such as ABCFM and *Deutsche Hilfsbund* could after all provide vital know-how, security, connections, and infrastructure in the Ottoman Empire, an unsafe and largely unknown environment for the Danes, however well-prepared they were. But it was always the ambition that core operations were run solely by the women themselves. It was not an easy job. Hammer came straight from relatively uneventful Copenhagen to an area still struggling with the effects of the 1890s massacres – many Armenian men, traditional breadwinners, were gone, women abducted or living in poverty, orphaned children roaming the streets. Also, the local Ottoman authorities were actively trying to prevent this new Western, Christian missionary organization from establishing a foothold, even threatening to forcibly remove Armenian children from the *Emaus* orphanage; Apostolic Armenians were mostly welcoming aid, schools, hospitals, and orphanages, but, especially after the many forced conversions to Islam in the wake of the 1890s massacres, they were naturally against losing more believers to Protestant and Catholic proselytization that often followed relief work; while oppression and violence were still widespread, according to sources such as *Kom og hjælp os! (Come and Help Us!)*, KMA’s pamphlet no. 16, 1902:

Indeed, in the year 1901 too much blood has been shed, many tears have been cried in Armenia, in the land of blood and tears. Besides from the abovementioned atrocities, considerable massacres have taken place in the vicinity of Van and Bitlis in July and August; the country is still flooded, partly by Kurds, partly by regular Turkish troops, and both parties ravage and grind down the land, kill men and ravish women, rob and plunder wherever they can. Many orphaned and homeless children still wander around, and a good many miserable widows suffer endlessly.

And what is being done to relieve the suffering? The various European Powers have made their suggestion to the Sublime Porte, but since they do not act in unison the Porte has yet to change the way it treats the Armenians, and the eerie silence which by and large has settled over the events in this miserable country is not a good omen. So there is not much help to expect from the world’s mighty empires and powers.³⁷

In 1907, the situation had hardly improved according to American Board missionary, priest, and dean of the Anatolia College at Marsovan (Merzifon), George E. White:

There is no direct hindrance to religious liberty other than the usual one: no permission to build anything for religious purposes. Many during the past two years have come into the Protestant community, and there have been encouraging additions to the Churches in several places. But the outlook is not very encouraging to Evangelical Christianity, chiefly because of government oppression. They have begun collecting the arrears of the soldier-taxes remitted three years ago. They are also forcing those Armenians who have been to America to leave the country, arresting, imprisoning, and expelling them under guard.

Oppressive and depressive as things are here, Van, Bitlis, and the eastern Turkish

37. KMA, 10.360, pk. 40, “Protokol for Armenien. K.M.A. Komite for Armenien. Maj 1900-Dec. 1902,” meeting 26/11 1902; *Kom og hjælp os!*, KMA pamphlet no. 16 (Copenhagen: Kristeligt Dagblads Bogtrykkeri, 1902).

border are far worse. In Van the merciless exaction of taxes leads to the taking of bedding, furniture, implements of trade, and standing crops. The Armenians of the province of Van are ground to powder between two mill-stones, the revolutionists and the government officers, and their cry goes up, Lord! How long! Were it not for this, spiritual prospects there would be bright. But how can men think of their souls, when they are in terror for their lives? There is an enormous exodus to America, and it sweeps away preachers, teachers, and those who should be the backbone of the Church and of society.³⁸

And there were the diseases, which destroyed the health and lives of many locals and Westerners alike, including Christa Hammer:

Sister Christa's departure took place from Copenhagen Central Station on 30 august [1901], where we met her wise, mild eyes and felt the warm, firm shake of her hand for the last time ... Two years! Years filled with happiness in the service of the Lord, years filled with difficulties, longing, and hardship, until the hour came when the Lord called his servant home after only 14 days of sickness – typhoid, which she most likely contracted by nursing a German sister. Then the white casket was lowered into the soil of Armenia, the soil that has drunk the blood of so many Christians and chosen witnesses.³⁹

But before that, Hammer had managed to accomplish her task by gaining vital local knowledge, establish a network of contacts among Ottomans and Westerners, and acquire a building for the Danish KMA orphanage, *Emaus*, with some 40-60 Armenian orphan girls in the years before WWI. And other well-trained, highly motivated women KMA missionaries, all with relevant educations and practical experience – teaching, nursing, midwifery, administration, etc. – were sent to work among Armenians in the Harput region in the years before the genocide. They included nurse Christiane Black, Wilhelmine and Sigrid Grünhagen (a widowed mother and her daughter), Maria Jacobsen, Hansine Marcher, Jenny Jensen, Jensine Ørtz, and Karen Marie Petersen, as well as Swedish KMA's Alma Johansson and Norwegian KMA's Bodil Biørn, who mostly worked further to the east in the empire, but kept close contact with their Danish friends and colleagues, most of whom they knew from the mission school in Copenhagen and from meetings and conferences around the world. They were there to, first of all, learn the necessary Ottoman languages, then as soon as possible to build schools, hospitals, orphanages, and to change the world – and be changed, because the meeting or clash of cultures and religions in or outside a colonial context leaves no one and nothing untouched.

Few converted to the missionaries' preferred branch of Christianity (Ottoman Armenians and other local populations were rarely uncritical or passive recipients of whatever missionaries and relief workers had to offer) – and, the occasional propaganda

38. *Maintaining the Unity: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference and Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the Evangelical Alliance Held in London, July 1907* (London: The Council of the British Organization of the Alliance, 1907), 328-29. See also, e.g., "Die armenischen Forderungen," *Sonnen-Aufgang: Mitteilungen aus dem Orient*, vol 7, no. 1 (October, 1904): 4.

39. KMA, *Jubilæumsskrift*, unpaginated.

piece for public consumption aside, it is doubtful whether conversion of Apostolic Armenians was ever a goal for KMA. They rather wanted the same thing for Armenians as they wanted for Danes: a faith that went beyond tradition and rituals to become a deep, intimate, lived experience that filled the hearts of the practitioners and would ultimately transform the world. Anyway, many Ottomans were 'saved' in a more material sense. Last, but not least, the missionaries witnessed the transformation of the Ottoman Empire from 1900-1920. At first with hope and joy mixed with caution during the 1908 Young Turk revolution, then, from the 1909 massacres in and around Adana, with increasing disillusion and pessimism until the outbreak of world war and genocide.⁴⁰

Life During Genocide

The systematic implementation of the genocide in the Harput region has been touched upon above and dealt with extensively elsewhere.⁴¹ In short, by the end of 1916, some

40. Karen Vallgård, "Omvendte omvendelser: Om to danske missionærers møde med Indien i første halvdel af det 20. århundrede," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 108, no. 2 (2008): 389-426; Bjørnlund, *På herrens mark*, passim; Kurt E. Larsen, "Var Indre Mission og grundtvigianismen hinandens modsætninger?," *Kristeligt Dagblad* (21 November 2017).

41. See Bjørnlund, *Det armenske folkedrab & På herrens mark*, passim. See also, e.g., Ara Safafian, *Talaat Pasha's Report on the Armenian Genocide* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2011), 21 and passim; Leslie A. Davis, "Turkey, Harput, 15 March 1915," *Supplement to Commerce Reports: Daily Consular and Trade Reports Issued by the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce*, no. 18a (Washington D. C.: Department of Commerce, 1915), 1; Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, especially chapter 7; Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province*, passim; *Armenian Tsopk/Kharpert*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers 2002); *A Village Remembered: The Armenians of Habousi*, ed. Vatche Ghazarian (Monterey: Mayreni Publishing, 1997); Jacobsen, *Maria Jacobsen's Diary*, passim; Helle Schøler Kjær, *Danske Vidner til det Armenske Folkedrab* (Forlaget Vandkunsten, 2010); *The United States Official Records of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917*, ed. Ara Sarafian (Princeton & London: Gomidas Institute, 2004), passim; Hagop S. Der-Karapetian, *Jail to Jail: Autobiography of a Survivor of the 1915 Armenian Genocide* (New York, Lincoln, Shanghai: iUniverse, Inc., 2004 (1957)), 9-20 and passim; Vahakn N. Dadrian and Taner Akcam, *Judgment at Istanbul: The Armenian Genocide Trials* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books 2011), passim; James L. Barton, *Turkish Atrocities: Statements of American Missionaries on the Treatment of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey 1915-1917* (London: Gomidas Institute, 1998), passim; Henry H. Riggs, *Days of Tragedy in Armenia. Personal Experiences in Harpoot, 1915-1917* (Ann Arbor: Gomidas Institute, 1997); Mardiros Chitjian, *A Hair's Breadth from Death* (London and Reading: Taderon Press, 2001), 81-82; Ruth A. Parmelee, *A Pioneer in the Euphrates Valley* (Princeton: Gomidas Institute, 2002 (1967)); Abraham D. Krikorian and Eugene L. Taylor, "Filling in the Picture: Postscript to a Description of a Well-Known 1915 Photograph of Armenian Men of Kharpert Being Led Away under Armed Guard," 13 June 2013, *Armenian News Network/Groong*; idem, American Missionary Physician Dr. Ruth A. Parmelee Describes the 1915 'Harpoot Deportations': with Appendix of some rare imagery from our files to complement what she wrote; included is the Infamous 'Deportation Proclamation,'" *Armenian News Network/Groong*, 29 September 2017, <http://groong.usc.edu/orig/ak-20170929.html>; Bryce and Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians; The Armenian Genocide: Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives, 1915-1916*, ed. Wolfgang Gust (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), passim; Tacy Atkinson, "The German, the Turk, and the Devil Made a Triple Alliance": *Harpoot Diaries, 1908-1917* (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute, 2003); Vahé Tachjian, "Building the 'Model Ottoman Citizen': Life and Death in the Region of Harput-Mamüretülaziz (1908-1915)," in *World War I and the End of the Ottomans: From the Balkan Wars to the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser, Kerem Öktem, Maurus Reinkowski (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2015).

80-90% of local Armenians were killed in the region or on the death marches, while the rest were exiled, forcibly assimilated, or living in fear protected by Western missionaries. All four Danish KMA missionaries make abundantly it clear in their diaries and memoirs that it was an experience of utter horror, as when Karen Marie Petersen describes her encounter in Mezreh with survivors of death marches from the north and north-east early July 1915. Everyone now knew that deportation meant extermination:

It was then that another crowd of people came to the town – expellees from Erzinjan and Erzerum, who had left their homes one month earlier, just as our friends had done today [Petersen is referring to the deportation of Mezreh Armenians that same day, 3 July 1915, described above in the prologue, MB]. All were ragged and half-naked, starved and exhausted. They camped in a field outside of town. It was mostly women and children, with a few old men and adolescent boys. The strong, powerful men were killed after one day's journey. They yelled and screamed for something to eat. At the orphanage we cooked for in big containers in a hurry and drove it to them in a wagon.

They threw themselves at us like wild animals, we were nearly crushed to death. In a moment all the food was gone – it had been like a drop in the ocean. Many were lying on the ground, sick with fever and begging for milk; their tongues were swollen, and they had not been able to eat for days. Their arms were burnt by the sun, their skin was shredded, and their feet were swollen so that they could hardly walk. The air was filled with stench; most had dysentery – around us dead people were lying, but dead was greeted with joy, as a liberator! This was the first time I came into close contact with the expelled, but it was not the last. Indeed, all summer the same event was repeated; one group after another went through the town, that was now dubbed: “The Great Slaughterhouse” – because the dreadful thing was that when they reached our town all men were killed a few hours from there.⁴²

At this point there was little talk about Evangelical world revolution in the letters, diaries, and postcards of the Danish KMA women. Disease and famine raged, no Armenian was safe anywhere in the Empire, not even at Western compounds, so for Maria Jacobsen, Karen Marie Petersen, and their colleagues it was purely a matter of saving lives, even if that meant breaking Ottoman laws and decrees for the normally extremely law-abiding missionaries. For instance, Petersen reported on the decree ordering everyone, Christian or Muslim, sheltering Armenians to be hanged in their doorway while their house was burned down, but she still kept 121 Armenian women and children at the *Emaus* orphanage, double the normal maximum capacity, filling all floors of the building to such a degree that when Bodil Biørn and Alma Johansson came by on

42. Lange, *Et Blad af Armeniens Historie*, 3-4. On the temporary concentration/death camp outside Mezreh at a place called the Four Fountains and at an Armenian cemetery, see also Jacobsen, *Maria Jacobsen's Diary*, 232-233, 269-273, 288; Rouben Paul Adalian, “American Diplomatic Correspondence in the Age of Mass Murder: Documents of the Armenian Genocide in the U.S. Archives,” in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915*, 160; Bryce and Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians*, 297, 306; Atkinson, “*The German, the Turk, and the Devil*”, 40, 53; Riggs, *Days of Tragedy in Armenia*, 146-147; Barton, *Turkish Atrocities*, 68; Esther Mugerditchian, *From Turkish Toil: The Narrative of an Armenian Family's Escape* (New York: George H. Doran co., 1918), 15.

their journey home after having witnessed the genocide in Mush, they had to sleep in a tent in the garden.⁴³

Some of the Armenians at *Emaus* the Ottoman authorities knew about and tolerated, although they could never feel safe, as Petersen later related: "*The Turks looked at us with evil eyes, and they often threatened us, saying that our turn to be sent away would come. It also happened quite often that Turkish officers walking on the street looked at the orphanage and talked about what they would use the building for when we had been chased out by them. Indeed, we had no other choice than to count on possibility that we would be sent away, so we had, among other preparations, made knapsacks for the children to carry on their backs containing their clothes and some bread.*"⁴⁴

Others, like a number of former students at *Emaus* who had escaped or been thrown out from Muslim households, were there secretly. Vartanush Lusigian was the name of one of them; according to the orphanage protocol she was "taken in Sept. 1915. 14 years old. Orphaned, her whole family has been killed. Quiet, appealing, modest." That was also the case with the only adult male at the orphanage, the priest Durdad. He had brought his wife and six children to Karen Marie Petersen and wanted to leave immediately, willing to sacrifice his own life in case he was wanted by the authorities. Petersen would have none of that, she conveniently heard God speaking to her through the Book of Proverbs 24:11-12, "Deliver those who are being taken away to death, And those who are staggering to slaughter, Oh hold them back. If you say, 'See, we did not know this,' Does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?" So Durdad was hidden in a secret compartment in the wood shed.⁴⁵

People like Durdad were obviously not safe in the region, nor were it safe to hide them, so during the genocide, some or all of the Danish missionaries at Mezreh and Harput not only protected Armenians. They also became part of the proverbial "underground railway," where Armenians and Westerners cooperated with some of the many Kurds who opposed the regime and aided Armenians for political, humanitarian, and/or economic reasons in order to smuggle the most immediately threatened Armenian survivors to the Dersim area (Tunceli) north of Harput and beyond. August 1915, for instance, *Emaus* became a stop on the escape route to freedom when Misag, a local

43. Bjørnlund, *På herrens mark*, 154. See also, e.g., Taner Akcam, "Mahmut Kamil Paşa'nın ilk telgrafı: 'Evinde Ermeni saklayanın evi yakılacak ve evi önünde idam edilecektir,'" *Agos*, May 3, 2017. On Alma Johansson and Bodil Bjørn: Alma Johansson, *Ett folk i landsflykt: Ett år ur armeniernes historia* (Stockholm: KMA, 1930); Maria Småberg, "Witnessing the Unspeakable – Alma Johansson and the Armenian Genocide of 1915," (Lund, 2009) (unpublished paper, which I thank Maria Småberg for sharing); idem, "The Swedish Mayrik': Saving Armenian Mothers and Orphans 1902-1941," in *In Times of Genocide 1915-2015*, ed. Lars Hillås Lingius (Studieförbundet Bilda, 2015); Inger Marie Okkenhaug, "Religion, Relief and Humanitarian Work among Women Refugees in Mandatory Syria, 1927-1934," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 40, no.3 (2015): 432-454.

44. Lange, *Et Blad af Armeniens Historie*, 45.

45. Bjørnlund, *På herrens mark*, 154-155; KMA, 10.360, pk. 112, "Protokol over Plejebørn i Børnehjemmet 'Emaus' i Mezreh, 1909-1917"; <http://biblehub.com/proverbs/24-11.htm>; Lange, *Et Blad af Armeniens Historie*, 45.

Armenian barber, arrived disguised as a veiled Turkish woman to hide in the Danish orphanage until nightfall, as Karen Maria Petersen later recalled:

One afternoon a silk-clad Turkish woman came; it turned out to be – Misag the barber. The evening before he had come out of his hiding place and came to us to hide until the evening, when he would leave with the Kurds. [A footnote is added in the original text here: “In the final part of the time of deportation Kurds helped Armenians escape.”] They had sent a man back to pick him up and waited by the river with the other refugees. The barber’s wife, a Portuguese woman with two children, was here, and it is touching to see his joy when he was reunited with his children. His beard had grown completely wild, and when he was later dressed as a Kurd he could pass as one. He said that he had been hiding 8 hours from here on the other side of Gølsjik [Lake Göljök].

God alone had miraculously saved him, because it was a nest of robbers. He saw how they attacked people sent into exile. Once they had brought a woman to the house and promised to defend her – and then they killed her right in front of his eyes. He had paid one lira a week, but they did not dare to keep him any longer. He thanked me with tears in his eyes because I had taken in his wife, because otherwise they would have all been dead by now. Had she and the children been with him on the road he would not have been able to escape.⁴⁶

Those who did not manage to get away were often found dead shortly after, or they remained in virtual imprisonment such as Digin (Mrs.) Versjin, a close personal friend of several missionaries, including Karen Marie Petersen. There are several reasons (besides, perhaps, plain luck) why it was possible for the missionaries to stay in the region and help surviving Armenians, even during a genocide.⁴⁷ Among those reasons the most important one was perhaps bribery, which Danish KMA also resorted to when they managed to get small shipments of gold safely through to Harput with the help of the Danish and US legations and ABCFM headquarters in Constantinople. Luckily, many local soldiers and officials, including *vali* Sabit Bey himself, were corrupt. Furthermore, many wanted to be on a good footing with the missionaries in case the Russians occupied the area, but missionaries were often also genuinely respected by local Muslims and Christians alike, as they worked tirelessly to save the lives of not only Armenians, but also of Ottoman soldiers and civilians.⁴⁸ January 1918 Maria Jacobsen was thus nominated for an Ottoman medal of bravery for having helped a large number of sick and wounded Ottoman soldiers at the risk of her own life. It was an Ottoman army doctor who nominated her via Turkish Red Crescent, at this point in reality a Young Turk outfit.⁴⁹

46. Bockelund, *En Tjenergerning blandt Martyrfolket*, 45–46.

47. Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 237; Burcin Gercek, Taner Akcam and Ömer Türkoglu, *Turkish Rescuers: Report on Turks who Reached Out to Armenians in 1915*, http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/wp-content/files_mf/1435335304ReportTurkishrescuerscomplete.pdf, 57ff.

48. Bjørnlund, *Det armenske folkedrab & På herrens mark*, passim. See also, e.g., Susan Billington Harper, “Mary Louise Graffam: Witness to Genocide,” in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915*, 222.

49. Bjørnlund, *På herrens mark*, 157; Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 943, note 39.

22 April 1917, the Ottoman Empire and the USA broke diplomatic relations. That had severe repercussions in the Harput region, as Leslie Davis and those remaining of the originally 72 American missionaries left the country mid-May. The consul tried to take Armenians with US citizenship with him, but at this point the authorities allowed no ethnic Armenians to leave the country.⁵⁰ Hereafter, it was basically left to Maria Jacobsen, a neutral citizen working for both KMA and ABCFM, and a handful of Armenian co-workers who had survived this far to care for what remained of the vast American Board operation and the Armenians in their care. The Danes were short on funding and had to choose who to feed among starving Armenian survivors in Harput and Mezreh. They had to focus on the survivors at *Emaus* and the American compound, all in all 800-1,000, as well as some additional 1,000-1,500 Armenian women and children in the final phase of the war.⁵¹

As Maria Jacobsen wrote in an uncensored letter 11 February 1917 that had been smuggled out with German help to Elise Blædel from Danish KMA's Armenia Committee, poverty and misery were boundless, worse than ever before. The Danish missionary expressed clear frustration that it was hard to explain to the Committee exactly how bad the situation was: there were 5,000 Armenian survivors in Harput and Mezreh at this point, most of whom had until recently been abducted to Turkish and Kurdish households as wives and slaves. But now they had been put on the street as the Muslim "owners" no longer could or would feed them. Those Armenians had nothing, they were dirty, starved, abused, and ragged, there was no work and no help to get from the authorities or the local population, there were only the missionaries.⁵² Finally, in 1919, the last Danish missionaries in the Empire, Maria Jacobsen and Karen Marie Petersen, were relieved by their American Board colleagues. The few remaining Armenians were expelled, evacuated, or left behind facing continuing oppression, Turkification, forced conversion, and constant threats.⁵³

In Lieu of a Conclusion

The Armenian Genocide was aimed at destroying the physical, religious, and cultural presence of a people in their ancient lands. But even such a cataclysmic event left survivors. Almost all were exiled, most in the immediate vicinity of what was to become

50. *The United States Official Records of the Armenian Genocide*, 683-684; Barbara J. Merguerian, "Kharpert: The View From the United States Consulate," in *Armenian Tsopk/Kharpert*, 305.

51. Jacobsen, *Maria Jacobsen's Diary*, 764, 792.

52. KMA, 10.360, pk. 13, "1917", letter from Maria Jacobsen to Elise Blædel, 11/2 1917; Jacobsen, *Maria Jacobsen's Diary*, 932; Parmelee, *A Pioneer*, 50-51; Levon Marashlian, "Finishing the Genocide: Cleansing Turkey of Armenian Survivors, 1920-1923," in *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 113ff.

53. Jacobsen, *Maria Jacobsen's Diary*, 932 and passim; Parmelee, *A Pioneer*, 50-51; Marashlian, "Finishing the Genocide," passim. On the similar fate of deported Greeks in the Harput region post -WWI, see Robert Shenk, *America's Black Sea Fleet: The U.S. Navy Amidst War and Revolution, 1919-1923* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012), passim.

the Turkish Republic, so this was where the Danish women missionaries and relief workers of KMA and DA went from 1919: to Constantinople before the Kemalists came, and then to Greece, Syria, and Lebanon. Karen Jeppe went to Aleppo and became a League of Nations commissioner working to free Armenian women and children from Muslim households. Among her staff was Jenny Jensen, formerly of KMA in Mezreh. No matter the ideological differences between KMA and DA, there was always agreement that saving the remnants of a nation, also spiritually through education, religion, and language, was of primary importance. Jensine Ørtz of Women Missionary Workers, posted in Malatya until the summer of 1914 when she went home on sick leave, started her own organization to help Armenian survivors in Greece from 1921, an organization that still exists today. And Maria Jacobsen and Karen Marie Petersen worked among the Armenians in the Lebanese refugee camps from 1922 before establishing the Bird's Nest Orphanage for Armenian girls and boys, first in Zouk Mikhail and Sidon outside Beirut, then in Byblos (Djbeil). More KMA missionaries followed over the decades, including Maria Jacobsen's younger sister.⁵⁴

Like numerous international relief worker and missionary colleagues and, not least, Armenian organizations, the Danish women literally dedicated their lives to the starving, traumatized survivors. The genocide and what was viewed as the subsequent betrayal of the Armenians by the Western powers did at times lead to depression and a temporary loss of purpose and hope for some missionaries. But almost all bounced back. Their faith could be shaken, but it was fundamentally strong, and they even sometimes found some meaning in meaningless slaughter – during and after 1915 the Armenians are, for instance, quite often referred to as “the Martyred People,” suffering not in vain, but for faith, and therefore for all of us. Besides from faith and meaning, the women definitely found a purpose with their own lives again when learning that they were still needed among the survivors. It is thus no coincidence that Maria Jacobsen, Karen Jeppe, and lesser-known KMA worker Dorthea Kulager Pedersen all laid buried in the faraway field. Like KMA's Christa Hammer, who died in Mezreh in 1903, and Else Kjærsgaard, a Danish female agronomist employed by Jeppe who succumbed to illness in Urfa in 1909 while helping to establish agricultural colonies in the area before them, they all willingly once more gave up their “normal,” arguably safer lives in Denmark for idealistic and ideological reasons as well as to seek meaning, opportunities, challenges, and adventure.⁵⁵

The Christian world revolution desired by the women of KMA did not materialize, however, and there is little evidence that the Danish women even managed to convert a single non-Protestant Armenian, let alone a Muslim, in the Empire. But, all rhetoric aside, KMA was from the beginning more concerned with “vitalizing” the allegedly petrified Apostolic Armenian faith than in actual proselytizing as noted above. And while working for their revolutionary ideal they furthered a transnational cause that may in a broad sense be called humanitarian. At the very least it was a cause that involved “the practices of building trust through close relationships and responding to actual needs of concrete others and the values of interdependence, empathy, sensitivity to the context and

54. Bjørnlund, *Det armenske folkedrab & På herrens mark*, passim.

55. Bjørnlund, *Det armenske folkedrab & På herrens mark*, passim.

responsiveness – in contrast to abstract universal principles of impartiality, individual rights and justice.”⁵⁶ And, according to at least one precise, meaningful, non-anachronistic definition, it was a feminist cause: the women did indeed have “a gender-based, but egalitarian vision of social organization.” Furthermore, by caring for the most vulnerable, they saved thousands of lives and mobilized thousands of others in the process, creating an enduring legacy from Denmark to Armenia and beyond.⁵⁷

56. Maria Småberg, “On Mission in the cosmopolitan World. Ethics of Care in the Armenian Refugee Crisis, 1920-1947,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 40, no. 3 (2015): 409.

57. Bjørnlund, *På herrens mark*, passim. The definition of feminism is found in Karen Offen, “Defining Feminism. A Comparative Historical Approach,” *Signs* 14, no.1 (1998): 135-136.

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DELAYING ANNIHILATION: MOUNTAINS AND THE POSTPONEMENT OF MASSACRE

Jeff Stonehouse

*“And it came to pass, when they had brought them
forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look
not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain;
escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.”*

Genesis 19:17 (King James Bible)

“Run to the hills, run for your lives.”

Iron Maiden, “Run To the Hills,”

The Number of the Beast (1982)

This paper aims at conceptualizing the physical environment of genocidal violence. Perpetrator organizations are understood to use artificial and natural settings to facilitate the task of mass killing. It is argued that mountains may be relatively distinct from other features of terrain because they offer advantages that strategically favor the defender. If targeted groups use these advantages to meet the goals of first arrival, maintaining biological needs, keeping the enemy at bay and alerting the outside world, they increase their chances of surviving destruction. Three case studies are examined: Musa Dagh (1915), Bisesero (1994) and Sinjar (2014).

Key-words: Musa Dagh, Bisesero, Sinjar, Armenian Genocide, Rwandan Genocide, Yazidi Genocide, mountains, resistance.

Introduction

Facing genocidal violence, groups targeted for extermination seldom find solace or succor in the physical environment.¹ Outside of urban settings they face a variety of natural impediments, including deserts, frozen wastes, ravines, swamps and, rivers. In peacetime, these features are typically benign and incidental; in contrast, during mass atrocity events, the physical environment is strategically co-opted to meet the nefarious designs of perpetrator organizations.

Alternatively, terrain may instead introduce an unanticipated setback to a perpetrator’s plans. If an organized actor commits to a course of extermination, then no terrain is truly safe; nevertheless, some terrain functions to inhibit mass killing, even if only temporarily.

1. This paper was originally presented at the Twelfth Meeting of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (July 8-12, 2015) in Yerevan, Armenia. I would like to thank my two anonymous reviewers, my graduate supervisor Dr. Adam Jones, and the IAGS for hosting the conference.

Mountains, for instance, can offer a defensive refuge by postponing the forcible imposition of genocidal intent. Mountainous terrain may delay massacre by ensuring that the task of extermination is rendered more problematic and time-consuming. Targeted groups can extend this delay by pursuing four objectives: arriving first upon a mountaintop position, amassing the necessary biological requirements for survival, organizing a defensive effort, and alerting the outside world of their need for immediate rescue. If followed successfully, these four objectives are critical to the preservation of life.

This paper is structured around three objectives. The first sections aim to conceptualize the physical environment in terms of its strategic or counter-strategic function. It argues that terrain either promotes the exterminatory goals of perpetrator organizations, or it imposes an obstruction to their plans. This paper uses mountains as a specific category of terrain. Additionally, it contends that, from the perspective of targeted groups, mountains often possess a set of advantages that may be utilized to delay massacre. These advantages are outlined according to the OCOKA framework.

Finally, three illustrative case studies are examined: Musa Dagħ (1915), Bisesero (1994) and Sinjar (2014). It is shown in each case how mountainous terrain was used to counter a genocidal perpetrator's exterminatory strategy. Each case is detailed with an emphasis upon how the targeted groups pursued the goals of first arrival, survival, resistance and alerting, as well as how mountainous terrain was utilized to postpone massacre.

Genocide, Terrain, and Strategy

This section aims to conceptualize the varied landscapes of extermination. The commission of genocidal violence and massacre invariably occurs within a tangible material context; this context constitutes the ambient surroundings of atrocity. The physical environment may be of an artificial, man-made origin or, alternatively, it may consist of pre-existing natural features. One-sided mass killing frequently occurs *in situ*, in urban, industrial and residential settings. During the Holocaust, urban areas were transformed into ghettos, and specialized facilities, such as concentration, transit and extermination camps, were developed. Moreover, prisons, from the Lubyanka to Tuol Sleng, have been used to torture, to "disappear" and to house mass executions.

Conversely, violence may occur in areas that are less developed or uninhabitable, including forests, lakes, and mountains. In these instances, the natural environment has been used functionally to facilitate the process of mass killing. Thousands of Ottoman Christians were driven into the Syrian deserts to die of exposure, an experience shared by the Herero and Nama in German South-West Africa. Conversely, the frozen expanses of Siberia and the Soviet Gulag system prevented escape while harming those within its icy embrace. Forests and ravines have been utilized to assist the implementation of massacre, including Katyn and Babi Yar. Lakes and rivers have been used to kill undesirables, such as during the French Revolution as hundreds were cast into the Loire River; or, like the Nyabarongo River in Rwanda, they are used to dispose of bodies. In short, mass killing never occurs in a featureless vacuum; rather, it is committed indoors and out, from dank prison cells to open-air executions at designated or impromptu killing sites.

The terrain present within a process of exterminatory violence may be classified as

either (1) instrumental or (2) detrimental.² The terrain of the first type strategically serves the genocide, while terrain of the second interferes and slows down its operation.

Groups that conduct organized violence against civilian targets do so *strategically*; these strategies are understood here as the deliberate and routine use of the physical environment — including both artificial and natural terrains — to implement a genocidal policy or end-goal. When the physical environment is used strategically, a facet of terrain is instrumentalized in order to facilitate the commission of genocidal violence. *Where* massacre occurs (i.e. upon what type of terrain) is largely determined by the strategy utilized by the perpetrators.

Locations were often sought out for their remoteness, for their difficulty to escape from and for how well they obscure the commission of atrocity; elsewhere, they were chosen for their centrality and ease of access. Sometimes these sites have a history of violence, for others the introduction of violence is a novelty. When the same terrain is utilized within the same genocidal event or episode, the functional use of the physical environment is seen to result in patterns of killing in analogous physical contexts. What all these locations share is a functional role in facilitating perpetrator strategy.

For instance, the Rwandan genocide provides an excellent example of the routinized use of corresponding terrains of destruction. Based upon his field research, Scott Straus contends that killing occurred in four main locations: (1) at central congregation points such as churches, schools, and government buildings; (2) at roadblocks; (3) during house-to-house searches; and (4) during searches through cultivated fields, wooded zones, and marshes.³

This paper would argue that the first three killing venues were the result of the perpetrator's strategy. In contrast, category four describes areas of counter-strategy. The fields, swamps, and forests highlighted by Straus were terrains that helped Tutsis and moderate Hutus to escape and hide from the agents of Hutu power. These locations were sought out because they countered *génocidaire* strategy by relocating the meeting of hunter and hunted to areas less conducive to mass killing.

Counter-strategy draws violence towards locations that are not explicitly part of a perpetrator strategy; instead, these locations slow the overall task of killing and occasionally make it dangerous for the perpetrator to complete his task. A successful counter-strategy disrupts a perpetrator's strategy by forcing the two parties to relocate their eventual engagement to an alternative setting, one more conducive to the defenders' requirements. Arguably, when beset by hostile forces, choosing where to die is one of the greatest acts of resistance. Groups targeted for destruction are handicapped by what genocide scholar Vahakn Dadrian describes as the "critical disparity of power relations."⁴ Individually and collectively they are in an inferior position. They lack the resources, arms, and coordination

2. There is also a third category as well. When the physical environment is understood to be incidental, it accompanies genocidal violence but does not play a major part in the killing process; rather, it resides in the background without a meaningful impact.

3. Scott Straus, "The Historiography of the Rwandan Genocide," in *The Historiography of the Rwandan Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 526-527.

4. Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Determinants of the Armenian Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 1, no.1 (1999): 65.

of the state that seeks their destruction. But by choosing where to resist, they disrupt the schemes of the perpetrators, and in doing so, they may be able to endure a genocidal onslaught.

Mountains: Advantages and Counter Strategy

From the perspective of resistance, mountains possess unique advantages. Targeted groups may hide upon them or use them to flee to safer areas. Most importantly, mountains possess certain characteristics that allow for fighting back. Whether fleeing, hiding or fighting, mountains delay the killers' plans whose strategies depend upon bringing targeted groups to terrain that facilitates their goals.

The advantageous features of mountains may be elucidated by adapting the OCOKA (Observation, Cover and Concealment, Obstacles, Key Terrain, Avenues of Approach) framework of terrain analysis.⁵ Developed and utilized by the U.S. military, this analytical framework provides a simple technique for determining the advantages of particular features of terrain.

First, mountains allow for observation over long distances, even if unaided. This means defenders may identify and anticipate the advance of hostile forces well before their arrival. Conversely, being able to see and communicate over longer ranges assists in locating potential rescuers; for example, a passing ship or vehicle. Furthermore, in terms of defense, mountains are enhanced by their advantageous "fields of fire". Even with less than ideal firearms, those conducting mountain resistances may use the terrain to place themselves in a much better position than the approaching enemy. These advantages, however, are not guaranteed: inclement weather, fog, and cloud cover may act to conceal the advance of the enemy or obscure the vision of a potential rescuer.

Second, mountains often provide both cover and concealment. During combat, rocks and trees provide hardened positions from which to fight. In contrast, hostile forces advancing up a mountain often lack the advantage of cover. For non-combatants, concealment is made possible by forests, ravines, caves and dense vegetation. Those incapable of fighting such as children, the elderly, sick, injured and women⁶ are able to hide while others do the fighting.

The third advantage of mountains is the ubiquity of obstacles. The task of advancing upwards in the face of boulders, outcroppings and cliffs makes scaling a mountain more difficult. Obstacles may prevent the refugees from successfully making their initial climb. However, if they can overcome these difficulties they may turn these natural barriers to their advantage.

Fourth, mountains also constitute a form of key terrain. By giving the defenders the advantage of height over their foes, the defenders are granted a position of dominance. Key terrain is not only significant for repelling an attack, it also includes a protected base; here, supplies of scarce resources may be kept safely, and defenders and non-fighters alike can recuperate, work and plan without molestation by outside forces.

5. National Park Service, "OCOKA Military Terrain Analysis," *Vicksburg National Military Park Cultural Landscape Report* (Atlanta, Georgia: National Park Service, 2009), 243-245.

6. It should be emphasized that women are equally capable as their male counterparts; resistance to their inclusion in defence efforts is more based upon social norms than capabilities.

Finally, mountains may possess avenues of approach and withdrawal. A viable route for withdrawal is fundamental; otherwise, the defending group has no options for escape and will eventually perish. They require an outlet to the sea or a corridor to a safer locale. An easy avenue of approach is also important, but is a double-edged sword: if it is a simple task for targeted groups to ascend the mountain, then their pursuers will likewise follow them with ease.

Groups escaping genocidal aggression have been known to flee to mountains because of the promise of these advantages. To promote the continued survival of its constituent parts, these groups must use these advantages in order to pursue four objectives. First, the refugees must arrive and secure a mountain base prior to the arrival of hostile forces. If the enemy arrives beforehand and occupies a superior position, the defenders are left at a major disadvantage. Depending upon the duration of this window, the defenders may use this time to evacuate people from the base of the mountain to a protected position; they may also use this time to transport food and medicine, weapons, ammunition and other supplies. Second, the defenders must maintain basic biological needs, including the necessary requirements for food, water, and shelter from the elements. Likewise, medical supplies are scarce or non-existent. Third, the defenders must organize a defense. By coordinating their efforts and using the mountainous terrain to their advantage, targeted groups may be able to hold hostile external forces at bay. Finally, the defenders must alert the outside world to their plight in order to convince a friendly and able force to seek their rescue. This goal is the single most important of the four for two reasons. Even with ample preparations, vital supplies invariably diminish and defense is made impossible without the energy to fuel it. Without an external rescuer, even the most resolute of defenses must ultimately crumble. Conversely, an early and successful attempt at alerting a rescuer compensates for shortcomings in reaching the other goals. Even with scant preparations, a scarcity of food and water, and poor defensive capabilities, a quick and timely rescue ensures a greater chance for survival.

Sometimes the advantages promised by mountains are purely ephemeral. When the advantages are nonexistent, mountains are not refuges, becoming traps and a part of perpetrator strategy. In some circumstances, mountains possess all the necessary advantages, but the very possibility of survival is preempted by other factors. For instance, the level of perpetrator technology⁷ and available infrastructure diminishes the defensive strengths of mountains. Furthermore, intelligence plays a factor; if the perpetrators are armed with prior knowledge of the terrain, the staying power of mountains is reduced.

Case Selection: Musa Dagħ, Sinjar, and Bisesero

This paper draws upon three historic examples of mountain-based resistance in the context of a genocidal onslaught. First, we discuss the 1915 siege of Musa Dagħ in the South-Eastern part of the Ottoman Empire. Then, the focus turns to the 1994 violence on Bisesero in western Rwanda. Finally, the most recent case occurred in 2014 in northern Iraq on Mount

7. Airpower is one specific technology, but even here targeted groups may adapt. For instance, on the Nuba Mountains, civilians have dug foxholes in order to avoid bombardment by government jets. Nicholas Kristof, "A Rain of Bombs in the Nuba Mountains," *New York Times*, accessed 20.06.2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/opinion/sunday/nicholas-kristof-a-rain-of-bombs-in-the-nuba-mountains.html?_r=0.

Sinjar. Although arising in diverse historical, political, economic, and cultural contexts, each case represents examples of mountainous terrain being utilized to promote defense against group destruction.

Each mountain defense scenario is outlined in three parts. The first section provides the historical background, context, and sources. The next part documents to what extent the mountain-facilitated window of opportunity was utilized by the defenders. Finally, each case concludes with the success or failure of external rescue.

Case No. 1: Musa Dagħ

The siege of Musa Dagħ and tales of its legendary defense are more than a mere national myth. The story was popularized and gained international recognition when Franz Werfel published his *Forty Days of Musa Dagħ* in 1933. However, from a historical and analytical perspective, the details of *Forty Days* must be treated with caution. He wrote the book 18 years after the events he describes. The cast of characters that populates Werfel's novel is largely his own invention and many of the events he recounts have been altered to fit his narrative; for instance, the siege lasted 53 days and *not* 40 as the title suggests.

Nonetheless, Werfel can be credited with extensively researching the subject by drawing upon a diverse array of sources. One of the most significant documents he utilizes is the account written by Reverend Dikran Andreasian.⁸ In his in-depth analysis of Werfel and his sources, Schulz-Behrend concludes that Andreasian's report was the "chief source of *Musa Dagħ*."⁹ It is this source rather than Werfel's writings that this paper draws upon.¹⁰

There were six Armenian villages around the base of Musa Dagħ. The residents of these villages were wood carvers, craftsmen and silkworm cultivators. They were not soldiers and had not anticipated the need to make prior defensive preparations. While some of the inhabitants may have had military experience, they were certainly not an armed fifth column. What they did possess was an intimate appreciation of Musa Dagħ's terrain. Andreasian notes that "Every gorge and crag of our beloved mountain is known to our boys and men."

The Ottoman government in Antioch issued a banishment order for the six Armenian villages on July 30, 1915. These orders were seen in other Armenian settlements elsewhere. The Ottoman strategy aimed at deporting the Armenians and using the deserts as a means of extermination. They were collectively given a week to evacuate their homes. There was no immediate consensus on how to respond and, after debating long into the night, some decided to give in to Ottoman demands. The Rev. Haroutine Nokhoudian, a Protestant

8. Unless otherwise noted, the following paragraphs draw upon Dikran Andreasian, "Jibal Mousa: The defence of the mountain and the rescue of its defenders by the French fleet; narrative of an eye-witness, the Rev. Dikran Andreasian, pastor of the Armenian protestant church at Zeitoun," in *Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16*, ed. Viscount Bryce (Frankfurt am Main: Textor Verlag, 2008), 512-521.

9. George Schulz-Behrend, "Sources and Background of Werfel's Novel *Die Vierzig Tage Des Musa Dagħ*," *Germanic Review* 26, no. 2 (1951): 114.

10. For an overview that places Andreasian's account of Musa Dagħ within the overall history of the genocide, see Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011): 610-612.

pastor from Beytias, argued that it was “folly to resist.” He was joined by over 60 families that ultimately chose to accept the Ottoman order.

The rest, however, chose the path of defiance. They used the one-week warning as a window of opportunity, utilizing this time to secure supplies, build fortifications and create a defensive organization. The remaining villagers immediately set to work to transport as many resources as was practicable. They moved supplies of foodstuffs to a secure spot on the mountain called the Damlayik plateau. Flocks of sheep and goats were herded up the mountain and away from the foothills and the soon-to-be-abandoned villages. They collected and hastily refurbished what few weapons they possessed. Andreasian calculated that they possessed “*a hundred and twenty modern rifles and shot-guns [sic], with perhaps three times that number of old flint-locks and horse pistols.*” These quantities were sufficient to arm a mere *half* of the defending men.

In addition to moving supplies, the Armenians made defensive preparations on the mountain itself. Andreasian recounts that “*all hands went to work digging trenches at the most strategic points of the ascent of the mountain.*” Where the ground was not amenable to digging, they barricaded themselves by rolling together rocks to make nests for sharpshooters.

Finally, aware of the pressing need to coordinate their efforts, the Armenians elected a committee of defense by secret ballot. This committee developed and implemented plans aimed at “defending each pass on the mountain” as well as protecting “each approach to the camp.” Additionally, the committee established a division of labor. Scouts and messengers were chosen among the agile, while those with good aiming abilities made up a central reserve of sharpshooters.

True to their word, the Ottomans sent an armed force to Musa Dagħ on August 5, seven days later. This advance guard numbered around 200 Ottoman regular soldiers. The force was led by a haughtily overconfident commander who, Andreasian claims, “*boasted that he would clear the mountain in one day.*” The Armenian defenders successfully rebuffed this attack, resulting in a number of Ottoman casualties and the soldiers’ withdrawal. Unfortunately, events later that day overshadowed this important early victory. During their frantic week of preparations, the Armenians had not anticipated the impact of inclement weather and the need for adequate shelter. A torrential downpour happened that evening. Their clothes were soaked and much of their bread became a “pulpy mess.” This failure would come to haunt them as the siege progressed and food reserves dwindled. Luckily, they had the foresight to keep their powder and rifles dry. Without those scarce arms, it would have been impossible to keep the Ottomans at bay.

The Ottomans returned shortly after their first failed attempt. This time they anticipated resistance and brought with them two heavy field guns which they used to hammer the defenders’ base camp. In response, Andreasian describes how one of their sharpshooters, a “lion-hearted young fellow,” stealthily crept down the mountain and handily killed four of the Ottoman soldiers manning the gun. As a result, the guns were temporarily withdrawn, giving the defenders a needed respite.

In the meantime, the Ottomans gathered their forces for a large-scale attack. Word of the upcoming assault was sent among the local Muslim villages and over 4,000 responded

to the call and were armed by the government. 3,000 disciplined regular troops joined them. When this force began its ascent up the mountain, Armenian scouts reported that the Ottomans seemed to be “appearing at every pass in the mountain.” Believing that the attack was coming from all directions, the defensive committee made the strategic blunder of dividing their reserve body of defenders to meet the assault at every point. This played directly into Ottoman hands: with their forces divided, the defenders were unable to meet the main Ottoman thrust. The Ottoman forces advanced further up the mountain, eventually capturing the high ground and threatening the Armenian camp. Andreasian writes that by sundown, “*Three enemy companies had advanced through the dense underbrush and forest to within 400 yards of our huts.*” All that lay between the Armenian camp and the Ottoman bivouac was a “deep, damp ravine.”

The defenders were in a precarious situation and had to act fast. The defense committee resolved to use their intimate knowledge of the mountain to their advantage. Andreasian describes their plan: the Armenians would silently “*creep around the Ottoman positions in the dead of night thus carrying out an enveloping movement, closing in very suddenly with a fusillade and ending with hand-to-hand fighting.*” The plan was immensely successful. The slumbering Ottoman camp was thrown into chaotic disarray and the Armenian encirclement had the effect of magnifying their presence in the minds of the panicked soldiers. The Ottoman colonel ordered a retreat half an hour after the attack began. The result was a clear Armenian victory: as the Ottoman forces retreated, they left more than 200 dead, seven Mauser rifles, and 2,500 rounds of ammunition behind them.

The nocturnal encirclement and ensuing battle resulted in a major victory for the Armenian defenders; however, as Andreasian had to concede, “[*We*] knew that our foes were not defeated; they were only driven off.” No matter how many victories they won, the Ottoman forces would always return stronger.

While the mountain provided them a modicum safety, it was a tenuous sanctuary and time was running out. They not only faced more Ottoman forces, but their food reserves were dwindling. Their supplies of bread, potatoes, and cheese were consumed after only a week on the mountain; their bread was destroyed by a rainstorm, and very little flour had been brought up from the villages. They were able, fortunately, to avoid starvation by using the flocks of sheep and goats they had driven up the mountain. Andreasian recounts how the Armenians used the milk to feed the children and sick, and how some animals were slaughtered to ensure a steady diet of meat. However, even with rationing, Andreasian estimated they only had enough food for two more weeks.

The Ottomans were aware of this and came to appreciate that a frontal assault was too costly. They decided to change their tactics to starving the Armenians out. They gathered 8,000 Muslim villagers around the base of Musa Dagħ, encircling the landward side of the mountain. There were more attacks, but none quite as extensive as the last general engagement. These limited assaults were met by the Armenians rolling boulders down the mountain to great effect. The Mediterranean Sea was on the opposite side of the mountain and the Ottomans were unable to establish an armed presence there. This fact would later prove decisive.

The Armenians desperately needed a way off the mountain. They had sent a runner to Aleppo 85 miles away through hostile Ottoman territory during the early part of the siege. The runner intended to contact the American consul Jesse B. Jackson in Aleppo and plead for assistance. What happened to this messenger is unknown. Another messenger was sent 35 miles away to Alexandretta harbor; it was hoped that an allied warship might be docked there. The messenger, chosen because he was a strong swimmer, was to swim towards any Entente ship and convey the plight of Musa Dagh. When the messenger arrived, there were no allied ships there and he returned empty-handed. Later, an appeal for assistance was written up and three capable swimmers were tasked with watching the seaward side of Musa Dagh and swimming out to meet any passing ship.

When all these attempts to warn the outside world failed, Andreasian suggested that the women create two massive flags, one of which said in English “Christians in Distress: Rescue,” while the other bore the image of a giant red cross. The two flags were tied to trees and defenders were assigned to monitor the seas, day and night, for activity. It was this innovation that ultimately secured their rescue. The French cruiser *Guichen* saw the giant flags while patrolling the coast. When the ship was spotted, a number of Armenians dived into the water and swam towards it. They were welcomed aboard where they recounted the siege and the plight of the Armenians clinging to life on Musa Dagh. The captain of the *Guichen* sent a wireless message to the admiral of the fleet and more ships arrived, including the French flagship *Ste. Jeanne d’Arc* and some battleships.

The evacuation was difficult; the Armenians built improvised rafts to ferry thousands through rough seas. Despite the difficulties, the evacuation was largely successful. In the end, 4,058 men, women and children were rescued and brought to Port Said, Egypt.

Case No. 2: Bisesero

On the evening of 6 April, 1994, the plane carrying Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile in the skies over the Kigali. Initially, the organized violence that followed the assassination was largely against political elites, most of whom were Hutu. The presidential guards followed a strategy of house-to-house searches for individuals on their lists. The emphasis on targeting specific people, however, would soon change: “*By the middle of the first week of the genocide,*” writes Alison Des Forges, “*organizers began implementing a different strategy: driving Tutsis out of their homes to government offices, churches, schools or other public sites, where they would subsequently be massacred in large-scale operations.*”¹¹

The best source for testimony on the fight for Bisesero is found in *Resisting Genocide: Bisesero, April-June 1994*. This edited work by African Rights collected 71 survivors’ accounts.¹² The book recalls how, rather than joining their ethnic kin at vulnerable public

11. Alison Des Forges, “*Leave None to Tell the Story*”: *Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), 9.

12. *Resisting Genocide: Bisesero April-June 1994* (London: African Rights, 1997). This volume should be read alongside their other meticulously researched collection of testimonies – African Rights. *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance* (London: African Rights, 1995).

sites, many Tutsis chose instead to flee to the hills of Bisesero. Rwanda is a very mountainous country; it is referred to as *mille collines*, land of a thousand hills. While Bisesero is not the highest mountain in Rwanda, it is still quite high at 2,000 m.¹³ The Tutsi inhabitants, known as the Abasesero, developed a reputation for resilience; during previous bouts of anti-Tutsi violence in 1959, 1962, and 1973, the Abasesero emerged relatively unscathed. While *génocidaire* strategy emphasized concentrating Tutsis at public sites, those who fled to Bisesero jointly acted to counter this strategy by moving the fight to an alternative terrain, one less favorable to the attackers.¹⁴

As soon as word spread of Habyarimana's assassination, both Tutsis and Hutus fled up the sides of Bisesero. Here, tens of thousands of Tutsis fought back for one and a half months. Life on the hills of Bisesero was fraught with difficulties. April is the peak of the wet season in Rwanda and the absence of shelter meant that rain persistently inundated the refugees. They built fires and huddled together to keep warm. Poor diet and sickness resulted in the spread of dysentery and those who arrived on the hills already injured lacked the medical supplies required to recuperate.

The defenders organized themselves soon after their arrival. They elected leaders, including Aminadabu Birara, to organize their resistance.¹⁵ Birara inspired discipline and ensured no defenders retreated until the signal was given. Survivor accounts recall that he would hit those too afraid to advance and that he cleared the battlefield of Tutsi dead.¹⁶

The defenders divided the people able to work into different groups. The defensive forces were divided into categories based on their capabilities. In the first rank were the strong men and youths. They made up the front line that was positioned about halfway up the hills and were responsible for the actual fighting. They formed a broad line and spread out to reduce the number of people likely to be hit by a barrage of gunfire.

Supporting them and making up the second line of defense were women and children, tasked with collecting stones. One of the benefits of Bisesero's terrain was the availability of natural projectiles. Women and children were sent out with bags and cloths to collect as many rocks as they could carry. Many were brought back to a central collection spot on Muyira hill or else taken directly to the front line. The elderly and the cows were positioned at the summit of the hill as the third rank. Many Tutsis brought their cattle with them during their flight up the mountain. These animals proved essential; in order to regain their strength, the defenders drank their milk and slaughtered them for meat.

The first battle occurred on 9 April on Rurebero Hill. In a pattern that would be repeated daily over the weeks to come, militia armed with guns, grenades, and machetes arrived and attempted to overcome resistance. The defenders retreated to Kiziba Hill once Rurebero was overrun; they were, however, pursued and many were slaughtered. Ultimately, thousands

13. Russell Schimmer, "Indications of Genocide in the Bisesero Hills, Rwanda, 1994," *GSP Working Paper No. 32* (2006).

14. Tutsis also fled into the swamps of Bugesera. Swamps allowed for concealment but made coordinated resistance impossible.

15. *Resisting Genocide*, 16.

16. *Ibid.*

converged upon Muyira Hill, an area of Bisesero covered with forests and bushes. This place became the defenders' chief redoubt.

Many more battles would soon follow. For weeks, the defenders suffered a tragically heavy toll, but they were not completely overrun. They resisted with what few resources they possessed. The majority of the defenders were agricultural workers and they brought farming implements, such as hoes and machetes, with them. Others brought traditional weapons, including spears and spiked clubs called *massues*. Since many of the attackers were drawn from similar rural origins, their weapons were comparable to those held by the defenders. With sheer numbers on their side, the defenders could overwhelm smaller bands of similarly armed militia.

When the organizers of the massacres brought supplies of firearms and explosives it seemed as though the balance would inexorably tilt in favor of the attackers. However, guns and grenades were a scarce commodity and deployed sparingly. Occasionally these weapons fell into the hands of the Tutsi defenders. In order to counter the advantages of the better-armed attackers, the refugees developed the tactic called *Mwuiungesha*, which in Kinyarwanda means "go and merge."¹⁷ One survivor who helped organize the defense described the technique:

When we saw them [the interahamwe] coming, I would go in front of everybody and tell them to lie down. The militia would approach us, shooting as they advanced. When they saw that we were all lying down, they would come up to us. I would then ask the Abasesero to get up and mingle with the militia. In this way they would not be able to throw their grenades nor could they shoot us because there was a high risk that they would kill their own people.¹⁸

Overwhelmed and caught off guard, many of the attackers fled. Despite their handicaps, the defenders were able to kill or injure militiamen, communal policemen, and soldiers.

Although suffering from many injured or killed, the defenders held their ground for 36 days. However, by mid-May, their position deteriorated beyond repair. Many Hutus and Twas climbed the hills in the chaos following the assassination. At night under the cover of darkness, the *génocidaires* infiltrated the hilltop encampment and persuaded the Hutus and Twas that the Tutsis were the true enemy. On April 20, the Hutus and Twas left *en masse*.¹⁹ Not only did the remaining Tutsis lose capable fighters, the Hutu turncoats divulged information about the *Mwuiungesha* tactic. With this intelligence in hand, the attackers positioned a heavy gun to fire upon the refugees from a distance and made efforts to surround the defending Tutsis' key positions.

There was a brief respite in mid-May; there were no attacks and the worst seemed to be over. This lull, however, was the result of the *génocidaires* making preparations for a final assault. Then, over the course of two days, May 13-14, the defenders' resistance was overwhelmed and untold thousands of Tutsis were slaughtered.

17. Ibid.

18. *Resisting Genocide*, 16-17.

19. Ibid, 24.

Tragically, the defenders were unable to alert the outside world of their plight before being overrun. French forces from *Opération Turquoise* were alerted weeks after the massacre by a passing journalist. By the time French troops arrived eighty days into the siege, only 2,000 refugees remained. To make matters worse, the French left, promising to return in three days. In the meantime, the *Interahamwe* returned and killed half of the remaining survivors. By the end of the siege, an estimated 13,000 to 40,000 Tutsis were killed, with a mere thousand surviving.²⁰

Case No. 3: Sinjar

Sinjar Mountain lies in Nineveh Province in northern Iraq near the Syrian border. Abutting the mountain to the south is the town of Sinjar, home to an ancient religious community of Yazidis. The Yazidis have come under assault by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) since 2014. ISIS justified their campaign as purging the area of so-called “devil worshippers.”²¹ However, this wasn’t the first time the Yazidis had come under assault from hostile Islamist forces. In August 2007 al-Qaeda orchestrated one of the most lethal bombings Iraq had seen as four simultaneous bombings targeted a housing compound at Siba Sheikh Khidr. Hundreds were killed or injured. The victims were largely Yazidis, leading one US military official to describe it as “almost genocide.”²²

At the time of writing [2016], the situation around Sinjar is still a “current event.” While Mount Sinjar is in Yazidi hands, the town is still occupied by the IS. Unlike the other two cases under consideration, in Sinjar the fog of war is still thick and, consequently, this section relies upon recent witness testimony and media reportage.

Early in the morning of August 3, 2014, ISIS units advanced upon Siba Sheikh Khidr and the town of Sinjar. In the aftermath of the 2007 bombing, the Iraqi government built a dirt berm perimeter to protect Siba Sheikh Khidr.²³ After initially failing to break through this defensive line ISIS deployed U.S.-made Humvees that easily overran the barricades. Looted after their victory in Mosul, the use of these vehicles proved decisive, and after five hours of fierce fighting, the battle for the town was lost. Much of the failure to defend Sinjar has been attributed to the abrupt withdrawal of Kurdish Peshmerga forces. Not only did they fail to forestall ISIS’ advance but they did

20. Philip Verwimp uses the lower estimates of 13,000, while the Rwandan government agency, the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide, uses the higher 40,000 statistic. See Philip Verwimp, *A Quantitative Analysis of Genocide in Kibuye Prefecture, Rwanda*, Genocide Archive of Rwanda, accessed 20.04.2001, http://www.genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/index.php?title=A_Quantitative_Analysis_of_Genocide_in_Kibuye.&gsearch=bisesero. National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide, *Bisesero Memorial Site*, <http://www.cnl.gov.rw/genocide/memorial-sites/>.

21. Shirley Li, “A Very Brief History of the Yazidi and What They’re Up Against in Iraq,” *The Atlantic*, accessed 08.08.2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/a-very-brief-history-of-the-yazidi-and-what-theyre-up-against/375806/>.

22. “Death toll reaching 500 in northern Iraq,” *Reliefweb*, accessed 15.08.2007, reliefweb.int/report/iraq/death-toll-headed-500-northern-iraq.

23. “A Child Called Tragedy,” *Al Jazeera*, accessed 26.08.2014, <http://projects.aljazeera.com/2014/new-iraqi-identity/>.

not warn the local Yazidis of their retreat, nor did they make any efforts to evacuate the civilian population.²⁴

Nonetheless, despite losing the battle, the effort established a five-hour window for the residents to escape. As many as 50,000 Yazidis are believed to have chosen to make the difficult ascent up the side of Mount Sinjar.²⁵ Some took vehicles with supplies, while others fled on foot. ISIS forces pursued them to the base of the mountain, but Yazidi resistance kept them at bay. They set up lookout points over the city and along Mount Sinjar's winding roads, watching for ISIS incursions. The Yazidi defenders possessed AK-47s, which could be used effectively from mountain cover but lacked the heavy weapons possessed by ISIS.

ISIS committed numerous massacres around the base of Mount Sinjar. The Yazda Documentation Project has produced a map of known mass graves and slaughter sites. These sites surround Mount Sinjar and are especially focused south and south-east of the town of Sinjar. The highest incident on the mountain occurred when 13 to 17 Yazidis were massacred near the switchbacks between town and Mount Sinjar itself.²⁶ The mountain itself, however, remained largely unscathed. The Islamic State was unable to gain a foothold on the mountain, thus buying the Yazidis precious time.

Those who made the arduous climb faced numerous challenges. On Mount Sinjar temperatures could get as high as 120 degrees Fahrenheit (nearly 48,8 in Celsius). People, including dozens of children, started dying of thirst soon after arriving.²⁷ Many were forced to eat crushed leaves picked from the sparse vegetation. Throughout the day the refugees sought out shaded gullies to escape the sun. Although Sinjar is dotted with over 300 caves, these proved insufficient.²⁸

Sinjar was the shortest of the three sieges presently under discussion, lasting a mere ten days. The Yazidis' plight was broadcast across the globe as the warning of an impending massacre swept social media. Modern communication technologies allowed the Yazidis to remain in constant contact with the outside world. After only a few hours into the siege, the plight of the Yazidis became a global *cause célèbre*. On August 7, American President Barack Obama announced the authorization of airstrikes and the delivery of humanitarian aid. In a White House press conference, Obama said that the Yazidis were "faced with a horrible choice: descend the mountain and be slaughtered, or stay and slowly die of thirst

24. "If it wasn't for the Kurdish fighters, we would have died up there," *Global Post*, accessed 28.08.2014, www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/140827/if-it-wasn-t-the-kurdish-fighters-we-would-have-died-there.

25. "Obama authorises Iraq air strikes on Islamist fighters," *BBC News*, accessed 08.08.2014, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-28699832.

26. "Mass Graves of Yazidis Killed by the Islamic State Organization or Local Affiliates On or After August 3, 2014," Yazda Documentation Project, accessed 26.01.2016, www.yazda.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Yazda-Report-on-Mass-Graves-Jan-28-2016.pdf.

27. "Iraqi Yazidi lawmaker: 'Hundreds of my people are being slaughtered,'" *CNN*, accessed 06.08.2014, edition.cnn.com/2014/08/06/world/meast/iraq-crisis-minority-persecution/index.html?hpt=hp_t3.

28. "If it wasn't for the Kurdish fighters."

and hunger.”²⁹ Significantly, the White House did not prevaricate on describing the situation as “a potential act of genocide.”³⁰

The Americans were joined by Iraqi, British and French airdrops of food, water and medicine.³¹ Iraqi forces also arranged to airlift a few dozen refugees off of Sinjar.³² One of these Iraqi rescue missions crashed on the mountain, killing the pilot Maj. Gen. Majid Ahmed Saadi.³³ Meanwhile, Kurdish forces from the PKK and their Syrian branch the YPG held ISIS at bay. They succeeded in opening a corridor on the opposite side of the mountain towards Syria. This provided a secure route of for the Yazidis to escape. The sick and elderly were rescued by the YPG from inaccessible areas using tractors. With further assistance by the Peshmerga and American airstrikes, the majority of the Yazidis were able to leave the mountain. The evacuation was so successful that a proposed American rescue mission involving V-22 Ospreys was called off.³⁴

Comparative Analysis and Concluding Remarks

While all three cases of resistance against genocidal violence are seemingly drawn from incomparable historical contexts, there are many parallels between them. In each case, mountains were used as a counter-strategy to interfere and interrupt the plans of the assailants. The various genocidal forces depicted here — the Ottoman army, the *Interahamwe* militia, the Islamic State, and their diverse accomplices — all wanted a trouble-free massacre committed on their own terms. In each case, the defenders refused to concede. The Armenians who ascended Musa Dagħ rebuffed the order to perish in the southern deserts; the Tutsis of Bisesero refused to congregate at public buildings turned into slaughterhouses; and the Yazidis who managed to climb Mount Sinjar denied ISIS of forced conversions, sex slaves and mass killing.

Each group of defenders, albeit with varying degrees of success, strove towards four goals: arriving on the mountain, maintaining biological needs, keeping the attackers at bay, and alerting the outside world. Of the three cases discussed, Musa Dagħ and Sinjar were successfully evacuated, while Bisesero was not.

What the cases examined tell us is that, although each goal is significant in maintaining a continuity of life, they are not of equal weight. Defeat is inevitable and resistance be continued indefinitely. If the defenders fail to alert the outside world in a timely manner, a rescue will arrive too late.

29. “Statement by the President,” White House, accessed 07.08.2014, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/07/statement-president>.

30. Ibid.

31. “US carries out air drops to help Iraqis trapped on mountain by Isis,” *The Guardian*, accessed 08.08.2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/us-aid-iraqi-trapped-mountain-isis>.

32. “Militants’ Siege on Mountain in Iraq Is Over, Pentagon Says,” *New York Times*, accessed 13.08.2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/08/14/world/middleeast/iraq-yazidi-refugees.html?_r=2.

33. “The most important ride of his life,” *Telegraph India*, accessed 18.08.2014, www.telegraphindia.com/1140818/jsp/frontpage/story_18731043.jsp#.VhiqXPIVhBd.

34. “Militants’ Siege.”

The key to the Armenian defense of Musa Dagh was their successful realization of all four of the survival goals. First, they used the weeklong advance warning to their advantage, using this time to make preparations. Second, they secured supplies of food to ensure that the defenders avoided starvation. Third, they competently fought back by organizing a defense and dividing the labor available. Finally, they successfully alerted the outside world to their plight, enabling a full evacuation with relatively little loss of life.

Despite Musa Dagh representing an “ideal” mountain survival narrative, the situation immediately prior to their fateful rescue was becoming increasingly dire. Their food reserves were diminishing and more and more Turkish and Arab reinforcements arrived around the base of Musa Dagh. It was only a matter of time before the starved and weakened Armenian defenders were overrun by the next Ottoman assault. Without the well-timed arrival of an external rescue, Musa Dagh would have been remembered as a tragedy.

Bisesero began as a partial success that ended in catastrophic failure. Like Musa Dagh, the refugees arrived on the mountain before the attackers appeared. They brought foodstuffs and livestock from their homes. Even though they possessed inferior arms, they successfully organized a defense, developed new tactics, and organized an efficient division of labor. However, they failed to successfully alert the outside world to their plight. As a result, the defenders were overrun by mid-May. When help did arrive, it was too little, too late, and ended up costing even more lives.

The final case of Sinjar shows how alerting the outside world early in a defensive effort can overcome other shortcomings. The Yazidis barely had time to evacuate and move up the hill, but they failed to bring sufficient supplies of food, water, and medical supplies with them and their defense was marred by disorganization. However, the Yazidi plight was broadcast across the world, so that after a mere ten days a multifaceted array of actors arrived to extricate the refugees from the ISIS siege. Had the Yazidis been stranded on Mount Sinjar for weeks or months, they would certainly have perished.

Summing up, mountains may provide a degree of sanctuary that is unobtainable in other settings. Whereas mountains can provide protection, other elements of the physical environment are often used instrumentally in the killing process. A perpetrator’s strategy determines *how* and *where* genocidal violence unfolds. Conversely, refugee counter-strategy transfers violence to an alternative context; it shifts violence towards terrain that is more advantageous to the defenders and concurrently detrimental to the forces of destruction. Mountains are one such geographical feature, giving substance to the old idiom *head for the hills!*

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BOOK REVIEW

Sarkis Y. Karayan, *Armenians in Ottoman Turkey, 1914: A Geographic and Demographic Gazetteer*, London, Gomidas Institute, 2018, 674 pp., maps, photos

Reviewed by Robert Tatoyan, Senior Research Fellow, Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation, Yerevan, Armenia

The question of the number of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire prior to and after the Armenian Genocide continues to attract widespread attention of many scholars. Besides being purely of an academic nature, this interest is also due to the Turkish government's continuous efforts to use these population figures as a keystone of its policy of genocide denial. Thus, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, in one of its official publications, connects these two questions in the following way: "*Demographic studies prove that prior to World War I, fewer than 1.5 million Armenians lived in the entire Ottoman Empire. Thus, allegations that more than 1.5 million Armenians from eastern Anatolia died must be false.*"¹

The vast majority of Turkish and some international scholars try to justify the Turkish state's official position by taking the Ottoman census data on Armenians for granted. They also dismiss data provided by Armenian sources, particularly the statistics provided by the Constantinople Armenian Patriarchate, which usually provide higher figures for the Armenian population than that of the Ottoman ones.²

Under the pressure of this wave of denialist scholarship concerning these figures, Armenian scholars in the West who deal with this topic mainly take a defensive stance. Thus, the late Vahakn Dadrian, a distinguished scholar of the Armenian Genocide, points out the systematic character of the mishandling of the Armenian population statistics by

1. "The Armenian Allegation of Genocide: The issue and the facts," accessed 20.04.2018, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-armenian-allegation-of-genocide-the-issue-and-the-facts.en.mfa>.

2. Almost every denialist historian surveying work on the Armenian question and the Armenian Genocide has a chapter or two dealing with Armenian population figures and the controversy over the number of Armenian casualties. See particularly: Esat Uras, *Tarihçe Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi* (Ankara: Yeni Matbaa, 1950), and English translation Esat Uras, *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question* (Ankara: Documentary Publications, 1988); see also Kamuran Gürün, *The Armenian File: The Myth of Innocence Exposed* (Nicosia and London: K. Rustem and Brother and Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985); for more recent example of this denial approach see Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey. A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007). Some Turkish and American denialist scholars have a special interest in late Ottoman demography issues (see particularly, Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); see also Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities. The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 1983). At the same time, Justin McCarthy, while praising Ottoman official statistics and basing his counts on the data they contain, is forced to make some adjustments and corrections, usually estimating the Ottoman Armenian population number higher than it is recorded by the Ottoman state.

the Ottoman authorities during the Armenian reforms era (1878-1914), as well as other discrepancies and fallacies connected to Ottoman statistics related to the ethnic distribution of population in the six provinces of Western Armenia (*Vilayet-i sitte*).³ Levon Marashlian, another Armenian scholar with a special interest in Ottoman Armenian demographic issues, while criticizing denialist scholars' (Justin McCarthy, Kemal Karpat et al.) methodological and factual fallacies in their approach to the Armenian population figures of the empire, uses statistical data provided by Armenian compatriotic studies on Ottoman Armenian communities and other unofficial Armenian sources and argues that prior to the Armenian Genocide there were at least 2,000,000 Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire.⁴ It is important also to mention here the French-Armenian scholars Raymond H. Kevorkian's and Paul B. Paboudjian's detailed study of the pre-WWI Ottoman Armenian population. Based on census provided by the Constantinople Armenian Patriarchate in 1913 they put the number of the Armenian populations at 1,914,620 Armenians living in 2,925 localities on the territory of the Ottoman Empire.⁵

Sarkis Y. Karayan's study is a new major attempt to break down this academic stalemate in the field of Ottoman Armenian demographic studies, by providing a detailed and scrupulous calculation of the number of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire prior to the Armenian Genocide. He does so on the basis of precise scientific methodology and comparison of statistical data provided by different sources.

Karayan's book consists of two sections which are unequal in their size, as well as Appendices 1-3, a Bibliography, and Index. Part 1 of the book (pp. 3-67) deals with the methodology used by the author. By providing a survey of the main statistical source, Karayan examines the figures before and after the genocide. These sources are: 1. Constantinople Armenian Patriarchate figures for 1882-1912; 2. Turkish official figures on Armenians; and 3. European sources on the population of the Ottoman Empire. Following this information, the author furnishes data on the number of Armenians in the diaspora from 1914 and after 1918, as well as the number of Armenian lives lost in Turkey and the Caucasus from the end of World War I to the final establishment of Kemalist rule in Turkey (December 31, 1922).⁶ In his conclusion to Part 1, Karayan presents a summary of his findings for the Armenian population in 1914 as well as his final figure of the total number of Armenian lives lost during 1915-1918. These are presented and summarized by vilayets [Ottoman provinces] in comparison to the Constantinople Armenian Patriarchate and Ottoman government's official figures.

Section two (pp. 70-566) of the book which is considered as the main portion of the

3. Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of Turko-Armenian Conflict* (New Brunswick: N.J., Transaction Publishers, 1999), 171-190 (Appendix entitled "The Questionable Features of the Ottoman Calculus of the Demography of Armenians.")

4. Levon Marashlian, *Politics and Demography: Armenians, Turks, and Kurds in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge Mass.: Zoryan Institute, 1991).

5. Raymond H. Kévorkian, Paul B. Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire Ottoman à la veille du génocide* (Paris: Editions d'Art et d'Histoire ARHIS, 1992). See also Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 265-278.

6. In accordance to his methodology, Karayan uses these figures in calculation of the Armenian death toll during the Armenian Genocide.

study, deals with the population figures of the Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire in 1914. In this section Karayan provides a long and detailed analysis of over 4,000 Armenian populated settlements. He groups them according to the administrative divisions of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century: vilayets, sanjaks, kazas, and, in some cases, nahiyes. The names of the administrative units presented within the book are given in alphabetical order. The tables of these data consists of five columns: 1. Place, name, and position, 2. Modern Turkish name, 3. Number of families, 4. Number of persons and a code, from A to E, referring to the given settlement mentioned in the U.S. maps and Gazetteer⁷ of Turkey.

Karayan's research determines the total number of Armenians worldwide in 1914 as 4,800,787 (including 2,534,784 in the Ottoman Empire, 2,026,000 in the Russian Empire, and 240,003 in the diaspora) and total number of Armenians worldwide in 1923-27 as 2,203,206 (including 150,000 in Turkey, 1,568,900 in the Soviet Union (including Armenia), and 484,316 in the diaspora). By subtracting the second figure from the first, the author provides the following final figures of the total Armenian lives lost during 1914-1923 as 2,597,581 of which Armenian lives lost between November 11, 1918 and December 1923 as 412,791, and total losses in 1914-1918 as 2,184,790 (by rounding up: 2,185,000.) (p. 67).

Thus, based on this extensive research, Karayan provides the numbers of Ottoman Armenians in 1914, diaspora Armenians in 1914, and diaspora Armenians in 1927, as well as the number of Armenian lives lost between November 11, 1918 and December 1923.

As the main bulk of the study is dedicated to the calculation of the number of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1914, it would be reasonable in the limited scope of this review to focus on the analysis of these figures through examining both the methods used by the author and their reliability.

First, it should be pointed out that both the Ottoman government and Constantinople Armenian Patriarchate sources provide different figures even for smaller administrative units such as the sanjak and kaza. Hence, there is no other reliable way to determine the number of Ottoman Armenians prior to the genocide than by counting the Armenian population, settlement by settlement, using the most important sources. Karayan uses this particular method which situates his work on a methodologically firm basis.

The bulk of sources used by the author to give the Armenian population figures on the settlement level are the following: 1. Data from the books about particular Ottoman Armenian communities published by diaspora Armenian compatriotic unions and Armenian Genocide survivors; 2. Census figures provided by the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1912, taken from the book *Koghkots Hay Hokevoraganutian yev ir Hodin 1915 Aghedali Dariin* [The Golgotha of the Armenian Clergy and its Faithful in the Catastrophic Year of 1915], compiled by Teotig [Lapjinian] in 1921 and printed in New York in 1985;⁸ 3.

7. Geographical dictionary or directory used in conjunction with a map or atlas.

8. Elsewhere the author dates Teotig's data at 1914 (see, for example, Bitlis kaza figures, 173). This census was taken in 1913, as it is justly mentioned in the note by Ara Sarafian (Gomidas Institute), the publisher of Karayan's study (p.vii). This confusion probably originates from the fact that the Armenian Patriarchate had actually prepared Ottoman Armenian population statistics in 1912, which were partially published by the Ottoman Armenian writer and public figure Grigor Zohrab under the pen name, Marcel Leart in 1913 (see Marcel Leart, *La Question Armenienne a La Lumiere des Documents* (Paris:

Population figures collected by certain individuals concerning specific provinces and published around 1910; 4. Armenian periodicals and journals published in the diaspora; 5. Official Ottoman population figures for 1914 (these are used whenever figures are not available from other sources); 6. The Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia (12 volumes, around 8,500 pages) and Geographical dictionary of historical and modern Armenia (5 volumes, around 4,000 pages) (pp. 5-9)⁹.

It should be noted that Karayan's statement that he "*presented and examined practically all available figures provided by different authors*" (p.7), for the 1914 Ottoman Armenian population does not do justice to the scholarship. For example, the author does not use the groundbreaking study Kevorkian and Paboudjian mentioned above which provides complete data of the Armenian population figure based on the the 1913 census survey lists which are kept in the Nubarian library in Paris. While Karayan's available source for this census (Teodig) provides only the number of households or families for each particular settlement by multiplying them by 7 in order to obtain the number of persons, Kevorkian and Paboudjian's work provides the precise number of individuals as they were recorded in these lists.

The main methodological weakness of the Karayan's approach to the population is that, as a rule, only one source is used for each settlement. This makes the author's calculation dependent on the reliability of that particular source and creates serious discrepancies. In some cases the author provides two or more village lists for the given administrative unit, but there is no indication on which criteria he chooses one of them to be the main source. Hence in some cases, he selects less trustworthy source as a basis for his calculations. By doing so his figures again become less reliable.

Let us provide some examples in order to illustrate the latter point. For the Armenian population of the kaza of Kharzan in the sanjak of Si'irt, Karayan uses the inflated figures provided by V. Bedoyan according to which the kaza had 2,131 families (17,048 persons for the administrative unit). If we compare these figures to the ones provided by Teodig (1913), we see that the latter provides a very low figure (1,000 families). It is highly probable that Bedoyan's numbers are inflated, thus affecting Karayan's calculation.¹⁰ Another example is the case of the city of Diarbekir for which Karayan estimates the number of the Armenian population to be around 45,000, whereas others provide much lower figures of 15,000-26,000. Despite the fact that the author attempts to justify his choice of the higher figure, almost all of his arguments are problematic and are essentially guesstimations (pp. 272-273).¹¹

Librairie Maritime et Colonial, 1913) and in a complete form in 1922 by the same Teodig in *Amenoun Taretsoys* [Annual calendar], 261-265, where data on the Ottoman Armenian population as of April 1, 1921 is provided. Karayan is aware of this key source, but, surprisingly, uses it only for his counting of Armenian Genocide survivors.

9. A more accurate translation of the name of the mentioned book is "Dictionary of Localities in Armenia and the Neighboring Regions" («Հայաստանի և հարակից երկրների տեղանունների բառարան»).

10. Karayan, actually mentions Teodig's figures, but provides no clue as to why he decided not to use them as a basis for calculating the population figure of the Kharzan district (p. 213).

11. If indeed there were about 45,000 Armenians in the city of Diarbekir, as the author claims, this town would be the largest Armenian-populated in six vilayets of Western Armenia (behind the cities of Van,

Unfortunately, this fallacy is also inherent in some of the author's other figures for the vilayet of Diarbekir, particularly those for the sanjaks of Mardin and Severag, where he provides the figures of Armenians at 44,833 and 37,355 respectively. As a result, the author's estimate of 194,398 for the Armenian population of the vilayet of Diarbekir is most likely an exaggeration. The most reliable sources at our disposal (Constantinople Armenian patriarchate's estimate of 1912, and Thomas Mgrdichian) provide figures between 125-150,000 for the Armenian population of the vilayet of Diarbekir.

At the same time, the author's estimate of 123,832 Armenians for the vilayet of Van at most an underestimation. Reliable independent sources (Armenian Patriarchate statistics for 1912-1914, Armenian Genocide refugee counting data, among others) provide figures ranging between 150-200,000 and even higher for pre-genocide Armenian populations of this province.

To conclude, despite some discrepancies in the figures provided by Karayan, most of his calculations and estimates are sound. However, the calculation errors mentioned above, as well as others not mentioned, could have an impact on the reliability of Karayan's estimates for particular provinces that affects his total figure for Ottoman Armenian population.

Thus, despite all his efforts, the author's calculation does not provide definitive and conclusive answers to the question on the number of Armenians in all the Armenian-populated provinces of the Ottoman Empire before the genocide and the consequent question of the figures of the Armenian Genocide death toll. Perhaps, it is a *mission impossible* for any specific researcher who would dare to undertake a task of similar magnitude and depth. Nevertheless, most certainly, Karayan's book contains a massive treasure trove of information, which could and should be used as an indispensable reference book by any future researcher in the field of the Ottoman Armenian demography.

Erzeroum and Sivas), something that does not hold ground based on all the available sources. Taking into account the similarity between figures 15,000 and 45,000 we cannot rule out the possibility that the figure of 45,000 in the original source used is a result of simple typographic error.

Ruth Amir, *Twentieth Century Forcible Child Transfers. Probing the Boundaries of the Genocide Convention*, Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books 2019, 273 pp.

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Children played a somewhat more important role in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (hereinafter the Genocide Convention) than appears at first sight: while two genocidal acts mentioned in Article II of the Genocide Convention explicitly deals with children – Article 2 (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group and 2 (e) forcibly transferring children to another group, the other articles have a somewhat indirect link with the concept of a child. The protected groups under the Genocide Convention were distinguished mainly by their biological characteristics,¹ so that an individual belonging to the group is not part of it through choice but through procreation.² In this sense children play a central role in the continuity and viability of the protected groups.

The forcible child transfer clause prohibits “transferring children of the group to another group with intent to destroy national, religious, racial and ethnic groups in whole or in part.”³ The forcible children transfer clause is, however, the only genocidal act that is often justified by perpetrators as stemming from benevolent motives, such as “to benefit the affected children” or “to save” them. But motives behind forcible child transfer are irrelevant in “assessing genocidal culpability,” when forcible child transfer is implemented with the intent to destroy a group.⁴

Meanwhile, the term “forcibly” is not restricted to physical force and may include any act consisting of threats, threats of force, inflicted trauma, or coercion such as those caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression, abuse of power or by taking advantage of a coercive environment which would lead to the forcible transfer of children from one group to another.⁵

1. Only in the case of religious groups, can belonging, in some limited cases, be through choice.

2. Kurt Mundorff, “Other Peoples’ Children: A Textual and Contextual Interpretation of the Genocide Convention, Article 2(e),” *Harvard International Law Journal* 50, no. 1 (2009): 89-90.

3. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crimeofgenocide.aspx>

4. Ibid, also Keith David Watenpugh, “Are There Any Children for Sale?”: Genocide and the Transfer of Armenian Children (1915–1922), *Journal of Human Rights* 12, no. 3 (2013): 289.

5. The Prosecutor vs. Georges Anderson Nderubumwe Rutaganda Case No. ICTR-96-3-T, para. 55; Prosecutor v. Akayesu, Case ICTR-96-4-T, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, September 2, 1998, para. 509.

Two massive programs of forced removal of children were implemented during the Armenian Genocide of World War I and the Holocaust during II World War with the former being considered as classical case of a genocidal forcible child transfer. Forcible transfer of Armenian children and their assimilation into the Turkish society was a structural component of the Ottoman genocidal policy and was one of the methods used for the destruction of the Armenians during the Armenian Genocide. During the death marches, vast numbers of Armenian children (also young women) were forcibly transferred and incorporated into the enemy group.⁶ A similar policy was implemented during WWII when “racially valuable” children, mainly Polish, were forcibly removed from the occupied eastern lands to Germany for Germanization.⁷ According to a well-designed plan nearly 200,000 *racially valuable* children were transferred to special institutions, orphanages or German families.

Other wide scale child removal programs were connected with colonization and further westernization or “education” of indigenous children. Starting from the mid nineteenth century in Australia, Canada and the United States, indigenous children were transferred from their groups for acculturation.⁸ During 1920-1970s the Swiss government removed Roma children for the same purpose.⁹ Starting from 1920s a policy of Russification of indigenous Siberian children was carried out by removing and placing them in distant schools of the Soviet Union.¹⁰

Despite being an old phenomenon with many examples in history, forcible child transfer has only recently gained considerable scholarly attention.¹¹

6. See for example Watenpugh, “Are There Any Children for Sale?”: 283-295; Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia. The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016); Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Orphans, Converts and Prostitutes: Social Consequences of War and Persecution in the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1923,” *War in History* 19, no. 2 (2012): 173-192.

7. For more on this see the International Military Tribunal, *Trials of War Criminals*, selected and prepared by the United Nations War Crimes Commission, Volume XIII, (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1949); Trial of Ulrich Greifelt and others, United States Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, 10th October, 1947 – 10th March, 1948; International Military Tribunal, *Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals Under Control; Council Law No. 10*, Nuremberg, October 1946 – April 1949, Vol. 4 (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1949), 674-687.

8. Ruth Amir, “Killing Them Softly: Forcible Transfers of Indigenous Children,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 9, no. 2 (2015): 41-60. Also see Margaret Jacobs, *A Generation Removed: The Fostering and Adoption of Indigenous Children in the Postwar World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

9. Mundorff, “Other Peoples’ Children,” 64.

10. Nikolai Vakhtin, *Native Peoples of the Russian Far North* (Minority Rights Group, 1992), 36.

11. The first major contribution in this direction is the work of Kurt Mundorff, “Other Peoples’ Children: A Textual and Contextual Interpretation of the Genocide Convention, Article 2(e),” *Harvard International Law Journal* 50, no. 1 (2009): 61-127; some separate aspects of the issue were addressed by Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe’s Families after World War II* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 2011); Sonja C. Grover, *Child Soldier Victims of Genocidal Forcible Transfer: Exonerating Child Soldiers Charged With Grave Conflict-related International Crimes* (Berlin: Springer Publishing, 2012); Sonja C. Grover, *Humanity’s Children: ICC Jurisprudence and the Failure to Address the Genocidal Forcible Transfer of Children* (Berlin: Springer Publishing, 2012); Sonja C.

Ruth Amir's book is a major attempt at bringing the issue of forcible child transfer to the reader by presenting a detailed analysis of the legal history of the forcible child transfer clause within the context of genocide. By referring to different historical examples, the author argues that recognition should be granted to children of any identifiable group that have been forcibly transferred, as a fifth protected group under the Genocide Convention, by adding a special Protocol to it.

The book consists of a detailed introduction, three parts (six Chapters, including a Conclusion), as well as a Bibliography and an Index. In the Introduction Amir presents the forcible transfers of children from one group to another as an old phenomenon that developed with modernity. She views a blood tax, *Devshirme*, in the Ottoman Empire as an early example of forcible child transfer (14th – 17th centuries).¹² She also points out that children were also removed for religious purposes in the 15th century, for filling the shortage of slaves, the westernization programs starting at the end of the 19th century, etc.

Amir examines certain 20th century forcible child transfer programs aimed at children with a particular collective identity, such as “nationality, political affiliation, economic class or ethnicity.” Among these she mentions the removal of Armenian children to Turkish homes and institutions during the Armenian Genocide, Stalin's mass-deportations of women and children from the Baltic States, and Hitler's Germanization of Polish children. Some other examples of forcible child transfer brought by the author relates to political conflicts in Cuba,¹³ Spain,¹⁴ Argentina,¹⁵ Israel,¹⁶ and Belgium.¹⁷

Part 1 of the book provides a detailed legal analysis of the crime of genocide by paying a considerable attention to the notion of groupism as “a major constitutive element of genocide.” The whole legal analysis is paralleled with Raphael Lemkin's broader notion of genocide and the intentions of the people drafting the Genocide Convention.

In Chapter 2 of Part 1 Amir concentrates on the legal analysis of the forcible transfer clause assessing it as protecting “children as a subgroup of a protected group.” In this part of the book the author argues for granting protection to children of any identifiable group as the fifth protected group under the Genocide Convention. Her argument is based on four pillars. First, children are recognized as a special protected group by national and international

Grover, “Child Soldiers as Victims of ‘Genocidal Forcible Transfer’: Darfur and Syria as Case Examples,” *The International Journal of Human Rights* 17, no.3 (2013): 411–427; Robert van Krieken, “Rethinking Cultural Genocide: Aboriginal Child Removal and Settler-Colonial State Formation,” *Oceania* 75, no. 2 (2004): 125–151; Jonas Nilsson, “The Vückovi'c Trial in Kosovo – Deportation and Forcible Transfer under the Definition of Genocide,” *Nordic Journal of International Law* 71 (2002): 545–555.

12. Young Christian boys were kidnapped, converted to Islam and raised as Muslims, being trained for military or civil service and later involved in the Janissary military corps.

13. Operation Peter Pan, when during 1960–62 over 14,000 unaccompanied Cuban children were moved to the US with a support of the US government against Fidel Castro's regime.

14. Forcible transfer of children of Republican families during and after the Spanish Civil War by Franco regime.

15. Forcible transfer of children of political dissidents.

16. Forcible transfer of immigrant Yemeni Jewish children and their re-education.

17. Children born to Congolese and Belgian parents who were reclaimed by Belgium after decolonization.

law. Second, a child's right is a peremptory norm in international humanitarian and human rights law, as the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most rapidly and widely ratified human rights treaty.¹⁸ Third, the Genocide Convention recognizes the invaluable contribution of the protected groups to humanity. Finally, the forcible child transfer clause recognizes the child not only in her/his individual capacity, but as a member of a family and a group.

Each of the following three chapters in Part Two deals with case studies of forcible child transfer, enquiring whether these historical cases could be framed as genocide within the framework of the Genocide Convention. All case study chapters in the book provide a detailed historical background of these cases, the dominant ideology of the perpetrator group followed by their intent to destroy the group. The final sections of these chapters deal with forcible child transfer.

Here the author omits a mention of transfer cases that took place during the Armenian and Jewish genocides and starts with the phase of European colonialism and the forced removal of aboriginal children in Australia, Canada, and USA. In this section Amir highlights the difficulty in defining indigenous people fitting into the category of protected groups under the Genocide Convention.

The forcible transfer of aboriginal children was viewed in the context of "the nineteenth century mega-narrative of progress," which became a political doctrine in the three discussed countries. The forcible removal of indigenous children from their tribal communities to boarding schools and their adoption by foster families was the essence of socialization or westernization that resulted in the eradication of tribal identity and culture. The author concludes that the concepts of civilization and assimilation are sometimes blurred as if they are synonyms. While seriously presenting the philosophy, political doctrine, and the intent of the forcible transfer of indigenous children, the author has a difficulty in putting the indigenous communities under the protected groups of the Genocide Convention, which is somewhat debatable.

The next case studied in the book is that of Jewish immigrant children moved to Israel from Yemen after the 1948 declaration of Israeli independence. At least 1,500 babies and young children were forcibly removed from their families by the Jewish Agency for Israel as part of its activities to absorb immigrants.¹⁹ Drawing similarities with indigenous boarding schools and methods, Amir highlights the east-west divide between European and non-European Jews and the Zionist movement. From the first day of immigration Yemeni Jews were singled out as primitive and uncivilized and the need for their civilization and re-education was put forward by the Ben Gurion government. Here Amir stresses the

18. Dr. Amir also details some rights listed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child related to the issue, mainly the child's right to be free of discrimination of any kind based on his or her parents' or legal guardian's race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status (§ 2), to identity (§ 7), to grow up in a family environment, to be cared for by his/her parents and not to be separated from his/her parents against their will (except under specified conditions, § 9).

19. According to the book this number may be up to 10,000 children.

doctrine of the centrality and superiority of the state over an individual. However, by trying to draw a line between assimilation and genocide, the author asserts that the methods used for assimilation in this case were much harsher and more violent. Here again she points to the difficulty in viewing Yemeni Jews as a separate group and casts doubt on the genocidal intent of the Israeli government.

The last case study in the book deals with the Spanish Civil War and the forced removal of children of Republicans' parents until the 1950s.²⁰ Here, together with persecutions and murders, thousands of children of imprisoned Republicans were forcibly transferred. The author argues that when targeting Republicans, ethnic, national, racial/biological terminology was used to enhance political and ideological rivalry, thus making it difficult to ascertain that the Republicans were only a political group. In this section Amir stresses the existence of genocidal intent and the devastating effect of excluding political groups from the Genocide Convention.

Chapter six concentrates on the discussion of the exclusion of political groups from the Genocide Convention and the debates among the scholars and international criminal tribunals on the issue by also referring to Lemkin's notion of protected groups. The chapter then analyzes from a comparatively perspective Operation Peter Pan in Cuba and the Spanish case of transfer of Republican children to illustrate the differences between genocidal and non-genocidal forcible child transfer within the framework of political conflicts.

The conclusion summarizes the historical cases and discusses the recognition of children as a fifth protected group under the Genocide Convention. By singling out some modern ways of forcible child transfer such as recruiting child soldiers, forced marriages and forced impregnation, children born out of genocidal rape, sex slaves and domestic workers, Amir highlights the new ways genocide can affect children. Mentioning the ambiguity in the definition of groups protected under the Genocide Convention, the author rightly points out that it cannot be reasonably resolved by only legal interpretation, thus offering to add a Protocol to the Genocide Convention.

Amir's work is very valuable in bringing forcible child transfer cases to our attention; a once enigmatic concept is shown here under a new light. The book has crucial in that it also presents the complex nature of defining a group whereby some genocidal forcible child transfer cases fall outside the scope of the crime of genocide.

20. *The Republicans and the Nationalists* were the two sides of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

I. SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Articles submitted to International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies for consideration should be related to genocide studies.
- Articles should be original contributions.
- Written in English and must correspond precisely to the format and style of articles published in *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies*.
- There is no standard length for articles but 8,000-13,000 words (including notes and references) is a useful target.
- Photographs must be of good quality and provided separately.
- Authors should include a short biographical data as well as information concerning his/her relevant interests.
- To be accepted for publication, all articles must pass a peer review by at least two experts in the field.
- The Editor has the right to edit the article to conform to the editorial policy and specifications of *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies* and to reject the article if it not be acceptable to our editorial committee for publication.
- Book reviews and press-reviews should be kept to 2,000-5,000 words.

II. LANGUAGE, SPELLING AND GRAMMAR

- Numbers from one to ten should be spelled out; other numbers should be written as numerals.
- Dates should be in the following form: December 21, 1915; 1894-96; the 1900s.
- Acronyms may be transliterated or translated in English.
- If an abbreviation is introduced into the article, the first time it is used, the abbreviation must be in parentheses following the full name or title.
- Any foreign word not known by the general public should be italicized, such as *yeghern* or *vilayet*.
- All footnote sources using non-Latin alphabet should be transliterated and provided with English translation.

III. ARTICLE FORMAT

- Title must be all caps and centered
- All articles should be in Times New Roman 12 point font (including title and footnotes), 1.5 spaced throughout.
- Long quotations (more than four lines) should be brought in the text in a separate passage, 10 point font without the use of quotation marks.

IV. FOOTNOTES

- The footnotes should be used numbered consecutively throughout the article, using a numeral (but not a Roman numeral).
- References should be made according to the Chicago Manual of Style Online 17th Edition https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html

