

REVIEW ARTICLE

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FROM GENOCIDE TO POSTGENOCIDE: SURVIVAL, GENDER, AND POLITICS

TALIN SUCIYAN, *The Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-Genocide Society, Politics and History* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2015)

RONALD GRIGOR SUNY, *“They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else”: A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015)

LERNA EKMEKÇIOĞLU, *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016)

KARNIG PANIAN, *Goodbye, Antoura: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016)

VAHÉ TACHJIAN, *Daily Life in the Abyss: Genocide Diaries 1915–1918* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017)

On 31 July 2018, eighteen representatives of religious minority groups in Turkey, including the Armenians, Greeks, and Syriacs, issued a joint declaration saying: “As religious representatives and directors of different faiths and beliefs who have been residing in our country for centuries, we live out our faiths freely and practice our worship freely according to our traditions.”¹ This state-orchestrated declaration contradicts a long history of discrimination suffered by minorities under different late Ottoman and Turkish political regimes. In the last two decades of the Ottoman Empire’s rule, Ottoman Armenian, Greek, and Syriac subjects/citizens, among others, suffered extreme depredations and persecutions culminating in ethnic cleansing, genocide, and population exchange. The books under review deal with a grim phase in Ottoman and Turkish history: the Armenian Genocide during World War I and its repercussions during the subsequent republican period.

These books include an in-depth analysis of the genocide, diaries of survivors, an orphan’s memoir, and an analysis of the genocide’s consequences for the remaining Armenians in Turkey. Exemplifying latest trends in the scholarship, they use methods and analytical frameworks that enable them to deviate from a narrative description of the genocide and postgenocide periods, and move beyond futile efforts to “prove” the Armenian Genocide’s veracity to those who deny it.²

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A DEFINITIVE HISTORY OF GENOCIDE?

More than two decades ago Ronald Grigor Suny stated that “no monograph or anthology can be ‘definitive’ on the Genocide, for it is by its nature and its position in the field of knowledge contentious.”³ One can hardly disagree with this statement. Although many books exist on the topic, none can amount to a definitive or complete history of the event. Suny’s latest book, *“They Can Live in the Desert But Nowhere Else”*: A History of the Armenian Genocide, is the culmination of decades of research and reflection on the Armenian Genocide. Its strength lies not in the presentation of new evidence proving genocidal intent, but in Suny’s unique ability to interpret and contextualize the event based on archival material in multiple languages. For Suny, the Armenian Genocide “was a foundational crime” that “made possible the formation of an ethnona-tional Turkish Republic” (p. 349).

Suny’s book provides a genealogy of the genocide in the escalating Armenian–Turkish conflict during the prior period. Thus, unlike other scholars, he dedicates substantial space—six of ten chapters—to a detailed history of the pregenocide period. In these sections, Suny places Armenians in the context of Ottoman and Russian history, showing them to possess agency. After detailing the equilibrium that long existed between Muslims and non-Muslim groups in the Ottoman sphere, he concentrates on the ways in which 19th-century state centralization and modernization became counterproductive. Focusing on Armenians, Turks, and Kurds, as well as Muslim refugees who arrived in the empire during the second half of the 19th century, Suny demonstrates how the region became “the vortex of a fierce struggle both between Christians and Muslims and between great rival empires fearful of their competitors’ ambitions” (p. 24). The central source of contention was over land—what historian Stephan Astourian calls a “niche overlap” that led to the escalation of interethnic tensions in eastern Anatolia.⁴

After discussing the amalgamation of Armenian identity in the Ottoman and Russian Empires, Suny demonstrates how political, social, and economic transformations in both empires during the 19th century disrupted interethnic equilibrium. In the Ottoman case, economic and social competition were “increasingly framed in ethnic and religious terms; what might have been understood as conflicts associated with social standing were seen as one ethno-religious community against another” (p. 55). Although these tensions began to take on political attire, the majority of Armenians saw themselves as an integral part of the Ottoman Empire. Their main aim was to improve the condition of Armenians in the eastern provinces. When the desired reforms never materialized, a tiny group of Armenians resorted to revolutionary violence.

Suny also discusses the politics of the European powers whose humanitarian sentiments towards the Armenians were “mixed with cool strategic interests” (p. 91). In the international political system “Ottoman Armenians were caught between their loyalty to the imperial government and their desire for reforms promoted by the Europeans” (p. 93). After dealing with the internationalization of the Armenian Question, Suny focuses on the Hamidian massacres (1894–96), which he sees as the culmination of decades of tension between local peasants and Kurds in the eastern provinces (p. 107). He places the massacres in the context of the Hamidian demographic engineering of that region, arguing that “officials and officers justified such measures as necessary to preserve the empire and its traditional order” (p. 105). Unlike other scholars, Suny

analyzes violence by deconstructing emotions such as fear, anger, and hatred that were “integral to the mental universe of those constructing the Armenians as foreign, deceptive, and treacherous” (p. 134). Understanding these emotions does not necessarily mean justifying them. In his view, both Armenians and Muslims “saw the other through an emotional veil, an affective disposition that interpreted any untoward movement as a threat” (p. 121).

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 was undoubtedly a major turning point in the history of the Ottoman Empire. Suny analyzes the revolution itself, the counterrevolution of 1909, and the impact of both on Armenians. Armenians had high hopes for the constitutional regime, but these hopes quickly faded with the Adana massacres of 1909.⁵ A major bone of contention between Armenians and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) was the land question in the eastern provinces and the reluctance of the CUP to find a solution to it, seeing “little advantage in antagonizing Muslim landlords” (p. 177). The political turmoil following the counterrevolution, including the CUP-rigged elections of 1912, the coup of the liberals, and the subsequent CUP coup during the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, contributed to political deadlock on the Armenian Question. The expulsion/ethnic cleansing of Muslim refugees from the Balkans and their calculated resettlement by the government in the eastern provinces complicated the already contentious situation. Whereas scholars claim that the Balkan Wars were a turning point in the CUP’s attitude toward Armenians and other Christians, Suny rightly argues that the Armenian Reform Project of 1914, which historians have not examined in detail, should be viewed as a catalyst. From the perspective of the Ottoman ruling elite, it was a major blow to the empire’s territorial integrity.

The most important section of the book deals with the Armenian Genocide. In these chapters Suny explains why and how the Armenian Genocide took place, covering both the center and the periphery. Unlike other historians, he does not view the genocide as a premeditated act. Rather, he sees it as a contingent event that took place in the context of World War I. What would evolve into genocide, he explains, “began haphazardly in policies designed both to rearrange the demographic topography of Anatolia and to prepare for the war with Russia and its European allies” (p. 219). One of Suny’s major assertions is that the Young Turks were national imperialists who were “prepared to take the most desperate and drastic measures to homogenize their state while promoting some peoples over others and annihilating still others” (p. 358). Hence, their decision to enter the war was made in attempt to save the empire. The reluctance of Armenians to take part in the war, the movement of a few Armenian leaders to the Russian side, and the formation of several Armenian battalions, “confirmed in the imagination of already suspicious Young Turks that Armenians as a whole were potential internal enemies of the state” (p. 222). The war served as a unique opportunity to solve the Armenian Question. Using Donald Bloxham’s notion of cumulative policy of radicalization, Suny views the defeat of the Ottomans in the Battle of Sarikamish in December 1914–January 1915 on the eastern front as “the prelude to the ‘final solution’ of the Armenian Question” (p. 243).⁶

The defense of Van and other minor resistance attempts were seen by the government as a widespread Armenian insurrection. Unlike at the beginning of the war, the massacres that followed “were no longer simply spontaneous or local but part of an overall plan to reduce the Armenians to impotence, to make any resistance impossible, and to Islamize

eastern Anatolia as much as possible” (p. 280). While most of the Armenians in Bitlis and Mush were killed in their hometowns, the historic Armenian communities in the east were deported toward the southeast. Concentration camps along the Euphrates in Syria housed thousands of destitute refugees who were eventually slaughtered in Deir ez-Zor. The final chapter deals with humanitarian aid to the Armenians.

Suny does not believe that the genocide was motivated by religion or the result of contending nationalisms, as is usually claimed in the historiography of the Armenian Genocide. Rather, he contends that the genocide was the “pathological response of desperate leaders who sought security against a people they had both constructed as enemies and driven into radical opposition to the regime under which they had lived for centuries” (p. 359). Although Suny’s approach is sound, complex and macabre events such as genocide cannot have a monocausal explanation. In the case of the Armenian Genocide, the inner clique of the CUP was likely motivated by a host of factors and did not ascribe itself to one doctrine.

FROM DEPORTATIONS TO CONCENTRATION CAMPS: THE SECOND PHASE OF GENOCIDE

Whereas the first phase of genocide has received much attention, the study of the second phase (February–December 1916) remains in its infancy. Historian Raymond Kévorkian, who coined the phrase *la deuxième phase* based on extensive research in the Aram Andonian collection at the Nubarian Library in Paris, opened the door to other scholars.⁷ During the first phase of the genocide, the liquidation targeted primarily the populations of the six eastern provinces. The convoys were systematically destroyed and only the remaining survivors were able to reach their final destination. The second phase of the genocide targeted the convoys sent from the eastern provinces and Cilicia to Syria. Kévorkian contends that the decision to slaughter these remaining deportees was taken in late February or early March 1916 and affected 500,000 surviving deportees who had reached Syria and Mesopotamia at least six months earlier.⁸ The next two books that I will discuss focus on the experience of deportees during the second phase.

Karnig Panian’s memoir *Goodbye Antoura* and Vahé Tachjian’s study *Daily Life in the Abyss: Genocide Diaries 1915–1918* both deal with the second phase of the genocide. Whereas Panian’s work is a memoir of his experience of the Armenian Genocide, Tachjian’s work is a sophisticated interrogation, contextualization, and analysis of the memoirs of two survivors from a microhistorical perspective. Panian’s memoir is not only pertinent to the genocide: it provides valuable information about the condition of Syria during a critical period of transformation. Furthermore, it is a valuable source for understanding children’s experiences during war and genocide. Panian’s memoir stands out from others in the genre for providing a glimpse of both phases of the genocide. Tachjian’s book concentrates on the diaries of Fr. Nerses Tavukjian and Krikor Bogharian, both from Aintab, during the second phase of genocide in Hama and Salamiyya.

Karnig Panian was from the village of Gürün in the province of Sivas. He portrays the pregenocide period as one of relative stability and harmony. This situation changed with the general mobilization of all Armenian men. Panian laments: “My father left that day, and we never saw him again” (p. 25). When the deportations occurred, Panian was five

years old. His family, led by his grandfather Hovannes Emmie, joined the large caravan heading south. Interestingly, the caravan was escorted by only three policemen, who apparently treated the deportees with decency. After reaching Elbistan, the caravan stopped near Marash. Though caravans were not allowed to enter cities, vendors—some of them Armenians—would come from the city to donate or sell food to the deportees. Panian describes the victims' mentality at the time: "We walked like a flock of sheep, obedient and submissive, tormented by our memories and our fears, but unwilling to speak up" (p. 36). When they arrived in Aintab, the new guards, unlike those from Gürün, treated them harshly. The deportees were loaded onto wagons and sent to Hama. A good portion of the book describes the misery experienced by Armenian deportees in the camp in Hama. Panian was astonished to see thousands of Armenian deportees from places such as Sivas, Zeytun, and Malatia crammed into the camp. He indicates that the population of the camp increased day by day: "The newcomers were all Armenians. That was their only crime" (p. 47). Misery, death, and hunger were prevalent in the camp. Panian portrays scenes similar to those portrayed by Aram Andonian in *Ayn Sev Orerun* (In Those Dark Days), his compilation of short stories published in 1919. Seeing the constant stream of carts carrying dead bodies to their final resting place, Panian concluded that the camp was "basically turning into a large graveyard" (p. 50).

At the camp of Hama, Panian's mother, sister, and brother died. When the situation became unbearable, Panian's grandparents decided to put him in a nearby orphanage run by a Protestant headmaster. Later, on the orders of Jemal Pasha, the commander of the Fourth Army, the children in that orphanage were moved to the Antoura orphanage in Lebanon. Panian provides unique insight into this latter institution, which at the time was part of the machinery of Turkification of young Armenian and Kurdish boys. Jemal Pasha played an important role in this process, with the assistance of the renowned feminist and writer Halide Edip, who served as inspector of the orphanages in Beirut, Damascus, and Aleppo. During World War I around 500 Armenian and Kurdish orphans lived in Antoura's orphanage at the mercy of its director Fevzi Bey. They were forced to speak Turkish and were given Turkish names. Some of the Armenian orphans resisted the policy by speaking Armenian. As Panian explains, "Clearly, Jemal Pasha's plan was to Turkify us, but we were determined to resist—not out of rabid nationalism, for which we were too young, but simply because we wanted to hold onto our identities, which were all we had left" (p. 83). Many boys died as a result of malnutrition, disease, and corporal punishment, and were buried outside the orphanage in shallow graves. Panian and his friends spent two years in "hunger, misery, fear, and pain, and we had become disillusioned, cynical, and emaciated. But we had not yielded a single inch. We had kept our faith, our language, and our identities intact" (p. 95). However, severe hunger did lead Panian and his friend to eat the bones of other dead orphans by grinding them into a powder and drinking them with water. "Our hunger made us desperate, and it dehumanized us. I didn't feel much revulsion at the idea. All we thought of was food, and this was yet another way to fight hunger" (p. 105). Unable to bear the misery in the orphanage, Panian and some of his friends escaped into the wilderness. However, after six months struggling to survive in caves, they returned, only to find out that the orphanage had come under French control. After the French occupation the Armenian orphans returned to their Cilician hometown of Aintab where they stayed in another orphanage. Yet when the Kemalist offensive forced the French from the Cilicia region, the orphans were transferred

to Baalbek, then to Karantina, and finally to an orphanage in Jbeil run by the American organization Near East Relief between 1920 and 1925.

Diaries and memoirs of the Armenian Genocide like Panian's have not yet received the scholarly attention and analysis they deserve. Scholars have neglected or shied away from using them because they are considered subjective sources. Tachjian's book therefore breaks new ground. He concentrates on the diaries of two survivors in the region of Bilad al-Sham where Armenian deportees waged a struggle of survival for three years. The region of Bilad al-Sham is extremely important to understanding the second phase of the genocide because it had the largest concentration of Armenian survivors (p. 1). Using a microhistorical approach, and drawing on archival material and other diaries, Tachjian attempts to reconstruct the daily lives of these Armenians and their decline in the camps of the region. Whereas Fr. Nerses's account demonstrates the moral negligence of the survivors and the decline of the social system, Bogharian's provides valuable information about the economy, the process of Islamization, and daily challenges faced by survivors.

Undoubtedly there is a difference between diaries and memoirs. Whereas the latter are written *ex post facto*, the former are written amid the events described. Bogharian was eighteen when he arrived in Hama on 17 October 1915; Der Nerses arrived in Hama on 1 August 1915. The two authors therefore wrote from the same town, providing us valuable information about daily life there and its struggles. Whereas Der Nerses' text is preoccupied mainly with religious issues, Bogharian's describes mundane issues. Tachjian's analysis indicates that even when they arrived in Hama, "they still had no clear idea of the fate in the store for them" (p. 24). Though Panian's caravan had arrived in Hama from Gürün, most of the deportees in Hama, including Tavukjian and Bogharian, were from Cilicia. Both diarists seem hopeful during the first phase of their presence in Hama, as they were still enjoying "relatively favourable conditions" (p. 27). Der Nerses and his family stayed in a *han* in Hama. When hunger and epidemics became part of their daily struggle, Armenian deportees from Anatolia began to succumb to death. According to Der Nerses, he and other priests buried more than eighty corpses. Lamenting this state of affairs, he says: "All of them [i.e. the deportees] are walking graves, and do not even have time to bury their dead" (p. 30). Thus, the diaries reveal two categories of deportees: people who arrived from the interior provinces of Anatolia (as we saw in the case of Panian) in dire and dilapidated condition, and people from the areas bordering Bilad al-Sham such as Cilicia who were in much better shape, at least at the beginning (p. 34). In October 1915, most of the Armenian deportees from Aintab city were transported to Salamiyya. The decision to disperse Armenians to different areas was part of the government's policy to ensure that the Armenian deportees did not exceed 10 percent of the local population (p. 41).

Tachjian also deals with the policies of Jemal Pasha. He argues that these policies were different from those of the unionist leadership in other provinces. The most important difference was that in the regions under Jemal Pasha's control there were no massacres and the deportees enjoyed relative security (p. 52). Tachjian contends that Jemal Pasha was not on the same page as his comrades in regards to the physical extermination of the Armenians; as we saw in Panian's memoir, his main agenda was conversion and education of Armenian and Kurdish orphans. Tachjian promotes the thesis that Jemal Pasha's policy was to use the Armenians of Bilad al-Sham who were uprooted from their natural

habitat by making them faithful tools of the Ottoman polity and major players in the economic development of the region (p. 56). This is an important deviation from the conventional understanding of Jemal Pasha's role in the Armenian Genocide. Tachjian argues that Jemal Pasha was not "merely the nationalist colonialist official just portrayed"; he was a pragmatic military man who wanted to use everything at his disposal to confront the Allied forces on the Egyptian front (p. 57). Regarding the hospitable treatment of the Arabs towards the Armenian deportees, Tachjian argues that this was "an ex post facto construction shaped by the continuing co-existence of Arabs and Armenians in Arab countries" (p. 64).

Tachjian describes how the "money-food-connections" chain defined the context in which these Armenians carried out their struggles. He demonstrates the dire situation of the Armenians, who were dehumanized, degraded, and called the "Walking Dead" (p. 81), and how they used every means to survive. Through the diaries, Tachjian also describes the diet of the deportees, as well as their aid structure: the Ottoman state's distribution of *tayin* (daily ration), and the Armenian Prelacy of Aleppo's provision of food and medication. Money was transferred to the prelacy and other individuals through the postal system or by hand.

In addition to hunger and suffering, Tachjian describes other types of calamities that befell Armenians during their stay at the camp, including epidemics and conscription. Tachjian discusses the ways in which epidemics such as malaria and cholera destroyed families and undermined the struggle to survive. In his diary *Der Nerses* laments the physical and moral decline of the deportees. Whereas he depicts the process of the deportees' "bestialization" (p. 141), Bogharian discusses the existence of female Armenian prostitutes in the Hama-Homs-Salamiyya region (p. 146).

The book concludes by discussing an understudied yet important topic: voluntarily conversion of Armenians to Islam. *Der Nerses* provides valuable information about the ways in which these conversions took place. Officials were sent to Hama and Salamiyya to supervise the conversion process. The aim, it seems, was to transform them into a loyal element. Bogharian, who became a clerk in the conversion office in Salamiyya, details the methods of conversion (pp. 161–62). Tachjian argues that conversion in the region "must be seen as a maneuver in the art of survival" (p. 164). By the end of the war both diarists returned to Aintab. When the Kemalist offensive on French-occupied Cilicia gained momentum, they moved to Syria and Lebanon.

Tachjian's greatest contribution to the study of the Armenian Genocide lies in his approach to diaries and memoirs. He demonstrates that by dissecting, analyzing, and contextualizing them historians can extract vital information about different facets of the genocide. Moreover, in introducing microhistory to the analysis of survivors' diaries in Armenian, he has opened the door to new interpretations of such texts, many of which have not yet been analyzed or translated from Armenian into English.

POSTGENOCIDE: A CONTINUUM OR A NEW BEGINNING?

While the previous two books dealt with the second phase of the genocide, the books by Lerna Ekmekçioğlu and Talin Suciyan both deal with what could be considered the third phase of genocide: the postgenocide period. They concentrate specifically on the

remaining Armenian communities in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. For these reasons and more, the two books could be read together productively.

Ekmekçioğlu's book is a history of Armenian feminism and its challenges and struggles during the postgenocide period. It concentrates on a prominent feminist named Hayganush Mark who, along with her husband Vahan Toshigian, was able to evade the genocide. Mark and other feminists of her period have been marginalized in Armenian and Turkish historiography for reasons ranging from her gender to her decision to stay in postgenocide Turkey.⁹ In this fascinating work, Ekmekçioğlu brings these important voices to life through the use of print and visual material. Ekmekçioğlu argues that feminist Armenians had two goals: "the betterment of their sex and the betterment of their *azk* (nation)" (p. 2). However, she suggests that those two goals sometimes worked in unity and sometimes conflicted with each other. The most important source used by Ekmekçioğlu is *Hay Gin* (Armenian Woman), the organ of the Armenian Women's Association, edited by Mark from its beginning in 1919 until it was shut down by the state in 1933.

Ekmekçioğlu analyzes the gendered ways and familial vocabulary in which Armenians imagined how they were going to survive the recent catastrophe. After the war the emphasis was on children. The Armenian elites of Istanbul saw Armenian children as part and parcel of their recovery. This critical period was called the National Rebirth (*Azkayin Veradzunt*). From 1919 until 1922, approximately 35,000 deportees, many of whom were orphans and widows, entered Istanbul and joined the 120,000 Armenian residents of the city. With the signing of the Treaty of Mudros in 1918, Armenians initiated a new effort to save the kidnapped Armenians, among whom were Islamicized women and children. The Armenian Red Cross of Constantinople, which was founded by women, took care of pregnant refugees and the sick. Armenian feminists played an important role in collecting orphans and widows (*vorpahavak*). Ekmekçioğlu argues that the practice of *vorpahavak* was frequently illiberal, prioritizing group maintenance rather than individual freedom, and was at odds with feminism (p. 41). Readers may sometimes feel that Ekmekçioğlu's expectations of the Armenian leadership at a critical juncture in Armenian history are too high on issues pertaining to feminism. Despite their voices being stifled by the male dominant leadership, most of the feminists "aligned themselves with the general *vorpahavak* ideology that saw the reunification of Armenians as the bulwark of National Revival" (pp. 42–43). Throughout the book the reader gets the sense that Armenian feminists sacrificed their demands and rights for the sake of protecting their nation. This paradox continued into the republican period.

Ekmekçioğlu argues that Armenian feminism reached its peak during the postgenocide period in the perpetrators' capital. The leading figure in this movement was Mark. Along with other feminists such as Nevrig Sebhian, Kohar Mazlemian, and Zaruhi Bahri, she launched a battle through *Hay Gin* against the patriarchal nation, stressing that women's emancipation was not an obstacle to the nation's revival but rather a boon (p. 54). The group was composed of middle- and upper-class, urban, well-educated women from the capital. This raises an important question: could only the privileged afford to become feminists or were they the only ones in position to oppose patriarchal policies and promote feminism? Armenian feminists were harshly criticized by their male counterparts for being "shortsighted" (p. 71). However, when *Hay Gin* covered issues dealing with

the national project, the journal was supported by men as long as it remained silent on feminist issues.

The period between 1922 and late 1923 was critical for the Armenians of Turkey. During this period the Kemalist movement finalized its military and diplomatic victories. As thousands of Armenians left Istanbul for foreign lands, those who remained came to be legally defined as “minorities.” Even orphanages under the care of the Allies began moving out of the city. At the demand of the state, the Armenian National Assembly expelled the last Ottoman Armenian patriarch from his office. Mark, like most remaining Armenians, turned to the church as a strategy for survival. Ekmekçioğlu demonstrates that Armenian feminism in the most critical period of its history was flexible and adapted itself to changing socio-political realities.

If Armenian feminism is one key facet of Ekmekçioğlu’s work, another is the minoritization of Armenians after the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Minority status was coined after World War I in the national and international order. The idea was that by providing minorities protection and room to express their difference, they would shy away from extraterritorial alliances (p. 93). Eventually, this protection would help them assimilate to the majority culture. Hence, the Allies insisted that Turkey provide Armenians, along with other non-Muslims, the status of minority. During the period in which the Lausanne Treaty was formulated, Armenians tried to have a say in the fate of their nation in Turkey. Their main objective was to convince the Allies to persuade the Turkish government to designate an “Armenian National Home” within its borders that would become a refuge to Armenian refugees around the world (p. 91). The Turkish delegation refused the idea. Their objective was to exchange the Armenians of Turkey for Turkish Muslims living in Soviet Armenia (p. 91). The Turkish state did not want Armenians to have minority rights. Turkish politicians found the minority status a problematic one and feared that, as during the Ottoman era, it would lead to European meddling in the internal affairs of Turkey.

In the new republic, non-Muslim faiths were relegated to the status of what Ekmekçioğlu calls “step-citizens” (p. 126). Despite the clause on minority rights in the Lausanne Treaty, antimorality attitudes remained high among the political elite and within society. Furthermore, “minority rights” were usually not respected, as is also attested in Suciyan’s work. On the contrary, in its nationalization process, the Turkish state forced minorities “to be Turk or become *like* a Turk” (p. 108). For example, in 1935 all Armenians, as well as other Turkish minorities, had to adopt Turkish-language last names. Ekmekçioğlu refers to the state–minority relationship as “secular dhimmitude.” For her this title “is an oxymoron that self-consciously places an Islamic legal category, dhimmi, in the framework of a secular, majority Muslim state” (p. 108). She contends that the two main pillars of this neodhimmitude were loyalty to the new rulers and “disidentification” with the past. Societies such as Society for the Elevation of Turks and Armenians (SETA) and its president, Berj Kerestjjan, became ultimate examples of the new “loyalist” Armenians. In demonstrating their loyalty to the state, they went as far as putting the blame for the genocide on Armenians (p. 111). In this environment, *Hay Gin* also adapted itself. It went from featuring Mount Ararat on its cover page in January 1922 to running an image of Mustafa Kemal on the cover in July 1927. Eventually, the journal even distanced itself from the Armenian diaspora. So why did certain sectors of the Armenian community in Istanbul embrace Kemalism? Ekmekçioğlu contends that

Kemalism “held out a promise for Armenians, and this was an important reason why at least some of them could have *really* liked the new Turkey” (p. 117). In this setting, most important Armenian institutions had to share power with the Turkish state.

A major question that Ekmekçioğlu raises in her book is whether Armenian feminism was possible in modern Turkey. Here she concentrates again on Mark who, along with her comrades, tirelessly sought to prove that traditional responsibilities associated with their gender could successfully coexist with their public activism (p. 136). Mark believed that through writing one can become an individual and push for change, and she used her writings to differentiate her feminism from “the male-dominated Armenian public sphere” (p. 144).

During the postgenocide project of restoration or “national rebirth,” the Armenian woman was given the most important role in the restitution of the “nation.” She was seen as a medium for reproducing a new generation. Without her, the future was not possible. She was the mother and educator of the future citizen of an imagined “Armenia.” Ekmekçioğlu argues that for Mark and other feminists the Turkish political framework did not provide many choices. As she points out, “Liberal progressivism that roots for gender equality is a threat to the hierarchically ordered ‘tradition’ that Armenians insist on conserving in order to continue their presence in a Turkey that insists on structurally discriminating against them” (p. 163). She concludes that “As long as the power imbalance between the Turkish state and its Armenians remains intact, paradoxes will remain the best friends of feminists” (p. 163). Ekmekçioğlu’s work should be regarded as one of the best analyses of Armenian feminism during a critical period of Armenian, Ottoman, and Turkish history.

Whereas Ekmekçioğlu’s book deals with feminism, Suciyan’s monograph reconstructs the political history of Armenians in the postgenocide period. Suciyan argues that her use of the word “post” in postgenocidal does not imply that the genocide has ended; rather, she argues that “the catastrophe of genocide is endless and irreversible” (pp. 21–22). The book also charts a long history of genocide denial perpetuated by the Turkish Republic until today. Suciyan’s book ends with the post–World War II period (1945–50). Her extensive use of Armenian primary sources, especially the press, archival material, and oral history narratives, is impressive. In terms of Armenian newspapers, she reads them in tandem with Turkish periodicals, providing an encompassing picture of events. The book demonstrates how the Armenian press of Istanbul at the time was far from monolithic, representing different intellectual and political currents. Newspapers such as *Jamanak* (Time), *Marmara* (Marmara), *Nor Luys* (New Light), and *Nor Or* (New Day), played an important role in (re)orienting the Armenian position(s) within the political framework established by the Republican Peoples Party (RPP). For example, the group around *Nor Or* represented postgenocide intellectuals who remained in Istanbul. Borrowing the concept of habitus from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Suciyan aims to understand the postgenocidal habitus and its impact on the remaining Armenians in Istanbul and the provinces.

Suciyan elaborates on the concept of postgenocidal habitus by underlining the continual interplay between Turkish official and social practices. Furthermore, she draws a line of continuity between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic by demonstrating how international mechanisms facilitated denial and its institutionalization during the postgenocide period. She argues that policies that targeted Armenians of the eastern

provinces demonstrate the continuity in the mentality and organizational practices of the state. Armenians were subjected to specific types of restriction. For example, Armenian construction workers from Anatolia were prohibited from working in road construction in Istanbul (p. 42). After the Armistice of Mudros, more than 30,000 Armenians from Aleppo were transferred to Istanbul. Various Armenian bodies took care of these deportees. The condition of the remaining Armenians of the eastern provinces continued to deteriorate. Frequent attacks on their churches, destruction of their cultural heritage, and other discriminatory measures led thousands of them to migrate to Syria (p. 50). Suciyan contends that such measures were part of “the post-genocidal habitus of denial that turns this story of absurdity into a normality” (p. 61). Suciyan deals with not only the Armenians who stayed/left the provinces, but also those who converted, were kidnapped, or became concubines. Another drastic measure that targeted non-Muslims—a topic that remains marginalized in the historiography—was the random draft of non-Muslims (*Yirmi Kura Askerlik*) during World War II. The *Yirmi Kura Askerlik* had an extremely negative impact on the social life of the Armenian community.

Suciyan concentrates more on the framework that was imposed on the Armenian community of Turkey after 1923. The most important factor that led to serious repercussions was the eradication of representative institutional mechanisms. Removing the legal basis of the Armenian community, governed since 1863 by the Armenian National Constitution (*Nizamname*), had serious repercussions for the Armenian community of Istanbul that continue until today. Under the “request” of the state, the community gave up the right to administer individual and family affairs according to their own traditions. The Turkish state argued that the newly adopted Swiss Civil Code addressed the needs of the family and the private code of minorities. Consequently, the Armenian community lost its most important administrative body and the state assumed control of Armenian community affairs through a new body called the Single Trustee System (STS). Suciyan argues that the STS was one of the bodies targeting the community administration system in order to eradicate its legal basis and stifle the community’s voice in the decision-making process. These measures were taken on the bases of the purported equality and secularism of the nation-state.

When the traditional bodies in the Armenian community were denied representation, the editors of the Armenian newspapers came to be regarded as the representatives of the Armenian community. The state-dictated changes did not go unchallenged. Armenian newspapers such as *Nor Or* demanded the abolition of the existing system established by the government and called for radical change to the community’s structures.

The activities of minorities in Turkey were monitored. Local and international Armenian newspapers were banned from Turkey. The surveillance of the Turkish state, which was, in Suciyan’s words, “part and parcel of the post-genocide habitus” (p. 126), was not confined to the newspapers but encompassed the whole community. In addition, the state isolated the Armenian community of Istanbul from the rest of the Armenian diaspora and forced it to advocate for the official position of Turkey vis-à-vis the diaspora’s demands.

The situation of Armenians in Turkey became more critical when Stalin abrogated the Soviet–Turkish Treaty of Neutrality and Friendship in May of 1945 and requested a revision of the Montreux Convention regarding the control of the straits in wartime, as well as

the reappropriation of the regions of Kars and Ardahan. In the same year, the founding conference of the United Nations took place in San Francisco,¹⁰ and the newly founded Armenian National Council of America brought territorial claims to the United Nations. The territorial demands, followed by the calls for repatriation by Soviet Armenia, were seen as a major threat by Turkey and “revived the fifth column accusation against Armenians” (p. 126). Instigated by the state, these events were reflected in a negative way in the Turkish press through racist and hostile language towards Armenians.

Although Suciyan’s coverage of the patriarchal crisis in Istanbul between 1944 and 1950 is too long and readers may lose sight of the complex ecclesiastic political developments, Suciyan provides an interesting analysis of its repercussions. The crisis began with the death of Patriarch Mesrob Naroyan on 31 May 1944. On 2 June Kevkork Arslanyan was appointed locum tenens by the Religious Assembly. Arslanyan refused to convene the Religious Assembly to look into the election of a new patriarch, but some members protested the move. The two most important Armenian institutions, the Patriarchate and the Surp P’rgich‘ Armenian Hospital, along with the community, were divided into two main camps—pro-Arslanyan and anti-Arslanyan—and quarrels took place in and around many churches in Istanbul. These types of crises were not endemic to the Patriarchate of Istanbul. In the context of the Cold War, similar scenarios took place in Jerusalem and Antelias.¹¹ The root of the crisis was actually part of a process that began with the foundation of the Turkish Republic, when Armenians in Turkey lost sovereignty over communal affairs. After years of tension, the government allowed the Grand National Assembly to convene in order to elect a Patriarch: Archbishop Karekin Khachaduryan, who had been the Catholicos Legate to South America (with headquarters in Argentina since 1938), was elected. Suciyan’s work ends with the one-party period in Turkey. The history of the Armenians in Turkey in the post-World War II period has yet to be written.

CONCLUSION

The books under review chart new ways of thinking about the impact of genocide on the victim population. Whereas Panian’s memoir could be used in the classroom similarly to Elie Wiesel’s *Night*, Tachjian’s book provides new insight on how to critically analyze these types of memoirs and diaries. Suny’s book could be used as a textbook on the Armenian Genocide, something not available until now. The books by Ekmekçioğlu and Suciyan have opened the way to understanding the complexities of the postgenocide period pertaining to the remaining Armenians in Turkey. Finally, it is important to emphasize that all of the books under review do not pertain exclusively to Armenian history; they are part and parcel of Ottoman and Modern Turkish history, and it is hoped that they will be received as such.

NOTES

¹⁰“Turkey’s Minority Leaders Sign Joint Declaration Denying ‘Pressure’ on Communities,” *Daily Sabah*, 31 July 2018, accessed 8 August 2018, <https://www.dailysabah.com/minorities/2018/07/31/turkeys-minority-leaders-sign-joint-declaration-denying-pressure-on-communities>.

¹¹Bedross Der Matossian, “Explaining the Unexplainable: Recent Trends in the Armenian Genocide Historiography,” *Journal of Levantine Studies* 5 (2015): 156.

³See Ronald Grigor Suny, review of *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Richard Hovannissian, *Armenian Review* 46 (1993): 217–20.

⁴Stephan Astourian, “The Silence of Land: Agrarian Relations, Ethnicity, and Power,” in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55–58.

⁵See Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2014).

⁶See Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁷See Raymond H. Kévorkian, ed., *L’extermination des déportés Arméniens Ottomans dans les camps de concentration de Syrie-Mésopotamite (1915–1916): La deuxième phase du génocide* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nubar de l’UGAP, 1998).

⁸Raymond H. Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2011), 808.

⁹Mark’s name even fails to appear in a recent major work on the history of feminism in Turkey. See Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye’de Kadın Özgürlüğü ve Feminizm (1908–1935)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, Ocak, 2014)

¹⁰Surprisingly, the most important work on the topic is missing from the book. See Michael Bobelian, *Children of Armenia: A Forgotten Genocide and the Century-Long Struggle for Justice* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009).

¹¹See Bedross Der Matossian, “The Armenians of Jerusalem in the Modern Period: The Rise and Decline of a Community,” in *Routledge Handbook on Jerusalem*, ed. Suleiman A. Mourad, Bedross Der Matossian, and Naomi Koltun-Fromm (New York: Routledge, 2018). On the Catholicosate crisis in Antelias, see Tsolin Nalbantian, “Fashioning Armenians in Lebanon, 1946–1958,” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2011).