

TESTIMONIES OF THE EYEWITNESS SURVIVORS AS HISTORICAL IRREFUTABLE DOCUMENTS OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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The Armenian Genocide - the crime against humanity, has become, by the brutal constraint of history, an inseparable part of the national identity, the thought and the spiritual-conscious inner world of the Armenian people. As the years go by, interest toward the Armenian Genocide grows steadily due also to the fact of the recent recognition of this historical evidence by numerous countries. However, the official Turkish and the pro-Turkish historiographers try, up to the present day and in every possible way, to distort the true historical facts pertaining to the years 1915-1923, the most tragic period for the Armenian nation.

Numerous studies, collections of documents, statements of politicians and public officials, artistic creations of various genres about the Armenian Genocide have been published in various languages, but all these colossal publications did not include the voice of the people: the memoirs and popular songs narrated and transmitted by eyewitness survivors who had created them under the immediate impression of the said historical events. These memoirs and songs also have an important historical-cognitive, factual-documental and primary source value. The Armenian nation itself has endured all those unspeakable sufferings. And, as in the elucidation of every political crime, the testimonies of the witnesses are decisive, similarly, in this case, the testimonies of the eyewitness survivors are of prime importance; every one of them has, from the juridical point of view, its evidential significance in the equitable solution of the Armenian Case and in the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

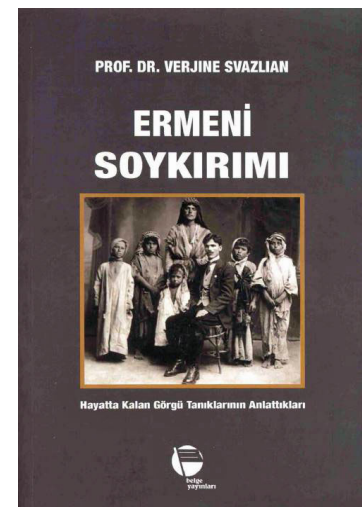
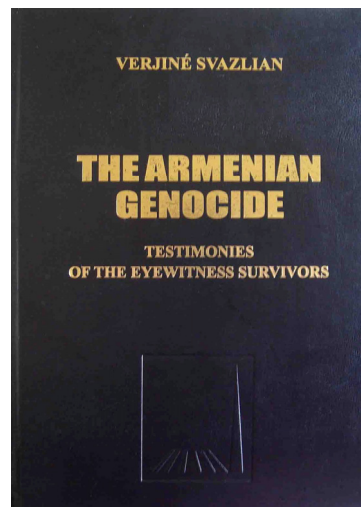


Doctor of Sciences (Philology), ethnographer Verjiné Svazlian
writing down the tragic memoirs and songs
narrated by the Genocide survivor, Mariam Baghdishian (b. 1909,
Moussa Ler)

Being deeply conscious of all these facts, as early as 1955, I, a student at the Yerevan Khachatour Abovian Pedagogical University, began to write down the testimonies of the eyewitness survivors of the Armenian Genocide, when it was not possible to speak explicitly about the Armenian Genocide in Soviet Armenia, when the exiled repatriates, the eyewitness survivors miraculously rescued from the

massacres were living in fear of being unjustly accused and deported anew. Despising difficulties of all kinds and conscious of the historical-scientific and the factual-documental value of the materials associated with popular oral tradition, I followed the call of my Western-Armenian blood and acted on my own initiative. Later, starting from 1960, I continued my work under the patronage of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of Armenia, and, from 1996, also of the Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia (being engaged, at the same time, in other scientific research works). Under the scorching summer sun and in the icy winter cold, I went on foot, from district to district, from village to village, searching and finding eyewitness survivors miraculously rescued from the Armenian Genocide. I approached them tactfully, without diverting their attention with irrelevant questions, and let them freely express their immediate impressions. I wrote down (and also audio- and video-recorded), deciphered and studied the bewildering memoirs, the impressive stories and the diverse historical songs, which they narrated and sang. The originals of all the popular materials are kept at the archives of the Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide of NAS RA.

These popular testimonies have been presented in my numerous publications and especially in the voluminous edition ***“The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors”*** (in Armenian)¹ which was translated and published also in English² and Turkish³.



Each of the books in three languages are composed of two parts:

¹ Սվազյան Վ., Հայոց ցեղասպանություն. Ականատես վերապրողների վկայություններ, Երևան, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ «Գիտություն» հրատ., 2000, 500 էջ: Սվազյան Վ., Հայոց ցեղասպանություն. Ականատես վերապրողների վկայություններ, Երկրորդ համալրված հրատ., Երևան, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ «Գիտություն» հրատ., 2011, 880 էջ:

² Svazlian V., The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors. Yerevan: “Gitoutyoung” Publishing House of NAS RA, 2011, 850 p.

³ Svazlian V., Ermeni Soykırımı: Hayatta Kalan Görgü Tanıklarının Anlattıkları. İstanbul: “Belge” Uluslararası Yayıncılık, 2013, 1064 s.

a) **Academic study**, where the genre and typological peculiarities of the popular testimonies are elucidated; in addition, the whole course of the Armenian Genocide is presented and substantiated with popular memoirs and songs of historical nature (in native Armenian and foreign Turkish languages).

b) **Primary source originals** (700 units), which include the Memoir-Testimonies communicated by the eyewitness survivors, historical Narrative-Testimonies, Song-Testimonies and Notations of Songs.

The volumes are provided also with a Documentary-informative table about the eyewitness survivors and about the popular materials communicated by them, as well as the Photographs of the survivors, Summaries in different languages, a Glossary, Commentaries, Indexes: Thematic Index, Index of Personal Names, Toponymic and Ethnonymic Indexes, and a Map, giving an idea about the deportation and the genocide of the Armenians realized in the Ottoman Empire.

The great majority of the **eyewitnesses** who have transmitted these popular materials are representatives of the senior generation; they are Armenians, who were forcibly exiled from their historical native cradle, deported during the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923), realized by the Young Turks in the Ottoman Empire, from Western Armenia, from Cilicia (1921) and the Armenian-inhabited provinces of Asia Minor (Anatolia) (1922, the Smyrna Calamity).

In the course of these historical events, the vast majority of the Western Armenians (more than 1.5 million) were ruthlessly exterminated, while those who, having been plundered, left destitute and exhausted, were miraculously rescued, reached Eastern Armenia or scattered to different countries of the world, after going through the harrowing experience of deportation and witnessing the victimization of their kinsfolk and compatriots. Subsequently, a fraction of those survivors was repatriated periodically to Eastern Armenia from Turkey, Greece, France, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, the Balkan countries, and the U.S.A.. Those repatriates settled in the newly built districts on the **outskirts of Yerevan**, which symbolize the memory of the former native cradles in Western Armenia (Aygestan, Sari Tagh, Shengavit, Noubarashen, Vardashen, Nor (New) Butania, Nor Aresh, Nor Kilikia, Nor Arabkir, Nor Zeytoun, Nor Sebastia, Nor Malatia, Nor Marash), as well as in different **regions of the Armenian SSR** (Nor Kharbert (Harpoot), Nor Kessaria (Kayseri), Nor Hadjn, Nor Ayntap, Nor Moussa Ler (Dagh), Nor Yedessia (Urfa), Edjmiadsin (now: Vagharshapat), Hoktemberian (now: Armavir), Ararat, Talin, Hrazdan, Leninakan (now: Gyumri), Kirovakan (now: Vanadzor) and elsewhere).

Upon meeting the eyewitness survivors miraculously saved from the Armenian Genocide, I always found them silent, reticent and deep in thought. There was valid reason for this mysterious silence, since the political obstacles prevailing in Soviet Armenia for many decades did not allow them to tell about or to narrate their past in a free and unconstrained manner. Consequently, I have discovered them and recorded the said materials with great difficulty.

During more than 60 years, owing to my consistent quests in various regions of Armenia, as well as during my short-term personal or scientific trips to the Diaspora: Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Greece, France, Canada, the U.S.A. and Turkey, I have constantly searched and discovered representatives of the senior, middle and junior generations of survivor-witnesses of the Armenian Genocide. I have gotten closely acquainted with them and have tried to penetrate the abysses of their souls. The great majority of the **eyewitness survivors** are representatives of the senior generation; the eldest survivor was born in the 19th century, **Maritsa Papazian** (b. 1874, Samsun).



Maritsa Papazian
(1874, Samsun)

Yielding to my solicitous exhortations, they began to narrate, with bursting agitation and tearful sobs, reliving anew their sorrowful past, the heart-breaking experiences they had retained in their memories, about how the policemen of the Young Turks and the criminals released from the jails had forcibly expelled the Western Armenians from their Native Cradle, their Motherland, from their well-organized and flourishing homes, and had inhumanly dismembered their parents and kinsfolk, had dishonored their mothers and sisters, and had crushed the new-born infants with rocks right in front of their eyes...

The popular testimonies, transmitted by the eyewitness survivors, provide also the possibility of subjecting the genre and typological peculiarities of similar materials to a scientific investigation.

Let us refer now to the popular historical testimonies - memoirs, narratives and songs - communicated by the eyewitness survivors.

The **historical memoir-testimony** is the compilation or the narration of any person's reminiscences of those past events, people or encounters, with which he/she had a connection. The precise description of the real facts and events in the memoir is combined with the personal impressions of the narrator. The memoirs narrated by the eyewitnesses of the Armenian Genocide represent the impressive description of the period they have lived in, including the very important aspects of the Armenian Genocide, as well as the multifaceted pictures of the public and popular life.

The popular historical memoirs narrated by the eyewitness survivors cover a wide range of topics: they reflect the beauty of the native land, their daily patriarchal life and customs, the time in which they lived, the conditions of the communal-political life, the important historical events, the cruelties (the extortion of taxes, the mobilization, the arm-collections, the burning of people alive, the exile, the murder and the slaughter) committed in their regard by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and also, the leaders of the government of the Young Turks (Talaat, Enver, Djemal, Nazim, Behaeddin Shakir...), the forcible deportations organized by the latter to the uninhabited deserts of Mesopotamia (Deir-el-Zor, Ras-ul-Ayn, Rakka, Meskené, Surudj...), the inexpressible

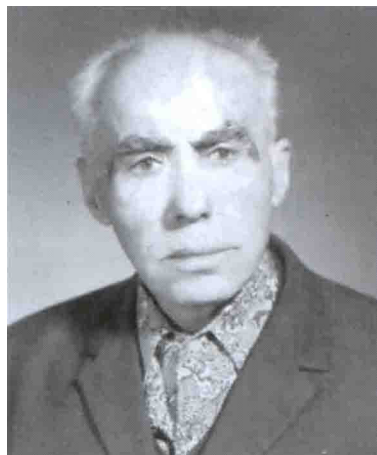
afflictions of the Armenians (walking till exhaustion, thirst, hunger, epidemics, dread of death...), as well as the righteous and noble struggle of the various sections of the Western Armenians against violence to protect their elementary right for life (the heroic battle of Van in 1915, the struggle for existence in Shatakh, Shapin-Garahissar and Sassoun, the heroic battles of Moussa Ler and Edessa (Urha-Urfa), and later, in 1920-1921, those of Ayntap and Hadjn), the national heroes distinguished in the heroic self-defensive battles (General Andranik Ozanian from Shapin-Garahissar, Armenak Yekarian from Van, the Great Mourad [Hambardzoum Boyadjian], Yessayi Yaghoubian from Moussa Ler, Mkrtich Yotneghbayrian from Edessa, Adour Levonian from Ayntap, Aram Cholakian from Zeytoun, the national avenger Soghomon Tehlirian), and numerous other well-known and unknown Armenians, who struggled against violence shoulder to shoulder with the popular masses, who were martyred, who often warded off the danger and survived...

Every one of the eyewitness survivors told his/her memoir in his/her own Armenian parlance, often in dialect or in Armenian mixed with foreign languages, also in Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish, English, French and German.

The popular oral materials I have written down, tape-recorded or video-recorded are the eyewitness survivors' recollections of their direct impressions, their meditations, reflections, expectations and testimonies with the true and authentic reproduction of the live pictures of the lot befallen the Western Armenians. All the eyewitness survivors, irrespective of their specialty, are, as a result of the cruel life experience they have had, enriched and sagacious individualities, for whom, first and foremost "*a man should be a man*", in spite of his nationality⁴ as **Artavazd Ktradsian** (b. 1901, Adabazar) has noted in the beginning of his memoir.



Artavazd Ktradsian
(1901, Adabazar)



Arakel Tagoyan
(1902, Derdjan)



Nektar Gasparian
(1910, Ardvin)

⁴ Svazlyan V., The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors. Testimony [henceforth: T.] 219, p. 404.

In the same spirit are the testimonies of **Arakel Tagoyan** from Derdjan (b. 1902)⁵ and **Nektar Gasparian** (b. 1910), from Ardivin⁶.

The memoir-testimonies narrated by the eyewitness survivors of the Armenian Genocide, as a variant of the popular oral tradition, are either brief and concise in structure or voluminous and protracted, and include also various dialogues, citations, diverse genres of popular folklore (lamentations and heroic songs, tales, legends, parables, proverbs, sayings, benedictions, maledictions, prayers, oaths, etc.) to confirm the trustworthiness of their narrative, to render their oral speech more reliable and more impressive. In particular, ***the eyewitness survivors themselves have felt a moral responsibility and a sense of duty with regard to their narratives. Many of them have crossed themselves or have sworn before communicating their memoirs to me.*** And an oath is a sacred word and a holy thing, which does not tolerate falsehood. As **Loris Papikian** (b. 1903), from Erzroom, told at the beginning of his memoir: *“...I should tell you first that if I deliberately color the events and the people, let me be cursed and be worthy of general contempt...”*⁷



Loris Papikian
(1903, Erzroom)

By subjecting the said memoirs and historical songs to a scrupulous quantitative and qualitative analysis, I have ascertained that, as there is no man without memory, similarly, ***there cannot exist a nation without memory***, inasmuch as memory is the life of a man or a nation, the past and the history of the years they lived, as Jews, Greeks, Gypsies and the other aggrieved nations have.⁸ And if any nation, in the present case the Turkish nation, has not preserved its historical memory, therefore it has not lived and has not felt all those afflictions.

It should be pointed out also that the testimonies - the memoirs and songs I have written down, recorded, studied and published on my own initiative are increasing with every passing day, following their first publication in Armenia, in 2000, and that is an interminable process, inasmuch as every Armenian has his family grief and losses. Besides, there are countless testimonies (in different dialects, in different languages, hand-written, audio- and video-recorded) in all the countries where thousands of Western Armenians were dispersed as a result of the Genocide, gathered in various archives and in private ownership. These also have to be deciphered, published and put into scientific circulation as factual-documentary testimonies of the collective historical memory of the Armenian nation about the Armenian Genocide.

⁵ Ibid, T. 96, p. 229.

⁶ Ibid, T. 81, p. 199.

⁷ Ibid, T. 88, p. 214.

⁸ For more details see: Porter J. N., ed. Genocide and Human Rights. A Global Anthology. Lanham, New York, London, 1982.

The Armenian Genocide, which was perpetrated at the beginning of the 20th century, has been directly perceived by the senses of the eyewitnesses and it **has been indelibly impressed in their memory**. As a survivor from Ardivin, **Nektar Gasparian** (b. 1910), has confessed: *"...More than 80 years have passed, but I cannot forget up to this day my prematurely dead beloved father, mother, uncle, grandmother, our neighbors and all my relatives who were brutally killed, and we were left lonely and helpless. During all my life I have always remembered those appalling scenes, which I have seen with my own eyes and I have had no rest ever since. I have shed tears so often..."*⁹

Verginé Gasparian (b. 1912), from Ayntap, has also narrated: *"...The Turks slaughtered my father Grigor, my mother Doudou, my brother Hakob and my sister Nouritsa before my eyes. I have seen all that with my own eyes and cannot forget until this day..."* (The survivor began to cry and was not able to continue narrating her memoir - V. S.)¹⁰.

The eyewitness survivors of those historical events, dolefully reliving their sad past, have transmitted to me their personal memoirs about their historical native cradle, their native hearth and their beloved kinsfolk, who, alas, have long since died. They have carried those personal memorial pictures during their whole life, unable to free themselves from the oppressive nightmare. And since the **memoirs narrated by the survivors** represent the immediate impressions of the particular historical events that became the lot of the Western Armenians, therefore they **have deep historicity**.

Objectively reproducing the life, the customs, the political-public relations of the given period, **the memoirs communicated by the survivors are spontaneous, truthful and trustworthy, possessing the value of authentic testimonies**. As **Yeghsa Khayadjanian** (b. 1900), from Harpoot [Kharbert], has bitterly testified: *"Now, out of our 7 families, only I have survived."*¹¹

Verginé Nadjarian (b. 1910), from Malatia, has also confirmed: *"...Our family was very large, we were about 150-200 souls. My mother's brothers, my father's sisters and brothers. They slaughtered them all on the road to Der-Zor.* Only three of us were left: I, my mother and my brother..."*¹² This fact has also been confirmed by **Hazarkhan Torossian** (b. 1902), from Balou: *"...So many years have passed, but up till now I cannot get to sleep at nights, my past comes in front of my eyes, I count the dead and the living..."*¹³ Thus, even the numerical calculations they have communicated are true. **Hrant Gasparian** (b. 1908), from Mush (Moosh), has particularly emphasized that circumstance, asserting at the end of his narrative: *"...I told you what I have seen. What*

⁹ Svazlyan V., op. cit., T. 81, p. 199.

¹⁰ Ibid, T. 271, p. 455.

¹¹ Ibid, T. 114, p. 260.

* "Deir-el-Zor" in popular pronunciation has been changed to "Der-Zor."

¹² Ibid, T. 134, p. 285.

¹³ Ibid, T. 129, p. 278.

I have seen is in front of my eyes. We have brought nothing from Khnous. We have only saved our souls. Our large family was composed of 143 souls. Only one sister, one brother, my mother and I were saved”¹⁴.



Verginé Nadjarian
(1910, Malatia)



Hazarkhan Torossian
(1902, Balou)



Hrant Gasparian
(1908, Moosh)

These factual testimonies, calculated one by one, analyzed point by point during the whole of the eyewitness survivors' subsequent lives and assembled with the historical events, are beyond any doubt. They, nearly always, speak in their memoirs of the senior members of their family, their grandfathers, grandmothers, parents, as well as their close relatives and other members of the family, often mentioning their names and dates of birth. Consequently, the data they have transmitted to me are so exact and trustworthy, that even kinsfolk who had lost one another in the turmoil of the Genocide, by reading the memoirs printed in my books, have sometimes, after decades, found each other from various continents of the world and expressed their gratitude to me.

The main person appearing in memoir-telling is the ***character of the narrator***. He/she not only tells about the important historical events, incidents and people, but is also interpreting them, displaying the main traits of his/her outlook and of his/her personality, the specific point of view of his/her approach, his/her particular language and style. Consequently, ***the memoir narrated by the eyewitness is unambiguous by its uniqueness***; it is the personal biography of the given individual and his/her interpretation of the past, and its main essence remains practically unchanged every time it is retold, since ***the eyewitness has communicated it as a mysterious confession***. And I, with my professional responsibility as a folklorist-ethnographer and remaining loyal to the oral speech of the witnesses, have written down word for word their narratives, realizing that they were entrusting to me their innermost and most sacred secrets ***to be transmitted to the future generations***. It is appropriate to mention here the words of a venerable 94-year-old Zeytouni of proud bearing, **Karapet Tozlian** (b. 1903). Although he was not literate, he *“had murmured every evening,*

¹⁴ Ibid, T. 13, p. 108.

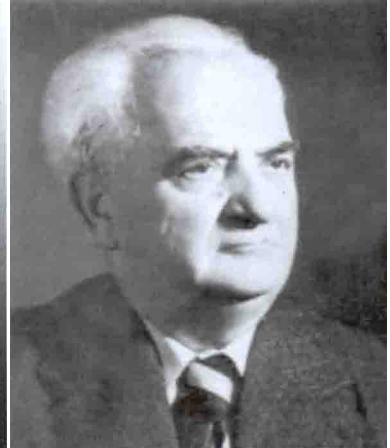
*before going to sleep,” his memoirs and songs “like a prayer,” so that he would not forget them. Consequently, he has communicated to me, with a sacred affection, his recollections so that “they would be written down, they wouldn’t be forgotten and would be learned by the coming generations.”¹⁵ Some eyewitness survivors have, at the last period of their lives, committed to paper what they had seen and felt, in order to entrust them, as a precept, to the following generations, as **Galoust Soghomonian** (b. 1905), from Bolou, has terminated his hand-written testimony with the following sentence: “I wrote this testimony of mine, so that the coming generations could read and know the sufferings we have endured as a result of the Genocide of the Armenians perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks.”¹⁶*



Karapet Tozlian
(1903, Zeytoun)



Galoust Soghomonian
(1905, Bolou)



Garnik Stepanian
(1909, Yerznka)

Worthy of remembrance, in this respect, are the words spoken by the survivor, the well-known literary critic **Garnik Stepanian** (b. 1909), from Yerznka, at the end of his narrative: “...*That which befell our nation in 1915 was horrible. Of our large family, which consisted of more than a hundred people, only fifteen remained alive. My mother’s kinsfolk were all killed or thrown alive into a large pit and covered with earth, which was moving over them. Among the victims of the Genocide were also all the Stepanians, the families of my father’s four sisters. It was a full-scale genocide. I always muse over those events and think about whether we can ever forget them, but we have no right to forget them, since we are small in number... The Armenian nation cannot forget that which it saw with its eyes. And, as Avetis Aharonian said: ‘If our sons forget so much evil, let the whole world blame the Armenian nation’.*”¹⁷



Tigran Ohanian
(1902, Kamakh)

At the same time, **the memoirs told by the survivors are also similar**, inasmuch as the memoirs narrated in different places, by different sex-age groups

(men, women, senior, middle, junior generations) depict, independently from one another and almost identically, the historical events of the same period, the analogous historical events and characters, the same horrifying scenes and cruelties, which, when put together, confirm each other, continue and complete one another, **tending to move from the personal and the material toward the general and the pan-national**. One of the survivors, **Tigran Ohanian** (b. 1902), from Kamakh, had this circumstance in mind when he concluded his memoir with the following words: “...*My past is not only my past, but it is my nation’s past as well.*”¹⁸ **Consequently, the memoirs of the eyewitnesses, with their contents, describe not only the given individual and his environment, but also the whole community, becoming thus the collective historical memory of the Armenian people.**

Nevertheless, **the historical memory of the nation also has the capacity to perpetuate**. Although more than 100 years have elapsed after these historical events, and many of the miraculously saved eyewitness survivors are no longer in the land of the living, yet the narratives of the representatives of the senior generation have been so much heard, so many times repeated in their families that they have also become the heritage of the coming generations and, being transmitted from mouth to mouth, have continued to perpetuate also in the memory of the next generations as historical narratives.

The **historical narrative-testimony** is a small-sized prose creation of descriptive and narrative nature about real events or characters. The teller of the narrative is not himself the subject of the event, but the person familiar or unfamiliar to it, who, impressed by what he has seen or heard, tells it to others.

These historical narratives have been mainly written down from the subsequent generations as testimonies of the fact that **the historical memory of the nation never dies, but it continues to persist also in the memory of the coming generations**.

I have succeeded also in writing down the songs and the ballads of historical character communicated by the eyewitness survivors of the Armenian Genocide, which also form an inseparable part of the people’s historical memory.

The **historical song-testimonies** are creations in verse on a tragic or heroic theme composed by endowed unknown individuals about the great historical events, which have then passed from mouth to mouth. The songs of historical nature are also lyric poems, in which the emotional world, the thoughts and the mood, the expectations and the demands of the composers are expressed in a picturesque manner. These songs have been mainly created by individuals dissatisfied with the prevailing public life, indignant at injustice, persecution and oppression and passing through an internal tragedy.

The words of these historical songs are simple and unornamented; they artistically reproduce the various aspects of the public life of that period in Turkey, namely, the massacres of the Armenians organized by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and also, the

¹⁸ Ibid, T. 97, p. 234.

mobilization, the arms-collection, the deportation and the massacres organized by the government of Young Turks, as well as other factual, affecting and impressive episodes, bold sentiments of protest and of rightful claim.

The songs of historical nature have often served as a basis for musical creations. They can become also a series of songs, which are joined together by the generality of



Shogher Tonoyan
(1901, Moosh)

characters, of the theme and the refrains or by the unity of thoughts, feelings and ideas, as, for example, the song series of Deir-el-Zor ("Der Zor çölünde" / *"In the desert of Der-Zor"*)¹⁹ or the song series of exile ("Sürgünlük şarkıları" / *"Exile Songs"*)²⁰ and others.

The authors of those historical songs were mainly the Armenian women. The psychological traumatic effect of the national calamity was perceived by every woman or girl in her own manner. Those horrifying impressions were so strong and profound that these songs have often taken a poetic shape as the lament woven by the survivor from Moosh, **Shogher Tonoyan** (b. 1901), which she communicated to me with tearful eyes and moans:

*"...Morning and night I hear cries and laments,
I have no rest, no peace and no sleep,
I close my eyes and always see dead bodies,
I lost my kin, friends, land and home..."*²¹

Women, who were emotional and sensitive by nature, have borne on their scraggy shoulders the whole weight of the sufferings of the deportation, the exile and the massacres of the Armenians. Consequently, they have vividly described in detail what they have seen with their eyes and felt in the abysses of their souls, since the Armenian mothers have seen off, with tearful eyes, their husbands and sons to serve in the Turkish army. And the men have created songs, where they described that the Armenian soldiers, however, were not given arms, but were sent to toil in the '*Amelé tabours*' (Labor battalions - Turk.) and they either died of exhaustion there or were killed and thrown in the pits they had dug themselves ("**Songs of mobilization, arm-collection and of the imprisoned**"). Subsequently, the Turks have compelled the Armenian women to leave their homes, orchards and belongings and to take the road of exile with their children and with their elderly and feeble parents. For months they have marched under the scorching sun, hungry and thirsty, on their feet bleeding from weariness and under the whip strokes of the Turkish gendarmes to the Syrian deserts of Deir-el-Zor, Ras-ul-Ayn, Rakka, Meskené and Surudj. Both in the memoirs and the songs communicated by the eyewitness survivors were described the roads they

¹⁹ Ibid, TT. 461-530, pp. 568-577.

²⁰ Ibid, TT. 531-547, pp. 577-579.

²¹ Ibid, T. 437, p. 563.

passed through, the pillage and plunder of the Turkish gendarmes, the Kurd brigands, the Chechen and Circassian slaughterers, the kidnapping and murder of the Armenian girls, their impalement, their crucifixion and torture to death, the cutting of live women's bellies in search of gold and of pregnant women to extract the unborn baby, the flaying of live people, the sacrifice of live Armenians instead of a ram or a he-goat at the feet of a mounted Turkish official and the like. That is why the innocent and desperate Armenian girls have thrown themselves, hand in hand, into the Euphrates River in order not to fall into the hands of the Turks, in order not to become the Turks' wives and not to bear Turkish children (**"Songs of deportation and massacre"**). A special section has been assigned to the sad songs about the sufferings of the mothers of kidnapped children, of the fatherless and motherless orphans and about the orphanages (**"Songs of child-deprived mothers, orphans and orphanages"**). Songs reflecting the Armenians' righteous protest and indignation, those created in protection of their elementary human rights of living and of not tolerating violence, as well as bold songs of self-defense, struggles and battles composed mostly by men are also presented (**"Patriotic and heroic battle songs"**). And finally, songs of the appropriated Motherland, regret for the lost native land and of hopes of regaining it are likewise included (**"Songs of the occupied Homeland and of the rightful claim"**).

With their originality and ideological contents, these historical songs are not only novelties in the fields of Armenian Folklore and Armenian Genocide studies, but they also provide the possibility for comprehending, in a new fashion, the given historical period with its specific aspects. Consequently, having been created under the immediate impressions of the peculiar historical events that befell the Western Armenian segment of the Armenian nation, ***the popular and epic songs of this order are full of historicity and have the value of authentic documents.***

These historical songs, created by endowed unknown individuals of different sex-age groups, were widely spread in their time and transmitted to a large extent, and since the people's anguish was of a massive character, consequently the popular songs, too, had a massive diffusion. They have passed from mouth to mouth, giving rise to new, different variants, so that similar songs have been created simultaneously in different variants and modifications, ***a fact, which testifies to the popular character of these historical songs.***

During my numerous interviews and recordings, the same popular song or its similar variant has been communicated to me by so many survivors that it was impossible to mention the names and surnames of all of them. Hence, I have only put in order the variants in the table of Documentation of my book, mentioning the name, surname, date and place of birth of the eyewitness survivor, who communicated the given song (or memoir), as well as the time, place, language and character (handwritten, audio- and video-recordings) of the recorded material and its number in the archival fund (according to Dr. Prof. Isidor Levin's Scientific Method of Documentation of Popular Materials).

I should also point out, that the eyewitness survivors of the Armenian Genocide (men or women) have recalled with a bursting emotional experience and tearful sobs the popular songs concerning the abuses and the outrages (mobilization, deportation, exile, murder and slaughter) perpetrated by the Turkish government, as well as about child-deprived mothers, orphans, orphanages and about the occupied Motherland, in as much as these events were directly connected with their historical memory. This circumstance construes the emotional-psychological peculiarity of this class of popular historical songs.

The diverse variants of those popular songs, in addition to their historical veracity, are distinguished by their concise figurativeness and by the subtle or the emotive tunefulness characteristic of the medieval Armenian lament songs. Every line and phrase of those songs is an entire picture, a horrifying scene of the massive tragedy, and the plaintive refrains carry to completion the emotive-psychological aspect of the poetic, vivid mind, whereas, on the contrary, the songs of the occupied Homeland and of the rightful claim are lively, impressive and full of conviction.

Some of the popular historical and epic songs are presented also with their musical notation.

The songs of historical character have been created not only in Armenian, but in the Turkish language as well, since under the given historical-political circumstances the use of the Armenian language in certain provinces of Ottoman Turkey had been prohibited. The number of the Turkish-language songs I have discovered and recorded exceeds 175.

It should be noted that, according to testimonies, "...those who pronounced an Armenian word had their tongues cut; consequently, Armenians living in a number of towns of Cilicia (Sis, Adana, Tarsus, Ayntap) and their environs had lost their mother tongue...",²² or "the oppression and the persecution by the Turks were so severe that the Armenian-speaking Ayntap became Turkish-speaking, like the other principal towns of Asia Minor. And the last sharp blow to the Armenian speech came from the yenicheris who mutilated the tongues of those speaking Armenian..."²³

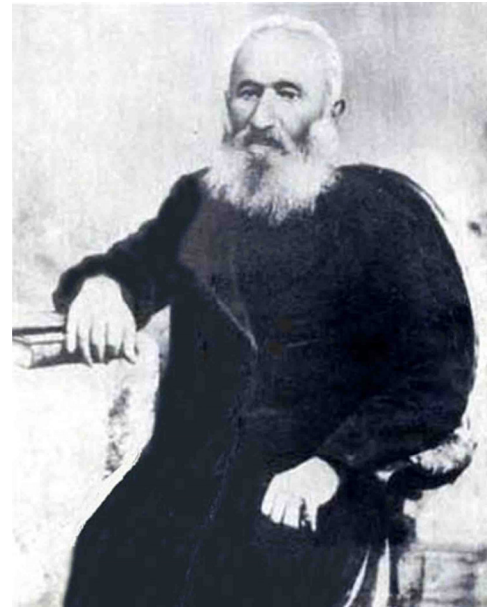
The ethnographer-folklorist **Sargis Haykouni**, living at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, described the political, economic and spiritual state of the Western Armenians of his period: "...The Armenian language was forbidden by Turk mullahs, and the use of seven Armenian words was considered a blasphemy, for which a fine of five sheep was established"²⁴.

²² Գալուստեան Գր., Մարաշ կամ Գերմանիկ եւ հերոս Զէյթուն, Նիւ Եորք, 1934, էջ 698:

²³ Սարաքեան Գ., Պատմութիւն Անթէպի հայոց, հ. Ա, Լոս Անճելէս, 1953, էջ 5:

²⁴ Հայկունի Ա., Նշխարներ. Կորած ու մոռացուած հայեր. Տրապիզոնի հայ-մահմետական գիւղերն ու նրանց աւանդութիւնները, «Արարատ», Վաղարշապատ, 1895, էջ 297:

There are numerous testimonies in the memoirs I have recorded, stating that the Armenians living in Sis, Adana, Tarson, Ayntap, Kyotahia, Bursa, Kayseri, Eskişehir and other localities were mainly Turkish-speaking. According to the testimony of **Mikayel Keshishian** (b. 1904), from Adana: *“It was already forbidden to speak or to study Armenian and infringers not only had their tongue cut, but hot eggs were placed in their armpits to make them confess that they were teaching Armenian to others, and if they confessed, they were sent to the gallows or killed.”*²⁵



Sargis Haykouni

Mikayel Keshishian
(1904, Adana)

The following fragment of a popular Armenian song I have written down also testifies to that fact; it was communicated to me by the survivor from Konia, **Satenik Gouyoumdjian** (b. 1902):

*“They entered the school and caught the school-mistress,
Ah, alas!
They opened her mouth and cut her tongue,
Ah, alas!”*²⁶

The school-mistress was condemned to such a brutal punishment, since she had dared to teach Armenian to the Armenian children. During the deportation and on the roads of exile, these strict measures had been reinforced.

Therefore, the Western Armenians were compelled to express their grief and affliction in the Turkish language as well.

Taking into account the public-political aspects of this sad phenomenon representing the initial level of linguistic assimilation, I have not failed, along with the materials recorded in various dialects, to pay attention also to ***the Turkish-language (but explicitly of Armenian origin) popular historical and epic songs***. Though these songs were created by Armenians and not with a perfect knowledge of the Turkish language (Armenian words and expressions, Armenian names of people and localities are often mentioned, grammatical and phonetic errors are noted), they have, with their ideological content, an important historical-cognitive value. The Turkish-language songs

²⁵ Svazlyan V., op. cit., T. 241, p. 421.

²⁶ Ibid, T. 446, p. 565.

have been presented, along with the dialectal originals, in their literary English translations.

The songs narrating about the slaughter and massacre of the Armenians have been woven on the roads of exile to Deir-el-Zor, and, since it was prohibited to speak Armenian, the Armenians have expressed their sorrow and affliction in the enemy's language, in Turkish²⁷.



Sirena Alajajian
(1910, Adabazar)

A 90-year-old survivor, an inhabitant of the Armenian St. Perkich (Savior) hospital-old-age home in Istanbul, **Sirena Alajajian** (b. 1910), from Adabazar, was four years old when the Turks murdered her father and her mother. The Arab desert inhabitants took care of the parentless child. After four years, following the Armistice in 1918, when the orphan-collectors were gathering the Armenian orphan children in the deserts, they saw an eight-year-old little girl with curly blond hair and blue eyes, her face tattooed with blue ink, and bearing an Arabic name. Undoubtedly, she was Armenian. Although she had forgotten her Armenian speech, but she had not forgotten to cross herself as a Christian, and that was the proof that

she was an Armenian-Christian. Thus, little Sirena was taken to the Armenian orphanage²⁸.

While recording and deciphering the memoirs and the songs, ***I have endeavored to keep unaltered the original peculiarities of the oral speech of the survivors***, presenting them with the accepted dialectal transliteration. When writing down the dialectal originals, I have taken into consideration the linguistic shades of the Armenians from historical Armenia, as well as of those from Cilicia and Anatolia.

In writing down, tape- and video-recording the popular materials, ***I have made special efforts to include eyewitness survivors deported from more than 150 localities*** (densely populated with Armenians) ***of Western Armenia*** [Sassoun, Mush,

²⁷ “Sabahtan kalktim, güneş parlıyor,
Osmanlı askeri silah yağıyor,
Ermeniye baktım – yaman ağlıyor,
Dininin uğruna ölen Ermeni!”

“I got up in the morning; the sun was shining,
The Ottoman soldier was oiling his gun,
I looked at the Armenians, they were crying bitterly,
Armenians dying for the sake of faith!” (Ibid, T. 488, p. 572).

Or:

“Der Zor dedikleri büyük kasaba,
Kesilen Ermeni gelmez hesaba,
Osmanlı efratı dönmüş kasaba,
Dininin uğruna ölen Ermeni!”

“The place called Der-Zor was a large locality,
With innumerable slaughtered Armenians,
The Ottoman chiefs have become butchers,
Armenians dying for the sake of faith!” (Ibid, T. 467, p. 569).

Armenians were dying “for the sake of faith” in order not to betray their Christian fate and national identity.

²⁸ Ibid, T. 225, pp. 410-412.

Taron, Baghesh (Bitlis), Sgherd, Bassen, Shatakh, Van, Moks, Bayazet, Igdir, Alashkert, Kars, Ardivin, Ardahan, Baberd, Sper, Karin (Erzrum), Khnous, Eriza (Yerznka), Derdjan, Kamakh, Tigranakert, Balou]), **Cilicia and Asia Minor** (Shapin-Garahissar, Arabkir, Harpoot, Malatia, Merdin, Severeke, Yedessia, Adiyaman, Derendé, Sebastia, Ordou, Divrik, Gyurin, Tokat, Kghi, Amassia, Samsun, Marzvan, Yozghat, Kayseri, Talas, Everek, Tomarza, Nidé, Konia, Stanoz, Afion-Garahissar, Sivrihissar, Kastemouni, Bolou, Eskishehir, Bursa, Partizak, Biledjik, Adabazar, Nikomedia, Aslanbek, Istanbul, Rodosto, Banderma, Kyotahia, Chanak-Kalé, Izmir, Mersin, Tarson, Adana, Hassanbey, Sis, Fendedjak, Hadjn, Zeytoun, Marash, Ayntap, Deurtyol, Beylan, Moussa Dag, Kessab, Trapizon and others) and subsequently settled not only in the various suburbs of Yerevan and in the different regions of Eastern Armenia, but also in the Diaspora (Deir-el-Zor, Rakka, Ras-ul-Ayn, Aleppo, Damascus, Ghamishli, Kessab, Beirut, Aynjar, Alexandrette, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Cairo, Alexandria, Ras Sudr, Addis-Ababa, Istanbul, Constantsa, Athens, Paris, Lyon, Berlin, Radebeul, Rome, Milan, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, New York, Boston, San-Francisco, Los-Angeles, Fresno, Moscow, etc.), who, taken together, give a fuller idea of the past and collective historical memory of the world-dispersed Western Armenians, who lost their historical cradle, but have future expectations...

I have included also, as an example, a few testimonies²⁹ and historical songs³⁰ from Eastern Armenia (Sharoor, Nakhidjevan, Agoulis, Alexandrapol (Gyumri), Talin, Mastara, Nalband, Cherakhli, Spitak etc.) to give an idea that the Turkish government carried out the Genocide of Armenians not only in **Western Armenia** (1915-1923), but also during invasions the territory of **Eastern Armenia**, particularly in 1918 and 1920. The Armenians living there were also subjected to brutal violences (suffering innumerable victims and native territories) committed by the Turks, under the leadership of Kyazim Karabakir and others. But the study of the testimonies of the eyewitness survivors of the Genocide of the Eastern Armenians is a separate subject of investigation.

Genocide is a massive political crime and it should not go unpunished, but it should be juridically elucidated also on the basis of the testimonies of eyewitness survivors.

It is time, therefore, that the present government of the Republic of Turkey, too, has the courage not only of recognizing the obvious historical truth, which has been substantiated by written and oral evidences and is not in need of any further proof, but also of condemning the accomplished fact and of compensating the Armenian people for the moral, material and territorial losses resulting from **the Armenian Genocide**.

*Translated from Armenian
by T. H. Tsoulikian*

²⁹ Ibid, TT. 307-315, pp. 500-505.

³⁰ Ibid, TT. 556-557, pp. 583-584.