

Institutionalized migrant solidarity in the late Ottoman Empire: Armenian homeland associations (1800s–1920s)

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By focusing on the Armenian homeland associations (*hayrenakts'akank'*) established in Istanbul in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this article examines the migrants' activism and their achievements—facilitated by affective bonds based on shared origins. It outlines the Istanbul-based homeland associations' development chronologically and discusses their cultural and economic goals in their home regions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The article then focuses on their durability and ability to adapt to the needs of the communities in the series of great political and demographic changes in the late Ottoman Empire from mid-1890s to their reconstruction after the end of World War I. The homeland associations established in the post-genocide period reflect the persistence of local belonging as a basis of solidarity and they fulfilled important functions as information networks and intermediaries between the survivors and the community administration. The article argues that Armenian homeland associations constituted a space in which agency of the migrants and their interaction with broader social and political developments could be observed in the late Ottoman Empire. They were one of the most durable and institutionalized forms of migrant solidarity which render migrants' agency visible in the historiography of the late Ottoman Empire.

Keywords: *Ottoman Empire; migration; Homeland associations; Ottoman Armenians*

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“Never can we get rich with money from Istanbul,” wrote Garegin Srvandztyants’, a prominent Armenian ecclesiastical figure in the Ottoman Empire, in 1864.¹ His words were in response to a project by a homeland association established by Armenians migrants, *pandukhts*, from the town of Akn (Eğin), who earned their living in Istanbul.² The association had declared its goal to establish a textile workshop in their home town and assist the Armenian girls’ school there with the profits from the commercial enterprise. Srvandztyants’ words reflected the ambivalent feelings of the majority of Armenian intellectuals about migrant workers, and the flow of capital from Istanbul (Polis) to the provinces, which such associations facilitated in the mid-nineteenth century when the Armenian seasonal migration to Istanbul was on the rise.³

The feelings of the intellectuals were uncertain; on the one hand, such projects could have brought to fruition the major dream of many Armenian intellectuals, namely the development of the economy and progress in education in the regions of the Ottoman Empire inhabited by Armenians. On the other hand, accepting money from the Armenian migrants in Istanbul would have contradicted another political goal, that of discouraging the provincials from migrating and instead channeling their energy into the development of the homeland through their labor there, particularly through artisanal manufacture and cultivating the land.⁴ Therefore, a decade later, when some migrants—again from the same town, Akn—proposed that they purchase land and build a model farm in the plain of Bitlis (Baghesh), Srvandztyants’ not only welcomed them, but also used his connections to ease the purchase of a plot of land.⁵ Sending money back was not enough; migrants were expected to return home to cultivate it. The episode serves as the point of departure for this article as it presents not only one of many different projects that the homeland associations in Istanbul undertook in the long nineteenth century, but also the interaction of the homeland associations with the discourses and developments of their times.

1 “Aknts’i azgaynots’ . . .,” Garegin Srvantztyants’, *Yerker*, vol. 2, ed. V.H. Bdoyan (Yerevan: G.A. Hratarakch’ut’yun, 1982), 90.

2 Vazken Davidian defines the state of being a migrant, *pandukht*, in the following terms: “Bantkhdoutioun encapsulates the phenomenon of emigration and also being in the state of a migrant, the bantoukhd. The word encompasses various aspects of the experience of the bantoukhd away from his or her homeland. Loneliness, poverty and yearning for home are constant characteristics ascribed to the bantoukhd in the nineteenth century (and earlier) Armenian imagination, usually with tragic connotations.” Vazken Kh. Davidian, “Imagining Ottoman Armenia: Realism and Allegory in Garabed Nicianian’s Provincial Wedding in Moush and Late Ottoman Art Criticism,” *Études arméniennes contemporaines* 6 (2015): 159 n.19.

3 Of course, not every intellectual argued against *pandukhts* and wanted them to stay on their lands, see Davidian, “Imagining Ottoman Armenia,” 177. Davidian critically examines the discourses of the period regarding the migrant workers in the works of Armenian realist authors and artists.

4 Avedis Gevorgyan, “Hay Demokratikan Mitk’n u Gahgt’i yev Pandkhtut’yan Himmaharts’erë XIX Dari 70–80-akan T’vakanannerin,” *Kant’egh: Gitakan Hodvatsneri Zhoghovatsu* 3 (2003): 172–81.

5 Arak’el Kezryan, *Akn yew Aknts’i* (Paris: Compatriotic Union of Eguen, 1952), 161–2.

Studies examining the regulations concerning the movement of migrants both within the empire and overseas have convincingly shown the modern state's increasing policing capacity and desire to control its mobile population through administrative, legal, and medical practices and discourses.⁶ Yet the migrants' activism and their achievements—facilitated by affective bonds based on such things as shared origins—*also* have to be rendered visible in the historiography outside the purview of the modernizing Ottoman state. Recent works began to approach migrants as capable actors who were becoming part of the “public” and formed various informal ties and forms of solidarity through existing networks of shared origins.⁷ The examination of Armenian homeland associations will allow us to approach the activities of the migrant populations in the late Ottoman Empire outside the perspective of the modern state and its controlling power.⁸ I argue that the Armenian homeland associations were among the most durable and institutionalized forms of migrant solidarity and that they constituted a space in which the agency of the migrants and their interaction with broader social and political developments could be observed in the late Ottoman Empire.

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- 6 David Gutman, *The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America, 1885-1915: Sojourners, Smugglers and Dubious Citizens* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019); David Gutman, “Armenian Migration to North America, State Power, and Local Politics in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34 (2014): 176–90; David Gutman, “Travel Documents, Mobility Control, and the Ottoman State in an Age of Global Migration, 1880–1915,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 3(2) (2016): 347–68; Seçil Yılmaz, “Threats to Public Order and Health: Mobile Men as Syphilis Vectors in Late Ottoman Medical Discourse and Practice,” *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 13 (2017): 222–43; Omri Paz, “The Usual Suspect: Worker Migration and Law Enforcement in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Anatolia,” *Continuity and Change* 30(2) (2015): 223–49.
- 7 Florian Riedler, “Public People: Seasonal Work Migrants in Nineteenth Century Istanbul,” in *Public Istanbul: Spaces and Spheres of the Urban*, eds. F. Eckardt and K. Wildner (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008), 233–53; Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap İlyas Mahalle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 107–11; Can Nacar, “İstanbul Gurbetinde Çalışmak ve Yaşamak,” *Toplumsal Tarih* 245 (2014): 30–34, reprinted in *Tanzimat'tan Günümüze Türkiye İşçi Sınıfı Tarihi 1839–2014*, eds. Y. Doğan Çetinkaya and Mehmet Ö. Alkan (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015), 120–31, is a rare example in which a labor historian examines migrant labor in nineteenth-century Istanbul. In her dissertation, Dzovinar Derderian shows that the regional ties of the migrants from Van in Istanbul which were utilized “to negotiate relations of power, to raise questions of legitimacy and . . . were part of the emergence of representative politics” and claimed to have a voice in the developments in their home region. Dzovinar Derderian, “Nation-Making and the Language of Colonialism: Voices from Ottoman Van in Armenian Print Media and Handwritten Petitions (1820s to 1870s)” (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2019), 204.
- 8 Reşad Kasaba, “A Time and a Place for the Nonstate: Social Change in the Ottoman Empire during the ‘Long Nineteenth Century,’” in *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*, eds. Joel Samuel Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 207–30.

In order to shift the focus from the state to the migrants, this article foregrounds a survey of *History of Armenian Cultural Associations* in the Ottoman Empire in three volumes compiled by Yep'rem Poghosyan and published between 1957 and 1969.⁹ Based on a study of contemporary newspapers and archival sources from the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul, Poghosyan makes a survey of over 1,000 Armenian associations in the late Ottoman Empire, and notes that about a hundred of them were established in Istanbul by migrants from the late 1840s onward. In this article I utilize the work of Poghosyan and other sources, such as Armenian memory books (*houshamadyans*), reports by the associations, and an Armenian provincial newspaper, to broaden the dataset enough to draw some conclusions about the projects and the networks created by Armenian migrants. As the recent works on immigrant activism in the *Mahjar* have shown, using a wide array of sources produced by the migrant communities—instead of the state—is a significant way to show migrant agency and has the potential to overcome the problems which may stem from a study solely focusing on the state archives.¹⁰ Thus, Armenian-language sources in the study of Ottoman Armenian migrants in Istanbul will allow us to examine migrants' agency and the trans-cultural exchange they facilitated, which has been the focus among historians of migrations for some time.¹¹

This change of sources and focus, however, can result in accepting another set of paradigms uncritically, namely that of the nation and the national suffering of the Armenian community.¹² In order to avoid such pitfalls, scholars have to keep a critical distance from the writings of Armenian intellectuals and reformists of the late nineteenth century like Srvandztyants', whom I quoted in the introduction, and others like Raffi and Krikor Zohrab, who rendered the Armenian migrants in Istanbul and other cities in the empire visible—albeit without any agency—and usually in extremely negative terms. In their short stories and other writings, migrants are represented only at the margins of urban life in Istanbul; they live in miserable conditions having left their families in their villages. In some instances they are confused with homeless

9 Yep'rem Poghosyan, *Patmut'iwn Hay Mshakut'ayin Ėnkerut'iywneru*, 3 volumes (Vienna: Mkhit'aryan Tparan, 1957–63). The first volume focuses on the associations established by Armenians in Istanbul, whereas the second and third volumes of the book are devoted to associations established by the provincials (*gavaratsi*) in their native village/town and in Istanbul or abroad where they lived as migrants.

10 Stacy Fahrenthold, "Transnational Modes and Media: The Syrian Press in the Mahjar and Emigrant Activism during World War I," *Mashriq & Mahjar* 1(1) (2013): 34–5.

11 Dirk Hoerder, "Historians and Their Data: The Complex Shift from Nation-State Approaches to the Study of People's Transcultural Lives," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25(4) (2006): 85–96.

12 Sebouh D. Aslanian, "The Marble of Armenian History: Or Armenian History as World History Studies," *Études arméniennes contemporaines* 4 (2014): 129–42.

people, or deliberately depicted as such.¹³ Thus in such writings, as opposed to the image of the Armenian migrant who was seen as subject to the regulations of the modernizing and self-strengthening Ottoman state, the migrants represent the “national suffering” of Armenians in the eastern provinces of the empire and its embodiment in Istanbul.¹⁴ This article neither rejects the disciplinary techniques of the modern Ottoman state to control migrants nor underestimates the violence and political problems in the Armenian-inhabited regions, which were among the major reasons for migration to Istanbul. Instead, it highlights the migrants’ agency alongside better-studied actors such as intellectuals, reformist clergy, and revolutionaries in the history of the Armenian community in the late Ottoman Empire. It undertakes a study of projects like those of the Aknets’i migrants and many others in order to provide another view of the Armenian migrants who, through the homeland associations, partook in various developments within their ethno-confessional community and broader Ottoman society in the nineteenth century.

The focus of the article is the institutionalized form of such collective agency, namely the Armenian homeland associations (*hayrenakts’akank’*) established in Istanbul.¹⁵ These associations are representative of the informal links deriving from shared origins and “the point at which political and social networks fuse giving rise to a means of communication with the political-institutional system.”¹⁶ This fusion took place within what Dirk Hoerder has defined as “transcultural networks,” and they facilitated the circulation of economic, social, and cultural capital, operating between the monocultural

13 Raffi, *Yerkeri Zhoghovatsu*, vol. 9 (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1958), 196–7, quoted in Hayk Ghazaryan, *Arevmtahayeri Sots’ial-Tntesakan yev K’aghak’akan Kats’ut’yuně, 1800–1870* (Yerevan: Haykakan S.S.H. G.A.H., 1967), 426–7. For an examination of the discourses on the pandukths and how they aimed to depoliticize the migrants’ agency, see Derderian, “Nation-Making and the Language of Colonialism,” 235ff.

14 For an overview of the history of the eastern provinces in the nineteenth century, see Elke Hartmann, “The Central State in the Borderlands: Ottoman Eastern Anatolia in the Late Nineteenth Century,” in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, eds. Eric Weitz and Omer Bartov (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 172–90.

15 I use the term “homeland associations” throughout the article to refer to these organizations. The alternative and currently more widely used term “compatriot unions” began to be used only in the 1910s and increased following the reestablishment of the homeland associations after 1918. The shift, as examined in the following sections of the article, is related to the political and social context of the post-World War I period and hints at the emergence of compatriot unions in the sense used in the Armenian diaspora today.

16 Jeanne Hersant and Alexandre Toumarkine, “Hometown Organizations in Turkey: An Overview,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, special issue on Hometown Organizations in Turkey 2 (2005), [3], <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/397> (accessed September 22, 2019).

and in many cases monoethnic Armenian village in the sending community in the Ottoman east and the multiethnic urban center, like Istanbul.¹⁷

The flow of economic capital materialized in the undertaking of various development projects, chiefly schools but also economic enterprises in the home regions. Thus, in addition to their roles of transplanting existing networks and forming new solidarities for their members in a new environment,¹⁸ the Armenian homeland associations facilitated the flow of capital and projects into their home regions from the second half of the nineteenth century onward. Thus, Armenian migrants were not only the outcome of certain economic and political problems and violence in the Ottoman Empire, they also engendered certain social, cultural, and economic developments in the regions they originated from.¹⁹

This article examines two dimensions of the Armenian homeland associations in Istanbul in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After providing the historical background of Armenian migration and networks in Istanbul, it introduces the homeland associations in the imperial capital by observing their development chronologically. It discusses the different goals of associations; as will be shown, the majority of the projects clustered in economy-oriented undertakings and in the field of education, a pattern which is observed in the associations formed by migrant communities both within the empire and globally.²⁰ The section will then examine the migrant networks

17 Dirk Hoerder, "Transnational, Transregional, Transcultural: Social History and Labor Migrants' Networks in the 19th and 20th Centuries," in *Transnationale Netzwerke im 20. Jahrhundert. Historische Erkundungen zu Ideen und Praktiken, Individuen und Organisationen*, eds. B. Unfried, J. Mittag, M. Van Der Linden, and E. Himmelstoss (Leipzig: AVA—Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 2008), 90.

18 Charles Tilly, "Transplanted Networks," in *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*, ed. Virginia Yans-McLoughlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 83.

19 Derderian, "Nation-Making and the Language of Colonialism," 216–18. For comparative cases see: Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Stacy Fahrenthold, "Sound Minds in Sound Bodies: Transnational Philanthropy and Patriotic Masculinity in Al-Nadi Al-Homsî and Syrian Brazil, 1920–32," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 261–3. The Ottoman state's fear of returning migrants from overseas has been examined in detail, see: İlkay Yılmaz, "Governing the Armenian Question through Passports in the Late Ottoman Empire (1876–1908)," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 32 (2019): 388–403; for comparison with the return of migrants from Lebanon, see Gutman, "Travel Documents, Mobility Control," 359–60.

20 Méropi Anastasiadou, "Greek Orthodox Immigrants and Modes of Integration within the Urban Society of Istanbul (1850–1923)," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24 (2009): 160–1; Jose C. Moya, "Immigrants and Associations: A Global and Historical Perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31 (2005): 847–8. For the Spanish case in Argentina see: Jose C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850–1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 297. The homeland associations of pre-Holocaust European Jewry in the USA are a relatively well-studied field; see: Daniel Soyfer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity in New York, 1880–1939* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

and homeland associations in Istanbul from the mid-1890s to the aftermath of the 1908 Revolution, when the empire in general and the Armenian community in particular were going through various pivotal events.

In the next section, the article examines the homeland associations' brief resurfacing in the period between 1918 and 1922 to heal the destruction of their communities in Anatolia during the Armenian genocide. It shows us the durability of the homeland associations and their ability to adapt to the needs of the communities they served—even when the social and political context within which they operated was completely altered.

Armenian migration to Istanbul in the late Ottoman Empire

Istanbul always attracted a migrant labor force and the authorities always tried to keep them under control.²¹ For instance, according to a register of artisans in the early nineteenth century, one-third of the artisans in Istanbul were migrants; the ratio was even higher among their apprentices.²² Thus, the prominence of migrant labor in Istanbul, despite all attempts by the government to control migration, was a part of life even before the population growth of the city in the second half of the nineteenth century. In that period, the Armenian migrant laborers institutionalized their solidarities through associations.

The Armenian migrants increasingly came to Istanbul and other cities from the 1840s onwards. As steamships began to call at Black Sea ports regularly in the 1830s, more and more Armenian villagers in the provinces began to make those trips to Istanbul in search for work.²³ The migrants were mostly male and ranged in age from 15 to 45.²⁴ The Armenian worker migrations were in circular form, and although they remained for very long periods of time they visited their families in the villages every few years. In order to minimize risks

21 Suraiya Faroqhi, "Migration into Eighteenth-Century 'Greater Istanbul' As Reflected in the Kadi Registers of Eyüp," *Turcica* 30 (1998): 163–83; Betül Başaran, *Selim III, Social Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century 1789–1793* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Süleyman Uygun, "19. Yüzyılda Anadolu'dan İstanbul'a Olan Mevsimlik Ermeni İşçi Göçleri," *History Studies* 7(4) (2015): 137–55; Nina Ergin, "The Albanian Tellak Connection: Labor Migration to the Hammams of 18th Century Istanbul, Based on the 1752 Istanbul Hamamları Defteri," *Turcica* 43 (2011): 231–56; Cengiz Kırılı, "A Profile of the Labor Force in Early Nineteenth-Century Istanbul," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 60 (2001): 125–40;

22 Cengiz Kırılı, "A Profile of the Labor Force in Early Nineteenth-Century Istanbul," 134.

23 Christopher Clay, "Labour Migration and Economic Conditions in Nineteenth-Century Anatolia," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34(4) (1998): 7; Uygun, "19. Yüzyılda Anadolu'dan İstanbul'a Olan Mevsimlik Ermeni İşçi Göçleri," 143.

24 Yet in my research I saw workers as young as 13 and as old as 65. Based on the examination of the *Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, Osmanlı Arşivi*, NFS.d. 330, which is the official register of Armenian laborers, amounting to 850, in mills and bakeries in the Asian part of Istanbul in 1845.

at their destination, ties of kinship and local relations were mobilized, migrants traveled and worked with the people in their personal networks, and fathers were replaced by sons as they aged.²⁵ There were push and pull factors behind the Armenian migration movement, blurring the lines between voluntary migration and forced migration.²⁶ The scholarship tends to highlight the push factors, namely economic and political problems, growing oppression and violence against Armenians, and the systematic indebtedness of Armenian peasantry in the provinces.²⁷ Given the lack of jobs or the very low incomes from existing jobs, the only available option for the migrant workers was to go to Istanbul—and, in fewer numbers, to other cities—to find work. The pull factors were high wages in Istanbul and the opportunity to work all year round, unlike seasonal agricultural work.²⁸ Their contribution to the economies of their home regions was substantial, as Christopher Clay claims in his seminal article on the migrants: the money sent by migrants to the home provinces was 1.5 times the tax revenues of those regions in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁹

From 1840 to 1885, as a result of migration, the male Armenian population of Istanbul increased from 48,000 to 84,000, with 60,000 of them having provincial origins. Yet this figure is deceptive and the term *pandukht* as used by the Armenian intelligentsia at the time was different from the term used in the official censuses.³⁰ In the official registries, people were recorded with a note on their land of origin, and it is therefore impossible to figure out whether they were recent (and temporary) migrants or people of provincial origin who had migrated long ago.³¹ This official designation, which was established to make a distinction between urban Istanbulites and outsiders, however, was not completely artificial and detached from historical reality. Indeed, the many homeland associations show that “migrants” continued to identify themselves with their home towns and kept in contact with them through different networks.

25 *Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, Osmanlı Arşivi*, NFS.d. no. 330, 29 Zilhicce 1260 (January 9, 1845).

26 Florian Riedler, “Armenian Labour Migration to Istanbul and the Migration Crisis of the 1890s,” in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, eds. Ulrike Freitag, Malte Fuhrmann, Nora Lafi, and Florian Riedler (London: Routledge, 2011), 161–2. For criticism of the dichotomies prevalent in migration studies see Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, “Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives,” in *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, eds. Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen (Bern and New York: P. Lang, 1999), 11f. John Chalcraft skillfully uses the concept of hegemony to question the rational economic migration in the case of Syrian migrant workers in Lebanon, see John Chalcraft, *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

27 Ghazaryan, *Arevmtahayeri Sots'ial-Tntesakan yev K'aghak'akan Kats'ut'yunë*, 417–18.

28 Clay, “Labour Migration and Economic Conditions in Nineteenth-Century Anatolia,” 14–15.

29 *Ibid.*, 27.

30 “K. Polsoy verjin mardahamarë,” *Arzagank'*, no. 10 (September 1885), 142–3.

31 Cengiz Kırılı, “A Profile of the Labor Force in Early Nineteenth-Century Istanbul,” 134.

Armenian migrants in Istanbul were far from a homogenous group. The overwhelming majority of the Armenian migrants in Istanbul were the unskilled and semi-skilled laborers in the expanding production and service sectors. They were mostly concentrated in jobs like porters and firefighters; their choice of occupation was chiefly due to the migration networks, but closely related to the politics of empire as well.³² They were also artisans, merchants, and students. Some migrants who arrived in Istanbul as unskilled laborers gained artisanal skills and entered the ranks of the artisans (*esnaf*). An amalgamation of artisans from the same locality in one job implied both the existence of networks that facilitated this kind of occupational socialization but also the role of primary social bonds such as kinship and shared locality in urban life. The institutionalization of these primary solidarity bonds into homeland associations was an important development and points to the interaction between the migrants and wider Istanbul society, as they borrowed modern institutions and adopted them into the heart of their experiences as migrants.

Armenian migrants migrated to cities other than Istanbul in lesser numbers. The number of Armenian migrant workers in Izmir more than doubled from 2,000 in the 1860s to 5,000 in the late nineteenth century.³³ Samsun, an emerging port on the Black Sea, became another migrant hub at the turn of the century, a development related to the expulsion of Armenian porters from Istanbul after the 1896 Massacres, which will be discussed below, and the establishment of the Quay Company.³⁴ Aleppo, for centuries the most important manufacturing center in northern Syria, received migrants from various regions in the north, including Arabkir, Akn, Sason, and Çemişgezek (Ch'mshkatsak') starting in the early decades of the nineteenth century.³⁵

32 The rise of Armenian laborers in Istanbul was closely related with the expulsion of many Kurdish porters from the city following the destruction of their allies, the janissaries, in 1826. Donald Quataert, "Labor Policies and Politics in the Ottoman Empire: Porters and the Sublime Porte, 1826–1896," eds. Heath W. Lowry and Donald Quataert, *Humanist and Scholar: Essays in Honor of Andreas Tietze* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993), 62.

33 Ghazaryan, *Arevmtahayeri Sots'ial-Tntesakan yev K'aghak'akan Kats'ut'yunë*, 426.

34 Donald Quataert, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881–1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 98–9; Uygun, "19. Yüzyılda Anadolu'dan İstanbul'a Olan Mevsimlik Ermeni İşçi Göçleri," 146. For the economic and social life of the Armenian communities on the Black Sea coast see Bedross Der Matossian, "The Pontic Armenian Communities in the Nineteenth Century," in *Armenian Pontus: The Trebizond-Black Sea Communities*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2009), 217–44.

35 Kuroki Hidemitsu, "Mobility of Non-Muslims in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Aleppo," in *The Influence of Human Mobility in Muslim Societies*, ed. Kuroki Hikemitsu (London: Kegan Paul, 2003), 130–1. For a historical overview of the community and the migrations it received in the nineteenth century, see: Vardi Keshishyan, *Halepi Haykakan Gaght'öchaki Hasarakakan-Mshakutayin Kazmakerput'iwinnerë* (Antilas: Kat'oghikosut'yan Hayots' Metzi Tann Kilikiyoy, 2001), 11–42.

Although they fall beyond the scope of this paper, their existence hints at the multilocal networks of migrants.³⁶ The dynamics in the sender communities and migration patterns in the home regions also had an impact on the migrant networks. For instance, Erzurum, a center in the transit trade between Persia and Europe, received migrants from regions like Mush and Arabkir, whereas the villages in its vicinity sent migrants to Russia, as village testimonies attest.³⁷ For this reason, not many associations of migrants from Erzurum appeared in Istanbul.

Armenian migrants' homeland associations and their projects in the nineteenth century

As mid-level networks, the hometown organizations linked the micro-level networks such as family and village to global ones, and were the most important networks in the migrant laborers' lives.³⁸ The Armenian migrants' homeland associations were primarily "cultural," as they were more likely to build a school or renovate a church, and "economic" such as purchasing land and establishing village communities. As the growing scholarship on the philanthropic acts of Middle Eastern immigrant groups in the *Mahjar* shows, however, such acts were enmeshed with the politics of the host and home communities and should also be viewed as political.³⁹ Such projects coincided with the goals of cultural nationalism, which focused on the Armenian language and history up to the 1860s and 1870s, and with those of territorial nationalism, aimed at the cultivation of the land, increasing production, and providing education to children in the homeland in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.⁴⁰

36 It is important to note that in some cases Istanbul was not necessarily the center or even a part of these migrant networks. For instance, migrants from Gürün, Sivas, had established an association, "Love for Homeland," in Aynap in 1872, with the goal of renovating a school in their hometown (Poghosyan, *Patmut'ıwn Hay Mshakut'ayin Ėnkerut'ıwnneru*, 2: 267). Likewise, the migrants from Mush established an association in Manisa in 1908 with the goal of opening an orphanage in the St. Karapet monastery in their home region (*ibid.*, 2: 66). Migrants from Arabkir and the surrounding villages had established at least ten homeland associations in Aleppo and there was at least one from Gürün district and seven from the district of Çemişgezek. Keshishyan, *Halepi Haykakan Gaght'öchaki Hasarakakan-Mshakutayin Kazmakerput'ıwnnerë*.

37 Vardit'er Kocholozyan Hovahannesyan, *Dzit'ogh Dashti Karnoy* (Beyrut: Hamazgayin, 1972), 41.

38 Moya, "Immigrants and Associations: A Global and Historical Perspective," 835.

39 Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, "Migrant Associations: The Spanish Transatlantic Experience, 1870–1970," *Social History* 41 (2016): 144. Lily Pearl Balloffet, "From the Pampa to the Mashriq: Arab-Argentine Philanthropy Networks," *Mashriq & Mahjar* 4(1) (2017): 4–28; Steven Hyland, *More Argentine Than You: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants in Argentina* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017).

40 Gerard Jirair Libaridian, "Nation and Fatherland in Nineteenth-Century Armenian Political Thought," *Armenian Review* 36 (1983): 71–90.

The earlier Armenian homeland associations in Istanbul were associations established for economy-oriented goals in the homeland which had long functioned as sending communities. There were associations of migrants who already possessed or had accumulated social and economic capital in Istanbul, who came together to undertake projects beyond merely collecting money and remitting it to villages. These were particularly rich Armenians of provincial background who invested in their homeland.

One such project was the Agricultural Society of the Vanetsi upper classes, established in Yıldız Han, Istanbul, in 1853, by the same persons who established the education-oriented Artsunyants Association in 1844.⁴¹ The main goal of the association was to purchase land in Van to undertake the cultivation of cash crops like opium and silk. For that goal it had reached a sum of 33,000 ghurush collected from eleven members, each holding 120 shares in the society. As a part of the investment it had purchased 14,000 mulberry trees and sent them to the region.⁴² A similar project was undertaken in 1857 by Grigor İshakçyan, who established a society in Istanbul in 1857 to promote sericulture in Van.⁴³

Another economy-oriented association was the 1864 attempt by migrants from Akn mentioned in the introduction. In the Armenian daily press, the incident was recorded as “a few Aknets’i in Istanbul” having applied to the Sublime Porte to open up a workshop in their hometown and pay the expenses of a girls’ school from its profit.⁴⁴ The “few” must have belonged to an earlier generation of migrants and been wealthier members of the community who had already established themselves in Istanbul by the mid-1860s, since it took only “a few” of them to undertake such a project. Migrants from Akn to Istanbul in the early nineteenth century might have experienced upward social mobility in Istanbul.⁴⁵

There were also other associations of poorer migrants set up to purchase land in their home regions; their members numbered in the hundreds. Such projects were contemporaneous with the ideas of some Armenian intellectuals who proposed national advancement through economic partnerships of many members of the community in large associations.⁴⁶ For instance, in 1861

41 Poghosyan, *Patmut’iwn Hay Mshakut’ayin Ėnkerut’iwnneru*, 2: 3–5

42 “Yerkragortsakan Ėnkerut’iwn,” *ibid.*, 1: 5–7.

43 *ibid.*, 1: 8.

44 *Masis*, no. 661 (10 October 1864), quoted in Poghosyan, *Patmut’iwn Hay Mshakut’ayin Ėnkerut’iwnneru*, 3: 5–6.

45 Zeki Arkan, “Tanzimat Döneminde Egin ve Çevresinden İstanbul’a Yönelik Göçler,” *Tanzimat’ın 150. Yıldönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu* (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1994), 467–80.

46 Nikoghayos Zorayan, “Association,” in *The Heritage of Armenian Literature* vol. 3, *From the Eighteenth Century to Modern Times*, ed. Agop Jack Hacikyan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 247–9.

migrants from the Fenese, Evkere, and Tomarza districts of Kayseri established an Agricultural Society in Istanbul with the goal of purchasing and cultivating land in those districts. In 1863 the society had 700 members who held 1,000 shares, each of which was valued at 5 ghurush.⁴⁷ The number of members and the amount they paid was substantially different from the association established by the Vanetsi merchants around the same time, showing that lower-class migrants in Istanbul were also engaged in economic investment projects in their homelands.

Another similar undertaking was the purchase of Norat village in the Mush plain by migrant from Akn in Istanbul to establish a model village with the name of Nor (New) Akn and work toward spreading education through the profit from that enterprise. The Narekyan Association, which proposed this project, was established by the members of two former associations, and one of which was the Usumnasirakan (Philomathical) Association. It was established by educated migrants from Akn who had returned to their homeland.⁴⁸ Despite its eventual failure, the Nor Akn project, with its close ties to previous educational societies, shows how closely connected the educational and economic projects were in the minds of many Armenians of the period—and the importance of migrant networks in realizing them.

Contemporaneous with the organizations oriented toward economic activities, many Armenian migrant associations undertook educational activities. This took place in the larger context in which mid-nineteenth-century Armenian reformers had shifted their attention to the provinces and saw the solution to the contemporary problems of provincial Armenians in education.⁴⁹ As a part of their middle-class liberalism, the Armenian merchants and intellectuals of Istanbul showed firm belief in progress through education from the 1840s onwards—a belief that culminated in the 1860s.⁵⁰ In addition to the Armenian central administration's activities, benevolent associations were established by prominent members of the Istanbul community to promote education in the provinces, promoting a form of cultural nationalism aimed at preserving the community through literature and education.⁵¹ Homeland associations show that there were parallel undertakings by migrants from the target regions which were no less successful.

Some homeland organizations with educational goals even predate this broader transition, going back as early as the first half of the nineteenth

47 Poghosyan, *Patmut'ıwn Hay Mshakut'ayin Ėnkerut'ıwñneru*, 3:188.

48 Kezyan, *Akn yew Aknts'i*, 161–2.

49 Pamela Young, "Knowledge, Nation, and the Curriculum: Ottoman Armenian Education (1853–1915)" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2001).

50 Libaridian, "Nation and Fatherland in Nineteenth-Century Armenian Political Thought," 75–6.

51 Young, "Knowledge, Nation, and the Curriculum," 105–8.

century, thus showing the resonance of cultural nationalism among a wider group of Armenians. In the forefront of some of the migrant organizations were artisans and shopkeepers who were also active elements in the community politics in the period.⁵² One of the earliest organizations was that of some textile producers/merchants (*kapamacı esnafı*) from the district of Divriği (Divrik). Although the date of its establishment cannot be ascertained, it is placed in the first decades of the nineteenth century.⁵³ This organization was formed under the leadership of some migrants from the region who had attained economic capital after migrating to Istanbul. It was organized as a foundation (*vakf*) with superintendents (*mütevelli*), and by the mid-nineteenth century had purchased property in Kapalı Çarşı (now Divrikliiler Sokağı) and elsewhere in Istanbul with the goal of assisting churches and schools in their home town and its surrounding villages.

Examples of associations with cultural goals can be enumerated quite easily, such as the one established by migrants from Ērērin (Dağönü) village on the eastern bank of Lake Van, which had the goal of renovating the Sahak Partev monastery near their village and opening a school there.⁵⁴ Likewise migrants from Hayots' Dzor (Gürpınar) village south of the city of Van had the same goal of opening a school in their home region.⁵⁵

Some homeland organizations drew members not from a village but a larger region. For instance, migrants from Hizan, Bitlis established the Love for Education Association in Istanbul in 1877 and by 1883 had opened schools in four different villages in their home region.⁵⁶ Armenian migrants from Kghi,⁵⁷ Palu and Çarsacak (Charsanjak) and their villages,⁵⁸ Mets Armdan,⁵⁹ Malatya,⁶⁰ Tamzara,⁶¹ the villages of Divriği,⁶² Sivas and its villages,⁶³ Akn,⁶⁴ Arabkir,⁶⁵ Kayseri,⁶⁶ and many other locations established associations with the goals of opening schools in their home towns and villages. The sheer number of associations with such goals shows the extent of this

52 Vartan Artinian, *The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1863: A Study of Its Historical Development* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1988), 24–8.

53 Poghosyan, *Patmut'iwñ Hay Mshakut'ayin Ēnkerut'iwñneru*, 2: 251–6.

54 *Ibid.*, 2: 36.

55 *Ibid.*, 2: 37.

56 *Ibid.*, 2: 55–7.

57 *Ibid.*, 2: 159.

58 *Ibid.*, 2: 168.

59 *Ibid.*, 2: 207.

60 *Ibid.*, 2: 218.

61 *Ibid.*, 2: 218.

62 *Ibid.*, 2: 260–2

63 *Ibid.*, 2: 273.

64 *Ibid.*, 3: 3.

65 *Ibid.*, 3: 119.

66 *Ibid.*, 3: 161.

phenomenon and the potential impact of migrant networks in the flow of capital from Istanbul to the home provinces and the realization at the village level of ideas prevalent among the Armenian public in Istanbul.

The migrants followed the various discourses of their day, widely accepting the power attributed to education as a cure to the ills of the community. Yet whether provincial communities passively received these notions, or whether they added their own input while translating the ideas into local contexts, is not fully known. What is known, however, is that there were cases of discrimination against Armenian students of provincial origin who came to Istanbul seeking advanced education. This may have had an impact on some migrant projects relating to education—it would be an interesting question to examine further. The famous realist writer of the 1890s, Melk'on Kürchyan, who wrote under the *nom de plume* Hrand, was one of those students from the provinces (he was from Palu). He remembers such instances “from his personal experience”—the insults of other students, the scornful looks of the teachers—and concludes that what a student from the provinces needed in Istanbul was to “be able to knock down two people with a single blow.”⁶⁷ Given this experience, the associations of migrant students with goals of establishing schools in their home towns might be seen in a different light, not only as following the discourse about education in Istanbul, but also as a reaction to the social hierarchy within the Armenian community in the imperial capital. The questionable qualities of schools established by the benevolent societies in the provinces might be contributing reasons behind this development, too.⁶⁸ Or, we can view these as attempts by the Armenian migrants, the absolute majority of which was Apostolic, to counter the efforts of Protestant missionaries by their own means.

Armenian homeland associations in the 1890s and after the 1908 Revolution

There are almost no references in Poghosyan's work to the Armenian migrant associations established in Istanbul in the 1890s and 1900s. Instead, many associations established in the USA occupy its pages, a direct result of the growing migration to the New World in this period.⁶⁹ There might have been other dynamics which directly affected the migrant networks in Istanbul. One plausible explanation is the growth of Armenian revolutionary parties in this

67 Hrand (Melk'on Kürchyan), *Amboghjakan Yerker* (Paris: Impr. de Navarre, 1931), 25. Originally published in *Masis* no. 3919 (1898).

68 Young, “Knowledge, Nation, and the Curriculum,” 109.

69 Gutman, *The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America, 1885–1915*.

period, which might have provided alternative networks of solidarity to the migrant workers in Istanbul. One indicator of such links is the active presence of Armenian porters in the Kumkapı demonstrations in 1895, which were organized by the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party to protest the non-execution of reforms in the eastern provinces. Government reports highlight the role of Armenian migrant workers and their quarters in the organization of the protest, which ended with clashes on the streets of Istanbul.⁷⁰

More important, however, was the destruction of the Armenian migrant networks in this period. The involvement of Armenian migrant workers in the demonstration of 1895 resulted in government action against them. Moreover, there were some migrant workers among the members of Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Dashnakts'ut'iwn*) who occupied the Ottoman Bank in 1896. Following the occupation, the mob targeted migrant workers the most in the ensuing anti-Armenian violence in the city.⁷¹ The Ottoman state authorities' response was to place a ban on seasonal migration to Istanbul, as the migrants were seen as a source of revolutionary politics.⁷²

Police reports on the migrant networks from the period, however, reveal the internal dynamics and organization of the homeland associations. One interesting case is the investigation following the Hunchakian Party members' assassination attempt of the Armenian community leader Maksudzade Simon Efendi in 1894.⁷³ Following a lead to the coffeehouses frequented by migrants in Galata, the investigation into the networks of those involved in the assassination led the police to Lutfik, a migrant from Zara, Sivas, who had come to Istanbul in the early 1890s and had been working as a porter in Galata docks.⁷⁴ A charity ticket (*iane bileti*) was found among Lutfik's belongings which belonged to the association of "Lovers of the Sahakyan School in Zara" (*Zara Sahakyan Nam Mektebi Sevenler Şirketi*). He had established this homeland association with his compatriots Toros, Nishan, Karabet, Bahadır, and Vartan. Lutfik claimed this ticket was one of 2,000 tickets that they printed and sold among his compatriots (*hemşeri*) to pay the expenses of the school and the church in their village. With the help of a priest in Galata, who had assisted the migrants earlier in printing the tickets, Lutfik

70 Sinan Dinçer, "The Armenian Massacre in Istanbul (1896)," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische geschiedenis* 10(4) (2013): 21–3. Riedler, "Armenian Labour Migration to Istanbul and the Migration Crisis of the 1890s," 167–8.

71 Dinçer, "The Armenian Massacre in Istanbul (1896)," 26f.

72 Riedler, "Armenian Labour Migration to Istanbul and the Migration Crisis of the 1890s," 170–1.

73 On the assassination attempt and the politics in the Armenian community in Istanbul see: Varak Ketsemanian, "The Hunchakian Revolutionary Party and the Assassination Attempts against Patriarch Khoren Ashekian and Maksudzade Simon Bey in 1894," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 50 (2018): 735–55.

74 *Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, Osmanlı Arşivi*, Y. MTV. 101-58 (July 31, 1894).

collected money in a charity box for these purposes for about three months. What is interesting, however, is that he did not send the money, about 600–700 ghurush, to the village. Instead, he provided loans out of it to the needy among his compatriots. He even kept a list of the addresses of the compatriots to whom he had loaned money.⁷⁵ The police did not believe Lutfik's story, which they claimed was a cover for collecting money for the group's mischievous acts, and they arrested them all, including the priest. This episode not only provides us with an up-close view of the relation between revolutionary politics and the migrant networks in Istanbul, but it also instructs us, regardless of whether Lutfik's story was true or not, in how homeland associations functioned in the period. Their primary function was to undertake cultural activities in their home regions, and provide assistance to the needy members of the migrant community. They sold tickets among the compatriots and collected money in a charity box in coffeehouses where the migrants hung out in Istanbul. The crackdown on such associations by the police and questioning of the motivation for collecting money, coupled with anti-migrant policies enacted in Istanbul from the mid-1890s onward, resulted in the suppression of their networks.

The relative silence in the sources on the homeland associations, however, changes after the 1908 Revolution. The major reason for this is the degree of relative freedom which allowed the organization of associations in the widening political and public sphere. For instance, homeland associations established relations with political parties openly after the Revolution. An important case in point is the Salnodzor (Mush) Compatriot Union, which was established in 1909 in Istanbul with the goal of helping the poor migrants from Mush in Istanbul. It included figures closely associated with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, such as parliamentarian Gegham Ter Karapetyan, Mkhitar Shekhikyan, journalist Artashes Ferakhyan, and the revolutionary Karo Sasuni.⁷⁶

In the post-revolutionary period homeland associations began to take on different formats, too. One striking example is the union established by students from Sivas who were students at the imperial academies established in Rüştü Paşa Hanı in 1910. The bylaws of the association were published in part in *Hoghdar*, the local Armenian newspaper of Sivas.⁷⁷ Its main goals were: (art. 1-a) to be in contact with the students of Sivas origin in Istanbul and to make

75 *Ibid.*

76 Poghosyan, *Patmut'awn Hay Mshakut'ayin Ėnkerut'iwanneru*, 2: 67–8. It is noteworthy that while the Dashnakts'ut'awn was organizing the poor migrants from Mush who traditionally worked as porters at the quay, the Committee of Union and Progress was organizing the boatmen for its own political purposes. Doğan Çetinkaya, *The Young Turks and the Boycott Movement: Nationalism, Protest and the Working Classes in the Formation of Modern Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

77 *Hoghdar* (Sebastia), no. 10, January 15, 1911, 2.

them engage with the educational affairs of Sivas, (art. 1-b) to enable the intellectual advancement of students of Sivas origin, and (art. 1-c) to motivate people of Sivas origin in Istanbul toward the educational affairs of Sivas. All Sebastiatzi university students had the right to be members of the association (art. 6).⁷⁸

The establishment of the Union of Sebastiatzi University Students in 1910 is indicative of changes in the formation of homeland associations, a shift from workers and prominent members with social and economic capital in the mid and late nineteenth century to exclusive social groups. The association of Sebastiatzi students was also important in that it reflected the political developments of the period, with new bonds emerging to join—but not displace—the sense of shared origins as bases of solidarity, in a period when other forms of solidarity, such as trade and labor unions, and professional associations for the middle classes, were growing.⁷⁹

Another factor in the growing publicity of the homeland associations was the emergence of a public sphere after the revolution and in particular the flourishing of newspapers in which people of different backgrounds—including migrants—could discuss the problems of the previous regime and challenge the structures within the Armenian community.⁸⁰

For instance, the post-revolutionary public sphere revealed the class-based rifts within the above-mentioned association established by artisans from Divriği. The major disagreement was around the question of who would be in the leadership of the administration and would therefore control the finances of the administration after Harutyun Ağa, the steward of the *kapamacı esnafı*, decided to withdraw from the affairs of the association in the late 1890s. Then the question was solved to the benefit of the townspeople from Divriği, who were mainly artisans in Istanbul, and to the detriment of the migrant workers from the villages, who worked as porters. Allegedly it was the porters themselves who did not want to take up the leadership of the association, stating that “we are porters, we are illiterate, we can’t handle a task like this,” whereas the townspeople “happily accepted” it.⁸¹ Within a few years

78 *Ibid.*

79 Hüseyin Hatemi, “Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet Dönemlerinde Derneklerin Gelişimi, 201–204,” in *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1, ed. Murat Belge (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985); Mehmet Ö. Alkan, “1856–1945 İstanbul’da Sivil Toplum Kurumları: Toplumsal Örgütlenmenin Gelişimi [Devlet-Toplum İlişkisi Açısından Bir Tarihçe Denemesi],” in *Tanzimat’tan Günümüze İstanbul’da STK’lar*, eds. Ahmet N. Yücekök, İlter Turan, and Mehmet Ö. Alkan (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), 79–145; Mehmet Ö. Alkan, “Ölçülebilir Verilerle Tanzimat’tan Sonra Osmanlı Modernleşmesi” (unpublished PhD dissertation, İstanbul University, 1996), 81–7. Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 81f.

80 Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 73–97.

81 *Zhamanak*, no. 356, December 12/25, 1909.

the new superintendents, the villagers claim, cut the financing of the village schools and diverted all of the funds to the churches and schools in the town. Despite the villagers' protests, the patriarchate kept silent while the court favored the superintendents.⁸² The post-revolutionary public sphere and the press allowed migrant workers and villagers to "open old books" and challenge the leadership exercised by the affluent members of the migrant community in Istanbul under the previous regime. Such changes placed the homeland associations within the broader debates of the revolution.

Transformation of the homeland associations after World War I

Starting from spring of 1915, the Committee of Union and Progress government subjected various Armenian communities in different provinces of the Ottoman Empire to deportation from their ancestral lands and exposed them to mass violence, forced religious and cultural conversions, and forced labor, resulting in the genocidal eradication of the Armenian population in the region.⁸³ After the Armistice in 1918, the extent of the destruction of the Armenian communities in Anatolia began to be revealed. The Armenian elite in Istanbul, who came from the professional and well-to-do classes of the community, undertook a series of enterprises to gather the survivors and provide services to them. Among them, the incorporation of women and child survivors into the community, and policies fostering marriages, were among the major concerns and showed the gender aspect of these policies.⁸⁴ The nationwide networks of the Armenian community and transnational (pan-Armenian) organizations such as the Armenian General Benevolent Union and the Armenian Red Cross were the most active in this period of initial recovery in the general atmosphere of freedom between the end of the war and 1922—the year that the success of the Kemalist forces was secured. In this period, in addition to the better-studied efforts of these communal and transnational actors, Armenian homeland associations also flourished and participated in the reconstruction efforts through their own networks.

The almost complete dispersion and erasure of the Armenian communities in Anatolia during the genocide and the flow of survivors to Istanbul as a safe

82 *Azatomart*, no. 185, January 16/29, 1910.

83 Ronald Grigor Suny, *"They Can Live In the Desert But Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

84 Vahé Tachjian, "Gender, Nationalism, Exclusion: The Reintegration Process of Female Survivors of the Armenian Genocide," *Nations and Nationalism* 15 (2009): 60–80; Lerna Ekmekcioglu, "A Climate for Abduction, a Climate for Redemption: The Politics of Inclusion during and after the Armenian Genocide," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55(2013): 522–53; Vahé Tachjian, "Mixed Marriage, Prostitution, Survival: Reintegrating Armenian Women into Post-Ottoman Cities," in *Woman and the City, Women in the City*, ed. Nazan Maksudyan (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 86–106.

haven resulted in the formation of new or “reestablished” (*verakazmvats*) hometown organizations in Istanbul. According to a report of the Union of Homeland Associations in 1921, they were re-formed “with the gloomy hope of returning their beloved ones who were irreversibly lost and to stretch a brotherly hand of assistance to the survivors.”⁸⁵ They were based on the former resources, namely social bonds of shared origin, but took on new functions. Above all, the homeland associations clearly point to the information networks within a specific community coming from a region: in addition to the material assistance to those who managed to arrive in Istanbul, they provided documentation to the community administration in affairs of birth, death, inheritance, and above all marriage. In the period of reconstruction of the community through reproduction, they produced documents about the marital status of a person and whether his/her spouse was dead or alive.⁸⁶ Through such services, they acted as intermediaries between their compatriots and the other community organizations.

The homeland associations had the interrelated goals of gathering information about the conditions of the survivors in their home regions and sending money, which was becoming difficult due to the growing power of the Kemalist movement. They also aimed to reach survivors in Syria and Deir ez-Zor and fetch them to their home regions or to Istanbul, a task which also failed due to the vast geography, political issues in the land, and the very fact that most of them had already died.⁸⁷

Some Armenian homeland organizations had already begun to be established outside the Ottoman Empire during World War I, such as the Yerznkatsi Union in Tbilisi in 1917. It aimed to assist Armenian survivors from the region of Yerznka (Erzincan) in the Russian-occupied region and also to reach Armenians in the Dersim area.⁸⁸ Likewise, the homeland association of Tayk’ aimed to assist survivors from Erzurum, İspir (Sper), and Khortorjur (Sırakonak). Its center was in Russia, historically a host country for migrants from the region, as noted above. However, it opened a small branch in Istanbul with twenty-five members by December 1918.⁸⁹

The homeland associations reestablished in Istanbul had broader networks and range of activities. In his *Everyone’s Almanac* of 1921, T’ēodik provides a

85 Teghekagir Hayrenakts’akan Miut’eants’ Yerkameay Gortsuneut’yan 1919–1920, (K. Polis: M. Hovakimyan, 1921), 3. The unions came together to cooperate in the summer of 1919 under the initiative of the Sivas Compatriot Union. *Zhogovurd* (Istanbul), no. 2 (148) July 31, 1919.

86 *Ibid.*, 5.

87 *Ibid.*, 4.

88 Robert T’atoyan, “Hayots’ ts’eghaspanut’iwunēverapratz’neri yew pakhstakanneri hamar ognut’ean kazmakerpumē Yerznkayum (1916 t’. hulis–1917 t’. verj),” *Ts’eghaspanagitakan Handes* 3(1/2) (2014): 270–83.

89 Teghekagir Hayrenakts’akan Miut’eants’ Yerkameay Gortsuneut’yan, 3.

list of such associations as a part of the “Union Movement of Constantinople.” They are given under the title Compatriot Unions (*Hayrenakts’akank’*), with the note that they were “established immediately after the armistice, with the purpose of reconstructing their homeland.”⁹⁰ The list included twenty-five homeland associations, yet it was not complete.⁹¹ Among the homeland associations, the Taron Salnadzor (Salnoy Dzor) Union was established as early as December of 1918 by Armenians of the Bitlis and Mush regions. The main goal of the union was to “support orphans and deported people.”⁹² As the source reveals, among the members of the union there were a doctor and men of religion. Survivors from the Harput region established the Yep’rat Union, also in December 1918. Its goal was “to gather around itself all compatriots found in Istanbul and its surroundings, with striving to create a unified cooperation under the urgency of current circumstances.”⁹³ The union soon opened branches and sub-branches, a new development for the homeland associations again necessitated by the circumstances.

The Senek’erimyan Union, the homeland association of Sebastians migrants, was reestablished with 250 members in Istanbul in December of 1918. Its first goal was to publish a report on the condition of Sebastians Armenians. According to the bylaw of the union, it had the goal of (1) reestablishing and encouraging communal, philanthropic, and educational works in Sivas and its surrounding region; (2) searching out, finding, and uniting the compatriots (of Sivas) who were scattered after the recent crime (*yeghern*), to assist them materially, morally support them, and inspect their losses; and (3) to find jobs for the unemployed, where possible. The union also published a weekly paper, *Sebastia*, in Istanbul until 1922. It opened a branch in Sivas in August 1919, a few weeks before the congress of Turkish nationalist forces in the same city.⁹⁴

The changing circumstances in the community, particularly the above-mentioned regeneration efforts, and the widow and orphan questions had

90 T’ēodik, *Amēnun Tarats’uyts’ē*, v.15 (K. Polis: M. Hovakimyan, 1921), 306–7. The list is partially reproduced in Zakarya Mildanoğlu, “Ermeni gurbetçilerin sığınağı hanlar,” *Agos*, www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/16652/ermeni-gurbetçilerin-siginagi-hanlar (accessed August 24, 2019).

91 The names of the compatriot unions and the region they targeted are the following: Senek’erimyan (Sebastia/Sivas); Taron-Salnadzor (Mush); Yegeghyats’ (Yerznka/Erzincan); Bagratunyants’ (Kasma district, Akn, Harput); Rażmik (Şebın Karahisar); Andzur (Kuru çay); Vasputakan (Van region); But’anakan (İzmit); Daranaghyats’ (Kemah); Nikia (İznik); Yep’rat (Harberd/Harput); Ordu; Rodosto (Tekirdağ); Tivrik (Divriği); Bābgēn Suni (Binkyan, Akn, Harput); Ēfk’ērē; Angara; Marzovan (Merzifon); Tayk’ (Khotordjur, Erzurum); K’ghi; Amasia; Kesaria (Kayseri); Kilikia; Ēvērēk; Artsiw (Şebın Karahisar’s villages). Compare the list with the one provided at *Teghekgagir Hayrenakts’akan Miut’eants’ Yerkameay Gortsuneut’yan*, 13–15.

92 Poghosyan, *Patmut’iwn Hay Mshakut’ayin Ēnkerut’iwnneru*, 2: 54.

93 *Ibid.*, 2: 137.

94 *Ibid.*, 2: 297–8.

led the associations to incorporate female members into their boards. For instance, the Senek'erimyan Union also had a "Women's Auxiliary Body" in Istanbul.⁹⁵ Some other compatriot associations had women on their boards, such as Aghavni Adamyan in Taron Salnadzor, Zaruhi Metsaturyan as the secretary of Babgen Suni, Anta Shefteyan in the Ankara Compatriot Union, and Nargis Kibritciyan of the Çemişgezek Compatriot Union.⁹⁶

In the post-World War I period, the "reestablished" homeland associations also strengthened their ties with their compatriot organizations in Europe and the USA, which had been severed during the war. The Senek'erimyan Union of Sivas had a branch in Plodiv, Bulgaria, an important Armenian center in 1919, from which it received donations.⁹⁷ Likewise, the Daranaghyats' Union, which was established by Kemakhatsis (from Kemah) in Istanbul in 1919, had branches in Salonica (Greece), Belgrade (Serbia), Sofia (Bulgaria), and Constantine (Algeria).⁹⁸ In some cases the homeland associations emerged as the nucleus of later compatriot organizations abroad through the transnational networks they built after the war. For instance, the Vaspurakan (Van) Compatriot Union, which was established in Istanbul in 1919, collaborated with the Vanetsi Homeland Associations in the US and functioned as their core for some time.⁹⁹

Most of the "reestablished" hometown unions in Istanbul were formed in December 1918, following the armistice and occupation of Istanbul by the Allied forces, so as to reach their surviving compatriots as quickly as possible. While sharing the same local origins still played the main role in the formation and functions of these associations, the transcultural space that they shared with their homelands was altered, as their home communities were destroyed during the genocide. These relations were replaced by relations in transnational space. The development of relations with compatriot associations abroad, as shown in the cases of the Senek'erimyan and Vaspurakan associations, was one way in which these groups can be seen to have evolved.

Conclusion: Armenian homeland associations in the late Ottoman Empire

This article has examined the homeland associations established by Armenian migrants in Istanbul in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2: 299.

⁹⁶ For the members of the boards see *Teghekgir Hayrenakts'akan Miut'eants' Yerkameay Gortsuneut'yan*, 13–15.

⁹⁷ Poghosyan, *Patmut'iwn Hay Mshakut'ayin Ėnkerut'iwnneru*, 2: 299

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2: 216.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 36.

associations' economic and cultural projects in their home regions show the participation of migrants in the change their villages and home regions underwent in the Ottoman east. The institutionalized ties of *hayrenakts'ut'iwn*, hailing from a small district or a region, in the form of homeland associations shared the premises of the major intellectual, political, and social developments of their times. Their earlier cultural and economic projects in their home regions were in line with the major trends and broader ideas in the community of the time, such as expansion of schools in the eastern provinces and economic development, although some of their projects actually predated the universal development of these ideas in the broader community in the 1860s. The homeland associations seem to lose their important role by the mid-1890s, when migrant workers in Istanbul began to form relations with the revolutionary political parties and migrant networks were suppressed by the authorities. Such links with political parties were openly carried into the public after the 1908 Revolution. In the same period problems within the associations also surfaced and were openly discussed in public. After 1918 the associations reappeared to heal the wounds of the community which faced mass destruction in the genocide. In that period, the homeland associations took active roles by participating in the community's goals, by providing the necessary documents for marriages, and incorporating women into their administrative bodies, while also filling other social functions related to the reconstruction of the communities.

This survey of Armenian homeland associations in Istanbul in the late Ottoman Empire demonstrates the ability of migrants to adapt themselves to changing circumstances in the face of various challenges over a long period. It shows that, contrary to the contemporary image of Armenian migrants as weak and uprooted, they were historical agents. They participated actively, alongside historically more visible actors like the community and the state, in the development of their home regions. Moreover, their projects showed that migrants were also part of the broader intellectual and historical developments of the era. Their close connection with the broader ideas on the development of the community through education and economic prosperity further complicate our understanding of the history of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire by pointing out the role of migrants in it.

The durability of the homeland associations further underscores the importance of affective bonds such as those based on shared locality in the history of the late Ottoman Empire. These bonds not only provided solidarity to the migrants in Istanbul but also allowed them to associate with other forms of solidarity in specific ways: migrant solidarity in guilds, revolutionary politics and student clubs, and eventually participation in the reconstruction efforts of the Armenian community after World War I. These intricate interactions

highlight the role of affective bonds in the social and political history of the Ottoman Empire which requires further examination.

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